

Chapter 7

March–May, 1944

March 2, 1944—Asheville

My dearest one,

Your cable yesterday and letter today and one Monday makes me feel I'm being "courted" all over again. The cable gave me a right and a half hope until I opened it. As always, you think of everything. Mom was thrilled and so happy to hear of Warren. Can't wait to hear both your impressions... why and how, etc.

Your letter today leaves me hanging in the air. Did you or didn't you go on the raid? It's good the cable arrived or I'd be terribly worried, not knowing. I suppose you're thinking, what's she going to say now? The answer is... nothing. Just take the best possible care of yourself and remember my prayers and love are with you. It's all part of the job and I understand, even though I'm not too keen on the idea. However, the impractical side of me envies you terribly.

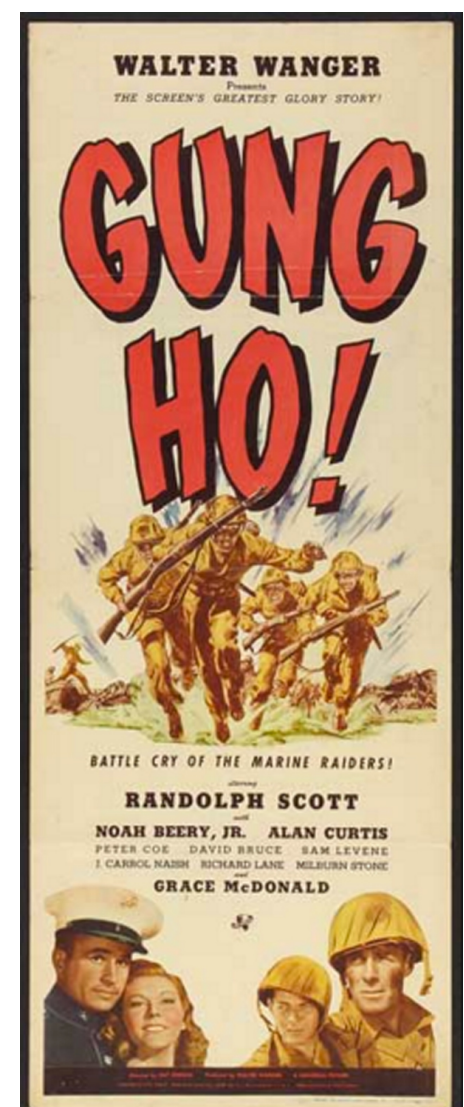
Your letter definitely gave me a vivid picture of the "night before." I can see everything... even you, banging away at the typewriter. This should be published... really.

Did I tell you I spoke to a lieutenant on Sunday that I used to go to school with? He's in the 12th Armored Division. I said I knew someone in the Fifth, meaning Eddie of course. He said, "Oh yes, they are due for some excitement very soon." I'm wondering if he landed with the latest convoy over there. What a reunion that would be. Keep on and we'll have to take an ocean trip. There'll be more of the family over there than here.

It's a lovely night. I went to the movies tonight with Freddie and we decided to walk home. I don't know why he hangs around. I'm not such good company but I guess it is someplace to come to that's like home. We saw "Gung Ho," the story of Carlson's raid on Makin. Quite good... very exciting, of course.

I'm enclosing this with your St. Patrick's Day card. Remember two years ago, that day you called me up, and called me "your colleen?" I'd love to have the phone ring and hear you say "Hello, sweetheart." Please, may it be soon.

The husband of one of the girls in the bank made quite a name for himself over in France the other day. He's a Capt. Benzing, a



bombardier I think, shot down three German planes. He has a gorgeous wife. She quit last week since he is due to come home within a week or two.

All those fellows finishing up their missions and then a leave for home, I hope, for them all. Do you have to complete twenty-five missions to come home? If so, hurry up. At the rate you're going, it may be ten years from now.

Don't mind me... I get like this now and then. Lately, I've felt the need of you so much. Do you get like that? Just one big ache, then you start slinging insults under your breath at everyone who's keeping us apart.

You've been playing second fiddle to a pair of socks the past few days. I finished one tonight... my first sock... of heavy white wool for Warren to wear inside his flying boots. They look kind of good if I do say it. I amazed myself because I don't think I ever saw anyone making socks. All I know, I got out of a book.

Believe it or not, your sweater is on the way with the shampoo, stationery, and cigarettes, all I could get in the package. You can wear the sweater for Easter.

Hey, darling, if you'll write a request, Mom will bake you a chocolate cake. She has a recipe that will keep indefinitely... the cake, not the recipe. She made one for Warren when he was in the west and it traveled ok.

I haven't heard from El this week. I was anxious to hear if she'd heard any more from Tom and what they've heard from Eddie, if anything. I meant to ask Bette, too, what she heard from her Eddie, when he landed, etc.

We have an empty house... just Mom and me for a few days. The girls in the apartment got vacations together so they all went home Tuesday for ten days to Missouri and Nebraska.

I just happened to remember I have two rolls of film I've been hoarding to put in the box and I forgot to send it, so I'll send it first class by itself. It won't weigh more than eight ounces.

I'm about ready to hit the sack too. I'll be back again maybe tomorrow. I hope another letter comes telling me about the mission and the fate of "Stars and Stripes, Second Edition." Love me and miss me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 5, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

Another day and another night to add to the many on which I have felt the need of you so much.

I don't know why that old familiar heartache should be more painful tonight. But it is. With every passing day, I repeat my vow never to let you out of my sight for a second unless it is absolutely necessary.

The way I feel tonight I wish I were in a position to carry you away somewhere, away from the rest of the world and have you all to myself. Not for a day or a week or a year, but from now on. I wish I could be alone with you for a million years, trying to prove how deeply I love you.

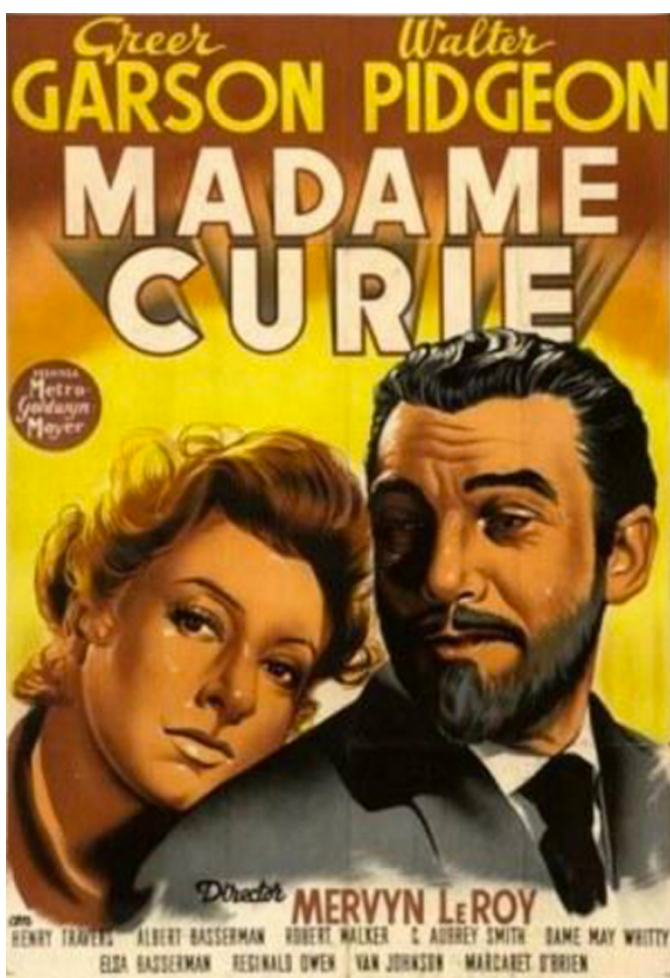
Billee, there was something said last night by Ben that made me examine my conscience, if it can be called that.

He said he wondered if Jane could believe deep in her heart that he had had two dates during the 25 months he has been away. He didn't, and wouldn't, question her faith in him but tried to point out that even wives are human and may sometimes wonder (and in many cases they have a right to wonder) if their men are treading the straight and narrow. He asked me what I thought about it and I was honestly stumped for an answer. You see, there must be many reports reaching home about the "wild life" side of the Army, particularly in London. I suppose it would be natural for some to wonder how much is going on that they don't hear about.

At first, I thought it would be silly, almost a challenge to our faith in each other. Then I decided that you, like Ben's wife and Andy's, should have a right to know what we do. I might add that I am positive in my belief that Andy hasn't had a single date during his 20 months overseas and that Ben has had exactly two. In my case, I haven't been so good. I have had three! And I've told you of all three. One was with Doris Frost a year ago Christmas and two with the WAC last summer.

Now, I don't intend for a single moment to be typed as a martyr to love and I'll tell you why. I may have said it before. When you love someone as I love you there just isn't anyone else. I'm sure I would be poor company for a girl, and it's easy to shun that company.

Once in a while a woman's company is appreciated wholeheartedly. When we went to Bebe Daniels' I enjoyed myself immensely. I'd be an awful liar if I said otherwise.



So, there it is. I simply thought it was about time I told you again that "I ain't misbehavin'." And, that I truly adore you and look upon you as being more precious than... well, you name it.

Speaking of Ben and Andy, the three of us passed our day off today having lunch at a French restaurant, "La Coquille," and seeing "Madame Curie." Early tonight we stopped at Air Force headquarters to get reports on today's raid, the first time the Forts went to Berlin. The reports were rather brief at that time so we couldn't tell what the true picture was.

Your V-mail of Feb. 17 came yesterday, the first since the airmail of Feb. 8.

You mentioned not having heard from Warren but that's all cleared up now. As for Eddie, I haven't heard from him yet but I expect I will pretty soon.

I was surprised to learn I had to request your picture, but here it is:

“Please... pretty please... send me your picture.”

‘Night sweetheart. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 6, 1944—Asheville

Darling,

What can I say or do? I’m so very grateful... truly it is the answer to my prayers that you are being kept safe. The next thing... what of the boys that went down? I hope you hear word very soon that they are safe as prisoners or perhaps in friendly hands, and that Mac bailed out in time.

I get frightened just writing about it, Charles. I hardly know what to say. It’s too big, but I’m so glad that it was your last mission. I won’t say anything to 195 in my letters... better not to worry them. I’m glad that you told me. Please, don’t ever keep anything from me. I realize there is much you can’t tell me but you understand what I mean.

I’m thinking too, how you must feel after knowing those men and being with them just a few nights before. I’m remembering your letter written the night before you were to go up. You can’t get used to things like that. Probably it has happened several times before, I imagine, but there was a special association with the “Stars and Stripes” and its crew.

Our announcement was in yesterday’s paper. A lot of congratulations from all sides today, even the vice president of the bank came to my corner and expressed the wish that he hoped you would come home soon on a leave. My immediate superior is a bit worried, I

FIANCEE OF ARMY WRITER — The engagement of Miss Billee Ruth Marie Gray to Staff Sergt. Charles F. Kiley, son of Mr. Charles Kiley of 195 Lexington Av., and the late Mrs. Ella N. Kiley, has been announced by her mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Gray of Asheville, N. C. Miss Gray has been a resident of Matawan for the past year. Sergeant Kiley, a former member of The Jersey Journal sports department, is a staff writer for the Stars and Stripes, U. S. Army paper, and is stationed in London.

Billee and Charles’ engagement announcement.

I guess, for fear you will come home soon. He had the nerve to say, “Aren’t you taking a chance, not having seen him for two years?” I got mad inside but I told him in a nice way that definitely I was not taking a chance. He doesn’t know us very well, does he? Taking a chance after what we’ve meant to each other these two years... Saturday was an anniversary... 23 months since the Hawaiian Room. Funny thing, I went to a formal canteen dance (every other week it’s formal, the request of the soldiers) and wore my white dress for the first time in 23 months. I almost didn’t go... it seemed almost sacrilegious to wear it. That dress seems to belong to you. The dance was nice... a good crowd. It’s heartbreaking to see those that can’t dance, or I should say, are not able to dance, sitting on the sidelines.

Yesterday we had company again for dinner. Soldiers, of course, but Mom has known them for some time so they come here as a second home. Yesterday afternoon we raked leaves. I'm exhausted today and sore all over. I used muscles I haven't used in ages but I slept like a rock last night.

Today it is raining very hard with thunder and lightening. It can do almost anything now... get very cold or very warm.

We received a V-letter from Warren today written the 22nd of February. Mom was more than glad to hear from him. He said he was at a reception center... didn't say much more. Poor guy hasn't received any mail yet.

These new raids are frightening Mom... it's in her face... wondering is Warren taking part? I've told her it will probably be several months before he goes into action.

I just happened to think: both Mac and his brother are "somewhere in Germany." Is it possible that they could meet? Oh, I hope so.

Things like this make you ask yourself, "Why?" All this... there's no point in going on but you know what I'm thinking.

I'm tired... awfully tired. I need your shoulder to lay my head on, your arms to comfort me. After two years, I can still feel your arms about me and your kiss, Charles... and my boss wanted to know if I wasn't taking a chance!

Goodnight... be back again soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: Do you remember a Ray Hansen? One of the girls that knows Theda asked me today if I knew he had been killed. I think he was one of the fellows that went up on the mountain with us that Sunday.

March 7, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

If you are looking into the sky tonight, you see the same brilliant moon that shines on us here... a symbol of our everlasting love. For as long as that moon in the heavens, my love for you will shine just as bright.

So, when you ask me not to lose my patience, I only have to look up to be reminded of an angel I love so dearly, as if I needed a reminder.

When I got back from a two-day trip to the beautiful rolling country of Devonshire today I found those four words at the end of your Feb. 10 letter. "Don't lose your patience," was what you said. Believe me, Billee, I never will. If I ever so much as stumbled to taint our faith, I couldn't live five seconds with my conscience; having been carried along by it this far, the rest is easy.

In return for not losing my patience, I only ask one thing. Please keep leaning over to kiss me "Good morning," "Good afternoon," and "Good night."

There were two letters today. The airmail of Feb. 5 was also waiting for me. The pictures you enclosed in it were “magnificallossal,” if you can make that one out. The sight of Oak Lodge, beautiful in its white and set off with the snow, almost made me weep. I had forgotten how much I have to see all over again. The picture of Mom and Warren with you was a study in family pride. Perhaps it was because I was looking for it that I saw pride in Warren sticking out all over the Gray women. Don’t ever change from the way you looked, Billee. You were frowning but such a lovely frown.

All you mentioned in the letters was getting a couple of my v-mails. I sent at least 15 letters in all in January. Let me know how many you receive.

I heartily agree with your remark that V-mails are “as personal as Grand Central.” so, I believe I’ll stick to airmail exclusively. The mail should be speeding up now with good weather coming on.

Billee, dearest, I want to apologize from way down deep for asking you about Mom’s attitude or reaction to our engagement. I should have been more of an adult instead of a worrisome infant. In the Feb. 5 letter, you said Mom wanted us “to be as happy as anyone...” and that’s good enough for me. I’m almost afraid now that I was begging you to “tell me off” again.

After recognizing my “bonus” story, Miss Mind Reader, you wanted to know what I was going to do with mine. Well, you asked for it and I’ll tell you. I am going to buy that fur coat I promised, remember? What do you prefer?

Leaving you to wrestle with that problem, I’ll say goodnight. I’ll be back tomorrow to try and tell you how beautiful Devonshire is just before spring.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 8, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

A year ago today I finished my first working day at Perth Amboy National... remember? Seems like a long time ago. Now that I’m home, it doesn’t seem as if I’ve ever been away.

Uncle Sam has been good to me today and this week... two letters from you and a V-letter from Warren. Three letters in three days. You will have the answer to your letter telling me of the fate of “Stars and Stripes Second Edition.” I’m glad there is a good chance that they bailed out safely. Theirs will be a long wait now instead of that trip home after completing their quota of missions... doesn’t seem right, somehow.

Good of you to write Mom. She needed just that since she hasn’t been up to par lately but she’ll be ok.

I’ll bet you were surprised to pick up the phone and hear Warren. Think how I’m going to feel to pick up the phone some evening to hear your “Hello, sweetheart.” Then things will begin popping around here. One of the men at the bank asked me how soon I was going to take off for London.

I had a feeling all along that if it were possible, you'd be along on the invasion. I understand how you feel, Charles, and I expect I'd feel the same way. I'll just have faith and pray that you'll be kept safe. I know you wouldn't much like the idea of being confined to an office, especially in these times.

Will I get another picture? My heart melts now when I glance your way while I'm dressing, fixing my hair, etc. I catch myself talking to you and blowing a kiss your way on my way out. You're a lot of company to have around.

Makes me feel kind of nice inside to know you want to come home. It would be hard to miss the climax and the end, after seeing it through this far, but I'm hoping and praying you'll get a leave.

There are so many of them coming home now. You've worked hard. Sometimes I wish you'd stayed in the infantry. Maybe by this time, they'd be sending you home for a rest. Purely selfish. Just sometimes I feel like that during one of my weak moments but more often I'm grateful you aren't on the battlefield somewhere.

I love you being jealous. Mean, aren't I? Can you be jealous so many miles away? He has been swell to both Mom and I... Freddie, I mean, but don't be jealous. No reason to be. He's a service fellow but my heart belongs to the nicest guy I know, a certain Charles Kiley. Know him? I haven't seen him in quite a while but that doesn't matter. He's the kind of a guy you'd carry around in your heart forever. You only meet him once in a lifetime. I'd give a lot to see him just long enough to tell him I love him, to feel his arms around me.

You must have had a time with Al's brother and his lieutenant friend, with your "morning after" head and raging thirst. I had to smile when you said you begged off for the second night. You can't take it... just teasing. I know how you feel.

You must have made a hit with Bebe Daniels. Now, I'm jealous... glamour enters the picture. I'm glad you are getting out. Do you good. She sounds swell.

We're having clear, cold weather today and tonight. There was quite a snowfall this morning but the wind carried it away. Tonight there is almost a full moon.

Berlin has really been getting it again. How much longer can they stand the heavy blitz? Looks like they'd give up.

The pictures are super but I can't help but feel down when I look at them, wondering where this night will find those boys.

I'm tired... have a couple of letters to write yet.

I almost forgot. Warren thinks you're quite a guy. "A pretty good Joe," was the way he put it. I want to drop him a line tonight, too.

G'night, darling. Love me and miss me. Here's that kiss you were wanting... kind of special just because I'm missing you tonight, as usual.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 9, 1944—London

Evening sweetheart,

Last night I said I would take you on a trip through the picturesque countryside of Devonshire. After putting the trip into words, however, I discovered there was entirely too much the censors would object to. Oh, you would be surprised at some of the things censors frown upon. Consequently, I abandoned the idea.

At the same time I received your airmail of Feb. 25 and frankly it stopped me in my tracks and I decided I would postpone the trip through Devonshire and discuss the subject, "Why I love you."

Now, don't get excited. We don't want to get all confused like we did once, do we? So, if you will come a little closer so I can put my arms around you while your head falls on my shoulder, I'll tell you why I love you... why there has been and always will be one Billee... why we are going to live "happily ever after."

You say, "I don't like your reason for loving me. That's no good. It has to be more than because I love you."

You are right, Billee. I should have gone beyond that when I said it. You see, that is only one reason why you are all I have or ever want. Surely, it is more than that. And, I'll tell you.

I love you because when my eyes first found you I tingled all over; because you are soft, tender and sincere; because you are intelligent with just enough devilry; because your eyes are sleepy and because I haven't lost the taste of your first kiss; because you like to dream the way I do and are sensitive the way I am; because you love children and because you are beautiful, even in the kitchen wearing an apron and an unruly curl on your forehead; because you are independent and could tell me to go to _____ and (maybe) get away with it; because you know a first baseman from a fullback, are romantic and enjoy good music, good books and good scotch; because you are all I ever wanted to come live with me; because you give me confidence and ambition; because you taught me faith; because you remember the little things that mean so much; because I have missed you so much the ache misted my eyes; because I wouldn't or couldn't go on from here without you; because you are all that matters to me; because your nose is tilted; because you love me! and, even if you didn't, I would still love you!

May I kiss you now?

You don't forget much, do you? Like the two-month anniversary of your ring. Does it still sparkle? Perhaps I should have given you a bigger one so that when GI wolves are nearby they couldn't fail to see that someone beat them to you. Still, even that wouldn't discourage them, I'll bet. But, I am glad you are able to have fun like the party you mentioned. Hell, I'm jealous again...

Billee, you are taxing my Irish temper something awful. You say you couldn't send the package until payday. Lady, you have our money to use whenever you are short and I mean for you to use it. That's an order from the sergeant!

You asked about censorship of mail. I can't remember a letter of yours being censored since the early days in Ireland. On this end, there is a drive in progress to maintain a strict censorship as possible, and rightly so, because of invasion possibilities.

Say... those people at the Sheraton Hotel and the ones who mailed the Bride's Book are on the ball, aren't they? It's a wonder a doctor or two didn't solicit the maternity case. Maybe it's because they never have to worry about business.

You must have heard the news of the daylight raids on Berlin. Probably played up sensationally in the American press. The receding losses on the three large-scale attacks are significant of waning enemy fighter strength, I think. We lost 68 heavy bombers in the first raid, 36 in the second and only seven in the third.

Of course, the birth of the quadruplets almost pushed the war off page one last week. It could only happen to an American soldier! We weren't allowed to print a line about it (ruling handed down from HQ) although the British papers and American correspondents went all out. I sat in on a press conference at which the fellow, a sergeant in the Engineers, issued a prepared statement saying he was going to do right by the girl, that he loved her and has asked his wife in Pennsylvania for a divorce. The girl, incidentally, was in the A.T.S, the British equivalent of our WAC.

Just had a funny thought: you haven't had quadruplets in your family, have you?

Be back Saturday., That's the night after tomorrow. 'Night, sweetheart. Love to Mom. Miss me lots and love me more.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 10, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

I feel like I'm being courted again... a letter every day this week.

Yesterday's letter was written Feb. 13, telling me of your evening with Bebe Daniels in detail. I'm glad you had such an enjoyable evening. It really sounded like fun, the "charades" especially. Seems to me I played a game like that a long time ago.

The reason I could write after Warren's last evening is that I'm definitely a night owl. Once I stay up past twelve, I could stay up indefinitely. As the hours pass, I get more wide-awake. At four-thirty a.m., I could hardly expect to have you write a letter, so don't be taking a "back seat."

We'll clear up this doubt about Mom's approval. I think I can explain it. She did seem a bit pessimistic about when we would be married, when I came home. Now she seems to be all right. As far as her approving of you, she does whole-heartedly. She talks about you to her friends as much as she does Warren. She has always approved... well, since we made up our minds. Mom is a bit disillusioned where men are concerned so we have to take that into consideration, since she had such an unpleasant experience with her marriage. We'll show her, though, that we two can be happy and make a good life for our children, and for you and me, won't we?

When she said we had only known each other a month, she meant we had only actually been together that long. The truth of the matter is, it was less time than that, but I don't think two people could know each other better than we do. It's a different sort of way than those people that are together all the time. You know practically my every thought, Charles, things that I wouldn't think to tell you were we together. You might say you're my diary. I'm only hoping it isn't going to be one of those five-year things (horrible thought). Anyhow, I'm not worried about our not knowing each other long enough.

Mom did think at first that it was too soon to announce our engagement but I was to do what I thought best. She hasn't said much about it here of late, but there isn't anything to worry about on that score.

I love that note of possessiveness... "You are mine" ... "Nothing will ever change that." It gives me such a nice feeling inside to belong to you.

Enough of that. So you met my brother. I'd love to have been a mouse and seen it. I'm envying you both. He's a good kid. The Army has changed him quite a bit... aged him a bit, I'd say. The mustache floors me. I told him he'd better be shaving it off. Having someone over there who knows him, even though indirectly, will help him a lot. He doesn't like to admit it but he does get homesick.

Quite a coincidence, him going to the same gunnery school as you did.

It's good to hear firsthand that he is well and ok. That does Mom good.

You've really been gadding about lately... entertaining Larry and his friend... going to see Warren...

Warren couldn't exaggerate about my ring. You can see it in the picture. Everybody raves about it... really amazed at how lovely it is and I've seen nothing like it.

I'm not so sure I want you and Warren to get together talking about me but then maybe it will be a good thing. I've been told if you really want to know about a girl, ask her kid brother, so we'll see. Could be he might disillusion you but I'll take the risk.

I've been awfully busy yesterday and today. The teller next to the head teller has been out sick. I don't know what he has wrong with him. Of all things, they gave me his window... all big commercial deposits. They really broke me in but I fooled them... balanced twenty thousand dollars to a penny. The strain was a bit hard on me, but I'll recover. You have to keep your wits about you, playing with that much money from nine to one. Working with money has spoiled me. Money seems to have lost its value to me after seeing so much of it. The only time it has value is when you come up over or short at the end of the day... especially short. Then you start "sweating it."

Enough of shop talk. We've been having a full moon this week. Tonight is lovely. We could take a walk and count the stars. It's just warm enough, too.

Oh, I got a present today from Dottie, the swellest cookbook. If I learn everything in the book, I'll be able to hang out my shingle. Funny, I've been scanning bookshelves trying to find just the right one and this fills the bill perfectly.

Guess I'll say goodnight. I want to drop a line to Dottie. The cartoons you sent are cute... "made to order." They'll go in our scrapbook. Soon it will be two years since April 4, 1942.

Goodnight, darling. I love you more than ever, more than yesterday and less than tomorrow... I like that.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 12, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

I went to “the dogs” today. No, I didn’t break out in a rash of wild revelry. It was the greyhound racing here at White City Stadium. It is the big Saturday afternoon sport, as popular as our horse racing, and after planning to go on several previous occasions, finally went today with Andy. It was lots of fun. I won about five pounds but played it all back.

Hold the phone... your brother just called me long distance. I couldn’t imagine who it was at first because I’m not one to get calls at 11 p.m. very often.

He has been assigned to an operational group and called to let me know which one so I can track it down. We can’t identify unit locations over the phone but in this case, he didn’t have to. I knew where he was from the number of his group. And, here is some good news. The bombardment group to which he has been assigned has the record for the entire Eighth Air Force of losing the fewest planes. Of the 112 bombers lost on the three big Berlin raids, his group didn’t lose a single one. I believe it was the only group to escape completely. I’m planning a trip to his base about the middle of next week.

Now, let’s take our minds off the Air Force and get back to the dogs. Incidentally, Warren said he hadn’t received any mail from you yet but I assume it will take time until you get his address. After the greyhound racing, Andy and I had dinner at a Chinese restaurant and finished the day off with a movie.

I suppose I should have preceded my story of today’s activities with a report on yesterday, because it was one of the most interesting and enjoyable afternoons I’ve had over here. It was a working day but Andy and I managed to combine business with pleasure by having lunch with Lady Astor, Virginia-born “stormy petrel” of the House of Commons, and later sitting



Nancy Astor with two women salvage workers during the Blitz in Plymouth, England, circa 1940.

in on a Commons' legislation session. I'd better start from the beginning so you will understand how we got there in the first place.

Andy plans to do a story on Lady Astor, the angle being she was American-born. Years ago she married one of the Lord Astors and for a long time now, she has been a member of Parliament from Plymouth. That is equivalent to our congressional representative. I don't know who I compare her with in our House but it is a matter of record that she has been lauded and criticized more than any other five MPs put together.

Andy made an appointment with her through her secretary and asked me to accompany him to Parliament yesterday. We met Lady Astor, had lunch with her and another female MP, talked for over an hour of a million things and then sat in the visitors' gallery of the House for a couple of hours listening to a debate on an education bill. I came away with the impression that Lady Astor is one of the most outspoken, sincere and lively personalities I have ever met. She is in her early 50s or late 40s, I would judge, but is as active as a girl of 20. If I dared write some of the statements she made I could get a tidy sum for the story.

But, of course, a lot of what she said was off the record. Still, a lot of journalists have taken her at her word in the past which gave her some anxious moments. She openly admits not being the least bit afraid of saying what is on her mind. She is sharp-witted and sharp-tongued as more than a few of her colleagues have found out. Although Churchill is a close friend and both belong to the Conservative Party (counterpart to our Republican Party) she attacked him, or I should say "opposed" him, on many issues. She smiles when she recalls the day she objected to a point on Anglo-Russian collaboration, and objected so vehemently that the prime minister called her a fascist.

"I'm nothing of the sort," she says. "And Winston knows it. As long as I am able to fight for what I think is right and have a voice in the House, they can call me anything they want to. I've called people worse than that so I guess I can take it when I have to." She is about as informal as you can imagine. It was like talking to the mother of someone you knew.

As Winchell puts it... "And now for the mail as time will allow."

I received two of your airmails within the last few days from Feb. 12 and 28. Quite a space in between, isn't there? But, they were really grand and I love you to pieces for every line.

The one of Feb. 28 included your "Glamour Girl of 1923" picture. I showed it to Andy today and all he could say was, "Billee must have a lot of faith in you to send a picture like that." But, he was just ribbing us. Furthermore, I think it's cute even though those pants are right out of this world! Lawdy, I hope people aren't wearing those now.

There are several questions in your letters but I'll wait until tomorrow to answer them. Awfully heavy eyes after running about all day.

Kiss me goodnight? Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 14, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

This is a nice way to start the week off... a long letter from you waiting for me today after a busy time at the bank.

Stayed a bit later today so I could get a little assistance on filling out my income tax. Didn't think I was going to have to pay so much... that's what I get for being a civilian.

Today was gorgeous... so pretty I couldn't see myself getting on the bus so I walked home. The sky was so blue.

The weekend was quiet. I went to the canteen dance Saturday night. It was a nice crowd and everyone seemed to enjoy it. The orchestra gets better, or else I'm just getting used to it. No jitterbugging Saturday night, though.

Mom is feeling better. She's doing a little of the housekeeping at a time, at my suggestion. She did two rooms last week and plans on doing two this week. I wish I had some time off. I feel like digging in and giving her a hand.

I went to see Darryl F. Zanuck's "Purple Heart" last night... an author's conception of what might have happened to those boys that bombed Tokyo and were captured. It was very well done... more than just a movie.

Yours was a real Saturday night letter, written just for us. I guess I've mentioned it since I'm home... that "miss you" feeling has been getting me, but I'll survive until you come and gather me up and carry me away to our two by four. Like you, I don't want to share you with anyone. I just want to bask in your presence and love and not ever be farther than kissing distance oh, for the longest time.

I'd believe anything you told me, you know that if you had three dates you had three dates. There wouldn't be much point in telling me different. I am surprised, though, that they are so few in number.

It's what my conscience tells me. Since you went away, I think I went out first in Massillon with Warren and some of his friends... in a crowd. There wasn't any going out in the east... I went back and forth to 195 and Arlington. That was the extent of my gadding about. Since I'm home I've gone to the show several times with Freddie, but they didn't seem much like dates. What does that add up



to? Guess we've been pretty faithful to our love, amazingly so in these times but ours is a special kind of love, and I can see where neither of us would be much company for the opposite sex.

True stories have come back but I don't pay much attention since I'm interested in only one particular GI Joe and he doesn't fall into that category.

Tell you the truth... I never have thought much about it. We've been so close in our letters, I take things too much for granted. Besides, if something like that were going on, it couldn't help but creep in your letters.

I can see where you would enjoy or appreciate a woman's company, as you put it, and you have been over there a long time. I'm grateful to Bebe Daniels for giving you such an enjoyable evening because they are few and far between, those kinds of evenings. We should know.

You should have the picture by now so the request won't be needed. Seems like an age since I sent it. I forgot to mention the letter received today was written March 5. Not bad timing, is it? A week ago Saturday.

I seem to have told you all the news around here this time. Be back tomorrow or the next day. I'm missing you and loving you more than ever. Hurry home, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 15, 1944—London

Evening sweetheart,

We have lots to talk about tonight. All that was contained in five letters, two of which I acknowledged in my last letter and the rest which arrived yesterday and today. They were those of Feb. 12, 14, 18, 21 and 28. Of the five, I loved the Feb. 14 "Valentine" and Feb. 21 best, although the others had your inimitable touch of "magic" in them, too.

Before we go into the letters, I'll have to tell you Warren called again today, just by way of keeping you informed about him. You see, today was the day I was to visit him but I had to postpone it until later in the week. I figured he would realize I would be up in a few days but when I didn't turn up, he thought something happened to me and called the office long distance. Looks like he is worrying about me when it should be vice versa. He isn't on "ops" yet but will be in about a week. They keep new crews on the ground for a few weeks before putting them on operational status. He said he hadn't received any mail yet, which isn't at all surprising. Takes time to be forwarded to a new APO.

Your Valentine letter with its kisses was cute, even though Earl Mazo (my private censor) noticed me reading the letter and ribbed me about the kisses. I loved all three of them, especially the "extra" one. You are taking perilous chances with reports of Freddie turning up on Valentine's Day armed with a box of candy plus the acknowledgment that his presence gives you more of a "miss you" feeling than usual. Sight unseen, I'll agree with you, that this young man is all you say he is. But the mere thought of him, or anyone else, reaching the "candy and movie" stage makes me want to go over the hill and take the next bomber to Canada. Moreover, when I picture you in somebody else's arms at the camp and canteen dances, I tremble with jealous rage.

Seriously, perhaps I shouldn't want to see you getting opportunities for a little enjoyment. But I do, honestly. I love you enough to make me intensely jealous, which isn't so good from this distance, is it? On the other hand, if you were simply sitting in a dark corner waiting for me I would probably imagine something was wrong. So, you just continue to laugh and enjoy yourself whenever you can. But not too much, mind you. I want to be the one to give you everything and I'll need a companion to help me catch up on all that I've missed. Here I have been preaching a sermon almost, and proffering advice, etc., and it wasn't even asked for.

I sent another \$100 to you yesterday, Mrs. K. When you mentioned a "long honeymoon" in one of your letters I jumped in a cab and went to the bank where I cabled the money. It reminded me that honeymoons aren't "for free" and another \$100 in the kitty would look good. You have a sound idea about buying real estate with our bonds. If they will give us maturity value on them, it means 25% interest and where can you get that? Besides, like you, I'm dreaming of our own house... have been for a million years, I guess. And, I haven't been idle. I have toyed with ideas, how everything would be, and how we could make our own improvements. But I don't want to talk about them until we can plan together. Tomorrow night I'm going to talk of a plan I have and see what you think of it. It concerns our lives together almost as soon as I get back. We have so much to talk of now I want to discuss it all by itself.

Your lines on Marguerite shopping for our linens and the fact that she wants to see us together, but quickly, reminded me to write to her. I'll do it first chance I get at the office tomorrow. I've been "in" all week after my visit with the tank destroyers last week. I've done a story I think you'll like and am sending it to you. It was a relief to hear the envelope of pictures finally reached you. I was tempted to think they were lost. I'll have some more soon.

In answer to some of your questions... the *Stars and Stripes* has not brought any WACs into the organization. Not while "Phyllis and Charlotte" are around. I don't know the Capt. Edgar Dickinson you mentioned but I'll try and remember the name.

Hey, who is this gal at the bank from Jersey City? Maybe I know her. Still, I suppose you have already checked on that... hussy!

Don't worry too much about the London raids. Some of them are heavier than others but none are like the RAF and U.S. attacks on Berlin. And, at least I'm not taking any chances here. There is plenty of protection.

Listen, my devilish coquette, let's hear more about your statement, "It's a bit hard to explain but sometimes I think you think I'm too much of an angel." You are, and always will be, an angel to me. But if you would rather I call you a _____, well, I'd better wait until I can smile when I say it.

Did you think you resembled Ingrid Bergman's "Maria" in "For Whom the Bell Tolls?" I did.

And now to dream of you, I hope. I haven't any lipstick to prove it but I'm sending kisses to match your Valentine gifts, sweetheart.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 15, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

A lone letter arrived yesterday written just a week before... March 7. Wonderful, isn't it?

We're having perfect weather. I came home early yesterday and worked in the yard for about three hours. I'm paying for it today... stiff and sore and two blisters on my hand to pay for my work. Mom and I burned off where the garden is to be. You should have seen me when I finished. Maybe it's a good thing you didn't. Face red where the dirt wasn't from the fire. Slacks and an old smock and a kerchief tied around my head.

We haven't been able to get anyone to do any outside work so yours truly is doing it a little at a time. Oh... I forgot. Freddie has done quite a lot of it on his day off the past few weeks, thank goodness. That helped a lot. I have one little patch yet to do on the side.

We've had three V-letters from Warren but not anything this week. Maybe tomorrow. Poor kid is probably still waiting to hear from us and doesn't feel like writing.

A letter from Bette today tells me they received a V-letter from Eddie but nothing that tells them where he is. She said her Eddie is somewhere in the South Pacific. I'm still very grateful you weren't sent there. It seems like such a long, long way from here.

The letter I received when I wrote the one you answered in today's letter seemed a bit impatient... hence my line, "don't lose your patience." I have to tell myself that now and then. The ache gets so bad. I feel like starting to throw things and raising my voice to the heavens at the injustice but I shouldn't complain. I keep telling myself how lucky we are but that doesn't make up for the loneliness.



Remind me when we get together to tell you something that has happened in the past few weeks. I get myself in more messes easier than anyone I know. Everything is going to be OK now, I hope. It isn't anything to worry about. I'd tell you about it but I'm afraid you'd misunderstand. It's a bit hard to write about. [We have no idea what Billee was referring to here.]

I wish you were here for just a night. Everything would be straightened out in a jiffy.

This weather is made for us. Mild nights... the stars... must be a million stars out this week. The moon has not been around but the stars are making up for it.

I went to see "My Friend Flicka." I enjoyed it. No war... just a story about a little boy and a horse.

I had a hectic day at the bank while it lasted today but finished early. Mom is in the middle of housecleaning so I did the everyday work when I got home. Stopped long

enough uptown to get you an Easter card and one for Warren to mail tonight.

A fur coat with your bonus... I think we can find something better than that. Honestly, I wouldn't know what kind I'd like. I'm hard to please when it comes to fur coats. I've seen so few I really liked... but I'll think about it.

I'd like to spend it another way... a long honeymoon away from everyone. Just us together so we can forget the rest of the world for as long as our money lasts. Getting reckless with your money, aren't I?

I always liked the name "Devonshire." Seems like it must have rolling green hills, little cottages, small farms, a few sheep grazing, narrow country roads, little carts and bicycles here and there, finding their way across the countryside... spring in the air, the first flowers blooming, new little leaves shooting out and patches of green showing here and there. Is my imagination any good?

The box should be arriving any day now, as well as the picture. I hope everything arrives in good shape. Let me know about the chocolate cake.

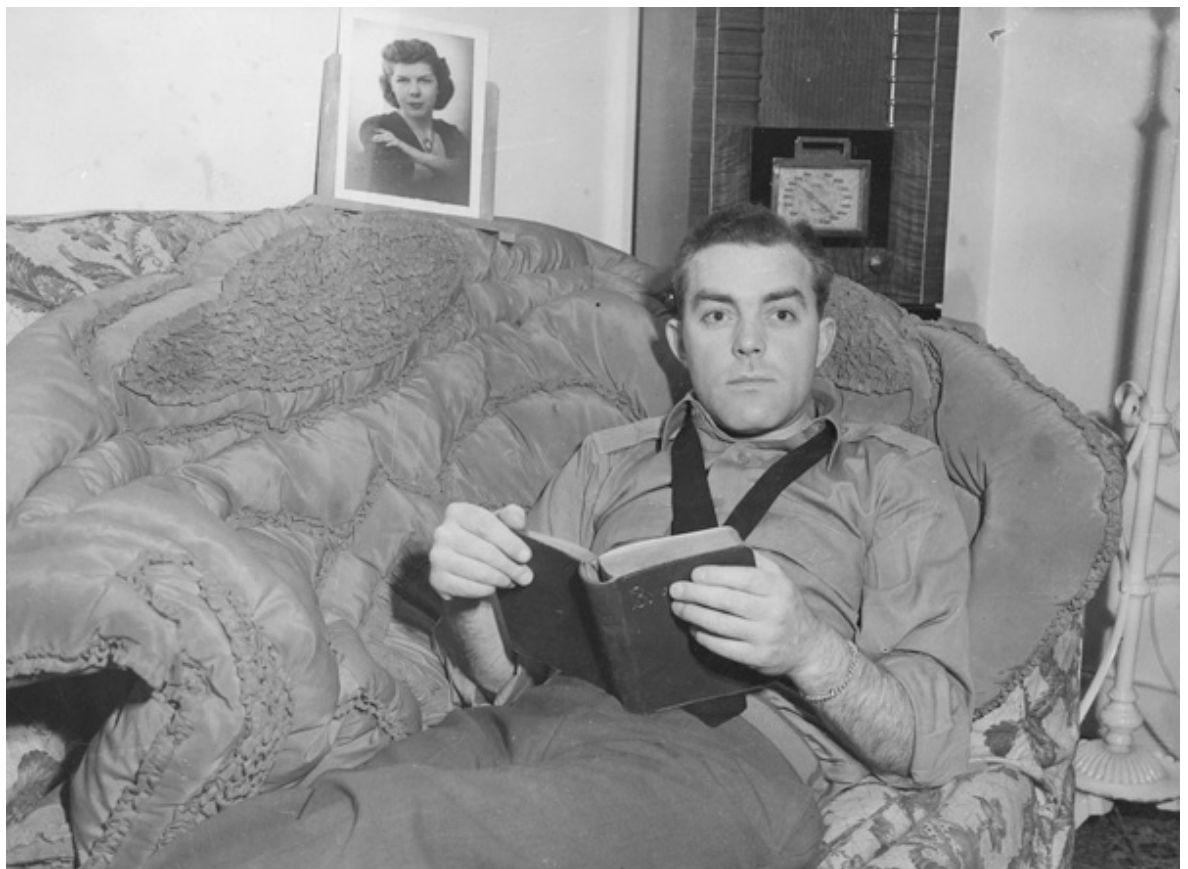
That seems to be all the news tonight. I'm loving you and missing you more than ever. Hold still, darling, and bend down a bit so I can kiss you goodnight. Hmmm... haven't changed a bit.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 16, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

Your picture arrived today. I placed it on the opposite of the glass frame, which holds your precious "sleepy-eyed" picture. And, I could just sit here and feast on you from now on. It really is a beautiful picture, Billee. Like the others it will follow wherever I go and be another inspiration. I can see your ring clearly in this picture.



Charles in Clifford's Inn with Billee's engagement picture. London 1944.

As dear as I hold the picture, the note which accompanied it puzzled me for more than a few moments. You asked me what I thought of your first picture as the future Mrs. Kiley and if I thought you had changed.

My reaction to the picture itself is in the first paragraph. And I can add that you haven't changed enough to make me forget my Billee of Jan. 17, 1942.

But this is what puzzled me. You said, “You still have time to change your mind. Think you want me tagging along for the rest of your life? It’s a serious matter, my darling... take care.”

Maybe I shouldn’t feel like this. But I get a strange feeling when you talk like that. I try to find a way to see if you are teasing me. Still, I can’t discover any reason why you should get the faintest notion that I want to change my mind.

God forbid that I have to wait so long but if I were separated from you for a thousand years, nothing will change my mind. No one knows how serious it all is more than I. I’ve repeated a hundred times that everything I have before me centers around you. I’m suffering enough as it is, just being away from you and not being able to do what I should have damned well done before I left.

So, please, Billee. I love you, and will ever more.

I know it is hard. I feel it all and I can tell when you do. Your letters are tell-tales. Like the ones in which you say, “I’m yours until you decide differently,” or “I started to write last night but I couldn’t find you.” Another one... “After everyone turned in I just sat and stared and couldn’t help but say to myself, how much longer.”

Yes, Billee, how much longer? I wish I knew.

Let’s not even think of any “changing of minds.” Mine has been made up for a long time. How about you?

I’ll be back without a second’s delay when the time comes. Give me a big smile and a long, lingering kiss, sweetheart. I need it tonight.

Remember me mentioning Sally Reston of the N.Y. Times? She called me today to say the Times wanted one of my stories. Fact is, she asked for it a few weeks ago and said she was sending it to New York for an ok. The N.Y. office said it would like to use it in its Sunday magazine. She confirmed the cable today and said she would let me know when it was used. She also said a check was forthcoming. I’ll send it along when it arrives.

I sent your Easter corsage today. That and roses for Mom, El and Dot. Hope you get them this time. I was thinking about Mother’s Day. Hope I remember the mothers then. I believe I’ll send something to you by way of counting my chickens.

Had a lovely date with you last night and I’m looking forward to another tonight.

Love to Mom... and love me lots, pretty please?

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 17, 1944—London

Evening colleen,

It must be the Irish love for beauty and romance, because I am very much in love with you on this St. Patrick’s night. Your St. Patrick’s card was perfectly timed inasmuch as it arrived today. And it was swell. Of course, the fact that I found a letter with the card made it that much better.

Last night I said I was going to talk of a plan, which has been going around in my head. The more I thought about it today the more I realized there wouldn't be any point in talking about it now so we'll skip it for the present. I know it is unfair to bring it up then drop it, but it isn't so important that it can't wait.

I was going up to Warren's base tomorrow but I had to put it off until next week. I told him during our last phone conversation that your pictures came and I am going to give him the enlargement of the Gray family. I suppose you sent one to him but it probably won't reach him for awhile. I believe I'll have some news of him when I get back and I'll pass it on to you. I'm bringing my camera so you will have a picture of us together.

In your letter, you said I was playing second fiddle to a pair of socks. I don't mind a bit, just as long as they are socks. After all, you did throw me over for a mosquito back in Matawan, remember? A pair of socks can't be so bad. Warren will appreciate them, I know. He has electrically heated shoes but the wool socks will give him extra warmth and comfort. I haven't received the sweater yet but I'm waiting. The request to Mom for the cake will be forthcoming when I answer her lovely letter. I want to wait until I see Warren so I can talk with her about him.

Remember reading about the Fortress crew that flew a donkey with them from Africa to England last August? Her name is Lady Mae and she is the mascot for Warren's group. Bud Hutton did a story on her. I'll send it along to you.

Incidentally, Bud and Andy finished their book, "Air Gunner," and mailed it today to the New York publishers, Houghton and Mifflin.

By now, you know I didn't go on that mission I wrote about in "The Night Before." I haven't heard from the fellow's families if there has been any news of them but that takes a couple of months usually.

That great big ache is prominent again. I'm not anxious for it to go away, either. As long as it is there, I know everything is all right.

I'm going away for two weeks on March 27. I'll write while I'm away this time, though. It's for a special course for correspondents and is being arranged to indoctrinate them with invasion tactics.

Did I tell you I received a letter from Ruth T., saying she was ready to be sworn into the WAVES? Now she can say she has a guy in every port.

About the Capt. Benzing you said shot down three planes recently. I doubt if he was a bombardier. Sure he wasn't a fighter pilot? In these days, fellows in bombers seldom get a chance to even fire their guns with all the fighter escorts around. And, it would be very unusual for a bombardier to get one, let alone three.

Time to kiss you and say goodnight. Miss me lots and keep your heart warm because I hope I won't keep you waiting too long now.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 18, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

A Saturday night date, believe it or not. It's a gorgeous night out... just made for us. I'm missing you dreadfully here in our corner. I'd be just a bit away from you if you were here where you belong and I could throw the pen and paper away.

The mail brought a letter from Ray Roche today. The clipping I sent him and finally the letter of commendation written nearly a year ago. He also sent an article from the Jersey Journal concerning the Bayonne boy that was reported missing and how you wrote his family. As always, you think of everything. I'll send Ray's letter along with this. You probably know Mel Shapiro is due to leave for the Army and he has two children.

I had a letter from my older sister, the one with the three children. Her husband is due to be called and with young Bill still under doctors care for infantile paralysis. What a row she's going to have to hoe.

I finished early today. I was home at two o'clock so I washed my hair, finished up the work and cleaned out a closet that's been bothering me. Mom is still painting, and she won't let me help. She says I can practice with my own paint.

Received two weeks of *Stars and Stripes* yesterday, from the beginning of February.

The weather has been perfect... warm, mild, occasional showers... I know I sound like a weather bureau but this weather was made for a good time. I'm sleepy. I could nestle my head on your shoulder and be asleep in nothing flat. That's going to be a wonderful feeling... to close my eyes and know that you are there and you'll still be there when I open them.

Maybe I've asked this of you before... is there even a remote chance of a leave?

Remember last night two years ago? You called me from Fort Dix... that "Happy Anniversary, sweetheart." I'll not forget. Please may it come again soon.

We had a V-letter from Warren. He's still in the same place but he seemed to like it. Mom was more than pleased to hear from him.

Have to go to sleep. Be back very soon. I love you, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 20, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

What would have been a "blue Monday" turned out to have a lot of sunshine in it around coming home time today. That's right... two long letters from March 8 and 12, and a hundred dollars to add to our hope chest. There's so much in your letters. I was just reading to Mom the part about Lady Astor: she was very interested. You're rubbing elbows with all kinds. It would be swell if you could do an article on her. Just from your letter I know it would be the best, with just the right intimate touch.

Don't be surprised if in the near future a Cpl. Frank Turner calls and asks for Warren. He's a fellow that is stationed here but expects to take the trip soon. His wife has been here several times... they are from Brooklyn. He used to live here in the house before they built the camp for the boys.

We're having nasty weather... rain and a raw cold. I guess it's the tail end of the storm in the east. We planned to take some pictures yesterday, too. That always happens.

I was doing some fixing... making last year's Easter dress do for this year. I've never worn it here so it won't matter. It'll be like a new dress. I've lost weight since it was made so with a few alterations it will do.

I've been thinking... I have our money in the Perth Amboy National Bank where I worked. What do you think about transferring it to a bank in Jersey City? Then, if we needed it in a hurry, it would be easier to get it. Never can tell... you might get a flying chance to come home. I guess, though, it would do just as well to have it transferred here. I'll make up my mind eventually.

I had a long letter from El today. Eddie is in England, too. What a reunion that will be. I know how happy you'll be to see him. You'll have so much to talk over. Say "hello" for me and that I'm wishing him all the luck and good fortune there is. Annice is trying hard to walk, El tells me, and she is the proud possessor of two teeth. It's a shame you fellows can't enjoy her growing up. I'm afraid she'll be a young lady before you see her.

I didn't expect such a... how shall I say it? Can't find the words to express myself the way you do. I always manage to bring on things like this but in this instance, I'm glad I questioned your reason for loving me. You make me laugh and cry all with one page. You make the ache nearer and dearer for you... just to have you near for a few minutes. When you write like this, all my fears vanish. I do have them still, but you do, too. We can't help but ask ourselves questions. After all, two years isn't two weeks or even two months.

Sometimes I still ask my self how I rate all this. Don't sigh and say, "here we go again." I can't take things for granted. Everything is much too wonderful. After all, when one of your dreams comes true, that always seemed impossible, you just don't settle back and say, "that's that" or at least I don't. It's amazing how you have all my likes and loves down pat. I don't think you left one out... oh yes, the most important one. You. I guess I love you more than anything else but that stands to reason. You're you... how could I do anything else but love you with all my heart?

The one line about liking good scotch made me smile. Any scotch would be good these days. I'm wondering how the gang at Arlington is making out. The last trip there, rum cokes and Tom Collinses were the order of the day.

Mom is just telling me you must be a lot more conservative than I am to be able to send me so much money. Sometimes she forgets or takes for granted how much I've put in the house, but that's another story... and I don't mind.

I had to laugh at her tonight. She went to a movie... called a friend of hers to go with her, but the friend was ill. So Mom says, "I'll just go alone and maybe I can pick up a good looking man." I told her she shouldn't be so choosy about the good looking part. Someday I'm going to pick myself up

out of a corner for teasing her so much but we get along. She's a good sport about my teasing. That's something you might have to get used to.

From the reports on the radio, invasion will soon be a reality. I want to see it come because I know the sooner it happens the climax of this will come but I'm dreading it with all my heart. My imagination is such that I know what it will be like, but most of all those people that mean my whole life will be taking part... you and Warren. I feel so helpless. I'm wishing you hadn't been so dead set against the WAC and the WAVE... it would have satisfied the restlessness in me... the need to do something materially that would be of some help to you indirectly. The response has been so poor but there are so many like you that have kept girls from enlisting. Now, aren't you ashamed! Teasing you but you know what I mean.

The American soldier-superman got quite a lot of copy here. What a mess to get into. I feel sorry for the guy and the girl. I hope the girl in Pennsylvania comes through and gives them a break. Not even twins in my family, so you haven't a chance to gather that kind of fame.



If you want to see a hilarious movie, try "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek." What a picture! I'm still laughing. The soldier and the quadruplets reminded me of it. A similar plot but Betty Hutton has sextuplets!

Mom says I didn't wear my pants in that fashion in 1923. My uncle took the picture and he thought they'd be cute like that. So I was quite modest instead of the way I look in the picture. You tell Andy I can send that to you without fear because you see I've seen all your baby pictures.

Are you really jealous just about a party? Please, don't be. Everything is all right. But then I got jealous... just a little... when you took Doris Frost to a show and I shouldn't have been. I was a bit because it's been so long since we went to a movie together. You know, we've only been to two movies together! There will come a day... but we won't waste it in the movies!

I feel like saying, "Yes, sir," and saluting you after the paragraph about using the money. I'd rather keep it as it is. I've had to use some of it, yes, but from now on, it's the fund for Mr. and Mrs. Kiley and I'm not using it. Understand, Sergeant? I just got another stripe... that's why I can talk back.

This is getting long and I'm getting sleepy. Could be the beer Mom and I had a bit ago but then it is twelve o'clock.

I'll say goodnight. Let me crawl over and tuck myself under your chin. Hmmm... nice. Now I can sleep. I love you, darling. There are so many good reasons but they all add up to just plain "I love you with all my heart."

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 22, 1944—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Another night. Let's see, I wrote Monday... nothing has changed much except the weather. Rain in the order of the day and night but it's a nice comfortable sound tonight.

Mom is tired so she's gone to bed. We're still housecleaning and will be for a time. One room is completed, thank goodness... your room, remember? Twin beds and a private bath? Freddie did the floor for Mom, painted it, etc. so we all had spaghetti last night and did we eat. I'm still full. Mom says I'm getting fat but I don't think so. The scale says the same as when I came home.

I had a long letter from Marguerite today. That was really a treat since she writes so rarely. Agnes is vacationing in Florida. I can imagine how she must have felt when the latest Japanese atrocities were published. She hasn't heard anything from Jack in quite a while.

Hey, darling... have you heard what Henry Ford said? The war would be over in two months? coming from him, that's amazing... he's always so conservative in everything. He refused to divulge his reason for making the statement. That's too much to hope for, or is it?

I sure hope Warren gets some of our letters soon. Kind of takes the heart out of you to keep writing and not getting any answers.

We have quite a few girls in the bank whose husbands are stationed here or at the hospital. They are being sent over fast and furious. First thing, the bank is going to lose a lot of help because they will all return to their respective homes.

Marguerite is sending me pictures of wedding dresses... not optimistic, is she? I believe she wants me to be married as much as we do.

I heard that new "Easter Sunday" song again tonight. I like it. It seems like this just has to be our last Easter being separated. I hope you aren't going to risk sending me Easter flowers. I'll understand. They messed up the last order so and we can use that money to such an advantage later. If it will make you feel better, I can buy one for you. It won't be the same but I'll pretend you pinned it on my shoulder, just as I'll picture you kneeling beside me on Easter Sunday. The latter won't need pretending so much because I know that somewhere you'll be doing just that, too.

One of the girls in the apartment got an engagement ring. Remember the party I told you we had? The fellow that was here then... he's on his way over your way, I think. He wanted to get married when he was here but she thought it better to wait until he came back. She's more practical than I am.

An article in tonight's paper about Bebe Daniels and how, even in the face of air raids, she continues entertaining the boys. I'll save it. You're getting it again over there by way of retaliation. I can't help but get scared when they announce it over the radio and I pick up the paper. I can't help but wonder and wait until I get a letter written after that time to know you are all right.

The time is coming very soon too, when you'll be taking part in that invasion. I know I probably shouldn't cross bridges until I come to them but I can't help it.

I'm tired. This was laundry night and I let it kind of stack up on me. Now I have to go wash my hair and take a bath. I'm going tomorrow night to hear the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra with Frank Black conducting... it sounds good. A girlfriend was able to get a ticket for me.

I was going, wasn't I? Wish it were straight to bed. Maybe I'll be back tomorrow night to tell you about the symphony.

I'm loving you so much. This would be a swell night for our corner. The crackle of logs burning in our fireplace... no lights except the glow from the fire and just us... no one else. I'd better go before I get started again. Love me, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 24, 1944—London

Evening sweetheart,

We have company tonight, you and I. It may interfere a little with our lovemaking, but I don't think you will mind. I won't, because we can make up for it tomorrow.

Our company is Warren. He came to London on his first 48-hour pass about an hour ago. Furthermore, he called me from the station and came straight to the apartment. He will be with me until he goes back. Just now he is talking "Air Force" with Ben while you and I snuggle up and talk.

Warren won't be able to tell you much of his work because of Air Force censorship. So, I'll be his spokesperson.

He has come a long way in a week. During the last six days, he has been on four missions. One more and he gets the Air Medal.

He went on "ops" last Saturday, Mar. 18. The target was Augsburg. On Monday he went to Frankfurt and yesterday to Big B... Berlin. Today he went to Brunswick. Those names may not mean much, but they are four of the toughest places he could have gone to. Everything from now on should be easy. He came through all four in grand fashion and looks swell.

I went up to his base yesterday to see him, just in time to "sweat" him out on the Berlin raid. I was there when he came in, had our picture taken together by the plane, talked through the night with him and the other fellows of his crew and stayed overnight in his hut.

I came back this morning and was frankly surprised to see him tonight. He said they got the pass when they landed this afternoon and he hot-footed straightaway to Clifford's Inn.

Warren's only complaint is that he hasn't received any mail yet. But he is waiting for the truckload when it comes.

He has another new A.P.O., too. It was changed yesterday from #634 to #559. The squadron and group numbers remain the same.

I'll have more to tell you about him when he goes back. I think he is going to enjoy that soft bed tonight.

I'm giving you the works on Warren, but in my letters to Mom I'm not going to tell her everything until you say it is ok. I'll leave it to you to tell her what you think best. If I say too much to her and she is affected by it, let me know quick like a bunny so I can tone them down.

Enclosed is the check I received today from the New York Times for the story I did for them. They didn't know when it would be used but said they would let me know as soon as they get a cable from N.Y. That makes \$275 since the first of the year, doesn't it? We ought to have that 2x4 paid for pretty quick at that rate. Or, give us a little more time on our honeymoon. Ah.... that word really gets me!

So, goodnight sweetheart. I'll be seeing you again tomorrow. And, I do love you dearly, tenderly and so much more.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Warren says "hello" and lots of love to both his sweethearts. C.

March 25, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Saturday night. Three months I've had my ring and the sparkle is still very new.

Looking up I can see a new moon out the window and wonder how many more new moons I will see this way, with a pen in one hand and a piece of paper for a date on Saturday night... or any night. Hmmm, there I go again but I'm feeling rebellious. Must be the shop girl in me, that Saturday finds me impatient. I'm afraid we're going to have to do some gadding about to make up for our lonely Saturday nights.

We heard from Warren yesterday. He has a permanent APO now so perhaps he will be getting mail from us. He probably told you about the fellows he is with. He says the only news he's had of us is through you.

I had a busy morning but I was home at two-thirty... not bad. I love not working on Saturday afternoon. I always said no one should have to work on Saturdays. I'm a teller on my own now, not filling in for anyone. People are getting used to me so today I was really busy. Being a new teller is a little like being a new salesman for a firm. The public nearly always goes to the same tellers in a bank... those they are familiar with, so I kind of have to work up a clientele in a manner of speaking.

Wonder what Churchill is going to have to say tomorrow. Cassino isn't going so good. Hitler must have his best there. Looks like it has to be over soon. How much longer do they go on?

We are still in the midst of redecorating, but it is going to look nice. All the bathrooms are done now and the one bedroom.

I didn't get to tell you about the symphony last night. I was busy helping Mom so you were neglected. I enjoyed it so much. The whole program was familiar. I think you would have enjoyed it. The "Romeo and Juliet Overture," Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony," Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" and the climax of the program was a symphonic picture of "Porgy and Bess." That took your breath.

I thoroughly enjoyed it, more than anything in quite a while. I love symphonies because I can lose myself in the music. We go to the nicest places, you and I in our dreams, with that music for a background.

You know what I did yesterday? I selected the material for my negligee and gown. You should see it... simply luscious. Mom said I'm crazy to try and make it but I've looked and looked and haven't been able to find what I want and this is just right. I'll have plenty of time to make it.

I guess I've told you all there is. Mom is working hard in the house but she is well. The work helps keep her from worrying too much about Warren. No more mail this week since the two letters Monday but I'm not complaining. Of course, I'd like one every day but twice a week is ok by me.

Goodnight my dearest. Love me always and miss me lots.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

I'm sending money to buy flowers for the cemetery for us for Easter... thought it would be ok.

March 25, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

Here 'tis... another Saturday night and my arms and heart aching for you, as usual. But it is a pleasant ache. Have you felt it that way? As I said once before, as long as the ache is there, I know everything is all right.

Appropriately enough, the radio is playing a song called, "One Day Soon."

I was going to write last night while Warren was spending his second night with me. But two things force me to put it off until tonight. One reason was the late hour when we broke up a talkfest between Warren, Earl Mazo, Pete Paris and I. The other reason surrounded a little overhead activity by Jerry... nothing serious but it kept us up.

I should introduce Earl and Pete. The former, if I haven't already spoken of him is a lieutenant who recently transferred from the Air Force, where he was a public relations officer, to the *Stars and Stripes*. He has an apartment, which he insists I share with him but which I use only when occasions like Warren's visit occur.



Earl Mazo and Charles.. Paris, 1944.

He has a bigger place than ours so after Warren spent one night with Ben and me, he stayed with Earl and me last night. I thought Earl and Warren would have a lot in common to talk of, and they did.

Pete Paris, a correspondent-photographer for “Yank” magazine, is one of the most widely traveled Army correspondents. He was in Africa, Sicily and Italy before he came here. Very interesting fellow to talk with.

Getting back to your kid brother. After sleeping for 12 hours Thursday, he got up at noon yesterday, did a little shopping and took in a show while I was working. Later we met for dinner and went to Air Force headquarters where I had to finish up by writing one “raid” story. The bombers (ours) were out for the 19th day this month... a record.

Before going on to Earl’s place, we stopped at the Stork Club (yep, we have one over here, too) for a drink.

We were at Earl’s only a short time when Jerry came. It was Warren’s first experience and he thought he would rather drop them than catch them.

He went back to the base this morning to leave me with the unenviable job of packing enough stuff for two weeks in the country.

I’m leaving tomorrow morning and won’t be back until April 8. Yes, that means I won’t get mail during that time but I’ll be able to write some. That’s why I fairly beamed when your airmail for March 10 came today. It was the first in a week.

The trip involves some sort of maneuvers and field indoctrination for correspondents. It won’t be new for me, but Bob Moora thought I should go. There will be a flock of civilian correspondents there, I’m sure. There won’t be much, if any, material for stories and that is mainly why I’m not as keen about the trip as I should be. However, it will keep me out in fresh air for a while and make my cheeks rosy. I’ll keep our dates as often as possible while I’m gone.

In your letter today, you said letters every day made you feel as if you were being courted again. What do you mean, “again?” Sweetheart, I’ll be courting you for 100 years after we are married... 200 years, if necessary.

In “clearing up any doubt of Mom’s approval,” you did so in such a manner that I feel more than a little ashamed of even mentioning it. I will say this, in answering a question for you... we will be more than happy and make good lives for our children. I’m pledged to that.

I agree with you, too, that two people could not know each other any better than we do. Naturally, I don’t know what brand of face powder you prefer and you don’t know what brand of shaving cream



Pete Paris, date unknown.

I use, but we know each other where the big things are concerned and it won't take long to know the little ones.

By the way, Mrs. K., what kind of face powder do you like? I use Yardley's shaving soap, Dr. Squibb's toothpaste, Tek toothbrushes, Interwoven socks, usually prefer ties to match sox in color, favor Arrow shirts, etc.

Did you find any good recipes I might like in the cookbook Dottie sent you? Looks like my "sister" is passing along hints that I like good cooking.

Goodnight, sweetheart. I'll be with you as soon as I get settled. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 28, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

No mail yet this week. I expect it will be showing up in a bit.

We're all on edge now... expecting any minute that the invasion will be announced.

Poor Mom gets more upset every day. Looking at her, I'm thinking of all the other mothers with boys over there.

We're having an awful storm. It must be the tail end of a coastal storm. What wind and rain we've had yesterday and today. March is going out like a lion.

It's been a short month but I think that's so because it's been so mild when we usually expect otherwise.

I'm just hearing Doolittle's report on Nazi planes destroyed by the Eighth and Ninth Air Forces. Not bad but our losses are heavy, too. Makes me dizzy when I sit down and think it out.

No more word from Warren this week either. I hope he gets our mail more quickly now that he has a permanent APO.

Sunday was lovely, Charles. the temperature went up to 79 degrees. The sun was lovely and warm. I was feeling a bit under the weather. The first time I've missed Mass but it was so pretty in the afternoon I got up and stayed around the house.



Major General Jimmy Doolittle at an air base in North Africa after a bombing mission, February 17, 1944. Doolittle planned and led the first aerial raid on Japan in 1942. He took command of the 15th Air Force in the Mediterranean Theater in November 1943 and from January 1944 to September 1945 he commanded the 8th Air Force in Europe and the Pacific.



*Billee in the front yard at Oak Lodge, with the Grove Park Inn in the background, upper right.
March 1944.*

We did take some pictures but I probably look the way I felt so I won't expect much.

We had some excitement... Mom and Freddie were finishing burning off the back yard, preparing for the planting. The wind came up a bit high and we very nearly had the cottage catch on fire. The fire department came and we had a merry time. It was a quiet Sunday other than that.

We had a busy day today. I didn't finish until 6:30 tonight... unusual for me since I've become a banker.

I just wrote the check for my income tax, and a bit late but I didn't want to cash any bonds or borrow. I don't owe anyone now and I want to keep it that way. Forgot today was payday. This once a month business is terrific. I feel like I work an awfully long time until that envelope comes around.

I'm missing you so... that same old ache only worse. We have another anniversary coming up April fourth. It's been two years since we sat together at that table in the Hawaiian Room and decided our fate... or destiny sounds better. We decided we wanted to live with each other when this mess is over.

I was thinking of Theda Donnell. Jack is still in Italy. He hasn't had an opportunity to come home either. When I hear about them, I feel kind of ashamed for wishing and praying so hard for you to come but I can't help being selfish where you are concerned. Seems like such a bit to ask for... your arms around me for just a little while. I kept myself awake last night trying to figure a way for me to come over there or you here, but couldn't get an answer except to go on waiting and praying and hoping.

I started sewing again tonight. I surprised Mom that I learned so much from Marguerite when we had our siege of sewing last spring. It's time I learned and if we're going to have that ball team, it'll come in mighty handy.

You know, we've been spending a lot of time in our two by four lately. Guess it's Mom redecorating that started me thinking about our home and what it would be like. I'm going to love being settled,

being Mrs. Charles Kiley, fixing and fussing for you. You know I just wasn't cut out to be one of these career girls. Here I've worked almost seven years. Makes me feel old.

My girlfriend and I were reviewing the years we worked together the other day, over lunch, and all the changes that have been made. It seems like a long time ago since I worked at Iveys.

I saw a good movie last night, "Broadway Rhythm." I was beginning to think they had forgotten to make those kind of movies... it's a musical based on "Very Warm for May."

That old wind is howling. This is a good night for our corner and our fireplace crackling and just us for company.

I know what's wrong. I have spring fever. That's why I'm missing you so much. Then, we only had spring together, didn't we? That's why when spring comes now the waiting gets harder. This is the second one without you. Seems like we said... or maybe it was just me... that we'd be together this Easter and here we are with still so many miles between us... but still closer than ever.

I'm not listening to any more predictions. They seem to be making them right and left. They get you all excited... you think maybe they know something and then somebody else comes along and throws cold water on that. There ought to be a law or something.

I'm sleepy, darling. Mind if I roll over and go to sleep? But first, a goodnight kiss. I love you, and how I miss you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 30, 1944— "Somewhere in England"

Evening sweetheart,

This probably will be the shortest "date" we've had, mainly because there isn't much I can tell you about this sojourn into the country. This is our fourth day out of the city and the first I have had a chance to call on you. Yes, I could have taken a few moments at the end of a day but, frankly, I have been a pretty tired cookie getting into bed these nights. The schedule (and I can't tell you what it is for) has not been nearly as strenuous as the Ranger or assault training courses, but it has left me with stiff muscles here and there.

As you can see I have strayed once again from my pen but I know you will understand. With the facilities at hand, I shouldn't be writing to you even now. But I have been missing you and I did want to talk with you, even for a few moments.



I thought I wouldn't be getting any mail for two weeks, or until I got back to the office, but one of the boys had to get back to London for a couple of days and promised to pick up my mail and bring it out to me. When I do get back myself, I promise to spend at least three hours with you.

By the way, one of the better facilities here is a fireplace but even that isn't enough to put us in our corner for a cuddle.

This is the first time I've been to this particular spot in England and it is one of the most picturesque I have seen. We have been favored by excellent weather, making it that much more enjoyable.



Charles with some of the correspondents at the training camp. We have not been able to identify any of them. England, 1944.

We have an unusual cross-section of men in our midst. Besides several Americans, there are three Englishmen, a Canadian and a Frenchman. It's a friendly group, too. Tonight, we are taking time out from the schedule to indulge in what they call a "beer bust." I can't say how "busting" it will be but I'm sure we will have a good time.

You don't have to tell me that this sounds like a lot of Greek but it is the best I can do. Perhaps, when the mail gets here (and I do hope there is some) we will be able to do a little better.

Give my love to Mom. 'Bye for awhile.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

March 31, 1944—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

You'd laugh, I know, if you could see me. Tonight was laundry night. I'm all tucked in bed with my bath all over, my hair washed and everything hanging up to dry.

I'm going to have company in bed tonight... cracker crumbs! Mom was able to get some cheese yesterday. It's scarce now, you know. So I decided to have milk and cheese and crackers. Tasted good.

Your two letters written March 15 and 16 arrived the other day but we've been so darned busy in the house trying to get it ready for the season. We've already rented three of the finished rooms permanently... nice going.

Seems like I move furniture in my sleep. We even moved my bed out last night. I'm sleeping on a sort of abbreviated bed temporarily but I'm used to having beds moved out from under me. It's a good thing I don't weigh any more than 116, else I'd hang out on the sides.

I'm looking forward to getting the letter with your plans. It hasn't come yet. I don't have any except to spend every hour of the day and night with you no matter where we happen to be.

I hope I haven't missed the story in the *New York Times*. I'll be sure and get it Sunday. That's really something... the New York Times. Sally's ok even if I did think she was stealing your stuff. See... I told you that you were good.

I loved your advice. If I thought something like Freddie getting to the movie and candy stage might bring you home, I'd... but, then I guess I wouldn't. Just teasing. You'd like him, I'm sure.

Mom is looking after me, though. She says, "I don't think Charles would like you going out with Freddie..." so I told her what you said in the letter. Don't worry... they aren't good times without you. There's always that miss you feeling there to spoil any real fun. I always keep thinking how much more enjoyable it would be with you. But I'm glad you discussed the matter in your letter. That's one subject we missed.

Don't be jealous... nothing to be jealous about. I get a little twinge now and then, like at the mention of the WACs and Mr. Frost's daughter... even Bebe Daniels... but, like you, I can't see you shutting yourself off in a corner.

I'm glad you liked the picture, Charles. It's a bit formal I thought but I think it looks more like me than the other. The note... well, it was just that. I think I have a fear of your having too many illusions about me. Maybe that was why I wrote it. I have no thoughts of changing my mind.

I made mine up definitely two years ago April 4. I knew before that but when I said “yes” I meant it for all time. I think I remember asking you then, “are you sure?” before I said “yes.” But all kidding aside, stranger things than that have happened and you can still change your mind.

I love you and only you. As always I’m praying and hoping that the day can’t be too far distant when those plans and dreams we’ve had for so long will be fulfilled and come into being. Everything is for tomorrow... our tomorrow when it becomes today.

Poor Warren. He was probably lonely, not hearing from us and you not turning up when he expected you. I hope he hears soon. These more recent raids worry me a bit. I’ve told Mom it will still be some time before he goes out on the raids. I think it’s better that way.

At last we are getting some sun, after all the wind and rain at the beginning of the week.

You’ll laugh, but you know what I’ve been trying to find? An Easter bonnet... a real crazy hat with flowers. I found just what I wanted but the price... zowie. \$25... can you imagine? For a bit of straw and two flowers and a wisp of veil. I just turned around and walked out of the shop. Guess I’ll buy some flowers and stick on a piece of ribbon.

You’re smiling at me... probably thinking about that hat I couldn’t find and how silly it was but you’re loving me in that smile. I can see that.

Guess what? Last night after all the moving around I was too tired to make up my bed so I fell into yours... the one in the room with the private bath... and fell asleep almost immediately. I dreamed about you, too. I don’t know where we were... seemed a foreign place... but we were together and Warren was there. The hardest part was that I knew you were only there for the one night. I’ll have to try sleeping in your bed again. I’ve dreamed of you so seldom... I love it when I do, especially a dream like last night.

I bought a new lipstick the other day. Nice... a new shade called “Daredevil...” nice and red.

Sure and I asked the girl from Jersey City the first day if she knew you. I was surprised that she didn’t, because... after all! She’s there now on furlough with her husband. He’s being sent overseas. I’ll be surprised if she comes back.

I didn’t get to see “For Whom the Bell Tolls” so I can’t compare, but I’m flattered at your blarney... if you say I resemble Ingrid Bergman.

So now I’m a coquette... and devilish, at that! I believe I’ll stick to the angel role. Do you mind? At least, I’ll try to.

I was teasing you a bit in the note but I didn’t mean for it to upset you. What a drip... here I am talking about changing minds and we’re practically Mr. and Mrs. K... excuse it, please.

Now I’m falling asleep. I’ll say goodnight. I love you more than ever. Keep well and remember my love and prayers are never far away.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

March 31, 1944— “Somewhere in England”

Evening sweetheart,

I’ve been feeling the need of you more than usual this week. Always seems to be that way when I’m on a trip. I have more time to miss you that way. Too, whenever I’m missing you most, you seldom fail to come to me.

This time you came in three letters, those of March 6, 8 and 18, and brought to me by one of the boys who had to make a special trip to London. When I left the office, I thought I wouldn’t get any mail during my two-week absence.

Together with your letters were others from Dot, El and the Journal, my first Easter card... from the mother of a soldier I knew at Croft... and a birth announcement from an ex-Journal girl. Quite an assorted collection.

Your letters were... well... better than ever. Perhaps it was because they were the first I had received in over a week but they were “specials,” definitely.

I am going to save some of the things I want to say as the result of your letters until tomorrow and other days. We will have more to say to each other that way.

Answering one of your requests... I won’t ever keep anything from you. That is, anything that isn’t censorable.

About “Mac” and the boys... I haven’t received any more news of them. I did get a letter from Mrs. Mahoney, thanking me for the one I sent to her.

Incidentally, I did not wish it to be made public. In the future, when something like that arises, I am going to make a request that it be kept confidential. Things like that are too personal to me. And, I’m sure you will agree with me.

The possibilities of Mac and his brother being together are good, inasmuch as Air Force officers are said to be in the same “Stalag.”

Billee, hereafter I won’t mention any of Warren’s missions to Mom as long as it increases her anxiety. However, I’ll give you all the information I have and let you handle it from there.

The enclosed picture is the one taken just after Warren came back from Berlin on his third trip. How do we look?

I loved you so much for your indignation over the question, “Aren’t you taking a chance?” Strange, but I never have been asked that. It must be the way my jaw sticks out, I believe. I would lose all of my gentlemanly characteristics if anyone put the question to me.

I hadn’t known our “announcement” would be used in Asheville. Made me mighty proud, though, just to hear you talk of it. Did they use the picture?

Now, about your white dress. I would give anything... yes, anything... to see you standing only a few feet from me in that dress.

That is one of the extra-special requests I will make from time to time. When we are together, I hope you will fulfill them for me. There will be a lot of “specials” but only a few super-specials. The white dress will be one of them.

You asked me about Ray Hansen. I don’t believe he was with us on the mountain that day. I knew him well, though. He lived in Jersey City and was inducted on the same day I was. He was killed in Italy, I believe. Jack Donnell, or one of the others, told me of it in a letter some time ago.

Tell you more tomorrow. Love to Mom. Goodnight, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 2, 1944—“Somewhere in England”

Billee dearest,

If I were in London, this would be just another working day but out here, it is a day of rest. It has been some time since I had an opportunity to wander around the countryside on my own time and today brought that opportunity. On my wanderings I encountered the ruins of what appeared to be a small fortress or hunting lodge, erected in Tudor architecture around 1700 [note: if it was “Tudor,” it would have been built in 1600], consisting of a rectangular stone wall with four towers in the corners and a main building inside of the walls. Tomorrow starts the second week of training.

I’ll try and pick up our conversation where we left off the other night, after I received your three letters.

You asked me a question, which is difficult for me to answer. Not because I haven’t an answer, but because I am aware of it. “It there a remote chance of you getting a leave?” was the question.

I wish there were even the barest possibility, so it would furnish both of us with a ray of hope. But, as I see it, there isn’t any chance at present. If and when a chance arises, you will know first.

From what I know, those who are going home from this side include a comparative few who took part and/or were injured in Africa, Sicily and Italy, about a dozen men who have been in Britain for almost three years, and only one, two or three members of bomber crews who have finished tours. Bomber pilots are staying to fly transports or ferry replacement planes, navigators and gunners are also filling in on jobs like that. Bombardiers, in most cases, seem to be the only ones going home. That is the setup at present but it is liable to change.

So, please string along with our prayers that it won’t be too long now.

There is a great deal of optimism over here about a possible quick success once the second front offensive is launched. I like to hear stuff like that, because it gives me something to cling to.

In one of your letters, you pictured me phoning you one day and causing a lot of excitement at 412. Hell, what makes you think I’ll call? If you aren’t waiting nearby for me, I won’t even stop to phone. In fact, I wouldn’t even call you from Asheville station or let you know I was coming. I would simply find my way to 412, ring the bell, wait until you opened the door and say, “Hello, sweetheart.” So, don’t depend on phone calls.

Sometimes I wish I could furnish you with a talking picture of my self to replace the one you have. Then, when you talk to me as you dress or “fix your face” I could talk back to you. Do you ever wrinkle your nose at me, or give me an angry look when the mail is slow? I wonder, too, if you ever feel like turning my picture to the wall by way of punishing me. I have never had to do it to you because you have been a very good fiancée. Furthermore, I would be penalizing myself that way, in not being able to look at you.

You ask, “Can you be jealous so many miles away?” Billee, I wouldn’t dare admit how jealous I can be, and have been, “so many miles away.” When I first met Warren, I wanted to ask him who this Freddie was. When I cooled off, I realized it would be juvenile and an open admission that our faith was false. Faith prevailed and I kept my mouth shut.

When Warren was in London we were talking of you and Ben teasingly said, “I’ll bet Billee is having the time of her life with all those guys in Asheville.” Warren leaped to my defense so quickly I must have blushed. He said, “No, I don’t think Charlie has to worry about Billee.”

But, I’m not taking you for granted. I won’t do that until that wedding band is on your finger. Actually, I get violently jealous simply glancing at your picture. Guess I’m in a bad way.

In the letter from Dot, she accused herself of being lax in answering your mail and surmised that was the reason she hadn’t heard from you recently. She also enclosed five more pictures of Dorothy Jean, which I am sending along to you. For some unknown reason, the baby is supposed to bear a resemblance to me in the picture where Al is holding her up. The opinion comes from Ruth T. Dot says she doesn’t mind... in fact, she is flattered, but “what will our friends say?”

Incidentally, how am I doing with this writing, with the pad on my knee?

Goodnight, sweetheart. Love to Mom, and a jealous growl to Freddie (only joking).

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 2, 1944—England [V-letter]

Dear Ray,

I guess by now you know by the letters I have been writing home that I am in England. I received a letter from El last week telling me that you had to pay six dollars to have the car fixed. I send you a money order to pay for the damage. I hope they fix it up as good as new. I can see the only vehicles I can drive are Army vehicles that are built for rough treatment.

I am going to try and get a pass to get to London and see Brother. Johnny Ryan has a brother there too and we plan to go together. He has been doing great work on the *Stars and Stripes* over here.

How is everything going with you? Have you gotten any help in the parish? How is the C.Y.O. [Catholic Youth Organization] coming along?

That’s about all for now. Drop a line or two when you are not too busy and may God bless you.

Eddie

April 3, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

I should reapply and put April 4 up there. It's after twelve o'clock and if I'm to have a date with you, it's really the fourth, the dawn of our second anniversary.

I'm thinking how excited I was two years ago this night, trying to get into a comfortable position on the train and not having much luck. I couldn't have slept anyway since I was much too busy spinning dreams that came true that weekend. We've gone over those precious hours so many times, haven't we... but still they remain precious.

I can see you yet, bounding up those stairs. Marguerite says she never saw two people move faster than we did at Penn Station that day.

So I'll say quietly in your ear as I snuggle a bit closer, "Happy anniversary, my dearest." Hold tight; bend down just a bit for a sort of special anniversary kiss...

Two letters were waiting for me today... your St. Patrick's Day letter and the one written March 24, while Warren was with you. Mom was delighted today with your letter and her first airmail from Warren. She loved reading about her pride and joy. I told her of the missions, Charles. I thought it best. She has to know sooner or later. She has such a fierce pride in him, though, in everything he does, even this. She can't quite grasp the idea of Warren actually taking part in the "action," but she took it very well.

One thing you didn't tell me about Warren... how did it affect him inside? Could you tell? Warren is very impressionable. I've been more worried about that aspect of it, just as I was worried about you and how being in the "action" would affect you. That was when Father John came to the rescue on that score and set my mind at ease. Here it is my brother this time. He still seems so young to me, I guess because he's the baby in the family. I'm glad he's near you, Charles, and Mom is too, more than you know.

We enjoyed his letter so much. His impression of London, and you should have heard him rave about the Kiley hospitality in London and he admitted that he could see where I could see something in you. Nice of him.

The check is lovely. I can't wait to see the article. You didn't tell me what the subject was. You didn't tell me that Andy and Bud were writing a book. I sure wish them lots of success.

Let's just go on an extended honeymoon. We'll think about the house afterwards. I thought I'd hear about the plan and you changed your mind. Unimportant, huh? Anything concerning the future Mr. and Mrs. Kiley is important.

I'm going to brag a bit about myself. Remember how I looked for an Easter hat? I made one last night and tonight. You should see it... looks almost professional. Cost me \$2.35. I used a pattern, black silk, some pretty white flowers and nice, wispy veiling. I even surprised Mom. She didn't think I could do it.

I went to Chimney Rock yesterday. What a gorgeous day. I rode out to the gates and then walked to the rock... three long miles but it was worth it. It's like sitting on top of the world after we got to the



Billee at Chimney Rock, April 1944.

top. Today, I'm exhausted. Guess I'm getting old, but it was quite a hike.

I called Marguerite tonight. I just felt like talking to her. Everything is fine there. Agnes is vacationing in Florida. I had a note from her Saturday. Remember, last October we gave them a year to finish off the war; then, we were going to take matters into our own hands. She was reminding me.

I dreamed Saturday night that I had a cable from you. I could see that thing so plain

and what it said: "See you soon, baby, but I'm dead broke." Now, isn't that something? And just a few nights before I dreamed we were together... maybe it means something.

School for you again, and I don't like this course. I still get the whim-whams when I think of the invasion and the fact that you will be taking part. Guess I'm in love with you, else I wouldn't be worrying.

I had a long letter from Dot today. She tells me Ruth T. was sworn into the WAVE. That's swell. I sure envy her. She's already started her "boot" training in Hunter. They had a cocktail party for her at Dot's. Dorothy Jean is growing up and has a tooth already. I miss seeing the babies, really I do. Dot tells me you met Eddie. I can imagine how happy you must have been to see him.

As usual, your sweetheart is falling asleep. I'll write more tomorrow. I love you; even after two years I still say it with all my heart. You're my life... take care and remember...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 4, 1944—"Somewhere in England"

Hello sweetheart,

I am sure it would be a sacrilege against our memories if I didn't begin our letter tonight by remembering that today was another, and one of the most important of "our days."

I am a wee bit footsore and weary after climbing up and down damn near every hill in this part of the country this afternoon but it wasn't enough to dull the memory of a lady in white two years ago this night. I know our thoughts have been blended today. I won't say you were by my side throughout the day because I would never ask you to follow me over the route we covered. Nevertheless, you are a comfort... just the thought of that blushing lady in white.

Each and every day we had together were “our days,” and there should be a better word to describe them. But, from all of them we have picked five, more memorable than the rest. I wonder if there are any to equal them... Jan. 17, Jan. 31, April 4, April 12 and Dec. 25? I think not!

In a few days, I will be back in London, feeling better (physically) than I have in months. Too, I'll be back in time for Easter. For the second year, we will be apart on Easter, Billee. But I have a strong feeling tonight that I will be pinning another pair of orchids on your coat a year from Sunday. I don't mean it will take that long to bring us together because a year from now I believe you will be getting your mail under a different name. I'm not saying this to boost my morale... I really believe it.

Time for dreams now. I'll be back for a Saturday date with your picture before me in London. Love to Mom. 'Night, sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 4, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Not a word today and our second anniversary, but I know you didn't forget. I've been thinking about us all day and night. I'd glance at the clock and think, we were doing this or that two years ago at this time.

Remember the box of rouge I bought in the drug store in Penn Station and the cokes we had there? I still have the rouge and more than half of it is still there. That makes me feel like it hasn't been too long ago. Still, missing you as I do, two years is a heck of a long time.

My patience still holds out. I just wanted you to know I didn't forget today, that I'm very glad... happy... everything... that you happened to want me for the future Mrs. K. I think I've always loved you. Each week and month that rolls by finds me a little closer to you. One of these days, I'll pick up the phone and hear your “Hello, sweetheart” and all the long days and nights of waiting will roll away from me like a tidal wave and it will seem like only yesterday that we parted. Your arms will feel as familiar as your kiss will seem... not too far off now. I don't have too optimistic ideas. I'll be more than surprised to see you this year but still it will go by quickly.

Once more, I'm telling you I love you and I'm so happy for all our memories and the past two years. Loving you is my whole life. Keep well, and remember my love and prayers are with you always. A special anniversary “goodnight.” Be back soon.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 7, 1944—Asheville

Evening darling,

Another Friday almost gone and it's been a busy one for me. Bright and early this morning for Mass at seven-thirty, a quick breakfast at the cafeteria and to work. They've really put me through the mill

this week, we have been so busy. I didn't leave until five-thirty and I had to dash to pick up Mom's new coat and Easter bonnet at Ivey's and then a short visit at St. Lawrence's, then home.

Now you find me curled up in bed with my hair all washed and done up and my washing and ironing behind me. I'm making myself tired all over again just writing about it.

I sewed the frill on my Ester dress; the same one I had last year, and gave it a final press. The cleaners don't do so well on that anymore. So, I'm all ready for Easter.

I'd like to spend Easter Sunday with you. That's a part of that new song I like. They are playing it a lot now... that and the age-old "Easter Bonnet" that I never tire of.

Mom's happy today. She got another airmail from Warren and your picture, the one of you together. It's swell... so natural but a dead giveaway for you. It's a good thing I'm not within throwing distance. I'd probably be on the receiving end of a vase of something, but do I detect "middle-aged spread?" You look heavier in this picture than in the others. I know it's from eating all those starchy foods over there. We'll fix that when you get home. I was getting worried about me gaining when I should have been concerned about you! It's all right... I'll love you just as much. More, because there's more of you now than before. I'm teasing you... is it all right? You know it makes no never mind.

Warren asked Mom for some chocolate candy so I guess we'll be making fudge over the weekend and sending it out. Oh, I almost forgot... he received a letter from Mom and an Easter card from me.

You know what I've been thinking of? That long honeymoon you mentioned a few letters ago. I thought the idea a little impractical at first but now I think we both have it coming our way. A nice long one to do all the things we've written about... all the Saturdays we've missed. It sounds like heaven. We'll have fun. You can have all the things you've been missing over there. Did I tell you I've learned how to like chocolate sodas and chocolate ice cream, so we could have them together? Tell me what happened about the soda fountain you were to get over there.

Received about six weeks of *Stars and Stripes* this week. I haven't had an opportunity to read them all. Did you write the story about Bennett, the news writer? It sounded like you but there was no byline.

I've had a good case of the whim-whams, as I call them, this week. I don't know what caused them but I've felt like running and never stopping until I found you somewhere. Guess I'm just missing you as usual. This week two years ago, I was vacationing in New York. Seems it was a special vacation. I went up to say goodbye to a soldier... a certain GI Joe. Of course, I loved him... I wasn't quite sure but I was almost... then I saw him in Penn Station and I knew I'd never change my mind. Memories have been falling over each other this week, so vivid and like yesterday, but still so d___ far away. There will come a day...

I've been rambling... but I wanted to be with you tonight for a little while. I love the way you look in the new picture. Keep well and love me and miss me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 8, 1944—London

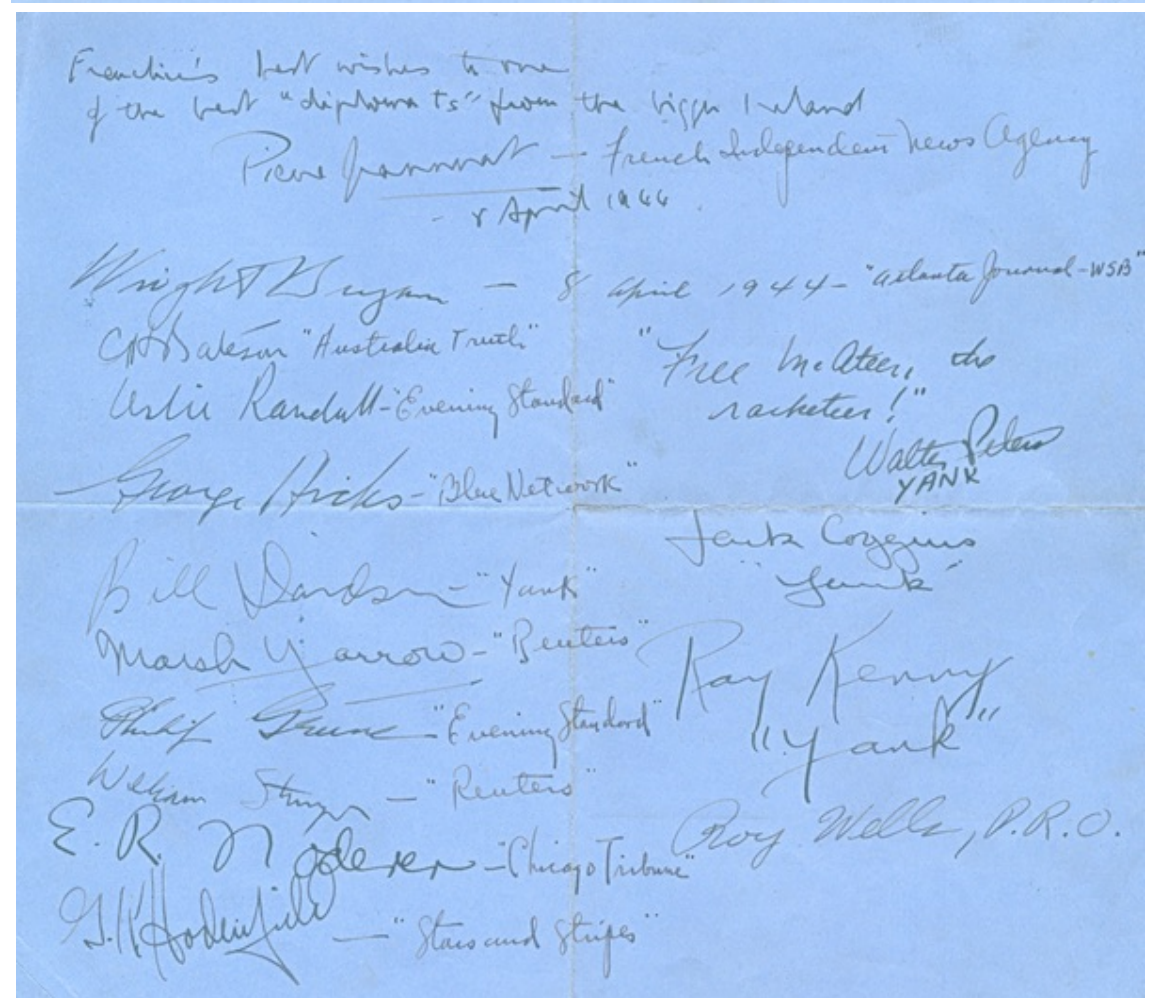
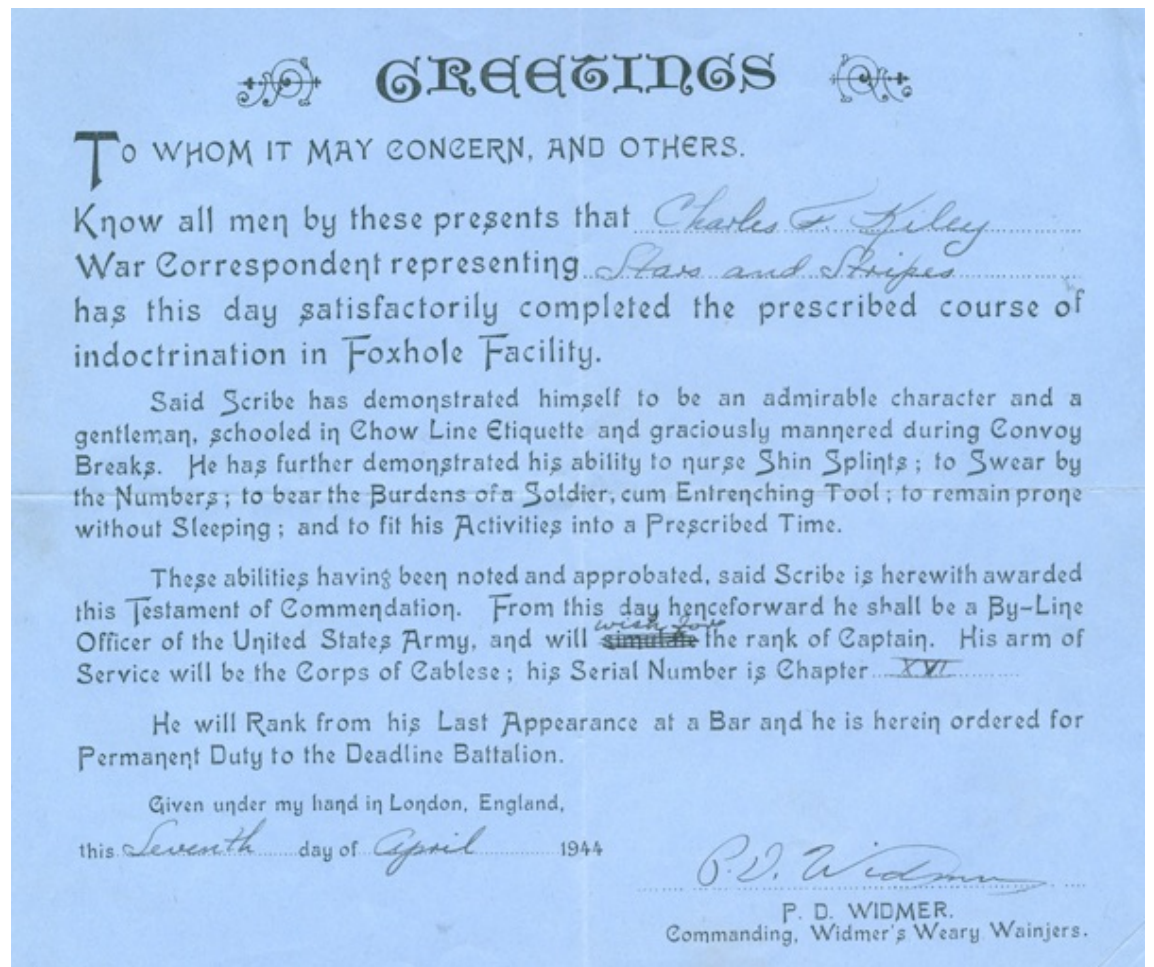
Billee dearest,

Home again! I arrived back in London about two hours ago and with dinner and a bath behind me I want to stretch out with my head on your lap and tell you all about the past two weeks. There wasn't much I could tell you while I was away as you must have realized from my letters.

First, let me say your letters of Mar. 14 and 16, your lovely Easter card and package were waiting for me at Clifford's Inn when I arrived. Also, the small package containing the film. Ben was thoughtful enough to bring the mail home from the office, knowing it would be the first thing I would look for.

Now back to the "school." The purpose of the school and two-week course was to indoctrinate correspondents who may cover the second front. Ours was the first class of 16. There is another class going through now and there will probably be a third. Most of the course was devoted to stuff I knew from my Army training (I sound like a civilian). But I did get acquainted with many officers who will work with us.

During most of my free time, of which there wasn't much, I spent with George Hicks, Blue Network radio correspondent who recently came here from Italy and Wright Bryan of the Atlanta Journal, a 6 foot, 6 inch "suthin' gentleman." The names of those in our class are listed on the "diploma" we



received and which I am enclosing. The name on top is that of Pierre Jannarat, an English-educated Frenchman who wore his monocle even when he played ball with us.

Now, it's good to be home with you and have your picture looking at me and saying, "So nice having you back, sweetheart."

Something tells me you are going to have a terrible time reading from this thin paper. I can hardly read it myself when I lift it from the desk blotter.

I'm not complaining about the stationery you sent. I wouldn't dare risk your temper by doing so.

The sweater is grand, as well as the shampoo, cigarettes and gum. I have enough Beechnut to last me from now on, I think. Who told you one of my bad habits is gum chewing? I tried the sweater on right away and I'm able to report it is an almost perfect fit. After one cleaning, it should be 100%.

Your Easter card was perfectly timed, just like the St. Patrick's Day card. You picked out something most appropriate with the "simple words can mean so much" verse on it.

It is a beautiful Easter eve. Now, at 10 o'clock, a golden sunset is covering everything with a lush blue-red hue. It won't be dark for another 30 or 40 minutes because of the double-summer-time [during the war, Britain added two hours to the clock in summer].

And, just at the right time, Bing Crosby's "Easter Parade" record is being played on the radio and I can very easily remember my "sweetest lady" in the Easter parade of 1942.

In covering your "datebook" for me, you said you had one in Massillon, none in Matawan and several in Asheville. I liked you in Matawan. Can you blame me? This is my jealousy coming out again.

Your word picture of Devonshire was good enough to make me think you must have been there. I wish you could see it at this time of year... no more beautiful than Vermont, Maine or New Hampshire, though.

Before I go, there's one more little matter we will have to discuss. You say, "Something happened in the past few weeks. Everything is going to be ok now, I hope. I'd tell you all about it but I am afraid you will misunderstand."

It must be important enough for you to hesitate, Billee, and if it is as important as that, I would like to give my misunderstanding an even chance. If you would still rather keep it locked up it will be all right, though.

Just as you said, I wish I were near you for only a little while to make things right. I have a strong feeling where I would begin, too.

See you at daybreak, sweetheart, to share our Easter kisses.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 9, 1944—London

Morning angel,

A beautiful Easter morning, Billee. So beautiful it made me want to spend a few moments with you this way. Because I got back too late last night to go to confession I went to “early” Mass today, nine o’clock, in order to go to confession before Mass. My communion was offered for us and the safety of ours.

Walking back from church, I wondered what you would be doing today, what you would be wearing, how radiant you would be on such a sun-bathed morning. And I missed you terribly.

I haven’t anything but a day in the office to look forward to, but I hope you had something better than that planned. However you spend the day, and with whomever you spend it, I’ll still be awfully jealous. Days like this were hand-made for us and I don’t care to share them with anyone but you.

So, on this Easter Sunday, I would like to tell you once more, Billee, how much a part of me you are, how much I truly love and adore you and how much I want us to be together soon.

I’ll be back with you again tonight. Miss me for a few hours, darling.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

Easter Sunday, April 9, 1944

Hello darling,

Happy Easter... what there is left of the day. It was a nice day, quiet but nice.

Our flowers arrived. Mom was so pleased with her yellow roses and my orchid is super. It’s asleep in the icebox now.

I went to early Mass so it didn’t arrive in time for that but Mom wore it. She was as pleased as punch... it’s the first one she ever had on. She looked so nice in her new hat and coat. We took pictures today, a whole roll, so you’ll get some.

I’m afraid Warren forgot or didn’t have an opportunity to send Mom anything for Easter. Luckily, I had a brainstorm and put an order in for a plant to be delivered in his name. I wanted to get her a corsage but there wasn’t one available. Everyone in town must have had one today. I wore mine in the Easter parade this afternoon.

I missed you this morning at Mass. The church was lovely, with the altar literally covered with snapdragons. There weren’t enough Easter lilies available this year. I missed them.

Mom baked a cake last night and I put the icing on after Mass and put Easter decorations on it. We even took a picture of that, with the yellow roses.

Oh, if you see Warren before he gets my letter, remember to tell him about the plant so he’ll know what Mom is talking about when she tells him about it.

I’m tucked in bed. Just have to say my prayers and snap the light out. I wish I could just say my prayers and whisper “turn out the light, darling, and let’s go to sleep.” Wouldn’t it be nice?

Almost forgot... your note from the school written March 30 came Saturday. I know just how you felt when you wrote that. It sounds like me. You wanted to be with me but didn't know what to write. Yes, so many times I've sat with the pen in one hand, trying to find you with words when all I wanted was to feel your arms around me.

Easter night two years ago... remember what a tired cookie I was, falling asleep on your shoulder at Marty's? That was torture trying to keep awake that night, but your shoulder was nice. I wish I could do it over again. Knowing Marty and Bill now I think I'd have just relaxed and gone to sleep.

We had a nice day for the Easter parade. It had to rain sometime but it is nice that it waited until late tonight.

The Sodality girls sang "Ave Maria" tonight accompanied on the violin with Evelyn. It was really nice. I was remembering how you liked it and how one of the Sundays at St. Lawrence, the soloist sang it.

This is my first Easter home in two years. It was nice but I miss 195... funny, I kind of missed you today...

I'll say goodnight for tonight with a prayer that soon you'll be home. I saw a quotation in the paper the other night. Someone said, "Home is where the heart is." Guess that's right... you're my home.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 9, 1944—London

Evening sweetheart,

Back for the third time in 24 hours, and it has been nice being with you on Easter. One of the many things I missed, though, was the orchid corsage I sent.

Your Easter gift to me was in the form of two more letters received today, March 20 and 23. Nothing I like better in pairs than your letters.

I loved the way you reacted to my reasons for loving you. Any time you feel like questioning my love, just fire away. I have lots more answers. I didn't intend to make you laugh and cry at once, though. I guess you are getting to be a big baby when you can't control your emotions when I make love to you. If it will make you cry, I'll have to promise not to make love anymore. Wouldn't want that to happen, would you?

You said it is a little difficult sometimes to realize a dream of yours came true. Your dream is my dream and if it has come true for you, well... for me it was the one that puzzled me most until I looked into your beautiful, sleepy eyes, at your tilted nose and felt your heart come to mine.

Sorry I have to disappoint you on the Lady Astor story you thought I could do so well. Andy and a new fellow in the office worked on it while I was away and did a rather bad job of it. I told Andy today and he readily agreed with me.

Concerning the transfer of our money, I think you should have it all in Asheville. Don't worry about needing it in a hurry and not having it available. We'll be able to manage until we get it.

Your sympathies seem to lie with the father and mother of the quadruplets born over here. You say you hope the sergeant's wife makes it possible for them to be married. From what I hear, that is the popular feeling at home. But, hell; I sympathize with the guy's wife who didn't have anything to do with it and is the innocent bystander. He must have loved his wife an awful lot to do what he did. After all, the stork didn't bring the children. Why, sweetheart... you're blushing! I love it, too.

You were worried about the "baby blitz" on London. It was a bit exciting for a time, except for the people who still are terrorized by the sound of sirens, bombs and gunfire. But it's all over now, I hope. I'm going to take your dreams to sleep now. I'll be back tomorrow. Have to make up for the time I lost in the past two weeks. Love to Mom. I'll call Warren tomorrow.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 10, 1944—Asheville

My dearest Charles,

Your long letter written last Sunday (!) came today. Bless Uncle Sam for brining you so close to me. Your day in the country sounded swell. Funny.... but I was doing the same thing. That was the day I went to Chimney Rock.

I have wondered a long time about the possibility of you getting a leave. It seemed very remote to me since you aren't in actual combat but I couldn't help but hope a little. Now we'll just hope and pray that the optimism over there has grounds and it will be over very soon.

So I'll just be on the alert for that doorbell ring and your "Hello, sweetheart." We could dispense with the doorbell... the welcome mat will be out and you can just come in any time. I get a case of butterflies just thinking about it. I'll probably do something silly like faint and cry all over your shoulder.

You'd be surprised at the conversations we have, you and I, while I'm dressing. You most always give me a smile of approval, not always but almost. I don't have much time in the morning because every second counts but at night I take my time. I'm taking advantage of talking to you now because you can't talk back to me. Just wait until we're Mr. and Mrs. K. I'll be meek when you speak. I'll probably salute you or something when you go ordering me around. On second thought, who's going to order who? I'm kidding you... order me around any way you like. I'll love it.

Today was a bank holiday... a lovely day. I slept until 11 o'clock. I took our Easter pictures to be developed, did a few things around the house, and met Mom at five o'clock for a movie, "See Here, Private Hargrave." Really good and a lot of laughs. Mom enjoyed it.

There's no reason to worry about Freddie. It is a funny situation but one that I can't do much about. He comes here to stay on weekends. It isn't as if Mom and I had a private home. All kidding aside, he is a nice fellow and has been a lot of company for both of us. He isn't the sort that gads about and the service clubs here don't hold any attractions for him. I think he likes to talk to me because I've lived near New York and he is homesick, as homesick a guy as I ever saw. Ask Warren, he'll tell you Freddie is all right. Nearly all the girls I knew here before are married and following their husbands

from camp to camp and I have stayed pretty close to home with Mom, so I'm most always here when he comes in. Both Mom and I have tried to get him to go to the clubs, but it's no go. I went to a couple of the dances with him and introduced him to as many of the girls as I knew, but he wouldn't dance with anyone but me and if someone would break in he'd go and sit a couple of dances out and then come and break in again on me. I can't figure it out. We talk about you and he takes pictures of me, and says these will be for Charles. He has a lot he hasn't had an opportunity to develop. He has to do it when the major isn't looking. He got the film for me to send to you.

Truly, he only makes me miss you that much more... makes the ache a bit worse is all, so don't be jealous, please.

My orchid is still nice. I wore it uptown today and it's back in the icebox tonight. The message on the card... the writing looks like Father John's... says "Easter love and kisses to an angel." That's the first message with flowers I've had. They have all been so formal, with just "Charles Kiley" on the card.

Speaking of Father John, I had the silliest dream about him. It seems he had been to Newfoundland, to see you evidently, because I was firing questions right and left at him about you. He brought me a baby doll in a cradle with a pink blanket and kept telling me it was my wedding present. El was in the dream and had the biggest jar of pickles you ever saw. She said it was a wedding present and then along comes Marguerite's brother, Ed, with the funniest looking horse you ever saw. He said it was our wedding present. Did you hear anything so crazy? I didn't eat anything before I went to sleep, but I can dream some crazy ones.

Two Easter cards came today from El and Dot. The pictures of Dorothy Jean are cute. I don't think she looks like you. She looks like Dot.

We have a sergeant and his wife and four-month-old baby boy in the house. He's so cute... the baby, not the sergeant. He made right up to me. I took him to the store in the carriage today. I felt almost like Mrs. K., buying my groceries and putting them in the carriage. One of the clerks made such a fuss over him, saying he looks just like me. I had to tell him he wasn't mine. I wish we had one but then I'd feel badly about you not seeing him growing. Let's see... he'd be over a year old now, wouldn't he, if we had one... our little pitcher. The gang might rib you but I hope we have one right away.

I have last week's and yesterday's N.Y. Times, but still no article.

Your last week of school is over and you're back in London now. I want to write to Dot tonight too, so I'll close for now. I'm loving you and missing you even more than ever.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 11, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

Nice to snuggle up close to you tonight. Well, up close to your picture anyway. I can't think of anything I would rather snuggle up to more than your picture just now, unless it were the real "baby."

Say, where did you ever get the idea, even in a dream, that I would call you “baby?” Still, you are such a darling baby it isn’t a bad idea. If and when I send you a homecoming cable though, I won’t say I’m dead broke, because I’ll always have three American dollars I have been carrying since I left. The money is being saved for a phone call, to scream blue murder if you aren’t where I can smother you in a pair of arms when I first set foot on U.S. soil.

The mailman gave us good service again today. He brought your airmails of March 26 and 27 and April 3. Here’s a kiss for each of them. In fact, you rate to for the April 3 anniversary letter... short but every word worth millions.

I have some up-to-the-minute news of Warren tonight. He called to let me know everything was all right and said he might be up within a week or so. Your brother has a medal now, and an oak-leaf cluster besides. He has 10 missions behind him... with the Air Medal for the first five and the cluster for every additional five. When he is finished, he gets the Distinguished Flying Cross. He sounded good and said he had just received your March 26 and 28 letters.

You asked me about Warren’s reaction to the missions. They are about the same as the average gunner’s. They don’t regard them as thrilling or adventurous after the first two, especially if they see a lot of unpleasant sights. It gets to be pretty important business with them. And Warren is just about like that. He talks a lot about them. That is, he did about the first four, which is a healthy sign. I don’t believe he will talk about them much when I see him next. You will have to be prepared to meet a more mature kid brother when next you see him. True, he’s young, but as I’ve said before, kids grow up awfully fast in the Air Force.

What is all this about a fire near the house? What is this guy Freddie trying to do? He’s getting very unpopular with me... first monopolizing my sweetheart and then trying to burn her house down. If he took the picture you enclosed, tell him he is a pretty poor photographer. Next time he should have more of you and less of Grove Park Inn in the picture. I wish I could have a picture of you wrinkling your nose. Think you can supply it?

You said you had selected the material for your negligee and gown. You didn’t say what color but I assumed it was white and you didn’t say for what occasion, but again I assumed they are for a certain day when a white negligee and gown will be in fashion.

Oh, how many times I have seen you slowly walking up the church aisle to meet me... standing before me with everything an angel ever had but a halo. I wouldn’t be surprised to see that over your head, either.

I’m glad you thought of flowers for the cemetery, Billee. I hadn’t forgotten but thought El, Bette, John and Dad would do my part. Thanks, sweetheart.

Now, about the story I sold to the Times. I wasn’t going to tell you because I wanted to have you read it without knowing what it was about. Since you are inquisitive, however, I’ll give you a brief outline.

It is a story about a soldier named Karl Warner. I never met him but got the story from men of his outfit who were in Africa. Warner was referred to only by the name of “Molotov.” He was tagged with the nickname while he was at Fort Bragg. His civilian background is rather mysterious. A

boastful wise guy who never obeyed orders and wore outlandish uniforms, he was generally disliked by all until he went into combat. He turned out to be quite a hero before he was killed. If I told more it would spoil the reading of the story for you.

Incidentally, the Times hasn't notified me it has been used so I guess it is still unpublished. We can't use it here until it is out in New York because the Times has a copyright on it.

And now, time to tell you I'm loving you and missing you more than I can say. And it was nice snuggling up. I'll be back tomorrow because it was two years ago tomorrow night we said goodbye for awhile.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 12, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

This is sort of an anniversary... one I wish we didn't have. Two years ago tonight, a bit later than right now, I saw you for the last time in Penn Station. Need I say... do you remember? That memory lingers longer than all the others.

Two letters yesterday... March 25 and 31, with the picture of you and Warren. I'm glad you sent me one because I want it for our album.

I didn't tell Mom about you all being in an air raid. She is still a bit upset over the news of Warren's missions. I'm glad he was with you for his first "blitz."

Of course, I've heard of Earl before, and his name is getting to be a familiar sight as censor for "our dates." Pete I haven't met before. By the way, Freddie knows a good friend of Pete's... Dan Cross of the Yank magazine. He was in Washington. Freddie doesn't know where he is now.

Warren sleeping 12 hours sounds just like him. When he has the opportunity, he can sleep longer than anyone I know.

These letters were written before those I received Saturday and Monday but it brings me up to date on the why and wherefore of your two-week trip.

What brand of face powder do I use? I'm a bit fickle on that score. My favorite is Primrose House but I can't always get it. I love new toothbrushes... one of my extravagances. I only keep one a few weeks and buy another. I never buy the same color twice in succession. Variety is the spice of life, they say. I change toothpowder, too. Right now Calox [?] is the order of the day. My dentist in N.J. told me it was the best, but I like Ipana, too.

I've been reading off recipes to Mom from our book and she tells me it's an excellent book, and that I can't go wrong if I follow the directions.

We're having more rain... another storm last night that kept me awake.

Oh, I'm coming up in the world. I have a sign of my own at my counter. It looks very prim... the "Miss Gray," I mean. My predecessor's sign was still up until today... "Mrs. Nelson..." and people I know are asking me when I got married, so I thought I'd better start the ball rolling to get me a sign with my name before complications set in.

When I saw the clipping about your letter to the mother of the boy missing in action, I knew you weren't going to like it a bit. I hope he is safe. It was swell of you to write her.

I'll take good care of the white dress, so I can fulfill your request. I'll love dressing up for you.

The week of March 6 *Stars and Stripes* arrived. I enjoyed your article on "Father Tim." One of your best.

I've just had a nice hot bath and I'm curled up in bed but falling asleep at this moment. Do you mind if I just lay my head on your shoulder? Today was busy again... didn't get home until after five.

I'm missing you as usual. Guess I'll never get over it... I hope not until we are together. Goodnight, my darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 12, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

When we said goodbye last night, or was it the night before or a year or two ago... did you think it would be so long? I didn't.

Two years ago tonight it was, when my lips last touched yours. Two long, lonely years since we were torn apart when we should have been beginning our lives. I knew only too well it would be a time before I could rush into your arms but not such a long time. If I had only suspected what the future held, I would surely have made you my bride then. Not two years ago today, or tonight, but as soon after we met as possible.

My consolation during these two years lies in my everlasting love and adoration of you. If I loved you then there isn't any description for my feeling now.

I am ever so close to you tonight. Your April 4 anniversary letter had a lot to do with it. Yesterday the letter you wrote at about midnight of April 3 arrived and today the one of April 4.

When you say things like, "I'm very glad, happy, just everything, that you wanted me. Loving you is my whole life," I just swell up inside. It makes me feel so clean, and strong in will. They are the words that have kept me going on and on these past two years despite all that has kept us apart.

So, tonight I want to repeat a vow I made so long ago... "I will never make you unhappy."

Love me, Billee, and pray for us.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

Love to Mom and thank her for her Easter card.

April 15, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

I fell asleep last night before I got to write. I've been neglecting my sister of late so I wrote her a letter and Warren a long letter and sent a short note off to Bette. I just couldn't hold my eyes open any longer after that.

At the end of the above paragraph, I did a run out on you. They had another dance at the camp and I was invited. I had a fair time but kept catching myself missing you more and more. There were quite a few girls there and I noticed more than one with a far-away look. Their hearts... or rather our hearts... just aren't in it.

It's late now and I should be asleep but I've woken up now. I could have gone to sleep a good 45 minutes ago but they were waiting to get a full load on the bus.

Your anniversary letter came Thursday as well as one from Father John. I knew you wouldn't forget me. What a way to spend it... tramping over hill and dale... but I'm glad if I went with you.

Your paragraph with the "I'll pin the orchids on your coat next Easter," was the best anniversary present yet. That's what I've been waiting to hear. People around here seem a bit on the pessimistic side, so I'll just listen to you.

I wore your orchid in my hair. It looked ok, too. It's still fresh enough to wear to Mass in the morning.

We've had a shower and the streets are wet. I can hear the tires singing as the cars go by... a nice, quiet sound. I'd like to be curled up beside you somewhere, kind of asleep and not asleep, and hear you whisper sweet nothings in my ear, or better yet, just feel you holding me.

This is a good way to get sleepy... writing to you. I could think of better ways though, if you were at hand.

I think I can sleep now so I'll say my prayers and hope that I'll dream of you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 15, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

I went to the dogs again today. I was going to commune with nature by taking a short train ride to Kent to see how the flowers are blooming but Andy and Ben persuaded me to see the greyhounds instead. I only lost a pound this time. In fact, the only race I won was the last, in which "Billy Boy" came through. It was the only dog that gave me a hunch. Later we saw "The Song of Bernadette," as good a film as they said it was.

Perhaps next week I'll go to Kent. Everything starts to blossom at this time of year out there and everywhere you go the flowers are, or seem to be, more beautiful than any you have ever seen before.

Two more letters yesterday and today... March 31 and April 7... that makes about seven or eight in a week. I believe you love me more in the spring. But then, I did receive almost 20 in January, which isn't exactly spring. Oh, I guess you just love me all year 'round.

Do you mind if I ask a pertinent question? In one of the letters, you said you weren't quite sure you loved me until you saw me at Penn Station. What was it that really and truly went on in your mind during the time we kissed and parted in Asheville until we kissed and found each other that day you came to New York? And, were there ever any doubts in your mind that I loved you truly? When did you realize, finally, that I didn't want anyone but you? Was it in Asheville or New York or after I had gone overseas?

I am just curious. Actually, it is a small matter when, where or why, as long as I have you now.

I'll tell you what I was thinking all that time. It has already been told how I was attracted to you from the very first instant. A great many things raced through my head that first night. I can't remember, even now, why we stayed behind in the car. I do know I wanted to be alone with you and it didn't seem to matter where it was. I wanted to say something but I remember being there in the darkness and not knowing just how to say it. I was sure I loved you, even after only a few hours. What puzzled me was how to convince you, or whether you considered me someone you would know one day and never see after that.

I know the best I could do to show my love at the time, and it was a rather poor show... to ask if I could see you every weekend thereafter.

And then I thought of little else but you from the on. For a time that first Sunday I thought I was losing you when you stung me with the "am I tagging along?" question. As time passed those next two weeks, there wasn't any doubt in my mind that I loved you but I was afraid I was doing a poor job of showing it. I was afraid, too, the flame would go out when I went north. Not with me, but with you.

I don't know if I told you how mixed up I was at Fort Dix, wondering if you would come to New York before I left. But, I must have. I thought then, as now, how it would be if I never saw you again. And it was something I didn't want to think about. I guess that is as good an example of love as there is, a reaction to the thought if not ever seeing anyone again.

While I had long wanted you for my own, it was during those days at Dix that I made up my mind to ask you to marry me, realizing we were comparative strangers, that I would be separated from you soon. But, my biggest mistake was not marrying you right then and there. Yes, we were practical but now I wish we weren't.

So, I loved you from the start, truly, and I love you ever so much more now. And I will come back to you just as you left me... in every way. Tonight, I am happy and glad to be able to make love to you after two heartbreaking years.

Listen, lady... wherever did you get the idea I have become a victim of "middle-aged spread?" If it's true, and I deny it, I don't see how you can possibly tell from that picture. When you last had your

arms around me I weigh 162 pounds. Tonight I weigh 163. I have been living on starchy foods, yes. But I doubt if one pound makes such a big difference.

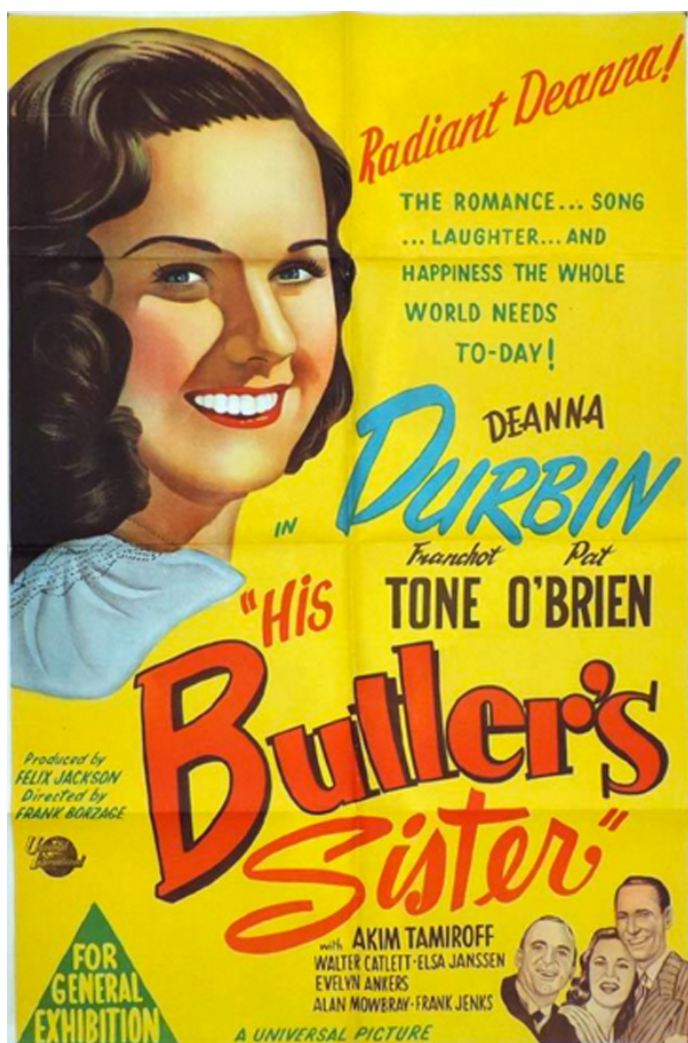
You were right in suspecting I did the story on Lowell Bennett. I did another this week on war correspondents gathered here in record numbers for the second front. Also did one, which got a good play, on what a soldier can and cannot write in letters about political issues at home.

The Times story hasn't run yet since they haven't told me. Hope they do soon because I want to run it here. Because I sold it to the Times, it has to run there first.

Going to leave you for awhile now. Love me and miss me terribly. That long honeymoon is "just around the corner," I hope.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles



April 18, 1944—Asheville

Hello darling,

It's late again. I went to see a movie, "His Butler's Sister." Cute, too, with Deanna Durbin. Last night I fixed magazines and newspapers for the collectors. I found some packed away in window seats dated 1937! Mom never throws anything away. After lugging those things out to the shed, I was ready to hit the hay... that, together with the effects of a ten-mile hike on Sunday.

Your letter written April 8 arrived yesterday. I found it myself in the mailbox and it was a welcome sight. Imagine getting one written the previous Saturday and postmarked April 11... just a week ago today. Wonderful.

You really hit the jackpot with all the mail. By the way, that's the last GI sweater you get. I'll make you a nice golf sweater. What color would you like? A pretty blue to match your eyes?

The diploma was super, especially with all the autographs. Nice material for our scrapbook. The Frenchman sounds cute. I know you must have enjoyed meeting the different guys. It is good to have you back again but I did get quite a few letters from the school, considering the training.

You don't mean the sweater is a bit large? I was afraid it would be too small. I guess I sent you so much gum because I like it. Freddie was good enough to bring a whole box in from the PX. It isn't as plentiful in the stores.

A sunset at two o'clock... that must be a sight. You couldn't arrange a moon for us, could you? Or do we have to draw the shades and look at the light. Who needs a moon, anyway?

In the picture tonight, in one scene D.D. and Franchot Tone are coming back from a nightclub in the wee hours, walking (in New York). She's in evening dress and I couldn't help but remember us that Sunday morning, walking back to the hotel after breakfast, passing the milkman and his cart. Seems like last night...

In counting my dates, I forgot the hundreds of "real dates," the only ones I consider dates. They were all with pen and paper and the mailman. Somehow, the others never seemed like dates, I guess because you were always there, too. I was always thinking about what fun we could be having.

I'd love to see the New England states. That's one part I haven't had a chance to see. I've been to the mid-east, the south and the southwest, including most of California, and as far north in the east as upstate New York, but I missed the New England states. Someday I'll see them with you.

I probably shouldn't have mentioned my little problem, so to speak, in my letter. I guess I did because it was on my mind. However, things are working out all right and I'd rather tell you than write it, some evening when we're cozy in our corner I'll tell you about it, all right? I think you'd like to hear it and would probably understand. If you were here, there would be no problem, but things are working out all right, so we'll forget it for now.

We had letters from Warren yesterday and today. He was to get a twelve-hour pass over Easter. I'm wondering if it was granted. We heard over the air that so many of the passes were cancelled so maybe his was included.

He definitely doesn't care too much for it over there. I had to laugh at his letter to Mom. I'm surprised the censor permitted it to go through. The first thing I know he'll be court martialed for interfering with international relationships. Maybe I'd better not quote him.

I wanted to tell you about Sunday... my ten-mile jaunt to a place I've wanted to see ever since I've been here in Asheville. It was so much more beautiful than I imagined that I wish now I had waited to see it with you. Have you seen things over there... a sunset or a beautiful view or perhaps a lovely English estate, an old castle or something like that... that you wished I could have seen at the same time? The place I'm speaking of is called the Biltmore Estate, the home of George Vanderbilt. He has some 12,000 acres here in the mountains. Before the war there was a charge of \$2.00 per person but that was just to keep riffraff out. I thought it rather stiff but I can see it was well worth it. The house itself is closed to the public but servicemen and whoever are with them are permitted in the grounds so I was "whoever" happened to be with Freddie. It was a beautiful day and the flowers... the wild flowers and the trees are all in bloom... everything is well-taken care of but still it has an untouched look. It's a three-mile jaunt to the house. Suddenly you come upon it, like something out of a book. It's fashioned after a French chateau... only has 385 rooms. Mere words can't describe the impression it makes upon you. Freddie, being a camera bug, was in his glory. He was oblivious to everyone except what he saw in the camera. Occasionally I'd make a shadow for a certain shot but I wandered around by myself. He shot up four rolls of film so he should have a few good pictures. He took a few of me... some I didn't know about until later. We even forgot to eat. We'll have to see it together. You probably have seen something similar... it's foreign-looking but still it has an American

touch to it. The view of the mountains... the Smokies... is magnificent. I enjoyed it but still I kept saying to myself at each new discovery, "Charles should see this." I'll send you the pictures.

I had lunch with my girlfriend, Elise, today and I was showing her the picture of you and Warren. Know what she said? "You must have done something awfully nice in your time, Billee, to rate a guy like him." See... someone else thinks you're wonderful besides me.

I'm still basking in the glory of your recent letter telling me you'll pin the orchid on my coat next Easter. I'm afraid if something like that doesn't happen, you'll find me knocking at your apartment door "over there." I'll probably be a bit bedraggled and damp from the swim, but you'll let me in. I'll find some way of getting over... just giving you fair warning.

I'm really falling asleep. 7:45 rolls around on the double. I love you... the "miss you" and "love you" feeling gets worse every day. That's a good sign, though. Goodnight... you'll laugh but I have a special name for you when I talk to your picture. Maybe I shouldn't say it. I don't know when it started but it's "angel-puss." It doesn't suit you particularly but it seems to come out when I talk to your picture. Don't throw anything... just love me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April or May, 1944—England [V-letter, not dated]

Dear Ray,

I am glad you received the money I sent you. El told me in her last letter, and she also told me that you bought a bond for me. I didn't want you to buy a bond, I wanted you to use that money on the car. Did you get it fixed?

I have seen Brother and it sure was good to see him, too. [There is no letter from Charles about this visit.] I was on a 48 hour pass to see him and we took in the town. I met all the fellows on the *Stars and Stripes* and they all were a swell bunch of fellows. They think a lot of his writing. 1st Lt. Moora, who is in charge of the office and was a writer on the New York Herald Tribune, said that he was going to see that he got Brother on it when they got back... said he was wasting his time on the [Jersey] Journal.

I also saw Gene O'Neil, one of the fellows I used to hang around with, and Danny Lynch, and guess what? Danny got married over here a couple of weeks ago.

That's about all for now. Take care of yourself and may God bless you.

Eddie

April 20, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

Taking up where we left off last night. [Letter missing.] We said we would discuss Freddie once and for all. Nothing to get excited about, I know. Still, it is something for us to talk about, and it would be

a dark day that we couldn't sit down, snuggly-like, and talk things out, however important or insignificant they may be.

When I said I was jealous, I meant it. Really I did. And as long as we are apart, I'll burn with envy whenever I have to share you for a minute. That's how it is, and will be until I can have you for my own in every way.

My selfishness in that respect, however, isn't so gross that I wouldn't rest easy until I was assured you were locked up in a room until I came home. Billee, I want you to enjoy yourself as much and as often as you possibly can. That includes dating Freddie or anyone else you care to and as often as you want, going wherever you see fit. I don't feel, and never will, that I or anyone else has the right to discuss what you do, with whom, and how you do it. Frankly, you are so damned independent it wouldn't do any good anyway.

I suppose I made my envy too obvious, causing you to think I was uneasy because someone was showing you attention. Just as I said, I was jealous and still am, because I love you so very much. Finally, you go ahead and see Freddie or anyone else. Knowing there isn't room in your heart for anyone else, I don't mind a bit.

I always enjoy hearing of your attraction to children, Billee, like the sergeant's baby you took to the grocer's. More than that I love the way you wish we had one. Yes, if we did he would be about 16 months old now. When our time comes, sweetheart, I too hope we are blessed with one "right away."

Somehow, I've had the strongest feeling lately that our family will be dominated by women. That is, our team will turn out to be girls, all of whom will resemble their beautiful mother. If so, I won't love them less.

So, 'bye for awhile. I'll be back in 48 hours for a Saturday night date. Will you have my favorite perfume handy? And my favorite lipstick?

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

Benny says hello.

April 20, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Get comfortable and make a place for me on your shoulder. I'm a bit weary and I'd like nothing better than to relax in your arms and close my eyes, and let the rest of the world go by... but this is the next best thing.

I'm getting the sniffles... a spring cold. It could be because I didn't wear a coat yesterday, just my jacket. We've been getting the cottage ready for new tenants to take over and I helped Mom put the finishing touches on it. One of these days I'm going to do that to my own two by four and I'll probably fall in a chair beautifully exhausted and look across at you and grin, because I'll love it. I can hardly wait to begin.

We'll have such fun, arranging and rearranging because we probably won't agree on where things will look best. Maybe we'll have a fight. I'd like that, because then we could kiss and make up. Do you suppose we could be doing spring housecleaning together this time next year? Just the thought leaves me breathless. Stop daydreaming, Billee; then, you won't be disappointed. Don't mind me... I talk to myself every now and then. You'll get used to it.

Guess where I went last evening? To a boxing tournament... and enjoyed it. Moore General Hospital and the A.C.S. and Weather Wing put in on for the benefit of the recreation funds for both places. [By 1942, supervision of Army weather activities within the United States had been centralized in the Army Air Forces (AAF) Weather Service, headed by the Director of Weather on the Air Staff. However, in 1943 the AAF reorganized in an



WWII-era postcard.

effort to move as many operations out of Washington DC as possible, and responsibility for the AAF Weather Service was transferred to Flight Control Command, which organized and activated the Weather Wing, Flight Control Command to manage this responsibility. This wing is the direct organizational ancestor of the 557th Weather Wing. By 3 May 1943 Flight Control Command had relocated the headquarters of the Weather Wing to Asheville, North Carolina.]

It was held at the auditorium and quite a nice crowd turned out. Nearly all the soldiers were there but the civilians supported it quite well. I was glad to see it. They had nine three-round bouts. One was an exhibition match, both boxers being professional before turning GI.

I couldn't help but think of you when I looked down near the judges' seats and saw two fellows busy scribbling away between rounds. Maybe sometime we can go to Madison Square Garden. I've always had a yen to go there. You might just as well get used to the idea of me tagging along to boxing matches, etc. If you insist on my staying at home and tending to my knitting, well... I'll probably do it. Maybe.

I had a long letter from El yesterday and everything seems to be ok there. She says Annice is getting so heavy she can't carry her around any more; that she'll soon be walking. I miss them so much, Charles. Already I feel like one of you.

Yesterday's mail brought a long letter from Warren, too. Seems the girlfriend here isn't writing to him so we're getting the mail. I don't mean that the way it might sound, but when Warren's life doesn't go

right I always get showered with letters. It amuses me a bit, but I like it. I'm glad he's writing so often. It keeps Mom easy, mentally. He tells me he was awarded the Air Medal plus an oak leaf cluster, which means ten missions, doesn't it? At the rate he's going he'll have those 25 in nothing flat. He said he was going to bed when he finished the letter and it was only 7:00 p.m. He must have been weary. That was the night he called you. He sounded just a bit homesick in this letter... a bit lonely. I'm glad you aren't too far away... it brings you both that much closer to Mom and me.

Believe it or not, the roses are still nice and my orchid still looks fresh. We put the roses in the icebox at night and my orchid stays there. I almost believe I can wear it to Mass again Sunday.

Mother Müller called me the other night. I sent her an Easter card and a note. I'm going out to see her Sunday and take the camera along. I'd like to have a picture of her for our album.

I nearly forgot: your two Easter letters came yesterday and I loved every word of them. I promise never to shed another tear if that will keep you from making love to me, and I'm not a big baby... (indignation!). I'm glad you went to early Mass. That was the one I went to, too. What a wonderful and glorious day it will be when we can kneel at the altar together just like other young couples I see on Sunday mornings. I shouldn't but I can't help feeling envious. I'll probably be a big baby then and cry.... I hope not. That would be awful.

I guess I wasn't thinking much about the sergeant's wife. I was just thinking of the babies and the fact that they'll need a father. Leave it to a GI to get himself in a jam like that. What a headache he must have. He can't even run away and join the army, can he?

As I told you, our Easter Sunday was lovely, too. I'm glad you didn't have English weather. Since I couldn't be with you, I'm glad you had to work. The time probably went by quicker.

I'm loving and missing you so much. Sometimes I feel like exploding my top and starting a one-woman rampage on everything that's keeping us apart. That's the bit of Irish in me, that hits me between the eyes now and then and I get that rebellious feeling. One of these days... I keep telling myself.

I'd better say goodnight before I get in a mood here. I love you and miss you so. Keep praying and don't lose your patience and as a special favor to me, don't be jealous. I don't like it. You're too far away for me to reassure you that there's no reason for it. 'Night, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 22, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

It's been a lazy day and a long one with lots of rain. I went to early Mass so Mom could go to church at eleven. We had nine for dinner so it meant a little extra work. After the dishes were over, I passed out on the bed and fell asleep almost immediately for nearly two hours. It felt good, too. Funny, I almost never sleep in the daytime.

We have some new people in the house: a doctor and his wife from Pennsylvania. They have a little nine-year-old girl and what a question box! They are nice people. Don't know how long they'll be here.

I've missed you today. Just before I passed out this afternoon, I stared at the ceiling making pictures. This would have been a good day to lock the front door so people would think we were away, and build a roaring fire in our fireplace and just snuggle up and be alone. Sounds nice, doesn't it, for a Sunday afternoon.

Everything is so green with the rain. It looks all fresh and washed. Our garden is all planned... now all we have to do is plant it. The seeds are here ready to be planted so I guess I'll turn into a farmerette. Mom is really going in on a big scale.

I have last Sunday's New York Times, and Ralph Martin's latest article is in the magazine section. It's really good... thumbnail sketches of things he saw in Naples and vicinity. He must have recovered all right from the malaria he had.

I was wandering around the yard the other day and found a hyacinth plant in full bloom and then I remembered it was one we gave Mom for Mother's Day some four or five years back and we set the bulbs out. I was surprised.

Last night I had a date with the mangle and a stack of laundry. We've been so busy with this darned house cleaning the everyday work has been neglected, so I was catching up. Nice way to spend Saturday night, but if it couldn't be with you then that's as good a way as any. Besides, you can't be jealous of a mangle... or can you?

We had some ice cream last night for the first time in quite a while. What a disappointment. I think I'll wait until after the war and eat it with you. It didn't taste much like ice cream You've never said... do you get ice cream over there? Whatever happened to the soda fountain you were supposed to get?

For the first time in a while I'm not in the state of exhaustion while I'm writing to you. I've had a nap. If it weren't raining, we might go out and find a nice quiet place for a Sunday night supper then a movie and home. I forgot... in the east, rain doesn't keep you from doing things. Down here, rain just automatically cancels plans for some reason and everyone here seems to follow suit.

Next Sunday Jeanette MacDonald is to be here in concert. I think I'll take Mom. She likes her as much as I do. That's a nice way to spend Sunday afternoon.

I found a cute poem in a new magazine... wait a second until I run and get it. Be back in a jiffy...

V-mail

These little pages lack the space

For what I'd tell you face to face,

And every word I use must be

Selected with economy,

But I who write and you who read

Know well that “love” is all we need.

Richard Armour

I thought you'd like it. We probably aren't being too patriotic writing airmails all the time, but we can't give up everything.

I think the rain is stopping a bit. Guess I'll wake Mom up and we'll have a cup of tea. I'm not very hungry but I want something. I know what it is... you.

Guess I'll close. 'Bye for a bit. It's too early to say goodnight. I love you and miss you even more.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 23, 1944—London

Evening angel,

Don't look so cross, please. Yes, I kept you waiting for me all last night and didn't show up. And, you have a perfect right to stand there with your hands on your hips, feet apart and right foot tapping the floor. I promised I would be with you for a Saturday night date and here I am, 24 hours late.

Why? It's spring, beautiful spring, and I'm just lazy.

These past two days have been the most ideal, as weather goes, that I can remember in the last two years. I can't afford to do so but I get to be the laziest white man alive in weather like this.

What did I do yesterday to stand you up? Well, we are going to move and a lot of things had to be straightened out. Ben left yesterday for a week's stay in our Northern Ireland office, which put the domestic load on me. We aren't moving far... just from the fourth floor to the third. It is a nicer apartment, better furnished and for the same rent. While Ben is away, Andy is staying here. He lent a hand with the packing, discarding of junk acquired, etc., and then led me to the dog races. They started twilight racing yesterday so we didn't get back until 9:30, weary enough to bathe and shuffle off to bed. I just hoped you would forgive me.

Today I was up bright and early for 8:30 Mass, then to the office for a solid day of reading, chewing, swallowing and digesting material on “how a soldier can vote.” It is in preparation for a series we are running this week. Last week it was “what a soldier can and cannot write on political issues at home.”

Do you wonder why I like the wide, open spaces?

Warren called again today. He has 15 behind him now... 15! Because of recent restrictions on leaves, he didn't know when he would be in. He said he sent flowers to Mom for Mother's Day. He should be going to the Rest Home pretty soon. I'm surprised he hasn't gone before this. Usually, every crew goes there after about 12 missions. It gives them a chance to lay around and rest for a week in ideal surroundings. He has come a long way... keep praying.

Your airmail of April 13 came today to make the day brighter. It was your remembrance of the day we said “goodbye for awhile.”

I was going to acquaint you with some of my eccentricities... little things you may not have noticed but which I know belong to me... but I'll save them for a day or two. I notice you and I have the same idea about toothbrushes.

I received a letter from Mac's mother the other day. She hasn't heard anything since the news-breaking cable. She asked me what happened to his personal things. I had to tell her they will be sent to her after three months. Judging by her intimations, she hasn't received the personal effects of Mac's brother yet either, and he went down last October. She has recently received a card and letter from Mac's brother, both written in November from a POW camp.

Father John told me about the news of your cousin in the Pacific. He also, casually mind you, told me Bette had a specialist remove her appendix and that he was laid up with a throat infection for six days. Guess you have to join the Army to stay in good health.

Time to retire... I'll take you to be with me so you will never be too far away.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Warren has two clusters for his Air Medal now.

April 23, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

It's a good thing I stay well and go to work every day or I guess you'd find me in a cage when you came home. By way of explanation, this cold put me to bed yesterday and today. How I've been missing you... not that I don't do that all the time but just lying in bed staring at the ceiling... that's no good. I thought of all the things we might be doing. So I've really had a case of the whim-whams, as I call them.

Your letter written April 12 came today as well as one from Marguerite and from your cousin Irene, thanking me for the Mass card for her father.

We wrote the same day as usual when one of "our days" happens along. After two years we do swell, don't you think? I'm beginning to read between the lines that you are getting as impatient as I but try to... it isn't good. As I've said before, don't lose your patience. Please, it can't go on too much longer. The two years seem like an eternity in between letters, but when they come... like the one today... the time doesn't seem so long ago when I felt your arms around me and your lips on mine.

Your love has been very close to me, Charles. I seem to feel it around me almost always. There have been times, especially since I've been home, that I thought I had lost you. I couldn't seem to find you anywhere, not even in St. Lawrence's, but then the feeling passes and there you are. Do I make sense? Sometimes I must sound a bit crazy in these letters. It's just that I'm not too good at putting what I feel into writing.

There's another new moon tonight. How many times I've looked at it and made the same wish, but time goes by and new moons go by, bringing us a bit closer to our happiness.

One of the announcers, Upton Close [reporter out of San Francisco] to be exact, said last night that whatever happens in the European theater must happen within the next sixty days. The papers are full of “jitters.” You don’t know what to believe.

One of the girls who lives here couldn’t believe that I hadn’t seen you in two years. Her lieutenant is awaiting overseas shipment at Fort Dix. He’s called her every day for the past week. She spent last weekend with him in Richmond. She said she didn’t know how she was going to stand it. I practically laughed in her face; then, I said I’d been standing it for two years. She said the way I talked of you it was as if we’d seen each other yesterday. She said I had so much hope in the way I spoke of you. They are both in their thirties... he’s almost forty. They met some seven months ago. It seems a shame to live that long until you find what you want and then be snatched away with just memories and the prayer that someday soon you will be together. They are a nice couple. He was here the first weekend they were here, the girls I mean, with their mother.

I’ve really been rambling. Hope you don’t mind. It feels almost as if I were curled up in your lap telling you whatever happened to be on my mind. Pleasant thought... curled up in your arms. You know I’ll bet we only need one pillow. I had to laugh when Myrtle (the one with the lieutenant) said that when he came back to stay she was going to crawl in his lap and stay there for the next forty years. I know just how she feels.

Guess I’ll say goodnight until tomorrow and write Warren a note. He’s homesick, I can tell from his letters. I love you and I’m glad you love me, even though sometimes I feel the way Elise described it: “Billee, you must have done something awfully nice in your lifetime to rate a guy like him.” Don’t blow up... I know just what you’re going to say. Just bend down a bit and I’ll kiss you goodnight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 26, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

What a nice week in the mail department... a letter every day so far. Sure is good, because this case of the sniffles is getting me down. I should have stayed in bed another day I guess. Oh well, I’ll survive. You know it doesn’t do for bank tellers to get sick. They don’t like it... you’re supposed to be on the job come hell or high water. The customers might be inconvenienced and have to stand in line five minutes longer (sarcasm).

Back to us... it’s raining again tonight. Mom decided to go to the movies. I didn’t want her to go in the rain but she gets like me... just wants to go somewhere. I was going but my head felt like a ton of bricks. Now it feels much better and besides I’ve been looking forward all day to our date.

These are such nice long letters, one dated April 11 and the other April 15. I feel much better now that I know you have three American dollars. I’m afraid if there’s no hope of seeing you before the armistice is signed, that as soon as it is signed I’ll come bag and baggage and park at the pier.

Mom was glad to hear about Warren. You both wrote the same night. He called you in the middle of the letter, he wrote me. And thanks for telling me about Warren. I’ve been worried. He is a bit high

strung as you've probably noticed. He's always been like that. That's the cause of the stammer he has. It was much worse when he was younger. He thinks faster than he can talk. He told me about the medal and oak leaf cluster. I wonder how many more he has added to his score by now. They send them up so often.

Speaking of pictures, Freddie took one of me at Easter. I hate posing for pictures and I wasn't sitting right or smiling to suit him... whatever it was he said I don't remember, but I stuck my tongue out at him and he snapped the picture at just the right moment. Maybe I'll send it to you. No... I just took a look at it, and I can't do it. I'll save it for when you come home. He says he's going to send you an enlargement so you'll go and look for an English girl. How about that?

The story sounds swell... I'm getting the Times every Sunday now. I told you, I believe, that Ralph Martin's article was in last week's magazine section. I'm presuming that is where your article will be published. I forgot to tell you: I'm having a little trouble getting the check cleared, since it's drawn on a London bank. Marguerite is working on it, though, and since it is drawn in American currency she may be able to collect it without having to send it back to you. In the event that happens, you'll just have to buy a money order with it or cable it as you have in the past.

So you take hunches and on a dog named "Billy boy." I'm glad he won. Things like that don't happen to me. I never won anything that I know of. Oh, when I was a kid I carried an egg on a spoon in a footrace and won first prize, a box of candy. I was so tickled. I must have been about eight.

What went on in my mind from the time we kissed and parted in Asheville until the time we kissed and parted in New York? I've been thinking about that ever since I read your letter this afternoon. Let's see... my first impression that Saturday night... I liked you immensely. The time we spent together at Lucille's and at the canteen. I was a bit surprised when you made no effort to get out of the car with the others and I couldn't move unless you did (you had me cornered). I knew you were going to kiss me and suddenly I think I was glad... especially after you kissed me. My mind and heart were conflicted. My heart kept telling me, "This is different, Billee" but my mind was practical... it kept saying, "He's a soldier... he'll probably be shipped somewhere... you'll never see him again." When I was on my way to New York, my mind kept saying, "He's imagined all this and he'll be disappointed when he sees me." I didn't want to go into the station, but when I got to the top of the stairs and saw you looking up at me the fears all vanished and I knew you wanted it as much as I did. The last sentence answers your other question... "When did you realize, finally, that I didn't want anyone but you, ever? Was it in Asheville or New York or after I had gone overseas?" I was pretty sure that night on the terrace that you felt the same way I did but Penn Station erased the doubt that was there.

You convincing me was anything but a poor show. As I've said before, it was almost too good to be true. Your request for every weekend following amazed me. Even now, I smile. I can still hear you saying it, sort of breathless... getting all those weekends in. I thought, "He's taking a lot for granted, thinking he'll want to spend all those weekends with me." I'd be telling a fib if I said I wasn't flattered.

I could definitely tell you were mixed up... wait until we read over these letters... and I didn't help ease that confusion. Everything was so unbelievably wonderful. I took some convincing.

Seems as if I've loved you forever now. Everything seems a bit blurred until Jan. 17, 1942. This is something I don't believe I ever told you. I called Evelyn that evening after seven o'clock to ask her if I could go to the party. She was head of the committee. Somehow or other, I knew I had to go to that party. I never asked to go before. She usually called me but she didn't that night. Destiny must have had a hand in it. We came so near to not finding each other that night. Like you, I have thought for a brief moment what it would be like not ever to see you again. I don't even like to see it written. I like better, much better, to think of the line in your letter, "and I will come back to you just as you left me, in every way." Our faith and devotion through our letters is proof enough for anyone. If it hadn't been meant to be for all time, we would have drifted apart long ago... am I right? The two years have gone quickly. I hope our first two years together don't go that fast. The weeks and the days and the months have dragged but now it seems like yesterday. It's two years ago this week that you boarded the ship that carried you so far away. Soon, very soon I think, it will carry you home, home to me. That phrase I read the other day, "Home is where the heart is," it's true, isn't it? You're my home in that case and I'm awfully homesick, believe me.

Excuse, please, my accusation of "middle-aged spread." Figures don't lie, or do they? You did look heavier in the picture, even Mom said so. Heavy or otherwise, I'll love you just the same. Can we kiss and make up after my teasing you?

Oh it sounds wonderful: "That long honeymoon is just around the corner. I love you, truly more and more each day and I'm missing you even more.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

April 27, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

We are all alone again tonight, you and I. Warren returned to his station this afternoon. And, being alone with you, the ache in our hearts becomes a pain... a sharp, penetrating pain, like it is now.

I'm not wearing a safe face, angel, or wilting under an extreme case of blues. The increasing happiness of our love prevents that.

But, love, I have discovered as you have, doesn't kill the pain of separation in the hearts of people like us. How long before we are blessed with the only cure? I wish I could feel it was tomorrow or next week or next month when I could kiss away your tears and hold you forever.

These nights, Billee, when I try to draw you ever closer, it naturally causes me to bring back our memories.

I have long since covered all the "big" things we did together. In fact, I have relived our biggest moments so often I can go through them all, step by step, without missing a single detail.

Now, I think more of the little things that were, at the time, perhaps insignificant but which during these two years have become so important. They are invaluable because they portray new and unforgettable pictures of you.

It is true I see you more clearly, sitting at the table in the “Y” where I first saw you... in my arms that first night... dancing at Lucille’s... across the table at the Inn... your uplifted face in the moonlight on the terrace... in our corner... at Penn Station for our “hello” and “goodbye.”

Yes, and I see you walking toward me in your white dress, the way you looked when I gave you my ring. Those were some of the “big” things.

The “little” ones?

Well, how I loved to watch you in the house on Sunday, over the newspaper I pretended to read but wasn’t. How I wanted you to be near so I could kiss you “good morning” on the days we were together. Wondering if your mom would approve of me kissing you in front of her and the ladies. Being with you in our corner the first night and thinking how grown up you were for such a baby. Walking near the Inn that Sunday and meeting a man you didn’t want to see. How I couldn’t resist the urge to kiss the tilted nose that fascinated me so much.

Trying to think of the name of the Red Wing manager... afterward thinking it was a queer thing for a couple of people like us to discuss.

Oh, they were so little then, but so big now.

Just a week ago tonight, you were writing to me and the letter arrived today. Hope you are rid of the sniffles by now because before I leave I want an awful lot of loving.

Every once in a while you bound up with an expression like “exploding my top,” which definitely wasn’t characteristic of the girl I left behind. I believe you are picking up a lot of Army slang. Why, I’m holding my breath waiting to hear you innocently use a GI expression that isn’t used in society.

I should have told you this before but hoped it would come gradually. You mentioned Warren finishing his 25 “in no time.” Well, within the last few months the number of missions making up a tour of operations has been raised. It went into effect shortly before Warren started. It was brought up at a recent conference with Gen. Spaatz and his answer was that “it was now up to the commanding officer and flight surgeon to determine when a man is through.” However, the figure has been set at 30 for heavy bombers and 50 for mediums. So, with 15 behind him, Warren is half-way through. Let’s hope the second half will be as easy as the first.

I haven’t been able to have any more pictures taken. But, I’m still trying.

Mail hasn’t been very plentiful in the past week. Had some from Bette, El and Father John, though. Another came from the boys in Italy, who are still having a rough time.

Andy says, with a purpose, that I make the best coffee ever and would like to have some now. So, ‘bye for awhile. I’ll be missing you and loving you and jealous... even if you don’t like it.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

April 28, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

I needed you tonight. What a case of the whim-whams, same as that old “miss you” feeling that we both know so well.



It's a beautiful night just made for us, and a few million others like us, I guess. At least, that's the way I console myself. I got too restless tonight, so after the dishes were finished I donned hat and coat and took myself off to a movie all by myself. I thoroughly enjoyed “The Hour Before the Dawn” with Veronica Lake and Franchot Tone. The setting is England. On the same bill was a short subject called “This is America” depicting the life of a war correspondent. They picked one at random: Kenneth Burns of the Associated Press, I believe. It was interesting. Of course, I thought of you. It showed scenes of him gathering material at the invasion of Africa. No gun or anything but a case of carrier pigeons. That won't be you, will it? I hope you're carrying that rifle with you. I hope you have an opportunity to see the short, since I'm sure you'd find it interesting.

We had three letters from Warren this week. According to yesterday's letter, he just returned from his thirteenth mission. He's homesick. He tries not to show it but he is.

Just like you, I read between the lines and know how he feels about all this.

It's been an unusually long week for some reason and a hard week. I'm glad it's over. Tomorrow will be a hectic day and I should be in bed but then I never do things I should.

Mom says, “You're not starting a letter at this hour of the night?” and she keeps talking. I just sent her to bed so now we're by ourselves.

I just found a nice plan for a house. The magazine belongs to someone else but I'll see if I can get the picture and the plans are shown. The upstairs can be finished with a bedroom, bath and study. There are three bedrooms downstairs, but the plans could be changed a bit. As Mom suggested, we could leave the upstairs unfinished. My sister did that. Now, since the youngest is getting a bit older they are finishing the upstairs. They have two bedrooms downstairs. Plans and dreams again, but now they seem to be near the materialization point.

My sniffles still persist. Must be an English cold. The doctor staying here with his family said I should be in bed but with so many of us at the bank all in the same boat, I don't feel like it. The sun will stay for a few days now and I'll get rid of it. Incidentally, the doctor's young brother was a crew member on a bomber and was shot down over Germany. Sgt. Duke Rosenberg.. he's been a prisoner of war

for several months now. He just recently, this week in fact, received a letter from him written last December. Prompt in getting them out, aren't they?

I heard from Marguerite yesterday and the check is being sent to England for collection. I wish I were a check and they sent me to be collected by a certain S/Sgt. I know. Would you bother to go by the bank and pick me up?

Her sister, the one with seven children, is expecting in July. Nice going, huh? She has five boys and two girls. That's a good percentage of boys. They are a wonderful family. Did I tell you that Tom, her husband, studied for four years for the priesthood, at Seton Hall, too.

I'm very tired... do you mind? I'd love snuggling on your shoulder. Maybe I could fall asleep there and you'd have to put me to bed. Did you ever get so tired you wished for a few minutes you were a kid and your mom or dad could pick you up and undress you and tuck you in? That's the way I feel now.

Goodnight, my dearest, for a little while...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 1, 1944—London

Hello angel,

My chin is a little low tonight. Your letters of April 15 and 18 were the only bright spots in an otherwise dark day.

It started out all right... a beautiful, sunny day and early Mass. But, after I was in the office for awhile, I had the news broken, gently but from what I can see, firmly.

Comes the "big show," the office wants me to be chair-borne, doing deskwork, instead of going in with the invaders. They explain it won't be permanent. Just until they get things organized after the first busy rush.

If they told me I was going to be shot at dawn I wouldn't have been more surprised.

Seems the colonel mentioned it to Bob Moora a few weeks ago but Bob hesitated to tell me, knowing how much I had my heart set on going. Too, he hoped he would be able to persuade the old buzzard to change his mind. Bob knows who can and who cannot handle the job and has made his plans accordingly.

But, the colonel, with the short-sightedness I should have expected, figures I'll be more of an asset on the desk, at the start at least. I don't know why I didn't suspect it because just before and after I went to the correspondents' school, I was put on the desk more and more.

Before the fireworks subsided in the conference between the colonel, Bob and I, I was able to exact a promise to get away from the desk as soon as possible.

Desk! Hell, that's for Bob, Benny and the rest, but not for me.

Speaking of Ben, he's still in Ireland and screaming his head off to get back. Meanwhile, I'm maintaining bachelor quarters. Andy took off this morning for a week with the Air Force. He made another flight last week and Earl figures to make a couple this week. And here I am chained to a desk. Holy cow!

Ranger training, assault training, infantry training... all for what? What an Army!

Oh, well. I suppose it could be worse.

What gets me is that I'm supposed to be flattered with this desk job.

Let's talk about something else, huh?

Mom's letter came today, too. It was swell. She said your morale went up a million percent when I said I was sure we'd be together next Easter.

But how about fulfilling a special request? I would like a "sweater" picture of you. Every one I love shows you in a dress. Do you think you can get glamorous in a sweater for me?

Regarding your "little problem" that you say will hold for now... all I can say is, ok. I have an idea what it might be. That's why I thought we could try and straighten it out together, now. Even if we can't go into it any further, I am glad you mentioned it. If you ever held out on me I would be more than disappointed. So, we'll forget it.

I wish I was with you on your trip to the Biltmore Estate. There have been dozens of places I have been to over here that I would love you to see with me. Like Windsor Castle and it's St. George's Chapel, Winchester and Salisbury Cathedrals, a ride up the Thames to Hampton Court Palace, Devonshire and Dorsetshire in summer, Kent's beautiful flowers, and more. I could go on for pages to list all of the things I've seen and the places I've been to, always wishing for my "tag-along." I'll tell you about all of them one day.

Say, I'll have to know your friend, Elise, better after reading that tribute. You can tell her for me that the "something awfully nice" you did in your time to "rate a guy like him" was simply to love the guy and keep faith with him.

By the way, when I stop in to make love to you tomorrow, remind me to tell you a story about "angel puss."

'Bye, kitten. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 2, 1944—Asheville

Happy May Day darling,

Mondays have been nice here of late. It seems I always get a letter from you. I love it, especially one like today's.

I love you being lazy and having spring fever because I'm sure that's what is wrong with me. We're having gorgeous days and nights, made for us and you aren't here to share them. Everything is

flowering, all the new leaves are out, so fresh and green, and the dogwood are scattered like snow on the mountainsides. This has been the best year for dogwood. Nearly every family has a tree in their front yard, either pink or white.

You've moved. I'd like to see you packing up and carrying downstairs. Better yet, I'd love seeing you packing to come home... oh, pleasant thought.

I don't mind being stood up since it was the dog races. Did "Billy Boy" run again? Somewhere along the line, I have a new name. Marguerite's young nephew started it in the east to distinguish me from his brother Billy, but the name is "Billee-girl" and I notice Freddie calls me that most all the time. Don't know just where he got the idea.

Did you ever feel as though you were sitting on a keg of dynamite? That's me for the past week. Must be "invasion jitters." I'm afraid to turn the radio on and afraid not to for fear I'll miss something. By the time this reaches you, it may have begun already.

Last night, along with "Passage to Marseilles," I saw the captured German film of Dieppe so that made me feel better.

I hope they give Warren a rest for a few days in some different surroundings. He sounded a bit tired in his last letter. He's really had a workout. It sounds like more than his limit. Mom is so anxious to hear what you have to say. She couldn't wait for me to get home so I could read your letter and tell her what you might have to say about Warren. She has a good case of "invasion jitters," too.



Mom, Myrtle (the girl upstairs) and I just had beer and pretzels a bit ago. It made them sleepy so they are off to bed.

I knew about Bette but I wanted to be sure they told you about it since I didn't know the details. Everything seems to be all right. Did Father John tell you how he kidded her? She said they must have "drilled" for it... her appendix, I mean. Father John seems to think he'll spend his vacation having his tonsils out.

Your past week, mentioned in the letter, sounded a bit on the routine side. You sounded a bit restless, but then, aren't we all?

How about a desk job when you come back, or is it no go. Maybe an editor's job... who knows? Anything can happen.

I agree with you about the Lady Astor story. It could have used your touch very nicely. You have that certain "thing." You name it... oomph isn't the word, I know.

I'm going to love hearing about your eccentricities. I have a few... not many... all little things that you might not like.

We've had a captain from New York in the medical corps this weekend. He goes with Myrtle's sister... quite nice, too. He did a lot of work at Seton Hall on Staten Island. He's a surgeon and very brilliant but still very young to have come so far... he's 34. He has served overseas in the African campaign.

Mom is well. We're still housecleaning but we'll be done someday I hope. I'm glad Warren thought to wire flowers. I was just getting ready to order more in his name but I won't now.

A fellow I knew well, that I went through high school with... he used to be in our crowd... is missing in action over Germany. He was the pilot on a bomber... Capt. Clyde (Bill) W. Bradley. A swell fellow, too. I hope he's a prisoner and not anything else. The Lt. Dickinson I mentioned and he were good friends. My goodness, everyone I know seems to be in England.

Incidentally, "Passage to Marseilles" is just as good as "Casablanca" and there is a memory-making song, "Til We Meet Again" that will become as popular as "As Time Goes By."

I hope they hear soon from "Mac." I know how his mother must feel. The mail is very slow coming from the camps over there.

Remember the picture of you taken at Torquay, stretch out so lazily? Freddie wanted to take a picture at Grove Park Inn so that was where we went yesterday. I made him take one of me in practically the same position on the Terrace. I thought they'd be cute, you and me in our album. They have quite a few people up there. Did I tell you President Quezan of the Philippines is staying in a cottage on the grounds with his family?

I must tell you we had an inquiry from a midshipman at Annapolis for a room for he and his bride. It's priceless... I know just how he feels. I have to quote from his letter:

"Would you please send me a list of your accommodations and prices? I should also like to know what facilities are available near your establishment for athletics and other entertainment. My bride and I are not looking for a stereotype honeymoon. Leisure and comfort are our first aims. We want to live, not squander the few weeks we have together before I put to sea."

Short and to the point, and my sentiments exactly. I'm going to love answering that inquiry.

Seems I've covered the news except, as usual, that I'm missing you more than ever with this spring fever weather. Love me and miss me, too. I'm falling asleep... move over. You had all the bed last night.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 3, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

When I think that I have a letter today that you wrote just a week ago tonight with Warren in the same room with you... wonderful service, isn't it? It just brings you that much closer to me.

Since yesterday I've received three letters dated April 19, 20 and 26... making four this week. Incidentally, this makes the 12th letter written in April. You must have spring fever or could it be you're in love? That must be the answer.

266 letters... amazing, isn't it? I'll have to count again and see how many I have. You really broke that figure down... you turned into a statistician for the evening. I can explain October 1942 falling into the minority. That was the month we made the move to Ohio. You're lucky you got five!

The one paragraph has an ominous sound. "The time has come to dispose of things" and "when the time comes to move." By the time this reaches you maybe all that would be for a reason. I think that's what I have... a good case of invasion jitters.

We'll have a time... you reading over your letters and me, mine. What a collection we'll have.

I've said it before, but having you near Warren has meant so much to Mom. My sisters are glad, too, that someone is nearby. As I said, they had no idea he was in combat until I told them, after hearing it from you.

We've waited so long now for the time when we can say, "Let's turn the light out and go to sleep." I know I'll feel the same way for a long time, never quite realizing that our dream has come into being, but I sure would love having the opportunity of getting used to the idea.

But definitely we are going to have a phonograph/radio and I have a Stromberg-Carlson in mind... that champagne taste cropping up again. I made up my mind long ago that that was to be one of our necessities of life. As for collecting records now, the idea isn't so good since we will have to express them and you run the risk of breakage besides the expense. I don't think it wise for me to buy anything else while I'm here. Express charges are pretty high, and I'd rather spend that money on us. As it is, I'll have about ten dollars to spend now with what I'll have to express. My fingers just itch when I see things, though. I'd love to be buying them but we'll save our money and go shopping together, all right?



1940s era Stromberg-Carlson phonograph/radio.

I see you've taken over this "baby" stuff since I told you of my dream. It doesn't sound much like you since I haven't heard you call me that before. Am I so grown up? I hope not.

My goodness, a whole letter and all about Freddie. He'd be flattered if he knew and a little bit worried, too, if he thought he were causing us so much concern.

I couldn't help but smile when you said I was so independent. I don't think I am. I guess it's because I've been more or less on my own for quite a while. This is my seventh year being in the business world. Hope it's not my last. Anyhow, you aren't going to worry anymore about Freddie... there isn't anyone else. You forget I'm a one man woman and my heart belongs to a certain Irishman. So much for Freddie...

Don't be getting feelings like the one that our family will be dominated by women. That just won't do, not at all. I'll keep whatever we get but I do want boys... lots of them.

Benny is nice. We'll have to get together, he and Jane and you and I, and paint New York with striped paint.

I was so glad and Mom, too, to hear of Warren. He doesn't say much of his work but then perhaps it isn't permitted. His missions read like a train schedule. Has he missed any of them? He's more than halfway through his 25. Our prayers are being answered so far. I know he was glad to get the pass. I do hope they have sent him to a rest camp. His letters sounded weary.

You are so good to him... putting his buddy and him up for the night and showing them London. Remind me to give you a special reward. Did I ever tell you how nice you are?

Your week sounded dull but it is necessary as I can see. The soldiers' vote is going to mean a lot. You're really something if you boiled down that stuff from Washington into an understandable, simple form. Maybe I can figure it out now.

Our gorgeous weather still continues. The nights are heavenly. You'd laugh if you could see me stretched out in the chair, my feet propped on the bed. Mom went to sleep so I came in one of the empty rooms so as not to disturb her.

We packed Warren's packages tonight. I hope he gets them all right and in good time. Do you need anything else? Just say the word. Let me send you more cigarettes. Send a request.

Enclosed are two pictures taken after Mass on Easter, so you can see how pretty the orchid was. They aren't too good of me, I don't think. One was caught before I was ready, hence the laugh.

I'm really falling asleep. I'll say goodnight and I'm loving you and missing you more than ever.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 4, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

When we parted after our last date on Sunday, I said I would tell you a story about "angel face." But first, you will have to promise not to repeat it to your children. Your husband and their father would never live it down.

It seems there once was a young 'un of 11. Let's say his name was Billy. He had the unfortunate knack of getting into mischief more often than was good for him... even in school.

His teacher at the time, in the sixth grade, was a nun named sister James Marie. She was a favorite with the boys because it was rather irreverently suspected among them that she was a bit of a tomboy herself when she was young.

The suspicion increased when they learned she had been a playmate of “Bucky” Harris, then manager of the Washington Senators, when both were children in Harrisburg, Pa.

Like I said, Billy was always getting into some sort of scrape and Sister James Marie usually detected him at it, as one who understands boys will.

One day, Billy did something awful... like bringing a snowball into class and slamming against the blackboard. When the good sister turned to the class to fix her eyes on the guilty one, she saw an angelic look of innocence on Billy’s face. All she said was, “Angel face, I want to see you after class.”

Twelve years later, Billy’s brother was ordained to the priesthood. His brother said a special Mass for the nuns in the convent chapel and when Billy showed up, he met Sister James Marie again. She just smiled and said, “Hello, angel face. It’s been a long time, hasn’t it?”

Have you heard that story?

Got another “bit of heaven” today, the airmail of April 27. Oh, how I wish I could have been next to you on that rainy Sunday, just the two of us. Do you know, I have an idea you and I are going to be crazily in love with each other for a long time... and it’s going to be ever so nice.

You said you fell asleep during the afternoon while staring at the ceiling. Moreover, you said it is unusual for you to fall asleep in the daytime. I have a strong suspicion you are just about the “sleepingest” girl ever. Don’t get me wrong. I wouldn’t want to start another war. But those lovely, adorable sleepy eyes are a giveaway.

So, you had another date, and a Saturday night date with someone else at that. Even if it was a mangle, for your information I can get jealous about anything! Mangles, men, women, soldiers named Freddie... anything!

You’ll have to picture me smiling in that last paragraph so you won’t think I’m serious.

Now, about this ice cream question. I haven’t even seen ice cream since I’ve been over here. Some Army camps, mostly bomber stations, have facilities for making ice cream from powdered milk, etc., and serve it once a week.

We won’t be seeing the soda fountain we were supposed to get because the British public put up a helluva howl when they heard about it. It seems they take the viewpoint that if their children can’t have it, why should the Yanks, despite the fact that everything was to be supplied by the U.S. As it is, the machines, etc., have been installed only in hospitals.

I got out of the office yesterday long enough to have a two-hour chat with Ernie Pyle, Scripps-Howard columnist up from Italy, who yesterday was announced as a Pulitzer Prize-winner for “distinguished war correspondence.”

Pyle is a swell fellow. Probably made himself more famous than any other newsman because of his stories of real life in the Army. He knows Ralph Martin well, and worked with him in Africa and

Italy. I did a piece on Pyle which ran on page one today. Tomorrow, I'm getting out for an hour or so again to see a Gen. Saylor, the Ordinance Chief over here. I think maybe he has a fair story. We'll see.

There's a gorgeous moon tonight. Hope you are looking at it and wishing with me.

I love you... truly. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 5, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

I'm weary but here I am anyhow. Get comfortable so I can lay my head on your shoulder. Don't let me go to sleep yet because I want to visit with you. We're having stormy weather... I really got drenched coming home.

Looking out the window, the streets are still shining, catching the reflection of the car lights. Mom is asleep and I'm in one of the guest rooms comfortably seated in an easy chair with my feet propped up on the bed and using my lap for a table.

This has been a busy week and I'm more than glad it's almost over. Next Wednesday we have a bank holiday. It's Confederate Decoration Day... don't laugh. They still hold it as a holiday here.

I was thinking today how worried on edge I was about you two years ago, not knowing if you were on the high seas, bound for heaven knew where. Here I am again in the same state. I know you're probably shaking me and telling me not to worry, that everything will be all right. Please, take care of yourself.

Kaltenborn wasn't so optimistic tonight. He claims Germany is holding so much in reserve.

Evelyn Fragge's sister's husband is in the Pacific... New Caledonia. He wrote and told her to buy two Civic Music Club tickets for the new season. You buy them now for the season that starts in October or November and goes through April... concerts, symphonies, ballets, operettas... whatever they can bring. He told her he wouldn't be there for the first ones but he'd see the others with her.

You know, I took over a man's job at the bank. I didn't know until recently that before Pearl Harbor there wasn't such a thing as a female commercial teller. There are three of us "females" now and everyone seems to think it so wonderful the way we've taken over. The job itself is so simple I don't know what they rave about. The responsibility of the money is something, of course, but so long as you are careful, you get along.

I had the most interesting conversation with one of my customers yesterday, an Australian who is a refugee from France. He and his wife are writers and they lived in France for years. They got over the Spanish border just 24 hours before the German tanks got there. They really saw the fall of France. Very nonchalantly he says, "Of course, my wife and I would have been shot had we been caught since we've been writing against them for years."

The rhododendron is beginning to bloom. It's early this year. We've had perfect weather until today. This is the first rain in two weeks so that's pretty good.

I had a long letter from El this morning. Everything is fine there. She had two letters from Tom the day she wrote it. Annice is talking a little already. I'd love to see them... maybe in the fall.

Is there anything you need? More stationery? I'll be sure and not send the last kind. I looked and looked... they got this that I'm writing on the week after I sent yours. Stationery, except the heavy kind, is scarce. Am I forgiven?

All I've done is chatter. Do you mind? I'm falling asleep and I wanted to write Marguerite but I can't tonight.

I started my First Fridays again today, with the same intention as last time, but they were interrupted so I'm starting again. This time I'm not missing any.

Goodnight, my dearest. I love you so much and my heart has that old ache. Love me and miss me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 6, 1944—London

Hello pretty puss,

Just a variation of your "angel puss," sweetheart.

This afternoon was chiefly devoted to getting caught up on mail and one of the letters was to Mom. In it I gave her the latest report on Warren.

A few hours after I mailed the letter, who should pop up again in London but your kid brother. He is on his way to the Air Force rest home at Southport for a week. Armed with a special pass giving him a couple of days in London, he is parking his bag with me until Monday or Tuesday.

As of today, he has 18 missions behind him. Only 12 to go now! If you haven't heard about the rest home before, it is a place where combat crews, officers and EMs go to take it easy and do whatever their hearts desire for a week. Fliers go there at various times. If nothing extraordinary occurs, a crew is sent there about halfway through its tour. They also are usually sent after a ditching experience in the sea, a crash-landing or something which may shake them up a bit. The accommodations are ideal, food of the best and entertainment galore. Fliers refer to the place as the "Flak Home" since those suffering from jitters as the result of too much nervous strain rest up at Southport. Andy spent a few days there last week, not because he needed the rest but because he was lazy and wanted a few days off.

This will be just a short date, just time for a hello, a kiss and a glimpse of your pretty puss.

The enclosed picture just arrived from a bomber base. That's Earl on the left. We were watching the boys come back from Germany when it was snapped.

Be back tomorrow for a long, long date. 'Bye now. Love to Mom from her two boys.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 6, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Saturday night and I'm all dressed up with no place to go. I don't know why I bothered to clean up but I did... maybe just for you. I'm still in my bedroom. The Hit Parade is going full blast... Frank Sinatra just sang "Poinisiana."

Your letter written last Thursday, April 27 was waiting for me today and I was so happy to see that bit of blue sitting on my dresser.

Before I go any further, let's mess up my lipstick. It looks much too perfect and since you have priority I'll let you do it. Gee, you used to be better than that... getting out of practice! Suppose we try it again.... now that's more like it.

I'm missing you but this is nice, listening to the Hit Parade and writing to you. It isn't like writing... it's almost as if you were here.

You know the little things I remember... you shining your shoes in the kitchen at 195... calling to your mom and asking for a needle and thread... us poring over the map trying to find your brother's camp in California and the kiss you sneaked... the way you looked at me standing in the bus going to the Daly's... or, no... it was to Journal Square and you left your hat in the luggage rack. The way you folded your hands when Mrs. Maser said grace that first Sunday... the way you liked chocolate ice cream. The evening you kissed me goodbye on the corner where Ivey's is... you didn't want me to go to the bus station. Reading the Sunday papers in Lucille's that Saturday morning. I remember sitting in the movie "The Jungle Book" and not seeing very much of it. I liked having my hand in yours and being so close to you. Your falling up the stairs coming from the subway...

I'm afraid you would have shocked our old ladies maybe at first but I think they thoroughly approved of you. You know I don't remember the manager's name now but it was fun trying to remember...

You see, I haven't forgotten anything... none of even the little things. I've gone over them one by one, remembering your every expression, feeling you so near to me. We'll have so many more to share one of these days soon but I'll not ever forget those first things that mean you to me now.

GI expressions... but I've always used that "exploding my top." I didn't learn that from you. Any others I might have picked up came from you... so there.

I think I remember seeing something about increasing the number of missions to 30. I had a long letter from Warren last Friday, written the day he got back, telling me how much he enjoyed the time with you. This friend George said it was like being home, being in your apartment. You are swell to him... I'll reward you special. I breathe a sigh of relief when I see his letters or hear of him through you. I hope the rest of the missions will go as well.

Sounds good that you make good coffee. Sometimes mine is good... and then again... I'm not too consistent and I use the same recipe so you'll be patient with my culinary arts?

I received the clipping concerning the survey. When I looked for bedroom furniture in New York, all the suites I considered had double beds... ok! As for the rest of the survey, I don't know that I ever dressed in the kitchen. Maybe I'm dumb but I don't see the point. I hate pajamas and if the weather

gets too warm, I just shed. I haven't had to do that since I'm in Asheville, and while it got warm in New Jersey, I didn't but in Ohio it got plenty warm enough for that. Does that complete your survey? Nosey, aren't you, but then that's the only way you learn. Funny... you didn't offer any answers.

We're having a thundershower. Nice night to stay in. They are playing "Long Ago and Far Away." "I dreamed a dream and here it is beside me..." Nice song.

Guess I'll say goodnight and love you... you're very close tonight but I'm missing you. It's not much fun making love to a dream, but I'll wait. Until then, a special kiss for being so especially nice.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 8, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

Warren has gone again. He left by train this afternoon for the rest home. I promised to try to get two days off later in the week and spend them with him there but I'm not very optimistic about my chances.

We had a couple of enjoyable days together, despite the fact that I worked during the day and was able to be with him only in the evening. It's odd that I have been with Warren almost as much as I've been with you.

Ben returned from Ireland last night and Andy moved to a hotel so the old homestead is back to normal. When Andy left, he put his wife's picture with those of Jane and you, so she will have company. Her name is Margaret.



Charles with Andy Rooney at Clifford's Inn. London, 1944.

Your letter of April 26 arrived yesterday, the kind of long intimate date I love to receive.

I have a few comments to make after listening to the thoughts that occupied your mind during the time between our farewell in Asheville and reunion in New York.

I loved the way you said, “I was a bit surprised when you made no effort to get out of the car.” Why, you little devil, you practically pinned me down so I couldn’t get out. And you knew... “Of course, you were going to kiss me.” It wasn’t that obvious, was it? Still, you couldn’t expect me to be within inches of those come-hither lips and not draw them to mine.

You put a tremendous amount of pressure on me by saying, “You were so exactly what I had always dreamed about.” When you say it, I believe you, Billee. I want it to be that way because it puts us in the same position. By saying you are everything I ever wanted, I’m just repeating myself.

I do hope and pray I live up to your ideal. Oh, you’ll probably be disillusioned in one way or another but I will try.

This is just like making love all over again, isn’t it? Do you think we will ever outgrow it? I don’t.

You asked me if we wouldn’t have drifted apart if our love hadn’t meant to be for all time. Yes, we would have drifted in Asheville to begin with, Billee. My anxiety to be with you, your anxiety to follow me to New York, our faith... all join in to prove the point. That and our will to avoid temptation.

I called the N.Y. Times office here to check on my story but all they could say was that New York said it was using it without saying when. I’ll add a few dollars to the check when it comes and cable it back.

I’ll be waiting, too, for the enlargements Freddie is going to send me, and you can advise him from me not to hold his breath until I get an English girl. If he’s so interested in them he can do one of two things... come over here and get one himself or I’ll send him one, C.O.D. Meanwhile, he can go on being a good soldier boy.

I’ll be back tomorrow... keep beautiful and love me lots. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 9, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

I’m not crazy. I know I put Saturday at the head of the letter and it’s really Tuesday. I just have Saturday on the brain... if you can call that confusion under my hair a brain.

It’s a beautiful night... not too cold with a bit of haze over the moon for a soft lighting effect. We could make a corner in our glider and look right up at it.

Tomorrow is a bank holiday so no work. I’m going to sleep in the morning, help Mom and then I’m invited out for dinner by my girlfriend Elise, and I think she has a movie planned. I want to show you off, too. I’m taking our album over.

No letter yesterday or today and my face is a bit long as a result... maybe tomorrow. I'll be home and I won't have to wait all day. Your article still isn't in the Times this week.

The rascal you mentioned being in me came to the surface today. Guess that's what caused me to make a purchase... I went looking for Mom's Mother's Day present and bought something for my trousseau instead. You'll see... you'll probably turn me over you knee for my first spanking when you see it.

I went to see "The Man Who Came to Dinner." I had seen it before but enjoyed it as much as the first time. The dialogue is super.

We had letters from Warren yesterday. He said he had received the second oak leaf cluster so I presume he went on the other missions he lacked. He asked Mom for a fruitcake. We'll try and make two and he can give you one. I hope you get some of the fudge.

The girl teller I broke in recently is leaving June 5 to join her husband in California. He's to be stationed there for a while. He was in on Guadalcanal. He still gets a recurrence of malaria so doesn't think they will send him out for awhile. They are just kids of 20, and I'm envious.

A friend of mine told me today that she read in the papers within the past few days that these men who had served overseas in an inactive capacity... that is not "in action..." after 2 1/2 years would be sent home for leave or transfer. Had you heard? You probably won't come under that category since there are so few of you. Anyhow, it sounded good.

I'm yawning here as usual. We both seem to wait until we get to this stage when we write, and we close our letters on a yawn... then we stretch out in bed and start making up dreams before falling asleep. I'll be back soon, after I've had a little sleep. I love you, and miss you more and more as days and nights go by.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 9, 1944—London

Evening angel,

There isn't anything I like to report more than the receipt of three letters in one day.

Being in a mood to spend as much time as possible with you without interruption, I patiently waited until I came home before opening them. It took a great deal of willpower to carry them unopened for several hours, but it was worth it. The letters were those of April 28, May 1 and 3.



Your Easter picture tumbled from the letter I opened first, and I liked the one with the dimple. That just about makes it a lead pipe cinch that our children will have them, too. [These pictures have not been found.] The orchid looked awfully lonesome under your Easter bonnet. I'll have to send two next time.

So, you folks at home have the invasion jitters like the rest of us. I suppose it is natural. That is, for families with men in England. It will happen just as suddenly for us as it will for you; in your case, it will be that little man in Radio City who sits beside a button for 24 hours a day. One day, or night, he will push that button. Bob Hope will be cut off in the middle of a gag. An orchestra will stop playing. A politician's speech will be interrupted and the little man will try to calmly say something like: "It has just been announced that British and American troops have landed on Fortress Europe." Those few words will cause America to stop whatever it is doing, if only for a moment and wonder. That will be the beginning of the greatest military operation in history.

I was interested in your remarks about the movie about war correspondents. I'm anxious to see it because everything isn't always as it is seen through the eyes of Hollywood. Basically, there isn't much glamour in it. I know that for certain.

The mystery surrounding my role in future operations continues. Today I was quietly told to report to a certain office. When I got there, I discovered my correspondent's credentials had to be checked so I could be accredited to Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters. I don't get it. Too deep and too much intrigue for me. I'm just going to sit back and wait.

I also was presented with a list of instructions. One of them said, "Correspondents will not arm themselves with weapons." It also said that in the event of capture by the enemy, correspondents would receive "treatment accorded to an officer with the rank of captain." Well, that's one way to get a commission.

You asked about the possibilities of me handling a desk job at home. Honey, I don't think I was cut out to be a deskman. Not now, anyway. I do the work here in order to alleviate situations. But I would rather be writing. Moreover, I'm not the best deskman in the world. I do it well enough to get by and have the patience essential for it. But I get restless when I see someone do a story on something I know I would do 100% better. My mind is subject to change, though.

"Time on my hands, you in my arms and nothing but love in view." The radio is drifting me back to your arms, sweetheart. Those old songs are best, aren't they?

Radio brings me around to the records I mentioned. After listening to your reasons why it would be impractical to start our library now, I'm ready to agree. There is one thing I'm going to question, however. And that is a house with three bedrooms downstairs. What kind of a house would that be? With a living room, dining room, kitchen and an odd room or two for a library or something, I can't see where three bedrooms will fit on the first floor. Unless it is a rambling estate and I can't see that until I've made my first million.

I've called you by many names, ones that popped into my head as I envisioned you at a particular moment, like "angel," "honeychile," "baby," "kitten," etc. but I'll go on record now as saying if I ever call you "Billee girl" it will be quite by accident. Why? Hmmm, you figure it out.

Getting away from painful subjects... You said it appeared as if Warren might be doing “more than his bit.” You know how I appreciate how you and Mom feel and know just how apprehensive you are about him. But, I want to caution you on one thing. Don’t ever think I, or Warren, or anyone else is going even as much as many others. The worst thing you can do to a flier especially is to make him feel he’s a martyr.

I’m trying to say this in such a way as to make you understand. It is and will be natural for you to give them ideas they may not have. It happens to most fliers, especially those who finish. I’ve seen so many of them practically convince themselves they won 50% of the war alone.

Warren has been exceptionally sensible in that respect, believe me. And you should be proud of him. He has done a lot. But in the time he has done 18 missions, others have done 30. Some go out twice a day. Warren has been fortunate in that he has had only about a half-dozen rough trips. Let’s hope it continues that way. Personally I pray he never sees an enemy fighter or a burst of flak.

I still haven’t heard anything of Mac and the rest. I’m just beginning to worry a bit, too. Before, I was confident but it’s almost three months now and the usual time to report P/Ws is almost up.

So, to bed, sweetheart. Do you know, I’ll be a willing volunteer to carry you to bed whenever you are so tired and lazy. Who’s going to carry me?

‘Bye, sweetheart. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 11, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

No letter today. That’s my theme all week so far and this is the first week like this in quite a few. The result? You’ve spoiled me being so attentive via the mailbag.

I went out to dinner last night with my friend, Elise. Her mother had a two-inch steak done to just the right turn. I don’t think I’ve seen one like that since before the war. I could eat it all over again. Am I making you hungry? We had strawberries and cream for dessert... real luxury. Elise and I went to a movie called “Shine On Harvest Moon.” Pretty good... a musical, so it was a pleasant evening.

We made up for our holiday today. What a morning! I don’t get rattled when I have so many to wait on but I do get a bit sick at my stomach... but I get along ok.

It’s been a lovely day. I went to the drugstore a few minutes ago to get Mom a cold drink. The night is



beautiful. I didn't wear a coat and didn't miss it a bit. I did a little sewing tonight, trying to make something to work in.

I received the Easter week's *Stars and Stripes* You weren't it them... that was the week you were at school.

We had a letter from Warren written May 4. He keeps telling Mom what he has to eat so she won't worry.

We have a budding romance here. One of the girls upstairs... she's in her early 30s... met a chaplain about two weeks ago. He's been overseas to England and Africa and injured himself in Tennessee on maneuvers with the boys so is at Moore General under observation. He's giving her a ring already. They make a nice couple. They're keeping the glider warm. Guess I should go up and let them come in, but they can wait a bit.

Elise told my fortune last night with cards. She said the cards showed more love around me than anyone had a right to, from a blonde or light-haired man. Couldn't be you, could it?

I'm rambling, but I'm missing you this week an awful lot. I guess because there hasn't been any mail. Maybe tomorrow. I haven't had to tell myself that in quite a while.

I'm sleepy and I'd like nothing better than to curl myself up in your lap and have you whisper sweet nothings in my ear until I fall asleep. Our corner looks lonely and a bit vacant.

Oh, they tell me you'll be allowed 40 days to go back to your civilian job after you are mustered out. They reckon that will be long enough... I don't think so.

Goodnight... I love you and miss you so very much.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 14, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

This is one time when you will really have to love me in order to say, "Yes, I forgive you."

Why? Because it is the first time I've come to call on you since Tuesday. You will have to agree that it isn't a very good display by one who is as much in love with a curly-headed turned-up-nosed angel as I am.

When we say goodnight, however, I'm sure I'll be loved enough to make up the deficiency.

Speaking of love, Billee... yesterday, Earl asked me a question seriously, which made me use only a few seconds to consider and then give a forthright answer to.

The question: "Do you feel you have changed since you have been away and do you believe Billee has changed in the last two years?" He asked the question because he had been thinking of himself and his wife and I know he doesn't mind me passing it on to you.

My answer: Yes, I'm sure I have changed in some ways but they are so insignificant as to make them scarcely noticeable. I feel that I am essentially the same now as I was when I left with a deeper

appreciation of you and a much stronger love. Moreover, I don't believe you have changed one bit insofar as keeping the same lovable characteristics I hold dear.

Whenever it is that we find each other's arms again, I know we will recognize each other, as it were. If anything, I believe our separation has caused us to be welded together more strongly and has certainly made us want to never be separated again. I've always felt that without ever talking about it, I think.

Yesterday put me back in the Women's Page department, with a story written as a first annual report on the WAC over here. The Corps, incidentally, celebrates its second anniversary tomorrow and I've been assigned to attend a review and dinner at Supreme Allied Headquarters. There will be more brass there than there is in a barroom rail.

I began my day off today by going to Mass and confession afterward. Tomorrow is Mother's Day and my communion will be offered for our mothers.

This afternoon I sat in on a concert in Hyde Park by the U.S. Army band, just over from Washington. Good, too.

Later, Andy, Ben and I went to the "dogs" and, honestly, I finally got some of my money back. In fact, I'm ahead of the game now. My winnings were nine pounds (\$36). Most of it came when I picked a pair of pups named "Sensation" and "Lifted Lid" to finish one-two; they did, and paid off nine pounds and 10 shillings for my six-shilling wager.

I didn't pick them because of their names this time, but rather because I thought they were good dogs. Andy and Ben, meanwhile, both dropped the two pounds we always set as a losing limit. Luck of the Irish!

I'll be back tomorrow, sweetheart, for more loving. Mind?

'Night. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 15, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Seems a long time since I had a date with you but I've had so much to do and no time. Mom hasn't been feeling too good and that doubles my work.

Friday I wanted to write but we had a lot of ironing so that's how I spent the night until twelve o'clock... and then I was too tired for anything but bed. I came home early Saturday and we cleaned our house from top to bottom. Then I went to a movie and to bed.

Sunday I helped Mom as much as possible and we even planted a little of the garden... some five rows. We went to the late movie as a way to top Mother's Day off. Warren's roses came early Sunday.

I hope your face is a bit lifted by now and you have received a little more satisfaction from the colonel and Bob Moora as to your part in the coming "show." What a dirty trick, after promising you so long

ago that yours would be an active part. They're really turning down something good. I'll bet there isn't anyone on the staff who has had as much training. I suppose he knows... the colonel, I mean... what he's doing but it seems to me as much experience as you have would be more of an asset at the scene of the action. Don't be too downhearted. Maybe things will work out for the best. They usually do.

I'd like to have seen you having it out with the colonel. I can just see that chin stuck out.

I know too how much you've been looking forward to taking an active part. In the long run, perhaps what they have mapped out for you is just as important but it doesn't satisfy you inside, I know. As much as I'm glad you aren't going in on the "first push" I'd rather have you happy and at peace with yourself.

By now you must know the awful truth that I'm anything but photogenic. Something happens to me when a camera and I come face to face. The very few pictures I've had that were halfway decent were taken when I wasn't looking. Could be you're prejudiced, since "Mr. Photographer" took them. He does better on buildings and landscapes... he hates taking pictures of people. I'll just keep trying and maybe one day I'll really take a picture. Who knows? Stranger things than that have happened.

So now you want a "sweater-girl" picture? For you, I'll do my very best. I've given up wearing them since I've been working in the bank except with a jumper. You get that "all over look" enough without wearing a sweater, if you know what I mean. So for you I'll don a sweater or take the jumper off. I hope I can go swimming Sunday and if so I'll send you a little "cheesecake..." is that right? Then I can be your pinup girl.

I wouldn't be surprised if you did know my problem... what a guy. I'll tell you all about it when I see you, some rainy evening when we're curled up in our corner.

This will make you smile. My hair is getting a bit long. I'm trying to find the courage and the time to have it cut. Yesterday it was a bit on the unruly side so I was having Mom braid the top of it to keep it out of the way before I did the gardening. Mom was telling Freddie what a cute little girl I was. She says, "Charlie thinks she's cute now. He says in his letter, 'God, I love her.'" She thinks you're wonderful, as I do.

This is another story that I didn't hear... "angel face" is good. The one I heard was about you and Al rolling the inkwells up and down the aisle. Seems to me that little boy's name was Charlie and not Billy. How about that... changing his name to Billy. Those poor nuns must have had a lot of patience to put up with a little demon like you. I've heard a lot about little "angel face." I don't care... I hope ours take after you in every way.

I never sleep in the daytime. I really have to be knocked out. The lights in the studios and the sun in outside pictures make my eyes look sleepy.

So, no ice cream in all this time? I always think of you when I see chocolate ice cream. We'll have it every day when you come home.

Your interview with Ernie Pyle sounds interesting. He's one of Mom's favorites. He's seen quite a bit at the front. I nearly always read his column. You really have a long list of interviews now.

No word from Warren since the middle of last week.

Guess I've told you all the news. I've missed and needed you so... funny how much I keep loving you. That old "miss you" feeling gets a bit deeper and sharper.

Go on loving me always...

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 15, 1944—London

Hi lovable lady,

And a happy Mother's Day to the girl who will one day be known as the mother of the best pitcher in baseball.

I've been surrounded by women all afternoon but I wouldn't trade a squeeze of your hand for all of them. After Mass this morning I went with a press party, most of which were women, to Supreme Allied Headquarters where a couple of generals reviewed some WACs on parade. The review was part of ceremonies marking the second anniversary of the WAC. The girls looked good. You have to give them credit for being hard to beat on parade.

In the evening, the party were guests of the WAC officers at a dinner. I can say truthfully that the dinner was the best I have had in many months. Yes, the WACs apparently are good cooks, too. I have a souvenir menu I'm sending in a separate envelope.



Dixie Tighe.

My companions during most of the day were Dixie Tighe of International New Service, Ruth Cowan of A.P. and the WAC public relations officer, Capt. Henriette "Hank" Horak. Dixie

is always good company. She must be in her late 40s but manages to look and act like a prematurely gray-haired woman of 30. [In 1944 she was 39 years old.] She was with me when I covered my first Air Force story in January of last year. Her husband, incidentally, is the London Daily Express correspondent in New York. There is an unusual paradox: he's a Briton in America and she is an American in England.

Getting away from the WACs... and I hope I can from now on... the office developments for invasion coverage remain clouded in mystery.



Ruth Cowan of the API was the first accredited female war reporter for the United States Army.

Since he returned from Ireland, Ben has not been reinstated on The Desk. Instead, he works out of the business office mostly, attending to details and preparations for the circulation of papers on the Continent. He doesn't like it and together with an increasing desire to get home it's making him rather unhappy. I thought my homesickness for you was bad.

There was a possibility of him going to New York and organizing a news bureau for us but the idea died more or less and Ben's spirit died with it, I think. He was to be the first to go since he as been overseas the longest and married besides.

I heard yesterday that Ralph Martin was in New York with several of the men from Algiers. That may mean they are getting ready to fold up the paper down there.

As you can tell, I didn't get a chance to visit Warren at the rest home. I could have gone yesterday but the trip is so long I would only have been able to spend a few hours there before catching a London-bound train.

Mentioning Warren reminded me to pick up a wrist band for his watch tomorrow. He bought it last week but alterations for size has held it up for a week. It is a metal band, I think he said. It's worth four dollars so it must be good.

Leaving you now, and loving you lots. 'Bye, infant. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 17, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

About two years ago now you were first setting foot on Irish soil and we were still wondering where you were. I was feeling the first real "miss you" ache, trying to get used to it. Funny thing... I'm still trying.

I love weeks like this. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday... letters. The ones yesterday and today were written May 6 and 8, bringing us good news of Warren. You're so good to him. Remind me to love you a little more. Mom was more than pleased to hear of his rest. By the way, have you ever had a furlough, other than the one in October of 1942? You've never mentioned another in your letters.

When you, Andy and Ben come home we'll all have to get together... Jane, Margaret and me. Let's paint New York with striped paint... do it up right.

Now listen, "angel puss," what do you mean I "had you pinned in the car?" I was next to the door, yes, but everyone got out the other door and I was waiting for you to move. Don't forget, there were four of us and we were packed a bit close. Fine thing... I had you pinned down so you couldn't get out. Only kidding... but it was that way, wasn't it?

You're probably in for more than one let-down where your "ideal" is concerned but we can take it. I'm anything but perfect but I'll do my best to be the best Mrs. K. there ever was. We'll get along, don't you think?

I wouldn't be surprised if Freddie didn't find an English girl or one from some other Allied country very soon and I won't be sorry. He's a swell fellow, as nice as they come, but he spends too much time here.

It's another lovely night, just made for a long walk or dancing in the moonlight, if there were a moon, or just being together.

Did I tell you Mom wants to go to New York in the fall? November. I hope we'll both have to go to meet you. I gave you warning before. You're going to have just time enough to change your mind before I whisk you down that aisle at St. Al's.

I haven't had a letter from 195 in about ten days. I'll have to drop a line or two. Hope no one is ill.

Mom sent me to town tonight to get oranges for the morning and I went to a movie... "Heavenly Body" with Hedy Lamarr and William Powell... a light comedy and a good diversion. After seeing "A Guy Named Joe" I'm spoiled for movies, it was so wonderful.

Notice the fireplace in the picture. It's in an inn in Scotland. Gorgeous... that isn't the right word but the fireplace is just right. When we make our first million let's build a cabin in the mountains somewhere with pine walls and a fireplace like that. Rustic but practical... a place to swim nearby... an outdoor fireplace. The kids will love it, don't you think?

I came home very early... a little bit after nine. I've pressed some things and now I have to wash this mop of hair I have. I've been braiding the top this past week. Neat, but hard on Mom since I'm not apt at the art. You see, we just have to have boys. I can't tie pretty bows or braid hair... all the things that little girls need.



Your article wasn't in this week's Times. The check was sent back to London... whether or not they will contact you I don't know. They may just collect the money from the bank. Strange to me that they couldn't collect it though the Guaranty Trust Company in New York since they have an account there, instead of going through all this.

I'm getting sleepy and have to get up a bit earlier in the morning since I'm going to Mass... it's Ascension Day, you know.

Two years and four months ago we were sitting in Lucille's or maybe dancing to "You Made Me Love You" and you were singing it in my ear... it tickled, too, but I loved it.

I was saying goodnight... love me, darling. Here's a special goodnight kiss... sorry, no lipstick on tonight.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

Say hello to Ben and Andy. I'm jealous of them that they can be around you and I can't.

May 17, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

The sun, moon and stars fell on Ben today. He is virtually assured of being in New York within a couple of weeks to open a bureau for us there. Unless something goes wrong with the simple routine of having his orders go through channels, he will be on his way.

Yes, naturally I'm envious but I would rather see him get it than anyone else.

I don't know the complete details behind the trip except that Ben vows he won't come back here. His orders will put him on detached service for an indefinite period. Following a talk with the colonel, Ben said it was intimated that the job would be worked on a rotation basis but there isn't anything definite on it.

So, don't be getting false hopes. Just sit tight until I can talk with the right people and sound them out on it. Both the colonel and our executive officer, went on a trip after conferring with Ben and won't be back until the end of the week.

I'm not looking through rose-colored glasses on this one. It sounds too good and with my luck... well...

I don't have to describe Ben's feelings after being here for 28 months and away from his wife. It is even hard for him to talk coherently.

The news came smack on top of two letters from you. I certainly needed them today. They were those of May 5 and 6. I wanted to be near you so badly I just pressed my lips to the kisses you sent on the 6th. And, incidentally, they were luscious. I may be out of practice but I can still taste my special brand. Send me more...

I loved our Saturday date on the 6th so much I read it at least five times before I got home, and twice after. I wonder if you know how much it means to hear you remember those "little things" you recalled. Yes, I know you do.

How many times I wondered if I would ever hold priceless those comparatively insignificant moments, I don't know. When I was in school, I thought those memories would never be equaled in importance. Girls do change minds, don't they?

I'm surprised you didn't remember the name of the Red Wing manager. It was Tony Kaufman. You're slipping, kitten.

Now, about those double beds... I'm all for 'em, as you know. But, suppose you are angry with me and kick me out? Maybe we should have twin beds in a guest room, just in case. I know you can work up a fearful temper. I think it would be a good idea for me to have private accommodations when, and if, I have to tip-toe home late some night. What do you think? I'm afraid to listen!

You said you didn't get the point about women dressing in the kitchen. I don't either, so we're even.

I don't know why you should dislike pajamas. I think you would look scrumptious in white silk 'jamas. If it got too warm, you could always shed top or bottom or both. Me, I favor pajamas, winter and

summer. But they have to be light, both in color and material and I like dark colored dressing gowns like the navy-blue one I'm wearing now.

Of course, you know what I think of women who wear steel curlers to bed and cold cream on their faces. And I don't like women who wear nightgowns or negligees at the breakfast table. One last dislike... women who acquire five pounds for every year of married life.

Do you think I'll find a girl who will agree with me on all those things? Okay, okay... I've got one.

Billee, I'll be back every day until I can get some kind of news on this New York business. Don't get all hot and bothered, over-optimistic and stuff, now. Kiss me? Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 18, 1944—London

Evening angel,

No word about the affair surrounding Ben's trip to New York and the establishment of the bureau there. Seems the colonel took all the information with him when he left yesterday. Here is the story from the beginning. I should have made this part of last night's letter in which I broke the news of Ben's luck.

Several months ago when the African edition sent a man to New York to file special news of the home front, we proposed a similar idea but the colonel said it couldn't be done. Then, as in the present case, Ben was regarded as the logical candidate because of his desk experience and his longest overseas service.

The idea died down until a few weeks ago, when Gen. Osborn, Special Service chief in Washington, was over here and the plan was submitted to him. He okayed the scheme and told the colonel to work on it. It was done on the q.t. until everything was about set and then yesterday he sprung it on Ben. All Ben knows is what his job will be, but nothing about the possibility of someone joining or replacing him later. Once home, he definitely doesn't want to be separated from Jane again. He says if they order him back he'll try to get a transfer. I don't know whether he will or not but I doubt it. If he is ordered back I'm fairly sure he will come, as much as he will dislike it.

Let's forget about "miracles" for awhile, shall we?

Your letter of May 11 came today. You sounded so lonely. It was because you hadn't received any mail for a week. Sorry... I never like to see that beautiful face of yours marred by a frown.

You made me terribly hungry just listening to your dinner with Elise. If your heart was in the right place, you would have saved part of the steak and sent it to me.

Here's one for the election records... I received a ballot for the N.J. primary today. The election was held two days ago!

I got a package, too, from the mother of a fellow I knew in Croft. He is a Jewish boy whom I met over here more than a year ago but who shortly afterward went to Africa. If I haven't told you the story already... It seems his mother is the usual worrisome type and was afraid of her son going into

combat. Actually he was in a security battalion which always remained near headquarters. I wrote a few times, assuring her the kid was all right and probably never would see combat. That was the gospel truth until today, when, with the package from his mother came a letter from him headed “a foxhole in Italy.” I don’t know what to tell her now.

Darling, you asked if I needed anything. More stationery is about all. I’m down to the last of this. The blue stationery you use will be swell if you can get it.

‘Bye... be back tomorrow. Love to Mom, and an hour-long kiss for you.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 19, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

What a lovely surprise waiting my arrival... a package and a letter. Womanlike, I had to open the package first. It’s lovely. I’m quite proud of it. You see, it’s the second... no, the fourth thing you picked out yourself for me... the perfume, the Easter rabbit and the orchid in New York. You must know I don’t like bracelets that dangle... this is just exactly the right size. I almost missed the note enclosed. I picked up the box again to see if there was anything else and there it was tucked in the top of the box. It’s not my birthday or anything but that’s what makes it such a lovely surprise.

Eight long pages to your letter of May 9... just ten days ago and making the fourth letter this week.

The invasion jitters are something awful. I still have them. With the new offensive under way in Italy, I keep saying “any day now.” I’ve just been listening to a round table report from NBC announcers in London, those that are to go in with the troops.

In the picture concerning the war correspondent... the battle scenes were supposed to be Signal Corps pictures... maneuver pictures.

I wondered about the prospect of your being armed so that question is answered. I don’t want you to have a commission if it has to be from eating sauerkraut. I’d much rather have my staff sergeant. I can’t help but get frightened inside at what the future holds as far as the invasion is concerned, but I know you’d be terribly disappointed not to be a part of all that.... that you have spent so much time training for and not to be in with those men you have met and been friendly with. I’ll just do my part over here for you and all the rest.

I’ll find the floor plan again of the home I saw and send it to you so you can see it, too. It does ramble a bit but not into an estate.

I like “kitten” best and “honeychile” because I can hear you calling me those names. The “angel” I don’t remember and the “baby” I only saw on a telegram.

I suppose Mom and I are a bit prejudiced where Warren is concerned and what he is doing, but I can see where you are right. I haven’t commented on how much he’s doing. I don’t know about Mom since I don’t know what kind of letters she writes him but I can see your point. It’s a little bit hard for us to understand, Charles. I don’t know how to explain exactly but you’re over there near the enemy

and you come in such direct contact with those who are doing the fighting. All we have is what is portrayed through Hollywood and what writers like you tell us. It isn't so much when you come right down to it. Be patient with us and we'll try to understand and act accordingly.

I've been wondering about Mac and crew, but surely all of them couldn't be lost so maybe the reports are slow in coming in.

I'm a weary sweetheart again but this time I've really had a workout. You may remember what a lot of ground we have around here. Before, we had a man that came around regularly and did the yard work but he cut us off his schedule since we had so much ground. I've tried and tried to find someone but no luck, so it was a question of whether to buy a cow and let her graze or else tackle it myself; so of course I did the latter. The whole front is done now. It looks a little more like 412 Merrimon and less like a cow pasture. I'll survive, I guess. The trouble is I'm afraid you'll find me looking like Charles Atlas or one of those Amazon women... all muscle and shoulders. Heaven forbid. You'll have to hurry home.

The bracelet brings back lovely memories. I could shut my eyes and see you putting it on my arm. Mom did the honors. It is so like something I'd imagine you buying for me.

I love you more than ever. Remind me to give you an extra special loving for my present.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 19, 1944—London

Hello sweetheart,

I have all the information it will be possible to get on our N.Y. bureau... and to keep you always informed on what is taking place, here 'tis...

The plans, as they are now and which are always subject to change, are for Ben to leave within a week or two to establish the office in New York. He is likely to stay there. After about two months, another man will join Ben to form a two-man office. This second man will be the first of the "rotators." He will stay about two months and return to London, being replaced in N.Y. by another man.

The colonel came back this afternoon and when I tackled him on the subject, he said he could not say whether or not the plan is definite. He said it was hard enough to get one man to N.Y. and we'll have to wait to see how higher-ups feel about the rotation. He couldn't say who would be included in the rotation and in what order, either.

So, while it won't be easy to do, let's forget about the whole thing until something definite takes place, shall we? Let's just forget anything out of the ordinary has happened.

Meanwhile, I'll be doing what I can, even though I won't talk much about it.

There isn't much point speculating on these things in the Army. No one individual is ever considered. I can say this... if the rotation system goes into effect I won't be any farther down the list than No. 5. That includes three men who have been over here longer than I have and Bob Moora who came in a

few months later. The other three are Bud Hutton, with three years including service with the Canadians, Mack Senigo, the sports editor who came two months before me, and Hodenfield, who like Ben came in Jan. 1942.

So, we'll keep our fingers crossed and pray everything turns out for the best. I'll be back tomorrow to make love to you, instead of this. 'Night. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Almost forgot to mention the pictures. The one in which you made that face is right out of this world. Wow! Almost needed a drink after I saw it. I liked the other two, though. You look like you were acting "snooty" about something. May I repeat... that I can take better pictures than those with my feet. What does that guy use for a camera, anyway? 'Bye love. C.

May 20, 1944—London

Billee dearest,

You have concluded that I am getting impatient. That conclusion is almost correct, with one exception. I am not "getting" impatient. I have been since our arms slipped away from each other, and will be until they are locked again.

The admonition, and I love you for it, was contained in a letter you wrote April 23, but which just reached me because you hadn't addressed it to "Stars and Stripes" and consequently confused the postal boys for awhile.

I'm thankful it wasn't entirely lost because it was a precious date, Billee. You were missing me after two days in bed with a cold, and obviously doing quite a lot of thinking. Reading "between the lines" of my letters, you said I was getting as impatient as you, and that it "wasn't good." As I said, I have been and will be impatient where you are concerned, but never for anyone or anything else.

My life, my work and my ambition surrounds you. There isn't anything to remove you from that position even for a second. I know love, and I couldn't do anything to mar it without branding our love and faith false. Billee, I can understand the times when you thought you had lost me and couldn't seem to find me anywhere. It is the "coming back," or the finding of one again that burns love in our hearts.

I haven't ever lost you, Billee. Of that I am certain because I can feel the warmth and security of your love by just pausing to think of you. It has been like that the whole time we've been away from each other. It is what causes loneliness, aches of remorse. And you can no more change that than you can hold back a tide or stop time. You may try a million and one "chin up" formulas, but they don't begin to make suitable substitutes for the real thing.

To say you aren't "too good at putting it in writing" is a vast and gross misstatement. I can't tell you how much or how well you tell me everything. I can only wait until I can prove to you the unselfish love I have for you. So, please let me be impatient for all of those things... your love, your smile, your lips, your arms. And be assured I am solely impatient for those that are yours. I can wait from now

until 1999, if necessary. There isn't a guarantee I'll be sane but I'll wait. Moreover, don't let anyone ever tell you that our love isn't the strongest and most faithful ever.

There is an "off the record" with Gen. Eisenhower coming up Monday. Do you think I should ask him to take the wraps off the invasion and get it started? I'll tell you about it... the conference, I mean.

During the excitement of Ben going home, I forgot to tell you about the ballot I received on Thursday. It was for the New Jersey primary election that was held two days before. Some service. I squawked loud and long, not for myself particularly, but for anyone else affected by it. The ballot was mailed April 26, which apparently tosses it into the laps of the postal people who are ordered to transport that stuff by air. My complaint went by cable to Washington which, by return cable, has asked for all particulars pending an investigation.

Today... day off... I caught up on some research I've been working on before going with Andy to see the Lunts in "There Shall Be No Night." A marvelous show. It played New York for a long time before the Lunts came here to do it.

Big raid on Berlin yesterday. Wonder if Warren was in it? I imagine he was since a strong force was involved. The new attack in Italy goes well. In fact, yesterday's news was the fall of Cassino after how many months of siege? Good news in the Pacific...

All good news. Never seems to be any bad, but where are we?

I'm taking you to bed with me tonight. I need your head on my shoulder and your hand in mine. 'Bye for a little while. Love to Mom

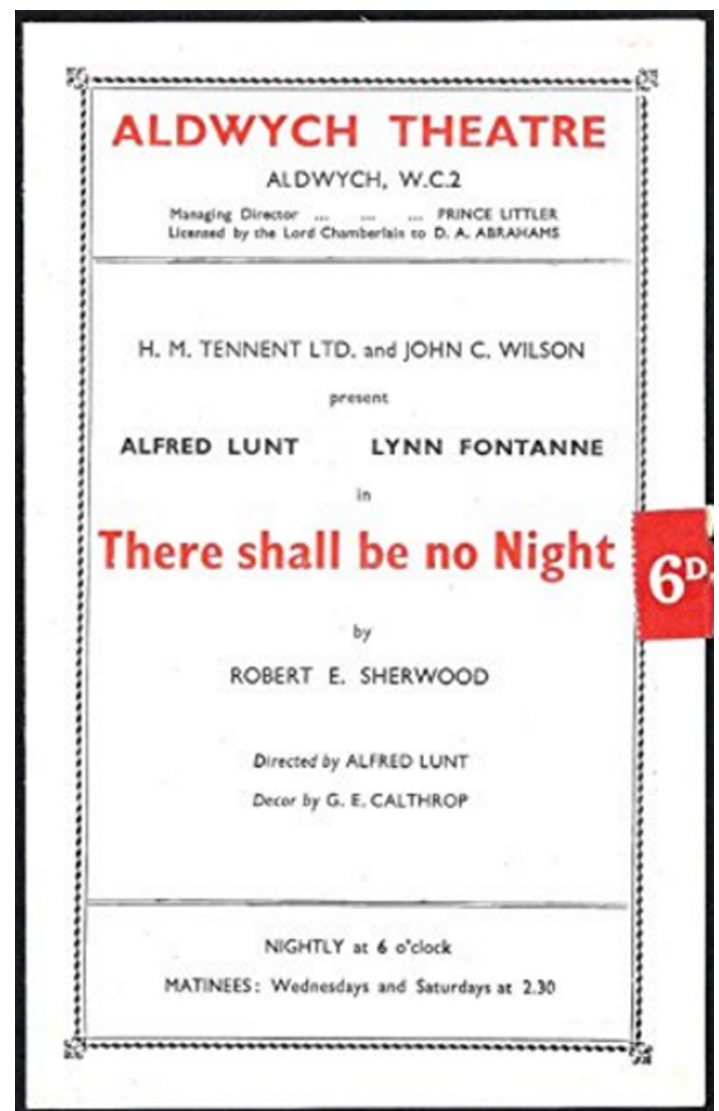
All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 22, 1944—Asheville

Hello darling,

Nice way to start the week off, to find a letter waiting for me today. Now I should be complaining because you didn't write from Tuesday until Saturday after five letters and a surprise package finding their way to my door last week. Fine thing. As long as you just don't "neglect" me I'll love you.

Earl is asking questions now. First it was my boss but since it's Earl I won't get mad. Our love hasn't changed except to grow deeper and stronger. As for other changes, we'd be fine individuals if we didn't change a bit from one year to the next. I've grown up a little more you might say. Being away



This play, originally produced in New York in 1940, was about the Russian invasion of Finland. When the Russians joined the Allies, the play was revised to tell the story of the German invasion of Greece. The Lunts toured with it throughout the war.

from home nearly a year made a difference, but that isn't important. It isn't as if we had been married. I mean for any length of time... enough time to really know each other and all the little things. Then, you are apt to find changes if any to be a bit more important. I'm afraid this doesn't make too much sense, but maybe you'll know what I'm driving at. We love each other. We want to be Mr. and Mrs Kiley and raise a ball team of little boys and spend the rest of our lives together... that's what's important to me. How soon? Well, any day now and I'll be ready for all the little changes, whatever they might be.

I liked, or rather loved, your answers. Did he seem to think it all right? How long since he and his wife have been together?

Seven and a half months... nine months now nearly since Dorothy Jean made her "entrance." It seems like yesterday when I picked up the phone that Sunday A.M. and Al said excitedly, "It's a girl." Who does she look like? Darned if I know. El seems to think she favors Al.

I've been looking for a white album for your god-child's pictures. Nothing but the best. So far, I haven't had much success. They are as scarce as hen's teeth now. I imagine that when we get together there will be a lot of rearranging with our pictures so that they will be chronologically in order. Some are dates, others are not, and you will know better than I. It would be nice, too, if we could find a large enough one that all the pictures would fit... that is, those relating to your service overseas. We don't have many of you taken in the states so we could just have it covering your service with Uncle Sam. The way I have these now is only temporary... just so they are in some kind of order and easy to handle.

Playing the "dogs" again... and what luck! We won. Hope you had some fun on it. Bet you treated the boys... I hope so. Have you won back... oh, yes, I remember you said you were ahead now. It sounds like fun but my luck isn't so good on things like that.

The WACs are really on a recruiting drive around here. They'll be snatching us off the streets first thing I know. I hope you had a good dinner. I guess there are quite a few of them over there now. Wish I were there. Bet you I'd have been there by now.

Yesterday was a busy day. We had twelve for dinner so you can imagine. I've been going to early Mass, but I had to stay up until two a.m. to put five soldiers to bed. Now don't get excited... one of the U.S.O. centers in town reserved rooms for five from Camp Croft and they didn't show up until that time. I was practically paralyzed but managed to show them their rooms. Everyone was from New York.

We had a private from Moore General as a guest of the Benson family that stay here (a mother and three daughters). He served in Africa for eight months until he was wounded. He'll be discharged very shortly. He told us quite a bit yesterday, a lot about the French Moroccans and how they saved the day at Oran. He told us how they cut the Germans' ears off and put them in baskets they carried on their shoulders. The French Moroccans, not the Yanks. He refuses to salute officers. He said he didn't care what they did to him, but he hadn't seen one yet worthwhile saluting. He told, too, how much the *Stars and Stripes* meant to them on the front lines, as much as mail from home. They

practically stampeded the distributor. He was in a hospital in England some time before being brought to the states.

Did I tell you in my letter the other night about the talk the chaplain, Reba and I had about England? He said to ask you if you'd ever been around the Piccadilly Underground. It seems they snatch the soldiers right off the street. I assured him that I didn't think you had. He was telling us about the English girls and how bold they were. How about that? I'm beginning to appreciate those three dates you had. This chaplain has served about 13 years in the Army. He's been put into limited service now because of an injury.

I had a letter from Warren written from the rest camp. He was enjoying the change of scenery and enjoyed very much the time spent with you in London. That's all the mail we've had from him last week.

Mom is well. We're still very busy getting the house in order for the coming season. They are still working on the kitchen. What a mess everything is in.

A batch of *Stars and Stripes* arrived today, with the Birthday Edition. I demand a rewrite job on the "minutes." They failed to even mention your name. Now how about that? I know you don't mind, but as long as you've been there they might have mentioned you somewhere. Who wrote it? Did you? It doesn't sound like you, though. The article concerning the correspondents is swell.

I want to write to El so I should close. Mind if I linger a bit for a goodnight kiss and a whisper... "hurry home."

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 22, 1944—London

Sweetheart,

We have lots to talk about tonight, so cuddle up a little closer and look beautiful.

My role in forthcoming operations has changed considerably. In fact, it has changed for a lot of us. We had a conference this afternoon... the colonel, Bob and five others including myself. It concerned our plan of operations and this is it.

About 30 men from editorial, circulation and business offices will move with our invasion forces and set up a headquarters in the field as quickly as possible. Capt. McNamara, the *Stars and Stripes* adjutant in the business office will head the first detachment of eight men. I'll go with him to get the editorial side of the plan organized. The circulation manager will also be with us to start papers rolling on delivery.

A second detachment of eight, including Earl and Andy, will follow us after a few days. The rest will come later, a week apart. Bob will stay where he is to head the home office. Bud goes with the Air Force, Hodenfield with one of the Army headquarters and Phil Bucknell with the airborne troops.

In short, it will be my job to investigate newspapers or publishing houses wherever we go and determine how quickly we can move a full force from London to "wherever" we go and launch a

continental edition. Capt. McNamara will furnish the necessary “brass” to expedite business transactions. Meanwhile, I’ll be filing stories whenever I can.

The group picked to go, 30 in all, were taken from the various departments to form a unit separate from the one in London. We will move shortly, I imagine, to a staging area and wait...

The new arrangements will not affect my status where the New York bureau is concerned. I willingly took the job as the editorial “executive” only after a promise to pull me back when my turn on the rotation comes along. That is, if the rotation is eventually approved.



The “advance” Stars and Stripes team to cover the D-Day invasion: Front row L to R: Chalres, Walter Newfield, James Grainey, Leonard Ruder; back row L to R: Francis Jackson, Capt. William McNamara, Jacob Miller and Peter Hansson.

So, your soldier-boy is going to see the war after all. And don’t worry, please. When we move from London I’ll keep our dates as often as I possibly can. If there is a lull once the show gets under way, you’ll know I’m pretty damned busy. I figure to be just that for the first few days, anyway.

No “whim-whams,” promise? And I’ll repeat my promise to pin that Easter orchid on. In fact, it may be a Christmas orchid. Who knows?

Andy is as eager as I am. He says, if his wife only knew he was going “to war” she would have all faith in Allied power.

I began getting things in shape this afternoon and will finish tomorrow. Since the rent for our apartment comes due this week, in advance, I’m moving to a hotel with Andy. Ben, meanwhile, is getting one of the other boys to stay with him until he leaves. Ben has your address and will call you from New York after he gets his feet on the ground.

I cabled another \$100 to you today. Another “century” for the “kitty.” I haven’t received the check from Marguerite but when it comes (hope it’s soon) I’ll add \$25 to it and send it back via the bank.

I don’t know what the hell has happened to the story. I checked with the Times again today and they maintain New York is at fault. Oh well, if they don’t run it before D-Day, they can start a fire with it.

Here I am going on and on without mentioning your letter of May 9 which came today. I have received later ones before, but it was a nice date. Your face was beginning to get long, as you put it, because mail was not forthcoming. A couple of days after that, it was very long. Don’t cry, darling.

I wanted to check on Warren today but didn’t get a chance. I want to tell him what’s cooking so he’ll know. They went to Berlin over the weekend and I’m anxious to know if he went.

You wanted to know if I heard anything about a leave or transfer of duty “after 2 1/2 years overseas.” No, I haven’t. But I’m hoping my rotation serves the same purpose.

Kiss me and hold me tight... and love me lots. ‘Night and love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

May 24, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Another bit of sunshine to brighten my day. What would I do without you? I don’t want to know... just keep on loving me.

Wouldn’t it be funny if our ball team all turned out to be pitchers? Heavens, that would be something for the records. Just so they are all like you, I don’t mind, not even the demon part of your youth.

I was anxious to hear about the dinner but didn’t expect to get the menu. It sounds swell... practically our menu this past Sunday except we had rice instead of potatoes. I’m glad it was so good. It must have tasted a little like home. They’ve done a good job so far. There seems to be a lot of gossip but the purpose is of the best and I think has been accomplished. They are still recruiting like mad but I’ll stick to “our corner” unless they start drafting us. You never can tell about that.

You’d laugh... I’m sitting here chewing on licorice sticks. A hangover from my youth... that and peppermints of any kind I love.

Mom and I both had letters from Warren today. He's back on the job and was welcomed with some 30 letters! Tickled pink, too. He enjoyed the rest a lot. I was glad to hear he got a break in his routine.

Poor Ben. I feel for him. I know how he must feel. It is a long time to be away from those you love. Maybe he'll get a break soon since he has been there so long. Too bad the idea of the news office in New York died. I think it's a marvelous idea. Tell the colonel from me especially if he puts you and Ben in charge. Tell him to keep his chin up. It shouldn't be too long now and you can all come home. The big show is about to begin and he wouldn't like to miss that... or would he?

Ralph Martin was lucky. To be home... that's super after all this time. I seem to remember you telling me he was from New York or the vicinity.

You haven't asked for any cigarettes lately. How about it? Anything else you need? How are your clothes holding out... pajamas, hankies, socks? Do you need anything?

Everyone likes my bracelet. I haven't had it off since Mom put it on last Friday.

I saw a good movie last night... "Cover Girl." Good entertainment, and the Technicolor is good... the best I've seen yet.

I finally was able to get one of the janitors from the bank to do the yard work. It looks nice now, more like Oak Lodge. We need rain for our garden now and everything will be swell.

There's a new moon out tonight, just right for wishing on. What's this "infant" business? But I love it. Anything you call me that sounds like that.

I'll say goodnight. It's still a little early but I'm tired. Let's turn out the lights and go to sleep. Goodnight and sleep tight. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 24, 1944—London

Sweetheart,

For the first time today, I realized fully how much of an obsession you have become with me. It has been so for a long time now, I guess, but I laid it at the doorstep of endless devotion, a deep love and a painful separation. I'm sure I never considered you an obsession. One school of thought says an obsession is not good. Maybe so. I don't know for certain.

You see, I wanted you with me more than ever since we parted, to comfort me and help me think clearly. So much has taken place during the last few days that I've been confused. Trying to think



these things out for myself, I find I need help... not from anyone but from you. I want to ask questions of you and I can't. Perhaps it is your moral support I want, or need.

Since I was informed of the new plans, I have had to think a lot about what I was to do, how to do it, etc. And the more I thought about it, I couldn't make a decision whether or not I was going to be satisfied. There are some aspects of the job which make it look bad. Too many parts of it have to be taken care of as we go along. No definite plans in advance. Then, on the other hand, it looks good in some respects. The news of the New York office naturally makes me think of that.

Today, Ben received word he leaves Sunday, four days hence. At the same time I was told our detachment leaves here on the same day for a post where we will wait and wait and wait. I spent the afternoon and evening just walking and sitting and thinking... trying to take each phase and settle it in my mind. All the time I wanted you to talk with. Does that sound strange, Billee? You aren't supposed to know the answers, but I needed you. That's when I realized you were an obsession, besides being a very lovely creature.

Andy says our future job will work out all right. I'm not certain because of the many holes in the plans. I've questioned them in talking with the officers but they claim they are in the dark as much as I am and will be until security regulations enable them to be revealed. I want things planned and insured to be foolproof ahead of time, which may explain why I can't put all of my faith in them. To fog my mind more, I went to the dispensary this morning to get four shots... typhus, tetanus, typhoid and smallpox. Those arms you want around you are pretty well punctured right now.

I'm afraid to read back what I've written because I'm sure I will get the impression it will all be "Greek" to you. But I wanted you so badly I had to talk to you, at least, about the picture in general. I can't go into more detail because it's censorable.

Your letter of May 15 came yesterday and in the absence of mail today I read it over this morning, in the park this afternoon and here again tonight. I'll kiss you now by way of thanking you in advance for the "sweater" picture. I'll be waiting for it.

After my long hours of solitude today I met Andy at about eight and went to the Eagle Club for coffee. I was in a perfect mood for reveries, and subconsciously I think, I played "I'll Get By" on the jukebox three times in succession. I've admired Andy for his outlook on "the job." He was set to cover air forces just as he always has until this week, when he learned differently. It is going to mean he will have to rough it a bit, something he hasn't done much in



The reading/writing room in The Eagle Club, London.

the Army. Oh, he can do it. Hell, he played football at Colgate for three years. But Andy is used to doing things the comfortable way. His family is quite wealthy; they gave him a Piper Cub plane when he was in college. The girl he married has a \$\$ background, too.

Now, Andy is all set, and while he, too, doesn't care for uncertainties, he says, "I know all the alleys and shortcuts in the Army now. I don't think I can get trapped. If things don't work out the colonel's way, we'll make them to suit ourselves." I'm sure that is how we'll operate.

The enclosed bill speaks for itself, sweetheart. Put it with our album stuff.

Please, don't picture me with a mile-long puss. I'm not down, just confused, and so very much in love with you.

I'll miss the apartment after all this time. Just getting accustomed to the new one, too. Two other fellows are taking it over from Ben and me, and I have a promise there will always be a bed for me.

Strange, Ben and I should be leaving on the same day... him to go home and me... Don't worry, and stay beautiful. I'll be back soon.

Love to Mom.

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

May 26 1944—Asheville

Hello darling,

Mind if I stop in for a late date? It's after 12... are you still awake? Don't get up. I'll just climb into your lap and get cozy. Got a kiss for me? Hmmm... that's nice. Now let's see what has transpired since our last date.

A check from Chase National came today. It's already resting in our bankbook, on it's way back to New Jersey along with a check of mine to keep it company.

I splurged a little today on trousseau clothes. I finished paying for the material for my negligee set and bought some other necessary items. I'm a bit excited tonight. I get that way when I buy things that will be for Mrs. K. I looked at luggage, too. A little disappointing, but I guess I can't do any better. I have to have that to pack my few belongings in when that phone rings and you say, "Sweetheart, I'm home." I'll catch the next train out. The day doesn't seem far away tonight. Just the mood I'm in, I guess.

I'm all comfy... hair washed, bath taken, unmentionables all washed and hung up. I'm propped in bed using my knee for a desk. I can write by the hour like this.

I nearly forgot... I had two callers last evening, a WAC lieutenant and a male private. Seems they are following up the literature they sent and I threw in the wastebasket. She came right out and called me a slacker. I told her I figured your peace of mind and Warren's meant more to the war effort than my joining the WAC. I told her I had too many home responsibilities, too. That's no lie, either. She mentioned how lovely our home was. Says I, that's one of the reasons why I'm not a WAC. I told her joining the WAC would be a vacation. The soldier with her burst out laughing. She kind of gave me

a dirty look. So that's that. Guess they are getting desperate and in spite of all my reasons... I do feel like a slacker.

We've had a couple of good showers so I weeded half the garden last evening. The ground is easier to work after it's rained. I'll be a farmer by the time you come home.

We have some new people, a Navy chaplain and his family... very nice, too. They are looking for an apartment so they'll be here awhile.

Please note the stationery. It was payday this week. so I decided you'd been written to on scrap paper enough. That blue stuff is some old letter heads my father had. I cut the top off. It's good bond paper, but I don't like it.

I'm looking for something for Annice's birthday. A year old she'll be on June 15. How time flies. It seems like yesterday the nurse at Margaret Hague's was holding her up to the window so we could see her. Also I'm looking for something for your dad for Father's Day. I found a card today I liked. I want to get Tom and Al one yet.

I meant to tell you that you liked the purchases I made today. At least, when I tried them all on, you gave me a broad smile of approval. When I put the black number on, I could almost hear you say, "hussy."

I'm sending Warren candy for his birthday. It seems to be the only thing he asks for. It's July 6, so by the time Marguerite gets the letter and money, he should get it in time. Candy is practically nil around here so I'm having her get some Loft's for me.

I received the first two weeks of May's *Stars and Stripes*. Your story on Ernie Pyle and the General Saylor and the WAC story are in them... really swell, too. That Ernie Pyle is quite a guy.

I'm falling asleep... do you mind? I'm so comfortable here on your shoulder.

The pictures are some of those we took on Chimney Rock. Good, aren't they? Some of them I took.

Kiss me goodnight and love me lots.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

May 29, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Don't know that I'll be such good company. My chin is dragging on the ground but just being with you for a little while will help.

No letter today and I missed it a lot. This was one of those days when everything goes wrong for some reason or other. I needed you to come home to so I could climb up on your lap and just forget about everything.

You know a funny thing? I'm so in love with you and how my heart aches for you... see what I mean when I said my chin was dragging? Guess I'm tired and missing more than just a bit.

I spent a quiet weekend at home, except for a movie last night... an exceptionally good movie this time. Charles Boyer, Ingrid Bergman and Joseph Cotten in "Gaslight..." full of suspense and intrigue. The setting was Italy and London, the time the gaslight period. I enjoyed it thoroughly. Mom says the same thing... that Ingrid Bergman reminds her of me, so maybe it's so. Thank you, kind sir, because that's a compliment.

We worked in the garden nearly all day. Slowly it's beginning to look like a garden. We weeded yesterday and set out 150 tomato plants... not bad. Freddie helped or I guess we'd still be planting. We took a few pictures. We had to quit twice on account of showers, but finally finished.

I'm going to have a party Saturday night... haven't had one in a long, long time. The Benson girls and their friends, the chaplain, the boy that was in the African campaign and a sailor friend stationed at the hospital. The kitchen will be finished, I hope, so we'll have it there... spaghetti and all the trimmings. I wish it were Mr. and Mrs. K. that were entertaining. Wouldn't it be fun? I'm so anxious to start being Mrs. K. and everything that goes with it.

I had a letter from my older sister. Young Bill took four steps in his braces alone. She said he was so proud and of course they were more than delighted.



Billee in the garden at Oak Lodge, 1944.



It's nice... I'm all alone for a little while. Mom went to the movies with the doctor and his wife that are staying here. I have some really good music on... Richard Crooks on the Bayer program.

Things are progressing well in Italy tonight. We are still going through invasion jitters. They must be cutting down on the mail... so many that I know who have brothers, sweethearts and husbands stationed in England haven't had mail in several weeks. I still get that sick feeling in my stomach when I think what it's going to be like.

Did I tell you I started my First Fridays again? This time, nothing is going to interfere.

Someone told me yesterday that when the invasion opens that they are going to blow the sirens and ring the bells. Can you imagine? As if it were a sideshow or something, instead of what it really is. Makes me wonder sometimes... Oh well. Guess they don't know any better.

I had a letter from Dot today. It was good to hear from her... almost like sitting in the kitchen talking to her as I did so many times. She's a busy housewife these days, with Dorothy Jean... quite a young lady with her teeth and weighs 21 pounds. They are all getting such a head start on us... makes me get a little impatient. There I go again. It's just that so many boys from this section that have been overseas... either east or west... anywhere from a year to two years are coming home on leaves and then reassigned to posts in the states. I shouldn't complain, and I am ashamed to get impatient. We have been so fortunate, you and I. I know you probably would have preferred a little more excitement, but I like it this way.

Ruth T. is still in Iowa in yeoman school and liking it very much. I guess you hear from her. She wanted to get in some branch of the service so badly. I'm glad now she has what she wants. I hope she rates a chance at a commission, because I think she would make an excellent officer. She has a lot of poise and a swell personality, and certainly enough business experience to warrant a commission.

I feel better now. You have such a nice shoulder, my head seems to fit just right. Give me a kiss, then I'll say goodnight with a special kiss... because you're so patient with me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee