

Book Title

Chapter 4

March–July, 1943

March 4, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Your letters of Feb. 15 and 17 arrived today. Without wasting a moment, I'm sending along my reaction to your "plan." First of all, I'll confess I was curious to find out what you meant by that "plan" you mentioned in a previous letter.

Here goes... you admit having made up your mind to go to New York. If I advised you not to go, you would be disappointed. You would wonder why I protested.

So, I'm going to say, go ahead. I didn't think it was wise for you to go a year ago because you would be leaving Mother at a time I left she needed you badly. She still needs you and always will. She will miss you terribly. But, you have ambitions, and I'll never be the one to try and stifle them. If you believe Mother will be content and able to withstand your absence, I see no reason why you shouldn't go. I don't know how conditions have changed since I left New York, but I would say there is a better opportunity there for you. Still, it will be lonely. New York can be the loneliest place in the world.

I will suggest you talk with Father John, Dad and Eleanor about living at 195. I don't know what your reaction to that will be. Too, it's not very pleasant traveling back and forth from New York every day, especially so if your employer is located uptown. Then, I don't know if New York is the place. You may find a job in Jersey.

It's a big step. But, go ahead and take it.

Meanwhile, I'll write home and mention the possibility of moving to 195. Don't feel obligated to go through with it. Personally, I'd rather live by myself. But I may be unusual in that respect. All I ask is to be kept posted on what you do. If and when you move, I know the doors of friendship and hospitality will be thrown open to you in more places than one. I'm sure El and Dot would love to have you near when the babies come.

As for being there waiting when I get back... wherever you are will be my first stop. It doesn't matter whether it is in New York, Jersey City or Fort Worth.

Billee, if my letters are changing, I'm terribly disappointed and sorry. I don't want them to change. But, I suppose the rush of passing scenes now distracts me more often than I realize. As for writing letters, I love the way you scold me. In fact, you are terrifying. I did write several since your first request but I admit I haven't done so in quite a few weeks now. It's not because I don't want to but more because I can't sit down that long. But, I'll repent. More tomorrow..

All my love and kisses. C.

March 7, 1943—Matawan (3 V-letters)

My darling,

Surprised to see the above address? But, of course, not after receiving my cable that I sent you yesterday. Everything happened so quickly that I couldn't wait for your letter but had to rely on my own judgment with the help of Marguerite and Father John.

I've been in such a muddle the last week I don't know whether I told all of this to you before or not. I think I only wrote once last week and I missed our Saturday night date last night, but I was so tired after traveling all night.

I called Father John when I arrived in Newark yesterday and he came down and waited with me until the train for Matawan came in... about an hour. It was swell seeing him again. I'm going to Jersey City to spend the weekend next week.

I start tomorrow morning on my new job. Marguerite's sister, Agnes, is going to break me in. I think there must be something wrong with me. I haven't been excited yet about leaving or my new job, I knew that I had to come back, why I'm not sure just yet but I think you are at the bottom of that. My mind was made up when I sent that letter of application. Perhaps that's why I haven't been excited. The space is gone... think I'll write another.

I like being with you today, but then, at any time. Haven't said I love you, so very much.

The fellows and girls that I worked with gave me a farewell party at one the of the big restaurants in Massillon, after twelve o'clock Thursday night. I was very much surprised but thought it was swell of them. We had fun. Much to my surprise, my boss told me if I wanted to come back, he'd do all he could to get me back in the order department. Hope I don't have to do that.

The trip up was very pleasant. It was very hard at first, leaving Mom. There aren't words, but you know what I mean. My sister and her husband saw me off. Mom wouldn't go to the station, for which I was just as glad. I met a nice soldier and sat with him. Any more, all the trains look like troop trains. You would have enjoyed talking to him. He was a freelance writer before the war. He's Scots, an orphan since the age of fifteen, and born in Manila. He's been around the world nine times, and is married and lives in New York City. He said he decided to drop anchor there four years ago, met his wife, and found what he was looking for. We had an interesting talk. He was so nice to me. Poor fellow was almost exhausted, traveling by day coach from Los Angeles, so you can imagine. Darn... the space is running out again. Do I dare write another? Yes. I love you so much.

I forgot to tell you what the fellow's name was. You might have known him... Michael Wylie.

Father John said he had not heard from you since his letter except for the cablegram. I won't hear for a time either because it will take time to have the mail transferred again, but then it will come eventually.

Marguerite and her family have made me very welcome. I believe, though, that I will find a room somewhere of my own. I'm afraid it will be too crowded unless her sister goes into housekeeping with her baby. She and her husband have been waiting word of his draft status.

I feel so much closer to you already. I have a strange feeling that I've probably told you before that it won't be long until we will be together. I do feel so right about what I have done. I prayed so for guidance in what I was doing. Mother will understand better as time goes on. I hope I haven't hurt her. I tried so hard not to. I hope I hear from you very soon. I love you. Said that before, didn't I, but I'd love to have you nearby for just a few minutes even, just to see you. Goodnight, darling. Wish me luck.

All my love and kisses, always Billee

March 9, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My dearest,

Just in from work, so I decided to dash off a line. Marguerite has something planned for this evening. I'm sitting by the window and it's so nice out. Still light.

Imagine, I was finished work at four-fifteen yesterday and three forty-five today. I'm really a banker... ha.

I called El today. I'm going in for the weekend. She said they had received a letter from you yesterday, or rather letters. You should have my cable by today. I'm wondering what you are thinking. I also called Dottie and she was so surprised. I'm going there for a weekend soon. They are all surprised as you must be at my quick change. Just like meeting you, I knew I had to come back just as I knew I had to be with you the rest of my life. As I said before, I feel so much closer already. I love you so very much. Always remember that, no matter what happens I'll be here to come back to. I already feel like it should be natural, to put "Mrs." in front of my name and add "Kiley" to the rest. Soon it will be nearly a year. It can't be too much longer?

I'm getting anxious again to hear from you. I will have to wait but then patience is the one virtue I seem to have, thank goodness. I'll say goodnight for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 9, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Your cable reached me yesterday, together with two of the loveliest "bits of heaven" I could have received, the letters of Feb. 9 and 10. I don't pretend to know how suddenly you decided to move but I gather you didn't waste any time once you made up your mind. I'll be waiting for the explanatory letter that is following the cable. I have a strong suspicion you talked over everything with Marguerite while you were up for Mother's funeral. In any case, when you received the letter I sent off the other day, you'll discover I was in accord with your plan to move, if only because you thought it best and

also, because I could tell you had already made your decision. Since you are with Marguerite, I know you are in good hands, so I won't worry on that account. I have already asked Dad to ask you to stay at 195 if and when you moved but I hadn't figured on Marguerite; so, now everything is settled.

As for the pictures I sent, (mind if I take time out here to tell you I love you? I've been getting careless lately, even to the extent of forgetting anniversaries), I'm sure our selections coincided. It would take me another three or four months to get another print made so we'll let it go the way it is, ok? Dot and Al have the "sorrowful" one. [Reminder: we still have not identified these pictures.]

I must get off another line of thanks to the boys and girls for making you feel so much at home in Jersey City and North Arlington. Still, I knew I could rely on them.

As for our post-war plans, I insist you make the decision where and when the wedding takes place. But we'll be able to discuss it together, won't we? I'll be ready as soon as I set my foot on U.S. soil again.

I was happy to hear the Christmas letter accomplished its purpose, although it didn't arrive as soon as I had hoped. I'm not going to say anything now but I'll bet I can take any one of several letters I have from you that can top anything I've ever written.

In a separate letter, I'm going to enclose a few clippings of recent stories. Too, I'll have to change your address for both the *Stars and Stripes* and the bonds. The bond officer is going to be vexed one of these days, changing your address. The war will probably be over before we get the first bond. I'll be back in a day or so. Love to Marguerite.

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

March 11, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Another evening finds me beside the window after a pleasant walk from the train. I like the banking business. So far, I've been getting along fine. I have my fingers crossed.

Marguerite, her brother, and I went to church last night for ashes. This will be my first Easter as a Catholic. I'm looking forward to it very much. It will mean, too, that Easter will mark another real anniversary for us.

I had a thought today, listening to all these Jersey accents going on around me. What if you by chance get an English accent along with your Jersey one, and me with my half southern and half mid-western accent... what is that ball team going to sound like? Oh my.

Haven't heard from home yet this week. Hope all goes well. Seems funny being away, as if I might be someone else. I have a sort of detached feeling, if that makes sense.

Except for the remnant of a cold, I feel good and loving you more than ever. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 12, 1943—Matawan

My dearest Charles,

Seems so funny to be having evenings to write to you instead of staying up until all hours of the morning.

This is the first date we've had like this in a long time. Except for the V-letters, you have been sadly neglected, but I'll make it up to you.

First of all, if I stand on tip toes a bit, I can kiss you hello and then we can go and cuddle up in a corner... just any corner now until I find a permanent place to stay. I love you so much. One of these days, I'll be able to say that in person.

Going to work on the train, we ride across part of the bay... Raritan Bay... and as I look across to the horizon, out across the ocean I can see in the distance, I can't help but feel that much closer. I'm glad now that I made the change. Tomorrow I go to see your family, and Al and Dot are going to stop in Sunday.

I just finished a letter to Mom. Seems funny to be writing to her... can't get used to it. Everyone is fine, she says, but the weather has been cold, below zero again.

I can't wait to get the pictures. Wonder how long it will take. Hope not as long as the others... the miniatures, I mean.

I like my work. Everyone is so nice to me. The work isn't hard... savings teller, taking in deposits and paying withdrawals, besides money orders... and I've made plenty of those this week with income tax to pay. I help the note teller post the payments on loans. The routine isn't nearly as complicated as I expected. I have quite a lot of money to handle, more than I've been used to before, but so far, I'm doing all right. The bank is quite large and new. Seems so good to work in a place



The Perth Amboy National Bank may have looked like this one in 1943.

that's clean; not only the building but the atmosphere as well. Some time I'll tell you what went on at the mill office in the particular department I worked in. I don't pretend to be a prude, but it was too much for me to take. Where Mom works is different... why, I don't know. That's in the past now. I feel sure I'll make good here and I like it.

I see your friend, Dan Scherman the Life photographer, has some pictures in this week of pinup girls he found in the barracks in England.

Marguerite is busy in the kitchen making applesauce. She's been swell. We went to make the Stations tonight before we came home. It's nice having someone to go to Mass with. I've missed that quite a bit because I didn't get an opportunity to meet anyone in Massillon.

With Mom's letter were three V-letters from you, sent via Massillon, one a Valentine. That makes two, besides the roses. You're spoiling me, but I love it. A billboard caught my eye as I got on the train tonight... "Visit the Hawaiian Room at the Lexington Hotel." You can imagine what went through my mind. Wish we could be there this Easter. In just a few weeks, a whole year will have passed since I said "Yes," and I said I didn't believe in long engagements. Now, that's a laugh. But, that's all right. What we have is worth waiting for.

I'm getting very sleepy. Mind if I say goodnight for now? Tomorrow is another day. I'll write Sunday night and tell you about my weekend. Bend down a bit... so glad you aren't too tall, but just right. A goodnight kiss... My prayers and thoughts are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, as always your Billee

March 15, 1943 [USO Postcard]

Dear Ray,

Just dropping you this card to let you know we are leaving California. When I get there I will write you... until then, don't write.

Ed

March 15, 1943—Matawan (3 V-letters)

My dearest,

The two letters I've been waiting for arrived Saturday via Massillon but, since I went right to 195 from the bank, via New York for shopping, I didn't get to read them until last night.

I know, my dear, without your trying to write, how you must have felt. I'd have given almost anything to have borne the shock for you. Your letters to the girls, El and Bette, were wonderful. I found them all well, and Pop, too. We had a long talk Saturday night accompanied by a couple of glasses of beer. He talked to me quite a bit about Mom. He is missing her very much, but he does wonderfully looking after the girls and he cooked Sunday dinner. I helped a little, but I knew he wanted to do it. Tom was home for the weekend and they spent Saturday night at his mother's. Pop and I also went to confession together and received at eight o'clock Mass. It was next best to being with you. You can imagine my thoughts going to the altar where you had received so many times.

Pop told me quite a few of your escapades, such as rolling the inkwells along the floor in school and being scolded by the sisters, you and Al.

Without the typewriter, I'm at a loss. Hope you don't have too much trouble reading these.

To continue my weekend... Father John came in about 4:30 and we talked about my new job. He dug his scrapbooks out of the cellar and showed me those. You both have improved with age. I know all about the Jersey Panthers now... quite a guy you were. He took me to the station in Newark and Agnes, Marguerite's sister, drove me back to Matawan. A quiet, but very pleasant weekend.



The Jersey Panthers, a semi-pro team. Charles is front row, third from left. Jersey City circa 1935.

Mind if I adopt your dad? I like him an awful lot. This is the first chance I've had to really know him. El is feeling well. She hasn't been sick a minute. You should see the things she has... everything but the baby. I hardly know what we will give her.

I'm anxious to hear of your trip to visit the Rangers. Hope that isn't the new scene of your operations. *The New York Times* carried a list of correspondents taking training to go over with those bombers. Among the names were a couple of staff members of the *Stars and Stripes*.

You'd think I'd said everything, but I love being with you. You spoke of a holiday. It must have been several days, or perhaps you mentioned it in another letter.

I'm still getting along well at the bank. I can imagine how you must feel over there now. I have such a detached feeling, as if I might be someone else. Remember me telling you about the writer I met on the train? He made a statement that he'd never be able to find the person he was before the war, that

he had completely lost himself in the Army. I can see where that might be, but still, it doesn't seem quite possible. As for me, just as I told Father John, the new job has changed my whole outlook and I feel like a new woman, so optimistic and full of faith and hope that it won't be too long.

I love you so much, darling. My complex is gone, but she is cute... Ruthie, I mean [Ruth Totten]. I'm much better than I used to be. Your love has done much toward that. Went to Novena again tonight, a perpetual one they have for peace and all the soldiers. Goodnight... a special kiss.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 17, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Sure and it's a great day for the Irish, this grand St. Patrick's Day. Furthermore, it's an anniversary, the first one I've remembered in a month or more, I'm afraid. But, now that things are normal again, I hope I'll always remember "our days." Today is also one on which I couldn't love you more because there's a touch of spring in the air and with spring this young man's fancy continues to turn to thoughts of you.

Your letters of Feb. 25 and 28 came the other day and since you said you were to start with the Perth Amboy bank on the 15th, I believe you are off to a flying start. And I'm sure you are happy. I'm anxiously waiting to hear everything about it.

As usual, your letters continue to arrive every few days, to keep me going.

The past week hasn't been very active. At present, I'm working on a story concerning the MPs here... tips on what they don't like soldiers to do on leave and how they enforce military law. Last night I had a nice chat with a lieutenant colonel, provost marshal of London, and then spent an hour riding around in one of the patrol cars. The latter have radio hookup with Scotland Yard.

I played golf last Saturday on my day off. Went 18 holes with Mr. Frost, with whom I spent Christmas. Honestly, I'm getting old. After the first nine, I wanted



Charles playing golf in England. Not exactly golf shoes. 1943.

to quit. At the 15th, I staggered and when we finished, I practically collapsed. Still, it was good exercise and it gave me a chance to get some sun.

Did I tell you I received a letter from Jack Kenny's brother recently? He's in Honolulu. If and when I get a letter from China, I will have "circled the globe." I've had some from Africa, Alaska, Hawaii, Bermuda, and Australia. The one from Africa came from Ralph Martin, one of the boys who left here to work with the North Africa bureau. He's having a helluva time down there but he's content. A couple of fellows who returned recently said he's been up to the front several times. Just like him.

In my last letter, I believe I told you I was going to one of the Fighter Command stations. It didn't materialize. I got as far as HQ and found out the planes they were using were still under security.

I hope you get an opportunity to visit 195 soon. I know, from their letters, they are looking forward to seeing you often. Now that you are practically in the neighborhood, they'll be wanting to monopolize you.

That's why I'm jealous of the moon that shines above... jealous of everything that looks on you. Love to all.

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

March 18, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My darling,

I let our anniversary go by yesterday without dropping you a line, but that was because I wanted to type this one and wasn't able to get a V blank until today. Forgiven? Yes? That's good. Fourteen months now. Doesn't seem possible. Yesterday brought two V letters via Massillon, one dated the 23rd and the other the 27th, telling me of your trip to Scotland. You do get around. That must have been an interesting trip. I'm looking forward to the story. This is fun, hearing about stories before they are written.

About meeting Ruth R... that wasn't what I said in the letter. I thought Ruth R. was to the house the night before I

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

TO: BILLIE RUTH GRAY
412 MERRIMON AVE.
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

FROM: S/Sgt. T. Charles F. Kelly
The Stars & Stripes
APO, A.P.O. 113, NYC
July 1, 1944
(Sender's complete address above)

(CENSOR'S STAMP) SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

HELLO SWEETHEART:

IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I REALLY SQUEEZED IN A DATE LIKE THIS. I HAVE BEEN TRAVELLING TODAY AND STOPPED OFF HERE FOR A BITE TO EAT BEFORE HEADING BACK TO ~~THE~~ ~~BE~~ HEADQUARTERS. I HAVE THESE FEW MINUTES ON MY HANDS AND DECIDED TO HAVE EVEN A LITTLE CHAT WITH YOU. OUR HOPES TO START PUBLISHING ON THE CONTINENT WENT UP A FEW POINTS DURING THE PAST WEEK BUT WE ARE STILL CIRCULATING THE PAPER TURNED OUT IN LONDON. I NEVER IMAGINED THERE WOULD BE SO MUCH ATTACHED TO GETTING A PAPER UNDER WAY AND IT HAS BEEN MORE DIFFICULT HERE BECAUSE OF WAR DAMAGE TO PLANTS, TRYING TO "PARLAY" WITH FRENCH LABOR AT A TIME WHEN THE PEOPLE ARE ONLY BEGINNING TO RECOVER FROM GERMAN OCCUPATION. STILL, WE'RE PLUGGING AWAY AND IF THE FIRST FEW EDITIONS AREN'T ALL WE HOPE FOR WE'LL TRY TO WORK OUT THE DIFFICULTIES AS WE GO ALONG.

OPERATIONS FOR OUR GUYS...THAT IS, THE AMERICANS AT THE FRONT...HAVE QUIETED DOWN SINCE THE CAPTURE OF CHERBOURG. THE BRITISH ARE TAKING OVER FOR THE TIME BEING IN THEIR SECTOR. THE WHOLE PICTURE STILL LOOKS LIKE A LOT OF HARD FIGHTING. THAT IS APPARENT BY THE TIME IT TOOK TO SWEEP SUCH A SMALL PART OF FRANCE LIKE THE CHERBOURG PENINSULA.

ANDY GOT OVER YESTERDAY, AND WITH EARL HERE IT'S LIKE OLD TIMES AGAIN. ANDY BROUGHT WITH HIM A POST CARD FROM BENNY, SENT FROM A LAKE IN WISCONSIN WHERE HE AND JANE WERE ENJOYING HIS FURLOUGH. THAT'S THE WAY IT IS. EVERYBODY ELSE RUNS FOR A FOX HOLE AND BENNY BASKS IN THE SUN AT A WISCONSIN LAKE.

'BYE FOR A WHILE....LOVE TO MOM. ALL MY LOVE AND KISSES
FOREVER AND ALWAYS

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP? **REPLY BY V-MAIL** HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

V-letters were typed or written on 7x9.5 inch forms like this one. After being mailed, the letters were censored, then photographed and transported as rolls of negative microfilm. Before delivery, they were enlarged to around 4.25x5.25 inches and printed on photographic paper.

arrived. I have them straight in my mind now that I have met them both, and incidentally, both swell gals, I think. I'll probably see one or the other or maybe both over the weekend, since I'm going to Dottie and Al's.

Concerning my thinking you might be peeved over the date I had... that was one of my weaker moments, but then, when you don't hear when you think you should, you can imagine all sorts of things. I can be jealous, too, just thinking about you going out with that WAAF, the one whose family's house you stayed at over Christmas. Your dad told me that you had taken her out. I'm afraid I'm very selfish about anything where you are concerned, but then you're entitled to all the fun you can have. I wouldn't blame you a bit if you went out with the whole WAAF auxiliary.

Now I can wait for the pictures to come, especially since there will be a "hello" in them this time. I'll never forget that day when that envelope of pictures came and I had been waiting and waiting for a letter... You can imagine. The air was blue for a bit, but I got over it and said, "Tomorrow is another day," as always.

I'm writing this in the bank and I'm finished for the day at 3:15. I still can't quite believe that I'm here and actually working in a bank in Perth Amboy. I never heard of the place until about a year ago. One never knows what can happen. This has been a year of events, ever since Jan. 17, 1942.

After a foggy and rainy day yesterday, something like what you must be having in London in one of those pea soup fogs, we are having a day of sunshine. Does it feel good coming through the window and just hitting me across the shoulders! I know you'd love to have some. Wish I could send a little with this letter.

The address you wanted is Mrs. George Paulus, 314 Market St., Wheeling, W.Va. I had to open my trunk to get it. Yes, I have all the letters and scrapbook material with me, and the first letter I picked out of the book was the right one. Lucky; but then, I'm a pretty lucky person.

When I finish this, I'm going in and call El to see how they all are. Seems nice to be so near. They made me feel right at home. Mind if I like them very much? You should see the things El has for the Kiley grandchild, everything but the grandchild, even to a high chair, but I guess I'd do the same thing. Makes me wish, but our day will come.

I'd better close up and go home. I think I was the first one finished tonight, and I feel a little guilty leaving so soon, but I balanced to the penny first thing. I always feel like going out and celebrating when I do that. I've done pretty well about that so far. I hope you can read this. If you could see this typewriter... it's older than I am, positively ancient.

Here goes a special anniversary kiss. I love you so much, but then, I've said that before.

All my love and kisses always, your Billee

March 18, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I sent a V-mail off this afternoon and didn't really expect to write again but I've been neglecting our "lengthy dates" and wanted to be with you tonight. The house is quiet. Marguerite is in New York shopping and I just finished washing my hair. I'm already getting prepared for my weekend at the Doyles.' I splurged and bought a new blouse to go with my red suit and also a new black bonnet... really not much to it, but it's cute. I have to do myself up proud so you won't be... ashamed, I was going to say, but that isn't the right word.

I haven't bought any clothes since my trip to New York last year, because I'm holding off, waiting for you to come home so I can dazzle you. In the meantime, I'm making the best of what I have. That's going to be the day. Now that I'm up here, I have to make some new dreams about what might happen and where our reunion will take place.

I'm not kidding... if there was any way humanly possible that I could come to London, I'd do it in a minute. When you told me of the arrival of the girl from New York, I could have wept. Too bad I'm not a socialite or dramatically inclined. Maybe I could take a trip for morale... mostly my morale, I'd say. Since you are living more or less a civilian life, it seems too bad I can't be there. We could rent a little English cottage somewhere and settle down for the duration. Makes nice writing, doesn't it, but we still have our dreams, thank goodness.

Today was lovely. I came home alone and walked in from Cliffwood. Spring was in the air. You were uppermost in my thoughts. I might have been walking along an English wood with you. You didn't tell me much about your holiday, mentioned in one of your recent V-letters. Where did you go? Or is that a military secret?

I tried to call 195 today, but I guess no one was at home. It was such a pretty day, I wouldn't have blamed them for getting out. I couldn't help but remember yesterday that you called me a year ago last night from Dix for our anniversary.

I should go... I have a lot of things I should be doing. I have some ironing to do before going to bed. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you, my dear.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 21, 1943 [USO Postcard]

Dear Ray,

Arrived here in Tennessee this morning and haven't much time to write. We are pretty busy drawing supplies and trucks. I just got finished dropping a few lines home, letting them know I got here safe. Write when you have a chance and may God bless you.

Eddie

March 21, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Another date I missed last night, but that was because I was at Dottie's and that was almost like being with you.

I'll start with yesterday, Finished at twelve-thirty and caught the one-twenty into Newark I stopped in town at a record store and picked up a couple of records to take to Dottie and Al, a new arrangement of "Stardust" and Bing Crosby's "Moonlight Becomes You" with "Constantly" on the other side. The latter I like very much. Then I took a 102 bus to North Arlington and got off where we did that time. I walked down the hill past the new apartment houses, which, incidentally, are very nice.

The girls were all there, namely Ruth T., Ruth R., Marty and Edie and Janet Cameron, besides Dot and Al. They gave me a royal welcome, including Janet [Marty's daughter]. She clapped her hands and laughed for me.

Marty and Edie didn't stay long. By the way, Edie says her husband is coming home in June. Talk about luck. Could you play stowaway and come, too? Edie is nice and such a pretty girl. I'd like to know her better.

Ruth Rommel's birthday was today so Dottie had her cake last night and we all sang Happy Birthday to her. She's so much fun. Dottie had a nice supper, macaroni and cheese, a lemon pie that Marty brought over besides cold cuts and everything else. Ruth R.'s ensign came up from Washington so she had to go to New York to meet him. That left Ruth T., and Bill Daly came in for awhile. We played Tripoly and this time I had better luck. I lost only seven cents. That's fun. The last time I was trying to play and losing all your money. All I could think of was, "This is our last evening," which probably accounts for my lack of concentration. Ruth T. won the most... a dollar sixty, I believe.

This morning, Bill came over and we all went to a launching at Kearny, the biggest transport ever built. That was a thrilling sight... such a monstrous thing, almost as long as the river is wide. Al and I went to twelve o'clock Mass then, in Arlington. We spent a quiet afternoon... went and had ice cream. Al and Dot drove me to Newark to catch my train and here I am back at Marguerite's.

A girl I know in Asheville just called me from New York. She has been there having an operation. I'm going in to see her tomorrow... she was so surprised.

I called El Thursday and they are all well; taking advantage of the sunshine and getting out in it. She's getting new slipcovers for the living room. Tom is supposed to come home on a furlough at the end of the month.

Still doesn't seem possible that I'm up here. To be near where you were and seeing all your friends brings you so much closer. To be able to talk to someone who knows you means so much. Dottie and I had a long talk over old times. She told me quite a bit about you and the good times you all had together. Seems they were quite concerned over you being a bachelor but you fooled them, after so long.

Dottie was asking me about our wedding plans. She seemed to think we'd be married in Asheville. That would be silly now that I'm up here and besides, there may not be anyone there. I told her that it wouldn't be anything elaborate, but of course we wanted them all there.

I feel like you did, enjoying Dot and Al and Marty and Bill. Al is in his glory as an expectant father. He practically waits on Dottie hand and foot... helps her in the kitchen. He's lost a lot of weight since I saw him last Easter, but then he is working hard at the shipyards. He's back on days again. Bill is the one that seems heavier to me. He is starting his victory garden today.

Forgot to tell you how much I love you, and how glad I am to be the future Mrs. K. Your friends are paving the way so I won't be a stranger in their midst by the time you return.

I'm sleepy... mind if I say goodnight? A goodnight kiss going in your direction... catch it.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 22, 1943—Matawan (3 V-letters)

Darling,

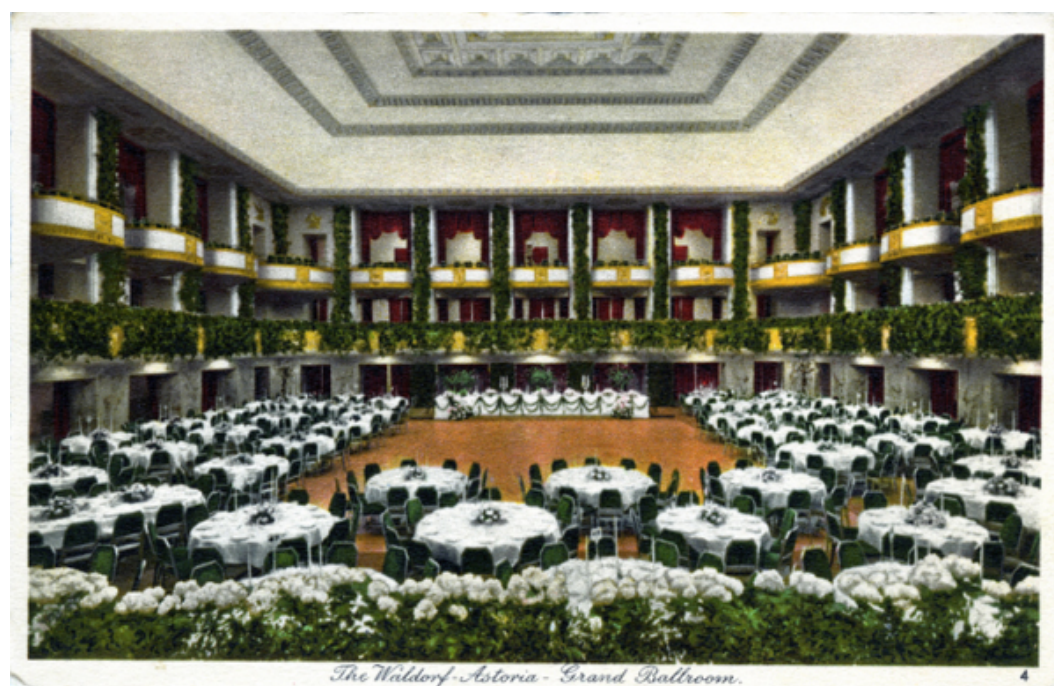
I started to write a V-letter this afternoon at work, but the typewriter refused to work, so I'm resorting to pen and ink again.

I wrote a long letter last night and sent it via airmail. Missed our Saturday date, but I was at Dottie and Al's. We had a nice weekend. All the girls were there Saturday afternoon including Janet Cameron and I met Edie for the first time. The two Ruths were there. Bill Daly came over in the evening and we played cards. I went into detail about the weekend in the airmail letter. It was swell being with them again and getting better acquainted. Dottie looks fine; she's beginning to get heavier but it's becoming. I went to Mass with Al.

This is a laugh. Al thinks we're married and you won't tell him because he said he thought we should wait when you asked his advice. He's the last person in the world I would have thought would have that idea, as good friends as you are. Dottie told me Al said he has always thought we were married when I was in New York last year.

—

Went into New York tonight. A girlfriend of mine from Asheville has been there for two weeks and I just found out last night where she was staying, so I went over to see her. She leaves tomorrow afternoon. I went with her to the Waldorf Astoria to meet her date. It was my first visit there... quite wonderful. We didn't have much time together but it was worth it.



The Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria around 1940.

I called Ray Roche Saturday, hoping he hadn't mailed the pictures yet, but he had, so Mom will forward them. He was very pleasant over the phone... called me "Miss Gray."

You should see what a beautiful night it is... a million stars and the moon is full, and going to waste as far as I am concerned.

Warren is in Sioux Falls, S. Dakota, and a sergeant. Isn't that something? He'll be there for five months.

Had a long letter from Mom today. She and the rest of the family are well. My two sisters have been giving her a lot of attention for which I'm very grateful. Warren and I keep her busy writing now. She's doing very well at it, too.

—

It's me again... seems I don't know when to stop.

I saw everyone but the Kennys and Gertie while I was at Dot's. We had such a good dinner. Al was saying how much improved Dottie's cooking is. Seems she didn't know how to boil water.

Called El Friday and they are all well. You know your dad works only a little ways from where I am, in Linden I believe he said. El said she was getting new slipcovers for the living room. Your dad is going to do his room over for her when the baby comes. Maybe I told you that.

I saw in Friday's paper that your friend Ralph Martin was one of the first to enter Gabes [in Tunisia], I saved the clipping and will send it to you. I'm glad you're still in London.

Al and Bill took Dot, her dad and I to see a big transport launched Sunday. It was quite a memorable site. I wish you could have seen it. I'm going now. Goodnight, my dearest. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 22, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

This is my first "hello" in a week and I am ashamed. I want to tell you how busy I have been but it doesn't compensate for the fact that I haven't written. And, unless I can get off something to you every few days, I feel as guilty as h..l. Even now, I have just about 20 minutes to spend with you. Seems as though I'm always running somewhere when I want to sit down and talk with you.

I've received your three-page V-mail of Mar. 7 as well as the one of Mar. 9 during the last few days, so you have been keeping me abreast of what is happening to you in Jersey.

To hear you talk about the new job, I can easily see you are happy with it. Naturally, that means so much to me, just to hear you are happy. Getting away in mid-afternoon is much better than working that night trick, isn't it? Happy to hear, too, that Father John met you and that you has spoken with El and Dottie. Now, I'm anxious to hear how you spent the weekend at 195.

One thing that has bothered me is the fact that you are thinking of living alone. I realize you are doing what you think best and that's all that matters but I would much rather you had company... myself, in particular.

About the fact that you'll be there for me to come back to, you don't know how much I'm looking forward to that day. And you won't have to wait long to have that "Mrs." prefix before your name, either.

You may have read that Archbishop Spellman is over here now. I met him yesterday and accompanied his party on a tour of the Red Cross clubs in London. Today I attended the funeral of Cardinal Hinsley who died last week. He was the ranking Catholic prelate in Britain. Archbishop Spellman flew from Algiers to Britain for the funeral and to visit troops in the field. He is the chief Catholic prelate of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps.

You mentioned the fellow with whom you spoke during the trip from Massillon. I can't remember his name but I do recall a Philip Wylie who I believe is still writing for *Colliers*.

When I think of how much mail I have to get off before people won't think I've passed away, I shudder. This is the first letter I've written since my last to you, which means I'll have to get busy with correspondence to 195, Father John and the rest of the boys and girls.

Gotta run now, angel. But I always have time to tell you how much I love you and there isn't even space enough here to go into that and cover it as it should be. Seems like everything is conspiring against us.

All the best to Marguerite, Mother and the rest. 'Bye for awhile.

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

March 23, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Another night. Mind if I drop in for a few minutes? Marguerite's sister brought out her husband's engineering typewriter, so if some of the symbols should look strange to you, that will account for it.

Another beautiful night, so clear and the stars so bright with a full moon along with all that glory. Can you imagine?

I had another short day at the office and caught an early train home and walked in from Cliffwood. The wind was blowing some, but the sky was so blue that it didn't seem possible that anything could be wrong in the world.

Today brought a letter from my sister, Lee. She says that Billy is crawling on his hands and knees in bed now so the paralysis is practically gone from one leg. She says Mom is well, but she won't talk



*Archbishop (later Cardinal) Spellman
visiting troops in England, 1943.*

much about me being away. I hope I haven't hurt her. She wanted me to do whatever I thought best, but I know that she misses me. I still feel right inside about leaving, in spite of the fact that I, too, miss her quite a bit.

I got an S.O.S. from my brother yesterday... couldn't figure out why I should get two letters in a row. That's right... a ten spot was needed so I sent it posthaste. He tickles me with his budgeting. It's like mine. He should get a good pay the end of this month, with his sergeant's stripes. He's supposed to draw a hundred and twenty, less the deductions for Mom's allotment and incidentals, so I gave him a little lecture along with the ten dollars, about what he should do with his next pay. Can you picture me in the role of a big sister? Me that has an awful time with my own budget.

This will be a lot better than those pen-written V-letters. I hope you were able to read them after they got there. I was a little in hopes that I might have some mail when I got in tonight, but tomorrow is another day. I tried to check and see if you received my cablegram, but they said there was no way, so I'm just hoping that it arrived. In any event, you should have my V-letter by now telling of my move east.

I plan on going to Jersey City for the weekend of the fourth, That will be another real anniversary, and a year ago that I was at your house, too. I told El that was when I would come in next, if it was all right with them. Pop says now, you're so close... don't be waiting for an invitation... just come any time at all.

I'm getting a little more used to being on my own and away from home, but I miss the folks quite a bit, which is only natural I guess. I still have to pinch myself to believe that I actually made the break, and that I'm not dreaming. I guess you must feel like that sometimes. Everything happens so quickly nowadays. Changes are made overnight. You seem like someone else, or that you're looking at a movie or play.

That seems to be all tonight. Just wanted to be with you a little bit... that old lonesome feeling again, but then it always sends me to a typewriter or pen and paper, so I guess it's all right.

As always, my dear, my prayers and thoughts are ever with you. Goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 25, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I feel rich! Three letters in two days and whole envelope of pictures, plus the enclosed "hello." The pictures are wonderful. I can hardly wait to show them to the family. Everyone likes the one of the English village. That's a marvelous picture. You aren't very plain in it, but then the others make up for that. I felt as if I were watching you at a day's work. These, together with the pictures in Life help me imagine your life over there and brings you a little closer.

The one V-letter received today via Massillon was nearly all blotted out by friend censor. The only think I can make out is that you were trying to tell me about an air raid. You left me in St. James

Theater and then you were snug as a bug in a rug, asleep when something else happened. Oh, well. I'll find out someday, and in the meantime, it will make good copy for our scrapbook.

I know how you must feel when you see your co-workers covering more exciting action than what you are doing, but you can't blame me for being glad. I know I'd feel the same way if I were you wanting to watch the action from the nose of a Fortress or what have you, but I'm still glad you're just meeting them on their return to base.

Your Cheesecake Manor sounds like something out of a book. I know you all must like being on your own. Fireplaces in every room sounds like something we might have in mind for our two by four. Don't you all need a housekeeper? I'm sure that I can qualify for the job. All I need is passage over. I could whip up some macaroni and cheese, and maybe a lemon pie if I could get the fixings. You aren't doing your housekeeping, too... or are you? I'm anxiously awaiting the arrival of the pictures to give me a better idea of where you are staying. [Charles had moved farther away from central London, into a cottage, which he shared with Ben Price. The letter telling about this move was lost.]

I'm so glad the cable arrived. I was beginning to wonder. About the address for the bonds, I think you'd better send them care of Father John since I don't know how permanent my stay here is. It's more or less of an experiment. I think it's a little crowded, but Marguerite wants me to stay on. Sending them to him, we can always be sure of them, or else sending them to 195 in care of your dad.

It won't be any warmer here than in Ohio. They really have scorching weather, so it doesn't make a lot of difference, and besides I have to get used to it. Marguerite says they go to Sea Bright quite often. The Berkeley Carteret has been taken over by the government for the time being. We'll have all those things to look forward to when you come home. I think we're going to be a very busy couple, going here and there, making up for lost time, but it will be fun. As for rewards, you rate all I have, but you can hardly call them rewards.

I forgot to tell you, neither Father John nor I have been receiving the Stars and Stripes for some time. The last I received was in December. Father John wants to have them bound for you. I hope Davy Jones isn't enjoying them.

Space running out, and I'm getting sleepy. Be back again tomorrow night. I love you. Here's a special goodnight kiss going your way for the pictures and the letters.

As always, all my love and kisses, your Billee



The Berkeley-Carteret Hotel in Asbury Park in the 1930s. This hotel, shaped like an "H" with four wings, still exists and looks very much the same.

March 26, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

A Saturday night with you for a change, since I've been in the east. Since this is the weekend before payday, I'm spending it at the Heusers and with you.

I've missed our Saturday night dates, but felt so close to you where I was, with your family and then Dottie last weekend.

I finished up early at the bank today... twelve-thirty... so we did an errand Marguerite had and then window-shopped. I have an awful yen for a new dress. I don't know whether I'll get over it or not. The first symptom of spring fever. We caught the three-eight train to Cliffwood and ran home between the raindrops.

I bought a snapshot album on the way home. By accident, it matches our scrapbook. You should be proud of me because with the exception of a few of the London prints you bought, all the pictures are resting between the covers of the new album, secured by those little corners. I ran out of them... that's why I couldn't finish. That's a good night's work. We have quite a few. I've mislaid that little picture of Ruth Rommel but I'll find it somewhere among my things, I hope, since it's such a good one.

I'm funny about putting anything like that together. I'll put it off for a long time but when I finally start I never rest until I finish. Another of my bad habits, you'll learn.

We're all wondering what sort of assignment you could be on in the Canteen, sitting behind that big glass of something and smoking a cigarette. We're wondering, too, what you are drinking. You don't have a job, but a position like mine. I worked 34 hours this week... how's that? I was ready to leave so early a couple of days. I was



Charles (center) in an Army canteen during one of his trips. England, 1943.

ashamed to walk out. I seem destined not to be overworked, since I left the department store job. I can say "job" and mean it. I must be being kept in good shape for your return. Just so I don't gain any weight and get lazy, that would be hard to do.

I just finished a long letter to Mom. I'm missing you both very much tonight. Marguerite and I are going home over Memorial Day. If you have time, will you drop Mom a note now and then? She'd appreciate it, I know.

I called El yesterday and they are all well. Your dad was at the transport launching Sunday too, standing on the bridge. Funny we didn't run into each other.

I did all my ironing this afternoon and played with the baby awhile. Marguerite's sister's baby... he's so cute. She's the one who married the Chilean. The baby looks like him, quite dark with almost black hair, but he is cute. I'm glad you're an Irishman. At least our children won't be too mixed up... the majority Welsh and Irish with a little English and Scots thrown in.

It's quite late and I'm getting used to going to bed earlier for the first time in years. I should be there now, especially since I'm going to early Mass.

Your "hello" in the packet of pictures was sweet. I'll always love you. If I ever stop, I don't want to go on because there wouldn't be much object to it. So, I'm sunk for keeps. I'm afraid you'll have to put up with me. My eyes are so heavy... wish your shoulder was nearby. I'd heave a sigh of contentment and just go to sleep. You have such nice shoulders and my head fits so nice under your chin. Remember "our corner?" There I go, reminiscing again, but Saturday night always does that for me. Don't you love the way I ramble on?

Goodnight, my dearest. My Mass and communion will be for our reunion. A goodnight kiss.

All my love and kisses as always, your Billee

March 29, 1943—London

Evening sweetheart,

You raised a question I never thought of in your letter of Mar. 11, one of three I've received in the past few days. The others were those of Mar. 15 (three pages, bless your heart) and Mar. 11 and 18. The question concerned our problem-to-be with the children's speech, your Southern-Midwestern-Northern mixture and my Anglo-Yank gibberish. You don't think they might talk Chinese, do you?

Your weekend at 195 sounded swell. Seems as though dad can't forget those wild days of my youth. And you have my permission to adopt him, too.

I received a card from Bob Paulus the other day, datelined from Tunisia. He said he had to use the card because most of his possessions were lost as "the result of several mishaps." I answered him immediately and also got off a letter to his mother. I don't believe Bob has much time to write these days.

Coming up tomorrow is a three-day basketball tournament here at Albert Hall, to decide the European Theater of Operations title. There are 16 teams from all over the British Isles entered. I'll probably meet some fellows who played on teams I covered at home. It's going to be strange watching basketball at Albert Hall, with its red plush seats, grand tiers and whose walls have listened to some of the world's best music. It might be compared to a basketball tournament being held in Carnegie Hall.

The other day I went out to a B24 (Liberator) station to handle the return of a bomber group that left Britain last December, took part in the African campaign and is ready to resume operations from

this theater. I met some swell fellows, one of whom is a friend of Marty Daly's brother-in-law (Ede's husband).

I don't know why I always wait until the fifth or sixth paragraph to tell you, again, how much I love you, miss you. I know I've been lax in telling you, but the flame still burns brighter than ever.

Had a letter from Dottie saying how surprised she was to hear your voice on the telephone. I presume you know of the appendicitis attack and of Al's illness. The Doyles are just trailed by hard luck, I guess.

Gotta run, as usual. Be back in a day or two. I'm not forgetting April 4. You'll be getting roses again.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 28, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My darling,

Another Sunday night. We had a long date last night via airmail, even though you don't know it yet. Yes, for a change, I stayed here this weekend. Very quiet, but restful. I went to eight o'clock Mass this morning and my communion for our reunion and victory. Either one will eventually bring about the other so I feel safe in asking for either.

They are going to have a Mission here beginning Sunday. The first week is for women and the second for men, so I'm in for another new experience. Marguerite says we'll get there in the evening but we won't be able to make all the Masses in the mornings, so next week will be a busy one for us.

I just finished reading "I Saw the Philippines Fall," by Lt. Col. Carlos Romulo, an aide to MacArthur. A wonderful book and tells so clearly what happened from Pearl Harbor to the fall of Corregidor. Makes me ashamed though, when I think of what they went through and the petty complaints you hear going about here, but I guess that's the American Way. It was especially interesting, too, due to the fact that Marguerite's sister's husband is a prisoner of war there now. She knows definitely that he was on Bataan and then was in the retreat to Corregidor and now it has been confirmed by the Red Cross that he is a prisoner there. Her faith is wonderful and she speaks of him so determinedly, but then you have to feel that way to go on.

I'm looking forward to next weekend with your dad and the girls. It's like going home. I was tempted to go this weekend, but since it was the weekend before payday, I decided I'd better be practical. I called El Friday and they are all well. I almost ran into your dad at the launching Sunday... he was there, too.

Last night, as I told you in "our date," I managed to get all but the remainder of those English prints of Windsor Castle in a bright, shiny new album that matches our scrapbook. I started with the Asheville pictures and all the ones of the gang and Janet. All the overseas pictures are together, even the most recent that your family haven't seen. I'm taking it in over the weekend. I wish I had had a camera today. Perfect weather for taking pictures, so clear and bright. Maybe next week will be nice and we can take some there in Jersey City.

Like all weekends, when I miss you the most, this one was another, more so than others. This was spent more or less by ourselves. The last two I've been with your friends and family and that helped quite a bit. As always, my thoughts and love have been with you. This morning I went to the altar wondering if maybe you, too, had done the same thing. Funny how near you can be to someone, and yet so far away.

I'm sleepy. You kept me up until two this morning so I'd better turn in early. Where are you tonight... curled up in front of your fireplace or out on an assignment somewhere? I hope the former and that maybe you have the typewriter, or pen and paper, and we're having a "date." Goodnight, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 29, 1943—Matawan

Hi darling,

Loafing this morning... not at all busy... so I thought I'd take advantage of the leisure time and write between customers.

Yesterday brought a V-letter, your St. Patrick's Day message. I remember last year you called me in Asheville. I wonder how many changes there will be by next St. Pat's Day. We'll just have to wait and see. The airmail "hello" accompanied by your stories also arrived, the first of those in some time. I enjoyed all the stories, especially the one about the Rangers and "Desert Victory." I felt as if I had seen it myself. You couldn't have been more realistic about the Rangers. That must have been an interesting and exciting trip. The next thing I know you'll be having an advice to the lovelorn, or the care and feeding of babies—you've written about practically everything else.

You know, the Mr. Frost you mention so often... Mrs. Davidson's husband's sister was married to a Frost from England. In fact, she and her daughter and husband made several trips abroad to visit his family. This may be a son or nephew. The name isn't common. That would be a coincidence! They live here in Jersey and spent Easter two years ago with us. Her husband is dead and has been for some time.

It's foggy again today. Last night was gorgeous. Have you noticed the very bright star in the northwest... that is, here. It is so bright. Last night it was unusually bright, but probably because the sky was so clear. We went to Novena last night. Tonight we all go to the movies to see Deanna Durbin in "The Amazing Mrs. Halliday." I've only been to one movie since my arrival.

So you can't take it... I mean the golf. I'm surprised, and only eighteen holes. You'd better keep in better shape than that, especially when you come home, because we're doing everything up in fine style. Cheer up, it won't be so bad. I just need long



enough to get this yen to go dancing out of my feet, then I'll settle down and be a good wife and stay home with my knitting! I'll probably have to learn how all over again... to dance, I mean.

I started on the Stars and Stripes scrapbook last night, but I know I won't have near all the stories. When I get them all pasted in, I'll make a list of what I have; then, you judge how many I don't have. I used your cablegram for the opening page and then used the pictures from Life. I'm having fun arranging. The only thing is, my lettering isn't too good. I thought once about asking Father John, but he's much too busy.

Since Sunday is a real anniversary for us, I dropped Father John a note and asked him to remember us when he says Mass. Was that all right? I thought it might be, but wasn't sure.

Had a letter from Warren yesterday. He still likes his work, so that's something. He's going to school all over again, but it isn't hurting him any, he says. It is still very cold out there... just a little above zero, and how he hates cold weather. It's funny... I still can't think of my little brother as a sergeant.

It will soon be time to eat lunch, so I'll close. This banking job is really a position, but it probably won't be like this all the time.

I wish I could walk into 195 on Saturday and find you there. It was just a year ago that we were there together... seems like only yesterday, now that I'm back again. I love you, more and more as the days and nights go by, if that's possible, but anyhow, I do. I'd give a lot to see that special smile turned my way. You'd have to pick me up and dust me off because I'd be sure to collapse.

As always, my dear, my thoughts and prayers are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 30, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

Evening darling,

Mind if I come in for awhile? Just finished another job tonight that I've been putting off because I didn't have time before... that's right, the scrapbook. Remember I said I was going to make a separate one for the Stars and Stripes, to contain only your stories? That's what I did and finished tonight, as many as I had.

Wrote you a long letter yesterday at the bank... sent airmail. Waiting for Marguerite now to come in from Newark, then we'll have tea and cookies, and then to bed. I had a long letter from Mom today and all goes well there. She has been pretty busy at the office, but she is well. I should be getting a report soon from my sister about her. That's the only way I really know how she is. Marguerite came in and I've had my tea so now all I have to do is take a bath and hop in bed, and I'd better be on my way. Be back soon, darling. Sent you a cable today for our anniversary on Sunday. Hope I get a letter tomorrow.

As always, my thoughts are with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 3, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Happy anniversary, darling. Another of our real ones... a whole year as the future Mrs. Kiley. Such a nice feeling inside to know that's who I am.

I'm at 195. El and Bette have gone to bed and I've been talking to your dad in the kitchen. He has a quart of beer on the sink. We've had ice cream and soda. I guess the girls got tired of hearing us discuss the war. As I've said before, I like your dad a lot. I brought in the scrapbook of the Stars and Stripes and the snapshot album to show them. El brought out some more pictures of you as a child, or should I say, "little devil?" From what I hear, you were quite a guy. I hope my or rather our ball team doesn't take after you too much. Of course, I don't want little angels, but there is a limit.

Tonight I was sitting here watching El crochet a bib for the O'Connor addition and what do they play on the radio but "Tonight We Love," and tonight of all nights... and then, to top it off, "You Made Me Love You." I can still hear you singing that in my ear at Lucille's. I'd almost be willing to turn the clock back a year so that we'd be together again, except for the months of waiting I'd have to do again.

Your picture came Thursday. I love it. I brought it in for the Kileys to see, only to find they had received theirs yesterday. They are nearly alike, just a shade of difference. I think they're swell. I'm so glad you decided to smile in this one. I tried to have mine taken today, but didn't succeed. I'm going to try and send a large one this time.

I finished in good time today after an exceptionally busy morning. I went to Bamberger's with Marguerite to try and get something for the baby. She has everything imaginable with the exception of baby dresses and those I can't seem to find. They have always been imported and now there aren't any. The only solution to that problem is to buy some materials and make some. Marguerite has a sewing machine so I'll practice on the first Kiley grandchild.

El looks very well. She's a little anxious about Tom. He was to have come home today and she hasn't heard since Monday. Bette looks very well, too. Her boyfriend is to come home in a few days on a three-day leave, so she's a little excited. Your dad has a cold, but other than that, he looks well. He misses your mom quite a bit, but that's to be expected. I think he's done swell.



Charles in England, 1943

Father John is to come in tomorrow afternoon some time. The weather isn't as nice as it was a year ago today. There's a high wind and the temperature has dropped considerably.

The pictures of your "Cheesecake Manor" arrived here yesterday. I love the one of you tucked in. [These pictures have not been found.]

I hope I find some mail waiting for me tomorrow night when I go back to Matawan.

I think we were at Radio City at this time last year, at about 10:15, holding hands. I was up in the clouds then.

We're going to eight o'clock Mass so I'd better be making my way upstairs. Bette has come down again and she is in the kitchen talking to your dad.

There was a piece in Ray Roche's column last week about you covering the boxing matches in England and about the boys from Jersey that took part. They sent it to your dad, thinking he hadn't seen it.

Those V-letters are breaking me in on brevity. My eyes are tired... think I'm finally going to have to resort to specs, for work anyway.

Goodnight, my darling. I love you so very much and tonight especially because of that well-known grin maybe, but mostly because you're you. A very special kiss going your way. Since I couldn't be with you tonight, I wanted to be here where I know you've been so much. Just across the table, we sneaked a kiss in, remember... with your dad asleep in the corner. Goodnight!

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 4, 1943—London (2 V-letters)

Hello sweetheart,

It was a year ago tonight, remember? True, it was early the following morning but I'll always remember it as the night of April 4. It's easy to remember even the slightest thing that happened that night... arriving at the hotel to get your message saying you would meet me at Penn Station... rushing there, picking up orchids and your Easter "present" on the way... seeing you standing at the head of the stairs looking about for me... and, oh, everything else, even my stumble on the subway steps... or was that the following week? The "big moment" in the Hawaiian Room. Later, after I left you, walking to the McAlpin trying to convince myself it was all true, that it had happened. And, knowing I was almost certain to be on a transport within a month, being angry at the world for what was happening. A separation, for how long?

A year ago Billee, and it doesn't seem that long. A year later and I love you more than ever.

Getting into the office for the first time in three days I found several letters waiting for me yesterday, most of them from you. A basketball tournament involving 16 teams representing Army, Navy and Air Force in the European Theater of Operations, kept me at Royal Albert Hall for three days. When I finally got the mail I waited until I got home, and comfortably settled in front of the fireplace, before I read them. Yours were the triple V-mail of Mar. 22, the brief note on the Paulus

address and the airmails of Mar. 18 and 22. Judging by the letter, it looks as if airmail is getting through again. You can expect some written letters in the future.

Your weekend at North Arlington sounded swell. I should have known Al and Bill would want to show you their “etchings” in the form of the boat that was launched. Speaking of Al reminds me of a recent letter from Dot asking me if I received the letter announcing Sir Stork’s date at 9 Prospect Ave. I not only acknowledged it, I did so by cable. Apparently, she didn’t receive it. Probably just as well they have discontinued the cable service from this end.

I can’t get over Al’s suspicion re: our being wed. I’d like to lead him on but I don’t think it’s fair, do you? I believe I will have some fun with him, though. I’ll send him an April Fool’s letter, ok?

I’ll have to pass along congratulations to Warren. He got those three books in a hurry, didn’t he? Looks like all the brains in the Gray family aren’t confined to the females.

Can’t figure out how Ralph Martin got to Gabes at the time you mentioned because the British 8th Army only got there last week. I’m wondering if you meant Gafsa?

—

A letter from El told me you had called a few times and also elaborated on what you said about the weekend at 195. Also had one from Eddie. To repeat part of what he said..., “wonder if you can tell me where I can find a girl like Billee?” I told him it was hard enough to find one without looking for two, but would ask you if you could help him.

You mentioned Edie looking forward to her husband coming home in June. If he does get home, he’ll deserve it, as will any of the fellows in the Air Force on operational duty. Some of those with whom I have spoken said they may go back after 30 missions. When I saw John last, he had only six. Last week I met a friend of his, also a bombardier, who had 29 and didn’t want to go back.

We’re having an early spring, Billee. It’s nice enough in the city but the English country is grand. Seems like everybody’s hobby is flowers, judging by their lawns and gardens. Yesterday was beautiful and today is even nicer.

I went to Mass and communion this morning for our anniversary, and walked about two miles from church to the office; had breakfast at one of the Red Cross clubs along the way.

Leaving church on Kensington road, I passed Knightsbridge, Hyde Park, along Piccadilly, down St. James Street to St. James Palace (where the Queen Mother, Mary, resides), along the Thames Embankment to Waterloo Bridge, Blackfriars Bridge and finally to Queen Victoria Street and the Times. The longest walk I’ve had since the 15, 20, 25 and 40 mile marches we had in Ireland.

Incidentally, I sent a letter to Mrs. Paulus with the first address you gave me. I’ll just trust to luck it gets there. I believe it will.

I’ll be back in a few days, sweetheart. Love to Marguerite.

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

PS: Your cable just arrived. Mmmm... nice. Love.

April 5, 1943—Matawan (2 V-letters)

My darling,

What have I said about spoiling me, and there you go again, but as usual, I'm loving it. Your roses were waiting for me when I arrived home last night from 195. Two dozen of them! You're being extravagant, but they are so lovely. Just think of a Four Roses advertisement and multiply it by six and you have my bouquet. Such a beautiful shade of red, too and that's my weakness. I was missing you an awful lot last night in spite of being with the family. Coming home on the train with Marguerite, all I wanted was you, so the roses helped quite a bit in bringing you closer... I imagine we were thinking almost the same thoughts this weekend.

We spent a quiet day yesterday. I went to early Mass with El and your dad, and we helped with dinner. He did most of the preparing of the dinner, as usual. Father John came in later in the afternoon all enthused, carrying a trophy his basketball team won, the county trophy, I believe. I showed him the new pictures, and the family too, and they all thought them so good. The ones of "Cheesecake Manor" arrived there Saturday. Quite a place... looks big enough for all of us to come over and join you. Bette, your dad and I walked to the cemetery and back through Lincoln Park after dinner. We went into the Canteen House there, that they have for the soldiers. Were you ever in the basement? They have it all fixed up to play shuffleboard and billiards. I left about eight o'clock and Father John took me to the station in Newark. I wrote you a letter Saturday night from there.

Your letter of March 4 was also waiting for me, a little late but it arrived all right. I thought that was what you would tell me to do when I stated my plan. As for going to live at 195, I don't think that would work out so well and, like you, I'd rather be on my own. Living with Marguerite at the present works out very well because she realizes my little independent streak and I'm more or less on my own... financially, too. She isn't charging me as much as I'd have to pay out somewhere else, but it is enough to make me feel that I'm paying for my keep.

I found the family well... El a little anxious about Tom. I'll call tomorrow and find out about him. She hadn't heard since Monday and he was to have come home Saturday and didn't. Bette is excited, as I told you in my letter Saturday. Her Eddie is to come home on a three-day leave tomorrow. Your dad had a little cold, but other than that, he seemed well. Father John says he hasn't been hearing from you very often. He's working hard but hopes to have a week off after Easter. He said he didn't know how he could take off since he had so many things lined up ahead of him. I told him to let them go for a week and go home to get some rest, but I don't suppose he will. He's turned electrician besides all the other work. They must be putting in new stage lighting in the auditorium. He said he paid the electrician forty dollars and the guy wasn't finished yet, so he said he'd finish it now.

El got the prettiest bright slipcovers for the living room in pastel shades. She keeps everything so nice. I told her she was doing too much, but I guess she has a lot of time on her hands and I'd probably be doing the same thing. You should see her crocheting... little bits of sweaters, bibs and bonnets... she's quite good at it. Tom's mother showed her how. She wants to make a carriage cover now that she's practiced on the other things. Do you have any ideas about what to get the Kiley grandchild when he arrives? I'm almost at a loss... she has everything but the baby.

About the last paragraph of your letter dated Mar. 4... as I suspected, you misunderstood what I meant when I said that your letters had changed. I didn't mean for you to be disappointed. There isn't anything to be disappointed or sorry about. Reading them one after another when I put them in the scrapbook, from the first ones I received up to the present time, there's bound to be changes in them. We know each other so much better and possibly take some things for granted now... that would only be human. You living in entirely new surroundings and under different circumstances has a lot to do with it, too, especially now with the work you're doing. I should have let it slip by without saying anything because you worried about it, and that wasn't necessary. About writing letters, that was just a whim. Any way at all will do. Both of us have to rely on the typewriter now, what with V-mail being what it is. Is that all cleared up now? Consider yourself scolded again for getting upset over nothing. This is fun... I never got away with scolding anyone before but I'll probably get paid back when you come home.

El and I were talking about our wedding yesterday. We're making plans already. She liked the idea of being married in St. Al's. I think that's the way it will be.

I've had letters from all my family since Saturday. Isn't that nice? Now I have to start answering them. They are bringing Billy home this month. The rest are all well. Mom was home a few days

with a cold, but she has gone back to work and is feeling much better.

Gracie Fields just came on the radio. She always makes me think of England when I hear her.

I want to drop Mom a line before I turn in, so I'd best close now. The note from Mrs. Frost was very thoughtful. I have it in safekeeping. I'm glad you have them to go to when you get that old lonesome or homesick feeling. I can guess by the note that they make you feel right at home. Is that where you went for the holiday after you heard the news? I rather thought that perhaps that was where you went.

I was going, wasn't I? As always, my thoughts and prayers are ever with you. More than ever I love you. Be back soon. Marguerite just set a nightcap in front of me... beer, of course, and a piece of cheese. Goodnight, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



Gracie Fields, a popular British theater and film star in the 1930s and 40s who also made several movies in the U.S.

April 7, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

Evening darling,

Another night almost gone by. This was laundry night and I have it all done and hanging in the basement. I feel like I've done a good night's work. One of these days I'm going to be able to do that in the daytime as it should be done, and then your things will be done, too. On the same subject, El

was giving me some pointers on how to get out of ironing your white shirts since you seem to have a preference for them... and three a day, I've been hearing. She tells me to train you right and not let you know I used to be able to iron shirts quite some time ago. I'm afraid that I'd have to learn how all over again.

I finished early today for a change, after several late nights this week. I caught the 3:08 to Cliffwood and walked in to the house. The weather is much better today, a little more like spring and the wind wasn't quite so high.

Marguerite's sister's children are here tonight so if this doesn't quite make sense it is because in between I'm having to answer questions. Bryan, the youngest, is quite concerned over how you are going to get this letter. He is four and I'm having a time trying to explain about the planes carrying mail.

Here is a bit of surprising information, something I never had any idea of and was told last night. Marguerite has been married and divorced some years ago. Seems that a wife wasn't enough to satisfy him and he had to have several other women on the side and, of course, Marguerite didn't stand for that. Under the circumstances, the Church permitted the divorce. Gave me such a funny feeling after knowing her so long and not knowing that, but I never pried into her private life. I had always thought there was someone or rather had been someone she had cared a great deal for, but never did I suspect anything like that.

I didn't get any mail at all today from anyone and I was kind of set for a letter when I got home. Oh well, tomorrow is another day... again.

In one of the new magazines is a kitchen very similar to the one you liked with the fireplace in it, except this one is even nicer, finished in pine woodwork, but not enameled... the natural wood. I think I'd like that and there would be plenty of room for our ball team to eat in the kitchen. I think I'll save it and put it with some other ideas I found here and there.

I missed the Mission tonight since both Marguerite and Agnes are away. We will go in the morning and tomorrow night to make up. You should have heard the priest last night, but then it was just for the women of the parish, so you can imagine. He was an interesting speaker and had a lot of expression, so we didn't mind.

That seems to be all the news tonight, except that I love you and that isn't news. That's just regular "copy" but I'm happy I can write it. When you say it, or rather write it, it always seems like the first time. I still get a thrill. I'll say goodnight for now and send a kiss in your direction. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 8, 1943—London (V-letter)

Evening sweetheart,

99% of my mail still comes from a certain honeychile residing in Matawan, N.J., or am I being too extravagant in that estimate? Nevertheless, it seems that way. Yesterday brought two letters from you, one of Feb. 23 from Massillon and the other of Mar. 13 from Perth Amboy.

There was one from El, too, Billee, saying one of my V-mails to you was censored almost beyond recognition. Will you mail it back to me? I'd like to see what was censored. Since the first letter I wrote on the transport almost a year ago, I don't believe I had a letter censored that much.

After I tell you how much I love you, I'd like to tell you of a letter I received today. It was one of commendation from Brig. Gen. Rogers, commanding office of London Base Command, as the result of a story I did recently. The story dealt with tips on how soldiers can stay out of trouble while on leave. I had to spend three days getting suitable pictures to illustrate the story and two more gathering material from the Provost Marshal. So, it was a question of persistence more than anything else. I'm forwarding the letter to you. I'd like Dad to see it. You'll bring it in to him when you visit 195, won't you?

In your letter of Feb. 22, you asked me how it felt to have two letters written to me in the same day. It would take too much space for me to tell you that. I'll show you how it feels one day.

You also said Mother had picked out a wedding dress for you in a rotogravure section. You might as well take the hint, because you're going to need one of those things.

Say, have you had a chance to see the Yankees in spring training at Asbury Park or the Giants at Lakewood? They're practically in your back yard, you know. And, as a devotee of baseball, I imagine you'd like it. I'll bet the boys who were accustomed to covering the clubs in the sunny south are burning up. Yet, I hope that's all they have to suffer from in the war.

Went out to a bomber station again yesterday. Story concerned a T/Sgt awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and two others the Legion of Merit. The DSC winner is missing from operations and one of the others is a prisoner of war. So it goes.

Love to all.

All my love and kisses.

April 9, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

You are surprised, aren't you? To get a letter written by me for a change.

I can't say how well I'll do with it since I haven't had much practice lately. It must be two months since I began to use V-mail exclusively, hasn't it?

However, recent letters from you and Eleanor indicate that airmail is actually traveling by air again. Your flood of mail continued today and not only brought V-mails of Mar. 23 and 25 but an airmail of Mar. 30!

So, I hope to be able to spend more time with you this way in the future, since our "airmail dates" shouldn't be delayed too long.

The living room fireplace at "Cheesecake Manor" is flaming nicely. I've had my Friday night tub and shampoo and am comfortably settled and looking ahead to a day off tomorrow.

I don't know what the devil I shall do about the bonds. While listing you as co-owner, I also had them sent to you, first at Asheville and then a change to Massillon, and then again to Matawan. I'll probably get murdered if I go back and have the address changed again. Every time a change like that occurs, it has to be made in quadruplicate and forwarded to Washington. By sending them to Father John, it would mean another delay. But, I believe you have the right idea and I'll see what can be done about it.

I'll bet the Post Office as well as the Treasury Department thinks you're a gypsy, but I love you just the same.

You afforded me a laugh when you mentioned the "touch" by Warren. Big sisters will have to learn that boys will be boys, especially kid brothers.

Dad is right about your visits to 195. I know they want you to drop in any time. El's letters say Dad is ready to adopt you, while you're thinking of adopting him. I suppose you have seen the watch Bette got on her birthday.

I've been forgetting everyone's birthdays and anniversaries during the last couple of months. Since the E.F.M. cables have been stopped here, it's rather difficult to send greetings. But it can't be helped and if people don't get them, they will have to understand.

A friend of mine, a former cartoonist for Associated Press, is going to do an Easter Card for me. I'll send it Monday with a prayer that it reaches you before Apr. 25. I outlined an idea for him and he said he'd do the rest.

The news about Billy is great. I hope you were a little pessimistic in saying Mother may be hurt because of you leaving. I agree with you that she will miss you terribly but only time will tell whether it goes any further than that. I must write to her more often. Perhaps more correspondence will make her feel better.

I'm going to make a check to find out a possible reason why you and the others aren't getting the *Stars and Stripes*. The circulation department should have been sending it to you since November 2. Even gave them the change in address but you'll know more about that later.

I've only been sending you clippings of some stories, believing you would see all of them when the paper arrived. I'll have to check with Mr. Frost to see if there is any connection with what you say concerning Mrs. Davidson. It would be odd if he's mixed up in it some way.

Things are rather quiet again over this way. I doubt if it will be that way for long. The news from Africa has been swell, as you must have noticed.

Archbishop Spellman of New York left here the other day after contributing \$1,000 to the Stars and Stripes War Orphan Fund [a fund started by the paper that benefitted British war orphans].

The fire has made me drowsy, honey. Meaning, it's time for bed. My goodnight kiss will be going out to you as usual. And, when I see that bright North Star you mentioned, I'll ask it to keep an eye on you. 'Night. Love to all.

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

April 11, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

It's been some time since I've taken pen in hand and written you a letter. There have been those V-letters dashed off on the typewriter. I have one to write when I finish this, so I'll be sure you get it in good time.

This has been a busy Sunday. We went to nine o'clock Mass and started right in when we came home moving furniture. I still feel like I've caused a lot of trouble, but Marguerite wanted me to stay with her instead of going out to live. I had in mind going to stay with a private family, but she said... only if I didn't want to stay here. Now her room looks like a dormitory. We have three beds in here. Luckily, it's quite a large room. We have fun. Now the furniture is all moved and we each have a bed of our own. Like me, she has been sleeping alone for a long time and it's hard to get used to sleeping with someone. While she didn't annoy me, I guess I did her, since I usually curl up like a kitten when I finally get comfortably to sleep.

Friday brought your V-letter of March 22. Consider yourself scolded again. Please don't feel "guilty as h—I" for not writing. You know I don't want you to feel like that. Only write when you have the time and the urge to write, please. I'll love you just the same... really I will.

If this letter looks messy, it's because I'm writing with a stick pen. My fountain pen has gone on the blink.

I had to stop for a few minutes. They were playing "Piano Concerto" downstairs and my ear just caught the tune. It was turned down pretty low.

We completed our Mission this afternoon. I really enjoyed it. Two Franciscan priests conducted it and they were very interesting. Perhaps I told you before, the intention of the Mission was for peace.

It's beginning to feel more and more like spring out. This afternoon was lovely after the high wind that raged this morning quieted down. The sun was so warm you felt like staying out and basking in the warmth.

We finished early at the bank again yesterday. Closing at twelve o'clock on Saturday made it even earlier. Starting sometime in June, they are closed all day Saturday. Maybe you could fly over for the weekend or maybe I could make arrangements to go to London for the weekend and spend it at "Cheesecake Manor." That name fascinates me. How did you happen on that? I'd give an awful lot for a weekend like that.

You know, it's a year ago tonight, or rather tomorrow night, that I last saw you. Doesn't seem that long ago and then again it seems a little like a wild dream, until I remember your closeness and the hurried farewell that we didn't say in Penn Station. Then the realization comes home to me. I'm in one of those rebellious moods tonight, against circumstances that keep us apart. Please, dear God, it won't be for long now.

Coming east has helped me a lot. My viewpoint is entirely different. I don't know what it was... the job or what... I don't think I've ever been so lonely in my life, and there was no reason for it. I was among my family for the first time in quite a while except for Mom. If I could get her to come east,

that would be swell, but I'm afraid that would take a miracle. I'm afraid we have a Tar Heel on our hands. The lonely feeling is gone now and I feel lots better, both mentally and physically. Being back on normal working hours has helped.

It's chilling off a little. Maybe we'd better make up the fire. Bet you never had a date that stretched out on her stomach before. That's my favorite position for writing. I used to do all my lessons that way, even through high school, stretched out on the living room floor on my tummy. I'm upstairs now, though, on the bed, writing on a magazine and using the night table to hold my ink.

Our date is coming to an end. I have to dash off a V-letter to Charles... the one who's always dashing off somewhere and doesn't have time to write. This is for the one that I sat curled up in "our corner" with. I like him best of all. The other Charles is only a temporary one, just for the times now. Am I making sense? I don't think so, but this makes sense: I love you so much. I wanted to say those words to you a year ago tonight, but I was shy and, too, I was afraid it would start the tears and I didn't want you to remember me like that. Bend down a bit, my dearest. A goodnight kiss... you haven't changed a bit. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 11, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My dearest,

Another Sunday practically gone. Another of our anniversaries, too. A year ago tonight was the last time I saw you... not such a pleasant anniversary. Maybe we'd better call it a memory and let it go at that.

Your V-letter of the 22nd came Friday and I scolded you in a "date" letter tonight for saying you felt guilty for not writing, so I won't go into that here.

I called Father John yesterday, expecting to tell him about you meeting Archbishop Spellman. He had received a letter too, written the 24th. I was glad because when I last saw him he had received only one in some time. Like you, he doesn't have much time to write. I wonder how he has time to do so many things. I suppose if I could follow you around, I'd wonder the same thing. I never know what or where you are going to be writing next.

Ray Roche called me tonight to see if I was still here. He had some pictures to send me, the ones you sent him. They made cuts of them and they are to be published. I told him to send me a copy when they were, since I can't seem to find a Jersey Journal on any of the newsstands in Perth Amboy. He asked me when I was coming into Jersey City again, and to be sure to drop by the office, but will almost always be on a Saturday and after 12:00, so I don't know when I will be able to do that.

I had a letter from Mom along with yours on Friday. Everything is fine there... she is feeling much better and is back to work. They are bringing little Billy home for sure this month and he will have to go to the hospital only three times a week for treatment. That's wonderful because usually they have to go every day. Did I tell you I thought I would go home for over Decoration Day? We have a holiday then.

I was to go into [North] Arlington next weekend, but I don't think I'll be able to make it. I have quite a bit of sewing to do and the weekend is about the only time I have to do it. I think I'll wait until after Easter... I'm going to 195 that weekend. El told me when I called her Tuesday to be sure and not plan anything except to come there. Father John will be on duty part of the day, but he said he'd be out at some time.

I'm staying on with Marguerite. We moved furniture today and settled everything. Now you won't have to worry about me living alone, although that was what I expected, but they want me to stay. They have been wonderful about making me feel at home, and I seem to fit in all right. I guess for now this is where I'll be. It would be nice to live with you. Have to try it some time. Maybe I'll like it so well I'll want to stay with you the rest of my life. Could be... It's going to be, I'm afraid, unless you should happen to change your mind... maybe bring one of those WAAFs home with you. Only kidding.

Space running out and have to say goodnight. Darn. You're forgiven... write when you have the opportunity. I know the desire is there. Be back soon. Your roses are still nice.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 16, 1943—Matawan

My dearest Charles,

Several days have passed by since I sat down to dash off a letter to you. Not paying you back but just busy. Monday night I sewed for the Kiley grandchild to be and Tuesday night I attended a bridal shower for one of the girls in the bank. Had a nice time for a hen party. Wednesday night, Marguerite's father had the Grange meeting here and I helped them serve. Last night, Marguerite and I went into New York, shopping. Remind me not to do that again on a Thursday night. What a mob. I went in to get material for a new dress, especially not to come home with anything red... and what do you suppose I came home with? That's right. Red... but it is pretty. All I have to do now is make it before next weekend so I'll have something nice for Easter.

I don't know that you'd recognize me anywhere tonight, I look like I'd been shot at and hit. I got a cinder in my eye sometime last night and it didn't bother me until today, and then it certainly made up for lost time. I finally had to go to an eye doctor and find out what was the matter. The result... a tiny speck on the pupil of my eye that had become embedded. I'm doing this with one eye, so if it shouldn't make sense, blame it on that. It does feel lots better now than this afternoon.

Ray Roche came by last night and I wasn't here. He left the pictures and copies of the Jersey Journal with the pictures they used in it. He was down to Long Branch and thought he'd drop them by on his way home. I'm sorry I missed him because I've been looking forward to meeting him. Some competition I have... you didn't look at all interested, in fact a little bored. They are swell pictures though, and will go in our special album. Some privilege Vivian Leigh has sitting next to you. Wonder if she realized it? She is pretty, though, as much as on the screen.

I don't think summer is ever going to come... not summer. I mean spring. We are still having heavy frosts and haven't been able to put on our spring coats yet. It's getting a little tiresome. I certainly have put in some winter for my first one north in eight years. We have had scarcely any nice days at all.

The Dagwood act finally failed. That's right... we missed our train this morning and had to dash to Cliffwood by car to pick up a bus. Luckily, we were able to get a ride with friends of Marguerite before the bus came. We beat the train in to Perth Amboy.

Notice the cover on this week's Life Magazine, of the "Soldier's Farewell." I just thought, they didn't see us a year ago. We did better than that. They have several pages covering Penn Station inside.

Have to go now. Hardly enough room to say I love you, but I guess you know that by now.

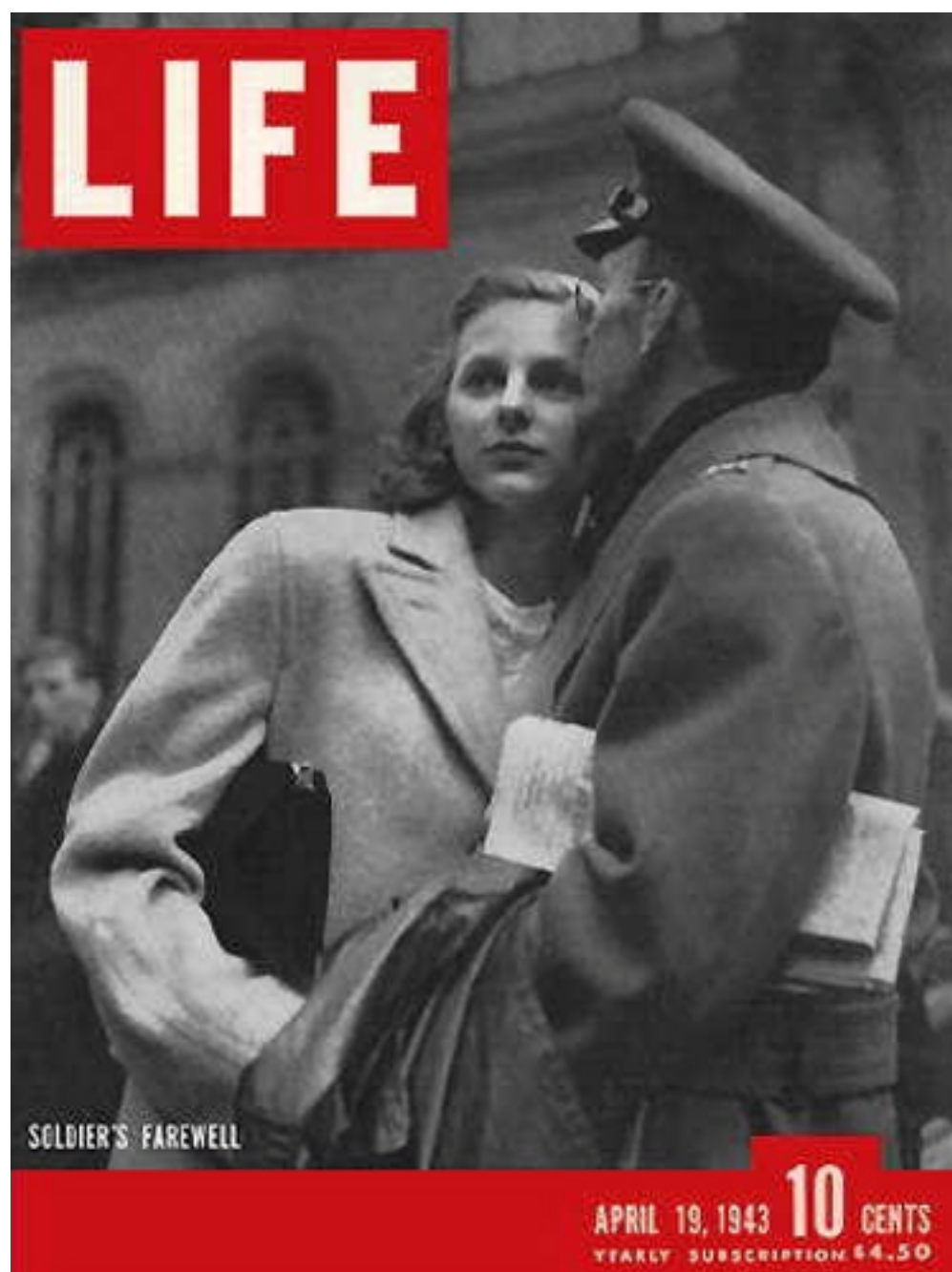
All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 17, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

I've been away for the last few days but got back in time to sit in on a quiet celebration of the Stars and Stripes first anniversary and also to drop in for a Saturday night date with you. It has been beautiful here during the last few days... days when I wanted to be with you. It's a perfect spring day again today and since I'm no different than anyone else, my fancy more than lightly turns to thoughts of you, and us. I shouldn't say they turn lightly because I'm missing you ever so much, day after day. You were with me during the last few days when I was traveling through the English countryside, still beautiful and picturesque despite war. These days make one wonder how long he can stand separation. I couldn't love you more than I do now, Billee. It's the same old story, told in every letter, but I do love to tell it to you.

There weren't any letters waiting for me when I returned last night but I did get two before I left... your V-mails of Mar. 28 and the one in which you listed stories in the scrapbook. I see now you haven't gotten more than about 30 percent of those I've done and which were worthwhile. I had been sending them to you by airmail but stopped because I thought you'd be getting the paper and would clip them. However, there seems to have been a period in which no papers were sent by the



circulation department. They have resumed mailing them now so you should be getting them. I don't know how I'm going to backtrack and get the ones that are missing. It looks as though we'll just have to pass them up.

I'm anxious to hear what you have to say about the Mission you were going to attend with Marguerite. Too, it was good to hear that Marguerite's brother-in-law is a prisoner of war. It's not too good, of course, but at least they know he's alive.

My out-of-town assignment during the last few days concerned sports. Tournaments in four sports were winding up at a division base. Next week all-star teams in boxing, softball and soccer, from this division and the Canadian Army met in a carnival of sports program. I met another one of our generals earlier last week, Maj. Gen. Key, Provost Marshal General in the ETO, regarding a story on an MP school. A couple of days later I traveled 80 miles to attend another graduation of officer candidates. Then came the long trip. Don't know what next week will bring.

I sent you a special Easter card [not traced]. It was done for me by Ham Cunningham, ex-Associated Press artist. It should get to you by Easter, I hope. Give my love to Mother, Marguerite and the rest. Keep your chin up.

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

April 19, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

Have you been neglected this weekend... and an anniversary weekend at that. Guess what the competition was? My Easter dress. That's right, I sewed practically all weekend. Saturday we did go into Newark to go shopping. What a mob there was! We went to Roma's afterwards for a spaghetti dinner and was it good... real Italian spaghetti. Do you like it? I hope so because it's a favorite with me. I bought a pretty bag for Mom to go with her Easter outfit that she isn't going to be able to wear, with the kind of weather they are having. Snow all week long, can you imagine? We've had rain and wind.

I called Mom last night for the first time since I've been away. I couldn't wait any longer. Guess I was a bit homesick for her... just to hear her talk. She has been sick and I didn't know it—bronchitis—but she says she is better now. When I called, at first she wasn't in so I guess she is better. They certainly aren't keeping me informed and that's what I stressed particularly when I left and had the last word with my sisters.

Little Billy is at home now, or did I tell you? My sister has her hands full now. While he is much improved, there is a long way to go before he walks: three times a week to the hospital besides the home treatments she must give him for some months to come yet.

I was able to get the nicest double frame for your two pictures, the recent one and the one your Mom sent me. It's nice brown leather, so now you have a special place on the night table beside my bed. We all had a hand at arranging them and the girls have decided you make quite a nice added attraction to the bedroom.

I'm looking forward to spending Easter weekend with the Kiley family. I haven't been there in nearly three weeks. I hope I have the baby dress and slip ready to take in. I found the tiniest Miraculous Medal at the Guild Studio in New York. Now all I have to do is find a chain small enough for a baby. Marguerite's sister has such a pretty one for her baby. That's where I got the idea.

It's been definitely a blue Monday, rain all day long. I'm beginning to think it will stay cold until the Fourth of July. I hope I'll be able to wear my spring coat on Sunday because I sure am getting tired of these heavy clothes. Probably another two months from now we'll be wishing for a little of this cool weather.

Agnes, Marguerite's sister, received word from the Red Cross that the cable she sent her husband in the Philippines passed the censors and will be delivered to him. He is a captain in the Engineers and has been a Japanese prisoner since the fall of Bataan. It cost her \$16.12 for four words, but then it was worth it... at least it would be to me.

Do you do this... just stare into space and wonder what else to say? Seems you must get tired of getting the same letters. I'm stuck. Not much news to write about now. I'm writing this at the office and I'm finished for the day, and it's only 3:30. Wish you were here... maybe I could be meeting you somewhere. The space is running out now so I guess there isn't anything else to say but "bye now" until next time. Something else... funny thing, but I still love you.

All my love and kisses always, your Billee

April 25, 1943—Camp Forrest, Tennessee

Dear Ray,

I am sorry I didn't write sooner, but as you know I am pretty busy. I am writing this letter while we are resting. I don't know when I will be able to mail it because I don't know when I will get close to a town.

Today is Easter Sunday, as you know from the date and we have been working most of the day. This morning I received communion and offered it up for Mom and you and the rest of the family. Today felt pretty strange... sitting on the ground and eating out of a mess-kit, instead of the customary Easter dinner, but that's the way it goes, Ray.

I wrote Brother the other day and told him I was on maneuvers.

You know Vinnie Burke, who used to pal around with me... he is down here on maneuvers with me, in a tank-destroyer outfit. He is a radio operator. I haven't seen him yet but he wrote and told me.

Betty wrote and told me about her girl friend Grace dying. That was too bad. Betty introduced me to her once and she seemed to be a nice girl.

Since we have been out of the desert in California, we have a new company commander named Capt. Thomas O'Keefe, and a real soldier he is. He has been in the Army for the past seven years and he knows his Army. Incidentally, he is a good Catholic. When we have classes or such things, he

can really speak. He tells us that sometimes he thinks he should have entered the seminary, because he can really preach, too.

I received your Youth Journal yesterday and I see where the junior basketball team won the county championship and are going to try for the archdiocesan title... I hope they win.

That's about all I can think of right now, Ray. I haven't much time, so I will close. Take care of yourself and give my regards to all, and God bless you.

Eddie

PS: There are rumors that after maneuvers are over we might get another furlough but that's only hearsay.

April 26, 1943—London (2 V-letters)

Hello sweetheart,

I have so many things to tell you I scarcely know where to begin. Besides, I have so many of your recent letters before me I feel almost ashamed to admit this is my first letter in a week. I've been away again on a flying trip to Scotland, returning yesterday in time to catch Easter sunset and so tired I couldn't even sit down and write an Easter letter to you. I started several times and then gave up. It being Easter, I was feeling a little blue, loving you as much as ever and missing you more. I couldn't help but think of Mom. Easter was always such a nice day for her. With all the things in my mind, I couldn't write... honestly.

I should tell you now that there will be a period of two weeks in which I won't be able to write. I'm going away at the end of this week and I'll have to wait until I get back to tell you about it. Nothing to worry about, so don't start wondering what it is.

When I mentioned receiving your letters I meant the ones of Mar. 24 and 29 and the V-mails of Apr. 4, 5 and 11. They were beautiful, every one of them. The hardest part about this upcoming trip will be that I won't get any mail. I'll miss that most of all.

I was happy to hear you were staying with Marguerite. It gives me a feeling of security, knowing you aren't alone and able to be with people like Marguerite.

In a way, the news that Marguerite was married didn't come as a surprise. But, it was a big surprise in another. I remember feeling there was something of a "Back Street" nature about her when we spoke in Asheville. When something happens like that to people like Marguerite, it's a tragedy. They don't deserve it, but it seems as though it's all part of a cross they have to bear.

Your "anniversary" letter, written from 195, rated orchids. As for the roses I sent, they form only a very small part of the things I want to do for you. That's why everything seems so futile at times. I know what is in my mind, how much I love you, and how much I want to do to show you. And then I remember we've been apart for a year. A long time, isn't it? And I wonder how much longer I have to wait until I can stop making promises and building our castle on dreams.

You were wondering what I was doing in the picture that showed me sitting in a canteen with a glass of ??? before me. At that time, I was spending two days there doing a piece on the officers candidate school. The glass contained ale. The fellow in the pic with me worked for AP in New York and is stationed on that post.

Of the many things I love about your letters are the little items, like you mentioning the fact you had the urge to get a new dress, wondering if it was because of spring and if you would get over it. You should give in to the urge. That is, if you really want it, because it will probably remain in the back of your mind until you get it. Furthermore, I never did meet a girl who didn't love clothes and all she could afford. That's one thing soldiers don't have to worry about... what the latest fashion is in Esquire. There's only one fashion here, and that's G.I.

You said you were thinking of having a picture taken for me. I'd love to have one. I still have the one you gave me in the picture case, in a place where I can see you when I'm home. When I go away I bring it with me. So, in a way, you've seen a great many things. For instance, on the trip from which I just returned you were in a plane for about 10 hours in all. You had a glimpse of Loch Lomond and saw a pub in which Bobby Burns quaffed his ale. Every time I come to the office and your picture is in my pocket you see the spot where Shakespeare made his debut on the stage. You see, just outside the door of The Times is the site where the Blackfriars Theater once stood, way back when, in the 16th century. It was this theater, later owned by Shakespeare, that housed his first works. [In fact, it was the Globe Theater that put on Shakespeare's first plays.]

I have another job for you to do, or I should say, a few jobs. I'm leaving it to you, as usual, to take care of gifts for the Kiley and Doyle infants. Dot's birthday is June 21 but I think I'll remember to send something from here, perhaps flowers. That's about all I can send. I've been missing quite a few birthdays and anniversaries but I don't think I could ever forget Dot's.

By the way, I hope your Easter orchids arrived before you went to 195, although I'm not too hopeful. I noted them for delivery on the 24th but I expect you'd left from the bank.

Easter always was quite a day for us... the crowd, I mean. I remember going to Asbury one year with Dot, Ruth T. and Al, joining the boardwalk parade, having dinner at the Buttonwood Manor. Another year, we all went to a cocktail party, finished up at the Dalys (when they were living in Jersey City) for snacks. Always fun... never a dull moment. that seems so long ago now, especially with 'most everyone



Possibly taken at Asbury Park at Easter: Charles with Dot Doyle, Ruth Totten and Ruth Rommel, circa 1939.

married, some with children. At that time Al was “a courtin” Dot, Jack was winning Berta, Grace and Artie Reichard were flaming, El Scott and Johnny, Gene and Frank Hedfern... the two Ruths. Yes, me too.

You’ll be getting the paper now. For some reason it was discontinued without me knowing it, for a couple of months. At the time, I thought it was going out. I know it’s being sent now because I’m paying for it.

Days are long now. We have daylight until almost 10 o’clock. It is usually chilly in the morning but it gets nice later on. In Scotland, it was cold and rainy all the time.

Going to say goodnight now, angel. I’ve written Mother Gray and will do so at least once a week or so. All the best to Marguerite.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 26 1943—Matawan

My darling,

First of all, please forgive me for neglecting you this week. You can blame it all on the red dress I was making for Easter because that’s the reason. I was determined to have something new to wear, so “I dood it,” but had to neglect you, doing it.

I should scold you, but I’m not going to because I love you too much... about the orchid. It was so unexpected and I was so proud wearing it. I had more than one of my customers say this morning, “Hmmm, you do right well for yourself.” They just don’t know. It’s resting in its box and paper in the icebox at the present so I can wear it some more. It’s a beautiful, double one with dark brown center and pretty orchid and white ribbon on it. I thought the next orchid I’d get would be... maybe... when I was married, so it was an unexpected but very pleasant surprise. The roses this month were enough. You shouldn’t have done it, but I’m loving this being spoiled.

I hardly know where to begin. Since I last wrote, five letters have come, including an airmail written April 9. Was that a welcome sight, written in your very own handwriting. I’ve read and reread that one and the V-letter written on the fourth for our anniversary. Two pages and they both came together... wasn’t that luck? They were the first I’ve received in about ten days. I was beginning to get a little worried again.

The weather has been so perfect since Thursday that I have to write about it. The long-awaited spring weather has finally come. Easter was beautiful, perfect for an Easter parade. Tonight is almost like something out of a book or picture. My north star is so bright and there must be a million others keeping it company. We just came in from Novena. We stopped at the rectory to get a medal blessed and Father Burke started talking to Agnes and I about his trip to Europe and the war, etc., so before we knew it the time had slipped around to nine o’clock. He is the type of person you could listen to all night. He has such a pleasant voice and an interesting manner of speaking. He’s been in this parish for a very long time.

The letter of commendation was swell. I took it to 195 this weekend and they were as pleased as I. You should rate a promotion or maybe a “furlough,” an extended one that would bring you to the States, but that’s only dream material, I’m afraid. I called Ray Roche to thank him for bringing the pictures and newspapers by and he decided to come by before going to the baseball game. He took the letter along with him, together with the article, to put in the paper. I knew you wouldn’t mind. He will forward them to me as soon as they use them. He’s a nice fellow and from just hearing his voice over the phone, quite a bit as I expected him to be. He stayed about an hour talking to Father John and the rest of us. They are having quite a problem getting help. He and Mel Shapiro are doing everything, so you are missed in more ways than one. He said he was talking to the managing editor about you and your position there after the duration. The editor reassured him that there was nothing to worry about so far as you are concerned, that there would always be a place there but, as Ray says, he’s afraid you will make so many contacts there that you would probably have bigger and better opportunities he wouldn’t blame you for taking. We all thought, though, that you would go back.

He mentioned, too, about baseball... that he didn’t expect it to last through Decoration Day. He was down to Lakewood for seven days and found no news at all. As he put it, they had a lot of “humpty dumpties” running around the field. No news at all and that the crowds had been very small. That seems a shame, but then all the good players are in the service now, so what can you expect?

My weekend at 195 was fine. Your uncle John came in from Philadelphia. He was there by the time I arrived so we had old home week almost. Father John came in for dinner and stayed until about three-thirty. He brought the pictures he took of Eddie and Tom and the ones of me when I was here in February. El taught me to crochet over the weekend so I’ve started Dottie a carriage set in white wool. I’m going to edge it in blue angora. I still don’t know what we will get El. She has so much of everything. She looks well, and is in much better spirits that when I was up last, but then she was worried about not hearing from Tom. In the meantime, he has been home for two weeks so that helped quite a bit. Bette wasn’t feeling so well. A close girlfriend, Grace (I don’t know her last name), died last week and she took it pretty hard. Bette is the godmother of her child... perhaps you know her.

Your dad looks well. He’s been working overtime quite a bit. He enjoyed Uncle John’s being there. We went to the Holy Hour services in Father John’s church Sunday night. We waited after the services for Father John and he took me to the Broad Street Station. Father John preached the sermon. I’ve been wanting to hear him and to visit his church too since I’ve heard so much about it. He just gave a short sermon on “Faith,” very simple and direct, but effective. He said when he left in the afternoon that he wasn’t prepared, that he had expected an outside priest but wasn’t able to get one. I was very glad he couldn’t because I would have missed the opportunity of hearing him.

As your dad and I walked down the street to the bus stop, I couldn’t help but remember last Easter and how scared I was walking down that street with you, to meet them all for the first time. That was a day. I was beginning to think you had called all of Jersey City to come over, but I couldn’t help feeling proud and loving you all the more for wanting to show me off, in spite of being scared and afraid they wouldn’t like me.

We took some pictures. I hope they turn out all right so we can send some to you. Speaking of pictures, I've a good idea. Don't know whether it would work or not, but at least we can try. Would you have any way of getting hold of a projector over there? I was wondering that if, after the baby arrives, we could take pictures and send you the film. Do you suppose the censors would pass it? Maybe it wouldn't be such a good idea at that. You might get the same feeling I had seeing you walk around the screen... to be so near and yet so far. Tell me what you think, anyway. I didn't think of it until after I left or I would have said something to Father John.

Do you know what his latest idea is? That I should join the volunteer Red Cross organization and ask to be sent to London. Sounds like a great idea except I'd probably just get over there and they'd send you somewhere else. I think he wants to see you as badly as I do. He said yesterday that he'd give almost anything to see you and talk with you. He wants you to write a book... says you should do it now while you're over there. He mentioned to Ray Roche that if it could be done that you should have a syndicated column in the Jersey Journal... something like "Johnny Doughboy Covers the News." That would be something.

I had a long letter from Mom. Did I tell you she had been sick? They didn't tell me until she was better. Fine thing, and I left specific orders with my sisters that I was to know immediately if anything was wrong. She is well now and back to work. She was home three weeks and three days so I know she must have been pretty bad, because it takes a lot to keep my mom down. I don't think she minds my going so much now that she realizes the opportunity I would have missed and the fact that I was stuck where I was has become more clear to her. She will love hearing from you... she thinks so much of you.

My brother sent me a picture of him in his uniform. He looks so terribly young. I told you, didn't I, about his engagement to the girl from home? He wanted to announce it and asked me what I thought. I told him, but definitely, and I had an answer back this week. Seems I gave him something to think about and there will only be an "understanding" until after the war. Tickles me... he says he can always depend on me for the right kind of advice about such matters. He makes me feel old and there are only four years' difference between us.

Back to your anniversary letter. I couldn't have asked for more. It goes with my Christmas letter, in spite of its being a V-letter. Since I've been getting so many of them, I've gotten over them seeming like letters by proxy. That was such a perfect weekend. I'll never forget a minute of it. I wonder if the other weekends coming to us will be as breathless and exciting. I'd love to find out, but soon. Our day will come. Just a little more patience and a few more prayers. The situation seems to be well in hand over there now. I've a feeling this summer will tell the tale. We'll just have to wait and see.

I called Dottie tonight to tell her I was coming in next weekend, and she broke the news to me that Nickie died over the weekend. He took sick last week and they took him to the vet and gave him treatments, but he said it was his heart. He gave him a shot of morphine and he died. Mr. Drayton is quite heartbroken about it as well as Dot and Al. You can get so attached to them. I know just how they feel.

Ruth Totten will enter the WAAC the fifteenth of May so she will be over next weekend, too. It's Dottie's dad's birthday too, so they will have a party for him.

Your walk back from Mass on our anniversary sounds like a paragraph from one of James Hilton's novels, or most any English novel, I guess. You are still making me envious of your opportunity, but seeing it through your eyes helps a lot. I've always had such a yen to travel. I would have made a good gypsy, or traveling saleslady. After this is all over and we make our million, you can take me to all the places I want to see.

Dottie wrote me a long letter last week, too. Her dad had been sick so that was why I hadn't heard. She says you are really taking a ribbing from the gang about the picture in the paper with Vivian Leigh, or rather "Scarlet O'Hara." She says you'll hear more about that when you come home.

I have a bank now, in front of your picture. It takes all kinds of coins and guess what I'm saving in it for? My wedding. I'm afraid if I don't start something like that, I'll walk up the aisle in a burlap bag or something. But it's fun... every day I put a few in. If I take an extra long look at you, especially the new picture, I end up putting a few extra coins in, hoping that will help a little more. Good incentive, having it there by your picture.

My first Easter as a Catholic, and it meant so much to me, and more being in your church with El and your dad. We went to eight o'clock. I always feel closer to you there, knowing you have spent so much time there... all the years you went there... and receiving communion at the same altar rail where you did so many times made everything mean so much more. Did I tell you I still love you? I've run out of words about that. The three words don't seem sufficient somehow or other, but I can't find any others.

I'm so sleepy I can hardly hold my eyes open. I'll have to give up and go to bed. I'll write some more very soon. I promise I won't let you play second fiddle to anything again.

My goodnight kiss going your way, darling. I love you... goodnight. My prayers and love go with it.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 29, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

This is going to be a hurry-up affair, written while I'm killing time waiting for the train that starts me off on the two-week trip I mentioned in my last letter. This will also be the last letter until I get back.

Your V-mail of Apr. 20 and the two V-mail greeting cards came this morning. Also got a letter from Bette. Those will also be the last letters I'll get until I come back.

It was too bad you weren't in when Ray Roche called. He's anxious to meet you, according to his letters. I must remember to thank him for delivering the pictures to you. And, you don't have to feel inferior to Miss Leigh, either. She can't hold a candle to you, believe me. Of course, she may have an advantage over you in the drama department, but that's all.

Here's more news. We're moving from "Cheesecake Manor." Charlie White, who was living with us, has been moved to another part of the British Isles. Then, Ben Price and I decided to move back nearer to the city. We'll have the place until May 20 and while I'm away, Benny is going to hunt around for a flat.

Got to rush now and get off a letter to 195. This is probably setting a record for brevity. If you are in touch with Dot, will you explain why they don't get any mail for a couple of weeks?

And, I almost missed this... I hope your eye isn't any more serious than you explained in today's letter. Take good care of yourself.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 29, 1943—Matawan (V-letter)

My darling,

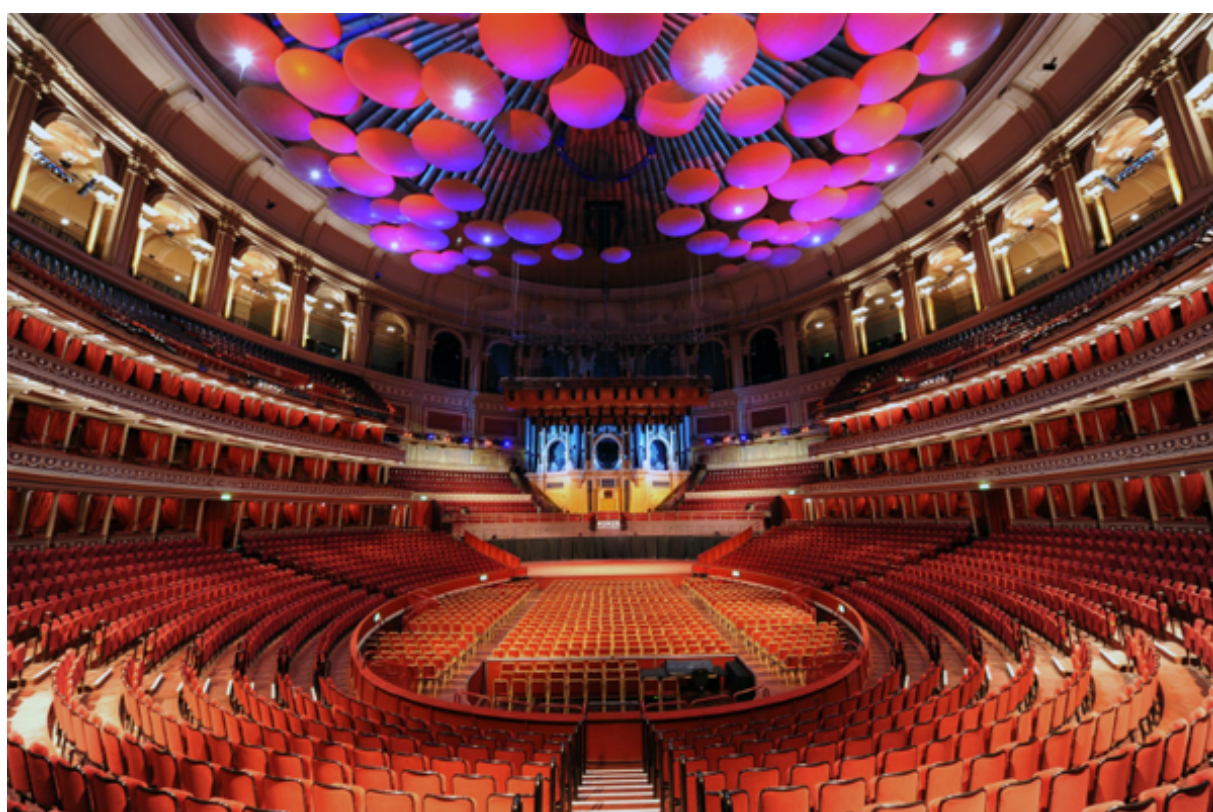
This is the first V-letter I've written in a week. I typed you a long letter on Monday and sent it airmail. I had to type it because of the heavy paper I had to use. Of late, we haven't been able to buy any airmail paper.

In the letter I told you all about the weekend with the Kileys and of the five letters I received last week. Incidentally, there have been none this week so far but then, after five, I shouldn't complain.

We're really having spring weather now. It's swell out... everything is waking up. The apple and peach trees are all in bloom and all the shrubbery has new leaves. It makes you feel good walking from the train and being able to look across the countryside and see everything beginning to grow again. This must be a little like the weather you told me about in one of the first letters I received last week.

In the new Life Magazine is a picture of the interior of Albert Hall and it mentioned the fact that a basketball tournament run by the Stars and Stripes athletic committee would be held the following week. I'm keeping it for scrapbook material. Maybe I'll get the story to go with it. I can imagine what watching a basketball game in a place like that would be like.

I had to stop for awhile... a blackout again, the second this week. The only trouble is we have to depend on the radio for the "all clear" and



Interior of Royal Albert Hall in the 21st Century.

they don't announce it on all the stations and usually we sit here in the dark an extra half-hour or so. I wouldn't mind if it was a necessity but this way I don't like it much. I could have had this finished by now.

I'm sending along an airmail note enclosed with the letter you requested. I showed Ray Roche and the rest at 195 and they all got a kick out of it... the first one they had seen. Ray Roche had just finished saying they hadn't had any censored at all when I showed him this one.

I'm going into Arlington Saturday for the weekend as I mentioned in the airmail letter, in case you receive it before this one. Incidentally, my orchid is still pretty, put to bed in the icebox. I might be able to wear it this weekend. It certainly caused a lot of comment. You shouldn't have spent so much money, but I love you just the same. I can't scold you this time. Guess I'm getting used to being spoiled, since you don't get a scolding this time.

Space running out. There is just about room enough to tell you how very much I love you. As always, my prayers and thoughts are with you. Here's a goodnight kiss going your way and a very special one for your thoughtfulness.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 29, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

You rate again tonight... being written to twice in one day, but I wanted to forward the letter to you that you asked for... what you can read of it.

I mentioned in the V-letter, too, that I was sending it on.

The lovely weather we've been having makes me think of our weekend in New York. The weather was a lot like this... spring in all its glory. I never thought then that I'd be seeing spring in New Jersey a year later. One never knows. This year has brought so many changes. I still can't get over them.

I feel neglected this week... not a bit of mail from you or home. Maybe tomorrow will bring some. So long as I can get mail from home and you my morale is good and I don't get homesick or lonesome.

Marguerite has been wonderful. I don't know that I could have gotten along so well living alone. I probably could if I had to, but since I don't I like this arrangement better.

I was shown some more pictures... one in particular I like very much. You can't be more than two or three, standing in the water along the shore somewhere and holding both legs of your swimming suit up. You have such a forlorn look on your face and the



Charles at the beach, circa 1916 or 1917.

haircut is a killer. You were quite a guy even then, as little as you were in that picture. I meant to tell you... Father John was telling me of the narrow escapes you had in the wild days of your youth... falling off a fence trying to get in the baseball park and being thrown into a rose bush, practically getting your ear torn off; then an automobile accident. Was the latter the time you were with Al and Bill? I seem to remember them telling me about that, or maybe Dottie when she was telling me about your “driving.” I couldn’t believe anyone could have such narrow escapes. I hope our “team” doesn’t take after their father in such escapades. Don’t know as I could take that kind.

Eddie was probably just being nice in his letter. He’s pretty nice at that, but then I hit the “jackpot” when it came to getting a nice family along with Corp. Kiley himself, more than I ever could have hoped for. You’re lucky, having such a nice family.

This started out to be a lone [HUH?] to send the letter along and here I am rambling alone.

I’ll probably see Edie when I go in, if Marty comes over. She has her heart set on him coming home, I know I’d like to know her better. I only met her for just a bit the last time I was at Dottie’s.

That seems to be all this time. I’d love to be curled up in “our corner.” Just anywhere would be our corner, now. Maybe not too long... I feel optimistic this week. Optimistic or not, I love you so much. I feel this way so far away from you... heaven only knows how I’ll feel when I see you. The state of New Jersey won’t hold me. ‘Night, my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 3, 1943—Matawan

Darling,

Another weekend went by without our “date,” but it was almost like having a date with you since I was at Dottie and Al’s over the weekend.

We had fun. Saturday was Dottie’s dad’s birthday and Bill Daly’s, too, so we had a party. Jack and Berta, Marty and Bill, Florence and Ernie, the two Ruths, and I. The only person lacking was you and there was definitely an empty space there for you... the party just wasn’t complete. I took in the snapshot album and showed

them the new pictures. They all enjoyed them, especially the “action” shots.

Ruth Totten goes into the WAAC on the fifteenth so I expect that was the last time I’ll see her. Her mother doesn’t want her to go now and the boy she is going with is very much against it. The girls think she might



The party: Billee, second from left, with Al Doyle, center, Ruth Totten, right.

back out at the last minute, but I don't think so. She has given up her job and seems very much in earnest about it. She's got a lot of courage, is all I can say, but then, if it weren't for you, I'd have been there a long time ago, or in one of the other services.

Your April Fool letter caused quite a sensation. It definitely made the rounds. I have forgotten about it when it was handed to me after Ruth Rommel read it. I couldn't figure out what was coming off. You should have seen her face and heard the yell she made before she got to the explanation. They all waited for my reaction then because I didn't know what I was going to read. Did I get a surprise, but I just laughed because after I started reading, I remembered about the letter you were going to write to Al. Some of them are still a little dubious about the "yarn" even though I tried to convince them and laugh it off. I couldn't help but wish that it were true, but then we wouldn't have our wedding to look forward to.

After most of them left Saturday night, Marty, Bill and Al, Dot and I went to Kean's to get something to eat and we had a couple of dances, the first for me in a long time. I think I walked all over poor Bill. I am definitely rusty.

Dottie looks well and feels good, too. She's been lucky. She's picking up quite a bit of weight. I hope she doesn't have too much trouble there. Sound like an old married woman, don't I, telling you about Dottie and El.

I called 195 when I got into Newark Sunday night and everything was fine there. I was going home on the six o'clock train, but I had that old "miss you" feeling and didn't feel like going back to Matawan, so I decided to go to a movie instead. I checked my bag and walked across from the Broad Street Station to the Rialto and saw "Commandos Strike at Dawn." A good movie and one that I had missed. I just saw part of the other feature because I wanted to catch the 9:07. It was kind of silly anyway, "I Married a Witch."

Your letter of the 17th was waiting for me when I got home, as well as one from my sister and one from a girl in Asheville. Today brought one from Mom. She's much better now, thank goodness, and I think will be going back to Asheville soon to make arrangements about either selling or leasing the house. I'd like to go down and meet her but I guess I won't be able to right now.

I couldn't help but get that old rebellious feeling again, reading your letter, because here it is another spring and we are still so far apart. I have so much to be thankful for that I try to overlook that, but there are times that doesn't help and last night was one of them. I needed that line, "Keep your chin up." I should say the same thing to you. We'll have to keep up each other's morale via mail. It doesn't do to lament too much on the fact that we do miss each other, but if we didn't something would be wrong. I don't know whether it helps to go in and see all of them or not... I missed you so much Saturday night. On Sunday, we stopped in from Mass to see Jack and Berta's apartment and say how happy they must be there with little Jackie. I met Grace and Artie; they live right next door. Oh well, our day will come and maybe it's not too far off.

Don't ever stop writing me that you love me because I look for it in each letter. It's still music to my ears and one of these days it really will be music because you'll be saying it yourself. I get butterflies just thinking about it.

The censor is going to love me writing on both sides, but when I can buy some airmail paper, I'll stop typing and use the pen again, and just write on one side. Enclosed is an article Mother sent me that was in the Akron Beacon Journal, about the Stars and Stripes. I knew you'd like to read it and pass it on to the rest of the staff.

That seems to be all, darling. I'll write again very soon. Your trips sounded well... they help pass the time away. And you met another general. Wasn't that lucky. I almost forgot, or could you tell? I still love you, oh so very much. The words are so inadequate... wish I could show you.

All my love and kisses, your Billee

May 5, 1943—Matawan (2 V-letters)

Darling,

Your long V-letter arrived today... both pages. Wasn't that luck? That's the first one this week other than the one I didn't get until Sunday night, so it was a welcome sight. This one came in a shorter time than any of them. It's dated April 26.

Your trip has aroused my curiosity naturally and I'm wondering where and when and, as always, praying that you will be safe wherever it is. I didn't know you were flying on your trips. I had an idea, but this is the first time you mentioned it. I'd lots rather be along with you, than my picture, but I'm glad I can go that way anyway. As I've said before, perhaps one day you will have the opportunity of showing me some of the sights and scenery you are seeing now, but I imagine you will be glad to stay home awhile after you finally get here again. The recent plane crash in Iceland has me wondering, since there has been no names published other than that of General Andrews and the Bishop, but I'm praying that wasn't the "trip" you took.

I'm glad to hear that you have been writing Mom. She will love hearing from you. She's worried quite a bit about Warren, but I guess that's only natural. He is going to try for Air Cadet School when he finishes his radio course.

The weather has been lovely yesterday and today, the kind of spring weather we should be having. I had a yet to go somewhere when I finished today at 3:00.

I know how you must have felt on Easter because I think we all did. I missed being home but then, being with those you love so much helped a lot. We missed you and your Mom so much. There are so many times when I feel like that. I try to write and I just put it in the wastebasket. Both of us have our moments but then, that makes me feel all the closer and love you all the more.

A report just came in that the sole survivor of that plane crash was a staff sergeant.



Lt. General Frank Maxwell Andrews, for whom Andrews Air Force Base is named, was killed in a plane crash in Iceland in May 1943, along with Adna Wright Leonard, presiding Methodist Bishop of North America.

Don't ever feel your efforts are futile because they aren't. I know it has been a year since we were together. Sometimes it feels like a long time, and then again it seems like yesterday. Time has gone by so fast. Just loving me as much as you do will suffice for the time. I'm almost beginning to take that for granted now... remember what a time I had being convinced? You have already done so much for me now that I can wait until you come home. I am praying that it will be soon, but patience is one of my best virtues. Don't worry about the slow materialization of your dreams. Please don't get discouraged. That's one thing I don't believe I could take. We have so much to be thankful for. I suppose I sound like a little Pollyanna, but I can't help it. Just remember how much I love you, as far apart as we are. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you, that the day will not be too far away when we will be together once more.

I'm afraid the "crowd" is getting very much married. The conversation follows along the same trend... their children, their homes... and we discussed recipes Saturday night, so you can see. We'll have to catch up with them when you come back. I'd love to get in that "rut" and be called "an old married couple."

As I said, the carriage cover I'm crocheting will cost five or six dollars before I'm finished with it, so I think that would be all right for our gift to Dottie. For El, I'm still at a loss to know what to give her, she has so many things. I thought of a spoon and fork set in sterling for a little later on since I want to give her something she could keep. Dottie will love the flowers for her birthday.

So glad to know I'll be getting the paper. I hope it won't be too expensive. Looked like you might get it gratis, but I guess not. I've missed seeing it. Father John said he got quite a raft of them recently so if he has duplicates of the ones the Jersey Journal has, I'll get them for our scrapbook.

Dottie says this Charles Todd who has a photography studio in Arlington is very good, so I'm going to make arrangements for an appointment there the next time I go in. I've been a little hesitant about having a picture made since I didn't know who to go to. He is the one that took Marty's baby's picture. She said he was good, too, so I guess he must be.

Guess that's all the news this time. I've enjoyed our date tonight. Just noticed we wrote our Easter letters the same night. I waited until Monday night, too, after getting in at about eleven on Sunday night.

You keep your chin up now, darling, but bend down a little for a minute or two so I can give you a goodnight kiss. Almost as nice as "our corner," remember? I'll be looking forward to your letters when you come back and I'll try to be patient those two weeks.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 9, 1943—Matawan

Hello my darling,

It's a gorgeous day and I'm at 195 for the weekend. Your dad is working today, El is lying down at present and Bette is upstairs.

We just came in from a walk to the cemetery. We bought some azalea plants and set them out, pink and white ones. El wasn't able to go... it's too long a walk and the buses too bouncy.

I just saw your dad a little last night. He worked late and then went out again this morning. They finish up this job he's on and next week will be light, he says. This is Father John's day on so I don't believe he will be in.

Yesterday I made the one-twenty into Newark and did some shopping. I bought that dress I was talking about. It's blue and white... nothing spectacular, just something I can wear on weekends and to the bank, too. Oh, I bought some navy and white checked material to make a suit. It's taffeta, so I'll rustle... you'll hear me coming. I love the sound it makes. I bought our present for the O'Connor heir, a very pretty spoon and fork set in sterling and a compartment plate with little Mother Goose characters on it. I finished one of the baby dresses and brought it in. I have two more to make and one slip to finish, and two more slips to make yet.

You should see Dottie's carriage cover shaping up. It's going to be pretty. I'll be a veteran at crocheting by the time I have to start on little things for our "pitcher."

El looks very good under the circumstances, a little tired but that's to be expected. She's getting a little impatient, but it won't be long now.

Father John suggested that Bette and El take a bungalow with the baby in July when Bette gets her vacation. El asked me if I thought I could take a week then so we could all go together. That would be swell. I need a little time off. Haven't had a vacation since my trip to New York. I could take a week on my own, then take my vacation in the fall because I wouldn't travel a long distance in the heat unless absolutely necessary.

Yesterday was really a scorcher. I had my first taste of Jersey heat. I nearly melted in Newark. I took my winter coat in to put in fur storage and it kept getting heavier, walking from the station to Bamberger's. I'm such a dunce... that scatterbrain of mine again... didn't think of taking a bus. I can't wait to go swimming now. I haven't had the opportunity in several years and now I'm so close to the water again.

We had something of a jam session here today. Bette was showing me how to jitterbug, believe it or not. I didn't think I could move that fast. The twins from next door came in and did their stuff, so we had quite a time. Bette said I didn't do too badly for the first time. I've always had a yen to do it but thought I'd probably look silly.

El gave me the copy of the column by Lud [?] that was in the Dispatch with your letter in it. It was a cute column. You know what the letter was about but the comments on the side are cute. It goes into our scrapbook. By the time you come back and we get everything together, we'll have to have a separate room to show our "etchings."

I saw an article in the paper about a school that has been opened in England for war correspondents, to teach them invasion tactics, map reading and first aid. Twenty-five war correspondents are now

enrolled. It makes me wonder if that is your new “assignment,” but then I’m always wondering. I’ll know one of these days I guess.

Bette bought a fur coat. Did she tell you? She’s quite thrilled over it. I still haven’t any desire for one



Billee wearing either Bette’s fur coat, or Eleanor’s. Jersey City, May 1943.

even after spending my first cold winter in the north again. Guess there must be something wrong with me. I can stand it until you come home, then you can keep me warm.

I have Decoration Day weekend off. I don’t know yet where I’ll go. That will probably be the weekend El goes to the hospital so it will be better if I don’t come here. They won’t want to be bothered with extras. Maybe I’ll go to New York on Sunday and stay over, take in a show and go to see the Statue of Liberty. We didn’t get there, remember? There is still so much of New York I haven’t seen yet.

Bette has a V-letter all ready here to send. I like her. She’s so genuine.

Your dad looks well. His cold is much better than when I was here before.

The African news is definitely welcome. It won’t be long now until things will start moving from your end. Then, please God, it will be over soon after that. I wish they could

realize their mistake now and give up before so many more will be lost.

I didn’t think I was going to write so much. My pen is running away from me, but I like our Sunday afternoon “dates” as much as our Saturday night “dates.” We walked by the park and you should have seen all the children and the baby carriages on the avenue. Everyone was out for a Sunday afternoon walk.

That seems to cover everything. All that’s missing to make everything perfect, is you, but this is a fairly good substitute. Remind me when I see you next to tell you how much I love you, or better yet, I’ll show you. ‘Bye, now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 11, 1943—London (3 V-letters)

‘Lo sweetheart,

Back “home” again from the trip I mentioned in my last letter, and it sure feels good. The best part about coming back was getting mail again, mail that included your letters (yes, still bits o’ heaven) of Apr 14, 27 and 30 as well as the V-mail of Apr. 15 (the Easter card). I know there are more because some of my mail was sent CENSORED and hasn’t been returned yet. I say CENSORED because that’s where I was, taking part in the training of U.S. Rangers, American counterparts of the Commandos, at the Commando Depot, “somewhere CENSORED.” I’ll need quite a bit of space to tell you all about it, so I’m going to write it and send it airmail. I’ll just use the V-mail to get this off as soon as possible and let you know that everything is o.k. My stay with the Rangers was the toughest experience I’ve yet encountered and hope to encounter. I’ll never know how I lasted as long as I did. But, it was surprising to learn how much human endurance one can stand. Let me just say I didn’t have my clothes off for 11 days (you sleep with ‘em on), didn’t have a shower until I stopped overnight in CENSORED on my way back, have bruises on both legs, hips and left arm. Still, I feel great and, now that it’s over, I’m glad I went through with it. In a way, I sympathize with the boys who are still there. I only took part in part of the training. They still have a bit to travel.

It all started when the office wanted a volunteer to train for a period with the Rangers and do a piece on it. My hand went up and off I went. I didn’t want to tell you about it until it was all over because it is risky business and there wasn’t any point in worrying you about it. I did the same to the folks and have now written them that everything is o.k.

I was thinking of you constantly. There were cold nights, wet ones and pretty bad days in the field. But you were near me always. To say I love you more than ever is inadequate. Let me just say I don’t know what I’d do without you, believe me.

You wondered if I remembered the anniversary of our farewell. Yes, sweetheart. I relived every moment of it, even to the trip back to camp and lying awake in bed wondering when I’d see you again, knowing I wasn’t going to be around much longer. I love to picture you in that “rebellious mood.” I can see your lips pressed together, perhaps quivering a little, your eyes staring at an unseen object. You put your hand on your forehead and wonder... how long? I know because that’s what happens to me. Still, knowing it will come some day I make myself see our brighter days ahead. And, the picture I see most often is you and I by ourselves, holding each other and vowing never to leave again, just looking and being grateful.

Have you noticed the promotion? [The “sender” line of the V-letter reads “Sgt. Charles F. Kiley.] Learned of it when I returned from the trip. Sure, I feel good. Who wouldn’t?

I’m glad you liked the orchid. I thought perhaps you would be in the Easter Parade and I wanted to be with you in some way. And don’t you scold me about sending flowers because I’ll send them to you as long as I can. That’s not spoiling you one bit. In fact, it’s just about one half of one-eighth percent of what I want to do for you. If it brings a smile, that’s my reward.

I’m glad you finally met Ray Roche. But, I feel sort of funny about having all that stuff published, the letter and the pictures, etc. It’s nice, but... Oh, I don’t know. People may get funny ideas.

About going back to the Journal... I'd like to very much. They told me when I left that my desk would be there when I returned. And I, well, have a close feeling for the Journal. I'm not going to be a prima donna about it but I'm afraid they are not going to see eye to eye with me before I go back. Still, perhaps I won't have any other choice. Don't think there aren't good men around in newspaper work. I'll have my ideas regarding salary, etc., but still may be forced to take what I can get.

I love the picture of you crocheting white wool carriage sets. Now's a good time to start crocheting your own things.

Do you know, I've never heard Father John preach a sermon yet, so you are one up on me there. I've tried to get out to hear him but something always prevented me. Or, when I did get out, one of the other priests was scheduled.

There is a projector here for the pictures you mentioned, Billee, but I don't think it would be safe to ship them. Too many things get lost these days. And, while we're on the "overseas" subject, you stay right where you are. If you want to do Red Cross work, do it at home. It would be too much to ask for, hoping you'd come here. You'd probably wind up in New Guinea or something.

So, John wants me to write a book. Little does he realize that I have trouble finding time to write letters. Those books and columns are o.k. for the boys at home. They haven't much else to do and are in a good spot. But things hum along too fast over here. Besides, there's too much censorship and red tape involved.

I wrote Mother Gray just before I went away. And, I'll get something off to her tomorrow. The news of Nickie's death at North Arlington was a bit of a shock. I know how badly they felt about it. I had a letter from Ruth Totten saying she was taking her exam for the WAACs and I'm waiting to hear the outcome. I never thought she'd go through with it!

I like your idea about the savings bank. I don't mean the purpose behind it, but the inspiration. We know that we are working in cooperation to bring our happiness to a climax as soon as we possibly can. You'll make the most beautiful bride ever, and I'll murder the person who doesn't agree with me. Just now, I feel as hard as nails and capable of making good that threat.

I don't like John to be telling "tales out of school" about my harum-scarum youth. It's bad enough that they took place without them being passed on through the generations. You'll have to promise not to tell our children, so they will pass out with us. The automobile accident happened years before I knew Al or Bill. That is, I did know Al. We were in school together. I was all of seven years old. I was coming home from the movies on Easter Monday afternoon. I dashed in front of a car and woke up in the hospital with a fractured skull. That's why I am a little nutty about you, I guess. Glad you asked about it? However, I survived to take part in many more diabolical episodes.

That's all for now, honey. I'll be back tomorrow or the next day and will literally flood you with mail to make up for the last few weeks. Love to Marguerite.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 11, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

I wrote a letter last night but didn't like it so I just finished tearing it up. Too bad because it was a long one.

Where to begin... oh yes, your last letter came Saturday but I didn't get it until Sunday night when I returned from 195. I love you thinking of me last.

I'm so sorry you are having to give up "Cheesecake Manor." You seemed to like the country so much. You couldn't have found someone else to share your luck with? A flat doesn't sound half so nice. Anyhow, I hope you will find a nice place.

We have another bond from Uncle Sam. This one is dated April 1943! The other was dated September 1942. Wonder what happened to the ones in between? Perhaps I'd better drop them a line and see what has happened. I understand that you are buying a fifty-dollar bond a month, right? We should have four hundred dollars in bonds and we have only one hundred.

Everyone is jubilant over the African victory. Surely, this is the turning point and it won't be too long. I have visions of another year in the European Theater and heaven knows how long in the Pacific. Everyone is expecting the invasion now at any day and Churchill's presence in Washington makes it all the more likely.

I called Mom Sunday night late. Warren had called her too, earlier in the day, and my sister and her husband took Mom to the movies and dinner, so she had a nice day.

She will be going back to Asheville in a few weeks to make arrangements about the house. She hinted that she might stay. I'm praying that she won't. She loves it down there so much but, for the present, she is so much better off where she is.

Little Billy is recovering rapidly. He crawled off the couch and they found him on the other side of the room. Being home and having his mother's care has helped a lot.

The short story from Liberty Magazine came Monday. You must have appreciated the poor guy's anxiety, but if I thought for one minute you turned down a seven-day leave for the same reason he did, I'd personally find a way over there and clean up on you. I'd be so mad, I wouldn't be able to wait until you came back. You should know I wouldn't send you a telegram like that. Here I am, scolding you for no reason at all.

I'll call Dottie today and tell her about your trip. I want to get Ruth Totten's address, too, since I want to send her something before she leaves for the WAAC. I imagine she is still going. I certainly admire her independence, since the fellow she is going with is so set against it. It makes me wonder. All kidding aside, my conscience is beginning to hurt. Enlistments have fallen off considerably and the plan itself has proved so successful. They have need for 300,000 and they can't even procure the original figure of 150,000.

You should hear Father John on the subject. When I first arrived in Jersey he was all for them and then, a month ago, when he took me to the station, he said I could just give up any idea of enlisting (I had already done that). It seems a chaplain friend of his related some happenings that went on in

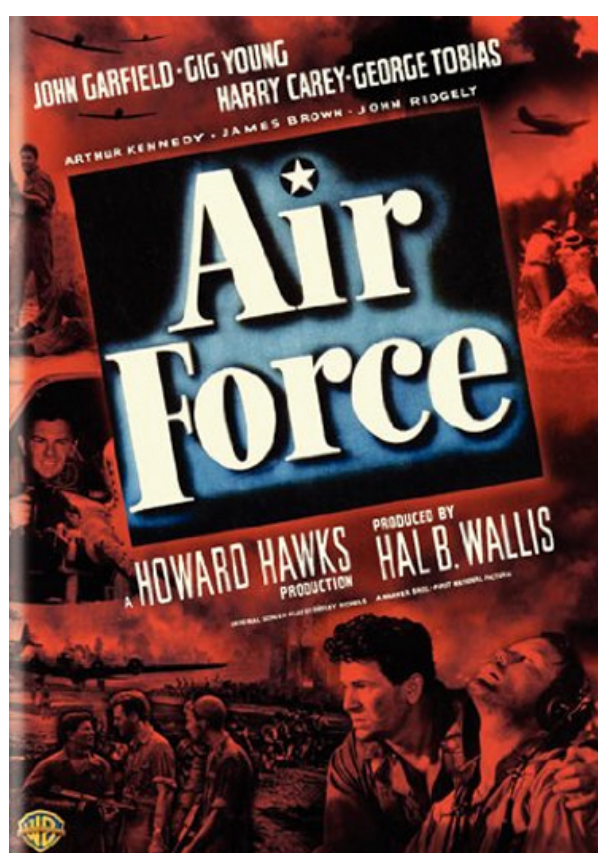
Washington and they were anything but nice. But then, you can't judge them by one incident... you find that anywhere. [In fact, throughout the war there were deliberate attempt to discredit the WAC for morals by spreading rumors; none of these rumors were ever substantiated, but they were traced back to male soldiers stationed in the U.S. who were afraid that their jobs may be taken by women thus freeing the men up for combat duty in Europe or the Pacific.]

After Novena Monday night, Agnes and I decided to take in a movie in Keyport, particularly to see those captured Japanese newsreel pictures of the fall of Corregidor, hoping we might see Jack... but, no luck. We saw a good movie, too, "Keeper of the Flame," Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. As good as "Woman of the Year," their last picture.

I've been to lunch and back again. If this letter makes sense, I'll be surprised, as many times as I've had to shove it in the drawer and take it out again because of interruptions.

Mother mentioned how much she enjoyed your V-letter. It was sweet of you to write, but then you always remember to do the nicest things.

I'm writing this in the bank. We are anything but busy. I'll be out again at three o'clock. The weather has been so miserable this week... must be the cause of the lack of business.



Yesterday the girls had their hair done so while I was waiting for them, I took in a movie, Howard Hawks' "Air Force." Very exciting. I enjoyed it even though it wasn't so diverting. There wasn't a dull moment in it. You'd like it, I know.

We just had some excitement... an air raid alert which meant sending the customers (what customers? away and putting all our money in our bags and down to the vault in the basement we all went for about forty-five minutes. Everything was very orderly. I happened to be talking to a customer on the phone and had to practically insult her to get her off the line. Thank heaven it was only an alert and not the real McCoy. That's my first daylight alert. We're so close to the shore, though, that anything can happen.

The weather is even worse. This would be a good day to build up a good fire in the fireplace at "Cheesecake Manor," Oak

Lodge or just anywhere so long as we were together, and get out some good books...but I don't think we'd be doing much reading!

I'm running out of paper now, so I'll have to bring this to a close. When this reaches you, you will have returned from your little "jaunt." Too bad you couldn't have hitched a ride with Churchill. That would have made a good story... a GI stows away...

That seems to be all. Guess I'll close and try to look busy. The president of the bank is back from a fishing trip in Canada for three weeks, so we have to look busy even though we aren't. Be back soon. Hope your trip was a successful one.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: Almost forgot... I love you oh, so much.

May 15, 1943 [Postcard from Nashville, Tennessee]

Dear Ray,

In Nashville for a day and looking over the city. Nothing like California cities.

Eddie



Eddie's postcard from Nashville, May 1943.

May 15, 1943—Matawan

Hello my darling,

Another Friday night almost gone. I don't think I'll be here tomorrow night so I thought I'd drop you a line before I go to bed.

Marguerite and the rest are out so I'm alone except for Theresa, Marguerite's younger sister. She's asleep and I have the radio to accompany my thoughts... good music, too.

Today was nice... rain in the early part of the day. Yesterday was gorgeous, a change from our unusual weather.

I called Eleanor tonight. She says she feels fine. Your dad is working again at night. His vacation will begin soon so he'll have two weeks to rest but I'm afraid there will be little rest for him since he plans on doing his room over for El. I only hope Tom will be here. He says he will go AWOL if he has to and I wouldn't be surprised.

Eddie said that after he finished maneuvers that he would probably be sent nearer home, I imagine to an embarkation point.

Things are really happening. All the activity gives us new hope that maybe this will be over soon. Didn't take them long to finish off North Africa. Tonight the news of the offensive in the Aleutians makes me think we will hear more from that place and that soon those yellow b_____ will be off Uncle Sam's soil or else in it.

I've got a good case of the whim-whams tonight. Itchy feet... think they want to dance. Have patience, Billee, I say. Just a while longer until your sweetheart comes back. I still have a lot of patience, thank heaven.

I had a long letter from Mom. She is definitely going back on the twentieth. If she were well... she is better but I know what these colds do to her... I wouldn't worry. She says she has a tenant in mind so if she does that I won't mind, but she still plans on staying in Asheville. She hasn't told me what she plans to do if she is able to get a tenant. She does love it so and she has that streak of independence in her that has sustained her all these years.

I meant to tell you... for the first time in my life I'm playing the baseball pool. The fellows in the note department that I work with, along with the savings department, have the tickets. I ended up in the middle last week. The weekly high is \$100 and the low is \$25. I might just accidentally win. One of the tellers won five dollars yesterday.

I should be at my sewing. We're going into warm weather all at once and I'm going to be caught without anything to wear, and I'm not kidding either. I could wrap those pieces of material around me and do a Dottie Lamour "act." That would cause a sensation or a new vogue. Can't you see me commuting in a sarong?

This new activity will mean some new work for you. I'm anxious to hear from you now and I have another week or more to go without mail. I have received two batches of *Stars and Stripes*, but there isn't one article in one of them with your byline. I can't seem to find any that you've written. A few, I thought were yours, but I wasn't sure. There are a lot of new names, I see.

That seems to be all the news my dearest, except that I love you so much. I always feel closer to you when I'm not sure where you are, as it is now. I can't help but wonder, but I'm not worrying much.

Keep well. Goodnight... haven't given you a goodnight kiss in a long time. Bend down a little bit...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



PS: That Buttonwood Manor you mentioned is very close by. Do you remember looking across the lake at the road there? That's Ravine Drive and at the end of it is where Marguerite lives.

May 15, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

"It's still the same old story, a fight for love and glory, a case of do or die.

The world will always welcome lovers, as time goes by."

Funny way to begin our date tonight, darling. But, it is being played on the radio and is a song that brings you close to me.

I have written to you only once this week, thereby breaking my promise that I would write in more detail of my training with the Rangers at the Commando Depot a day or so after my return.

I won't say I've been busy, because you would only scold me again. But, I have been. Come a wee bit closer and I'll tell you how much I love you. The latest letters from you were the V-mails of Apr. 16, 19 and 29 as well as the "miss you" ones and the airmail of May 3, all as welcome as your kiss would be.

Now that my bones are back to normal and my muscles are relaxed, I can tell you a bit of the Ranger training. Those fellows have a pretty rough time of it while they are going through the course, believe me. Speed markers, assault courses, unarmed combat, landings in assault craft, range work with weapons, sleeping on tent floors in cold, damp weather, night problems, cross-country marches and 36-hour maneuvers are only a part of the grind. Still, they'll feel better about it when they're finished.

The first of the WAACs (enlisted "men," or enrolled members as they call them) arrived here during the week. There were only five of them. One of the boys, Phil Bucknell, and I accompanied them on a tour of blitzed areas and spots of interest yesterday. Felt good to talk "American jive" again.

My eyebrows went up like twin



Entertaining the WAACs: Left, Phil Bucknell; right, Charles. London, May 1943.

elevators when one of them said I was actually acquiring a British accent. What she meant was that I was using a few British expressions. Can't you picture me coming back and saying, "Actually, dear, I've missed you terribly, don't you know?"

It has been beautiful here during the week. Roses grow here (in the vicinity of "Cheesecake") like corn in Iowa. I wish I could send you a carload. I'm enjoying them while I can since we'll be moving back to the city this week.

I was sorry to hear about Mother's illness. I'm writing to her again tonight.

Just now, the midnight news is coming over. Bombers of the 8th Air Force carried out their third record raid today, blasting the harbor at Emden. Yesterday they blitzed the naval base at Kiel. And the great news in Africa continues to develop.

I love you shopping and crocheting for the expected children. You can be sure you will get them all back one day, not the same ones, but things like them.

I would have enjoyed being with you all when my "April 1" letter was passed around at the Doyles. too, I hope some of them are dubious over it. I like to keep them guessing. Did you blush when they were kidding you? I hope so. I remember how you blushed once, at the Hawaiian Room. Don't deny it, darling, because you did!

Thanks so much for the clippings. I enjoyed them all and kept them with the pile of letters I've been saving. That pile is quite high now.

It was surprising to hear how expensive it was for Marguerite's sister to send a mere four words to her husband... gosh!

Time to kiss you goodnight, sweetheart. There is a beautiful three-quarter moon shining, and going to waste as far as I can see. But it will be there another night and we'll see it, won't we?

Regards to all.

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

May 17, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

As I wrote the date above, I remembered that this is an "anniversary" for us. A year and four months... tonight it seems like a long time ago.

Received a batch of *Stars and Stripes*, the anniversary issue among them. Several of your articles are in these with your byline. I have read several that seemed to be yours, but no byline so I couldn't really tell.

I see where the *Stars and Stripes'* soldier poll says the war will be over in Europe in August 1944. Personally, I think it will be before then.

Several times over the weekend I tried to write. I must be getting temperamental because the results of my efforts are in the wastebasket. It was a quiet weekend spent in Matawan for a change.

Saturday, Marguerite and I went into New York to do a little shopping. I got a much-needed pair of shoes. I went in for comfort this time. I don't think they look too old-maidish. Anyhow, they feel like heaven. In fact, I wore them out of the store. Since I'm standing a good part of the day, I decided I'd better have something solid under me. We went to Caruso's to eat, and passed Rigg's restaurant on the way. Remember the breakfast we had in there? I must have looked lovely in there at five-thirty or thereabouts, after not having slept in two nights. Really something to look at over the breakfast table.

I started to write Saturday night after we came home but didn't feel too much like it. On the way through Penn Station, someone went whizzing by me into the arms of a cute little blonde... right, a GI. What a greeting. All I could think of was a similar greeting a little over a year ago. How frightened I was that day and did the butterflies rage! Marguerite had to practically drag me in. I was afraid you'd be disappointed. I'll probably go through the same anguish at our next meeting, it will have been so long, even if we were lucky enough to have it now. I'll tell you something. I won't need a push or a drag into any station where you might be. You can believe that.

We went wishing in Macy's furniture store, in their Guilford Maple house; I've furnished our apartment, at least as far as the bedroom and the dining room go. It's a little expensive but a good investment. We'll be able to give it to our children... We'll have fun picking out furniture for our "two-by-four."

Had a letter from Mom today. She says she is only taking a leave of absence from her job. She has two prospective tenants to lease the house. I hope and pray that's what she will do.

You should see me with my budget book, trying to figure out how to take care of myself, send money to Mom, buy bonds and save a little for my wedding. I need a Philadelphia lawyer to divide \$110 a month into all that. I need you to help me most of all. You seem to be better at it than I am.

I'm curled up in bed again... very comfortable. I could always write better this way than at a desk. I used to do all my homework lying on the floor. That seems a long time ago... five years in June. A lot has happened since then.

Today was muggy and damp. Everything was sticky, my counter, the money and everything I worked with. We had, or rather I had, my busiest day yet. They liked to have worked the socks off me.

Tonight is beautiful. There's almost a full moon and a breeze blowing in from the water. You can smell the sea in the air.

I've rambled about enough. You should be back from your trip by now. Remember a year ago, now? You landed overseas. How relieved I was to hear of your safe arrival.

I'll say goodnight. Here's a special anniversary kiss... bend down a bit...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: I love you.

May 20, 1943—*Matawan* (2 V-letters)

My darling,

Your V-letter must have broken all records for time. It was written May 11 and I received it yesterday. I haven't been sending many V-letters of late... taking a chance on airmail again. Needless to say, the letter... and such a nice long one, was more than welcome and a surprise at that because I didn't expect one until the end of the week, or possibly not until Monday of next week.

Sergeant Kiley... sounds swell, doesn't it? I feel like they pinned the stripes on me. Before I can go any further, I must tell you how much I love you. You told me not to worry while you were gone and, of course, I did and for a good reason, now that I know where you were. I'm so relieved to know that you are back safe and sound once more in spite of being knocked around a bit. You say you need me... the need is very mutual. I know I couldn't go on without you, even though there is such a distance between us, but each letter brings you that much closer. I've always said that words were inadequate, that I could do a much better job showing you. Perhaps I could really convince you then.

So you have to go and get knocked around with the Rangers to get the realism of their training. I know you must have a satisfied feeling, despite the bruises, that you can "take it." What happened to the fellow who wanted to collapse after eighteen holes of golf? It isn't so very long ago that I heard about him. Did you leave him at the desk at the *Stars and Stripes*, or in a foxhole somewhere in the British Isles? I'm praying now that you only have to use the training for the article and nothing else. I imagine they will play an important part in the coming invasion that we are hearing so much about now, and expecting it every time the paper comes out or we turn the radio on... that it has begun and are dreading it even though we know that the sooner it is started the sooner victory will be ours... realizing the sacrifice of lives that will have to be made. Sleeping in your clothes and not being able to take a shower must have been harder than the physical hardships you endured. Afterwards, it must have been like your furlough. I still think you spent most of that in the bathtub.

I had quite a surprise yesterday. Two pleasant surprises in one day is something. Your letter and my favorite uncle paid me a visit. He just walked in the bank and up to my window. I nearly fell off the stool from shock. He came home with Marguerite and I and we had a spaghetti dinner. He can go back and tell the family how I'm getting along. He will be in New York several more days so I'll go in either tomorrow or Saturday and we'll take in a show and dinner. He's my favorite... the one from Massillon that I lived with. We called my aunt last night and luckily, Mom was there too, so I talked with her. She is leaving Monday for Asheville.

I meant to tell you that all three pages of the letter arrived at the same time. Nice of Uncle Sam to keep them together. I called El yesterday before I got your letter and she is fine. I never know now whether she will be there when I call or not, and I say a little prayer while the call is being made that she is all right.

I hope I'm as lucky as you, and that these arrive together. Back to El... she says she is feeling fine. By the time this reaches you the O'Connor heir will have made his entrance into the world, we hope. I'm getting as anxious as she is.

We had a terrible storm last night, the first electrical storm I've been through in years. Of course, I couldn't sleep. I just lay there and watched the flashes of lightning and listened to the thunder, thinking of us and comparing all the turmoil that is keeping us apart to the storm... wondering how soon it would all be over and when the sun would shine for us again, like it is now. I didn't go to sleep for a long time, even after the thunder stopped. Amazingly, this morning I was very rested.

I love hearing about your "wild" youth, even though I wonder how you survived the escapades, at least some of them. I promise not to tell our little ones if only for the sake of keeping such ideas from them. I imagine they won't have any trouble thinking up things to do, with the parents they are going to have. I did my share of devilry when I was young, too.

The other night we went to the president of the bank's mother's home. She died over the weekend so we all went to the wake. They have a lovely home at Sewaren, overlooking Raritan Bay, I was sitting on the terrace... they are quite wealthy so you can imagine what kind of house it was... watching the lights and the moon. It was a gorgeous night, with the moon and the searchlights flitting back and forth across the sky, picking out a plane here and there. There was a beautiful moon last night, too... an orange color. It didn't stay out long after the storm came up.

I think I'm going to make the 3:08 train again today. I'm going out and call El again, more to tell her I have heard from you, in case your letter to them didn't make such good time.

I'll write again tomorrow. Your letter was so long that I can still write more about it, but now I want to get this in the mail, and I just have time to make the train.

I'm glad you are back at least for a time. Be careful about holding your hand up... you never can tell what you'll get into. My prayers and thoughts are ever with you, as always. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 22, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

The Wizard of Something-or-other, meaning yours truly, is off again tomorrow for another week, which means no mail from the only girl in the world and no opportunity to write. I won't even be able to tell you where I've been and what I have done during this trip. The enclosed story is the first installment of my Ranger sortie but I'll have to wait until I get back to send you the others. You should get a pretty good idea what took place during my most recent absence.

And now, since this is Saturday night, let's forget about trips, business, etc., and devote our time to us, shall we?

Your two-page V-mail of May 5 arrived yesterday the only mail I've had for the last four or five days, I think. By now, your fears should be gone. That is, the ones you mentioned about the plane crash. You also mentioned the possibility of getting your picture taken. I can wait for that, but not too long. I'm anxious to see how much more beautiful you've become since my eyes have had the chance to gaze on you. One thing I'm certain of, your pretty little nose is still tilted. Even a year couldn't change that or 50 years.

I said your letter was the only one I received recently. I'm sorry, there was one from Dot, too. She begged me not to send any more letters like the one of Apr. 1 because she was afraid the Doyle heir might make an unscheduled appearance, before his time.

I have told you we are leaving Cheesecake Manor, haven't I? Ben Price and I are taking a place off Fleet St., about five minutes from the office. We were very fortunate to get it. Places in London are as scarce as oranges, even those that are miles from where you want one. But Ben made a connection and we move in June 5. That will be just about a week after I get back from this upcoming trip.

No doubt when you started to read this letter, a thought flashed through your mind... "...said he would never type a letter again unless it was V-mail." That promise still holds but this has to be done tonight (I'm doing it in the office) and there isn't a pen to be had. Forgive me... pretty please?

Here's another item for the scrapbook, Billee... the enclosed picture of me stepping into the plane. There's an interesting story behind that, too, and it will have to wait, along with the others.

Time to rush. I've got to gather equipment and get stuff in shape for tomorrow. Forgive me, again. That must make about the millionth time I've asked for it. Be a good girl... miss me... because I ain't misbehaving, I'm saving all my love for you. 'Bye for awhile.

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

May 23, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I have a million things I should be doing but you can see what an attempt I'm making. The sun is shining for the first time in days so I'm in a lawn chair under a tree, taking advantage of the sunshine. Everything is so green and clean-looking after all the rain we have had.

I called Eleanor yesterday and she is still feeling fine. Every time I call now I don't know whether she will be there or not. Bette answered... she was up in the clouds. Her Eddie was in for the weekend. Lucky her. Tom is being sent back to Virginia. I don't like that too well. He just has to be here for the big event. Eleanor is going to need him.

I had a long letter from Mom. She tells me not to get any "silly notions" like giving up my job and running back to Asheville. I really don't know what to do. I'm not doing anything until I know if she is going to lease the house or stay there. Like Scarlett, I'm not going to worry about that now.



Charles covering the air war, England 1943.

I don't know exactly what I'm going to do next weekend. I have Monday off. Maybe I'll go to the Kileys' Saturday night and Dotties' Sunday and meet Marguerite in New York on Monday. Quite a weekend I have planned for myself. I'd like to take in a good show... haven't been to one in ages. I could think of a lot of other places to go to, but with no escort, I guess I won't attempt it.

I had a long letter from Warren, too. He expects a furlough soon... lucky guy. You haven't had but the one furlough, have you? It's time you had another. We could spend it on the Jersey shore or go to the Pocono mountains. We plan to go to the latter place for Fourth of July weekend.

I just had to make a dash for your letter. It blew off my lap and went across the lawn.

Some of the neighbor children went by, swinging bathing caps. It's a bit too cool yet for me. There goes a beautiful airplane. The sun is catching the silver color of the wings. There are a lot that go over here in a day.

I called Dottie and Al Thursday. They heard the good news too, of your promotion. You probably know by now that Ruth Totten didn't enlist in the WAAC. Seems her mother made a fuss at the last minute. Dottie says she is disappointed. She really wanted to go, I could tell that. I guess she won't have much trouble getting her job back. He seemed to like her quite well.

The ants are starting to crawl on me now. I don't know how long I'll be able to stick it out.

I wanted to write last night but was busy with a job I wanted to finish. I can't mail this until the morning anyhow. Both Agnes and I were in that "rebellious" mood last night. We turned the radio on and that was worse, because it was some good dance music... so we turned the d___ thing off. We'll have our day. At least I have the advantage over her. I do have contact with you. I don't see how she has stood it all this time, not having any direct word from Jack, but I guess you can get used to most anything... not used to it, but able to readjust your life to the facts.

I've gained five pounds since I've been here and feel better than I've felt in months. I don't know what the cause is... perhaps regular hours again. I'll have to watch the weight. Can't get that middle-aged spread yet.

I'm anxious to read your article about the Rangers or rather about your experience. Did I tell you in my last letter that friend censor didn't like several of your remarks in the letter about where you were, and blocked them out?

The girl that works next to me in the bank left for Spartanburg yesterday to pay a visit to her fiancée at Camp Croft. Does that bring back memories? Seems so long ago now.

The sun is making me sleepy. Did you find a nice place to stay when you got back? I'll bet not as nice as Cheesecake Manor.

I'll see what Father John says about the pictures. I haven't seen him since Easter. Maybe we could send them airmail.

There's a great big wasp that has decided he likes my chair. I don't know yet who's going to win.... Think he's gone now.

I expect Mom is busy with last-minute packing now. I can just see it. I hate to have her go back to the house alone. That's going to be a lonely time for her. I can't help but put myself in her place. My conscience acting up again.

I had a \$1,000 bill in my hands yesterday. It's pretty, except it didn't look like that much money. The head teller had quite a few of them. Working in a place like that, money doesn't seem the same. They all call it "crap."

That seems to be about all for now, except the same old story... but I have to tell you just in case you might forget. I love you oh, so much. I'll never be able to tell you in words. Perhaps in a "moment" like that one on the Inn terrace, I could do justice to that love for you. The weekends get longer than ever without you, but I'll survive thanks to my patience. They just played my theme song: "Don't Get Around Much Anymore." (I had to come in... the wasp came back.) 'Bye now, my dear. Bend down a little so I can kiss you a bit... that's right. Just the same as always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 24, 1943—Matawan

Hello my darling,

Your airmail written the fifteenth was waiting my arrival today. I caught the four-thirty-eight at Cliffwood and walked leisurely home, wishing all the way there might be a letter. You're always making wishes come true, but then, you're quite a guy.

Your "dreamer" has a place in the corner of your picture... surprisingly there is a resemblance except he's a corporal. The picture is right here at the head of my bed so when I turn that way in the morning and open my eyes, you're the first thing I see. I say, "Good morning, my darling Sarge," now that you have the promotion.

I loved your letter... worth waiting for one of your spare moments. No scolding this time. Do you reckon I'll have to scold you when you come back? I'll have to, just so I'll be able to make up with you. Trouble is, it takes such a lot to make me mad. Maybe you'd better not remember that.

So the WAAC thought you had acquired an English accent? All I can say is, if you were to say you missed me in that manner, you'd find yourself at the receiving end of a ball bat. It sounds like there's too much tea in your diet, especially after taking the Ranger training. Just bring all your "aitches" back with you and, well... how shall I say it... the way you came bounding up the stairs in Penn Station... enthusiasm? Can't find the right word. You supply it for me.

Doesn't seem like there could be much left of the continent the way the R.A.F. and U.S.A.F. has bombed the h___ our of it. It's time Germany was getting a dose of her own medicine. I see the latest news tonight is "Biggest Raid Yet on the Reich." Dear God, it has to be soon.

Did I blush? I remember feeling quite flustered over your proposal but I didn't think I blushed. You must be kidding me. I did get awfully warm while reading the letter because I could feel all eyes turned on me, waiting the result of reading the letter [the April Fool letter]. Maybe I did blush. I wouldn't be surprised. You almost made me believe it, the story was so good.

Your roses sound heavenly. How I love them. We had so many around our bungalow in California [Billee spent six months in California with her family in 1932]. They bloomed from January until we left in May. Too bad you couldn't spend the summer months at Cheesecake Manor.

We are still having sunshine today and it's cool along with it, but at least there is the sun.

I didn't have much intention of writing you until later tonight or maybe tomorrow, but when I finished your letter, I automatically reached for pen and paper. See what you do to me?

I love you, my darling. Seems to get worse each day, but I like the ailment... it agrees with me. I could think of a tonic to encourage it a little more. Here's a sample... bend down a little bit... 'Bye for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

I almost forgot... I'm so glad all your kinks and bruises are eased out and you're feeling more like yourself. Or are you a changed man, what with the promotion and Ranger training behind you now? And escorting the WAACs around London may have made a difference. Just kidding... a little difficult to do by mail since you may take me seriously.

All kidding aside, I'm proud you came through with such flying colors because, from what you say and other accounts I've read, you should feel proud that you are able to "take it" in every sense of the word, since it isn't ordinary training. But I'm still praying you will only use it for material for your article. 'Bye again... more love and kisses, Billee

May 30, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

About a half hour ago, I arrived back from my week in the "sticks." It actually felt good getting back in the field again, sleeping under the stars, eating field chow (which, incidentally, is good) and mixing with the boys. That was all part of the seven-day job for about a score of correspondents and photographers as well as cameramen. What took place? It's M.I., but I'll save it for you. I'm still clad in field uniform, leggings and all, munching on cheese and biscuits salvaged from a "K" ration kit and keeping a Saturday night date. I intended to wait until tomorrow to write, then realized I had about an hour to wait for my 12:15 a.m. train and couldn't think of a better way to spend it than to be with you.

One letter, more than I could hope for, was waiting for me... that is, one from you, from May 18... when I got in tonight. I had one the day I left but it's wrapped up in my bedroll. When I realize I've written about two or three letters to you in the past three weeks, I feel more ashamed than any time I can remember. Now, don't scold me for mentioning it, but it's just that I feel that way and I want to tell you. I know how my chin drops if I don't hear from you every few days and I'm sure you don't celebrate when you don't get mail for a couple of weeks!

Now that I've gone this far... Benny, who is sitting here with me waiting for the train, tells me clearly enough that I was promoted to Staff Sergeant during my absence. You have my sanction to go out and celebrate right now.

Too, Ben tells me arrangements were made during the week for both of us to move into a new place in town. We leave Cheesecake Manor on Tuesday and take up our new quarters Wednesday. It is a flat, or an apartment as they call it here, so I won't be able to send pictures of the building. There won't be any fireplace, either.

Got a letter from Ruth Rommel, telling me that Ruth Totten cancelled her application for the WAACs at the last minute because of her mother. I feel sure Ruth would have gone through with it but, being one of only two children and the only one at home, I can see how much it would affect her mother. It was tough for her to back down after all the preparations and I believe she deserves as much credit for doing that as she would for going into the service.

In your letter, you talked of getting new shoes, comfortable ones. I could read your comments on those things for hours. I don't know, it's just the way you talk about them. I can just see you feeling so cozy in them. You know how much I would want to be with you on that "wishing" tour of Macy's, looking at our furniture, etc. Just hold tight, it won't be long now. I'll be back with another letter tomorrow.

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

June 1, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I'm very tired but I will stay with you as long as I can. We worked late tonight getting the statements and then walked in from Cliffwood. All I wanted to do was crawl off in a corner and curl up and go to sleep.

Your very welcome airmail was waiting for me and gave me just the "lift" I needed.

Off again on another mission somewhere – you and Roosevelt, or should I say Eleanor? This one I'll have to hear about from yourself – I hope I know soon. I love the picture, darling. But it gives me butterflies in my tummy wondering how often and where those silver wings are carrying you.

I'm tired from my weekend of going here and there. Marguerite and I went to Newark and left part of our pay in Bankeeper's, then I went on to 195 and found everything fine there – all waiting on pins and needles for the big event. Eleanor felt much better than I expected. Your dad is home as it's his vacation. We had a pleasant time together Saturday evening – El went to bed early and we sat up 'til all hours talking – a little about everything. I like him such an awful lot. We went to 6:30 Mass since El didn't want to go to a later one. We said around and crocheted some – the conversation always drifted back to the O'Connor infant while your dad cooked dinner. (I'm wondering if I can train you along those lines.) Your dad starts redecorating his room today. El wants him to take the little bed down but he said absolutely no. "The boys will be coming home soon and we'll make other arrangements. This is only temporary." Bless him. He said to me Saturday night, "Do you think they might be home this winter," and then, "Guess not."

I went to Dottie's in the afternoon and got mixed up in the Memorial Day parade. The bus detoured and I walked six blocks back to Ridge Road and ran into Dottie and Berta and Mr. Drayton with a

little Jackie, so we all went and had a chocolate soda at the corner ice cream store. Dottie looks well and feels that way, too.

Sunday night Dottie and I went to Marty's. It was Janet's birthday and I didn't remember. I felt so badly about it. It looked like Christmas there with all the packages and toys. We went in while she was being put to bed. She's looking more like both of them now instead of just Bill. I met Marty's mother and father. Little by little, I'm meeting all the people I've heard so much about. Bill gave us one of our wedding presents. It's lovely and I can't wait for you to see it: a cross about four inches high including the pedestal in a gold finish. Bill made it at work – perhaps you remember my mentioning the one he made for Al. I told him I wouldn't be able to thank him properly until you came home. I'll take it in and have Father John bless it for us. Bill also parted with his favorite picture of you and incidentally the same one I've been carrying around in my locket. You are watching a basketball game with Bill, perhaps you remember. I hated to take it since he liked it so much but he insisted so it goes in our album. It is good of you, a little serious but then you were concentrating on the game.

We went back to Dottie's early to see Al off to work then we sat around and talked, had some cake and milk and to bed. I left about eleven in the morning to meet Marguerite in New York. I was late because of the transportation by almost 45 minutes – poor Marguerite – first time I ever kept her waiting.

We went to Radio City and saw a swell picture, "The More the Merrier," with Jean Arthur. You'd like it. The stage show was excellent. That's the first visit there since we were there together. I couldn't help but remember that.

After the show, we strolled up Fifth Avenue window shopping and trying to decide where to eat. Decided on the Savarin in Penn Station. It was good. We stopped in St. Francis for the novena then caught the subway to Liberty Street via the ferry and so back to Matawan, really a nice weekend but I missed you, my darling, so very much.

Dottie read me the letter about the Washington incident. I'm beginning to feel married, everyone seems so sure we are. You're quite sure we didn't take the final leap and make our dream come true? I'm beginning to wonder. I made a mistake when I put the white nightgown in my bag for the weekend, not thinking, I guess, it does look a little like a "bride," since it is white satin. But it so happened it was the only one I had ironed. She gave me her room and we undressed together, and she said, "oh, pretty, you look like a bride," and raised her eyebrows, but I think she believes us.



I don't think I blame you for "misbehavin'." I miss you just the same but I'm glad you aren't – of course, I didn't think you were – not kidding either – see how I'm taking you for granted? I still get that "lost" feeling going through Penn Station, passing the place I saw you last. How soon can I stand at the top of the steps and find you waiting to for me again. That old "rebellious feeling," I get it each time I see the "gang" – Dottie and Al, Marty and Bill, and Jack and Berta. Our day will come.

I enjoyed the first issue of your Ranger article. I'll have to wait for the next, like a continued story. I didn't tell your dad anything that you told me about the trip because I didn't want to spoil the story for him.

Your apartment sounds nice. The description was a little more complete in Dottie's letter. Maid service and all – you are lucky, and so convenient to the office but I imagine you'll miss "Cheesecake Manor."

I don't care how you write my letters, just write them. Not meaning that literally – typing – anyway, you can even draw pictures and I wouldn't mind.

Speaking of pictures, I have yet to receive the Easter card. I'm wondering if friend Davy Jones received it for Easter.

Pictures again, yours will soon be on its way. I think I'm older-looking. Maybe it's the faraway look in my eyes from spending so much time with you. I'm afraid my nose still tilts. I can't seem to do anything about that, but since you like it so much, I'm glad it does and I never felt like that before. I was always a little envious of those girls with nice straight noses.

This is getting long, but I haven't written in several days and I've missed being with you so I'm trying to make up in some way.

You should be back from your trip by now. Wonder if sometimes they might let you board the plane coming in this direction. There's a lot doing over here now that you could write about, and think what it would do for my "morale."

Dottie said Ruth T. is taking her mother's decision about her entering the WAACs very well. She was terribly disappointed at first but as Dottie says, she doesn't show things like that. She was able to get a nice job at Colgate – secretarial position – quite a nice salary and interesting work. I can imagine she might have wished for you to be around to talk to since you were such close friends. Times like those when you need a real friend.

Edie is still with Marty. She's nice. I liked her from our first meeting. She brought out pictures of John, quite a handsome fellow, isn't he? She is a beautiful girl, and there isn't anything affected about her either, she's sweet. She still expects him home in July. I hope she isn't disappointed. She gave up her job at Chase National Bank in New York.

I've rambled enough, darling, you must be tired. Where are you reading this? Your new apartment, at your desk or on the run somewhere? Where ever it is you know I still love you, oh so much. I can say, that I'm not "misbehavin'" either. I had to smile at that line. I love you for the little things you say, but then it's all the little things that make you what you are.

Good night, my love, till next time. Do we have a corner in your new home I could curl up near you somewhere and find my place on your shoulder? Mmm... nice. Just right for a good night kiss. Catch it... Good.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



The entrance to Clifford's Inn in the 21st Century. It housed attorneys' offices for hundreds of years, then was transformed into apartments.

June 1, 1943—London [2 V-mails]

Hello sweetheart,

I don't know how many installments this is going to run but I do hope you get them all together. So far we've been lucky that way. At least I believe all the more-than-one-page V-mails you've sent reached here together.

Taking stock of recent bit's of heaven I find I have two page V-mail of May 5, airmails of May 12, 15, 18 and 24 and a two page V-mail of May 20. All of which indicates that my angel is still spoiling me so much I'm disappointed when I don't get a letter every day. I've told you how much I love you and will... only forever, darling... but if you multiply every gallon of water you see roll on the Jersey shore by ten that will give you an arithmetical estimate.

In a separate airmail, I'm sending the story on my work of last week. I thought at first I wouldn't be able to pass it along, and while the story itself doesn't show much for a week in the field, it will give you an idea. The rest of the Ranger

stories will be along with the papers. I thought of sending them separately but I believe the papers will be getting there just as quickly now.

Ben and I moved back to town this week – bedroom with twin beds, living room, bath and tiny kitchenette. We are supposed to be very fortunate to even get a place let alone one for a “reasonable” rent – \$96 a month. Taxes are so high, living conditions the same, that people are forced to pay prices like that. Can you imagine what we could get for that rent?

About the bonds, Billee, it's a relief to even know they are being delivered and I assume the rest will be along to match those of September and April. You were right in believing I'm getting one each month, \$37.50 with a \$50 maturity value, which means we do have \$337.50, or, \$450 maturity to date, including May. As soon as I can get straightened out on moving expenses, traveling expenses, etc., I'll make a budget and see if I can't supplement our savings with some cash. Every time it looks as if I'll see a little, I go off on a trip like the one last week and donate to the good and welfare of hotels, restaurants, etc. While we were with the troops on maneuvers, most of the time we did have to maintain a room in a centralized hotel for headquarters purposes. And hotel rates over here are really something.

Mother should be in Asheville by now, judging by your letters. So, I'm anxious to hear your decision on whether or not you should be with her. Use your own judgment, honey. You know what's best.

In two of your letters you said you were having trouble getting off a letter that satisfied you, filing them in the wastebasket, etc. That's bad. Why not just get everything off your chest, as you see it. Let the chips fall where they may.

You also said you were having "fun" keeping your budget straight and that you were waiting for me to give you lessons. Honey, my advice is to learn now because you're going to be the finance officer of our Army. There won't be any alternative if we hope to have anything at all. I'm the spendenest guy ever, believe me.

The news that you've gained 5 pounds sounds good. But don't get too healthy. Let me see, you were just about right as an arm full of loveliness when I had the opportunity to try you for size.

Your trip to New York with Marguerite made me homesick. The mention of Riggs, Caruso's, Macy's. The pictures you mentioned, "Air Force" and "Keeper of the Flame," showed here and I caught both of them on Saturdays off.

Honey, you sounded rather excited about the possibility of me turning down the seven-day leave in connection with the Liberty story I sent. Put me on record as saying if I did get a seven-day leave I'm sure I could have been persuaded to change your name. At least, that's the way I feel now. How long would it take me to be near if you beckoned? Offhand, I would say, less than a second.

The censored V-mail you received after the Ranger trip concerned the location but I can say now it was in Scotland, which you know now since receiving the first installment.

I had a letter from Ruth Totten yesterday, telling me about her withdrawal from the W.A.A.C.s. I felt sorry for her because I could read between the lines and see how badly she felt. It must have been rather embarrassing to face all the people who gave her farewells and stuff.

I thought this was going to run much longer, sweetheart, but I've run out of gas. I'll be back in a day or so. 'Bye for a while.

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

June 4, 1943—Matawan

My dearest Charles,

Another Friday almost gone and here it is June already again, how time flies.

I started to write you an “April fool” letter but decided it would be a dirty trick. We are in the middle of my first heat wave. I took a shower about 30 minutes ago and I should go back now for another. I perspired more in two days than I have in seven years. I don’t know, think I’ll have to be a “tar heel” from Asheville and go home. That’s what my letter was going to be about. I’ll just get into condition for the summer to come – our summers. I guess I can take it.

We are going to try and go swimming Sunday. I’ve been expecting a call from 195 but none as yet. I couldn’t stand the suspense any longer so I called this morning and El answered. I said, “what – you still here?” Poor kid. She’s tired of waiting now and you can’t blame her. I thought if El was in the hospital Sunday I would go to see her but anything can happen now. Marty was two weeks late. I sent Marty the cutest card from us to Janet, a “belated” birthday greeting but it was cute. She asked me in for the weekend so when I go I’ll take something for Janet. Maybe her next birthday party we’ll both be there – wishful thinking, but we can still dream.

We all got together tonight and took turns pushing the lawn mower. Rain made the grass grow so fast. I was drenched when I came in and really worn out but it was nice feeling for change to be tired that way. I took a hot than a cold shower and felt like a new woman.

There was an article in the Tribune about your Lt. Moora concerning the strike situation. I saved it for our scrapbook. Really, I’m ashamed for them, and what the fellows on the other side must think. I saw in the same paper where fifteen in one mine refused to walk out since they had boys in North Africa. I think now, though, that Roosevelt will step in and settle it, as he should have done in the beginning. I can’t understand why they would do such a thing now when everything is leading up to a swift victory, why they should want to prolong any of it... more than I can understand.

There is a fairly cool breeze blowing through the living room now but it’s still terrific upstairs. Maybe I’ll stretch out down here for a bit and go up later. I’ve been going to bed early the last week or so and it looks like I’m turning into an early bird after all these years of 12 and 1 o’clock, but I’m feeling swell so that’s all that matters.

Marquerite has a promotion. She’s been made note-teller and I work with her now. The old note-teller is taking over his father’s grocery business after 14 years of being in a bank. He was a nice fellow. That leaves only one man downstairs besides the cashier and the assistant cashier. It really looks like a harem now.

I’m getting the *Stars and Stripes* regularly now and enjoying them so much. I really missed them before. You have a lot of new writers now. None of the names seem very familiar anymore except a few you mentioned in your letters.

I can’t help but wonder where this last mission took you, but I don’t guess I’ll just go on wondering until I see you. By that time I will have had to make notes to remember to ask you all the things that you didn’t go into much detail, about these incidents like you mentioned in this last letter.

I've rambled quite a bit and haven't told you much except how much I love you still, my dearest. It's so easy to write and so hard to say. I've always regretted the fact that I didn't tell you before you left even though I knew you must have known how I felt. Oh, well, I'll make up for it when I next see you.

Good night darling. I hope it's cooler where you are this night. My thoughts and prayers are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 5, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

This is our first night in our new place and since you can't be present for the house-warming, we can do the next best thing, can't we?

I said it was a house-warming – rather private – Ben writing to his wife and me spending a “date night” with you.

We moved in this morning and after getting our things straightened out set out for lunch, a movie, a walk, chow mein at the Hong Kong and home.

Just now – I'm doing this between munches on crackers and sips of coffee.

Let me describe our place as I see it from here:

This room – the living room – is nicely furnished with two easy chairs, small dining table, coffee table, side table, floor lamp, red rug, daybed, imitation fireplace.

To my left is the “kitchen.” It is so small – there were three flies in there this afternoon and one of them had the nerve to complain he was too cramped. Still, it's big enough for our needs. The bath is roomy – everything just right. The bedroom has twin beds, plenty of closet space, chest of drawers, night table and phone.

That's just about it – like?

Your letter of May 25 arrived Thursday – just 10 days – and of course, you know how I treated it. Always – I read it as soon as one of the boys brings the mail to the office – stop everything to read it slowly. Then I put it in my pocket and read it again when I get home. Somehow, it is better reading the second time. Like your kisses, Angel – one better than the one before.

You said in your letter that it takes a lot to get you angry. My, honey, how you can forget. Why, I recall our first Sunday in Asheville when you wondered if you were “tagging along.” You tried not to show it but your eyes were glazing a little. I know you scared me because I was afraid you were forming a bad impression. As you recall, I was a bit concerned about Jimmy Kirk when I should have been more concerned over my sweetheart. I vowed, then and there, never to do anything that would make you feel like that again.

As for asking me to bring back a certain “something” that you couldn’t describe, and asked me to do it – Billee, if it is a method by which I show my lasting love for you – whether it be shown in racing up the stairs at Penn Station, or something else – I’ll bring it back – multiplied a million times.

You speculated as to whether my Ranger training, visit with the W.A.A.C.s and promotion had made a changed man of me. You did it jokingly but I can answer that by telling you – I have changed, in one respect. That is in my attitude towards you. If I loved you before – I adore you now.

All this may sound like nonsense from a sophomore’s diary and I could put it in a different way, darling. But, that’s the way I’d say it to you if we were together and that’s the way I’m saying it now.

Just to hear you say you are proud of me – actually makes me proud. I honestly don’t believe I’ve done anything extraordinary, but I love to hear you say it.

Things were rather quiet for me during the past week – since I returned from the maneuvers. Big news during that time was the coal strike. It had a bad effect on the boys here, I’m afraid. Everywhere they talked of men who would walk out over a job like that in war time.

Now today, I see, 20,000 workers in the Packard engine plant in Detroit struck because three Negroes were hired. What the h—l’s going on in the minds of those people?

It’s good to know most of the home front is going strong, though.

Time to kiss you good night, kitten. Love to Marguerite and all.

‘Bye for a little while.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 7, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Breaking records again – your letter dated May 30 arrived today – V-mail. I started to write this one that way but couldn’t get comfortable with the typewriter. Now I’m stretched out on my bed – trying to write propped up on one elbow – my favorite position.

It was good to hear from you, just exactly a week this time. I won’t scold you for not writing – perchance you’re shopping around, darling? Don’t tell me those stripes have gone to your head? Just kidding. All joking aside I never felt more like celebrating – the Staff Sgt. already. I’m very proud. That’s another stripe to sew on. Wish I could do it. We’ll celebrate all those stripes together, when we are together once more. There’s going to be a celebration like nobody ever saw before. I can see lots of champagne cocktails (I don’t want much, do I?) And lots of music and dancing and the two of us together. The Hawaiian Room once more or maybe some new places?

I can just see you, in your field uniform. Do you have a hat too, like they wear, the new style? That’s right, the boys in the field aren’t rationed so much and you are having your taste of rationed food living in London. But then we are too, so by the time you get back you’ll be used to the idea because I have a feeling this will go on several years after peace is declared.

You haven't been able to tell me much about what you are doing, but you have given me enough hints, together with what we read in the paper, that the big push is due to come anytime now. I feel, too, that this week was more or less to conditioning you to go in with the troops. Of course, like a woman, I always imagine the worst, but then I know you would want to be in on it because I wouldn't want to miss anything either. Whenever it comes, just remember how very much I love you and that my prayers and love will always be with you. I can't help but be frightened at the thought of it. I rather imagined or was consoling myself with the thought that you wouldn't see "action" in this work, but now I'm not sure. Seems like every time I imagine the worst, it doesn't happen, so maybe this will be the same way.

I can hear Mom say now, when I didn't get mail from you, "For heaven sake, pick your chin up off the floor." It does drag when I don't hear. The one letter she wrote you that I tore up was a "lulu." You'd have hoarded that torpedo you spoke of outside St. Al's that Sunday after Easter. Remember, you were humming "Somebody Else is Taking My Place," and I said I didn't like it – remember the incident? Back to the letter – that was when I didn't hear from you for nearly two months. I hope I never have to go through that again.

Marguerite said tonight when I read your last line of the letter to her, "Hold tight, it won't be long now," – "Hmm," she says, "you'll have to start putting half dollars in that bank from now on. Those nickels and dimes aren't going to be enough." I can't seem to put anything bigger than a dime in it. I'm still having trouble with my budget.

We took pictures yesterday. It was a beautiful day – typical Asheville summer day – sun warm, but a breeze. Marguerite's sister's husband, the Bolivian, has a marvelous camera and he develops too. They all turned out swell – we sent them to be printed tonight so we should have them back in about a week. He took several shots of me so in all there should be one good one, I hope.

We spent a lazy day. Went to 7 o'clock Mass because we were afraid it would be so warm later. I'm getting so I'd rather go earlier. Get up at 6:30 and think nothing of it.

Your last line that I mentioned above gives me hope, that's the first time in a



Billee. Matawan, June 1943.

long time that you've mentioned any "time." I still try not to be too optimistic. Sometimes I can't help it, then again I feel just the opposite. Temperamental wench, aren't I? Think you're going to be able to stand it?

Dragged out my bathing suit yesterday to see if I can still wear it. It still fits. I'm glad I stay around the same weight all the time. Agnes and little Bill, one of the nephews, went in the bay yesterday. I wanted to go but I have a cold in my ear and I didn't want to risk it. Not anything to worry about, just a little annoying since it is stopped up. If you were to whisper "sweet nothings," tonight, I wouldn't be able to hear them.

The strike situation is settled for a little while, thank goodness. I think, when you fellows come back, you're going to have another battle on your hands, and it will be at the gate of Washington. I'm thinking they are going to need some settling up there and then you're going to have to take over. Seems they are getting a little out of hand.

We went to novena tonight. I finished one a couple of weeks ago, started again last week at St. Francis. I haven't missed but one Monday since I've been here. I like to go. Marguerite has come upstairs now and is getting ready for bed. Agnes is already asleep so I guess it's my turn next. You'd laugh if you could see our "dorm." You should have seen us those hot nights we were in all directions, but it was hot. Not in years have I been so warm. You weren't kidding when you said it got hot here but I think I'll survive.

Time I said good night, for now. My darling, Staff Sergeant he is now. I love it, but I'd love you just the same if you were still a "buck private." Keep well, and "behave" yourself, my dear.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: I love you

June 8, 1943—London

Hello Angel,

And where the devil did you ever hear those "moron" stories? I thought I heard the last when I was told of the WAAC who saluted a refrigerator because she thought it was General Electric.

Still no word about El, although a letter from Bette yesterday said she was going to the hospital "soon." I'm getting a bit fidgety because it should be all over now and they promised to shoot a cable along as soon as it happened.

By mentioning the "moron" stories, sweetheart, you know I received your V-mail of May 26. I haven't heard any of the recordings you mentioned, mainly because I don't often get a chance to listen to them. I suppose they're on the jukeboxes in the Red Cross clubs but I haven't dropped pennies in them in a long time. I have heard one I like, though, "Brazil." It has a catchy tune that would be just right for a sleepy night in our corner.

Honey, I have a complaint to make. I don't get enough pictures of you. While waiting for the enlargement, I could stand some snapshots just to satisfy my curiosity. And, I am curious to see if

your nose is tilted, and oh, just how beautiful you are. The logical answer to that would be why I'm not sending more than I am. The truth is, darling, I'm out of film and it's pretty tough to get. Every now and then, I do a bit of searching but to no avail.

Upcoming this week for me are the boxing championships between the American and British armies at Royal Albert Hall. Our boys have a couple of scores to settle but will have a tough job to do. Back in 1935 at Yankee Stadium and in 1936 here at Wembley Stadium British amateur teams gave American boys more than the once-over-lightly. They should be good scraps.

There's a bit of Hollywood news (always interesting to the ladies) around that you may like, angel. Burgess Meredith is in London as a

public relations officer for Air Transport Command and Adolph Menjou is due in tonight with the USO Camp Show group. I'm assigned to the latter and will let you know more about it.

Our Andy Rooney did a swell job on an interview with Capt. Clark Gable the other day. Contrary to public opinion, Gable is not on operational duty but working on a training film for gunnery instruction. He has been on one mission as an observer to get first-hand information on gunnery and isn't likely to go on anymore. Quoting some of Andy's story: "He is not a captain doing a staff sergeant's job but a captain doing a job that has been done by majors or better. He jumped from second lieutenant to captain in six months not because he had a direct pipeline to the general but because he is an intelligent man doing a good job for the Air Force. Until he bites a dog or figures in a legitimate news story like any other G.I. Joe, the *Stars and Stripes* will leave him alone."

(amlakfaa) Charles



Charles covering the boxing tournaments, London. June 1943.

June 9, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I feel like I'm being courted all over again – a letter every day this week. A V-letter Monday – your request yesterday with the story of the maneuvers with the commandos in the June 1 issue and the picture and today with your V letter of June 1 – nice going. You shouldn't have any reason to feel "ashamed" now.

I'm glad you told me that was you in the picture because I couldn't make it out for the mud. Together with your article, the letter and the pictures I have a very clear picture of what you went through. In fact, I can almost feel the bruises.

I'm getting the cigarettes this week from the man that has the luncheonette in the building. He has to order them. The latter I'm having trouble getting, so you'll have to have a little patience. I enlisted the aid of Father John's by phone tonight. He has the day off tomorrow and he'll see what he can find in Newark. I scoured Perth Amboy today for the most likely places that I might find one – no luck. We'll send flints and fluid with it. I'm glad we can send something to you. Maybe I can sneak a few extras in. Father John says he isn't an uncle yet. Poor Tom is a nervous wreck. He's writing letters twice a day now. I'm going to be a nervous wreck if she doesn't have it soon. I told Father John about Marty going a month passed the intended date – he just groaned.

He thinks you might get your commission now. He was as proud as I am of your promotion. I hope he has Sunday off next time I go in. I haven't talked to him since Easter.

I had one letter from Mom today. There is still nothing definite about the house except that it is in order. She says she feels much better since she has returned, and that she is convinced Asheville is the place for her to stay.

About our "budget." I can see where we are in for trouble because I've always had trouble with those d—- things. I start out with a good beginning and end up with 15-cent lunches the last week. But now that I have such a good incentive maybe I'll succeed. What bothers me is that I won't have enough for my wedding – now isn't that something to worry about?

We had another blackout last night – over an hour this time. Seems like every time I plan to do something worthwhile with my evening they pull one of those things on me.

Your apartment sounds swell. For \$96 a month it ought to be gold-lined. That's taking advantage of a good thing. Do you get enough in your subsistence to pay it? I hope you don't have to go digging your own pockets for it. That's a little bit disgusting when we hear of the British sailors being put up at Asbury Park's finest for free. We should be able to find a super apartment for that price over here. I've forgotten for the moment what those in Arlington rented for. Incidentally, Dottie says we should put our names in now. They have a waiting list of 400! Maybe by the time the war is over and you are home once more we could get one.

We've had rain again. Mom says the sun has shone every day in Asheville since she's home. We've had a very wet spring. Mr. Heuser sent some strawberries to market in New York the other day and

they netted him \$.45 a quart. You can imagine what the retail price will be like. I wish I had a strawberry patch – red gold.

The two pages of the June 1 came together – lucky again. I think Uncle Sam likes us. He's been getting our mail through in such good time here of late.

You can't expect to save much with what you are doing. We are going through the same thing here. You can hardly get a decent meal in New York anymore under a \$1.50.

I haven't gained any more weight. That was the five pounds I lost this winter from my cold and worrying about you! I'll watch my waistline, though, just to be sure. I wouldn't want to disappoint you.

I'm in your fix now, out of gas but more sleepy than anything else. It is way past my bedtime, which has been extremely early here of late. The clock just struck one. The girls have been asleep long ago and I still have some "luxing" to do and my face to wash.

I've gone this far without telling you I love you, and this is worth waiting for, and fighting for, too.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 9, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

There has been something on my mind for a long, long time now, and, after deliberating a great deal I came to the conclusion that I should tell you – before another minute goes by. It came to me only a matter of minutes after I met you – 17 months gone by. It has been with me every day since I've known your lovely face. Many times, it kept me awake at night. It distracted me from work, made me wonder if I could ever tell you and make you understand. It isn't exactly a confession – perhaps it could be described as a novel way of saying something. Yet, it isn't new. What I'm trying to say, sweetheart, and hope you didn't expect the worst – is that I love you – and so much!

Your airmail of June 1 came today after I had returned from an assignment to one of our bomber stations. I could tell by the thickness of it that there was plenty of reading in it – so, I put it away until after my story was turned in and brought it home with me. You wondered where I would be reading it – in our corner at home, or the desk work "on the run." Now you know.

You certainly did have a full weekend over Memorial Day. Can't say I blame you for feeling "all in" for a week afterward. When you said you wore a white "nightie" at Dottie's – I had to smile. I've often pictured your tousled head on the pillow, with a blue ribbon in your hair and specks of white nightie showing on your shoulders.

Listen, darling, because my dad is qualified to cook dinner is no reason to believe his son inherited that ability. I can make a bad cup of coffee but that's about all. Speaking about house keeping, the maid service I mention consists of a woman straightening up our flat after we've left for the office.

You shouldn't feel too badly about not remembering the Daly baby's birthday – I never thought of it until Marty mentioned it in the recent letter. I also forgot Father John's – June 7. Been so damned busy lately I've forgotten everything.

I mentioned in my V-mail of yesterday that Adolphe Menjou was due in town. I met him last night when they had a press interview for him. The enclosed story will tell all.

My assignment today – one that really made me envious of the boys going home – is also enclosed [a story about a bomber crew having completed 25 missions]. You have probably read about them by now. At the airbase today were correspondents from all over, including picture, movie, and radio.

I'll have to thank Bill for the cross, sweetheart. It was thoughtful of him.

You said you went to 6:30 Mass while you were at 195. Gosh, they sure do get you up in the middle of the night, don't they?

I'll be looking for your picture every day now. Ben has his wife's picture in the living room and yours will go beside it.

Have you heard anymore about the bonds, hon? I have them working on them from this end so we should get results between us.

British vs. American Army title fights tomorrow at Albert Hall – that means me. So, 'bye for a little while, Angel. Miss me more than a little, please?

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

[Enclosure] Darling,

A request – if you can – now that we can get packages, up to 5 pounds. Send me a cigarette lighter and a carton of Virginia Rounds. Lighters just can't be had over here and they're indispensable. A small Ronson, nothing expensive, will do. And, I'm dying for a good smoke. Never could get used to the damn old Chelseas, Chesterfields, etc.

I believe regulations call for you to show this request to the Postmaster when you mail the package. The cigarettes can go regular mail but you might be able to pack the lighter small enough to go by air – pretty please? I love you... uh, huh!

allmyloveandkissesforeveralways

c

June 12, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

This is one for the books. I'm answering your letter that was written last Saturday and received Thursday! It's postmarked June 7. I believe that breaks all records.

I love the letter, it was really a date. I could tell you were comfortable and didn't have anything else to do but write. You weren't getting ready to dash somewhere to a WAAC or a Ranger.

Sophomore or not, the letter was just what I needed. You know I had one every day from Monday through Thursday. Really swell.

Your apartment sounds like just what we need but I thought you would insist on a large kitchen. At least room for the flies and you all... remembering a previous argument we had concerning kitchens. Seems I wanted a small one and you a large one. I finally decided on a large one too, remembering our ball team. The apartments in Arlington have exceptionally large kitchens should we be able to get one.

How are you taking the quiet life now after all your traipsing around sleeping under the stars “roughing it?” To be able to go to a movie and eat quietly somewhere, sounds like Marguerite and my trip to New York. Will you be ready to settle down after all this is over to a dull life living in a 2 x 4 and going to the office every day with nothing more exciting than maybe the Jersey City basketball team winning with a shut out?

I know your letter practically from memory, I’ve read it so often, but still I have it here at my elbow.

The income tax rush is on and since I handled the bank money orders, they have really been keeping me hopping. One thing sure I’ll never lose my girlish figure on this job... the ground I have to cover to get these damn things signed by one of the officers of the bank. Do you think he’d sign any ahead? No, so I walk with each one.

Still I was finished at 1:30 today. Teresa’s husband (Marguerite’s sister) picked me up on the way home and we went to Keyport to do some shopping for the baby. We stopped on the way home at the Cottage Inn and had a couple of glasses of beer. When I got home I cleaned up the room and guess what then? The beer must’ve made me sleepy because I stretched out on the bed and fell asleep from four until seven and I never could sleep in the daytime. Lazy I’m getting. Do you mind my liking beer? I’ve often wondered.

You haven’t forgotten that incident that first Sunday? I wasn’t angry, I was just afraid I was presuming too much, that you wanted me to wait until the bus left. That explains the “tagging along” expression.

If all your recent experiences have done so much to change your attitude towards me in such a nice way, I say bring on more “action.”

What makes me all the more proud of you, my dear, your promotions haven’t been handed to you. They’ve all been earned. We see so much of that around here. For no good reason at all someone has a commission handed them. Of course you know those particular ones I’m referring to. Seems like Perth Amboy has so many of them. I’m very proud. I always feel a special glow when I go to Jersey City and someone new to me comes into 195 and I’m introduced as “Brother’s girlfriend” or to the Doyles’ and I’m “Kike’s girl.” You must know how I feel.

The strike news has settled down again for a time. I sympathize with the miners. They deserve all that’s coming to them but still this isn’t the time to assert their rights when we need all the cooperation from labor we can get. I’m afraid the American people have to see or feel real “blitz” before we can be all out for a total war. We are a selfish nation, thinking too much of our own

personal needs and wants. I can understand how these fellows over there feel and as I said before it makes me ashamed for us that this confusion and lack of cooperation goes on.

I gave Marguerite your message and she says with me sleeping in the next bed to her she's a little afraid to send the same message back again but she'll take a chance. She went to Long Island this weekend to visit a cousin in Garden City.

The cigarettes came in yesterday and I wrapped them at the office expecting to take it to the post office before I went home but when I arrived at the post office it was closed so I'll have to wait until Monday. I'm anxious to hear how Father John made out about getting the lighter. I hope he finds one.

We are going swimming tomorrow for the first time. I hope it's warm. My ear is better now after a trip to the doctor and what a relief to be able to hear once more.

I have the issue of Life Magazine finally, July 27, that you mentioned in one of your letters from Ireland in the fall. Is it the article and pictures concerning troop movements in Ireland or the Atlantic convoy? There is one picture in the article on Ireland that I could see where you were in it but it covers radio work and that's what confuses me because I didn't think you were in radio work over there.

That seems to cover all the news this time, my dear. Did I tell you I love you – meant to – oh, so much – Even more so when I get a letter like the last one. I go around the cloud, but I've been that way this week from receiving four in a row.

I'm sleepy now, really sleepy, just awake enough to kiss you good night.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 13, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

In your air mail of June 5, just received, you tell of being baked by the Jersey heat. Our weather seldom varies, more like April or late September than anything else. But I'd trade it any time for the worst Jersey can offer, if only to be able to hold you and tell you all the things I've saved up for you. I'd like to trade it, too, so I could be wrestling with the lawn mower!

I've had two reports from old Company CENSORED, darling. The other day, while looking over list of wounded, I noticed a Cpl. and Sgt. Then, today I had a letter from Harold Gee, a boy from Winston-Salem, who told all he could about the climactic finish. He indicated all of my particular friends were safe. I'd like to know how Jack Donnell came through so I'm planning to get something off to him in a day or so. Also had a letter from Ralph Martin, an old one that was delayed.

Your V-mail of May 26 also reached me yesterday telling of Mother's departure to Asheville. It would be swell if you could persuade her to join you. It would be great if you were together again.

Ever thoughtful, my Billee, thinking of sending the belated card to the Dalys. When I wrote to them the other day I apologized for not remembering. It doesn't sound very important but it is to them, I know.

Glad to hear you are getting the *Stars and Stripes*. I clipped two stories I did last week and mailed them with the air mail. I've sent Father John all the copies I've been able to get and in my next letter will ask him to have them bound. I'm missing three issues of the weekly and three from the daily but I doubt if I'll ever be able to get them.

Big news today, honey, is the fall of Pantellaria and Lampedusa, not much but a couple of more steps in the right direction. Also, over 300 Flying Forts had a crack at Bremen today. And, the other night the RAF sent out about 1000 four-engined bombers to hit Duisburg and Munster in the Ruhr area. The tempo is being accelerated again.

About the Easter card, if you haven't received it by now we will have to give it up for lost, I guess. It was done, as I mentioned before, by one of the Special Service artists who was with AP in civilian life. This was done in color and would have made a good addition to our scrapbook. [The card was not found.]

Haven't heard anything about El and I'm getting worried now. Gosh, here is the 13th and something was supposed to happen around the 5th, wasn't it?

I'll be back with an airmail tomorrow, angel. Judging by your letters you aren't getting everything I send. I've been sending more airmail than V-mail recently but I guess some of them aren't getting through. So, I'll continue to send V-mail supplemented by air mail. At least the V-mails seem to get over okay. Congratulate Marguerite on her promotion for me.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 17, 1943—Matawan

Hello, darling,

Just thought I'd drop in for a few minutes with the pictures. They aren't so good that they are "snapshots." The "glamour" that you can send back if you don't like it or just pitch in the basket, but I thought you would get a laugh.

Agnes' brother wanted to know who I was trying to make – the answer is you if that's



Billee's letter on bank letterhead. June 1943.

what you're wondering, too. I just thought that the picture you have of me is so sober but maybe you'd like a grin for a change.

Using one of our letterhead to show you what a nice building I work in. The third long window from the rear is where I work most of the time. That's all for now – have to run. Bye for a while.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: I love you, oh, so much.

June 17, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

The tables have turned. I don't know whether it is safe to write or not, or am I in the doghouse? I wouldn't have felt so bad but the letter I wrote Saturday night was returned yesterday for more postage so that it had to be re-mailed. The way the mails are going across now in such good time you would have almost had it by now. I have been busy, though, working for Uncle Sam. Remember I told you I handle the bank money orders. Income tax period came along again and you should've seen the mobs outside my window. I really have a good case of writer's cramp. I think I can spell "Collector of Internal Revenue" backwards. Today I am sufficiently recovered, and I have all my back work caught up so I feel better.

In a separate envelope I'm sending some snapshots, believe it or not. They aren't too good but what with the model you couldn't expect much more; no remarks, please. I hope the enlargement will be on its way soon.

The cigarettes went off Monday morning – here's hoping they arrived in good time. Still no word of the lighter from Father John. I hope he is able to find something.

You probably know the good news by now that El is the mother of an 8 pound baby girl. I'm disappointed that it was a girl, but then that's what Tom wanted. I hope my first is a boy then I'll be satisfied. You must have been wondering what happened like all of us, but I still think the doctor miscalculated. Marge and I were figuring and after all they were only married on September 12. Bette said your dad was so excited. She wasn't exactly calm when she talked to me. I've certainly been keeping the wires busy between here in 195 keeping in touch with what was happening. I called Dottie and told her the good news. She's feeling swell except for a summer cold but then I am enjoying one of those things, too.

Two of your letters came Tuesday. The airmail written the ninth and the V-letter written the eighth. Darn you anyhow – get me all worked up. Here I was thinking you were going to tell me something about your past and instead it was even better than that. I'd lots rather hear that or read it perhaps I should say. I couldn't help but smile and mutter to myself, though, something to the effect of, "you devil, you."

How does it feel to be settling down again to interviewing celebrities, etc. No more Rangers or commandos. Which do you like the best, the latter, I suppose, anyhow I would. The articles were swell, especially the one of the fellows coming home. Cheer up, Billee, that will come true, and

maybe not so far off. One of these days the telephone will ring or I'll look up from work here and you'll be there.

We spent a quiet weekend, except for a little swimming. It was a perfect day for it, not too warm, or too cool. Cliffwood Beach is nearby so we went there. They have a large pool there about 9 foot the deepest part. What a surprise I had when I dove in and came up in saltwater. We stayed in about two hours and a half. I got a little sunburned but not much. I couldn't help but think how much you would have enjoyed it. I'm glad you like to swim because next to dancing it's my favorite past time. After we left the pool, we went to the bar at the end of the boardwalk and had had a couple of beers. Tasted good after the swim. They had a music box and we played a few numbers, Agnes and I taking turns dancing with Harry. We went home about 7 o'clock.

Tuesday night Agnes and I went to see "Casablanca;" after so long I finally caught up with it. I think I remember you mentioning that you had seen it. Really swell, wasn't it? If you never liked "As Time Goes By" before, you have to like it after seeing the picture. There is something about the words that I like very much, maybe because there is such a lot of truth in them.

Send along another request for cigarettes. They stamp that at the post office so that you can't use it again.

I'm going into 195 Saturday if my cold is better. I'm anxious to see the baby. Bette says she has El's nose and dark hair. By the way I'm having my first Saturday off, from now until September 15. Wish you were here. Think what nice long weekends we could have.

I'm writing this in the bank as you can probably guess. I'm having a lot of interruptions from my customers so I hope it makes sense. Back again – wish I had a couple of these savings accounts that I have here, really nice.

Last night was really beautiful. A full moon almost and the weather just right. Agnes and her brother and I after mowing the lawn felt in the need of a little refreshment so we went to a place nearby in Bayport—just as we were, too. Agnes and I in our shorts and Ed in his working clothes. We had some rum cokes—I like those too. Ed had Tom Collins. They are the first drinks I've had out in a long time. In fact I think the last time was with you. We didn't stay long.

Just noticed the date. 17 months ago today we met. Remember, but then how could we forget? How it seems like a long time ago—in fact my life before that time is just a blur. You're so much a part of



every day that I don't even care about remembering what went on before that January 17th. When I think how close I came to not going to the Y that night I get butterflies. It's still the same old story, darling, but I love you more and more as time goes by. It's contagious, this expressing ourselves with phrases, but it is kind of nice.

It's about time for us to close so I'll have to go to work for a change. Better close now. Who knows, maybe there will be another letter today. I love this being spoiled with mail. I'll see what I can do about spoiling you from now on. So long for a while, be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 18, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

At long last, a cable from Bette today broke the good news—a baby girl and both doing well. If I had to wait another day to get word I would've had a baby myself, maybe twins. Now that I “sweated” that one out I'll start worrying about Dottie. Why do people have to have babies? Can' they have eggs and hatch them? It would save a lot of trouble for the uncles.

Your air mails of June 8 and 10 came while I was away for a couple of days, but they gave me something to look forward to when I got back. I can't blame you for wanting to celebrate the promotions. How do you think I felt? Still, like you, I can wait. And when we do celebrate it won't be because of promotions. However, I want to stress one thing. I've done it before and so I only merely remind you. If there is a time when you don't hear from me for a while it may not be because something has happened. You know how it was the last time when mail service was practically stopped for so long. It may happen again. Too, I may not be able to write. But as long as I can you'll hear from me.

You wanted to know what I wore in the field while I was away. I'm sending a picture of a group of us who work together. You'll be able to see for yourself. It isn't a very stylish picture but then you can't be very stylish on maneuvers, can you? [This picture has not been identified.]

I didn't expect you to have much luck getting the cigarette lighter. Fellows just over and with whom I spoke said lighters were pretty rare but I thought I'd chance it anyway. I can't wait until I get the Virginia Rounds. Haven't had a good smoke in months. I think I'll smoke them chain-style when I get them. I doubt if you'll be able to send the fluid since it is flammable. It won't matter much because we can get fluid and flints in the PX here.

I can't understand why Father John gets so enthusiastic about my promotions. From what you say he's got big ideas. I only hope I can live up to half of them. He makes it sound easy but it isn't as simple as all that.

It was good to hear Mother is happy again in Asheville. I'm praying she has good fortune with the house.

Listen, unless you get that budget of yours straightened out so that you won't have to end up with skinny lunches, I'll, well, I'll haunt you in your sleep. I'm not the one to give advice on budgets

because I just can't keep one that works. That's why I always expect so much of you. It is going to be fun, though, when we try to keep one together.

I'm going to sign off for a few hours, sweetheart, because I want to write a special anniversary letter tonight—17 months ago tonight. 'Bye for a while.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 18, 1943—London

Evening angel,

It was just a year ago that I fully realized how thoroughly and completely separated we were—and would be. Then, it had only been two months since we kissed and said “goodbye, for a little while.” But, the aspect of what was to come and how long it would be coming formed in my mind. We knew extensive maneuvers were to prepare our 34th division for action of some sort. And, as the months passed by, and the preparations work accelerated—I became frightened, sweetheart. Oh, I don't think it was a fear for safety. That would have come under fire.

It was a fear that one day you would see men coming home. There would be families and girls like you there to meet them. You would be there—looking—but not for anyone in particular because you would know I wasn't coming. You would be there just because we planned it. I saw you standing there—and I was frightened.

That was last summer. In a few days another summer will be with us. I'm not as frightened as I was a year ago for more than one reason. One is that I never stopped getting ready for the time when survival might mean a question of who was better prepared. Another is the faith we have in each other—the faith that has been tested during a year's absence. I'll always thank God for that faith. When I met you 15 months ago tonight, sweetheart, I knew I would love you always, would fight for you if need be. And that is all still with me.

And, I'm not frightened at the thought of not coming back to you because I will be there for you to meet. I know what you will look like, how you will feel in my arms. You are going to cry—and it is quite possible I will, too, although I can't recall when I cried last. Sometimes I wonder if I have tears.

I suppose it is natural for soldiers to think of what they want when they go home; what they can expect. For my part, Billee, I only want you. The rest will follow. I'm not expecting anything from anyone. I know now what it means to work and strive for something—someone. And, nothing is going to stop me from getting it. I believe I can stand up with the next fellow and get what I want—with you beside me. That's what I'm thinking of tonight when the full moon, enemy bombers, sirens, guns and noise isn't enough to take you away from me.

I guess you can call this part two to this letter, darling, because of the change in theme. Now that the full moon is brightening the nights, Jerry is making stabs at London. He was over three times last week. And he's over again tonight. I say “tonight” even though it's 1:30 a.m. The alerts don't last long—only about 20 or 30 minutes. The sirens wail, 10 minutes later you hear the planes, guns bark at them, you hear a couple of explosions way off—and it's all over.

I'm going back on the old job in a big way next week. I'll be sports editor for a week while Mark Senigo is on furlough. I was to go away for four days to cover amphibious training by one of our combat units but the job was given to one of the others when Mark decided to take next week for his furlough.

Honey, in your last letter you wanted to know if we should apply for one of the homes in North Arlington. I don't know how it would work out. If I could say I'll be home one, two, six, seven months from now, I'd say "yes." That is if you had looked them over and liked them. But we can't plan anything like that can we? If you like the places and they actually will "reserve" one for us — why, go to it!

Before I turn in I have to sew a button on my shirt—not that I haven't sewn them on before but I wish I had you to do it, sweetheart. Miss me—and love me. 'Night.

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

June 20, 1943—Matawan

Evening, darling,

Just got back from 195 a little while ago. Found everyone fine. We made two trips to the hospital to El and the baby. They are both doing well. El has probably told you all about the baby and the difficulty they are having getting Tom home. She's quite worried about him which is only natural, but other than that she's all right.

The baby is darling. El all over again except I think she is going to be a blonde. The new hair is light and her eyelashes and eyebrows far, too. Your dad is tickled pink about being a "grandpa;" very proud and Bette can hardly wait until she can hold her.

Your dad was quite busy on his vacation decorating. The room he did over for El is lovely. I slept there last night with the new crib and all. I couldn't help but lie there and think this morning that your head should be on the other pillow—maybe still asleep and our "pitcher" should be making cooing sounds in his crib. I usually do all my "thinking" just before I drop off but last night I went out like a light. Said my prayers and hopped in and before I could even turn over was gone.

Your dad and I went to 8 o'clock mass this morning. I like going with him, next best to going with you. The graduating class received communion this morning—quite a large class of girls. The boys were few—noticeably few. They all looked so nice in their caps and gowns.

At long last we found a Ronson lighter. Guess where? In your drawer. Father John looked all over and I looked in the stores and no lighters. They look at you and laugh when you ask for one. Back to the two—did I say one? Well, there are two: one a lighter and case combined, the other a lighter and pencil... remember? The only thing is that they are obviously gifts and would you want to risk having them sent? The pencil could probably be sent airmail easier than the case. So it's up to you now if you want a lighter. By the way or did I ask you before to send another request for cigarettes.

It's been a scorcher yesterday and today. I'm wilted if you know what I mean. My arm keeps sticking to the paper here. I came home earlier tonight because of it being so warm.

Your dad and I sat on the porch a while last night. He has the screens up. Then we adjourned to the kitchen to catch the breezes back there and of course, the usual picture of beer. I like to listen to him tell about the old times when you were all children. Then he talks about your mom quite a bit. He tells me a lot about the church, too. Then we fight the war for a while, wondering about this and that. Bette went to bed early. She got up for 6:30 Mass.

Have you heard the latest? Father John claims he's going to have 40 nieces and nephews. 10 from El, Bette, Eddie and us. How about that? Mass production, I call it. We'll have to buy a wing in the Margaret Hague for the Kiley-O'Connor families. I didn't get to see him again this time. He is due to spend his vacation at home—three weeks. He's to decorate the hall.

The christening is to be July 4 so far as we know now. El, of course, wants Tom there if it's possible. What we wouldn't give to have you there.

Isn't there even a slim chance of your coming home for a leave? I try not to think about it, but there I go wishing again. It's probably the weekend that set me off, seeing El with her new baby and everything.

Getting sleepy, and it's only 10 o'clock. That comes from living in the country. Maybe I'll write you again tomorrow.

I love you more and more and miss you more than that. Remember the "picture" you have of me is in my rebellious mood. That's me tonight—me and 1 million others.

Good night, my dearest. My thoughts and prayers and love are always with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 22, 1943—Matawan

Evening, darling,

Here it is Tuesday again and everything is much the same including the heat which is even worse. What a day. I think I'll take the next boat to England and share that April and September weather with you.

My own mom would have disowned me had she seen me about a half hour ago but now I've showered and am ready for bed and look a little neater. This makes me want to make tracks for Asheville, but then I get ashamed when I think of the fellows in North Africa.

Speaking of them, the line in your latest letter concerning the boys in the old company was blotted out, but I knew what it was so it's all right. You never said whether or not you received the V-letter that was censored that I enclosed in one of my air mails.

I had a long letter from Mom yesterday. She feels quite well and has a woman staying with her and keeping up with the work. She rented the apartment to a flight officer and his wife and daughter for quite a nice sum. She isn't giving any meals at all for which I am more than grateful. Having to cope with the rationing together with no means of getting the food home changed her mind.

Received Eleanor's announcement today of Annice's arrival. You know by now and I imagine are much relieved. I know we all are. So you're an uncle now.

I'm glad you heard from the fellows in North Africa. I've been wondering and praying that they are all right – Ben and the rest.

The bugs are getting the best of me around this light. You'd wonder how they could get in with all the screens up.

I'd like to close my eyes right now and wake up on the terrace of the Grove Park Inn, sitting in one of those chairs with you beside me watching the moon and catching some of the mountain breezes. I probably need a coat or a wrap of some sort. Sounds wonderful. Mom says in her letter "I hope it isn't too warm for you." I can take it, just conditioning myself for future summers in Jersey that you and I will share together.

You know, in the last letter I wrote—Sunday night—I made a horrible mistake. I got to thinking about it yesterday. It seems to me I said something like, "as I lie here thinking." Sounds wrong doesn't it? I think it is very wrong, excuse it please and blame it on the heat.

I wonder what you fellows must be thinking of now at all these race riots breaking out in the defense areas. The only thing I can figure out is that the Negroes are making too much money and they're getting cocky and the men aren't going to take it. Sure does make you wonder how they can be such a bottleneck at a time like this. We haven't won yet, not by a long shot. We still have a long way to go, as much as I would like to feel a little more optimistic. I'll bet they hold off the invasion until fall. I wish it would start soon, but then they all know over there what the right time is to start.

Heat or no heat, wish you were here. You could make good that first paragraph you wrote in the letter about trading the weather over there just to be here, etc. Your letter was just what I needed. They always have just the right "lift" to them and you never fail to make me smile over some paragraph. Funny how precious a bit of paper and a few lines on it can be.

I guess I told you all there is this time – guess you know Jersey City is at the bottom. Sure hope they have a good team when you come home so you'll have some good material to work on.

I was going, wasn't I. The clock just struck 12 and tomorrow is another day.

Just time enough to tell you how much I love you. The same old story but I have to tell you so you won't forget. Keep well. Oh, and behave yourself (haven't told you that in a long time). Good night my dear.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 24, 1943—Tennessee

Dear Ray,

Maneuvers are over and we will be leaving Tennessee in a couple of days. I received the Journal the other day and thought it was pretty good. I will give you the new address at the end of this letter.



Eddie Kiley holding Annice O'Connor. July 1943.

I also received a letter from El. She told me that you and Father Eddie were up to see her. She told me the baby weighed 8 lb., 5 oz. I don't know what the average baby weighs but that sounds like a pretty good size baby. What do you think?

I understand Brother is a staff sergeant now. The folks at home asked me what was holding me up. I told them the job I have driving doesn't call for more than a corporal's rating, so I have decided to give up driving and come back to the Company to do Company work, drilling and the like. I don't know if I will like it or not. I know I never did when I came into the Army.

When I get up to Pine Camp I will be an acting sergeant until they think I can handle it. I know

I can, after all I have been in this Army now... almost a year and a half... so I think I can handle any job they have. The only thing is I don't know if I will like it. I always did like driving these big trucks and tanks.

I will be glad to leave the South, Ray. It's starting to get pretty hot down here now and I had enough heat in the desert.

When I get up to Pine Camp I am going to try and get a three day pass as soon as I can, so I might be seeing you all pretty soon.

I guess that's about all I can think of right now. Take care of yourself and God bless you.

Eddie

PS: They say this camp is up around those Thousand Islands where you spent some time a couple of years ago with Father Eddie.

June 25, 1943—Matawan

Dearest Charles,

Just a line while I'm waiting for the girls to go home. I've missed the train to Cliffwood so we'll all have to go together to save gas. Mr. Heuser can pick us all up at the station.

Are we having a scorcher or not? I feel like someone threw a bucket of water on me—hot water at that. Tomorrow we don't have to work so that will be all right. I'm going to enjoy one more Saturday then I'm going to go look for a part-time job. I can't seem to put any away in savings. I just manage to get along on my salary and that's all. Me and my budget again.

I called 195 this morning expecting to talk to Bette to see how El was and who should answer but Eleanor herself. She had been up and given the baby her bath. She sounded well over the phone, but I cautioned her about doing too much. After something like that you have to be more than careful. She says she feels fine. She was much relieved after talking to Tom yesterday. He was even more surprised to hear her answer the phone than I was. I'm going in over the Fourth for the christening. Tom has gone to his chaplain to see if he can enable him to get permission to come home. He's been on maneuvers and is due to be sent back to Pennsylvania once more.

Last night about 12 o'clock I decided to write the letter about the bonds. One dated May 1943 came the other day from Massillon so that's three we have, but since they are coming a month behind now and none for those months between September and April I decided I'd better not waste anymore time. Now all I have to do is wait and see what they have to say. I think I explained the matter in full. I had a time trying to make it as brief as possible and still complete.

I'll get some swimming in this weekend cold or no cold, it's almost better anyhow. Maybe I can get a little more tan, too. You should see my freckles and I never had them before. That comes from walking home in the sun these afternoons.

This is such a swell time to be going to the shore. We could leave tonight since I'm not working and not come back till Sunday night or even Monday morning. Maybe we could be going to Asbury Park to the Berkeley Carteret, or is that too expensive? We could go for a moonlight swim. I always liked to swim at night and early in the morning.

Yesterday when I went to the station there was a wedding party there seeing the bride and groom off. You should have seen all the rice. Made me a little envious but then maybe it won't be so long now.

This is sort of disjointed if you know what I mean—blame it on the heat. I want to write and I'm so warm. I can't wait to get home and peel these clothes off and get into my shorts. What a relief it is. I had a letter from Mom the other day and she says, "I hope it isn't too hot for you there. As always, we are having the lovely cool evenings and using our blankets." I can remember when I used to sleep with the blanket in the summertime. Now I never even get the sheet pulled up. Oh, well, what's a little heat in my young life? Heat or no heat, I still love you, oh, so much. This will just condition me for the summers we will share together. Maybe by that time I'll be used to it, say by next summer or is that too much to hope for? I read where a congressman said how important the soldier vote was going to be in next election and that the majority of them would be home to vote. I love guys that

talk like that. They make me feel good, but then General Arnold [Henry H. Arnold, head of the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII] says we shouldn't be over-optimistic.

I'm going now. Guess you've heard enough of this prattle, anyhow. Be back when I have a little more sense, but then I always said you picked out a "scatterbrain." 'Bye now, I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



June 26, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

The small portable—Bing Crosby's "When Day is Done,"—your letters, smoke curling up to the shade of the table lamp, my sweetheart and Ben's wife smiling from their pictures. That's what you would see if you were sitting across the room, watching me dream over my visit with you tonight, angel.

Your picture is one of those enlarged snapshots which came today, together with your airmail of June 15 and number two of June 17 V-mail. This will probably take me hours to write this because every minute or so I stop to look-look-at that picture.

Judging by your letter, darling, you didn't think much of your "glamour" picture. It means so much

to me it will never be too far from my sight. To me, it is the most realistic, the most "alive" picture I believe I've ever seen. Everything is there—your smile which was fading in my memory for want of seeing it again—your eyes which say you love me—and the ring on the third finger, left hand.

And, you give me permission to throw it away or send it back! Billee, will you save the negative because it's going to be an enlargement in our scrapbook. The other pictures were swell, but not real, un-posed pictures like the other one.

You're going to hate me for this, too. I like the dress in the "glamour" snap better than your Easter creation. I don't know, honey, the Easter dress makes you look older and more dignified. Why, I believe I'd be afraid to throw dignity away and pick you up in my arms if you were wearing that

dress. I'm being unfair because I'm looking at a picture—but I love you, sweetheart—you couldn't hate me for saying that, could you?

You'll never know what those pictures did for me. I just stared and stared into your eyes—almost hoping you would come to life. Seeing these makes me wonder how much longer I can stand being away from you.

The second half of the V-mail told of your swim and stop at the “Cat and Fiddle” bar. Seems I've been to a place with that name somewhere. Hope the first half of the letter comes tomorrow.

Listen, you wondered if I minded you liking beer. I remember you saying you had a few glasses with your mother and again with Dad, now some with Teresa's husband—and I love it. Not the beer, but the way you talk of it. You can drink all the beer you want to.

Re: the “Life” issue of July 27. The pictures of the convoy were taken of our trip. The transport on the cover is the “Aquitania,” the one I traveled on. The pictures were taken from the battleship which led the convoy. I can tell you now, since it is over a year old, we had 26 vessels our convoy—the largest of the war up to that time. There were 13 transport and supply ships and 13 warships, from destroyers to aircraft carriers, cruiser and battle-wagons. You see, they must've known you had a special piece of cargo aboard. I wouldn't be in any of the Ireland pictures, though.

Here's a new one for you, honey. One of the five WAACs I met when they arrived called me on the phone yesterday. Said she wanted to see me before she returned to her station after a 48-hour leave in London. I met her at the Washington Red Cross club and learned she wanted me to “ghost write” a story for her. One of the WAAC officers wanted the beat article written by one of the five girls to put on one of the wires home; she told the girls they could get help if they wanted to. This one said I was the only newspaperman she knew and, rather embarrassed, asked me if I could help her. I asked her a flock of questions, bought her a “coke” and wrote the story in the office. It was a hurry up job – but if you see the WAAC story “written” by Joy Dunlop—that's me! That's the best yet, “ghost-writing” for a WAAC.

Bob Hope and Francis Langford hit town yesterday for a stay of five weeks. They are putting on a three-hour show here July 4.

I've been to the doctors today. Nothing serious but something I should have taken care of long ago. Every once in a while my left hand dries—like chapped skin. It has happened for a year and a half but I never paid much attention to it. The “doc” said the gland that is supposed to supply oils in the hand isn't functioning properly. I'm taking ultra-violet treatments every day. I'm in town for two weeks. I'll be gone for three this week which means I won't get much.

I also had the dentist check on my teeth and made three appointments with him for the middle of July. I'll have them cleaned, a small filling or two. I've been extremely lucky since British food is almost wrecking soldiers teeth. That is, those who live under British rations.

A good-night kiss at the end of our Saturday together. Love me and miss me more and more. The best to Marguerite and all.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 27, 1943—Matawan

Hello my darling,

I think I have a little more sense about me tonight than I had on Friday when I wrote that dopey letter. We're still having the heat wave, but I'm getting tough. We went swimming today and that helped. There was really a mob in the pool and quite a few on the beach, but we had the kids with us so we thought the pool would be safer.

The diving boards tempted me today. I haven't done much of that in a long time. I'd almost forgotten the feel of a spring board under me. They have three... two low ones and then the ten-foot one. After trying the low ones for awhile, I decided to brave the high one. I didn't spring the board much but I must have turned half way over because I sure gave my legs an awful sting when I hit the water. The pool is only 9 feet deep and I practically scraped my face on the bottom. After that it wasn't so bad. At least, I didn't sting my legs again. How I love the water! The more I go in the more I don't want to go home when the time comes. I'll probably be good and stiff tomorrow.

I did get a little more sunburn today and a few more freckles on my puss, across my nose and cheeks. Now, isn't that something?

Called Mom today. It was her birthday, the first one I've been away for. She didn't get the package yesterday we sent her so she thought I'd forgotten. Can you imagine me forgetting her birthday? She sounded fine. I can always tell from her voice how she feels, and this was the best yet. I missed being with her today. She says she's feeling good, taking care of quite a few soldiers in the house.

I only had one letter all week. I'm not complaining, but I missed hearing from you. Guess they will be on their way. Do you mind if I miss you oh, so much?

I couldn't help but be envious of Marguerite's brother, Ed. He packed his bags yesterday and left today for a week in the Poconos, he and his girl and a young married couple. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? We all helped him pack. I was kidding him about taking so many clothes. I told him he wouldn't have a good time with all those... all he'd be doing would be changing clothes. It seems they dress for the dinner hour at the lodge they had reservations in... there is also an orchestra for dancing.

Enclosed is an article I thought you might like to read. I think it's true that, even though there does seem to be so much confusion going on and lack of cooperation, that it is only a few and that the majority of people are ashamed of what's going on and hope that you over there won't feel too badly about it.

I'm feeling good now. My cold is practically gone and right now I'm cooled off with the help of the shower I just had and the tall glass of ice water sitting beside me.

We went to seven o'clock Mass this morning. When I came back, I crawled back in bed and slept two hours. Lazy... that's the latest I've slept in a long time.

I think I'll call Dottie tomorrow and see if they have anything planned for the Fourth. Maybe I'll spend part of the weekend with them since we have Monday off, too. I haven't seen her since Memorial Day.

I'm getting sleepy. All my swimming today. Maybe I'll sleep tonight without dreaming. I really had a wild and wooly one last night but I'm not going to tell you what it was about.

Next week, or rather this week, is really going to be a lulu, so if I don't write for a couple of days it's because I'm very busy. Besides it being the first of the month, it's interest period and we all have to help.

That seems to be all for now. Wish you'd been with me today. Oh, I heard the "Stars and Stripes" [radio show] tonight. Last week's program had several of the writers from the office in N. Ireland so I thought maybe they might have you on tonight, but no luck.

Don't you love these nice even lines... but I'm sitting on an angle and that's the way this is going.

Guess I'll say goodnight for now. Be back as soon as I can. Here's a "special" coming your way... I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 28, 1943—Matawan

Dearest Charles,

For heavens sake, what are you going to do when you have one of your own, if you're going to get that upset over your sister's baby? They'll have you in the hospital before it's time for me to go. That will be something. I can imagine you were much relieved, though. I was only kidding about the above. It will be fun worrying about our own.

Those sidecars we had in New York were good. I had forgotten. It's just that champagne has always been a symbol of celebration to me but, darling, I'll settle for water if I have you to there drink it with.

I forgot to tell you the V-letter dated June 18 arrived today together with the pictures of you and the photographers on maneuvers. Incidentally, the pictures arrived on the 22nd so that is less than a week and they weren't sent airmail... wonderful.

The pictures are swell of you, darling. I love the hat. It's most becoming to that well-known smile of yours. That's kind of contagious. I have to smile every time I look at any of your pictures like that. You look very much like Father John in the more sober one – more than in any picture I've ever seen of you. I'll have to be knitting you another sweater – that must be a little worn by now, yes? Are those the gloves I sent for Christmas or not? The big fellow in the picture looks very English. Am I right? Was Ben Price with you? One of the fellows in the Jeep looks like him. I'll take them in with me this weekend when I go in for the christening.

Why shouldn't Father John get enthusiastic about your promotions? Don't I? Of course it's only what you deserve and in our estimation you should be more than a sergeant, but that's only natural.

If I thought you would haunt me in my sleep, I wouldn't eat any lunches at all. Idea – then maybe I could keep my budget. I'm so glad you added that last sentence "it's going to be fun, though, when

we keep one together!” Because this is going to be a 50–50 proposition including the budget. I’m declaring myself right now, as we used to say in the credit office at Ivey’s when we wanted something. I just went out for a few minutes. Quite a few stars but a little cloudy and just a suggestion that there might be rain here. Not that we need it or anything. This is the 17th day of the record-breaking heat wave. Maybe you have read about it. I promised myself I wasn’t going to discuss the heat anymore and here I go again.

Back again, seems like in between every other word I’m having to smack the censored mosquitoes that come into the screens. They have my ankles chewed up nearly already.

We stopped in to see Father Burke tonight after novena, Agnes and I to pick up a baptismal certificate for her sister and to find out about confirmation class for me. I happened to mention the fact to your dad that I have not been confirmed and he thought I should be confirmed before we were married. Won’t be any here until next year so he is going to give me a letter to another parish where they might be having confirmation soon – probably the fall. You know, to please Mother Mueller when I was received I used the name Wilhelmina Ruth Marie and I just happen to think that Father John will use all of that. I like Ruth Ann Marie, but the Wilhelmina floors me – don’t you suppose he could just say “Billie Ruth Marie?” I don’t suppose it’s that important.

The mosquitoes are winning out. I’m going to have to turn the light out. They’re coming at me from all corners now like the R.A.F. I heard this morning where the Reich wants to throw Goering out for not producing competent fliers for the German Air Force. If they’d thrown Hitler out that would be swell or better still just throw the Third Reich out. Given a little more time the combined Air Forces will do that, too.

As I said before I’m going to have to go and let the bugs takeover. I love your letters, darling, haven’t told you in a long time. They always make me smile over some part in them – just what I needed today together with the pictures. You look well, darling, really well, maybe not quite as heavy as some of the pictures taken in Ireland, but heavy enough.

I’ll try not to worry but that would be like telling me to stop loving you. I can’t help but be concerned about your welfare. I’m looking forward to my “anniversary letter.”

I love you – just read this letter over. Do you get tired of being called darling? Seems like that’s every other word. Oh well, I have to call you something.. something nice. Good night, for now, my dearest. Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 29, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

While you are trying to survive the heat waves I’m still sleeping between sheets, two light blankets and comforter as July approaches. Reading your airmail of June 21 and 23 in the first half of the V-mail of June 17, all of which arrived today, almost brings beads of perspiration to my furrowed brow.

And when I get the news of the blistering Jersey weather I don't blame you for dreaming of Asheville, and that cool night at the Inn.

I said all I could about the snapshots in an airmail written last Saturday but I'd like to repeat, the "glamour" picture is the best ever. I wouldn't trade it for anything. I just stare at it, and stare at it again. I can't see why in heaven's name you didn't think so much of it, I probably took the edge from the other two snaps while raving about the one, but I did like it so much.

I'm waiting for a scathing reply asking me why I imagine I'm a fashion expert and qualified to determine what kind of dresses look good on you. Seriously, honey, you did look beautiful in it and I shouldn't have said otherwise.

You ask me which type of assignments I preferred, those around town or the ones with the little more action. I do prefer the latter, much more than the others. Tomorrow I'm off for three-day trip that might give me a chance to see the Ranger boys again.

So you want to hear some of my past, do you? Sorry I disappointed you by starting a "confession" and then telling you it's just that I love you so. Richly, I don't believe I have a past—that is, one that could be called such.

A letter from El, written in the hospital, told me of the baby. How it looks like her as far as noses go. That means it looks about like me because my nose is like El's, they tell me, or vice versa.

Just keep on dreaming about that room with the crib, angel. It will be true one day. I don't know where Father John gets that stuff about 40 children from the Kileys and O'Connors. Can't you just see 40 kids marching off to school together?

About the lighter... I completely forgot about the ones I had at home. Yes, both of them were gifts but I'll take a chance of getting the pencil-lighter. Will you ask them to send it? As for the cigarettes, here's the request that the post office wants.

I got a kick out of your worriment concerning the use of "lie" or "lay." You said it was a horrible mistake. Good grief, how many people were killed because of it? I don't think I use the word properly myself twice in succession.

When I get back from the trip I'll tell you what I can of it. Meanwhile, be a good girl. Don't worry, I "Ain't Misbehavin,'" and miss me lots.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

July 2, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I'm a long time answering your letter that came Tuesday, the anniversary airmail, but I've been working for a change. As I mentioned before this is Interest period. We stayed until ten Wednesday night and last night it was almost seven before we finished. I really haven't had an opportunity to write. Maybe just to dash a note off but your letter kept going through my mind and all I could think of was a quiet corner somewhere to answer it.

Even now, I'm not sure that I can answer it the way I want to because once more you've left me wordless.

The letter was waiting for me Tuesday when I came in. I had walked in from Cliffwood and sat catching my breath when I tore the envelope open. Marguerite's sisters were sitting there, too. When I read the first line I knew it wasn't just an airmail so I excused myself and made my way to the "dorm" where I could be alone.

So, stretched across the bed, I read it and as each line went by the lump in my throat got bigger until... yes, I cried. I couldn't help it. I don't know why exactly. Maybe because of the injustice of it all. But then again because I love you so much and when you write like this and share your thoughts with me the realization of our closeness comes over me again. I think we're very lucky, we two, that we have kept our faith in each other and our love so bright and shining, like that star I see almost every night.

You must have been remembering my "worry" letter when you wrote this because truly it has helped. I've thought of all the things you wrote about so many times but never put them on paper. To say I hadn't thought of what I'd do if you didn't come back wouldn't be so... I'm only human, but I always chase the thought away because I never found an answer to it. Not to have you near would be like living without breathing. No, dear God, please don't let me have to cope with that problem.

I've never thought of our reunion occurring in so many weeks or months. I think that's why my patience hasn't worn thin. All I've prayed for is that it will be soon.

In one respect, you frighten me. I keep wondering if I'll be able to measure up to your expectations. Then again you make me so proud and eager to start our life together so I can prove to myself what you expect. Please, be patient with me at first. Ask your Dad. I ruined his eggs the last time I was in... all the eggs I've fried in my time I had to muffle the job that morning. I don't know yet what happened. Seems to me I cooked eggs for you and they turned out all right. I was only kidding about the above there... the eggs, I mean. Sort of changed the tempo of my letter. Where was I? Oh, I want to be so much as you expect.

What does the girl you left behind expect? Very little. We've learned to do without a lot. We still have a long way to go, but all I want is you to be home safe in one piece. There will be adjustments to make but all that will come in time. The most important factor is you. I have an idea our faith and courage is going to be needed even more when this is all over.

I have a picture of you writing that letter... I think you must have looked a little like the picture you sent Dot. You have such a determined look about you. Or you may have looked the way you did going back to New York that last Sunday night. I'll never forget the way you looked that night. A rather desperate look but I loved you so. You were worrying a bit about me I could tell and I couldn't make the lump in the throat go away to reassure you.

So, my darling, we'll go on a little longer until we are together once more.

Do you think for one minute I'd miss the fun of our apartment-hunting together? Not on your life. I was only kidding about the "reservation" and you took me seriously. I'll have to be more careful, I can see that.

I talked to Dottie this week. She was so pleased about the roses. You were sweet to remember, but you couldn't very well forget anyone like Dottie.

There was a WAVE in today, a former employee. She left for Hunter College a few weeks after I started at the bank. She's a very nice person and is she enthused about the WAVE's... simply loves it. She goes to her first station now, Rhode Island. She finished her training at Iowa State College in Navy Records.

I see today that the President signed the bill making the WAAC part of the army now they have to all re-enlist, don't they? That's what I heard.

Had a long letter from Mom yesterday. Said she had received a V-letter from you and how glad she was to hear from you.

I caught myself asleep that time. I guess it's time to quit when you do that.

We haven't seen much about the raid on London, but plenty about the raids on the continent of Europe. Glory, is there anything left? Are you getting used to being "blitzed" by now? Don't forget to be careful, or need I tell you that now?

I started my nine First Fridays this morning again to see if I can complete them this time. I hope but then it's just as well left unsaid.

Really I have to go now... can't see anymore.

Once more, I love you oh, so much. If you made me love you any more than I do now, I don't know what I'll do.

Keep well and be careful. 'Night for a while.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 3, 1943 — London

Billee dearest,

Tonight is something more than the eve of Independence Day. It is also the evening of another anniversary, the "15th" and I want to propose again, sweetheart.

I want to ask, "Will you be mine?" "Will you change your name to mine?" "Can you love me forever?" and a million other questions. But, all together they bring me to a point where I can simply blush, stammer and blink. "Will you marry me, my darling?"

I want your love, only forever, because you are my world and everything it holds for me. My one promise, in return, is that I will never make you unhappy.

I was reminded of our honeymoon-to-be during the week. Not that it is ever very far from my thoughts. While I was away for a few days I was able to stop for a few hours on Torquay, on the

southern coast of England. It didn't take much for me to decide I'd like to spend a few days there, just sitting in the sun and trying to see you across the ocean. I believe it is the only part of Britain in which palm trees grow. Oh, they aren't like our palm trees... much smaller and the leaves are shaped differently, but they call them palms here and I guess we can agree with them. While waiting for my train I was able to have lunch at a hotel overlooking the water and then relax on the boardwalk.



Charles in Torquay. July 1943.

Where does all this fit in with our honeymoon? Well, it's the type of place people would be honeymooning.

It has been rather warm these last few days, so much so that I tried to picture us "lost" in Maine or a Adirondacks, miles from anyone, with just a cozy log cabin, plenty of provisions, a wee bit of snow, and love.

Not long ago you spoke of my letters setting records getting overseas to you. I believe your most recent "bit of heaven," written last Sunday (June 27) at least tied any existing mark. It reached the office yesterday morning (Friday). All I can say is "bless the bombers," or, the Clippers that carry the mail.

The opening paragraph said, "I think I have a little more sense about me than I had when I wrote that dopey letter Friday." That would be the 25th, and I haven't received it yet. So, I'm anxious to see how beautifully "dopey" you can be. Honey, I couldn't ever accuse you of that. You are much too precious.

Billee, I wonder if my letters are telling you the little things your letters tell me. For example, I knew you loved swimming but never pictured you atop a 10-foot diving board until you mentioned it in your letter.

I've been wanting to swim so badly I finally determined to do something about it next week. Andy Rooney is donating his trunks and I have my eye on a good pool at the Roe Hampton Country Club, 20 minutes on a bus from London. Unless duty prevails, I'll be able to tell you all about it. Perhaps you will be in the water at the same time.

Your report on Mother was good to hear. When you say she sounded "swell" on the phone, I know everything is all right with her. You do miss her so, don't you? Wonder if the soldiers she meets love her at first sight the way one did a year and a half ago? In fact, the way he still does.

You must know by now that a possibility of twins coming to Dottie and Al exists. Gosh, won't that be something? Had a letter from Dot yesterday, telling me not to worry and that doctors usually "save" prospective "uncles." She also sent the enclosed pictures. The one of Janney came from Marty. I'm sending them along for the scrap book. I think we should have a separate page for each baby so we can follow them through the years, huh?

Sweetheart, why do you tease me by saying you have "wild and wooly" dreams, and then say, "but I'm not going to tell you what it was?" If I forget to spank you, please remind me. And, you aren't too old for a spanking, either. Or, would you want to be kissed instead?

I can't imagine who those "writers" from N. Ireland were whom you heard on the radio. Our N.I. news bureau consists of Charlie White, one of my roommates at Cheesecake Manor. Must have been some of the circulation boys.

One last favor, and I won't annoy you any more. I need pajamas, of all things, and can't get them here without coupons. Nothing fancy or expensive. Size 36, and you can make them any color you favor. I'll even promise to save them and wear them on our wedding night, if they aren't in tatters!

"Bye for a little while, angel. I'm taking your "special" to sleep with me.

All my love and kisses forever and always, Charles.

July 5, 1943—Matawan

Hello, darling,

My holiday is practically over and tomorrow we go back to the daily grind.

It was such a nice weekend. Let's see... where shall I start? Arrived in Newark about two-thirty and made my way to a music store behind Hahn's [department store] and picked up a couple of records to take to Dottie for her birthday. I didn't want to mail them before. Hopped a bus to Dottie's and believe it or not I kept an appointment with the photographer and had my picture taken so that will soon be on its way. Ruth Totten was at the Doyles. Haven't seen her in some time. She still talks about the W.A.A.C.s, or should I say W.A.C. now? Her army heartthrob is in Greenland now.

We had supper and then played Tripoli[?]. Incidentally, I lost 57 cents. Ruth and Al won all the money but it was fun. Dottie looks and feels swell. Al looks good, too. He had another flash burn in his eyes again, but by evening he was all right.

Ruth and I caught an eleven o'clock bus to Journal Square then from there I went to 195. Didn't get there until nearly twelve. Your Dad made me feel right at home with, "Fine time for you to be coming in." Christening festivities had already begun. Mrs. O'Connor, her daughter and young Terry were there, with George and Kay Emerson, El and your Dad.

I didn't hit the bed until nearly two. Bette was out and Eddie, too. Forgot to tell you he was there.

El and your Dad went to 6:30 Mass and I went to 9:00. The rest all went to the last one. I liked going alone for a change. First time in ages. It was like going with you almost. My Communion and Mass were offered for our reunion. Sounds a little selfish but then I think when that happens so many others will be made happy at the same time... then it doesn't seem so selfish. Father John came in soon after I was back. First time I've seen him in ages.

The christening was at one o'clock. Annice was very good, in fact she slept through most of it. Eddie and I went along with Mrs. O'Connor and your Dad. I wished you could have been there. Maybe the next christening in the Kiley family will be our first one.

She's so little. Annice, I mean. El let me hold her a couple of times while she was getting things for her and this morning I helped a little with her bath. El goes after her as if she'd already had the nine and this was the tenth.

You should see Father John. He hangs over the bassinet. If she moves wrong, he picks her up. El swears she's going to brain him. He's to be home for three weeks so you can imagine how he's going to spoil her. Incidentally he calls her "Butch."

Your Dad was so proud being godfather. He fairly burst with pride. As you can see, we all think she's pretty nice.

Father John is so put out, he forgot to rag Eddie about the girl in Tennessee. Your Dad asked him about it and Bette. He told Bette "Don't be worrying. I'm not marrying her. Just writing to her." He told his Dad he had one in every state. We did learn, though, that she is blonde with blue eyes.

We took some movies of the baby, also some still pictures to send to you and Tom. I'm holding the baby in some of them.

Sunday night we had more people in. Your Dad had a cooler and a keg of beer so you can imagine. Mrs. Doyle, Kay and her husband, the Emersons and the rest of us that were there. Eddie left early in the afternoon to go back to camp. We all had a good time. Father John was there, too.

Today was quiet. Mrs. O'Connor and the children left early. Bette had to work. I helped El do up the housework. While she was washing clothes, I crocheted and talked to Father John. I left on the five fifty-nine. I enjoyed being with them all so much, but I missed you being around as always.

You heard about Father John's proposition of forty nieces and nephews. He's going to buy fifteen acres in upper New York State in the mountains and build a three-story house where we can all go in the summer. Before I thought, I asked him if he was going to help take care of them? All I could get out of him was, "Well..."

This is getting long and I have a big day ahead of me. I'll mail this and write another tomorrow. Oh, I love you so much. It's weekends like this that bring you closer to me. Father John and Eddie so like

you in many ways. Little things they do bring you that much closer. Please, miss me and don't stop loving me, ever.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 6, 1943—Matawan

Hello again my darling,

There's a new moon out tonight. Did you notice? I wished on it for us... a good wish, too.

I'm tired again tonight after a busy day at the bank. No more of this three o'clock business for awhile, I guess. It was six o'clock tonight when I left, part of my work undone at that.

You have probably heard that Eddie has left the division he was with. Seems he doesn't have much opportunity of being advanced to a Staff Sergeant and since you have made the grade he isn't resting until he gets the extra bands. He looked swell, G.I. haircut and all. I hope you don't have one of those. I don't think I'd like that.

We took Annice for her first ride in the baby carriage, El and I. We stopped in Jimmy's and had a coke then I pushed the carriage to the park and back home. Felt natural to be pushing the carriage along. Can't you picture me? West Side Avenue is quite a popular place for baby carriages now. They almost need a traffic cop.

Father John is spending his vacation at home, as you probably know by now. Sister Mary Annice is pretty low and is expected to go any time and he promised her that if it was humanly possible he'd be there. He was to have gone away with two other priests, I believe, the same ones he made the Canadian trip with, to Saginaw and then to Montreal by boat. They don't have facilities on the boat for him to say Mass and since he hasn't missed since his ordination, he decided not to go. I don't think he'll stick out the three weeks at home doing nothing, though. He has too much nervous energy for that. He was getting bored yesterday. Your Dad will enjoy having him there... someone to talk to so I hope he does stick it out.

Everyone thought the pictures were swell. Isn't that Sam Schulman the Life photographer or am I dreaming again? They are in the album now. You don't look as heavy as in some of the other pictures, probably the result of the Ranger training. Al said how fit you look... ten years younger. If that's the case I'll have to watch myself so I'll look my 22 1/2 and not any older. Younger looking or not, you look swell to me.

Father John liked the idea of sending you the films if you have an 8mm projector. I'm going to inquire at the post office to see if it will be permissible. He thought it would be worth the risk. We were talking Sunday night wondering how long after hostilities ceased it would be until you'd be home. He says if it's too long I should board the first ship going over. He seems determined to get us together somehow or other.

Marguerite's brother came home from his vacation yesterday. Agnes and I drove to Red Bank to get him and his girl. They looked so happy and as if they had had such a good time. She still has another

week so she's staying with friends in Keyport so they can be together this week. We stopped on the way home and had rum and cokes and heard all about the vacation.

There are two fairly new songs out that I like. Listen to them should you hear them: "You'll Never Know," and "Would It Be Wrong." Yesterday we listened to the radio practically all day and heard them several times along with "Piano Concerto" for the first time in ages. I was holding Annice when they started to play it. I always get that "butterfly" feeling when I hear it.

Everything is quiet tonight. I'm stretched out on the couch listening to "Faust" [opera radio broadcast] with one ear and writing to you. Marge went to bed a few minutes ago. I'll be on my way soon. I want to write Mom a letter then I'll go up.

Sunday, before I went into the church, I looked for the Honor Roll in the back and found your name and Eddie's. They have quite a nice one. I went to the children's Mass and sat very near the front. All the little boys were sitting on my side and they kept straggling in, one with an awful black eye. I couldn't help but smile and think of you then and especially when several more came in with their arms in slings and a cast. Monsignor Duffy kept walking up and down the aisle keeping order. I missed you very much then, darling.

They're playing the "Soldiers' Chorus" now. I always liked that. You don't go for opera and symphonies, though, do you? So, I'll listen by myself when you're away. I hope that isn't too many times.

I'm getting sleepier. Mind if I say goodnight? I hate to leave, but I should write to Mom. I'll be back soon. Keep well and be good. I love you oh, so much. 'Night, now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 8, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

Just back from a four-day sortie to Air Force fighter stations and Service Command posts. Caught two good stories at a P47 (fighter) field on the second day and phoned them in. One was a sports piece on Monte Weaver, ex-Washington pitcher now a second looney doing desk work.

While I was talking with him a squadron of P47s came in from a sweep over Germany. We watched them, and saw one of the strangest sights I've ever seen. Instead of clambering out of their ships and reporting for interrogation, they immediately refueled the planes and took off again. We went to the control tower to see what it was all about and was told the boys were going back over the same





P47 fighters flying in formation.

ground they just covered in search of their missing 28-year-old squadron leader, Col. Anman[?] Peterson. They didn't find him. I had a hell of a time getting the stuff cleared by censors before I phoned it in, eventually being forced to wait until the following morning when 8th Air Force H.Q. announced Peterson was missing.

So here we are after a six-hour train ride from Blackpool. The wee radio is playing "Louise" and it carries me back to June of 1930, I think, and one of our high school plays. I believe Al associated the song with the same occasion.

The mail has been good to me this week. Aside from yours, there were others from Dot, Bill (who writes once every 1,000 years and when he does it is an occasion), Eddie, father John, a girl who used to work in the office and is now living in Pittsburgh with hubby and baby, and Ray Roche.

I never fail to get a special kick from Eddie's letters. He mentions getting a cable about the baby and says innocently, "They say it's 8 lbs., 5 oz. I don't know much about those things but it sounds good."

John said he was passing up a vacation trip to Canada. I would have wanted him to go, remembering how much he looked forward to a rest in the summer, and he does like to travel.

Speaking of traveling, coming back on the train today I figured I've traveled about 15,000 miles in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland during my eight months with the paper. This past trip, for example, covered about 700!

I said last week I was going swimming. Looks like it will have to be postponed because of a drop in the temperature and misty London weather. "Jerry" pulled a funny one tonight, just as our train got in. The ceiling was practically zero, it was raining a little but he came over, in daylight. I could hear the planes passing overhead, later heard a few blasts in the suburbs, then our fighters streaking after them. Because we are so near the Channel coast we don't get much warning. The sirens scream and half a minute later the planes are overhead.

Getting back to swimming... I'd give a million dollars, if I had them, to spend this weekend at the shore with you. The next time you go, just look across the ocean and I'll be on the other side blowing you a kiss, an extra special one.

I nearly died when you mentioned Tom going to see the chaplain. You'd have to be in the army to appreciate that. You see, whenever anyone has a complaint, large or small, he's usually advised, sarcastically, to "see the chaplain." I'm enclosing a clipping done by one of our artists. Perhaps you can picture Tom.

I can't imagine what has happened to our bonds. Still, I'm sure you'll get action as the result of the letter.

Oh, by the way... Wilhelmina... ouch! Don't throw that!

Darling, I could love you to pieces for wondering if Father John will broadcast it at the wedding. Can't you hear me saying, "I, Charles, take thee, Wilhelmina, for my lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, etc?"

I passed it along to Father John and I'm sure he laughed as loudly as I did. I don't blame you for being "floored" as you put it. I'm afraid the Dutch queen will not have any of our children named after her.

Another thing, about this working on your day off. I'd rather see you enjoy it while you can. If your budget brings you out even, o.k. Don't worry about saving. Let me do that. Pretty soon now I hope to be able to send some cash to you each month. When I do, use it as you see fit, as if it was your own. I don't remember if there was anything left of what I sent before but if there is, use it. The point is, take it easy while you can. Promise?

Talk about Father John being enthusiastic about my promotions... he started off his letter, "Dear Lt." He doesn't know that getting a commission over here is really something. We have one O.C.S. 90 day course which leaves us out. We couldn't possibly go away for that long. Most O.C.S. boys go home which also leaves us out. So, if there are any commissions at all they will have to come by direct appointment. If that day comes you'll know it was really earned. During the year and a half of publication only Bob Moora got a 2nd Lt. commission, and he really did earn it. He's the "brain" of the office on the news desk. Incidentally, Bob censors my mail by saying, "to Billee?" and signs it without reading it over. In fact I doubt if he has read a letter through yet. Just pretends to.

I want to kiss that freckled nose of yours. But, I'll just have to take a long look at your picture, sigh, and say, "Night, sweetheart." Miss me lots.

All my love and kisses forever and always, Charles.

July 8, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

I think I'll follow in your footsteps and start a column something like this:

"Advice to the Girls They Left Behind," or "How to Keep That Man Overseas." Note: send a "glamour snapshot" enclosed in your letter and see what happens.

I can see where I should have sent pictures long ago. Forgive me for neglecting you. Really, though, I've had so few turn out satisfactorily... that they didn't look as if they needed to be framed in the wastebasket... I just got disgusted and quit.

I knew when I put that one in that it would probably be the one you'd like best and I was right. Guess I know you pretty well, by now.

While we are on the subject, the proofs came yesterday from Charles Todd in Arlington with a nice little note asking me to please come in for a re-sitting, that something went wrong with the camera mechanically and he wasn't satisfied with the proofs. See what a girl you have. She goes around breaking cameras with that puss of hers. Now I'll have to wait until next week to go in.

I'm worried about your hand. Are you sure it isn't serious? I hope the ray treatments help. I wonder if it could be from the diet you're getting. Be careful and try not to miss the treatments. A year and a half—that's just since you are over there—didn't it bother you here in the States? I'm glad you told me. Don't keep anything like that from me. Of course, I'll worry but I don't know of anyone I'd rather worry about than you.

I'm having my teeth fixed, too. I haven't been in several years, something I always put off but I don't have too much to have done.

We'll be on the lookout for the story by Joy Dunlop. Nice pen name you have there. That's one for the books... ghost writing for a WAC. Nosey me, is she nice? Just a little jealous that she should be able to call you up and have a coke with you. I guess that all goes with loving you as much as I do.

I always wondered about your trip over. To my way of thinking, they didn't have half enough protection, not with the cargo they carried. One of these days I'll hear all the details. I rather suspected you had a little "action" on the way over or am I wrong? I'll take good care of the magazine.

I received the latest roll of *Stars and Stripes*, but I'm missing the week that all your articles on the Rangers are in. Everyone else has them, Dottie and 195. I read them at Dottie's. It made the shivers go up and down my spine to think you actually went through all that. They were really so realistic I could almost feel the bruises myself.

Do you still write to Ray Roche? He has the letter of commendation together with the article yet and I haven't heard from him. I don't want to just write for them and I don't have any other reason to write. I thought maybe you could mention it in some way. I wouldn't want anything to happen to them.

I'm reading over your letter again. The part about "dignified" and "older" makes me laugh. The dress is a little on the "dressy" side and the flowers in the print showed up quite a bit in the picture. I think when you really see the dress you'll change your mind. But, if I thought you'd find me that way in the dress and you wouldn't throw dignity away, as you say, I'd never wear it again. I wouldn't want to spoil anything like that.

I wondered about your Fourth of July and how you were spending the day. I tried to sneak away and dash off a note to tell you I was thinking of you. I remember you saying your last Fourth was spent under a pup tent trying to keep dry. I sincerely hope the day was much more pleasant than that this time.

Closing my eyes, darling, I could see our Saturday night date... how I miss you then. Will we ever make up for all this time we've spent apart? All the Saturday nights?

I should be closing. I want to write a note to Mom. I haven't heard from her in over a week. I'm a little worried, but then I suppose she's busy.

We're having more cool weather. I hope the weekend is nice because I'd like to get a little more swimming in. I guess the weather is too cool over there even if you had the time and the place. What do you do for amusement or don't you? Mine seems to be every other weekend into the city.

Father John was to go out last night with another priest to a movie and dinner then a show, either "Oklahoma" or "Student Prince." If he went to the latter I'm anxious to know how he enjoyed it since it's been a favorite of mine. I'm going to splurge before the summer is over and take in a show for myself.

The enclosed article I thought you might enjoy. A little different from your experience... not quite so rigorous. The other I just happened to see. Thought you might remember a certain night. He's still there after all this time. We'll have to go there for a Saturday night date again. Maybe you could ask me the same question again. I don't remember answering. All I remember was the shock and how funny I felt, that old "butterfly feeling." Then I remember steadying myself and asking "Are you sure?" Afraid you might change your mind.

So here it is fourteen months since "our night" in New York. Then I didn't think we'd be so long away from each other, but the time has passed quickly.

I was going, wasn't I, several paragraphs back and here I'm still rambling on. Love me, and don't worry about me. Take care of yourself. I'll be back soon. Goodnight, for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

P.S. I love you

July 10, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

If you could see, all you'd be able to call me would be lazy-bones because here I am stretched out in a sun chair in my shorts and halter trying to get a little tan, battling the flies and occasionally a bee that comes my way.

I still am not used to the idea of Saturdays off, but I like it very much.

Your V-letter of June 29 came yesterday. I'll pick up the lighter next weekend when I go in and mail it from there along with the cigarettes. We're having more warm weather today. Probably be worse tomorrow. Hope I can get in a little swimming.

While I was cleaning up our room today I heard Shane McIntire from the Hawaiian Room [where Charles proposed to Billee]. They have a program quite often from there.

I had a long letter from Mom yesterday, the first in over a week. Of course, I was beginning to worry as usual. She said she was feeling very well. They have had quite a bit of rain there for the past week and she was getting a little tired of it.

This is the latest. She wants me to join the WACs. I'll have to write and tell her she'll have to talk to you first.

Marge has gone to New York shopping and Agnes went to Paterson to spend the weekend with her in-laws so I'm pretty much on my own today.

Once more you are off chasing the Rangers, three days this time. Hope you come back in better condition than the last trip. At least, try not to get so bruised. Silly, telling you that now when you are probably home already.

I had a surprise visit from my sister last night. She is staying nearby. I probably won't get to see her again, what with transportation the way it is, etc.

I've turned around now and am cooking myself on the other side, so I'll be done to a turn by the time I go in. It's been a long time since I've spent a Saturday like this. When I was a kid and we lived in Massillon I used to spend the majority of the time in swimming. By the end of the summer, I was like nothing less than an Indian. The good old days when you were very young and all your worries were so trivial. I have to laugh now when I think of some of the things I fretted about. They wouldn't amount to a row of peas now.

I'd like to be going in now to shower and hop in the car in the best bib and tucker and be meeting you somewhere like the Grill Room in the Taft Hotel—was that where it was?—to start out on a Saturday night.

Here comes a pair of silver wings, quite low, too. Wonder where it's going. The thought came to me that aboard one of those I could be in your arms about twelve or fifteen hours from now, not even a day. Wonder if I could be a stowaway. I'd better stop since I'm getting that rebellious feeling again.

The sun is making me sleepy. All I have to do now is go to sleep and really get sunburned.

Believe it or not I have an answer about the bonds. It seems they have reorganized and made two bond divisions and as soon as the one gets settled and its personnel trained, the rest of the bonds will be forthcoming. In the meantime, the current bonds will be mailed as they have been, that is May's in June, June's in July, etc. It almost takes a Philadelphia lawyer to figure out what they are trying to tell you. Anyhow, we got an answer and that's most important. He reassured me and said there would be no difficulty in getting the bonds.

More planes going over and all so low. We are in one of the lanes though. That's why we see so many. I'm about airplanes like some people are about fire engines. I always have to look out and see how high or low they are and what direction they are traveling in.

That seems to be all the news this time. Wish I didn't have to go but I have some others that I should write that I've been putting off. You keep me too busy.

That line, "You aren't misbehavin'" amuses me. Do you think I need reassurance? Then you tell me to be good. I'm afraid I don't have any reason to be otherwise. I'm saving my time for you. Have you heard that song, "Don't Get Around Much Anymore?" That's my theme song.

Seems to me I was going... just as soon as I tell you I love you and miss you more than ever. Hurry home, my dearest.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 13, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Here I am answering your most recent letter received today written July 3 and postmarked July 7. This mail service we've been getting is wonderful, but I guess we'd better not be bragging.

I love being proposed to again. I don't remember you blushing, but you were a little breathless. All I can say is "yes" to all the questions. I don't remember how to say "no." It seems to have left my vocabulary since January 17. Anything you say, darling. I just automatically say, "yes" because whatever it is will be nice, I know.

You've more than lived up to your promise not to make me unhappy. Just thinking about you makes everything all right. Of course, I've been unhappy in recent months, but it isn't your fault... rather the circumstances that are keeping us apart... that old "miss you" feeling that I get.

I'm afraid that I would be the one that would blush, stammer and blink if you were here to ask me those questions and tell me how much I mean to you, but I'd love hearing them. Seeing them is music to my eyes (new expression) and I can't help but feel a little breathless and smile reading the words over again.

You never did decide where we would go on our honeymoon. You'd better because it's up to you. I want to be surprised. There is only one place that I don't wish to go to and that's Niagara Falls. Anywhere else will be swell. I like the thoughts of a cabin in the Adirondacks. Funny, in some of my dreams that I've spun, we've been to just such a place as that. Somewhere that we could go swimming any time we wished or climbing through the mountains and just being alone.

I'm anxious to know if you went swimming. I hope so. I'd like going swimming with you. I could "duck" you, maybe? I love the water. Never seem to get enough swimming. After I finished your letter Saturday, Marge's brother came in from work and went and picked up his girl in Keyport. We gathered a few more up and went to Cliffwood pool again. We stayed until it closed. The water was just right... not too warm and not too cool.

You're telling me news about Dottie's twins. I hadn't heard. That will be something. Can't you see Al's face when they tell him "twins?" Dottie still can't realize she is going to be a mother. I guess I'd feel the same way, too. El found herself hanging over the bassinet the first few days just staring. I can understand that, too.

The last spanking I had my Mom gave me when I was about 12 or 13. Seems like I wanted to go to a movie and she said no. Since I had my own money, I went anyhow and she was waiting for me when I got home. She broke the yard stick on my bottom before I got out of the way and upstairs. I'll never forget the name of the picture, either... "Take a Chance." I should have known better. I think I've passed the spanking age. I'd prefer the other "punishment" for teasing you.

You're a devil, darling. Why can't you just say "send me some pajamas" and let it go at that? Don't you realize I have to show the letter to the man in the post office and he has to read that part? There I'm going to be standing blushing all colors, but I'll send them. Are you trusting me for color? I'm

liable to pick out some nice brilliant purple or a little sky blue pink in with them. Don't worry. I'll pick out conservative colors whether you like it or not since I might be seeing them again soon. I think we're going to New York Saturday so I'll get them then. I've been scolding you in this paragraph... didn't you notice?

Since I wrote last Sicily has been invaded. I can imagine how excited you all must have been. We've been hanging over the radio and everywhere you see people pouring over the newspaper. This is the turning point, I feel sure. The next few weeks are going to mean an awful lot, but then that's only my opinion. I'm praying that it is what Roosevelt said, "the beginning of the end." I've been reading John Steinbeck's articles in the Herald Tribune the last few weeks. A couple of them I clipped out. They are very good. I never liked his writing before, but these are excellent. One in particular he wrote about the boys in England and Independence Day that struck me just right. Incidentally, he is in England as a correspondent for the Herald Tribune.

I helped them pick raspberries awhile on Sunday. Mr. Heuser doesn't have any help except his grandchildren and one of the daughters is helping. I got out with the kids and helped some. Marge sent me to the patch to get them for dinner so I stayed and picked while they ate. So, darling, you have a picture of me swatting mosquitoes and stretching to reach the berries, popping one in my mouth every now and then because I like them. The darn mosquitoes likes to have chewed my ankles up, though.

I'm sleepy now, darling. Mind if I turn in? I'll be back soon. I have a shower to take, my prayers to say and read your letter one more time, then off to sleep. I love you so much, specially when you write me a "love" letter. 'Night for now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 18, 1943—Matawan (enclosed in pajama package)

Hello, darling,

Didn't expect to find me in here, did you??

Hope the color and style satisfy. The blue is my choice because I thought they'd kind of match your eyes. The other struck Marge's fancy. The style I picked out so you wouldn't be sewing buttons on. Maybe I'll benefit by that, too... just happened to think.

The handkerchiefs were an afterthought since I remembered how badly you needed them at Xmas.

Pleasant dreams, darling, in your new p.j.s. I loved getting them for you. I love you, my dearest.

As always, your Billee

This could be an anniversary package since it's 18 months yesterday that we started to live.

July 20, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

Tonight is dark, not like it was three nights ago. Yes, even over here starry, moonlit nights observe our anniversaries.

It was at a Replacement Center where the WAACs are being housed before getting assignments.

As I mentioned in my last letter, another fellow and I were along to cover the arrival of the first WAAC battalion to this theatre.

Before I left I received your air mail of July 3 in which you spoke of my anniversary letter.

I read it on the train, and was thinking of it while I watched the moon that night. I saw you reading the letter, and crying. And I wanted to hold you so much, darling, and tell you everything was all right. I wanted to kiss you and taste the salt of your tears, to see you smile through them. I wanted to tell you there wasn't any answer to the question of what you would do if I didn't come back. Because, I was back, and that you were going to be so nice to come home to every night.

I will tell you all these things, sweetheart.

You say you are frightened, wondering if you will measure up to what I expect. May I make a confession? I'm half-scared to death you might say you don't know me, that I'm not the guy who left you behind.

Really now, honey, what do you think I'd expect?

Here I am ready and willing to lay down my life for maybe just a minute with you, and you ask me what I expect. With a little mathematics you can figure what I'll give for a lifetime with you.

I couldn't help laughing when you sounded so worried about "ruining" Dad's eggs. Honey, I'm sure I don't know how you get concerned with such unimportant things. You should see how Benny "destroys" my eggs sometimes.

And now, let's you and I have a few words on the WAAC insofar as you are concerned.

I won't say you should, or, you shouldn't go into the WAACs, WAVEs or any of the other services.

You said Mother wants you to go into the WAACs. If you want to join, go ahead, but please don't be misled by recruitment posters.

The WAAC isn't any different from the army in many respects. There are all kinds of people in it... good, bad and indifferent. It isn't an easy life... rather boring at times. Some of those in the WAACs are anxious to get out. Others are quite happy and would do it all over again.

All this comes from those with whom I spoke at the WAAC center.

But, this is what I offer in defense of my selfish defense, and why I wouldn't want you to join any service.

All my love and kisses forever and always, Charles.

You, sweetheart, are “home” to me. You are the one I’m coming home to. You’re going to be the first things I’m going to see. If I can put it another way, you are making the foundation for both of our lives. It has to be one of the two of us and I can’t do it from ‘way over here.

What do you think?

Earlier in the night I was glancing over the list of dead in the war and published in July 5 “Life.” There was a familiar name, Page Beeman from Minnesota, Co. H. Bugler, killed in North Africa. His horn got me up early on many a cold morning, and how many times did we say, “Oh, how I’d love to murder the bugler.” It all doesn’t seem very funny now.

Goodnight, sweetheart. Miss me and love me.

All my love and kisses forever and always, Charles.

July 20, 1943—Matawan

Hello, darling,

It’s really me, at long last. You don’t know it, but I’ve been trying to write to you since Friday night so keep your fingers crossed and maybe I’ll get this one off. I’m not sure what the trouble is. Maybe I’m just plain lazy. Friday night, I was off to a good start when I fell asleep so that one didn’t get finished. Saturday I went in to 195 for the weekend and didn’t find an opportunity there to write. Sunday I came home early to get a letter off and guess what? I went to sleep in the middle of that one. Last night I was all rested up and brought my pen and paper downstairs to settle down comfortably after I finished my laundry and what do you suppose they pulled on us? A blackout. so, it looks as though the odds have been against us. It’s only five o’clock now, so I don’t think I’ll fall asleep and it’s still daylight so I don’t think we’ll have a blackout either so here goes...



Charles at Camp Croft, S.C. with Company H friends. Winter 1941-1942.

Since Saturday was our eighteenth anniversary, I especially wanted to get a letter off then, but your Dad and Father John and I were so busy talking about you and post-war plans that I didn't get the opportunity., but then that was almost as nice as writing to you would have been.

I didn't really plan on staying over. Just wanted to go in and pick up the lighter but when I called Saturday morning to see if they were going to be home (El had mentioned a day or two before that they might go to the shore that weekend), Father John answered the phone and said, "Of course, you're staying over."

Marge and I went to New York Saturday and bought your pajamas and handkerchiefs. They are on their way now since yesterday, together with the lighter and another carton of cigarettes. They are in two separate packages, by the way. I hope you like the selection and that they are the right size. Incidentally, you don't buy pajamas by size numbers, but by small, medium and large... A, B and C. The saleslady thought the B, size would be right so here's hoping.

Tom came in over the weekend so the O'Connor family was reunited for a bit. He had a three day pass and didn't have to start back until one o'clock yesterday. He's been sent back to Greenville, Pa. they went down to the shore Saturday night to see his mother and came back early in the morning. Bette was nursemaid for the night and loved the job.

Eleanor's Annice is getting big, 9 lb. and 5 oz. already. I could see Tom at first in her but now that she's a little older she is definitely a Kiley. I can see how maybe our little one might look like her if he or she takes after you. The picture we took the day of the christening turned out fairly well. You'll enjoy the ones of Eddie holding her. You are, of course, to get a set.

Tom, El, Bette and I went for a stroll Sunday afternoon with the baby on West Side Avenue and through the park to join the parade of baby carriages, Tom, of course, wheeling the carriage. He was a riot. His first time out with the carriage and El coaching him up and down the curbs. The park was very crowded with carriages and families scattered here and there on the grass taking sun baths. Some of them had picnic lunches. Seems to be quite a popular place.

Father John has been considering the army again. He wants to go so badly, but he's holding off because of your Dad and the girls. He feels that would probably be the last straw for your Dad and he's right, it would be. He really feels like a slacker when there is such an urgent need for chaplains now. I don't believe he will go, though, because as he said, if something should happen to your Dad that would leave the girls there alone. He is being practical about it, but that isn't much consolation when you feel about it the way he does.

He was to have left for a week in Vermont yesterday morning if the OPA OKed his trip [if he was able to get rationed gas for his car]. Father Eddie and Father Van Wier left Sunday. He would have gone with them but had a baseball game on and of course he wouldn't disappoint the kids. The rest at home seems to have done him a lot of good. The trip will just top it off.

Father John and I were swapping letters Saturday night. He had several of his and one of your Dad's, the Father's Day letter. Did I tell you, I took in a half-dozen nice white initialed handkerchiefs that weekend? I found just the right card and put both our names on it.

Bette was home on vacation all last week. She enjoyed helping El with the baby. She looks after her as if she were the mother. Eleanor A. will never lack for care but she is so sweet and such a good baby, she's no trouble at all. El looks grand, more rested than the last time I was in, but then she was worried about Tom and that didn't help matters any.

Your letter written July 8 came Friday and such a nice long one... I liked that. I can't say I'm familiar with the poem, but with your collaboration, it's really something. How did you manage to think of the lines you changed? I know, you probably have an answer for that one, too. That's a scrapbook item... a poem written especially for us.

Speaking of letters, I wondered how you wrote some of them and then had to let someone you know so well censor them? I wouldn't like that. Somehow or other I imagine that wouldn't bother you. Anyhow, I'm glad Lt. Moora is such a regular guy.

Your fifteen thousand miles seems almost unbelievable until you stop and figure all the trips you've taken. It'll make nice listening when we can curl on in our own corner in front of our own fireplace and you can tell me about all the people you met and the places you've visited.

You speak of a daylight raid as if it were a tea party. Don't you make for a shelter any more or are you afraid you'll miss something? The latter would be me, I'm afraid, but don't you go following my example. We haven't been hearing much about London raids now. The Sicilian campaign has pushed all that kind of news to the inside pages. If only the rest of the "push" to Berlin could be as easy as this seems to be. There are so many stories in the papers, almost unbelievable, of whole companies of soldiers surrendering to a few of our soldiers. This morning brought the news of the bombing of Rome. Sherman was right when bombing Rome seems to be necessary. Of course, Axis reports state that St. Lorenzo was seriously damaged. That seems to be the only non-military objective mentioned as being hit.

Eddie was so interested in the christening. He wasn't going to miss that. He said to me, "You know, I've never been to one of these before."

I showed Tom the cartoon and did he howl but hastened to assure me that he didn't pay a visit to the chaplain. He merely said he should have.

We won't worry about Wilhelmina any more. Instead, we'll tuck her away somewhere to gather dust but promise me you won't bring it to light again.

You might just as well forget my using your savings because we're going to need that later a lot worse than I need it now. While I did use the money you had left when I first came East... I had to wait quite a while for my first pay and I gave Mom nearly all I had when I left to tide her over to my first payday. I'm trying to put it back for our future use.

I called Dottie yesterday to see how she was getting along. I asked her about the twins and she explained that the doctor said a couple of months ago that either the baby would arrive earlier than previously scheduled or she'd have twins. Now it seems the baby will arrive earlier and that there isn't any danger of a... let's see. I could say, "double-play," couldn't I? she says she feels fine and that in probably two or three weeks I should hear the good news.

I had a letter from my brother yesterday. He graduates this week as a radio mechanic and with a Staff Sergeant's rating... nice going. Did I tell you Mom bought him a service watch for his birthday and graduation? He was so tickled and is so proud of it. We wanted to get him one when he graduated from high school but something happened and we didn't get it. You remember my telling you about him getting engaged? In this letter he breaks the news to me that in a letter he had just received from the girl she tells him that she's been engaged for two months to an ensign in the Navy. Poor kid, you can imagine how he feels. He says, "Shall I go on a three day binge or hang myself?" I'll have to write to him tonight and see if I can pick his chin up off the ground because from the letter it's really dragging. Can you remember when you were nineteen? I hope you didn't go around getting yourself engaged, though, at nineteen! I'm anxious to see now where he will be sent. I hope somewhere here in the East. He is supposed to get a furlough soon and when he does Mom and I are meeting him in Massillon if I have to walk.

Sitting here thinking that in another six months it will be two years. I wonder where that day will find you. Father John seemed optimistic about the time element but I don't know.

I had to take time out to eat supper and help with the dishes so here I am again. We had our first tomatoes from the garden tonight fixed with cucumbers, onions, salad oil and vinegar. Tasted good, too. It's almost dark now. Smells a little like raid, too, but we could do with a shower.

Guess what, we had another bond in the mail yesterday sent from Massillon. this one is dated October 1942 so I guess gradually we will get all of them. Let's see, now we have September, October, March, April and May. June should come this month some time. In fact the last ones came right after the first.

I hope you found yourself somewhere comfortable to read this since it has become quite long, but then I had a lot to say and this airmail stationery is precious stuff so I decided to type it. Incidentally, I haven't touched a typewriter in weeks and I'm definitely very rusty. This typewriter was made to type Spanish on so if there are few symbols here and there that don't register that's the reason.

I've got that old rebellious feeling again. The moon is going to be full again tonight. They've been gorgeous nights since Sunday going to waste. Something funny today... I've had the worst case of "butterflies" as if something were going to happen. It isn't as bad now as earlier today. I can't figure it out and it isn't indigestion, either.

How is your hand getting along? I hope you haven't neglected the treatments. See what a worry-wart I'm going to be about you? So take good care of yourself.

I'll say goodnight now. I keep saying and writing I love you so much but the words never seem to say what is in my heart. I'm only hoping you'll understand how very much you mean to me and that you'll go on loving me as you do now.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 21, 1943—Matawan

Hello again,

Your V-letter came today written July 15. Not bad service, so I decided to write again tonight. I can't understand you not getting any mail. I haven't neglected you lately except last week a bit, but I know how you feel exactly. I'm spoiled rotten now with all the mail I've had from you. Heaven help me when the day comes that it isn't regular.

I had a long letter from Mom today, too, along with yours. She doesn't tell me to come home but she keeps telling me how the Postal Agency there needs girls and that they pay \$1620 a year and \$360 extra a year for working Saturdays. I guess she misses me as much as I miss her.

We're having terrific heat again. I just took a shower and washed my hair and I'm thinking I'll have to go back again. I was going right to bed but it's hot upstairs worse than here so I decided to let my hair dry a bit before I put it up. I never put my hair up that I don't think of the night you asked me out of a clear blue sky, "Billee, do you put your hair up in curlers?" I always tried to imagine what you were thinking. I believe that was the second date we had. No, darling, I'll tell you now I don't use metal curlers. Instead I use pins... is that all right? It's too bad I wasn't blessed with natural curls like my sister, but since I wasn't I have to do the next best thing.

I finished early again today and decided to take in a movie... "Bataan," very good but anything but diverting. They had a Harry James short and guess what they played? "You Made Me Love You." I all but cried because it was his recording we danced to. I can still see us there at Lucille's and you singing softly in my ear as we danced... remember?

You needn't be so emphatic about your business with the WAAC after you being so firm about my joining them. I'm not worried. The only thing is, one of them over there might change your mind. When that day comes, there's going to be a record broken for swimming and there will be one WAAC minus hair and maybe a couple of eyes. Sounds, vicious, doesn't it, but I'm not kidding!!!

I remember reading the story about the gunner who was awarded the medal in the paper here and the Stars and Stripes. I see in yesterday's Tribune where a page of the *Stars and Stripes* is being turned over to the WAACs to report their activities.

I suppose you've seen where [Frank] Knox [Secretary of the Navy] predicts the war will last until 1949. I'd like to fix him personally. If that's the case, I might better join the WAAC or WAVE or something. At least I might accidentally get to see you. Father John said a year in Europe. I'd rather listen to him. 1949... hmmm... our poor ball team will certainly be minus a few players I'm afraid.

I'm glad the cigarettes arrived. I think I sent them June 16 so that was just about a month. I hope these packages sent Monday make a little better time.



Father John saw Ray Roche and he hasn't forgotten about the letter or the article. He's going to see if we can send the film to you. Incidentally, Father John is going to make arrangements for my confirmation.

I'm wondering how Father John is making out on his O.P.A. [Office of Price Administration, which administered domestic rationing, including gas rationing] certified vacation. H.I. Phillips' column in the Sun has been ragging the O.P.A. about its "certified vacations."

My hair is about dry now. Guess I'd better get that job over and tuck myself in bed.



WAACs arriving in Britain, July 1943.

Charles, darling, I'm loving you so much and missing you more. Please God that it won't be too long now. Be good, and take care of yourself. Be careful of those WAACs, too.

All my love and kisses, always
your Billee

Guess I'd better go back to writing V-mail more often. Maybe I'm tying up the airmail service with so many letters.

July 22, 1943—London

Hello sweetheart,

There were so many things I wasn't able to get in my air mail the other night I had to hold them over. I started this yesterday, then got tied up with a lot of work and had to put it off another day, the same as I've had to do for the past week.

I told you in the air mail letter that the WAACs had arrived. There were 557 of them, and the Air Force got them all. They will be attached to the 8th Air Force, working as stenographers, telephonists, plotters at operations stations, etc. Another fellow from the office and I were among several correspondents, mostly women, to make the trip to a Replacement Center where they are rested and processed after the voyage. They took part in a formal review during their first day and really looked swell. The job lasted three days, plus another spent in doing the stories. I won't go into any more detail about them because you can get a better picture when the papers reach you.

I'm glad I have you to give me the news from home. I had been anxious to hear about the christening but not until your letter told me all about it did I receive any word of it. A letter from Bette came yesterday, without mentioning the christening at all.

You mentioned Ruth Totten's No. 1 man being in Greenland. I assume she's busy supplying him with mail because I haven't heard from her in quite a while now. Too bad, because I could think of a lot of places I'd rather be than in Greenland.

Say, where does Father John expect to get people to inhabit those 15 acres in New York? Not only that, but I hope he has a lot of money for the upkeep. But then, perhaps we'll be able to furnish him 50% of the quota. Yes, no? Of the inhabitants, I mean.

Judging by what you say re the bonds, I guess we can give the government a rest for awhile until we see what happens within the next few months. Let's see, we have 10 bonds paid for now, up to and including June. I hope to be able to have a little left over at the end of this month to start saving a little extra from my salary. If I was anywhere but London I know I could do it but it costs so damn much to do so little here.

I splurged last night after I was finished in the office and saw "The More the Merrier," with Jean Arthur and Joel McCrea. I wondered if your "dorm" was as crowded as theirs. When I see pictures like that I get nostalgic. Doesn't do me any good because I want you to be so near.

I'll be back in a day or so with another "hello," angel. 'Bye for now.

All my love and kisses forever and always, Charles.

July 24, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

Another Saturday night almost gone that we can mark off our calendar. Speaking of calendars, the time is slipping by so quickly I can hardly realize the first day of August is nearly here.

The time goes quickly but still it seems like an era since I saw you last. Funny, the memories are so vivid, each moment of the time we spent together stands out alone until I know almost to a sigh what we said and did and yet it seems like such a long time ago.

My mind seems to be a blank today and tonight... not a blank really, but filled with missing you so. It all began with hearing "Tonight We Love" today. My knees started to shake and I had to sit down and hear it through. Is it good when music does that to you? I don't know. I always get such a choked feeling when I hear it. Perhaps it's just as well that it isn't so popular.

I've had a reading spree on. I haven't touched a magazine or read a book in months. The last few nights and today I've practically devoured magazines... short stories, book-length novels and what have you. Some even good and others not much. One or two are worth passing on.

Sunday p.m.

Hello again, darling. I gave up on the above and went to bed. You can probably tell what kind of mood I was in so I thought the best thing to do was to quit.

It's so quiet tonight. The girls and Mr. Heuser have gone to a wake so I'm here alone. the only noises are those the crickets are making and they seem to be playing a merry tune. You know it took a while for me to get used to the quiet of the country after being a city gal all these years. Did you find it that way at "Cheesecake Manor?"

By the way, I heard one of your colleague on the Stars and Stripes program tonight... Sgt. Russell Jones. He'd been to Africa and back to London again, but I should be telling you, huh?

The WAACs received quite a welcome from the accounts in the paper. Said to have boosted the solders' morale in the E.T.O. 100% Did you wish I was a WAAC for a minute or two when you saw them or no? It would have been my luck to be sent to Africa had I joined.

Today has been quiet. We went to 10:30 Mass for a change instead of 7:00. I helped Marge with dinner, ironed my clothes, sewed a little on baby dresses and crocheted all the wool I had on Dottie's carriage cover. Exciting day. Here I am now in a quiet corner of our room writing to you and listening to the crickets sing.

I almost forgot... the quietness of the day was broken by the blaring forth of the radio telling the world of the ousting of Mussolini, which makes us all wonder, What now? Is it for the good? Is the Pope behind it? Is it a cover up for Mussolini and Hitler? We'll just have to wait and see. Frankly I'm a little wary of the news. The pessimistic side of me showing up I guess, but I don't trust these guys any farther than I can throw them and that isn't far.

I had a postcard from Father John... short, but he said he was having a swell time. From the card, the place looks nice. I've always wanted to go through the New England states. I'd like to hear what Father John has to say about the bombing of Rome and the fall of Mussolini now.

I missed not getting any mail yesterday. Fact is, I only received one letter all week... the V-letter. That's the first time in weeks I haven't had at least two.



Did I tell you in Mom's letter that she had three bonds she was forwarding to me. That will make eight we have. That's three we are missing yet so I suppose they will be coming along now, too.

The other day I came home early and decided to clean off the night table a bit by my bed. I had quite a few of your letters there so of course, I ended up by reading them over. Reading your letters over after a time is just like the first time again. I always read them at least four or five times from the time I get it until I answer it and I always get the same laughs and smiles and the same heartaches, too, reading them over and over.

I went to another movie this week, a B picture but good. I think the name of it was "Tonight We Raid Calais." Story of a commando in France, very exciting. Annabella played the

feminine lead.

The last couple of days I've been thinking of the kind of place we'd have when we finally start being Mr. and Mrs. Kiley in our own two by four. Too, I've been thinking about the hours you'll probably keep. Your dad has been telling me about that. He's told me a lot about you and I love it. Our Saturday night talks cover a lot over that pitcher of beer but most always center around you.

I must call Dottie and El tomorrow and see how everything is. I was going to do it Friday, but left the bank on the run to catch the four thirty-eight, as always. One of these days, I'm going to give the natives of Perth Amboy a surprise and walk up the street like a lady to the station instead of running for dear life as if someone were chasing me. You'd think it was the last one that was going that day.

It's hot and close again tonight. There were a few rumbles while ago as if there might be a storm, but so far nothing more. We could stand a little rain. Mr. Heuser's tomatoes need a little wet weather. Don't get exasperated, but I left you again a few minutes ago. I decided to take a shower before the others come home so now when I say goodnight to you, that's what it will be because I'll be saying my prayers and hopping in bed.

The folks are back so I'd better be on my way. It is late and seven o'clock rolls around early.

I've covered all these pages and haven't said how much I love you once. I always like to save it until the end. What I'd give to be able to curl up in a corner with you snuggled on your shoulder and go to sleep. You know, did I ever tell you that you have nice shoulders? Just made for snuggling. I was going, wasn't I? Goodnight, my dearest. I love you so much and miss you more than ever.

My prayers and thoughts are ever with you. Goodnight and be good. None of this misbehavin' business.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 27, 1943—London

Billee dearest,

Back from a four-day trip to Wales and southwestern England and a chance to spend a beautiful evening with you.

My trip wasn't very productive from a news-gathering standpoint but it did give me an opportunity to see Britain when, in my opinion, it is wearing its nicest colors.

I started out with a short plane hop to save about five hours but traveled the rest of the way by train. Wales was a bit damp. I stayed a day in Cardiff and then set out for the English coast, Penzance, Land's End, Plymouth, Torquay, Brighton and Bournemouth.

Night before last, you were never closer to me. I stood atop a cliff overlooking the Channel, in the warm, lush purple twilight. Below the water rolled over the uninhabited beach and far away a gold bar, running from north to south, stopped the sky from dropping into the water on the horizon.

And, I was lonely, very lonely. But, just to think of you and know you are mine, for as long as forever, made me really feel as though we haven't been apart so long. Perhaps it is because I can almost touch you, you are that near to me in everything, that it doesn't seem so long.

You will know how close you were, and are, to me when I tell you a rather amusing story.

In my train compartment today were a man and his seven-year-old daughter as well as a woman and a two-months old baby. During the trip I confess to have taken part in: holding the baby for almost a half hour while the mother went to the dining car for tea and then mixed something in a bottle with water and came up with milk; and escorting the seven-year old junior miss (named Doris) to tea. Perhaps it was because she had a wee nose and dimples that I "fell in love" with Doris and asked her father if I might take her to tea.

Honestly, I thoroughly enjoyed both. I must have looked odd holding the baby. The man asked me if I had any of my own and although I answered in the negative, I added that I had plans to be carried out if the blasted war would hurry up.

And now, it begins to look as though we really have God on our side, insofar as bringing us together again is concerned.

The end of Mussolini's power may be far-reaching. There's a big job ahead and while many over here believe Germany's collapse will be sudden and unexpected, I'm just keeping my fingers crossed.

When I got home tonight the first question I asked Benny was, "Any mail?" His answer was, "Charlie, it looks like nobody loves us any more. I haven't heard from Jane (his wife) since a July 12 letter."

I always feel as badly as he does but don't show it outwardly as much. Your last letter was also dated July 12, but we make it sound as if it was Jan. 12.

So, without new "bits of heaven" to read, I went back over your old ones. Even went so far as to count them again... 145 received since April 20, 1942.

I read six of them, from April 20 to the 29. You haven't changed one little bit.

Those letters made me feel so selfish all over again; made me realize for the 1,000th time I was wrong. I was wrong for not starting plans for our marriage before I left you in Asheville. I was wrong for not doing it while you were in New York. Yes, we possibly would have been bewildered by the rush of everything. Still, you wanted it and I insisted on being so damned practical!

Then when it appeared as if we could be married when you came up again on June 1, I knew, knew too well we didn't have time because that blasted transport had my name on a berth.

There are some of the things you said in those letters, sweetheart:

"I'll always remember our two weekends for the little things that happened."

"I'm going to see if I can get a leave of absence and try New York for awhile."

"I've been engaged two weeks now. Isn't it wonderful? I celebrated by doing my ring up in fresh adhesive."

“Charles, you must never worry about me no matter what happens.”

“I’m going to learn how to make lemon pie.”

“My brazen proposal in New York was selfish. I felt I could stand the waiting better knowing I really belonged to you. Our love is so right.”

“Mother thinks we should wait for the duration, but I don’t. I’ve finally decided to come, bag and baggage, as soon as the girl in the hospital returns.”

And, there were all the things in my mind when I left. I swore then, as now, at myself, the war and everything it did to us.

Then, the first letter I received from you in Ireland:

“June seems like an eternity to wait, but it won’t be that long.”

And, tonight, as true to my beloved as when I kissed her goodbye, I love her so. And I pray, please God, bring us together soon. Because I want to feel her cheek on mine and kiss her little nose and tell her everything I’ve saved in my heart. ‘Night for awhile, angel.

All my love and kisses forever and always, Charles.



July 27, 1943—Matawan

My dearest,

Again no mail but am I complaining? Not much. You’ve spoiled me with these two and three letters a week I’ve been getting, but then I love being spoiled that way.

We finished early today and went to see “Stage Door Canteen.” Really good, at least I enjoyed it. There isn’t a lot of story to it but what there is is good and I think you’ll agree it brings back more than one of our memories.

Speaking of mail, I haven’t had any all week, not even from my family. I feel like a stepchild.

I called El yesterday and all seems to be going well there. Your Uncle John was home for the weekend. I’m glad of that because your Dad was beginning to worry about him. Eddie was home, too. Eleanor Annice weighs ten pounds now. Have a little patience and she’ll make that twelve pounds yet. Bette was at Rockaway Beach for the weekend. said she had a swell time. I think I’ll go in this weekend.

Nothing new about Mussolini so far tonight. His whereabouts still seem to be a mystery. I wish they'd hurry and decide what they are going to do. I can hardly wait for the outcome of the next few weeks. We had our first sweet corn tonight and was it good. We certainly did away with a lot of it, but I love corn on the cob. Just hit the spot tonight.

Did I tell you I had a long letter from Mother Mueller? She is well and asks to be remembered to you. She called Mom and they had quite a long talk about me and you, too.

We're still having our share of the heat and humidity. I'd love to swap a little of the weather. I know you'd appreciate some good warm sunshine. Did I say warm? Meant to say hot.

I washed my hair a bit ago and am waiting for it to dry now. I took a shower, hot and then cold to wake me up. We had a beer for supper and it did a good job of making me drowsy and I thought of the letters I wanted to write you and Mom and decided that ought to do the trick to wake me up.

There is one scene in "Stage Door Canteen..." the soldier and his girl atop a roof in New York and they talk until dawn about all the things they want to do and they talk about a fireplace and a corner. They stole our stuff, but I guess there are a lot with dreams like ours. He sailed on their wedding day.

I keep wondering what you are doing on another assignment. The last letter you were going on a 3-day and covering the WAACs. I'm looking forward to hearing that one.

An amusing incident today... while waiting for the train, a young sailor picked up a conversation with Marge and I. Just a kid. He had just returned from his boot training in the Great Lakes. You never saw anyone so bubbling over. He told us practically his life history. An Irishman, too, by the way. He was going to Matawan to see his darling... that was the way he put it. I guess he just wanted someone to talk to.

According to the latest requirements for Xmas packages... you have to tell us what you want. Now isn't that going to be some Xmas for you? I had kind of hoped you'd be home, but I guess that's too much to hope for. Wonder where I'll be spending mine?

Before I know it my vacation will be rolling around... if I get it. Keep your fingers crossed. I can't wait to get home and see for myself how Mom is getting along.

I'm so wide awake now. Not a bit sleepy and it's after twelve. They are all in bed now except the mosquitoes. They seem to like me an awful lot. I've been swatting them all evening.

We played records tonight. I mentioned before that Agnes had so many good ones. I don't think she enjoys hearing them so much now. She and Jack bought them together and spent many happy hours together listening to them. Gee, Charles, her faith and courage are really something. Outwardly she never shows her feelings at all and I know how worried she must be. She makes me feel ashamed sometimes when I get feeling low. The only time she shows it is occasionally when I get mail from you and she happens to be around. She's had no direct word from him since a year in April. It's a case of being able to stand a lot more than you think you can when it really has to be done.

I've rambled a lot again tonight, but I love being with you even this little bit. I'm waiting until last again to tell you how much I love you. Each letter brings the realization of my love closer to me. I'm

so grateful for our faith in each other and our love. I'll never be able to thank Him enough for that. Please, keep on loving me as you do now. Goodnight, my dearest. Keep well. And here are...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 29, 1943—Matawan

My darling,

I started this once with pen but I looked at the supply of paper I had left and decided that I'd better do it this way.

Today was perfect. My day went smoothly and I was at the station in time to catch the three eight to Cliffwood. I made my way leisurely homeward wanting to quicken my steps a bit just in case there was a letter and saying a prayer that there would be one. I was beginning to get anxious... eight days without one but my prayer was answered because I found one lone letter in my place when I got home and it was yours.

I enjoyed the stories about the G.I. Janes as you call the WAACs, but darling, this is the pay-off... you an editor for the Women's Page with a byline, "Charlotte Kiley." I'm beginning to wonder who I am writing to and I'm afraid that you're going to have a time living that one down. I'm just kidding... they can call you anything they like but you'll still be my sweetheart to me.

I think I'm being scolded again. The paragraph asking me what I think you'd expect. I'm afraid that it's my inferiority complex cropping up again. Maybe it's because there's never been anyone like you before in my young life and I'm still a little overwhelmed. Do you mind, before I go any further, if I tell you know how very much I love you... don't think I can wait until the end.

You know, I'm afraid that despite all our reassurances, I'm going to feel that day we meet again like I did the day I walked into Penn Station to meet you and my knees turned to water because I afraid you'd be disappointed... remember? But I'm telling you, change any way you like from the "guy" that left me except for one thing, please. Go on loving me the same old way. There are bound to be changes, outward changes. After all you've been gone quite a while now and it will still be some time yet before you come home, I imagine. You are meeting new people, living in new surroundings and a new country to you. We'll have to expect a few changes and then, too, you aren't getting any younger or do I dare say that?

Speaking of changes, you will probably find me changed a little. At least I think I've changed some for the better. It started that night in January, 1942. Since then your love has filled my heart and it's at peace for the first time. I don't know whether that's saying it right... sounds a little clumsy. Before, I was unsettled, didn't know exactly what I wanted but I learned, not that night, but a little later on that I wanted to be Mrs. Kiley, your wife and the mother of your "ball team." I decided, then, that there was going to be none of this "career girl" business, that I wasn't cut out for that. I'll feel much more at home and like myself in my niche as Mrs. C.F.K., Jr.

Now, we'll get down to business about the WAAC and what have you and then there will be no more mention of it from here on. You must be reading my mind because I have been thinking very

seriously of joining the WAVE for more than one reason. First of all, to ease my conscience. This is as much my war as yours and I thought maybe it would satisfy my need to do something that would help more than just being a civilian and sticking to my job. I thought I would like to try for the hospital work since I always wanted to be a nurse. I've been sorry that I didn't enter a hospital when I finished school instead of going on with the job I had in Ivey's. I realized only too well that it wouldn't be an easy job I'd be getting into, especially the work I wanted. The thought of you has held me back—the way you would feel about it. Strange, but your defense almost the way you wrote it has been in the back on my mind like a warning signal ever since I had the desire to enlist or enroll, whichever way is correct. You make me feel proud and a little ashamed, too. That I can't explain but I'm forgetting my desire to enlist even though I don't think military life would change me and I'll find something else to do that will ease my conscience while I'm waiting for you to come "home." Do you mind if I say, I think you're very right and I should have listened to that warning signal before and not even thought about doing it. so now, that's settled and I feel settled too, and we won't mention it again.

I'm sleepy. It is late, too... after 12, I think. Everyone is in bed and I have only the old clock in the kitchen ticking to keep me company and the dull thud of the keys on the typewriter... it's a noiseless number.

I'm going to 195 for the weekend so I probably won't get to write again until Sunday night. I want to call Dottie tomorrow and see how she is getting along, but then I may see her Saturday for a bit.

I checked the names in Life but didn't see any familiar ones except those I already knew about in Massillon and Asheville. None of the New York names or Jersey rang familiar. Several of those fellows have written and said they were very much alive. I usually read the letters to the editor in the front page. I know how you much have felt when you saw the bugler's name but I'm afraid there will be more than just his that will be familiar to us before it is all over. I'd personally like to say "thank you" to the chaplain that said the boys would be home for Xmas in the *Stars and Stripes*. That seems too much to hope for but it sounds good. The president's speech was encouraging last night, too. The end is near I feel sure. The next few months will mean a lot.

I'd better close. Seven o'clock comes early. Don't worry about me any more. I'll be here loving you and waiting and perhaps seeing you soon... who knows? Be good and none of this misbehavin.' I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Section 1

Untitled