

Chapter 8

June–August, 1944

June 1, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

I'm anxious about you, Charles – no mail all week. I've gone this long longer before, but I guess it's because of the coming invasion and all – keeping us on pins and needles, and missing you so much. That makes me feel a little more anxious.

I'd like the reassurance of your arms around me; then, I'd know you were all right.

Your story is in this past Sunday's New York Times—looks pretty nice with that byline “Staff Sergeant Charles F. Kiley”—the story is excellent, darling, one of your best. Makes you wonder about his background and his reasons for his utter disregard for anything military except the actual combat. I liked it very much and not just because you wrote it. I have only the one copy; I'm pretty sure that I can get another, so shall I send you one, or do you have means of obtaining one over there?

It's a nice night, raining quietly almost like soft music. I'm in bed, propped up on pillows using my knees for a desk. My favorite position for writing. Guess that's why my letters are so hard to read, my brother tells me.

You've been so very close these past few days because I haven't heard from you. I spent Monday with you. Tuesday was a bank holiday and I worked at home. I went to a movie in the evening.

Life and Death of 'Molotoff'

By Staff Sgt. Charles F. Kiley
Stars and Stripes Reporter

LONDON.

THEY found him face down on the side of a hill in the Sedjenane Valley. Near by were the lifeless bodies of French Commando scouts who fell with him in a suicidal attempt to storm a German machine-gun nest. This was the end of "Molotoff," the United States Ninth Infantry Division's one-man army and one of the most fantastic personalities of the war. His incredible story was revealed by wounded officers and men of his outfit passing through Britain on their way to America from the Mediterranean battlefronts.

His name was really Karl Warner, but on the corner of Broadway and Forty-sixth Street, his New York hangout, he was known as "Curly." He was a private, hated and loved by officers and fellow-soldiers alike, who for a long time regarded him as the poorest example of a man in uniform. But before he fell dead on that Tunisian hill Molotoff proved himself one of the most efficient, courageous and fearless soldiers in this or any other army.

A boastful, loud-mouthed "wise guy," Molotoff was allergic to discipline. He always wore outlandish uniforms and never completed a route march. He fell asleep on guard, deserted his post and talked his way free of two courts-martial. He won fabulous sums in crap games, squawked loudly about Army life from reveille to dawn, was insubordinate to all ranks and went AWOL.

BUT in combat Molotoff performed incredible feats, albeit by his own peculiar methods. He never was known to get out of hand under fire and he subjected himself willingly to combat orders, but he raised hell when a colonel told him to get a haircut. He bluffed an entire Italian company into surrender with the same persuasiveness that saved him from courts-martial. He exposed himself to enemy fire on numerous occasions to direct artillery and once saved his company from being trapped by a superior enemy force.

Frequently disappearing on authorized solo expeditions for days, Molotoff located enemy positions that regular observers had failed to find. He captured an Arab spy and was the first of his outfit to scale the wall of a besieged fort, where he found more than 40,000 francs which he distributed among his buddies. He killed more than a score of enemy officers and men in hand-to-hand combat on scouting trips.

NO one knew him by his real name. It was always Molotoff at roll call. It was Molotoff from the moment another soldier pinned the tag on him at Fort Bragg after deciding Warner was "a radical." About his civilian life little is known except that he lived alone in a boarding house on Forty-fourth Street in Manhattan, that he hung out at his own special corner of Times Square,

seemed to have been all over the United States, claimed to have been on familiar terms with radio and screen stars, did business for and with racketeers, and once said he was "part Russian and part Jewish."

It was in the early days of the North African campaign that Molotoff, the misfit, found his place in the Army and a warm spot in the hearts of the men. Through the French Moroccan, Maknassy and Cedjenane battles he appeared at various times in French scarlet and blue capes, in an armored soldier's "zoot suit," in an Italian beret with a huge, black plume, and with an Italian officer's belt.

IN Port Lyautey he quickly made friends with the Arabs when others failed to make any headway with the natives. His new followers built him a tent, furnished it with rugs, tapestries, lamps, pictures, a cot and mattress, table and chairs. They dug his foxholes and brought him fruit, wine and eggs.

The outstanding feat of this "poorest example of a soldier" occurred at Station de Sened, where Molotoff's platoon was covered by a company of Italian infantry dug in on higher ground. By this time he was regarded as the company's best scout. Molotoff brazenly walked up the hill toward the Italian position. The enemy thought it was a surrender and withheld fire.

With his gift of gab, Molotoff made them believe they were surrounded by a superior American force. The Italians said they could not surrender until to do so by a colonel v then in the rear. Molotoff back up the hill a second when the Italians stood was first to charge and 140 men without firing a

THE following day told his platoon sergeant going up ahead "to see score is." Standing at 800 yards from his command waving his automatics a head, he shouted, "F guerre, finish la guerre sound echoed over the enemy machine guns spr area with searching fire. between two boulders, made note of the gun relayed the information artillery and soon the placements were wiped On his final exploit part of a file assigned tain contact between and a French force on flank. That job was too a man of his caliber. back word that he was with the French Ghoum "what the score was." report was of a German gun nest and he was last his way to wipe it out patrol of the French Com His body was discovered French, who found a N in Molotoff's hip pocket. When he died a her were two charges pending this "poorest example of in uniform." They were from his record in acc with Army policy. Even he beat the rap.

Charles' Molotoff story as it appeared in the NY Times, May 26, 1944.



Saw Danny Kaye in “Up in Arms.” A good musical.

I was so darn tired when I got home, I fell in bed. Yesterday was really a day at the bank. What a workout, and it lasted until 8 o’clock. I came home and ate, washed up the dishes, went for a short walk and fell in bed. So here I am, curled up on your lap, snuggling against your shoulder and sleepy as usual. We had more interruptions this evening. Mom and I were going to do cupboards but we didn’t get to them for all the callers we had.

I put a suit away today for Mrs. K., I hope. It’s very neat looking, soft gold wool gabardine. It felt like me on, so I decided on it. I’ve wanted one for a long time but wasn’t able to find just what I had in mind. I think I like this. I’ve spent too much money on me this month. I know that. I’ll have to pull up the purse strings. But if I pick up something here and there, a little at a time, I’ll have everything ready for that “hello, sweetheart, I’m back” day.

I have a Father’s Day card for you. I want to find a cute one with maybe a lot of kids but wasn’t able to find one so I decided on this. It says what I have in mind.

Tomorrow is first Friday, so I’ll get up an hour earlier for mass. Time is flying, seems like last Monday that I went for May.

I’m falling asleep on you... guess I better say good night. I love you, Charles. Always and forever. Kiss me good night.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

[NOTE INSIDE FATHER’S DAY CARD]

June 1, 1944—Asheville

Darling,

This is a special card – haven’t sent one like this before. A Father’s Day message, but it carries a lot of hope, faith and expectations. You see it’s a funny thing but after all this time I still want that pitcher of mine to call you “Daddy” and to be Charles Francis Kiley III. Has a lovely sound, that name does.

This card, too, carries the hope that next year this time I can buy a card that says, “Happy Father’s Day, from your wife.” Somehow or other I think that might happen.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 2, 1944— “Somewhere”

Hello again, sweetheart,

I know when this reaches you there will have been another week, at least, between my letters. This is my first since last Saturday and my first since arriving here at my present station. It has been quite a week... working 15 hours a day mostly... up at 6:00 and to bed at 11:00, just like the old days with Company H.

You will be able to tell how little I can say to you. This is a place that is more security-minded than almost any I have ever encountered... and for a good reason.

Since we arrived there has been much more preparation and work to be done than I had imagined. But it is being done and now, after a week, we just about have our feet on the ground and I can get back to my favorite occupation of making love to my honeychile.

Andy and I are living together, far short of the comfort and freedom we enjoyed in London, but not too bad. If we only had beds, it would be positively swell. I'm not certain I can tell you how we are living, so until I find out you will have to simply picture me living in a house but without a bed, rising at six and dressing in leggings, field jacket and steel helmet, eating in Army mess and coming home late looking like a real soldier.

I'm sure that “house without a bed” is confusing. It isn't that I haven't any bed, just that the one I do have could just as well not be there, and I wouldn't miss it. One advantage is the food we are getting. A good Army cook is better than any civilian chef I've patronized in the last two years.

Your letter of May 19 came the day we left London but there hasn't been any delivery since. We are expecting the first bag of mail sent from London tomorrow. I just know you are in that bag.

We have a new A.P.O. and you can use it until I notify you differently. The new address will not be permanent from present indications, so I will not inform anyone of it but you and 195. When I get the old A.P.O. back again or another that is likely to be permanent, I'll let you know. Meanwhile, the London office will forward the mail we get at #887.

Glad you liked the bracelet, angel. I didn't know you didn't care for “dangling” bracelets, but I'll try to remember. It might cause me to change my mind and not get you a diamond and emerald one because it dangles, however.

So, you like “kitten” and “honeychile” best. O.K. For your information, I distinctly remember telling you, “you remind me of an angel I once saw in heaven.” Now, confess. Didn't I? Sure I did. So don't say, “Angel... I don't remember.”

I hope I didn't overemphasize the caution about fussing over fliers. Heaven knows, you and Mom have every right to feel Warren is the best damn gunner in the Air Force and be ever so proud of him. I am. But, I believe you get the idea I was trying to get across.

Don't ever believe anything is as it is filmed in Hollywood, or the way it may appear in print. Hollywood is famous... or is it infamous... for its faults and errors in military pictures. It must get the

last drop of drama, heroism and impossible situations to make the film successful. Writers sometimes feel they must exaggerate the smallest of things to make stories.

I'm not going to have the time to handle the correspondence I did in London. But you and I will be "dating" as much. I'll just have to cut down on the rest. While I'm anxiously awaiting tomorrow's mail, I'm almost afraid to get it because I know there will be a lot of back mail from others.

Letters to Warren, 195 and the Doyles will follow this. Mind if I kiss you goodnight and wish we were together... putting out the lights to go to sleep?

If possible, I will send you \$200 tomorrow. If not, then I'll try to do it early next week. Can't spend money here.

Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 3, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Saturday night. The Hit Parade is playing, Sinatra crooning. Outside it's raining quietly to the tune of "Amour, Amour." A nice setting for a quiet Saturday evening.

I'm in the mood for lights and following you around to some of our old favorite tunes... a Saturday night of real fun. It's been so long.

Still no mail. There was a piece in the paper this morning about the restriction of mail from England. Your last letter was dated May 17 and Warren's was about the same date. We aren't alone so I guess we shouldn't worry too much. It's just that I'm missing you a little more, if that's possible, not hearing from you.

We had a little excitement when the report, in error, came over the radio today that the troops had landed in France. I can just hear you all say "leave it to a woman to mess up the works," if that was the cause of the error.

Baby bought a new pair of shoes. White, kind of neat looking, if I do say so. A little on the spectator side but more versatile, shall I say. By the way, they are my first white shoes in two years so I decided to part with my airplane stamp #1 for them. I think you'd like them. They are very feminine looking.



A page of "airplane" clothing ration stamps.

Believe it or not, we have a maid. At least she worked today. Monday will decide whether or not she'll be a maid. Mom says she was good today... quick to learn. That means a lot.

I had a hectic day... a lot of people and a heck of a lot of money. This is a heck of a business to be in, being a bank teller. Funny thing... perhaps I've mentioned it before. You lose the value of money seeing and working with it so much. I handled some \$30,000 today just an example.

I was just figuring up. You know what we have exactly \$1191.25 in cash in our nest egg. Mr. and Mrs. K.s future. Pretty nice going, I think. It doesn't make any difference, though, if you only had a quarter I'd love you just the same or maybe a little more.

I hope my mail is going through. I sent you a Father's Day card. Funny, I can't remember whether I wrote inside it; however, I enclosed a note inside. I'm getting forgetful lately. Must be old age creeping on me. I have had so darn much to do lately, Guess that will explain it.

I think the rain has stopped now. We could go out if you wanted to but I am comfortable snuggled on your shoulder. Let's stay in. I'll make coffee and sandwiches later. Tell me all the things you wanted to tell me when I wasn't around. Those nights you stared at the ceiling making up imaginary conversations. Have you done that? Yes, so have I, by the hour. In fact, I keep myself awake sometimes just to talk to you.

Some folks are coming so I guess I'd better say good night for now. How about the special kiss just for loving me... like this [lipstick print]. I love you, darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 5, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Today, after nearly 2 weeks, brought two letters from Warren, but none from you. Another Monday and no sunshine to brighten my day.

Yesterday marked our two years and two months anniversary... and the fall of Rome. As the president said tonight, one down and two to go. Surely, fall will see our victory or am I being too optimistic?

I went swimming yesterday for the first time this year. It was swell... the water just right. It was a bit late by the time I went in so I didn't get much sun. I'd like to get the good tan one year. When I was very much younger, mid-July would find me like an Indian, I'd be so brown, but I lived at our swimming hole in Massillon, that was why. There was quite a mob at the pool yesterday... looked like a miniature Atlantic City or Coney Island.

How about meeting me in New York, let's say October or November, for your birthday, maybe? I'm going to ask for two weeks either in October or November and see New York again. 195, Arlington and Matawan. I'd like to meet you in Penn Station where we said goodbye "for a little while," and

start where we left off with a hello again. Sounds heavenly; almost out of this world. Daydreaming again, as usual.

Warren didn't have anything to say about his activities. The letter was written May 19. He wants a cake. Mom got the fruit today and we'll send it on the double so it will reach him in time for his birthday... July 5. Will you, if it's possible, call him and say "Happy Birthday, brother dear," for me?

I'm tired tonight, as usual. Swimming yesterday for the first time made me a little tired today on the job. I was so mad Saturday night after I wrote to you. Mom went to bed very early and I had quite a few people come in and calls from soldiers for rooms. Darn 'em, instead of coming out early and finding where they are to sleep they wait till they are ready to go to bed. Result: 2:30 a.m. I crawled into my little trundle bed, the last G.I. tucked into bed. I'm going to get me a curfew.

It's cooled here considerably today. Someone must have had a storm nearby. Guess I'll have to use another blanket.

Do you mind if I say good night? Kiss me, and love me. I hope I have a letter tomorrow, please –

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 6, 1944— "Somewhere"

Hello sweetheart,

This may be my last letter for awhile. I can't tell you why, but I'm sure you will understand and be with me in the absence of mail.

It is after midnight now and we have been busy since eight this morning. That is an indication of what we have been doing.

Today has been one we have been waiting for, for a long, long time. We received news of the invasion by radio this morning and have followed the bulletins through the day. The BBC midnight news told of successful operations all day.

The aerial bombardment and naval support preceding the landing of airborne and ground forces must have been terrific. I'm sure Warren was in on it since the announcement said bombers in "very great strength" were employed.

The amazing, but wholly satisfactory, item was the statement that Allied losses in the landings were extremely light. The latest news said our forces have pushed inland seven miles.

With the fall of Rome earlier in the week, today's success makes things look good all around. I'm not optimistic enough to feel it is the beginning of a quick ending but it is a good start in the proper direction.

There was good news for me today. That is, for Earl, Andy and myself. We spent almost an hour talking with big people concerning our mission and the outcome was more than we expected. Our plans, dependent on many things to come, are now complete.

I'll be separated at first from both Andy and Earl but we'll be together again in a comparatively short space of time. Capt. McNamara, the C.O. of our unit, has been swell to work with. He knows his job and has given us a free hand to go ahead with ours. He and I will work together at the outset until we can organize and then we will put into operation our second plan. That's the one I will like best and I'm only hoping and praying it will materialize.

We have had more mail sent to us and, yes, you were there for me, sweetheart. The letters were those of May 22, 24 and 26. The latter also contained your pictures. I'll have to admit, "Mr. Photographer" did a better job this time.

Your letters mean more to me than ever now. And, if I couldn't rely on anything else to give me please of mind, you will.

I guess it is natural for me to miss you and love you more at a time like this... natural for me to turn to you for comfort when there doesn't seem to be anything else to keep my Irish chin up.

There were letters from Warren, Eddie and El, too.



Billee at the Grove Park Inn, 1944.

You asked me if I needed anything. No, not just now. I have plenty of cigarettes and other stuff. When I get short and thin it is feasible for you to send something, I'll let you know.

Instead of sending you \$200 last week, I made it \$150. However, I'm sending \$25 in a day or so. In fact, I'll have to have Andy send it for me. From this you can tell I'm getting rid of any money I have.

I won't say "Thanks, angel," for picking me up with your beautiful letters because there's a better expression for it and you know what I mean, from my heart.

Before I go, I want to ask one more thing of you and that is to ask God more than before to watch over us, you and I. I'm sure He will listen to you. I went to communion on Sunday for the first time in the field since the day I almost went over with Mac at the bomber base. My intentions are to go at least every week from now on, not to "put the heat" on Our Lord when help is needed but to ask Him to keep you and Mom from worrying about your soldiers. We'll be all right, I know.

So, wherever I go and wherever I am, you will be by my side and closer to my heart than ever. I'll think of you more often and yearn more for the beginning of our own "D-Day." Smile, angel, and kiss me goodnight.

'Bye for awhile. I'll be back soon. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 6, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

Mom awakened me this morning at seven with the news. "It's the invasion." She had a strange look on her face: confusion, relief, anxiety. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I did more of the latter, I guess. Anyway I dressed as fast as I could and made 7:30 Mass. I figured that was the best place I could be at this hour.

Everyone is calm outwardly, all of us a little cautious. Trying not to be too optimistic, most of us I'm sure with a prayer in our hearts and on our lips for your welfare and success. I'm afraid my mind wasn't on my work. I kept thinking of you wherever you might be, and Warren and wondered where Eddie might be.

Words somehow seem futile, each news bulletin—and they come fast and furious—keeps you waiting for the next. It's late now; my ear hasn't been too far away. The direct reports haven't been too clear because of atmospheric difficulties. We were to hear an eyewitness account just now but they couldn't get through. They got through, and George Hicks is giving a blow-by-blow description and you can hear the guns.

I'm wondering how tired this day is finding you. I'd like to be near by for you to come back to, to have you crawl into my arms that I might comfort you. It's a strange feeling—one I don't like—not knowing how long it will take this letter to reach you.

I know, though, that you would want to be a part of it. I would too. Even this far away, I'm restless and feel useless. I should be a man so I could be there, too.

So far, things are going too well. Doesn't seem possible that there could be so little opposition. The lack of air defense is what puzzles me. We've all felt that they were conserving the Luftwaffe for just this time.



Quentin Reynolds is on again. He's very good. I like his interpretation. This is probably a little disjointed. I'm trying to listen to the radio and be with you.

Still no word from you, darling. But I imagine it will be released now and some of it will be coming through again.

Darling, I'm loving you and praying for you. I've never been very far from your side this day and I won't be as long as it lasts. May the miracle happen that it will be a swift and thorough victory.

I'm going to turn in, but I'll say this. I couldn't help but think how long we have waited for this day, over two years since the day you landed in Ireland. Now it's the beginning of the end and our dreams are on the horizon coming closer to us. One day we'll reach out and they'll be ours together.

Good night, my darling, wherever you might be. I love you with all my heart. Keep well and remember my prayers and love are never far away.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 7, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

El called me a few minutes ago and told me the news. It seems you are front-page copy again. I felt since yesterday morning you were a part of it but I didn't expect you to hold such an important position. I'm proud, darling, that they realized your ability and gave you a position you deserve.

I know what you're thinking and that regardless of what they made you do, you wanted to go in. It's only natural. There is so much going on in my heart, I can't write it. Words don't describe it. It's bigger than you and I.

El sounded good and I was so happy to hear of 195 and their reaction. They started novenas today as I did yesterday.

I turned the radio off for little while because I wanted to be with you. Everyone is in bed or out and I'm sitting here quietly trying to find you in all the confusion and panorama of guns, men, planes, trying to guess where among all those beachheads established you might be and wondering how long it will be before I hear from you.

Kiley, J. C. Soldier, Goes Over To Head Army Paper Reporters

Staff Sgt. Charles W. Kiley, 195 Lexington Av., former Jersey Journal sports reporter, is one of six soldiers heading a staff of Stars and Stripes newsmen collecting and relaying invasion news to the London office of that army paper. In addition, they will set up and distribute to U. S. forces a new and continental edition of the successor to the AEF newspaper of the first World War. Two New Jersey, and four New York State men head the staff.

Kiley is in charge of approximately 15 reporters, photographers, and circulation men in the vanguard of the invasion group. While their main job is to feed the pages of the London edition they will institute a continental edition, at first in mimeograph form, and distribute the paper to members of the armed forces in the European theater as the invasion proceeds.

Inauguration of this edition will mark the fifth of a series of Stars and Stripes editions, which, in circulation and volume, exceed the Stars and Stripes of World War I. At present editions are printed in London, Ireland, Italy and North Africa.

After facilities have been arranged, more members of the Lon-



CHARLES W. KILEY

don staff will be transferred to Europe, under the direction of Lt. Robert W. Moora, Montclair, present editor of the London edition, who will take over the more delicate detailed job of printing and distributing the continental edition of the newspaper.

Kiley, now 30, entered The Jersey Journal sports staff, Dec. 18, 1933, and was the first of the editorial staff to enter the service in October, 1941. After training in this country he was sent to northern Ireland in 1942 with the U. S. Infantry, but was transferred to the staff of the Stars and Stripes in November, 1942.

He has been on several bomber missions as an observer to get material for his paper. He was disappointed when he was not a member of the invasion group to go to North Africa when a special edition of the Stars and Stripes was gotten out and another disappointment came when he was not included in the move on Sicily, but his big thrill came when he was eventually ticketed for the big invasion. Presumably the likeable Jersey City newspaperman crossed the "ditch" yesterday when "Ike" Eisenhower gave the word to go.

*From the Jersey Journal,
June 7, 1944*

It's a strange feeling being all tied up inside, afraid to relax for a second. I just go on praying and hoping and loving you more and more. It's difficult to write, it should be something gay and carefree, but I feel very grave and cautious inside. I can't describe it.

Things according to reports here are still quiet. No counter-offensive has begun as yet today, and they are, and we are, wondering why. By the time this reaches you, we will be able to tell a little more.

It's a beautiful day here, cool, just right and very clear. There is an almost full moon, a grand sight for a walk or ride in our convertible, just you and I and the stars to keep us company.

Already you hear predictions. The man, one of my customers today, said 60 days. The writer I mentioned in a previous letter, the one that lived in France, came in and asked me if I thought you were there. He wished you well and proceeded to tell me a little of Normandy. He lived there for some time. He said we had a tough fight ahead.

Mom is holding up. Of course, we expect Warren is in there pitching too. I'm proud of her because she is doing so well. She stays pretty close to the radio. We have one upstairs and one down. She wished yours were in working order so she could carry it from room to room, but I don't think she has missed much news.

Darling, I'll say good night, wherever you are. God bless you, darling, and take care of yourself. I love you more and more.

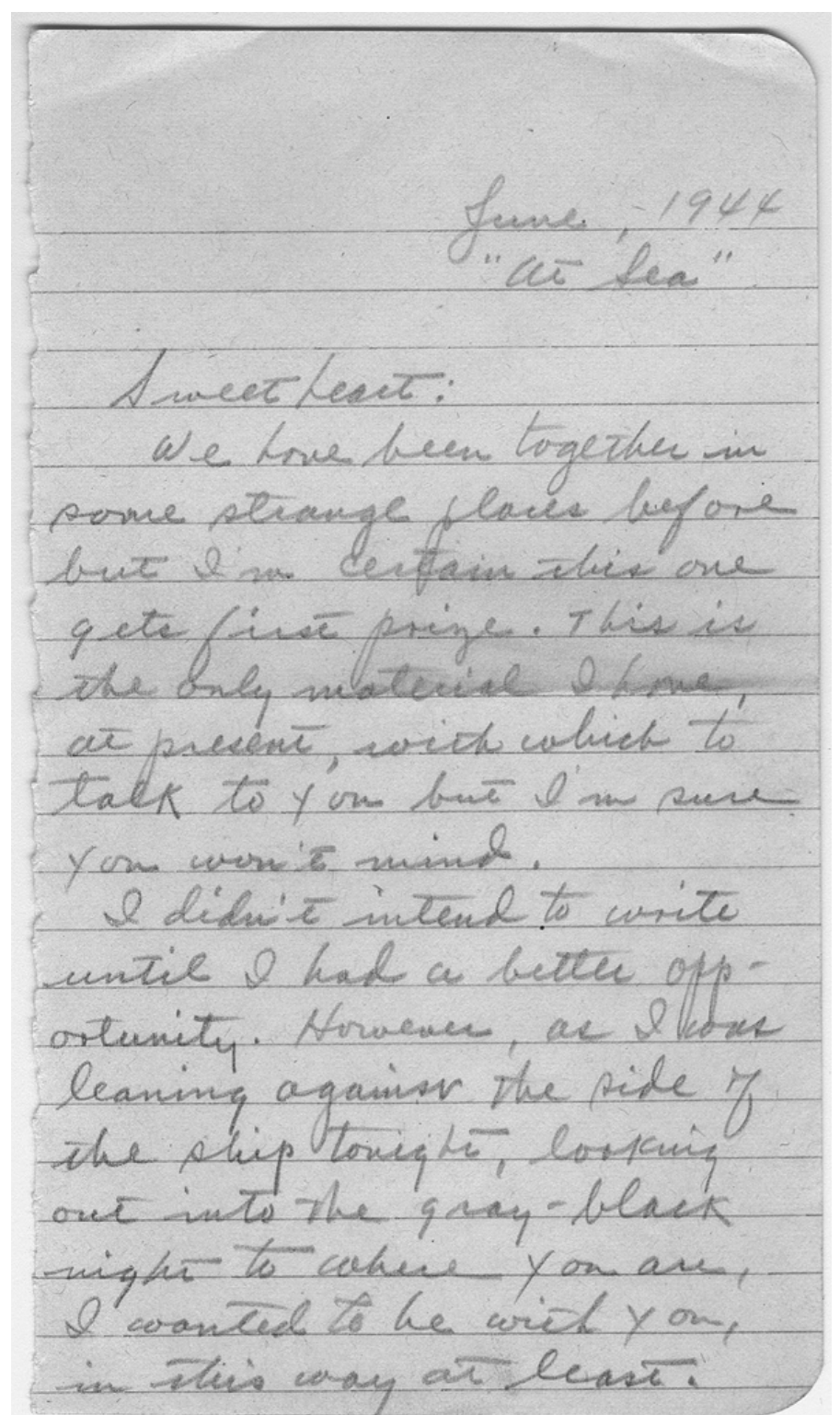
All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June, 1944 [Probably June 9] "At sea"

Sweetheart,

We have been together in some strange places before, but I'm certain this one gets first prize. This is the only material I have, at present, with which to talk to you but I'm sure you won't mind.

I didn't intend to write until I had a better opportunity. However, as I lean against the side of the ship tonight, looking out into the gray-black night to where you are, I want to be with you in this way at least.



First page of Charles' letter written enroute to Normandy, on pages torn out of his reporter's notebook. June, 1944.

I don't know when I'll have a chance to write again and since letters will be few at first, we may as well make the most of these opportunities.

I am on a Liberty ship, bound for what the radio says is "our beachhead in the Normandy." Looking at the map makes it appear to be a simple process of getting from England to France. But it takes longer than you may imagine. We have been aboard for three days now and we are just about there. The travel experience has been reminiscent of our trip from America. That is, everyone sleeps with clothes on in the hold of the ship, wears lifebelt, etc. Our meals come right out of the can, prepared ourselves. We wash out of the tin helmets, sneak in a shower in the crew's quarters, and—wait.

This morning brought one of the most impressive sites I have ever seen, as far as strength in merchant shipping and warships is concerned. Passing a U.S. battleship and two cruisers at a 200-yard distance, we watch them fire salvo after salvo at targets miles out of sight on land.

Planes of every description have been soaring overhead in pairs, quartets, and large formations. In the distance, we heard shellfire on land. And in the midst of it all a chaplain spread his white alter linen over an oil-stained canvas on top of a hatch and celebrated Mass. The occasion also marked the second time I received communion on board ship, only this was under more memorable conditions.

I'll have to apologize for not being dressed for a date tonight, darling. My "ensemble," from shoes to helmet, are pretty grimy. Moreover, I have a band-aid on my three fingers, right hand, that is dirty enough to smudge these pages.

The news over the ship's radio says the beachhead has been extended along 50 miles of the Normandy coast and some 15 miles inland. Intense fighting in Caen however is still going on.



Omaha Beach, Normandy. June 1944. Note the ships in the foreground are actually beached at low tide; the ships floating in the background are actually about a quarter of a mile away from the beach.

When we sailed, I noticed part of Eddie's division on the way over so it looks like I might meet him again.

Thinking of you tonight, Billee, made me realize, or rather appreciate more than ever, how much it means to know someone is waiting to help lift you out of all of this some day. It is more than a comfort, or an insurance against uncertainty. The mere thought of our life tomorrow brings the same feeling you get when you are wet and cold, and know that you will soon be before a warm fire.

I've been looking for our star but didn't see any tonight.

Perhaps you will look at it and come live with me tonight. 'Bye for a while. Love to mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always Charles

June 10, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

Your first Saturday night in France. I'm wondering where you are and what you are finding. I hope at this time maybe you are getting a little rest and maybe a little comfort. This week must have seemed like a century, the days just long hours.

Your mail is catching up... four letters since Thursday, those of May 18, 19, 20 and 24. Even though I know they are all old news now, they were so welcome. To see that familiar scrawl was like a message from heaven.

The plan is wonderful to rotate the men [to the *Stars and Stripes* New York office]. should have been done long ago. I'll bet Ben hated it when he found out the big show broke right after he left. Jane will be a welcome sight to him. I'm glad and happy for him that the long awaited day is very near at hand or has already happened... a dream come true. I'm glad, darling, your name isn't so far down on the list but maybe you'll be home before your turn comes up... wishful thinking, but I hear 60 days on all sides until Germany surrenders. I hope they are right but I'm not getting too optimistic.

So much excitement this week. First the news of D-Day itself, then El's telephone call and Thursday night the dramatization of your [Molotoff] story on the March of Time. Did you know? I missed it. I'm so mad I could chew nails. I went to a movie and came in just as it was going off. Mom heard it all. She was so excited. I wrote and asked for a copy of the broadcast. Everyone I've talked to that heard it thought it was swell.

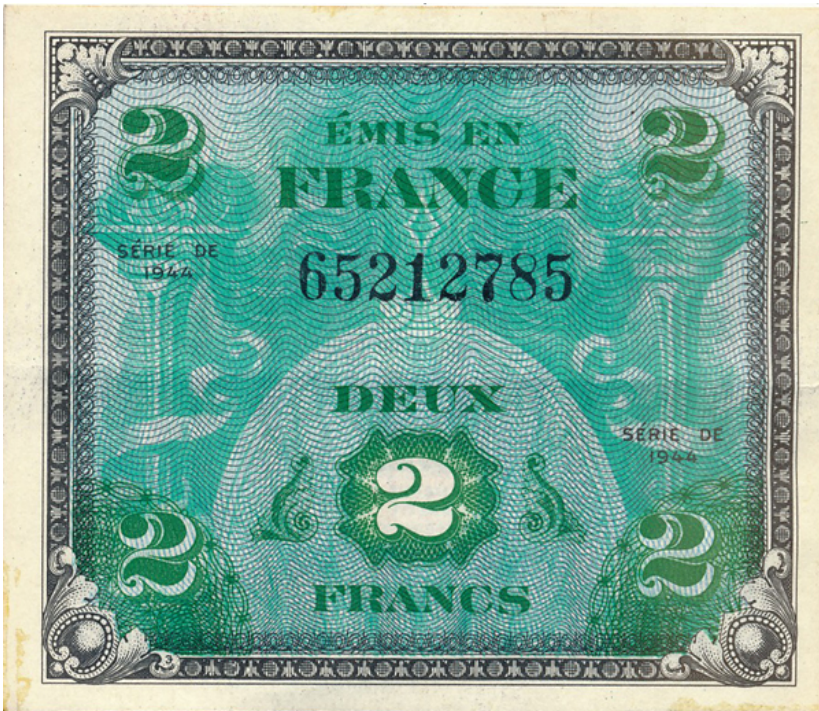
What a joke after you spending all the time writing all the articles on how a soldier could vote and then to have them send yours so it arrived two days late. Pretty good. No wonder you squawked loud and hard.

What did I ever do without you and your love? I'm speaking of your letter of May 20 in reply to my "don't get impatient" letter. I know you'll say, "There she goes again," but I still wonder how I rate everything I've always dreamed of. Sometime in the near future looking into our fireplace I'll tell you why I still make that statement after all this time.

The news is good tonight. You're very near Cherbourg and the Russians' offensive has begun. I keep trying to imagine where you are and I try to be with you.

Charles, I'm making a daily Mass and communion for you, Warren and Eddie and, of course, adding a prayer for all the other boys. I wanted you to know. Maybe tomorrow you won't be in a position to attend.

Mom is a little worried about Warren. We've heard nothing. She has his birthday cake all baked and ready to send. We're sending red, white, and blue candles for it. He'll be 20 years old, you know. Seems like yesterday he was such a kid and Mom had a big chocolate cake for him and ice cream... that's the birthday ritual in our house, regardless of age.



Uncirculated French 2 franc note from Charles' WWII scrapbook.

I showed your French franc in the bank. They were all interested. Makes me a little heartsick knowing those boys are prisoners. What a shame. I know what they would have given to have taken part in this, that they helped pave the way toward.

Your letter of the twenty-fourth hit me. Don't misunderstand... it gives me a deeper feeling sharing your confusion. I know now what it was about. I understand what you must have gone through. I have had to make decisions alone. This was more than a decision. At times like these you want to burn up the distance separating us... if only for five minutes you could have the comfort and security of your beloved.

One thing for which I'm glad... they didn't make you wait too long before you went in. Waiting for that, the way things are now would have been awful... breaking up your routine in London.

It doesn't sound strange, wanting me in your state of confusion. Loving you so much, I would have felt out of it if you hadn't reached out for me.

I like Andy's confidence. He seems to be a likable fellow. I'm wondering how he's doing roughing it. I'll be glad when I hear from you so I can put all the pieces together and know a little more what you are doing.

My poor darling, what a dose of shots for one day. That's brutal.

I'm glad you "talked" to me about everything even though I cried, the first time since Tuesday morning. As I've, or we've, said, we'll not keep anything back.

Something to make you smile... I turned half monkey yesterday and spent two tours in the top of a cherry tree picking cherries for canning. Remember the girl from Jersey City at the bank? A neighbor of hers has three trees and she's letting people pick them on shares. Jane and I picked 8 gallons in two hours. You should have seen me. You would have disowned me, because I was black from head to toe. I could just see you standing at the foot of the tree, hands on your hips, telling me, "Billee, aren't you ever going to grow up?" "Did I marry a woman or a tomboy?" I'm afraid the latter comes

out on me every now and then. I really feel it tonight. My legs are sore but I'll get over it. Mom has them all canned. I love cherry pie.

I had the chaplain and the Benson girls for spaghetti tonight. It was good. I like entertaining. Never have done much so this is good practice. Everything went off nicely.

Something else to make you smile: we have a maid, and what a character she is. Mom told her I was going to live in New York. First thing she said, she wants me to carry her to "New Yawk" with me when I go to be married, and she'll be our maid. Can't you just see your father's face if I were to arrive at 195 with a colored maid in tow? That would be the day I'd board the train back to Asheville.

It's very late. Just heard on the late news that Toulon is being bombed.

I'm going to sleep now, with your love and warmth. I'm missing you and trying to find you in all the confusion. I don't think I've lost you because I've had such a good feeling since yesterday that everything is going to be all right. Love me and stay close. My love and prayers are ever with you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 13, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

The night is awfully still. All I can hear are crickets. I'm sitting in the middle of the twin bed of our guest room (the one you had) yogi style, writing to you... if you can stretch your imagination that far to get a good picture of me.

The bank had their picnic tonight... fun. We swam, went boating, stuffed ourselves with hamburgers, cokes, coffee, and regular picnic fare and then danced with the executives. They are a nice bunch outside the bank. They seemed a little "stiff" to me in the bank. Folks change when you get them out.

The picnic site was lovely... part of Pisgah Forest. The mountains run into the lake practically... really a picture spot. We paddled to the center of the lake and used the boat to dive from. The water was super, a little cold but it made you feel swell. It was fun but I kept thinking how much you would enjoy a spot like that.

The \$150 arrived yesterday. I put it in the bank here since I presumed it was the biggest part of your June pay and should you need some I can cable it to you. By the way, it came directly to the bank addressed to the bank... first one I've had like that.

By the way, before I forget, Marguerite wrote and they collected the \$75 and it's been credited to our savings account in Perth Amboy National so you won't have to worry about that any longer.

Two more welcome letters arrived yesterday, from the 17th and 22nd of May. Now I know a little more of what you are doing, together with your letter and the clipping from the Jersey Journal that El sent me. Do you mind if I'm a little bit proud of you? I feel a little like strutting. As I've said, I can't help but be worried about where the new job is taking you but I had more or less prepared

myself for you going in with the men. Still, Tuesday... a week ago.... the news really hit me below the belt. I feel better now that I know more of the details, but I'm anxiously awaiting direct news from you. I was more than glad to hear that it won't affect your position in the rotation plan. I'm trying to take that last bit of news sensibly and not get excited about it, but at last a fairly concrete dream that I can dream on for a while. The time will go quickly.

I'll be looking forward to Ben's call. I feel as if I know him already. It's swell the plan worked out for his benefit.

I bought your Dad two nice sport shirts, a white and a pale yellow. I noticed last summer he wore them so much around the house. I found a cute card, a tiny one, to tuck in from you and me, for Father's Day.

I'm going to call 195 Thursday and wish Annice a happy birthday. Doesn't seem possible she's that old already. This time last year, you were sweating out that cable telling about her arrival.

Two old letters from Warren arrived yesterday. They didn't say much... wish we'd get a recent one.

I must remember you don't like ruffles (I go for simplicity myself), nighties at the breakfast table... who the heck could get breakfast in one of them things... metal curlers... I'd have to sleep sitting up. We'll have to settle on a time when I can get beautiful in private... cold cream, pinned up hair, etc. Five pounds each year of married life... we shall see, but I don't think so.

I'm warning you, I sleep "kitten style." Don't care too much for twin beds. We'll just have to learn to sleep together. Shouldn't be too difficult. If there's any "tip-toeing" done, you'll do it with me. Didn't I tell you I'm going to be your shadow?

Speaking of guest rooms, Mom wants to furnish one in our two-by-four.

Wouldn't it be cute if I could find white pajamas for myself and you? I still like nightgowns better, especially in the summer... then I don't have to shed anything.

The news is still good all over. Makes you feel better to hear that.

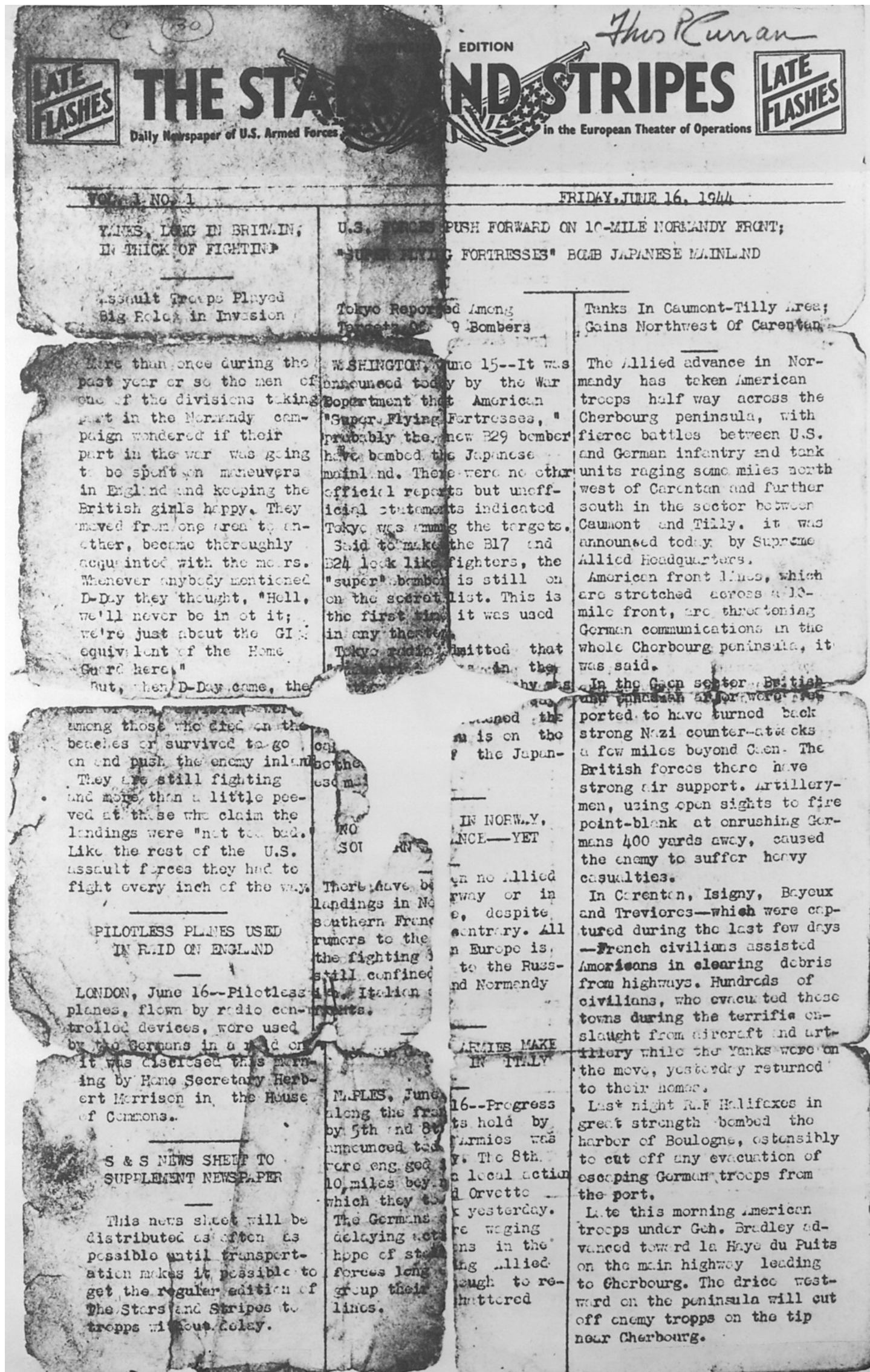
I'm falling asleep. Let's call it a day and go to bed. I love you so much, so very much. Keep well and don't worry about me. I'm ok.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 14, 1944—Normandy [The date on this letter is probably wrong, and should be June 16]

Hello sweetheart,

I have been here for three days now and this is my first letter from France. I won't tell you how busy I have been. I'm sure you are able to realize it. The fact that I'm reverting to the old typewritten "dates" is indication enough. We just got out our first "beachhead" edition of the paper, a single page mimeograph sheet with the *Stars and Stripes* masthead, and have been working like hell to distribute it.



Vol. I, No. 1 of the Stars and Stripes Beachhead Edition, which Charles wrote, typed, duplicated and distributed. This is the only known copy extant of any of the edition numbers. Now in the collection of the New York Public Library.

The first load of papers from London arrived yesterday, only two days late. We needed seven hours to deliver them but we made it. When some of the other fellows get over here, I'll have more of an opportunity to get around to some writing. In fact, I may be able to before then.

We aren't too far from the front, and are exercising muscles digging foxholes, etc. I have been from one end of the beachhead area to the other as well as getting inland as far as possible. Consequently, I've been able to see quite a bit, short of the actual fighting. The French people, I'd say, belong in two classes. Those living in towns not shattered by the terrific air and ground attacks during the drive are openly welcoming the Yanks. Those in the bomb-battered towns like Carentan, Isigny and Treviers are apathetic. They are dazed by what has happened and I honestly don't know if they are certain of what's going on. The people here remind me of those I saw in Northern Ireland. They are definitely country folk, are in the poor class and desperately in need of rehabilitation. It is apparent they weren't too well off even before we came.

I learned yesterday when the colonel arrived that Phil Bucknell, one of our boys who went in with the airborne troops on D-Day suffered fractures of both legs. Pete Paris, whom I knew very well as a writer-photographer with "Yank," was killed going in with the 1st Division. Bill Rodgers, a friend of the Doyles from N. Arlington, went in on D-Day with the [CENSORED] Division.

You had better be in rare cooking form when I get back because I'm going to eat and eat and eat some more. I've been eating K rations, C rations and every other kind of ration until now they all look and taste alike. Furthermore, the ground and floors over here are pretty hard. I know I can rely on you to know a soft mattress when you see one, come our shopping days. I haven't had any mail in more than a week and only the two I received just before I left... since I left the soft bed and hot meals of London. With all the rush and scramble, sweetheart, you are still closer to me than ever and more lovely and dearer in my heart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 16, 1944—Asheville

Hello darling,

It's a lovely night... clear, stars shining and fairly cool... swell for a walk or a moonlight dance or something. I'm wondering what kind of weather you've having and if it's as pretty a night there as here. No more mail this week, but a letter from Warren today telling us he received our packages. He's rationing the fudge to the boys. He was so glad to get the packages, as well as the other boys. Everything seems to go all right with him but like everyone else, we're waiting for mail written since the invasion.

The news is good on both sides this week... news of the bombing of Japan again and new landings close to Japan. The news in Normandy is good, too, except for the rift with the French, but that will get straightened out soon, I'm sure.

I forgot... in Warren's letter day before yesterday he had completed twenty missions. He told us the name of his ship: "Rhapsody in Flack," and he's with the same crew that was with him at Ardmore. I didn't know that.

I called El last night to say Happy Birthday to Annice. She said all the kids on the block had been in all day. Your dad had a barrel of beer and they were going to have a party last night. Everything is fine there. I sure miss them. Did I tell you, I bought her a musical bank... a fuzzy white one with a Swiss music box in it... really cute. I felt like putting it on my dresser along with my soldier boy. You know, ever since I was a little girl, I've always wanted to have a music box all my own. That and one of those glass ball paperweights with the snow in it have always been two of my pet desires... besides being Mrs. Kiley, of course.

I hate getting too optimistic but I have such a good feeling about everything and that perhaps it isn't going to be too long before we'll be picking that dream out of the sky and finding out what makes it tick. Funny, I was looking at the ceiling and trying to think what you'd like for a wedding present. I'm a bit stumped because I want it to be good... got any ideas? Speaking of white silk pajamas, wouldn't it be cute if we could get some that matched... yours and mine, I mean. I used to wear them when I was a kid. Seems like a long time ago. For you, I'll wear pajamas... but if it gets hot, why bother?

This is going to be a busy weekend. We have a convention in town, and we're due to get quite a few delegates and they'll come in tomorrow night. That's the way I spend my Saturday nights now, putting people to bed until the wee hours. You should see our garden. It's beautiful. The corn is getting so high and we'll have fresh beans this week. We've already been getting lettuce, radishes and greens for the past week. We're kind of proud. It gets a good wetting once a week now that we have it started good, so there isn't so much work.

I went to a ball game at the camp out here between the Army and Navy hospitals. The camp invited a hundred sailors and marines from the hospital; most of them convalescing from wounds. The game was good... Army won 6-4. Softball, it was. They had a couple of good pitchers. That's the first game I've been to in a couple of years. I enjoyed it. They were to have a broadcast and dance but I didn't feel so well and didn't feel much like staying. The recreation hall was like an oven so I caught the nine-thirty bus like a good girl and I'm ready to go to bed when I kiss you goodnight.

Enclosed are some recent snaps... not too bad and not too good. The one isn't exactly a sweater girl shot but under the circumstances, I couldn't do any better since the camera isn't mine.

I've been thinking about the records and decided maybe I'd



Billee, June 1944

better see if I can get a few since maybe by the time we get ready to buy them, those we want may not be available. I know there's "Ave Maria," "Piano Concerto," "You Make Me Love You," "I'll Get By," "Stardust" of course... help me out a little on some of the ones we liked. My mind seems to be a blank where song titles are concerned.

I should go to sleep. Tomorrow is another day. Perhaps I'll be back again for a Saturday night date. I'm missing you and your dates but I'm feeling awfully close to you. I'm finding you each morning that I start a new day at Mass. Mom is getting so she's sure I waken in case I should lay a few minutes after the alarm goes so that I'll be sure to get to St. Lawrence's on time.

Goodnight, darling. Love me and miss me. Be careful and remember I'm never very far away.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 18, 1944—Normandy

Hello, sweetheart,

We have about an hour to spend together tonight before the sun goes down. Perhaps we can cure some of the blues you had in your letter of May 29. It came today, brought by another of the fellows in from London. You had it real bad this time, didn't you? I know how you felt, because I get it like that more often than I can remember. The intimacy of your expressions was just what I needed over here. There isn't much for us to do but work and enjoy each other's company, so a "date" with you is a rare privilege.

We have been having ideal weather during the last few days, which has been a boon to our operations. Today's reports were that the 9th Division, the boys I knew in England and whom I did several pieces on, swept across the Cherbourg peninsula to cut off the enemy north of their positions. We haven't been too far from the front at any time. But there isn't what you would call immediate danger. All that befalls the boys at the front. Some of our gang went through Carentan, which was taken four days ago, and the 88s were still dropping an odd shell or two near the town.

But, let's forget about the war, shall we? I'd much rather talk about the garden you've been planting and the party you had scheduled. I hope you remember the recipe for the spaghetti dinner you planned. It certainly would be appreciated right now. The canned C rations are beginning to wear holes in my stomach. Still, it tastes good when we get it.

I got my first good laugh in a long time earlier this evening, listening to Jack Benny's show over the Allied Forces network. Charlie McCarthy is on now. This is a



Edgar Bergen, vaudeville, radio and early tv star with his more famous puppet, Charlie McCarthy.

helluva war, isn't it? Only a comparatively few miles from here men are dying and we can sit here listening to radio programs and laugh.

Somehow, I know you are looking lovelier than ever this night. It is going to be a cool, bright, moonless night... quiet until the "boom-booms" start looking for the Jerry planes. That's the only thing that interrupts our reverie, sweetheart.

Miss me lots and send a big, broad smile this way. 'Night and love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

June 21, 1944—Asheville

Darling,

Your D-Day letter arrived and what a welcome letter! By now you know I had you pictured among the first on the Normandy beaches! This eases my mind considerably, to know that there was a day or so passed before you left England. I had thought your June 2 letter would be the last one and I had settled myself down to a lull between letters. I'm so glad this came through.

Already they've been in over two weeks. The time slips by so fast. I hope it passes quickly for you over there, too.

My dear, you must have been worn out by the time you made your landing... the long hours you've been putting in being a soldier again, but I know it must feel good, especially now that it means the real McCoy.

I'll never be able to tell you the feeling I had that morning of the sixth. I guess a lot of folks had it, too. I'm glad you heard it via the airways, too.

We had a letter yesterday from Warren, written D-Day also but no mention of the invasion. The boys sent Mom a thank you note for the candy. They all (nine of them) want me to knit socks like Warren's for them. I wish I had the time... I would.

I went to a dance at Moore General Hospital for the patients. What an enormous place that is. The two boys I played rummy with had been in the African and Italian campaigns. The one had been a German prisoner for two months. It left me a bit depressed seeing all those men crippled, legs and arms in casts...

I hope you've found me over there. I think you have because I've felt very near you these past few weeks, especially the last ten days. I guess that's only natural, loving you the way I do.

Everything is going so well on the whole, both in the Atlantic and the Pacific but I'm still being cautious with my feelings and trying not to be too optimistic. The newest naval victory off the Philippines is very encouraging. I'm so glad to see them really being on the offensive now.

I've been following Ernie Pyle's column from France. He's so human, isn't he? Telling all the little things... Some of them that I think you'll like I've been saving. I have the Life Magazine and the

editions of the paper with the D-Day headlines for our scrapbook. I still have the Pearl Harbor editions and the news of your arrival in Ireland. I thought our grandchildren might like to see them.

I'm glad you liked the pictures. Those were the ones of Chimney Rock, yes. I thought them very good. I have a lot more but I'll save them.

It's been slow at the bank this week but I'm glad. We've been rushed for so darn long. I was home at three-thirty yesterday and four o'clock today... real banking hours.

I think it will be all right with you... I'm going to buy an extra bond with some of the money you sent. We'll still have enough cash when you come home and if we need any more it doesn't take long to get the money for the bonds.

Some of the patients at the hospital got together and formed an orchestra, and are they good. A few boys last night were able to dance. The orchestra played a lot of old tunes. You would have laughed to have seen the way the girls were tagged and checked like cattle going in and out of the place, but I didn't mind. The fellows seemed to like us being there. I noticed the majority of them were very young... late teens and early twenties.

In case this letter is a little confusing... I fell asleep writing it last night and didn't get an opportunity to finish it today, so now it's Thursday about midnight.

I came home today and lay across the bed for a few minutes and fell asleep for two hours, so I'm not so sleepy tonight for our date.

It's a nice night, just made for us, with stars and a cool breeze, swell for curling up in the corner of our convertible listening to the surf or just riding leisurely making plans for our ball team... just being together... just living our moments as they come. I'm going to be so satisfied just being with you when I can reach out and touch your hand, and know you're nearby. You won't have any trouble pleasing me... just stay near.

It just has to be this year that you come home... look who's talking.

I'll say goodnight for a little while. I love you. I don't think I could miss you any more than now. Good night and pleasant dreams.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 24, 1944—France

Hello sweetheart,

This is merely an afternoon date which may be extended tonight. I have only a few minutes to be with you now so we'll make the most of our opportunities. I started to write last night but the letter was interrupted. Following the interruption I didn't have much spirit to continue it. The result of the interruption wasn't very pleasant so I won't go into any further details.

Two of your letters, June 6 and 7, came from London by plane yesterday. You sounded extremely anxious as the result of the invasion break. Yes, I wish we could be together, but not here. It will be a while before anybody will get into a romantic mood.

I also received a letter from Warren. He has only six to go to finish his tour but he thought he might have to do a few after than because of the necessity for air support on the continent. He sounded 100 percent more confident than when he first arrived in the ETO. And that's a very good sign.

We have moved from our initial area and are now situated in one of the liberated towns from where we handle the general distribution of papers and also use it as our continental headquarters for the time being. Everything is working out fine so far with the exception of a dire need for more vehicles and men. None of the other fellows have arrived yet although we are expecting several almost momentarily. Unforeseen difficulties prevented the second detachment from coming over on the scheduled date. Earl will be in the next one and Andy in the one after than.

So far, as I believe I mentioned before, I have been assisting the route men in delivering the papers, turning out a late news mimeographed sheet and gathering stuff for stories to be sent back to London. Several of my stories have got back and have been used.

In short, everybody is tackling the job that has to be done at any given time. The Colonel has been here for several days now and has been called the "self-appointed newsboy."

I got my first haircut in France this morning. Capt. McNamara and I went to the "coiffeur" together... and what a haircut I came away with! I had it cut short before I left England and wanted it just a little shorter today but the coiffeur went all the way (well, just about all) and left me looking like le Boche. Capt. McNamara didn't fare much better. As soon as I can I'm going to try and have a snap made for posterity.

Your picture of the peoples' reaction to the invasion was superb, Billee. I just about knew how you would feel. Don't worry, I'll be all right. You mentioned



Charles with the remains of his bad haircut, with Earl Mazo in Normandy, June or July, 1944.

George Hicks being on the radio on D-Day. I haven't seen him over here yet. Larry Leseur of CNS stopped at the office yesterday and said he hadn't seen Hicks. bud Hutton rolled along the other day and stopped in. He's working a different beat with Frank Scherschel of Life.

I don't know what the correspondents sent home on D-Day and the subsequent action. But don't for a second believe that there wasn't much opposition to the landings or in the defense of some of those first objectives like Isigny, Carentan, St. Mere Eglise, St. Saveur, Montebourg.

The fighting has been as tough as it could be but our guys are coming through magnificently. The big advantage Jerry has is being in these parts for four years during which he grew to know every inch of the territory and how to use it for defensive purposes.

Those who said the invasion was a pushover must have filed the stuff from London, believe me. I think Gen. Bradley's casualty figures—15,000-odd killed and wounded during the first 11 days—answers all questions.

When you mentioned El's phone call and the fact that I was "front page news" I didn't know what it was all about. Perhaps you can clear it up for me.

I'm inclined to believe your French friend where the predictions are concerned. These people who say 30, 60, 90 days don't know what the devil they are talking about.

Before I go out this afternoon I'm going to ask one of the French people where the church is and at what time Mass is tomorrow. I'll have to do it this way: "*Ou est l'église, sil vous plait? Quel heure est Catholique Mass demain?*" Think I'll get by o.k.?

Got to go now, angel. I'll be thinking of you and loving you, missing you more as always. Love to Mom and tell her for me there isn't anything to worry about. It's a cinch for Warren now.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

PS: Sorry for the typing. And send the mail to the old APO 887. It will get here quicker, I believe.

June 26, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

It's me again and you can really call me "curly locks" tonight. After nearly a year, I broke down and got a new hairdo. This time, I had a little left on my head instead of looking like Maria in "For Whom the Bell Tolls." I think you'll like me just the same.

Andy sent the pictures and do you mind if I love you a little more? I get goose bumps and butterflies all over again. The one of you and Andy together is out of this world. You look as if you might hold out your arms and say, "Come here, angel" and I'd just melt, I know.

They are all so good... reading my letter, and that far away, wishful look with me in the frame. The casualness of the one looking up from the book as if I interrupted you. You might be saying, "Did

you call me, darling?” The sofa looks as if it could be “our corner...” looks all soft and cozy. I guess you’d like to be curled up there for five minutes since I imagine you’ve been really roughing it.

Hodenfield’s article entitled “Sidelights of War on the Beachhead” was in this week’s New York Times. He mentioned the Army setting up tents and facilities for the correspondents to bat out their stories. I presume you were in the vicinity.

I have an article you wrote that was taken from the *Stars and Stripes* by A.P. One of our summer guests tore it out of the Tampa paper Friday on his way here from Florida. He remembered your name and brought it to me. Nice, wasn’t it? You were with the Fourth Infantry and it described the nine days of fighting they went through. I couldn’t tell whether you had been with them from the beginning or had just joined them.

I’m going to pay a visit to the paper here and find out if there’s any way I could be assured of getting your copy. They get a lot of A.P. reports that they don’t use and yours might be some of them. That way I can keep up with you better.

In tonight’s paper, it states that 6000 commissions are to be given directly to enlisted men on the battlefields... had you heard?

I was hoping I’d be getting some of the *Stars and Stripes* soon for D-Day.

If I seem to be a bit absent-minded, it’s because I have your pictures spread out on the bed beside me and I keep looking and wishing, wishing and just wishing.

A couple of details... how do you rate the officer’s shirt, tabs, etc.? And the black tie? I didn’t think you all were allowed to wear them any more.

You are still the same. I think I see a few extra gray hairs but I love every one of them. I could just curl up beside you and lay my head on your shoulder and let the rest of the world go by.

You know I was thinking the other day there are so many things we haven’t done together. I’ve never taken your picture... we’ve never shared a steak dinner... I’ve only been to two shows with you... we have to go on a picnic together... swimming... so many things to do.

I like the frames. The boys must think it something having two big pictures sitting around. By the way, what did you do with me? I’m too big to put in your pack. You must have had a lot of things you didn’t know what to do with.

I love the way your eyes crinkle at the corners and that smile always gets me. I fell in love all over again.

I’m so disappointed tonight. I baked a cake for Mom’s birthday tomorrow: I tried something new and what a flop it was. Mom says not to worry, that she’ll make a pudding but I hate making flops. Now I’ll have to dash home tomorrow and make another, and hope that it comes out all right. We’ll have ice cream and cake as usual and she’ll open her packages.

I’m falling asleep on you. Fine thing. Why do I always wait until the end of the day to write you when I’m always so tired? The need for you must be greater then.

I'll close since I want to attend Mass in the morning. I love you, so much. Keep well and be careful. Goodnight, my darling.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

June 28, 1944—France

Hello sweetheart,

Glory, glory! An armful of mail today when I returned from Cherbourg shortly after it fell! Your letters of June 1, 4, 6 and the "Father's Day" card were among the 10 pieces of mail for me. Earl and several of the other fellows arrived and brought it with them. Now that we have a little more badly-needed help we can get something done.

Our reportorial work has worked out fine, with Hutton, Hodenfield and I sending stories back. Inasmuch as they haven't had to worry about circulation, they had more time to write but within a couple of weeks, I hope to be able to do more.

The picture in Cherbourg wasn't so nice. It was the second time in as many days that I had been up to that front and most of what I saw will not be passed on to you. Not that you can't take it, but I'd rather not talk about dead, dying, shelling, snipers, wounded, chaos, etc.

Since I wrote last, we moved for the second time. The first was to establish better headquarters. The second was because Boche shells were getting too close for comfort... next door, in fact. Now we occupy a house, which formerly housed a German H.Q. The place was partly shelled and the roof leaks but it will suffice. We



U.S. soldiers with bodies of dead German soldiers, Cherbourg, June 1944.

have engaged two French women to cook and housekeep for us and they are worth their weight in gold. The husband of one has been a prisoner for four years. One of her two sons, a six-year-old boy called Guy (pronounced "Gee with a hard "G") is the cutest kid you ever saw. The fellows have taken

to him quite a bit and are spoiling him, I'm sure. He greets me with "Bon jour, Monsieur Charles," and holds out his hand. His twelve-year-old brother's name is Michel.

I'm terribly sorry the mail is so few and far between for you. Please bear with me for a while, until I'm able to get back to normal. I don't know when that will be but I hope it isn't long.

I wish I could be near and see you in your clothes. The gabardine sounds stylish.

About the Molotoff story... if you have two copies, I'd like to have one sent. There isn't any other way I can see it now.

What's the latest on the \$75 check? I thought it was coming back to me but I haven't seen it yet. It would be funny if it were lost in transit and we never did get anything for the story.

The "nest egg" of \$1191.25 doesn't look too hot when you consider how long we've been saving. Still, the money I sent just before I came over should bolster it a bit. There was \$150 in one check and a little more than \$30 in another. Since I have been in France I have spent exactly 25 francs (50 cents) for my GI haircut, shampoo and tip. That shampoo sounds out of this world when I consider what we're going through.

The June 3 "date night" letter put me back in your arms as I read it. I could almost feel your head next to my face and your voice in my ear. The special kiss at the end just about put me in dreamland. After I read the June 5 letter, I wondered what you looked like in a bathing suite. I must put that on my list of things to see post-war. You in pajamas, nightie, white dress, slacks and sweater, are a few others.

Writing to you like this almost makes me feel the war isn't too close but the spirit is interrupted too often by the Thunderbolts and Lightnings sweeping low overhead on their way out and the roar of traffic from tanks, big guns and trucks is constant. In the midst of it all I can look at your picture and still say, "Hello, sweetheart. You look damned pretty today, as usual."

'Bye for awhile. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles



American troops entering the Normandy town of Ste. Marie Eglise, June 1944. [Where the horses came from I have not been able to figure out. They might have been liberated from the Germans, who did use horses in France. They look far too well-fed to be French horses.]

The house Charles lived in was on this street in Ste. Marie Eglise.

June 29, 1944—Asheville

My dearest one,

At last and much sooner than I hoped for a letter from France written June 14. Your first.

To be able to hear from you at last from all that confusion and turmoil... from the pictures we've seen I have a good picture, together with your letter, of what goes on.

I've read and reread your scribbles on the note paper and the typewritten letter. I could tell immediately how busy you are, the way your sentences were short and to the point, but I don't mind. We'll have time to settle down at a near-future date and you can take time to tell me. We'll find a nice quiet place... our corner... and you can stretch out on our sofa with your head in my lap and tell me all about it if you like. If you'd rather not remember, that's all right, too.

You were able to tell me much more than I expected. I'm glad because I'm closer to you when I know more of what you are doing.

What a tough break for Phil Bucknell. You know, I always think of the worst. I had visions of you going in with the paratroopers. The photographer from "Yank" was with you at the apartment when Warren was there. I'll tell him when I write.

I wondered about Eddie, but presumed he was taking part, too.

You know what picture I've had in my mind... the picture your mother had of you in your fatigues and leggings with your hands on your hips or in your pockets and your funny hat on the back of your head, your gun slung on your shoulder... remember? I like that picture a lot. Somehow, I always think of Huckleberry Finn when I see it.

Cherbourg has fallen since I last wrote. Now we have a port through which supplies can be brought easier. The news is encouraging on all the fronts except China but we can't do everything at once.

Grimy or clean, I'll love you just the same, but I know how you don't like to be that way. I'll do my best at cooking for you. We'll have steaks and everything you like. I'll practice on my pies some more. I know what I did to my cake the other night... read the recipe wrong and put an extra cup of sugar in it so it was my fault. Poor Mom ended up baking her own birthday cake. We had a get together... Mom's good friends from down the street and some old summer guests who are here, and Freddie. We had cake and ice cream and I gave Mom her presents. Warren sent her roses. She was so pleased.

I get impatient, terribly so sometimes, but I remember all the things we did, how much we love each other, and I calm down. Some day soon all this will seem like a dream, a long dream but we will start a life of our own and the long days and longer nights will all be in the past. We'll reach up and make that star our own.

I have a confession to make. I was so exhausted when I settled down to write last night. I had raked the whole front and side of our yard and when I finished, I took a bath and crawled in bed. I wrote a page and a half and must have fallen asleep for I woke up about 1:00 a.m. with my pen still clutched in my fingers and paper all over the bed. I wasn't digging fox holes but I was pretty tired. I did more

of it tonight... not finished yet but another evening should do it. We had a hard storm last week and it knocked so many leaves and branches out of the trees.

Our papers keep telling us of all the steaks and good food and wines found in Bayeaux. They call it "Furloughville" in Newsweek.

You settled right down to work getting the paper out right away, and the boys were so anxious for news of any kind. I've been thinking of the cartoon of you and the typewriter the Journal gave you. You really went to war with it, didn't you?

I had a letter from the March of Time and they regret that they are unable to oblige with a copy of your broadcast but suggested that I get in touch with the New York Times, that the dramatization was taken from a story written by S/Sgt. Charles F. Kiley published in their magazine edition May 28, 1944. As if I didn't know that.

The tiny snapshots were taken where? There or in England?

I'm having the pictures Andy sent me framed. They are much too good to have in an album. I'm hanging them on either side of my mirror so I can always find you. What do you think... when we have our own place, I'd like to have a room, a sort of den you could call it. All the pictures that size would be nicely framed and arranged on the walls. We'll have enough to paper the wall if we keep on.

We have a holiday Tuesday... the Fourth of July. I was thinking this is your third holiday overseas, the first in Ireland, the second in England, and the third in France. The fourth? Who knows? How about 195 or the residence of Mr. and Mrs. C.F. Kiley, Jr.? You'd probably have the day off. I want to go on a picnic, a swim, steaks cooked on a grate and the rest of the day to ourselves, to do as we pleased. Picnics always go with the Fourth of July.

Warren has his third oak leaf cluster. That must be about 25. He's anxious about you. See how much family you're gathering as you go along?

Tomorrow is a busy day for me. I wish I could tuck you in a nice soft bed and make you comfortable. I'll do my best to make up for all the discomfort. It won't be too long now, I feel sure.

God bless you, darling, and keep well. Remember my love is always near.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 1, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

A welcome letter today written June 24... pretty good timing, considering.

I'm so glad you are able to tell me so much of what goes on. Your letter must have gone back to the office to be censored because it has Earl's name written across the front.

How could I have been any other way but anxious the day the big news broke, you big lug? I happen to be in love with you. I'm glad you are all right and under the circumstances getting along so well. The unpleasant interruption you mentioned left me wondering, but I'll know sometime if you care to tell me.

Warren has been away on detached service, according to his letter of June 29 and wasn't able to write. We've been wondering if it was this recent three-way bombing run that took several days, or else perhaps they are using them to evacuate wounded from the beachhead.

You sound as if you are a bit shorthanded. I hope by this time the situation is changed. You sound tired and a little grim, but then this is grim business you're in, and I understand.

Some interesting news over the air tonight. Col. White, I believe his name is, who has charge of the African publication of the *Stars and Stripes* was recalled because of suppressing political news from the boys there. Isn't he the one you mentioned in a letter some months back, that the boys on the staff had so much trouble with? Another raid on the Japanese, with the B-29s again. Good news. I wish we had more of them to relieve the Chinese situation.

According to reports tonight, the boys are holding their own in France. Ernie Pyle's column has carried a lot, concerning the activities of the boys. I read that every day. The latest week of the *Stars and Stripes*... June 12... covered it more thoroughly than anything yet and covered it more exactly, I'd say.

I still can't understand why they try to soften the news to us. They make much ado out of the first news of any big battle and then when the reports on the wounded and killed comes through they stick it on an inside page in an obscure place, when nine times out of ten no one would notice... as if to tell us we can't take it. I'm inclined to believe the majority of us can take anything coming our way.

Here's a coincidence... remember the girl I mentioned from Jersey City, that I work with? Her husband very recently arrived in England and he has the same A.P.O. as you do... #887. Pretty good, that is.

We had a little rain but not enough to be of any use to the garden. I'm getting to be a farmer, watching the skies for a shower.

I'm falling asleep. Love me, darling, as I love you. Keep well and safe.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 1, 1944—France (V-mail)

Hello, sweetheart,

It has been a long time since I really squeezed in a date like this. I have been traveling today and stopped off here for a bite to eat before heading back to headquarters. I have these few minutes on my hands and decided to have a little chat with you.

Our hopes to start publishing on the continent went up a few points during the past week but we are still circulating the paper turned out in London. I never imagined there would be so much attached to getting a paper under way and it has been more difficult here because of war damage to plants, trying to “parlay” with French labor at a time when the people are only beginning to recover from German occupation. Still, we’re plugging away and if the first few editions aren’t all we hope for, we’ll try to work out the difficulties as we go along.

Operations for our guys... that is, the Americans at the front... have quieted down since the capture of Cherbourg. The British are taking over for the time being in their sector. The whole picture still looks like a lot of hard fighting. That is apparent by the time it took to sweep such a small part of France like the Cherbourg peninsula.

Andy got over yesterday, and with Earl here, it’s like old times again. Andy brought with him a postcard from Benny, sent from a lake in Wisconsin where he and Jane were enjoying his furlough. That’s the way it is. Everybody else runs for a foxhole and Benny basks in the sun at a Wisconsin lake.

‘Bye for awhile. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

July 2, 1944—Asheville

My dearest,

Another letter this week. It’s wonderful... I feel like a new woman hearing from you. I hope our mail is getting through in good time.

I’m sorry you had to wait so long and then not get a happy letter. I must have been feeling low but we were getting no mail.

At long last, we are getting a little rain. Our poor garden is almost burned up. I hope this rain will save it. We worked so hard in it... the weeds haven’t had a chance.

It was a lazy weekend. We had a houseful last night, mostly soldiers. One came in from the hospital and had his wife with him. It’s the first time in 14 months they have been together. He just got back from overseas. They were oblivious to everything but each other.

Promise to look at me the way you are looking at my picture in that one that Andy sent. I won’t ever have to worry about you not loving me enough... not that I worry. I don’t, not now.

It’s like you to reassure me that your position is not in the danger zone. In the newsreel today we saw them landing supplies at Cherbourg. We saw the king, General “Monty” and Eisenhower as they visited the beachhead, and also DeGaulle. I looked for you but didn’t see you.

I started arranging some of my Asheville pictures in an album. It’s going to work out very nicely.

We saw a good movie today, “And the Angels Sing.” Mom enjoyed it lots. “Dr. Wassel” is here today. Guess I’ll have to see that one, too.

At this point last night I fell asleep on your shoulder. You didn’t disturb me, so I just slept on.

The news is good tonight in Europe. Everything seems to be topsy-turvy but all to our good. Reports came through tonight that Germany has moved gold and valuables to Lisbon. It looks like they are getting scared at last. It must be over soon, not only for our sakes, but there are millions of others like us asking for so little but having to wait so long... not only Americans but those who are sharing this battle. They are even more tired than we are, who have not borne the physical brunt of the battles. How anxious they must be to lay down their guns, but not until we have attained that just peace we’ve been fighting for. We’ll not get so tired that we give up.



It’s the eve of another Fourth of July... the 27th month anniversary of our engagement. I can remember the letter you wrote, struggling to keep dry under that tent in N. Ireland when you were with the 135th. This is the third Fourth over there. Something tells me 1945 will find us celebrating our Fourth as it should be... together... with a picnic or just being together. Mr. and Mrs. Kiley for the first Fourth of July 1945. That will call for a real celebration.

I’m missing you so, and getting anxious now that the day... our day... really seems on the near horizon. I’ve been trying to follow you through the news but I don’t make out so well.

Did I tell you I went to the newspaper here and talked to the A.P. editor? He promised to inform me at once if any of your stuff came through from the pool. Says he knows several *Stars and Stripes* fellows... one by the name of Vance. I can’t remember the other fellow’s last name but the first name is Max. He was in the South Pacific. I think he’s in New York now. Have you had any news at all of Ben’s arrival in New York?

A lot of these desk-warmers are to be sent out of Asheville this month and overseas. It’s about time. This, the headquarters for Weather and Communications for the Air Force. I guess it’s more or less of a pool for men and that’s why there always seems to be more officers than necessary here.

What a day we had at the bank today. The Monday after the first of the month is always terrific. I’m beginning to realize I took over a man-sized job but I’ll survive. We have enough easier days to make up for those at the beginning and middle of the month. I handled about thirty thousand today. It’s interesting work but you sure lose the value of money when you handle everyone else’s. I’ll have to learn how all over again when I take up the position of housewife. It should be a steady job, don’t you think, especially since it’s to be with a new name.

I had to stop again and billet... is that the term they use?... two lieutenants and wives for the night... field artillery observer pilots. What a title that is! We get all kinds from colonels down to privates.

Friday night I watched the sun go down and our star was the first to appear in the sky, so bright and alone for quite a while, but somehow reassuring... keeping a watchful eye on me as if to say that your darling is thinking of you this night and he's all right. Sometime we'll see it together and I wouldn't doubt that he'll give us a happy little twinkle, to know that we were finally together.

I must write to Marguerite before the day is over. I'm in the doghouse... I've owed her a letter for so long. We've been having so many reservations and I have to answer all of them, two or three a night besides my dates with a certain staff sergeant. Keeps me pretty busy, so she'll have to be patient.

Love me and miss me... how about climbing aboard a cloud and spending tonight with me. I wouldn't tell on you. You could be back by reveille. Goodnight... see you in my dreams.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 5, 1944—Asheville

Hello my darling,

Can I drop in for a bit? Maybe we could have a spot of tea or something. Better yet, let me just look at you. How has the past month treated you? Are you very weary? I'd love to make up a nice clean bed and let you crawl in. Then I'd bring a tray of everything you'd like and let you eat in bed. How would that be?

I'm going to make you so comfortable when you come home, you won't want to budge.

Yesterday was a holiday and I celebrated by sleeping until 12:00, the first time in weeks. Sundays I go to early Mass so I get up a little earlier than I do to go to work, so there's no sleep there. When Mom woke me, I lay for awhile, just thinking about us.

I had us in our apartment... everything just the way we want it. I was waiting for you to come home. I even had it all planned... what we'd have for supper. Silly but it's fun.

Hey, if you were going to buy a sweater, a regular sweater in civilian life, what color and what size would you buy? Why? I just wanted to know.

Father John dropped me a line in answer to the special I sent concerning your activity in France. He went to see Ben. They have a dinner planned at 195 whenever I can get up for a few days. I'm afraid that my traveling days are over until I see you. I'm trying to save a little money for my wedding dress and a train ticket to Newark... Pullman this time. You know why. Don't laugh, but it's so I won't look like a hag when I get off the train, and certainly I would, riding the day coach.

I got the week of June 12 *Stars and Stripes* which included the Liberation edition. Lt. Hodenfield sure is getting a lot of stuff in ... every issue has a couple of his columns. I'm missing the week of D-Day yet... it's probably on the way. I read Phil Bucknell's account. Poor guy stayed in the same place for 7 1/2 hours before they moved him to the medical aid hut. I guess you already knew that.

I went to see “The Story of Dr. Wassell” last night... really swell. Gary Cooper has another hit. It’s amazing how completely he lives each part. It’s a wonderful picture.

I went to Red Cross tonight. Someone misinformed me when I came home in January... they told me they no longer had night sessions. After D-Day, they had a notice in the paper that they had one night a week, so I presumed they started the night sessions again because of that. Now I learn that they’ve always had them. I’m so mad. Here, I could have been going all this time. Think of all the bandages I could have made. I used to go pretty regularly before I left Asheville.

We have reports tonight that bombers have returned to England that have been gone since June 22nd on a 3-way bombing mission. They landed in Russia and Italy. I’m wondering if Warren was among them. We haven’t been hearing as regularly. They mentioned no losses.

The news is good all the way around. They announced last night on the late news that the first continental edition has been distributed to the boys and how you fellows had to figure out the French presses. See... you’re making the news again.

Father John said they hadn’t heard from either of the Eddies... Bette’s Eddie is in the Pacific somewhere. Did you hear about Bette’s diet the doctor put her on? El says she’s really sticking to it and losing weight. I’m still holding my 118. This time last year, I was down to 112. I guess it’s Mom’s cooking together with not dashing to make a train. Perth Amboy must miss seeing that streak coming down Smith Street every day; that was Billee making the train.

I’m yawning and it isn’t the company. Mind if I cuddle up on your shoulder? You know, one of my nicest memories is you snuggled against me on Dot’s sofa, listening to her phonograph. Remember how Dot and Ruth tactfully took themselves off to the store?

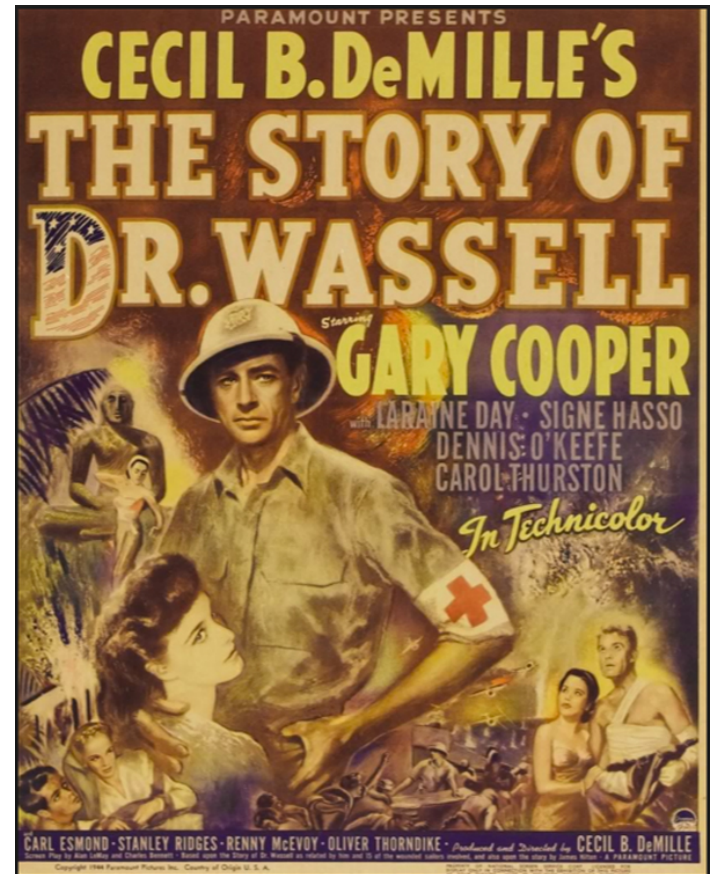
Goodnight... see you in my dreams. I love you.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 6, 1944—Cherbourg

Hello sweetheart,

At last, we have an hour to ourselves. I can keep my date in temporary comfort at least, and try to make you feel how much I have been missing and loving you.



Air service from London yesterday brought three of your letters and the “don’t worry” card, which made me laugh out loud.

But first, let us get each other up to date on the picture over here.

The day after Cherbourg fell, our somewhat small editorial staff moved in. There is, or was, a small newspaper plant here and after negotiations with the owner, we decided to try and turn out our first paper in France. The mechanical facilities and incoming communications system only allowed for a two-page paper. We got the first one out on July 4 and we will publish every day until the paper stock runs out or we move to another spot. Morrow Davis, ex-N.Y. Herald Tribune, and I are handling the desk with Earl, Andy, Hodenfield, and two others on the staff. Our cable news is coming direct from Benny in New York.



Allied troops celebrating the taking of Cherbourg, July 1944.

Until someone gets here to relieve me so I can devote my time to writing, I’ll be on the desk from 7 p.m. until 8 a.m. Of course, the job is more than that. We only have one Frenchman working with us, and our work also includes just about everything there is to publishing a newspaper. There isn’t any engraving plant here so we can’t use pictures.

We have moved into a three-story house and have two Frenchwomen and a man cooking and keeping house. Now, there’s a job you’d like.

Bob Moora is supposed to be coming over soon, but not soon enough to suit me. Despite all the trials and hard work, it certainly has been a lot of fun.

Getting back to our “home...” It was formerly occupied by a German labor headquarters. Before that, it was possibly the home of a fairly wealthy Frenchman. There are three floors, eight bedrooms, three baths, and five large rooms for office and dining space.

There was a huge safe in one of the rooms, locked and looking a bit suspicious. Today, the Intelligence people came and calmly burned the door off. The fact that it could have contained a booby trap and blown me to kingdom come in my sleep didn’t seem to bother them. The joke of it was that the safe was empty.

Andy, Morrow Davis and I occupy a room on the top floor and, under the circumstances, we are quite comfortable. The schedule operates with Andy, Earl, Hod and the other reporters covering the

field and front, with Morrow and I on the desk. Hutton is stationed in another sector, writing solely for London.

One of the women in the house is a 20-year-old named Paulette. The fellows have a great time trying to make her understand English. She grasps the general idea of what we say and serves as a medium through which we talk to others.

We've also hired a young Hollander who speaks broken English and good French, and we use him as an interpreter at the plant. He was conscripted for work by the Germans and sent to Cherbourg to work for them.

We are still on canned rations, but with a little ingenuity have done pretty well.

After the first week, when death was all around and everywhere I went, this has been something of a pleasant change.

I've gone on and on without saying anything about your letters... and it's time to go to work so I'll be back on my day off, Saturday, to spend ever so much time with you.

Love me lots, sweetheart. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

July 7, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

"I miss you since you went away. Miss you more than I can say, dear. Daytime, nighttime... nothing I do can make me forget that I still love you. Kiss you, in my dreams I kiss you, whispering 'darling, how I miss you.' Tell me, do you ever miss me as I miss you?"

See how I feel tonight? I was sitting here looking through an old song sheet and this one caught my eye. I haven't heard it in ages.

We've been having a beautiful rain and we needed it so. It's stopped now and it's nice and clear. I wish I had a good raincoat... I wouldn't mind walking in the rain. That's something I should buy and I never think of it until it rains... then I always wish for one.

Our garden looks so nice... fresh and green again. It looked as if it needed a drink bad.

I was with you last night but decided I wanted to see you again tonight. Do you mind? Do you think the paper and boys can spare you for a little while? We might walk down the road a piece. Tell me what you're doing. Are you very tired tonight? There's a nice tree over there and a lot of grass... let's sit down and you can put your head in my lap and just relax.

I like to walk very much. I suppose after being in the Army, you won't like it so much after all that you've done in almost three years. We can just ride in our convertible. What do you think of that idea? We can get along a long time without one. I'd rather have a phonograph radio combination,

wouldn't you? I don't drive and I hear you don't drive very much. You did drive Father John's car that Sunday uptown. He told me, though, that he had both fingers crossed all the way.

Eddie is the guy... what a ride he gave me Christmas day to Journal Square to send that cable to you. I didn't think we'd make it. He was having fun, though.

I was finished for the day at 1:00 today... pretty nice. That's what I like about bank work... when you finish you can go home.

I bought you Virginia Rounds today to send with your cake. I'm just sending cake, cigarettes and stationery... then you won't have anything to accumulate. The cake looks swell and we'll give it the same treatment as the Christmas cake. At least it will be a change from the rations.

I feel better now, since I've been with you for a bit. I'll be back soon. Love me and miss me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 8, 1944—Cherbourg

Hello angel,

We won't talk much about the war tonight, will we? It's a lovely night and the war isn't very far away but everything is quiet. It is just sunset time... 10:30. We are alone in the room I share with Andy and Morrow Davis, Andy having gone off to the front for a couple of days and Morrow downstairs talking baseball with Earl and a few of the others.



American nurses landing in Normandy, June 1944

Our house is getting to be quite popular. The word has spread like wildfire that we have a good "mess" and invariably there are four to eight guests for meals. Yesterday we had our first female guests... two Red Cross girls and a nurse. They said they were just "passing by." And last night, three correspondents stayed all night.

After working all night on the paper I went up near the front for awhile this morning, but came back early for a cold shower and some sleep. I wanted to see some of our artillery in action.

The most recent letters I've had from you have been those of June 10, 13 and 16. Until you broke the news, I hadn't heard about the

March of Time program. In fact, I still don't know what it is all about, although I suppose it was the "Molotoff" piece. Will you give me more details on it? A letter from Dot said they heard about it but missed the broadcast.

Dot's letter also included a picture of her and the baby. It was a miniature of the one she gave Al for Father's Day.

While we're talking of Father's Day, it was thoughtful to remember Dad, honey.

The pictures you sent were super. I liked the one taken en route to church the best [not identified].

Billee, I haven't seen much on what they are saying at home but the life of me I can't understand this "60-day surrender" business. I don't think I'm pessimistic when I say the Jerries are pretty well set here, and it is taking a helluva lot of hard work to push them back. We have been here for more than a month and we aren't even clear of the Cherbourg peninsula. Still, the apparently optimistic news that is reaching the U.S. may be more accurate than we ourselves can see here.

By the way, I've been communicating with Ben by press wireless almost every day... strictly business, of course.

You wondered how you rated "everything I ever dreamed of." Why, my little piece of angel cake, it's because you are the sweetest, most lovable girl who ever dreamed. Anyone can see that. And, it's because you don't ask for much... just me and a music box.

Be assured that the first music box I see I'll send to you. Your slightest wish is my command. How's that for gallantry?

Your daily Mass and communion constitutes the best possible support I could ask for. Thanks, sweetheart.

I was amused, puzzled and a little thoughtful as the result of two things you mentioned in your letters. One was what would I like for a wedding present, and the other was something about, "we'll have to learn to sleep together."

I remember you saying once before you had my wedding present all picked out. I hope it's all wrapped up in a white evening gown and a tilted nose. And, I can't foresee any problem about sleeping together. In fact, it will be a pleasure. You see, even in France, I can take liberties with you and not be afraid of a comeback.

Glad you received the \$150 okay. But I have a correction to make. You said it probably was the biggest part of my June pay. Hell, it was all of my May money, plus! I haven't been paid for June yet but will get two months' salary at the end of July.

The idea of getting the records now is swell. The only one I can think of that should be added is "As Time Goes By." I'll think of some as we go along and let you know.

Time to kiss you 'bye for awhile. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

July 10, 1944—Asheville

My dearest one,

Your “hello sweetheart” of June 28 was just what the doctor ordered. After a hectic day and I mean hectic, that lasted until after six, you can imagine how that familiar airmail looked.

I’m glad Earl and other boys arrived. That relieves the tensions a bit. I could tell the difference in this letter. I can gather that you’ve been shouldering quite a bit of the responsibility and with the fellows coming in, maybe it will be spread around a bit.

I’ve seen quite a bit in the newsreel and the commentators give us a pretty vivid picture of the area so I have a fairly clear picture of your surroundings, enough that I don’t like it but who wants any of their loved ones seeing and smelling death and all that goes with it? It’s better to talk about it to me than keep what you feel inside, and I can take it.

At least La Boche, as you call them since being in France, keeps things from getting dull and in a rut, dropping shells on your next door neighbor, necessitating a move. Having the roof leak in your new domain isn’t too good either, since the weather hasn’t been on your side of late, so we hear.

You sound all settled and comfy... two Frenchwomen to cook and clean for you. Are you getting better food? I hope so. I’m sending two packages this week. I was sure one would be mailed today but I finished too late to have them boxed. Since the boxes and the weight have to be exact, I take whatever I’m going to mail to a friend of mine in the mailing department at Ivey’s and she boxes them for me. I’ll send along some candy for the two little French boys, just in case you are in the same place when they reach you. I’m also sending you some very precious film.

We took some pictures yesterday, of my new hairdo and some puppies that happened to be in someone’s yard nearby. The cutest things you ever saw, one a ball of white fluff, and the other two black. I couldn’t get away from them after taking pictures. I finally had to put them behind the shrubs and run like mad out of sight to keep them from following. It was a little late to be taking pictures but I hope they come out ok.

I’ll send along my second copy of the NY Times magazine in the box so you can see it. It has an excellent drawing of Gen. Ike on the corner.

I always feel a bit ashamed for being so impatient when I hear and read about women like Guy’s mother whose husband has been a prisoner four years, but I guess I can’t help being that way when you love someone as I do you. Maybe I’ll be forgiven.

Don’t be so concerned about the mail situation on this side. Write when you can and I’ll understand. I know what a problem it is to find opportunity and time to write in your present situation. I’ll love you just the same. It’s just that I was hearing so regularly until just before D-Day and then nothing for several weeks. You understand.

I think I explained about the \$75, that it had been collected and re-credited to my account in the Perth Amboy National, less a 30 cent charge for the airmail, etc. The \$150 I received. Half was used to buy a bond. As yet, the \$36 hasn’t arrived. Don’t belittle our nest egg. You’ve done beautifully. It’s

I who am ashamed that my share is so very little. I have reasons but I won't bother with them now. I hear the boys were paid in Cherbourg... French money, of course.]

I heard a broadcast tonight, transcribed, entitled "Dateline, Normandy," with Larry LeSeur, George Hicks and Collingwood... very good, intimate incidents that happened among the boys taking Cherbourg.

I had to smile at all the dressing and undressing I'm going to have to do, modeling for you. Slacks I don't know about. Since the war, we've seen all sizes and shapes in them until I've sworn I'll never don mine again because if I look like some I've seen, I'll just dig me a hole somewhere and crawl in.

You made me almost hear the interruptions interfering with our date... the tanks and the rumbling of the guns. Since hearing the transcription of George Hicks entering Normandy, it isn't hard for me to imagine what you are hearing. That was so vivid... all I had to do was close my eyes and I was at his elbow, seeing the Luftwaffe being shot down and hear the ak-ak of the anti-aircraft. The land batteries probably sound a bit different but it all adds up to the same thing.

Young Dorothy Jean is getting to be quite a young lady. I think Dot owes me a letter but I'll drop a line and let them know you are all right.

My sister and aunt in Ohio both heard the broadcast of your story, along with countless millions. I feel like a robin I see in our yard, strutting around, I'm so proud of you. Do you mind if I strut a bit?

You've moved, and I've moved to our little two-room cottage in the rear... our summer quarters when we get reservations for so many summer people. I'm practically all moved. Mom still has some of her things yet to bring out. You're all settled on a table in your double frame with Father John's gift, the painting of Christ and the Sacred Heart, above you and Bill Daly's cross in front of you.

Haven't heard from 195 in about ten days. Hope everything is all right. You haven't come across Eddie yet? You know, unless the letter was lost, you never told me of the meeting with Eddie. Did you forget?

It's a quite night and a little warm. I forgot to mention I'm writing this from our new quarters, stretched out across the bed. I've had my bath and have written all this and it's only 9:00. I'm not falling asleep on you tonight even though I'd love to.

It's peaceful here. In the distance, I can hear people laughing and as far away as I am, I can hear snatches of people's voices from their respective porches. Everyone has a porch around us, and every evening finds them all gathered there. I can hear some dogs barking and an occasional car going by. I notice more cars on the road here than in the east. That is, more after business hours. I think that's because gas is a little more plentiful around here. I wish, but then it won't be too long now. I'm not being over optimistic, but when we've waited so long even to wait another 6, 8 or 9 months doesn't seem so long and I can get a little bit excited inside, can't I?

I'll say goodnight. Wait... I'll put on a fresh mouth and send you an extra-special kiss for making the sunshine bright for me today. Incidentally, it's Dorothy Gray's "Daredevil" worn by Billee Gray. Darling, you're all smeared with it... what did you do with the hanky you wiped off our first kiss with?

Remember you bringing it out of your trench coat pocket in the George Vanderbilt? It seems like yesterday. The canteen dances are held there. I haven't been in some time now but I always looked over there in the corner and saw us sitting so close together, holding hands. I was going to go, wasn't I?

Goodnight, my love. How do you say goodnight in French? I love you in all the languages and miss you so.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

July 12, 1944—Asheville

My darling,

It's very late but I'm not sleepy and I find myself wanting to be with you as much as ever.

This was a nice evening. I went to Red Cross and rolled bandages until nine, and took in all the latest methods of raising infants. I was the lone single woman among a half-dozen or more young mothers. I filed it all away for future reference. There were a lot of memories gone over tonight. I just listened to what Bill and Jim and Gene did... the little things they did around the house... so you see, you aren't forgotten, any of you. You're talked about in all the Red Cross rooms or wherever women... waiting women... gather. I thought, how these boys would have loved to listen in and hear about themselves.

I thought, too, how very much alike we all are in that respect, over there or from what I've heard when you gather together, talk always goes back home and what they used to do, and about Mary, Betty, Sally... whatever their names happen to be... and it's the same here.

Back to my evening... Elise picked me up at nine and we saw a movie, a good one, too. "Home in Indiana..." really refreshing. A horse story in Technicolor. We rode to Biltmore. She had her aunt's car, and we had chocolate sodas. It seems ages since I went riding in a car. It was fun.

Believe it or not, I like chocolate ice cream sodas now. I never did before but since you're so fond of chocolate, I've learned to like chocolate cake and chocolate sodas. I'm going to love going to an ice cream parlor and look at you over the rim of a tall chocolate soda.

Elise said to tell you hello, and she hopes you hurry home. Incidentally, she's coming to the wedding. Her mother always asks about you. They are a nice Jewish family.

I had a long letter from El. She tells me Eddie is still in England. I'll bet he doesn't like that. Tom is out on the water somewhere.



He must be on patrol duty. She said, too, she and Father John and the baby might drive down on his vacation. I wish they would, but the only trouble is we're having a polio epidemic nearby and I wouldn't want to risk it.

She asked if I couldn't come up before Ben went back to England. She wants to have him and his wife over for dinner, and me, too, if I can make it.

I made up my mind I wasn't going to take another train trip unless you were at the end of it, but maybe I'll weaken.

It's a typical summer night... warm but just right and the stars are out. I'd like your shoulder nearby to snuggle on.

I sent you a package today... cigarettes, stationery, film and a little candy. I'll send the cake this week, too. I got some lollipops... I thought you could use them to cement French relations with the younger generation. I'll send them with the cake.

The stationery I think you'll like this time. I wasn't able to get this kind in the size I wanted so I bought some by the pound and it will definitely hold the ink.

I saw more pictures of Cherbourg tonight and the rubble, ruin, prisoners and dead. I know why you didn't want to write about it.

A letter from Warren yesterday says he had completed 27 missions as of July 4 and that they had jumped it to 35. He had a pass and went to Southport. He said he spent it going from one bar to the next. A fine thing that is. I hope he got his birthday cake in time. He said he was well and getting along fine. Here's hoping and praying.

Think back... did you dream about me July 10... the other night when I wrote to you? I've had dreams before but never anything like this, so help me. I saw you... I hadn't been to sleep long when I woke up and felt someone leaning over me... then the vision was gone. I'm sure it was you. I was shaking all over by the time I fully awakened, but it was all so real I could feel you there. Don't laugh and tell me I'm having hallucinations. I was tired and had been thinking of you, as usual, before I fell asleep. Maybe that did it. Anyhow, wouldn't mind having a vision every night.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

[A NUMBER OF BILLEE'S LETTERS FROM THIS TIME ARE MISSING]

July 15, 1944—Cherbourg

Hello sweetheart,

More mail from my favorite angel this week... the letters of June 19, 26 and 27. And, if our dates were "little bits of heaven" in England and Ireland, they are great big chunks of it now.

With all of the excitement during the last few weeks, I haven't taken much time to make love to you, have I? That will never do.

Cherbourg isn't the romantic spot we knew in other places. Being an old city, with only 30,000 population and a port, makes it ugly in places. That's a brief picture of our "lover's lane" in France. Nevertheless, we are still very close together, always, and more in love than ever.

In one of your letters, you asked me what I had done with "you," when I scrambled up the beaches of Normandy. I had to leave most of "you" in Clifford's Inn but you know I wouldn't go more than two blocks without you in my pocket. Your big pictures were too valuable to risk damage so I brought the picture case with you and I together. That's the one I took to Frankfurt and Norway as well as on most of my trips.

Bob Moora and three more fellows arrived from London during the past week, which makes the job more than a little easier. Bob will take over the No. 1 spot on the desk, with me as No. 2. I thought I would get a chance to get out and write but the colonel says no. However, Bob and I are going up to visit the press camp at 1st Army this afternoon and will return tomorrow. Ralph Martin, in a letter from New York, gave me a message to pass on to Ernie Pyle and there are a few others I want to see. Meanwhile, Andy says he'll write to you while I'm gone. I'll bet he does, too.

Did you receive the money he sent before he came over? When I left suddenly, I gave him \$20 or \$30, all that I had, to send to you. He sent it just before he left.

It's all right with me if you buy bonds with the money. Remember, you are the finance officer of our army.

Say, what about this new hairdo? I insist on a picture showing from several angles.

I'm glad you are saving the Life magazines, Billee. I'll be most anxious to see them.

Now, about the Virginia Rounds. During the last few months, I've changed over to Chesterfields because the V.R.s are pretty stale when they get here. So far, the cigarette problem hasn't been so bad but I can always use a carton. I can also use a few tubes of Colgate toothpaste or Lyons powder and a few toothbrushes. A box of chocolates would go well, too.

Now, I'm off, angel. Kiss me 'bye for awhile. Love to Mom.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

July 17, 1944—Cherbourg

Morning sweetheart,

It's 3:30 a.m. here at the office and there's a lull in the work so it might be a good idea for you to drop in, sit on the edge of my desk, and let me have a look at you.

I had two letters from you today, by way of marking our anniversary, but they are back in our "chateau." I meant to bring them down with me but not only forgot them but my pen and ink as

well. I'm afraid this nightlife isn't agreeing with me. I never was able to sleep much during the day and I've been trying to do it for the last two weeks.

I had the plaster removed from my chest and back yesterday afternoon and let me give you some advice... don't ever have your chest shaved. Come to think of it, I don't believe I told you about that. Nothing serious, but a couple of weeks ago I had to make a dive to safety and in the process of doing so strained my back and chest. Adhesive tape was all that was needed to fix me up. But that gets us around to the chest-shaving department. The doctor shaved my chest (all five strands of hair) before taping it and now I have to scratch my chest so often it looks as if I had something. Of course, if you were here to give me an alcohol rub now and then, everything would be fine.

We have a radio here in the office, which gives us music all night. We get New York on short wave occasionally but mostly it's German stations. Berlin Betty is on now. And I could almost love her for playing "Ain't Misbehavin'." She sounds like an American and besides playing records, also sends messages to the American people from GI prisoners of war.

Thinking of what you said in your letter about the new hairdo reminds me to tell you my hair looks more like Maria's in "For Whom the Bell Tolls" than yours ever did. I got an invasion haircut before I left and had it trimmed even shorter over here. It has been growing back and just about now, the only way I can describe it is "scruffy."



WACs landing in Normandy, July 1944

The WACs (54 of them) landed in Normandy the other day and for the life of me, I don't know what the hell they are doing over here. That is, since there are only a handful to do the secretarial work they are cut out to do, it seems they could let the GIs do it for a while longer, until the situation gets more stabilized. To me, it looks like a stunt to get the women in on the war as quickly as possible and in a cheap way. Oh well...

Goodnight, honey. See you in dreamland in a couple of hours.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, Charles

July 23, 1944—Cherbourg

Morning sweetheart,

Another early morning date for us: 4:00 a.m. and about 30 minutes to spend looking at my angel. Sure, I can look at you. I have that pretty puss of yours in my pocket, and since Bob is in the composing room throwing type together, I can take you out and stand you up before me without risk of interruption or wisecracks from the other side of the desk.

This is a kind of special date because we have something to celebrate. Of course, by the time this reaches you it probably will be old stuff. Sure, you know what I'm talking about... Warren finished up and will be going home soon.

I believe I told you we have a teletype here that runs direct to the Times in London. Well, this afternoon while I was in communication with London, one of the boys broke in on the transmission to say he had an important message for me. I assumed it was a routine answer to some of the things I have been asking London to send here. But, this is what came over: "URGENT TO KILEY: Warren Gray has finished up and is going home." [In fact, Warren had broken down right before he was to leave on another mission, and was shipped home, right after his 20th birthday.]

I felt good all over and when I finished the afternoon's business I dropped into the church here just to say "thanks" to Somebody who listened to us and took care of him. During the past week, I started to worry again.

I hadn't heard from Warren for a spell and almost every night the wires told of "more than 1,000 American heavy bombers today attacked targets in Munich, Leipsig, Sweinfurt, Regensburg..." They are all pretty tough runs, and we have been losing a few, although not so many in view of the large force we sent. Last night when we lost 36 on a run to Schwienfurt and Regensburg, I got to thinking again... he should be finished by now... maybe he finished up last week... why don't I get some word about him...

Well, it's all over. Now we just have a couple of more to "sweat out." I heard part of Ed's outfit got in today but haven't been able to check where they are.

Got a letter from you today, too, which made it a good one all around. And, with the sudden reports of revolt in Germany, Hitler almost knocked off, the Russians rolling along like a steamroller, our guys invading Guam... Wow! All I need is you in my arms.

Your letter was the one of July 7, and I could love you to pieces for that "you big lug" compliment. At least, it's better than being a little lug. I'll get even for that crack.

So, 'night sweetheart.

All my love and kisses, forever and always, "Angel Puss"

July 26, 1944—Asheville

Darling,

Can I come in again for just a bit? I was surprised to hear from you again... July 16, a Saturday night date.

I'm glad to hear of the arrival of Bob and I know you were glad to see him. The trip to the front sounds exciting. I'll like hearing of it.

I was a bit disappointed... no packages today after receiving three in two days... only kidding. Hearing nothing concerning the contents makes me wonder if it is a military secret!

Bowling was the order of the night, with one of our guests. Her husband has been in the Pacific for two years. She expects him home soon. Incidentally, I bowled 78 which is really good for me, since mine is usually a lousy game.

We have a congenial crowd in the house... all Floridians... perhaps that's why.

I'm noting the items you need and I'll send them along. I don't know about the Chesterfields but I'll do my best. Popular brands are really scarce now. You see the strangest brands on the counters.

We're waiting patiently for Warren to put in an appearance. Mom is so excited... she's on clouds.

There's the nicest 3/4 moon out. I wish I could snuggle on your shoulder and look at it with you.

I see in the paper tonight where four WAC have been wounded by the robot bombs in England. They've been awarded the Purple Heart. I'm almost glad you are in Normandy and not in England where they are seeing so much of it. Warren didn't go there on his pass... he said the weather was too warm.

I'm getting excited myself at the prospect of seeing Warren. I hope he's well and will be able to enjoy his leave.

I'm not sleepy tonight. I'd love being curled up near you and have you talk to me, and tell me about the things you've done. I feel like listening tonight.

I'm loving you so and missing you as always. I'll say goodnight until another time. Keep well, and love me always.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

PS: The money from Andy hasn't come yet.

August 2, 1944—Asheville

Darling,

Bless our dear old Uncle Sam... another letter today dated July 23. So good to hear from you. I could almost feel your enthusiasm and the good feeling you had.

Do you think it would be all right if I got a little optimistic now? I still have the date of our reunion after Xmas. Is that being too optimistic?

Well, we know now that Warren is finished and home but I know how you must have felt, too... such a good feeling to know that big job is behind him, his last mission.

It's a lovely night. I like our early morning dates because it makes us having dates that time the same time since the time is about 6 hours ahead. Did I call you a "big lug?" Just goes to show you how much writing to you is like talking. I meant it in a nice way, my dearest lug.

I'm glad Bob left us alone for awhile... very considerate of him. Is he married? He needn't be so free with the wisecracks.

I have the picture of you, the ones Andy sent, back from being framed and do they look super. I practically caused a riot in the bank. I was showing them to the girl next to me and before I knew it the bank personnel were gathered around, including the vice president. They did a swell job. I was wondering... would you like the picture of the "Stars and Stripes" [plane] done? It's about the same size.

Warren told me over the phone he had sent a direct message to you but had received no reply.

I went to a swell movie last night... "Bathing Beauty," in Technicolor with the new star, Esther Williams and Red Skelton... really good. He does a pantomime of a girl getting up in the morning that makes you roll in the aisles.

I've been wondering about Eddie. Hope you see him again. The report this morning said a tank division went ten miles in one day, and is only 160 miles from Paris. I wonder if we'll shell it. The news is unbelievably good on all the fronts... do we dare hope?

I've had to give up my Red Cross work for the present. I just can't get away in time to make it, so I'll have to go back after the season is over.

I was thinking tonight... should we get married in January, Florida would be the most logical place for us to go. We could catch up on our sunshine or rather your sunshine. I could see us basking under the palms, getting beautifully tanned.

I'm falling asleep. Mind if I say goodnight for now? I'll be back tomorrow. I love you and oh, how I miss you tonight. Love me and miss me.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee



August 7, 1944—Asheville

Darling,

Can I come in for a little while? Just clean off a corner of the desk or better still, let me be your secretary for a bit and you know where I'll sit then.

Your box is all packed. I'll note the contents for you so the censor doesn't decide to help himself. I've heard of it being done.

2 boxes Colgate toothpaste 1 box Dr. Lyons toothpowder 1/2 Chiclets 2 tooth brushes 1 carton of Chesterfields 1 box of fudge - 12 pieces 5 fudge bars wrapped separately

I had shampoo, peppermints and soap but the package weighed too much and I decided you'd rather have the fudge than soap. Send me another request?

I had a long letter from Marguerite today, mostly about the heat. It's been pretty bad. Incidentally, her sister had her 8th child last week, four girls and four boys... both doing well. They are such a grand family. Her husband went to Seton Hall to study for the priesthood but after four or five years he met Kit and changed his mind.

We're having a bit of heat ourselves here, but it's cooling off now as it usually does this time of night.

Did I tell you... I guess I did on Saturday... that Father John got a script of the March of Time program. How does he rate?

You were very close yesterday. In fact, I frightened myself at your coming home. You know, I think I'll need someone to give me a push into the station as Marguerite did the last time. Did you have any fears that day? You never said. I kept saying, "He'll be disappointed," but that welcoming smile and that leap up the stairs made me feel reassured almost immediately. So once again, it may happen. We'll just have to wait and see.

Marguerite says for you to cable me when you leave, so I can have a head start on preparations. I want to give you a chance to change your mind and she says no.

Lloyds of London give 8 to 5 that victory in Europe will be by October 31, 1944. Tonight's news says we're 110 miles from Paris. The news in the Pacific is good, too. The campaign for the Philippines is starting now. It all seems too good to be true. It seems so long but the optimism is beginning to get me. What are the odds on our being together for Xmas? What a Christmas present that would be. How could I ask for anything more... to be in your arms and have your Xmas kiss on my lips and in my heart. I get butterflies just thinking about it.

Mom says she's getting tired of making fudge and cake and having to wait so long to hear whether or not it hit the spot. She says the next, and it'll be soon, she's going to give to you in person.

We're worried about Warren. Not a word since a week on Friday when he called. I can't understand what goes on. He said he'd be there for a week or maybe two, but he'd let us know. I'm afraid he might be sick or something. Maybe tomorrow will bring good news.

My first Monday in several weeks without your cheerful hello to brighten my day. I missed you.

I noticed in the most recent *Stars and Stripes*, Ben's article from New York. He must be in seventh heaven. Haven't heard a word from him, though.

In the July 17 Newsweek there was quite an article about you guys in France and the new edition of the *Stars and Stripes*... also about the recalling of Col. White from the Mediterranean area. Capt. Neville is taking his place.

I remember you telling me he went with Ralph Martin to Africa. Is Ralph Martin still in New York?

Barry Wood is singing "Blue Moon." That's really old. I'll have to remember that because it will go in our collection.

I'm looking forward to my trip to New York in October. I'm beginning to need a vacation. I should talk... how long since you had one? Hope I can get reservations from Spartanburg on the streamliner instead of going by coach. I'm saving that Pullman ride for you.

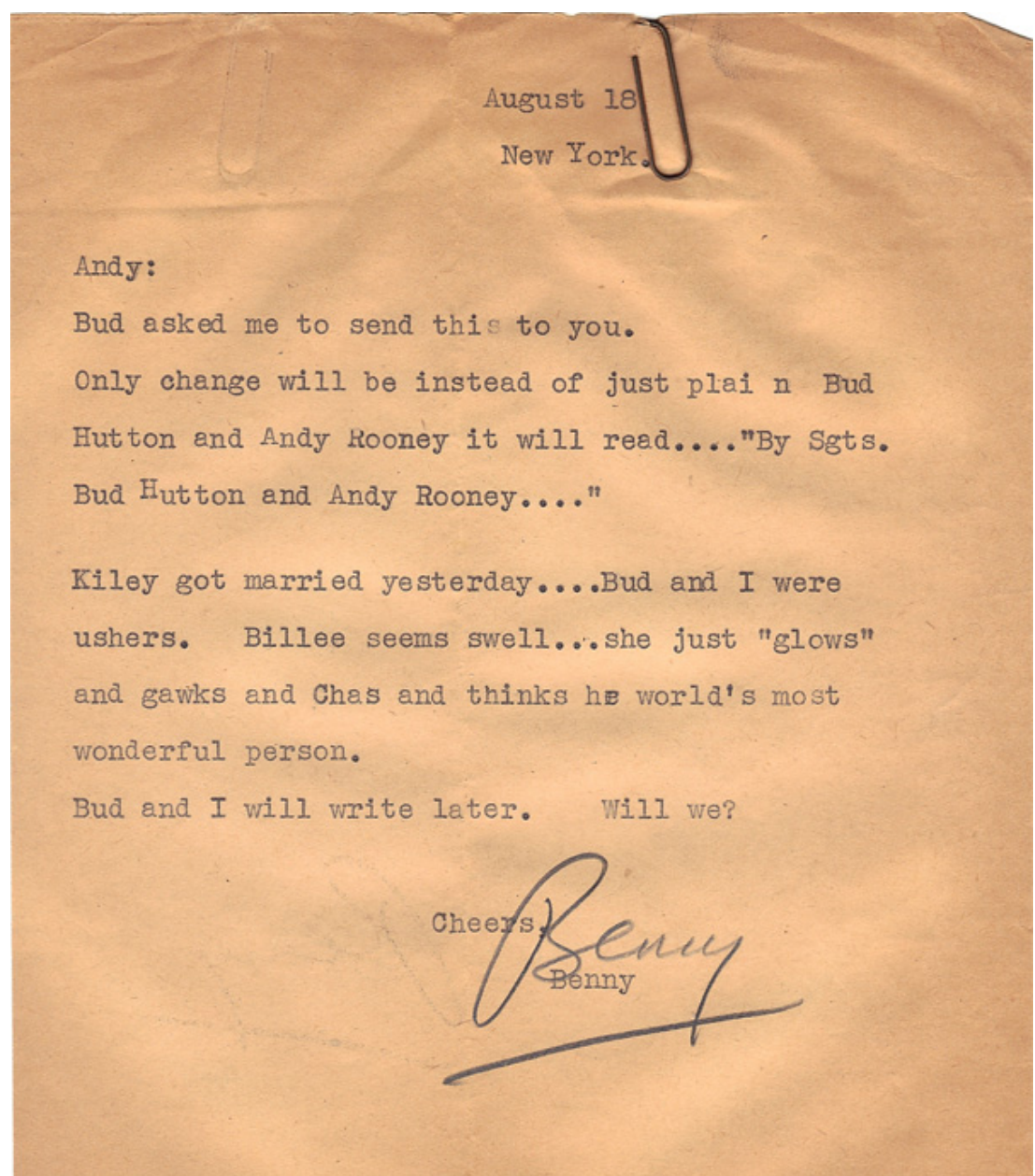
I'm falling asleep. Mind if I say goodnight for a little while? I love you. Miss me and love me. You can go back to work now. Your secretary is taking a little time off.

All my love and kisses, always your Billee

[Note: Charles arrived back in the U.S. unexpectedly some time during the second week in August, for a month's furlough and an assignment to work in the *Stars and Stripes* New York Bureau for an unspecified period of time.

Billee and Charles were married on August 17 in Jersey City. After the wedding, they entertained their guests for a wedding breakfast at a hotel in Jersey City. Then they went to the Lexington Hotel in Manhattan, where they spent the first four days of their honeymoon.

After their four-day Manhattan stay)we know they went to a baseball game and to St. Patrick's Cathedral), they visited Fred and Katharine Gilbert in Massillon, and Elizabeth in Asheville. After



Letter from Ben Price to Andy Rooney, August 18, 1944.

