

Love Letters

An American Family Epic

1941 - 1946



*The love letters and story
of a newly-married couple
separated during the war.*

Written by:

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Preface

In April 1995 when I contracted with William McFerren, Jr. to write his experiences as an U.S. Army Air Force B-24 navigator with the 380th Bombardment Group during World War II, I thought it would be a short “vanity press” account that would not interest the general reader. A few days into the project, his wife Betty mentioned that they saved all their personal correspondence of the period. The box-full of hand-written and typed letters revealed that their story would be of broad historical interest. What I had to do was interview, transcribe and weave his personal and military story around their letters to set a context.

Then 80 years old, McFerren was afflicted with “Parkinson’s disease.” While his memory was excellent, he suffered a speech affliction that made his recounting of the time difficult. I resorted to a long series of taped interviews that were made during 1995. These were transcribed to make the original source notes for his story. I then edited and wrote his narrative and placed his and his wife’s letters at appropriate places to form the manuscript that follows. Since the wartime delivery of mail did not allow letters to be sequentially received and replied to, there wasn’t a way to order them in a direct logical sequence here.

After the manuscript was complete, in late 1996 McFerren suffered a debilitating stroke. He died a few months later in 1997. For personal reasons, his wife did not wish to proceed with publishing his account and their letters. She died in 2010. Now their story deserves to be made part of the history of the period. After these many years, except for minor typographical corrections, I’ve decided not to further edit or revise the original narrative. I transcribed all their letters unabridged, and have left them unchanged. They are a unique collection of family wartime correspondence that reflect the personal and a general sense of the period on the United States war and home fronts.

Personal letters from combat zones were heavily censored about specific military operations, personnel, and details. It was only by hindsight that McFerren was able to fill the military details by his interviews with me.

Because of his superb navigation skills, 1st Lt. William McFerren was offered the job of 380th Group Navigator and promotion to Major in October 1943. He never assumed that position because he was shot down just a few days later on a mission to the Celebes. In 1992 he belatedly received a Silver Star for his wartime service.

The global Internet was in its infancy in 1996 when this was written. Today, for the discerning and experienced researcher, it is an excellent source of historical research and authentic records of military history. This includes a website for the 380th Bombardment Group of the Fifth Air Force. Those interested in the broader military context and details of the 380th, of which this account is a part, may consult: <http://380th.org>

Wm. A. Boas
Wray, Colorado
April 23, 2015

Introduction

The world celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II during 1995. News commentators cited the great battles and victories in Europe and the Pacific. They glorified the campaigns, exploits of leading commanders, and heroic airmen, sailors, and soldiers. But missed from all the talk, were stories of the emotional battles that families endured on the home front.

There isn't an equally extensive published record of what our families thought and experienced during that tragic time. When the war started for the United States in 1941, long distance telephone service was relatively expensive, and there was no such thing as electronic mail. Friends, families, and lovers spanned the distance between them by writing letters to each other. Letters are special, you can literally hold the expression of another person, a loved one, in your hand. A hand-written letter reveals the unique writing, and often the mood, of the person who wrote it. It can be read over and over to glean deeper meaning and pleasure. If saved, it leaves a detailed and permanent record. For those of us who lived and fought the war, letters were the most important things we could get to sustain our morale. They were the tangible evidence of love and support from our families, friends, sweethearts, and wives.

During the war, I was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps serving as a navigator with a B-24 heavy bomber group based in Australia's Northern Territory near Darwin. When I went overseas in May 1943, my marriage was just 19 weeks old, after a courtship of only four months. Thousands of others going off to war, experienced the same whirlwind romances and marriages. My wife, and many others, were left pregnant as we shipped out to our unknown fates. My son was born while I was overseas and I didn't lay eyes on him until he was two years old.

My war experience was traumatic for me and my family. During a mission in late October 1943, my plane was shot down, and the Japanese captured and interred me as a prisoner of war. A full year passed before word reached my wife and family that I was alive and well.

Betty, my wife of 53 years, saved the letters we wrote each other during the war. While I was overseas, we tried to keep a daily writing schedule to each other. There were times we couldn't manage it, but all the letters we wrote and saved are the substance of this volume. I was 28 years old, she 24, and our love was at flood stage. Our letters revealed aspects of our character and thoughts that we didn't have the opportunity to express adequately during our brief courtship. In part, our letters were a way to discover more about each other and to sustain our lonely spirits. They reinforced the mutual sentiment that we had really found the person with whom to share our lives.

In May 1943, I wrote Betty a letter saying I wanted to write a book about our lives and love. The book didn't get written then, or in the intervening years. In the Spring of 1995, Betty reminded me about our wartime letters, still carefully tied in bundles in our basement. I started to reread them, and realized we had already written our book. Not only had we depicted our personal story, but our letters and those of our family and others, seemed to portray a larger story of the national mood at the time.

While I was a prisoner of war, Betty didn't have to tough it out alone. Fortunately, people in similar circumstances established a support network. Betty wrote and received a flood of letters from our respective families, friends, and strangers who dedicated their time to writing the families of prisoners of war. The war involved almost everyone on the home front. A volume of just letters without setting the context, would leave many questions with a reader. So along with the letters, I have tried to set the context, describe key people, and relate colorful anecdotes. I also asked Betty if she would write a few lines recalling her reaction to the telegram reporting me missing in action. That was the turning point in our wartime lives.

It wasn't all tragedy, of course. There were humorous episodes both overseas, at home, and in the prison camps, as both our letters and my narrative will show. I served with men who were as colorful as they were courageous.

I am now 81 years old, and I hope our wartime correspondence will strike some nostalgic chords with our many contemporaries who experienced the war as we did. I also hope that our generation's children will have a better understanding about what impact, for better or worse, that period and war had on our lives. Each World War II family has its own memories. In part, what follows is ours.

William McFerren, Jr.
October 1996

Part I

Mrs. McFerren Remembers

Early Army Days

Air Corps Training, Courtship, and Marriage

Combat Training, Honeymoon, and Off to War

The Flying Boxcar

Mrs. McFerren Remembers:

WESTERN UNION

33 S B 47 GOVT WUX WASHINGTON DC 407PM NOV 2

MRS BETTY MCFERREN P.O. 266 CORONA CAL

THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS REGRET THAT YOUR HUSBAND FIRST LIEUTENANT WILLIAM MCFERREN HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION IN SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA SINCE TWENTY SIX OCTOBER. IF FURTHER DETAILS OR OTHER INFORMATION OF HIS STATUS ARE RECEIVED YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED. ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL 242P

Corona, California

November 3, 1943

My Darling Sweetheart,

I am writing because - Oh darling, I do not believe the horrible news I received in a wire last nite. It can't be true it can't it can't it can't - that's all. I just won't have it. You asked me what the anguish of childbirth was - I would rather endure that a thousand times than one nite like I spent last nite, and instead fate wills it that the childbirth shall only be once and there are a thousand nites.

No no no - Sweetheart, I don't believe it, and I'm writing to tell you so. You see I know you will get back to base, somehow, my navigator, and when you do, this letter will be waiting for you to tell you I know you are all right. See? Do not worry, my Sweet, as I am taking good care of Willie, and he is great company to me. He with his great big toothless grin. He is so like you darling, and I love him so terribly, the precious rascal. And honey, you know how I love you - the most perfect husband a woman ever had. You have made me know life at its very highest, and you will come back to me, Sweetie, I know you will.

Always, Sweetheart, I am in love with you. Betty.

My world had just fallen apart. When that motorcycle pulled up in our gravel driveway, I felt a terrible apprehension that it was bringing something I wasn't going to like. When the dogs barked, I had only a few seconds left in my happy world before the messenger handed me a Western Union envelope and roared away into the night.

'Missing in Action' . . . wasn't that something that happened to other people? Missing in action in the 'Pacific theater of war' (as it was so inappropriately called) Theater? Ugh! It was more like a boiling cauldron of witches' brew. Anyhow - the words 'missing in action in the Southwest Pacific' usually involved water, lots of it, deep and salty. Bill was a good swimmer, but . . . was he wearing his Mae West? A thousand questions flooded my mind.

The brief news had taken seven days to reach me - did they send it by carrier pigeon? It was many more days before letters from the air group arrived giving me the sparse available details. There had been eleven on board - ten regular crew members and a photographer. Five to eight parachutes had been reported. (Dear God, let it be eight). Parachutes -

parachutes - do you mean a piece of flimsy white nylon was all that lay between my Sweetheart and certain death - if he were one of the lucky ones able to get out of the wreck.

What terror could force a man to jump into thin air, thousands of feet above land or sea, fumbling for the ripcord to release the canopy that would arrest his freefall and carry him safely toward a new unknown - shark infested water. God, or Lady Luck, or whatever administrator of fate you adhere to would have to protect him from being strafed on the way down by enemy fighter planes. Even the smartest man in the world had no control there.

And yet - when faced with the alternative - the final moments of a swooning, burning, about-to-explode hunk of hot metal that had been a mighty aircraft, the decision to jump was certainly the lesser of the evils. At a time like that, you do what the experts have trained you to do. You jump. And pray. If you have time for prayer.

Nothing in my 24 years had ever happened to even remotely prepare me to deal with a blow like the one that arrived in a yellow envelope on a motorcycle that dark November evening. The man I planned to spend the rest of my life with might be dead. And dead is forever. We had such a short time together. Was that all? Was his life over now?

Sleep refused to come that night, but in the cold hard light of day, I began to assess the situation. Bill was very resourceful, very smart. I always told him he was the smartest man in the world. I learned so much from him. I was convinced that if he hadn't been killed outright, he would find a way to be in one of those parachutes. If captured, he would use his 'people skills' to placate the enemy enough to survive and come back to me and the baby son he had never seen.

My friends all said, "You're so brave not to lose hope." Hell, it didn't take bravery to believe what I wanted to believe. I could always face the worst if I had to. But I've never believed in borrowing trouble. It didn't cost any more to think that things would turn out as I hoped. I guess that's what is called being an optimist. Why suffer unless you absolutely have to? They're not giving any prizes for A-Number-One sufferers.

Bravery? I'll tell you about bravery. Just what made that crew climb aboard Fyrtle Myrtle for each foray into they knew-not-what, knowing full well each flight could be their last, ending in some grisly, unimaginable way. If fate favored them with a safe arrival home once more to be debriefed and to relax with a few drinks of welcome anesthesia, they still knew they would go through the whole thing all over again in another few days. Bill had done it 18 times before October 26. Now that's bravery.

Those 23 months that my beloved husband spent in various prison camps and that I spent waiting, not knowing if he were dead or alive, I lived and functioned, ate and slept, changed baby diapers - all pretty much without any feeling. It was two years of zombie-like existence. Our 'little navigator' grew and thrived; never having known his Daddy. He was blissfully unaware of what he was missing.

At the war's end, the zero hour came for me. Waiting was over. Now I would find out if our son and I were among the lucky ones whose beloveds would soon be returning to them. I was on pins and needles. We were without a phone in the beach town of San Clemente where my folks planned to retire. A telephone was out of the question because there were no lines available along with gasoline, tires, nylons, sugar, kleenex, and all the other wartime shortages. Pat and Paul Gilliland, retired military living nearby invited me to use their number as a contact point.

Late on the afternoon of September 8, I was preparing dinner when we were startled by a loud racket out in front. Someone was beating on the door, and then we heard Pat Gilliland screaming, "He's in Manilla!! He's in Manilla!!" I remember those moments as though they were yesterday. The feelings of disbelief - I hardly dared believe it was true. I could scarcely breathe, I was so gloriously excited. What a melange of emotions! Was this really happening or was I dreaming again? My joy was tinged with sadness for others whose news would not be so good. From that moment on, life was a whirlwind of phone calls, arrangements and celebration for young Bill and me.

Betty McFerren

September 1996

Early Army Days

When war broke out in Europe in September 1939, I was 24 years old and a 1937 graduate of Yale University. I was working in the research department of the American Can Company in Chicago studying ways to prevent the spoilage of canned goods. My connection with the food business was part of my heritage. I grew up in the small Illinois town of Hoopston, about 100 miles south of Chicago, where my family had interests in farming and canning businesses.

By 1941, with an escalating United States involvement in the European war, Howard Hamilton, one of the American Can executives I knew was transferred to Washington, D.C. to take charge of grading canned goods for military procurement programs. He invited me to join his staff, but because of some obscure regulation, he said I had to be in the military service to get the particular job he offered.

Since my father and uncle had answered their country's call to duty in the First World War, I could do no less, and agreed to join the Army. Also, since I then found life in Chicago a bit dull, the prospect of eventually being transferred to Washington, which was blossoming with eligible single women, was another reason I agreed to join the service in July 1941. I volunteered for the Army's Quartermaster Corps. The plan was that as a college graduate, I would be sent to officer's candidate school after some basic training, then transfer to Washington for what I thought would also be a great social life. That plan went awry in Wyoming.

After basic training, they sent me to Fort Warren, an old calvary post at Cheyenne, Wyoming, that was taken over by the Quartermaster Corps. Compared to Chicago, Cheyenne was a social desert, a small windy and dusty capitol city of a state where the entire population was only 250,000 people in 1941.

The first week there, they assigned me to a course for cooks and bakers, and during one class the instructor was talking about 'veetamins.' His mispronunciation suggested he didn't really know too much about nutrition. I questioned him on one point where I felt sure he was wrong, and he put me on the spot by asking, "Well, Private McFerren, where did you get all this information about nutrition." So I explained about my background with the can company, and the issue in question, and he agreed that I was qualified to speak to the subject.

Then, a voice from the back of the class echoed, "Yes, he's damned well qualified!" There was a major who had been listening to the presentation. He approached me afterward and asked "How would you like to be an instructor?" Puzzled, I asked, "For what?" "You could take that guy's job." I hesitated and replied that I would hate to take anyone's job from them. The major quickly advised me, "Listen, you got to look after yourself," uncannily repeating the admonition of my father who once said the same thing. So, I became a nutrition instructor, promoted to sergeant, and got a pay boost to \$60 a month instead of the \$20 I received as a private.

I also connected with the social life of Cheyenne. Chance had it that I was able to help the daughter of the base commander when she suffered a spill while horseriding. We became acquainted, to her father's chagrin, and she introduced me around town.

By December 1941, I was working in the officer's mess on the base. On Sunday, December 7th, sometime before noon mountain time, I heard the radio report that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, and a funny feeling in the pit of my stomach made me wonder what impact that would have for me. The following Saturday, when I went down to the Plains Hotel in Cheyenne to have a beer, I found the answer to that question.

In the bar, I sat next to an army captain and we started talking. Seeing that he was in the Air Corps, I told him I grew up near Chanute Field in Illinois, an Air Corps training base started in the 1920s. Air Corps officers frequently visited our house, and my family and I got to know many of them over a period of years, including a Captain W. Cushman Farnum. 'Cush' and his wife Louise, became a big part of my life, and my war story. When the captain learned I graduated from Yale, he offered, "I'm with the Air Corps' travelling recruitment board. Would you be interested in going into the Air Corps?" "Well," I said, "I'd do just about anything to get out of Cheyenne, I'm freezing my ass off here."

Satisfied that he probably found another flyboy, he diverted the conversation to a more pressing concern. "Tell me, you know any nice girls here in Cheyenne?" "Yeah," I said, "I know a great girl, her father is a prominent lawyer, and she happens to have a friend who is very attractive." He said, "Why don't you line them up, and we'll take them out dancing?" I said, "To be honest with you, I only have about three dollars on me." "Don't worry about the money, I just got paid, contact those girls!" he insisted. I called, and the ladies agreed to go out dancing. In fact, they invited us out

to the local country club which was having a dance. We had a great time, and wound up taking them home about two in the morning.

After we dropped them off, he said, "I'm serious about the Air Corps, with your education, you'd be a great pilot. Have you ever flown a plane?" I said, "I was once up in a Stearman owned by one of my Yale classmates and he let me take the controls." "Great," he said, "But, I need to give you a preliminary physical." After our evening of drinking and revelry, we went down to his office, and he gave me a physical at two in the morning. Under the circumstances, I passed only by the vigor of youth. After the exam, he said, "I'm going to Omaha, Nebraska, I'll take your papers with me and you'll hear from me within a week. Right now the Air Corps has a priority call for anyone they want no matter what branch of the service they're in."

A week later a wire came in from Omaha ordering me to report to Minter Field, at Bakersfield, California, for air cadet training. I reported there in February 1942 after 30 days home leave.

Air Corps Training, Courtship, and Marriage

Minter Field turned out to be just few weeks stay for orientation and preliminary cadet training. I then transferred to the Santa Ana Army Air Base for ground school. I arrived there about the time the California coast panicked when it was said a Japanese submarine surfaced and fired on Santa Barbara, a coastal town north of Los Angeles. After ground school of a few weeks, flight training followed at Visalia Dinuba Air Base near Fresno.

There, after six hours of flight instruction, I made a check flight, and got washed out of pilot training. One problem was that the check pilot was out of touch with the instructors and asked me to make maneuvers I was never taught. I later found out that the entire group of instructors and their training methods were terrible. Shortly after I washed out, a general heard about the situation, ordered the curriculum revamped, and replaced most of the flight instructors.

The check pilot who washed me out was known there as 'one way Porter.' He also washed out most others in the class. However, it turned out, my problem was more than poor instructors. It was depth perception. Porter told me, "You're a smart guy, you have potential, I think your instructors did bad by you - but all that aside, you've got a problem in depth perception." I replied that I knew I had a problem, but didn't think it was that bad. He told me, "It wasn't too bad for regular flying, but it would be terrible for formation flying where you have to fly wingtip-to-wingtip. You'd be a dangerous pilot. I can get you through primary instruction easily enough, but they'd knock you out later in advanced training." As disappointing as this was, fortunately in school, mathematics was my strong suit and I was able to transfer from pilot to navigator training back at Santa Ana.

During our training there, we cadets could get weekend passes and go as far as our \$75 a month pay could take us. Nearby Los Angeles was the logical choice. We'd get off Saturday afternoon and have to be back by Sunday evening. The first thing we did in Los Angeles was look for a place to stay, and the second thing was to look for girls. We found a \$5 suite in a small hotel across the street from the exclusive Ambassador Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard where it would have cost twenty times that.

One weekend, with two cadets who already had dates, I was odd man out. I told the others I was going to pick up the first good-looking girl who came down the street. Everyone started betting that I would strike out. It wasn't long before a real good-looking gal came along, so I stopped her saying something like, "Pardon me miss, could you give me some information?"

Then, a military uniform was a badge of honor, and she stopped saying, "Sure, if I can." I said, "Could you tell me where I could find a nice looking girl who would like to go out and have a good time tonight?" Taken aback she said, "Well . . ." I quickly added, "Like you!" "You mean you want me?", she asked. I introduced myself, told her I was Yale graduate, and otherwise gave her a good line. She smiled, saying, "Sounds like we'd have fun." We crossed Wilshire Boulevard to the posh Ambassador and I bought drinks.

While chatting, told her I had more liquor in our rooms across the street. After drinking and talking a bit longer, she said, "Mind if I ask you a personal question?" I said, "Sure, what is it?" She said, "Could I have another drink here before we go to bed?"

This time I was taken aback, mustering an understated, "Well, that sounds reasonable to me." So that was that, and we spent time together over the next three weekends. Then I found out she was getting serious and I wasn't.

The next weekend, I asked Horace "Goldie" Lund, my barracks roommate, "How would you like to go to Laguna Beach instead of Los Angeles?" He agreed, and we went down to Laguna and managed to meet two nurses in a bowling alley. We wagered our games, and my team lost so we owed them a drink. Then, if you were a serviceman, you couldn't buy a drink until it was six in the evening. It was then only about 4:30pm. My pretty partner said, "Look, I've got a house near here with some liquor."

So we went back to her place, had some drinks, and were getting along great when she asked, "By the way, where are you boys staying?" I said, "Don't know, we've got to find a place." She offered, "Well, if you want to stay here, I've got an extra bedroom downstairs." Goldie and I agreed the Gods were smiling on us.

As evening approached she said, "I've got a slight problem. I work for a wealthy patient and I've got to attend to him every evening," adding, "But why don't you boys go down to the beach, have dinner, and meet us afterwards?" So I asked where, and she said, "Go to a place called Las Ondas, it serves seafood out by the beach."

Dutifully, Goldie and I went there and a waitress came to our table who turned out to be Betty Garvey, who was to become my wife. I was immediately taken by her sparkling eyes and presence, and to get a conversation going asked, "What do you recommend here, the french fried shrimp or the shrimp creole?" She said, "I don't particularly care for shrimp, so I can't honestly tell you, but I'm sure they're both excellent."

Looking for a further opportunity, I noticed her ring with its large blue-green stone. I remembered hearing a similar stone called a turquoise. I took a chance and said, "Say, that's a beautiful turquoise, I love them and have a collection of over 200 of them." She brightened and said, "No kidding?" It was a bald-faced lie, but I went on, "They're wonderful stones, I've several books on them." Apparently I'd struck the right chord and I noticed a mutual interest developing during the meal.

As she served dessert, I asked, "Do you have a date tonight, I'd like to take you out." She answered, "I can't, unfortunately, I already have a date." I had this other gal lined up, but something was happening between us that made Betty the more important to me.

After dinner, as Goldie left for his date, I moved to Los Ondas's bar to wait things out. Some time passed and I noticed another cadet came in looking vaguely around, and I correctly guessed he was her date. I asked him if he had a date with the waitress with the white shoes on, and he said he did. I gave him a line, saying, "I'm an old friend of hers, just flew in from Luke Field in Phoenix to see her, but apparently we got our signals crossed as she seems obligated this evening." He said, "Well, I won't stand in the way of an old friendship, be my guest."

That settled, I waited at the bar until she was through work. When she came out and asked, 'Where's my date?' I told her, 'I sent him packing.' She snapped, "You've got a lot of damned nerve!" I said, "I'll surprise you with how much nerve I've got!" She surveyed the situation for a moment, and after adding things up as only she can, said, "Well, I guess I'm stuck with you." I said, "Do you like to dance?" She conceded that she did and suggested a place nearby called The Broiler. We went there and danced all night until they closed the place. During the evening, Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine" became 'our song.' I brashly told the musicians that every time they played it, I'd buy them a drink. They played it seven times, I ran out of money, and had to admit that embarrassing fact to Betty. She volunteered, "Don't worry, tips were good, I have some money." Thus, that memorable evening when I first met my wife, I borrowed money from her.

I walked her back to a girlfriend's place where she was staying. We necked for awhile, and I tried to coax her down to the beach with a blanket. Although she was warming up, she'd have none of that. So I offered to meet her for breakfast in the morning. I thought I'd have a bit more luck with her then, but I figured wrong. When I went by her place she introduced me to her girlfriend's daughter. It was charming, but not exactly what I had in mind.

However, there was some magic between us and we were becoming fast friends. I suggested she visit me at the base when she had an opportunity, but I forget that they didn't allow access to civilians after security tightened up all along west coast. We arranged a date on the base for the next day, and she shows up and is refused entry. Completely exasperated, out of 3,000 men on the base, she runs into my roommate Goldie who was walking out the gate and equally surprised to see her. He told her I had given up after waiting over an hour. With Goldie as escort, she got on the base and we had a coke date at the post exchange.

The next day I received orders to transfer to Mather Field, near Sacramento, where I was to start the advanced phase of my navigation training. When I got there, I thought again about her wonderful eyes and wrote her a letter asking her to come up for a date. She did and brought Palma Jean "P.J." a college friend of hers, for Goldie. Goldie was smitten, and we double-dated every weekend from then on except one, when Betty had a conflict.

As I was about to graduate in the top of my navigation class, there was precedent that made me think that they might keep me on at Mather as an instructor. Instead, we all received orders to report to combat air groups. By early December 1942, when I knew orders would send me to Tucson, Arizona to join an air group, I asked Betty if she would go with me. She asked, "Well, what would be my status?" "Well," I said, "I guess I'll have to marry you!" It wasn't a big surprise as I had been leaving subtle hints about wanting to marry her all along.

We planned a quick marriage date, and one weekend I went to meet her aunt and uncle, Sadie and Clayton Garvey in San Francisco. He was a lawyer there, and a delight. I learned we couldn't get married on the day we wanted because California then had a law that stipulated a three day waiting period from the time you applied, until you actually got a marriage license.

Meanwhile back at the base during my final day in class, a soldier reported to the classroom and whispered something to the instructor who started laughing and said, "Cadet McFerren, stand up." I stood at attention, and he said, "There's a

young lady out at the gate who says she has an application for a marriage license for you to sign.” That broke up the class. I met with Betty, signed the license, and later that same day, I received my navigator wings and commission as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps.

I then asked for a 24-hour pass to go to San Francisco to get married. They wouldn't give me the pass. I went to San Francisco anyhow, going A.W.O.L. in the process. This was probably not a good example for a newly-commissioned officer. I took a train, then a ferry, and finally met Betty's mother and father for the first time.

I arrived Saturday evening and Betty's uncle had arranged for the city clerk to open up the San Francisco city hall so we could get a certified copy of the marriage license to show the Episcopalian minister who had agreed to marry us at 11 o'clock that night. Wartime security required a semi-blackout, known as 'dim-out', and we drove through the surreal streets using only parking lights. We had the eerie experience of maneuvering through the dark corridors of the huge city hall with just a flashlight to light our way. It was January 2, 1943.

In the excitement and haste, we forgot to arrange a place to stay that night. I tried to get a room at San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel but it was full already. However, just across Powell Street from the St. Francis was the Hotel Stewart, and we asked if they had a room. They didn't, and as we were in its lobby wondering what to do, the manager appeared and asked if we were newlyweds. When I told him yes, he let us spend the night in a room held in reserve for him, but that he didn't use.

It had been a long day, and I was tired. I had also flown early that morning to complete my last training hour. Once in our room, Betty said she was going to freshen up, and I said I was going to go and lie down on the bed. The next thing I knew it was 8:30 the next morning, and I had slept my entire wedding night. I said, "Honey, I wasn't much of a lover, was I?" She said, "Sweetie, you looked so comfortable there, I just couldn't bear to wake you."

I checked in with the base and Harry Long, another roommate told me I was in trouble. He said a by-the-book captain wanted to court martial me for being A.W.O.L. I told him we'd be coming right back to try to straighten things out. We took the train back to Sacramento, and I was lucky that Captain Stadham, a friend from navigation class, was on duty at Mather Field when I reported in. I explained the situation to him. I also explained that I had orders to transfer out to Tucson via Salt Lake City that night by train. I couldn't get my orders because this other captain was holding them.

Stadham said, "Let's go down to the station, you keep your mouth shut, and let me see if I can handle this." We did, and Betty and I just waited around while he spoke to this other guy by phone, and told him to bring my orders down to the station. When the other captain came with my orders, my pal asked for them. The other guy said, "McFerren was A.W.O.L. and should report for a hearing." Stadham, thinking fast, then asked the date of the other captain's commission. It was three weeks later than his, allowing Stadham to outrank him. Stadham then took charge, ordered the other guy to hand me my orders, and the matter was settled.

How to get Betty on the departing train was the next problem. I approached the train conductor and asked him if I could take my wife on the train. He said, winking, "Well according to our deal with the Army, you're entitled to a lower berth, if you can get her in it, you can take her." Besides us, there were eight other newlywed couples on that train.

Another couple had not been able to marry before our transfers because they were Catholic and his fiance forgot to get a letter from her parish priest saying that she had never been married before. When we got to Salt Lake City, we resolved that we had to arrange a proper marriage for them. We found a Catholic priest in town who agreed to marry them using us other couples as witnesses. The priest asked, "Is there anyone here who has known this lady for at least two years and can verify that she has never been married?" When no one else responded, Betty sensing it wasn't going to happen, spoke up saying, "I have." After the brief ceremony, when it was time to fill out the papers, the priest asked Betty to play secretary. Betty then realized she couldn't spell her 'old friend's' last name. The priest wisely said nothing about this strange situation and finally had to laugh about it.

The period from September 1942 to January 1943 was probably the most emotionally exciting, chaotic, carefree, and equally frustrating of my life. I lived only to see Betty on the weekends, and just endured the training weekdays. Fortunately, during that time, she arranged to go back to school at the University of California at Berkeley, which was about 90 miles from Sacramento. We could get together easily as train service was good between Sacramento and San Francisco.

My letters to her during our courtship show the flavor of our escapades, friends, budding, then flowering romance. Sadly, Betty's letters from this particular period, and those sent before September 1943, were missing from my personal belongings shipped back to her after I, too, was declared missing.

Letters - 1942

Mather Field, Sacramento

September 27, 1942

Betty dear,

After a very pleasant trip we arrived here at Mather Field Friday afternoon, with short stops in L.A. and Oakland. My first impression of Sacramento measured up with everything you said about it, although I will admit they whisked us out to the post in a great hurry.

The most pleasant surprise however, was the post itself. It measured up and surpassed our wildest expectations in all respects. Our quarters are very comfortable, the landscaping delightful, the food excellent, and the general atmosphere permeates one with the desire to work hard. We face probably the toughest fifteen weeks any of us have ever fared or will fare even in actual combat. But all the boys here say the work is terribly interesting. We have ten hours of classes a day with the exception of Saturdays and Sundays.

On Saturdays we are off at two p.m. and on Sunday off all day until nine p.m. Much of our time later in the course will be spent on missions all over the western part of the United States - Salt Lake City, Phoenix, etc. At the end of the course we must know all types of navigation, and to be able to fly to any desired point thru reference to the wind, the stars, radio, and known landmarks. It will indeed give us all a feeling of satisfaction if we can attain the goal of being a good navigator.

Forgive me Betty, if I talk shop so much, but you see, all of us who were eliminated as pilots lost most of our initiative and ambition in these long weeks at Santa Ana, and it's wonderful to get back your ambition and pride and confidence in oneself. All of my squadron came into the air corps of their own free will, to do the best they could for their country and themselves. The majority of them are college graduates, and only want a chance to show what they can do.

Enough of my homespun philosophy, Betty, these things probably aren't too interesting to someone else. Goldie wrote Madeline today - as we have been a little rushed for time, he didn't have time to compose a masterpiece, but dropped her a very satisfactory note from all indications.

As yet, we are not quite certain what weekend our open posts will begin, but it will probably be a week from Saturday. From then on, the first chance you get a date mutually satisfactory to you and Madeline, we will be waiting with baited breath for your arrival, and as I told you before I left, the sooner the better. I had so much fun with you the short time we knew each other that I am determined we can't let it end there. I hope you feel the same way.

Regarding Irma Sahn, I was a little mixed up on that. Goldie doesn't know her. but his roommate at Santa Ana did. Goldie wrote her a note, and heard from her, however things worked out in such a way that they never did get together.

I imagine that your students are keeping you very busy at Singers, teacher, but not so busy, I hope, that you can't drop me a line. I thought of you last nite and wished to God I could be with you down in Laguna, but c'est la vie, c'est la guerre, ma cherie. You are awfully sweet, Betty, so be a good girl and write me soon.

Much love, Bill

P.S. Goldie sends his best regards, and give mine to Mary Jane and Tex.

Mather Field

October 5, 1942

Betty dear,

As it is very late, and we just got out of class, I will have to make this short. To say that I was delighted to receive your letter, and hear about your change in plans for this year is putting it mildly. We should have lots of fun together. More specifically, Goldie and I, barring acts of God or the Army, will be off at 2:00pm Saturday afternoon, and all day Sunday (except from 2am Sunday to 9am) and will meet you anytime after 2pm that is convenient for you.

As you did not outline any plans where you were going to stay, we took the liberty of reserving a room for you, and your roommate, at the hotel, where we made our own reservations. Naturally we will expect you to be our guests. Goldie was very pleased with the news, and is waiting as I am with bated breath for Saturday to arrive - we didn't get out last weekend, but should this one. If by any chance we are delayed in getting out, there will be a message waiting

for you at the desk - we will meet you in the Walnut room as scheduled at whatever time you designate. Please make it early as possible as we don't want to waste any of the precious hours of the weekend apart.

That's all for now, Betty, but I can't tell you how much I am looking forward to seeing you.

Always, Bill

Mather Field

October 13, 1942

Betty dearest,

Goldie and I were so pleased to receive your letter today, and were very amused by the very original stationary. We are darn glad you enjoyed the weekend, because it was perfect as far as we were concerned, in fact the best I can remember. Our only regret was that we had to leave so early Sunday nite. But this is serious business out here, and if we flunked out, we couldn't see you at all, which indeed would be a calamity. As you must know by this time, Betty, that I think you are pretty swell.

I hope that you got the supper cooked in good order, although I must admit I wouldn't have been up to it myself Monday nite. I neglected to inform you that I am a quite capable cook, said ability, I hope, may be demonstrated to you at a not too distant date.

You and P.J. undoubtedly will be pleased to know that we were the envy of the entire cadet ensemble in Sacramento this weekend, as one boy after another has asked us who the two very attractive girls were that we were with. However, Betty, that was no news to us. It is wonderful, I think, that P.J. and Goldie got along so well, as the four of us should have loads of fun together this fall and winter. As to what will follow then, is hard to say, as God knows it is hard to plan too far ahead, but I think you and I are intelligent enough to solve our problems as we come to them. What I am trying to say is that I don't intend to let you go out of my life when I finish here at Mather, if I have anything to say about it.

Frankly, up until the weekend in Laguna, and this last one in Sacramento, I had adopted a rather cynical outlook as far as girls were concerned because of the war, not only so I wouldn't get hurt too much myself, but also, so I caused no one any harm.

This system worked out all right in theory, but not finally in practice, because you are the type I have left alone, and now I find that I can't stay away from you. I hope you understand, Betty, what I mean. Because it has appeared impossible to offer anything concrete to a gal you might be serious about, I have stayed away from all who might possibly fall in that classification. Contrary to what you may believe, my standards are not completely lost because of the war, and I still feel I can recognize a lovely girl when kind fate throws one my way. This may sound rather stereotyped, but you don't know how hungry some of us are for the love and affection of a so-called good woman - as the westerners put it.

Returning to the present, I was unfortunate enough to receive seven demerits Monday, which means I may not get out this weekend -however, I will know better later in the week. In any case, if you can make it over here this weekend, I'll get out somehow. The following weekend is prior to our phase examination, which we must pass to stay here. Goldie feels we should study that weekend, and would like to have P.J. over this weekend, if she can come.

So anyway, try to come, dear - as I would hate to let two weeks pass without seeing you. Hope you have located a satisfactory place to live and made your registration OK. Incidentally, Sweetie, if by chance you girls are a little short of funds with the school year just starting, Goldie and I will be only too happy to take care of your transportation. I don't mean to be too personal, but I think we know each other well enough that we can be frank.

Much Love, Bill. P.S. Write soon. With many a Smack. Mac.

Mather Field

October 20, 1942

Betty dearest,

I've tried to get a phone around here after 9:30, but with only a couple available it's quite difficult, so if you don't hear from me for a few days, you'll know the reason why.

Your letter was swell, Betty, and it made me feel at tops, to say the least. We had quite a busy day on our first dead reckoning flight today, and it was a pleasant experience to find it waiting for me when I returned.

It was awfully hard not to stay down and see you off, but from one standpoint it was a good thing, as we barely finished our work before taps, and got by OK on our marks for it.

I am very happy that you consider me a good host, but you must remember it is very easy and a great pleasure to entertain such a charming guest. Last week was wonderful, and I'll never forget it, because regardless of what happens in the future, I felt a very deep feeling of understanding with you, and later we may look back and remember that time again.

You have given me in few short weeks the most genuine happiness I have ever had, and have killed a spot that was sorely barren - to sum it rather quickly, I am terribly fond of you, Betty, and I can't wait to see you again - which will not be, damn it, for about ten days, as I still feel I have to study this coming weekend.

Goldie appreciated your note very much. He also thinks you are a swell gal, and that isn't only because you introduced him to P.J. Received an absentee ballot today so I can cast my straight Republican vote - after all, we can't agree on everything, and apparently that is definitely one point.

I was so happy to hear that you are so well pleased with your new living setup. Your companions sound very charming, and I know how much easier it is to work in the right environment. I further appreciate your feeling about getting settled, as a person as meticulous about order as you are doesn't appreciate living out of a suitcase. My army career to date has taken me from pillar to post, and I really detest packing and unpacking. However, it's been good for me in a way, as I never had to take care of my own things particularly before, and this is good training, I guess. In Chicago all we had to do is leave things out, and the maid for a tip, would take care of everything for my two roommates and myself - now you can understand the "gigs".

I hate to cut this short, but I am terribly rushed, so will write more later. Will try to call you if it can be done. Until weekend after next, much love, and many smacks (you know how I love them) - fell out of bed again - what should I do?? Also, my back is in dire need of tickling.

I miss you. Bill

Mather Field

October 27, 1942

Betty dearest,

At this point I am reposing in the hospital with the biggest jaw you ever saw - they took my wisdom tooth out Sunday morning after and one and a half hours of twisting and pulling. By four that afternoon I was going thru hell, with a temperature of 102. They put me in the hospital that night and shot me so full of morphine I didn't know what was going on until yesterday afternoon. I'd have really given a lot to have had you here to hold my hand. In one of my doped dreams you were sitting besides me tickling my eyes - what a disappointment to wake up and find you gone! Your solution to my problem arrived in good order, and I thought it very intelligent and thoughtful, although if you think a little cord like that could keep me away from you, you're crazy!

I hope to get out of here tomorrow night; it better not be any longer than that, as they'll wash me back three weeks. I'd hate not to continue thru with all of my pals of long standing, but of course, we have to be philosophical about those things - what must be, must be, I guess.

Regarding your letter of Saturday, I definitely resented that crack about it being a chore to clean up the room that morning. As frankly, Miss Garvey, I have always enjoyed leaving a place clean and neat, although I admit in the past I have been a little careless about picking up my own bedroom. I guess I need a woman's touch.

Saturday nite was terrific - there was the most beautiful moon I have ever seen, and where was I? At Mather studying navigation, and where you? Not where I was, damn it. I really wanted to see you Saturday nite, Betty, and I can't wait till this one wheels around. We seem to have so darn much fun together, and I enjoy being with you even more each time I see you. Which is nice, you know. Well, dear, here it's Tuesday and I'll see you in a couple of days - if you don't hear from me before Sat., I'll leave a message at the Senator for you as to when I'll get down town.

Take care of yourself, Sweetie, and until I see, all my love. Pardon this illiterate scrawl, but I can't write very well in bed. Beds weren't made for writing anyway. A big kiss, dear, Bill.

Mather Field

October 28, 1942

Betty dearest,

I wrote you yesterday, but sent the letter to 2118 Union instead of 2219 Union, so just in case you didn't get it, I am writing again. As I told you yesterday, they have me in the hospital at present due to a very swollen jaw, however, as my condition (very critical at one point) - the side of my jaw is definitely improved, I expect to get out of here tomorrow morning. Due to the good will of my instructor the odds are I won't be set back three weeks as Willie has been studying very diligently since he has been in here.

I can't wait to see you this weekend, Betty, as it seems like years since weekend before last. It is funny how sometimes the hours go so slowly, and other times so quickly. The latter applies to the weekends when we're together. It's been so darn much fun the last few weekends - wouldn't it be terrible if I hadn't gone to Laguna that last weekend at Santa Ana. It was rather funny, but I had decided to go down there a couple of days before, and despite the fact that a couple of my friends tried to get me to go to Long Beach, I was determined to go there for some reason I couldn't understand at the time.

Regarding your very intelligent remedy for my malady, I am sorry to inform you that the cord was not of sufficient temper, as I found it broken asunder this morning - c'est la vie.

It's a lovely day here, and not one to spend in a stuffy hospital. I wish it was Saturday, but we can't have everything, I guess. This is the kind of day it would be fun to drive thru the mountains in an open car. This time of year is very beautiful on the East Coast thru Connecticut, Vermont, and New Hampshire, when the air is very brisk, and the color of the trees a gorgeous array of every shade a great painter would love to command. There are so many lovely things in this world it seems a shame people have to spend their time fighting when enjoying beauty and making love is so much more pleasant. Which reminds me I wish you were here. Until this weekend, a big hug and a smack. Bill
P.S. I'll leave a message at the Senator as to what time I'll be in as I don't know exactly now.

Mather Field

October 29, 1942

Betty dear,

Just a note to tell you that I got out of the hospital today, and thru the valiant efforts of my instructors I will not be put back a class. However, I do have to take a makeup on my first phase examination Saturday afternoon, so I probably won't be able to get into town before about 6:30 as I have to fly a makeup mission that morning so won't start the exam until about 1:30 and finish around 5:30. I was so hoping I could get off early this time, but that's the way things go. If you decide to come in early anyway, just check your bag, and we'll pick it up when I get in town unless you want to change first, in which case you could probably do so at the hotel, as I reserved a room as you will recall.

Saturday seems so darn far away although it is actually Thursday. This has seemed like a helluva long week for some reason or other. I got a letter today from a gal from home who, I told you, joined the Waves. She is at Northhampton, Mass., in training and she says they work the devil out of them, and in addition, they are not allowed to touch a drink at any time until they get their commissions, which is four months hence. I had to laugh like hell, because she thought the Army was so damn glamorous before she went into it, and now she found out as plenty of other girls will, that it is just darn hard work.

I have to run now, as I have a lot of work to do - Saturday can't come soon enough as I miss you very much.

Oceans of love and plenty of smacks. Bill

P.S. Goldie has been keeping in good touch with P.J. and they intend to help us raise hell Saturday. Good companions, I think!

Mather Field

November 2, 1942

Betty dearest,

Each weekend with you seems more wonderful, and when each time Sunday nite comes it is increasingly hard to leave you, and also, damnit, each day it seems like the next weekend is miles away. What I am trying to say is this last weekend was the most wonderful of all, and if the weekends to come increase the geometric ratio of difficulty in leaving you, we will certainly have to do something about you.

You are definitely not contributing to my navigation course as today instead of concentrating on radius of action, I was thinking of you, and when I was supposed to be taking code, I was writing out your name without thinking - in fact Miss Garvey, I definitely have you on my mind both night and day. I am almost afraid to go to sleep these nights. I never knew how much fun someone could be, or how much someone's love and affection could mean.

This war is a shame, but if it had not happened, I would never have met you, and if I hadn't met you, I wouldn't know how wonderful life could be. You have changed my whole outlook on a lot of things, and have given a meaning and a purpose to what before was a comparatively empty blank. Last evening when we were dancing before we parted, I realized even more greatly than ever how my affection and love for you was growing, and realized I could never let you go.

Someway, somehow, we'll have to solve a few problems, but I do feel as I told you once before, if one or two people rather want something badly enough, and are willing to pay the price in the form of certain sacrifices, that they can attain their end. I have never felt this way about anyone before, and I have never said the things I have said to you to anyone before. As I sit here writing to you, my love, I can only think how wonderful it would be to have you close and near, to feel the wonderful touch of your hand which I love so dearly.

Oh, God, I hope Saturday hurrys - it seems wrong to want time to pass by, but time spent away from you now seems so utterly wasted, and everything else seems so relatively unimportant.

Damn it, there goes the bell, and I have to be off to night classes, but I wanted to get a note off to you tonight so you would know, my dear, how much I miss you, and how much you mean to me, if you didn't know it already. Goodnite, my Sweet, and write soon. I love to hear from you when I can't see you.

All my love, Bill

P.S. A great big smack, and then another.

Mather Field

November 3, 1943

Betty dearest,

I can't tell you how happy it made me - to hear from you so soon. I agree with you that three and a half hours is much too long to be away, and it certainly behooved me to start back to Sacramento again as soon as I got here Sunday nite. The weekends are definitely too short, and the time between them too long - someone should institute a weekend beginning on Thursday and ending Wednesday nite, don't you think?

We are busy as little bees this week, which should make the time go a bit faster. Tomorrow is our first really tough mission and we are looking forward to it with a mixture of desire and hesitancy, as we'll get a good indication in our own minds tomorrow how well we have been able to correlate the material presented to us so far and apply it in actual practice. This navigation is a fascinating art in many respects, although not so fascinating to my way of thinking that I would want to pursue it after the war was over.

My mother sent me some pictures of our house taken a couple of years ago that she happened to run across, and thought I might like them so I could see again a place where I have had a wonderful time. A house doesn't mean much unless it represents the joy and happiness that come to a happy family, and that is what it has meant to us. I thought you might like to see the snaps, so I'm enclosing them.

Regarding Saturday, it was swell you made arrangements for us to stay out at the school, so we'll plan on that. The weekend sounds like lots of fun, but it doesn't matter where I am with you, I always have fun. I'll let you know later in the week about what time we'll get over there, so we can make arrangements about meeting some place.

The place where you had dinner Sunday nite sounds like fun, and I always love good food, especially since I've been in the Army. So I don't think it will take much to "lower my resistance" in having dinner with you there one of these Sunday evenings soon.

My oldest sister Marg, whose husband is in Australia, is going back to nursing in Chicago which made me very happy, as she is very lonesome with Gus gone, and it will be better for her to be busy. She never used her training much, as she graduated from nurses training in April of 1941, and there married Gus the following August. As she has lots of friends in Chicago, it will be much more fun than Hoopston, as it is a small town, and all our friends are in the Army, or have moved away. It would be fun to be back there again, especially if you were with me, as I am sure you'll like my family and my friends, and I know they would like you. I hate to read the papers anymore as every day the end of this debacle seems ever further off. One of the worst prices of war is the way loved ones are separated from each other. When there is so much fine that can be gained from life, and so much love and beauty to partake of, it is difficult to understand how people can spend their time fighting. If all the energy which is expended on warfare were diverted to more useful channels, just think what a wonderful place the world would be.

I have to stop now, Betty darling. But I want you to know I too am lonesome, and navigational pursuits are a poor substitute for the wonderfulness of your caress. Goodnight, my sweet, and many hugs and kisses.

Always, my love - Bill

Mather Field

November 4, 1942

Betty dearest,

The arrangements regarding the weekend sound swell, but we will be able to tell more whether I should meet you in Woodland or Davis when I talk to you Friday. By the way, could you call at 9:45 on the dot, as I can get over there then - or let me know where I could call you. You see, we get out of school at 9:30, a little distance away and we have to be back at the barracks at 10:00. When you call, ask for the cadet officer of the day, as I shall be at his phone.

It was swell that you could get over to see your aunt and uncle - they sound like lots of fun, and I am looking forward to meeting them. By the way, I thought they said the way to a man's heart was thru his gastric impulses. I guess I'll have to change my tactics and woo you with filet mignon and pate de fois gras instead of too many smacks and hugs. Although a little bird told me you were not too adverse to the latter approach. I am indeed alarmed by the refrigerator you have to cope with, and only wish I could remedy the situation. How I would love it, as I go almost crazy thinking about you when I wake up during the nite. And it's not just because you can tickle my back so beautifully.

We flew quite a mission today, rather complicated in nature to what we have been doing, and it turned out pretty well, considering our experience with that type of tactic. I really love to fly, although I admit I get an awful desire to get at the controls, instead of merely directing or following the course of the ship.

Bob Hope was up here last nite, and put on a good show. I was so behind on my correspondence to the various members of my family I skipped it, so I could catch up a bit, as they get a little concerned about me when I don't write regularly. I guess all families are that way. My mother said they had been putting up some apple jack at the canning factory as an experiment. I hope they send us a sample, as I know how to make a wonderful cocktail with it from my New Haven days when I used to buy it upstate at \$3.50 a gallon and sell it at school for \$2.00 per pint. My father was a little shocked when he found my spending money was derived from first class bootlegging.

Damn it, it's time to go to school again, so I have to close, dear. I miss you more and think of you more every day which is a helluva situation with Saturday three long days away. All my love to keep you warm.

Goodnite my Sweet. Always, Bill

Mather Field

November 9, 1942

Betty darling,

It was so wonderful to hear from you today. I tried to send you a wire last night, so you'd get it when you got home, but the darn thing was closed at the hotel, and the boys had a cab waiting, so I couldn't go downtown to the main office.

I certainly felt blue when you left last night. It seemed that part of me had been taken away, much worse than having my appendix out - the weekend was so darned much fun. I loved Davis, and all the people I met over there, it was great to go to a place like Davis where people are so real and genuine, after seeing some of the people you find picking around a place like Hollywood, where so many misguided souls go to such great trouble and put on such a show to try to obtain the things that in reality are so close and so simple. It reminds one of the saying, "they can't see the forest because of the trees." The Mays were so darn much fun, and I really got a big kick out of Mrs. Eddy.

Incidentally, there is a Lt. Phipps in my unit who was over there for four years. He told me quite a story about one time when the boys turned the fire hose on, and Mrs. Eddy came around the corner and caught the full blast of the hose. He said the boys were terribly embarrassed and Mrs. Eddy was terribly wet. Phipps was teaching before he came up here. He was in charge of the ROTC unit at one time over there, he said.

Gosh, darling, it was too wonderful being with you yesterday. Every time we are together I love you more and more. But it does make it so darn hard to say goodbye until the next weekend. I hope Winchell was right when he predicted the end of the war by February.

Now that we have found each other is no time for us to be taken apart and somehow we must see that never happens. You have given me so much happiness in the time we have been together, that I feel almost like a Midas when I think of how much love and joy could come to us if we were together always.

Of course, we would have to have plenty to eat, and I certainly got a kick out of the clippings you sent me. Goldie said the one you sent him really hit the nail on the head. I guess all of us like to flirt a bit, and most girls go thru that stage at one time or another. We recommended Julius's to lots of our friends, as it certainly lived up to the buildup you gave it, even if we have to be "bootlegged" into the place.

All day I have thought of you so much, and so many times this morning and afternoon, would have traded Mather Field, and ten or twelve states for another hour in your arms. It means so much to me to be close to you, not only from the thrill, but also because you seem so close in mind and spirit too. In some ways maybe we don't think so clearly, the whole world seems so far away. Oh, darling, I miss you so damn much. It's 10:30 and I have to stop. All my love, Sweetie, and I'll write more tomorrow.

Always, Bill.

Mather Field

November 11, 1942

Betty darling,

I never thought I'd be so busy that I wouldn't have time somehow to write you, but yesterday was the case. We had a mission to prepare for, and an examination coming up tomorrow, plus taking shots on the stars, and by the latter I don't mean the local blondes. Besides, that I am nursing a rather nasty cold, which shows signs of slackening tonite. Nothing like going to the country to get your health back, I always say. I wrote Mrs. Eddy and told her how much I enjoyed meeting her, etc. She's a darn good egg. I really ought to drop the Mays a note too, but couldn't remember anything but Jack's name.

We have to take our physical tomorrow, so the exam was switched to Saturday morning, or afternoon. I'll let you know by wire or phone which it will be. In the former case, I'll get in at three; otherwise not until after six. After the various discussions on hotel rooms, I still went ahead and reserved you a room in your name at the Senator, so you can pick it up when you get in. I didn't fancy you sleeping out in the street, and knowing P.J., I didn't figure she'd be going home too early despite all the sermons she makes. If you make plans to stay with her, we'd be tracking them down all evening. This week she decided Goldie and I drink too much, but I'll lay you 2 to 1 she's the first one pickled.

I got an ultimatum from my family telling me I better send them a snapshot or picture of you or else. In order that I can keep the home-front under control, I'd appreciate any aid you can give me in that direction. My old man wrote me, and said my mother was just eating up my letters about you, but, says he, knowing your fickle nature, son, I take the whole thing with a grain of salt.

I promptly sent him a short note to go to hell. He and I don't mince words. He loves to kid me, and I don't mind reciprocating. My mother was in New York for some time a year or so ago, and he escorted a young widow to several of the local parties, so I had him on the pan for a while to the fare-thee-well. He never drinks, but a couple of American Can boys got him looped a couple of weeks ago on Champagne, and he's still getting kidded about that, as he appeared

at the local hotel to mail a couple of letters, and no one had ever seen him fried before. So many jaws went down and eye brows up.

We had a wonderful flight this morning, and despite my running nose and straight back, (I am practicing) I really enjoyed it. We flew out over the Pacific, and up the coast. The mountains were beautiful, and the water crystal clear with little wind. I really appreciated the beauty and majesty of California more than ever before. Too many people think California starts and ends in L.A. and S.F. They've never been to Laguna Beach, or in the mountains above the Pacific. We expected the interceptor command to be after us any minute, despite the fact arrangements had been made with them for the flight. We were only out a comparatively short time over water, but I can see on a long flight over water it would give one a rather eerie feeling.

Darling, I miss you so darn much. I finally solved my problem. I put the mattress on the floor, a very poor solution, but the best I could handle. This week so far has gone as quickly as they can go, which is too damn slow. Sometimes I think Saturday will never come, darling. Please make Saturday hurry, because I want to see you so much. I meant to make this a long one, but I'm so darned tired I can't keep my eyes open.

All my love, Bill

Mather Field

November 16, 1942

Betty darling,

At present it is raining cats and dogs, with the wind howling thru the rafters, and all I can think of is how wonderful it would be to have you close in front of an open fire with the same wind howling outside, and we two snug as two Eskimos in an igloo. Last weekend was wonderful, despite all the problems that slightly heckled us at times, and as usual it proved more marvelous than before being with you.

When I went back to camp, I naturally felt very sad, but glad in one respect, and that is that I feel each weekend we love and understand each other even more than before. When we were sitting in Bedell's having a goodbye drink, I felt as close to you in understanding as I ever have before. There is so darn many things that I have never said or discussed with you, that I always can't wait to see you the next time to start in.

I received an awfully nice note from Mrs. Eddy, extending a very cordial invitation to come back to Davis. She spoke very highly of you, and said she so much enjoyed hearing me express my sentiments as I did.

Regarding San Francisco I have some good and bad news. This afternoon I was offered a ride which would be swell as I wouldn't have to worry about the train, and could meet you at your aunt and uncle's as he could drop me off there if you could tell me where it is. The bad news is this - if we don't fly tomorrow, which seems very unlikely at this writing, we will undoubtedly be forced to make up the mission either Saturday or Sunday. If we can fly Saturday, it will be OK, but if we miss tomorrow, I won't know until Saturday morning what the score is, which I am afraid is somewhat an imposition on your aunt, leaving her with such short notice. It would be possible to make arrangements to wire you Sat. morning as to whether to come to Sacramento or San Francisco. I can tell better a little later in the week, but I wanted to let you know what the situation was.

We had a ground problem today, which turned out quite successfully as far as grades were concerned. Goldie hasn't found out yet regarding the exam Saturday, but I am afeered he is a dead duck as far as navigation is concerned. However, as much as I will hate to see him go out, I think it is for his own best interests. Darling, it is late as hell, so I have to stop now. All my love is with you my sweet. Goodnite and pleasant dreams. I hope I dream of you even if I do fall out of bed.

Always, Bill

Mather Field

November 24, 1942

Betty darling,

I wanted to write you yesterday, but frankly, honey, I was so tired last night I couldn't keep my eyes open, not even with dull toothpicks. I went right to sleep in the middle of a lecture yesterday evening, after flying in the afternoon. We

flew south and then back up the valley, passing right over my old stomping grounds at Visalia. The little Ryans were buzzing around, and looked so small and inconsequential.

Darling, last weekend was the most wonderful one of my life, and one I could never forget. Each weekend has been more wonderful, which is good considering the weekends have been more than three or four. As you say, though, the horrible thing is parting on Sunday and today and yesterday, I have just seemed lost without you. Navigation has suddenly seemed very dull to me, and yesterday when I was flying I caught myself looking out the window and day dreaming instead of tending to the course of the ship. We were darn lucky we got home at that rate. It was a good thing I wasn't the only navigator, or we would probably have had a forced landing in Berkeley from the power of suggestion.

I sent you a wire this morning to the effect you will have to content yourself with the Major, the lucky bastard. We have school all day Thursday as far as we can find out, so that is that. I really hated to run off and leave you Sunday, but it was a good thing I did, as the phone was jangling busily for the C.Q., with the officer of the day wanting to know where that blankety-blank son-of-a-*** was. However I pacified him, and there were no aftermaths of my skipping out. It would be terrible if I had to walk the ramp. I have misplaced the letter regarding your aunt's name and address so if you would let me know again, I'll drop her a line. Incidentally, if we fly Wednesday, San Francisco would be OK this weekend, but you might not want to make it then, as you will have just been down there, and besides it might not be convenient for your aunt.

I have to run now, Sweetie, but here's saying I miss you like hell, and wish you were in my arms now and always, because that's where I feel you belong. Write soon again, and I'll do the same. All my love, dear, it's Tuesday already and the weekend will be here before we know it.

All my love, always, Bill.

Mather Field

November 26, 1942

Betty darling,

I have been a bad boy about writing this week, but in defense I must point out we have been really rushed for time. We definitely won't have any more flights this weekend, so if the San Francisco trip should be convenient, I thought I'd let you know, as it would be fun to meet your aunt and uncle and get out of Sacramento for one weekend.

I am definitely sending out circulars on bear rugs, and will let you know the results. You can tell by listening for the wolf howling at your door. Most wolves breed trouble, but that is not always the case.

I am afraid the man you heard in Berkeley is a little optimistic about the war. However, I hope he is right. Regarding Alaska we would take a large supply of canned foods and frozen meat up there, which should tide us over. I can think of nothing cozier than an igloo, a bear rug, a can of beans and you. Of course, I don't necessarily group the latter items in their natural order. Darling it is now five o'clock, and we just got out of school for the day, and to tell the truth I am very lonely. This is a helluva way to spend Thanksgiving day, although I guess it's better than being in the trenches. I am certainly glad there are only two days till the weekend, as it would be unbearable otherwise. I hope the Major or Colonel has indigestion.

My family saw Bud Linville at Chanute, and liked him very much. My mother said he was one of the best looking boys she had seen in a long time. She asked him over for Christmas, but he said he was being transferred in a couple of days, so couldn't make it. She also wanted to know what shade of powder you used, because she could tell from that what to get you in other things. She explained in her letter that she was afraid when you heard that record, that you would think I came from a reservation of wild Indians.

I finally remembered the poem she sent me which was supposedly the conversation of a very prudish Boston girl talking to a chap she had just met that day: "Please, darling, don't ask me to marry you yet, Mother would just have a fit, after all, it was only today we met, Can't you be patient a bit? You know how people will talk about things, I mean if they aren't in good taste. Besides, I don't think that a girl if she's nice, would marry a man in such haste, I'll marry you, tomorrow, my love, and share the same toothbrush and comb, But if you keep teasing me, darling, tonight, I'll get up, get dressed, and go home!"

I think that's really cute, don't you? My father also sent me some other ones, but they don't bear repeating at the present time. Goldie has been really having a swell time this week, as he has been in to see P.J. every day but Monday. I envy him like hell, as I would like to be seeing you, darling, but it wouldn't be good, looking ahead, as my

commission will mean possibilities of even greater things. My family wrote me, and said if you were as nice, even half as nice, as I thought you were, that I would be a damn fool to let you get away, a sentiment with which I thoroughly agree. The only thing I don't like about you is that you make it awfully hard for me to study navigation, but who in hell gives a damn about navigation. I am just living this week and every week for the weekend to come.

Please let me know whether it will be Sacramento or San Francisco, I'll reserve you a room anyway, at the Senator if possible. If it's Sac. take the early train as I will be off before two, otherwise, I'll wire you what mode of transportation I am taking to San Francisco, or rather Berkeley. Some of the boys are going into town tonight, and I got hold of a pass, but decided not to go in, as it wouldn't be any fun without you.

I just went over for dinner, and Harry Long and I decided after swinging a couple of passes, it would be fun to go down and have a drink in memory of other Thanksgivings to come. So I'll be thinking of you, Sweetie, and lift a glass and toast to you, my darling.

Always, Bill

Mather Field

December 7, 1942

Betty darling,

Last weekend was the most wonderful of all, and it is hard to believe that this progression could have lasted so long. It was certainly swell that we got that last minute reprieve, so we could get that dance in. We really have been getting the breaks. It was certainly fun to have Jean up last weekend. I, as well as Dunkle liked her very much. Regarding future plans as far as she is concerned, I'll let you know about that a little later.

I received a swell letter from my mother and father, and they seemed quite elated about the news. They thoroughly approved of our tentative plans, and were really enthused. One thing, though, my mother suggested as far as the various things were outlined, I had planned to give you an engagement ring for Christmas as a surprise, but my mother feels I should let you pick out the setting, as she said "a woman wears her ring all her life, and she should have something to say about the setting." My mother had her ring reset, as the setting of hers didn't pan out so well. So, they are sending me the diamond via air mail as soon as they hear from me. I wrote today, so it should be here the first of next week. In the meantime, if you have spare time, you might look at some settings. Although it would be fun to surprise you, once the surprise was over, we might have regretted that you hadn't selected the setting. I have never seen the stone, but my mother says it is of very good quality.

Tuesday - How time flies. Ran out of stationary yesterday and as they were all out at the PX, this letter was delayed somewhat. Your poem, ode to a wolf, was swell, but Dunkle hasn't seen it yet, as it disappeared already. Someone was looking at it this morning and the next thing I knew it was gone.

The more I think about it, the more I think February is a helluva long time to wait, although I realize you should finish the semester. However, at the rate the boys are being shipped out, it would be nice if we could have as much time together as possible. If they send me to St. Jo, Missouri for ferry command training, I think you ought to come with me when I leave. I guess all we can do is wait till Jan. 2, to see the score, but it is worth while thinking about, I think.

As far as I can find out today, we are not going to Arizona, but that can be subject to change without notice. Regarding the dance the 19th at Davis, Louis Phipps is officer of the day that weekend, so couldn't go - although it would be fun to go. I was wondering if there might not be some transportation difficulties especially back from Davis if we went without Louis. You might give that some consideration as you know more about Davis's transportation facilities at night than I do. If we knew someone coming back to Sacramento, it would be OK.

I got some of my Christmas presents from the fond relatives today, and felt very guilty I hadn't done anything about them, but c'est la vie, c'est la guerre.

At this point I feel very much like a gal eight months pregnant, as I am suffering from the summer or winter complaint, and have this day made eleven trips to Chick Sales house of diarrhea. If this kept up for long, they could close Niagara Falls off and let me run the power plant. I don't mean to be vulgar, but I can't help feeling sorry for my poor condition. Harry thinks it's a riot, but somehow I can't appreciate the humor of the situation. The boys say when I start making tracks, Whirlaway or Alsab wouldn't have a chance.

The lights are about to go out, but I wanted you to know how much I miss you, honey; it will be wonderful when we can be together all the time. That can't be soon enough as far as I am concerned. This damn war is a problem, although if it had not happened, there is little likelihood we would have ever met. So I guess every cloud has a silver lining after all.

I am glad that you feel the way you do about four o'clock trains, etc.. although I wouldn't ask that of you unless you really wanted it that way. All my love, always, my sweet.

I love you. Bill

Mather Field

December 9, 1942

Betty darling,

At this point I certainly wish you were here, as little or big William has his problems, mainly the summer complaint which I wrote you about. I have been in bed all day, and definitely show signs that I may pull thru, but it has been a long hard struggle. When I feel good, I want to see you, and when I feel badly, I want to see you, so I guess I'll just have to marry you so I can see you all the time.

Goldie crashed thru with a letter today. He is down at Bakersfield with little or nothing to do and no clothes as yet, which means he will probably get in trouble. They plan to move him to another field soon, which means that it will be some time before he goes to O.C.S. He is rooming with Del Valle, a darn nice fellow who was eliminated because of migraine headaches. That was a break, as Del Valle has been with us for some time.

We will have to be sure and see P.J. this weekend. I may have to go to school Saturday afternoon. If I am not at the station, there will be a message for you at the desk, darling, where I reserved you a room. We have to fly eight hours tomorrow, and I hope I am up to it, as I missed a flight today due to being indisposed.

Darling, you write such wonderful letters, and they make me so damn happy. I will really have to practice upon writing so I can stay even with you. (Scene I) regarding bridge just so long as you can love so well, I don't give a damn if you trump all my aces. (Scene II - two years later) You dumb dope! Why didn't you lead diamonds! All kidding aside, darling, I think we will always be happy because we both think the same things are funny, even if I do laugh at the wrong times sometimes.

When I look back at the fun we have had together, I realize that the basis of it is the fact that we have sort of entered everything on a give and take basis - and that is the basis of happiness in any home.

I love you so darn much, I'd just like to jump on the train and head for Berkeley. I am glad you wrote your family, so they can know what's cooking. I hope, however, you didn't give me too much of a build-up as it would be terrible trying to live up to a zenith I couldn't reach. Betty, my sweet, I can't decide what I love most about you, as there are so many things about you that make me happy - your tenderness, your affection, your humor, and your spirit. If I ever lost you....but we won't talk about that.

Well, darling, I am afraid I'll have to stop now as I don't feel so hot and I want to be in good shape for the weekend. As you can see, I sort of scrawled this letter as I am a little weak in the knees, as I can't keep any food down today as yet.

But I'll be in the pink by this weekend. I miss you like hell, Sweetie, until Saturday, all my love, darling. I'll write you if there is any change in our flying schedule - however, unless you hear differently, take the early train.

Always, Bill. P.S. Much, much, and all my love, darling...

Mather Field

December 10, 1942

Betty darling,

Pardon the stationary, but I haven't anything else over here at school and I wanted to get a letter off to you, as I have been a bad boy for not writing this week. It doesn't look very good as far as the Christmas weekend is concerned. They let us off from 9:30 in the morning to 9:30 at night, and then out again at 2:00 the next afternoon. I can't figure anyway to get out yet, but I'll keep trying.

It was wonderful to see you last weekend after not expecting to see you at all. We have certainly had some funny breaks. I felt very guilty leaving you to go to the train alone - but that was all I could do. The diamond came this week, and I think it will be very pretty when it is set. We'll look at some settings when you get here. I looked at some yesterday, as we got a couple of hours off. I saw P.J. and she asked me to get her a date, so I got her one with Paul Steffen whom I don't believe you have ever met. He is a swell guy from Freeport, Illinois, and is very attractive, I think. P.J. has had trouble with her eyes, and is afraid she'll lose her job unless she gets them corrected. Goldie is provoked that she hasn't written more. He had his choice of public relations or finance and took the former. He may get a commission without going to O.C.S., which would be swell. He wants to get up here, but doesn't know when he'll be able to.

It has been foggy here all week, which is bad as I would hate to have to fly over Christmas. We haven't had a plane off the ground since Monday. The fog will last a few days, so we would be able to stay here this weekend.

I am going to call my family tonite and see if I can get hold of some money to tide us over temporarily. Unless I can do that, we wouldn't be able to swing it for a couple of months, and we might as well have as much time together as possible before they send me out, which may be too darn soon, as some of the boys have been sent out very shortly after graduation.

I would like to get ferry command, as that means we are in the country between flights, have quite a bit of time off, and make more money - around \$400 per month. As it is, I will make \$321 per month as a married 2nd Lt. In order to retire a few obligations I have, plus what money I am going to borrow temporarily, plus insurance, we may have to get along on about \$200 per month for the first six months or so, but I think we can do that, don't you, darling?

My hunches tell me to get married right away, and we both believe in hunches, don't we? If we can get the dough when I call up tonite, I also thought of a way to get Christmas weekend off. We could get married Saturday down in San Francisco, and they'd probably give me the weekend off. However, we'll talk about that Saturday.

It was sweet of you to send my family a card, and I know they will appreciate it. I hope we can get out there one of these days. I can't wait to see you darling. I'll try to get off as early as possible - they may make me walk a few tours, but I'll try and talk them out of it. I guess they don't like the way I fold my comforter, you'll have to give me some training. That's all for now, darling, but I love you like hell.

Always, Bill.

P.S. a big kiss and plenty later.

POSTAL TELEGRAPH DEC 12, 1942

MISS BETTY GARVEY, 2219 UNION ST. BERKELEY CALIF

IMPOSSIBLE RETURN BEFORE TOMORROW IF THEN. SORRY DARLING WILL CALL SUNDAY NIGHT.

BILL

POST CARD Dec 13, 1942

Here we are back again, Darling. It is Sunday morning and I miss you like hell.

Love, Bill

Mather Field

December 16, 1942

Betty darling,

I feel very badly I haven't written you this week, but we have been pretty much on the go. I got in OK Monday morning which is the only good news I have, except that I will be here this weekend, so we can be together.

The bad news is this - we get Christmas day off, but have to be back at 9:30pm that night. Then go out again on Saturday, as a result, we are wrecked all the way around, unless I went A.W.O.L. If they didn't catch me, it would be OK, but if they did it might be a court martial, as I would be gone over 24 hours. You see when we just stay out overnight that is less than 24 hours and is therefore not being A.W.O.L.

However, I'll try and figure something out. Honey, excuse the shortness of this, but I've only got ten minutes. I may have to walk some tours Sat. afternoon, so if I'm not at the train, I'll meet you at the Senator - where I reserved you a room darling. I love you like hell, and I have a new idea which I will discuss with you as soon as I talk to my family tonight.

Much, and all my love, Bill.

Mather Field

December 21, 1942

Betty darling,

I forgot to give your address to my family, so am enclosing two notes from my sister and mother - a little sentimental, but they are that way.

By the time you will have gotten this I will have talked to you. Everything is set at this point, and the certificate will go out right away. My pass is still pending but barring bad breaks, I should be able to make it. Please give my best to your aunt and uncle, and tell them I think it is swell we can be married over there. Darling, I love you more than anything in the world, so I'll write you more later.

Always yours, Bill.

Dyer & Dyer

Hoopeston, Illinois

December 24, 1942

Dear Betty, It has just come to my knowledge, in a very secretive manner, that you are about to be married to one William McFerren, Jr. of Hoopeston, Illinois. There is a young man by that name who lives across the street from me, and if he is the man, you must be a hound for punishment. I have argued with him for the past twenty years about practically every subject in the universe but to no avail. Maybe you can straighten him out on some of his ideas.

I think the whole idea is wonderful, not that it makes any difference, but I think you are both doing absolutely right in getting married at this time. I have known Bill intimately since his birth, and you will find him very kind, considerate, and a perfect gentleman. You are both to be congratulated. From what he has told his mother, and from his description of you, I can visualize just how you look. You are slender; you wear a white robe with a loose-fitting belt of white rope; along each shoulder there is a large white wing; and just over your head you wear a circle of some sort. I have seen your picture numerous times, especially during the Christmas holidays. I understand you are sending your picture. I am anxious to see if I am right but more anxious to meet you, but that will probably not be for sometime. Again, I want to sincerely congratulate you both, and I know there is a very happy future in store for you both.

Love, Uncle Charlie.

Dear Betty,

Just a line in addition to tell you how happy I am that Bill has found 'his one and only' in you. I know he is to be congratulated and I want you to know that he has always been 'tops' with us. You will both be very happy. Our home will always be open to you both at any time and you must always feel welcome. Bill's whole family are overjoyed that he has found you and that you two are to be married. All kinds of happiness and may we meet soon.

Sincerely, Irma M. Dyer

WESTERN UNION Dec 24, 1942

MISS BETTY GARVEY

CARE CLAYTON GARVEY 845 HEAD ST. SFRAN

TAKING 515 MAY FLY SATURDAY CAN WE BE MARRIED TOMORROW. LOVE BILL

Mather Field

December 28, 1942

Betty darling,

It seems like twenty years since I rushed back and kissed you goodbye - and every day away from you makes me increasingly unhappy, because with you I have had the only complete happiness I have ever known. All this fall I fell more and more in love with you, progressively each succeeding weekend, and that progression has never ceased, because darling, I just keep loving you more and more.

I so appreciated what a wonderful sport you were about the developments over the weekend. Darling, right now I have one paramount and everlasting ambition in life, and that is to marry you, live always with you, and always make you happy, because you seem a part of me, and you are all I want of women in this life, or any life to come.

Regarding your blackeye, the boys are kidding me quite a bit, about the scars I brought back. They said it looked like I had bit off quite a bit to chew, but I told them they ought to see the other guy, I mean gal.

It is raining out, my sweet, and I so wish you were in my arms. I have never forgotten on Sunday, when it rained like this, and it seemed I had found heaven when you were so near, and your heart beat close to mine. I know things will break right for us, and with half a chance, our life together will be perfect. I don't think any boy ever entered marriage with as great a confidence as I will, and the sooner the better, my dearest.

My family will get a great kick out of you wearing your wedding ring on the other finger - it was darn close, but will put it on the right one before the week is out.

Present plans are for us to fly out of here somehow today, and return by Wednesday. However, that plan is subject to change without much notice, so I'll keep you informed as well as possible. Right now it is difficult to say what will happen. I think Harry will try to get down for our marriage in Frisco. You might think of some gal for him down there, but it wouldn't be advisable to get him a date until we can find out more of what will happen.

I haven't been able to get hold of a blank check, but I'll try to get it off tonight. I think we should set up a joint account with the Bank of America temporarily. I'll send you the balance of our original \$300 credit, and then I'll have \$80 more owed me by the boys, plus my cadet pay, plus the balance of my clothing allotment.

I received about 25 notes and cards, etc, when I got back here, and most of them sent congratulations. They don't know how much I should be congratulated, because darling, I think I'm the luckiest guy in the world.

The bells are ringing again, so I have to be off to school, but just remember you are always with me, and your love and my love for you always keeps me warm on the coldest day - until Wednesday, or some day this week.

All my love, darling, Bill

P.S. I think Sadie and Clayton are two of the grandest people I have ever known. They were just wonderful to me and I shall never forget it. I was crazy about all their friends too, and all of them with you made this the best Christmas for me too. I am looking forward so much to seeing them again. B.

Mather Field

December 29, 1942

Betty darling,

I just received your wonderful roll letter, and it was really perfect, as I got such a big kick out of it; it was swell you wrote my family as I know they will get a big kick out of hearing from you. The boys kidded me about the small package, as it was about ring size, and they said here comes your ring back, but I knew better.

We still haven't taken off, but are supposed to some time today, returning tomorrow nite, I so hope we can get the time finished, as everything is blocking us, and the time is growing short. However, if worse comes to worse, we can get married in Reno on our way to Salt Lake City. The latter place is just a guess, but I have a hunch based on rumor that we all are going to be assigned to combat, with few exceptions. However, I may be all wrong on that, and I hope I am.

Darling, I can't understand what happened to my insomnia. When I am away from you, I can't sleep for thinking of you, and wanting to be close to you, and when I am with you, what do I do but fall asleep! C'est la vie. However, when we are together all the time, I have a hunch I can strike a happy medium. Darling, was I eager just before I left, and

have been ever since. You really do something to me, my sweet, and I don't mean maybe. We had open post last night, but I stayed home and caught up on my lost correspondence. I owe so darn many letters, I don't even know where to start. It is hard to write to other people when I am only thinking of one.

I am enclosing a check for \$100 in case you need any money. I should have the rest of my dough by the end of this week. Powers will send me the \$50 by Thursday, and the other boys will pay off when they get paid.

Gee, darling, it is going to be so wonderful when we can be together for more than 24 hours at a time, which is the most we have had at any one interval. I so hope this damn war ends soon, because we have so much to live for, and so many things to do together.

I was deeply grieved by Sadie's decision to join the "church". As usual, the man was right, but you can tell Clayton for me that even so the woman is always right or else. Now don't get any illusions of grandeur, dear, as you still have one eye that isn't black yet.

I am sending this special and hope you get it before you leave for Davis. You will probably have heard further from me by the time you get this letter anyway.

That letter was a honey you sent me, and I really enjoyed it terrifically. Those little things you do are among the many things I love you for, and always will as long as I live. In my mind and heart, I have already taken as sacred, the vows the marriage ceremony can present, but we'll add those too, just to make our family and friends happy, and they'll make me happy, too, when we say them together.

All my love, darling, forever and ever. Bill

Combat Training, Honeymoon, and Off to War

From January to May 1943, Betty and I enjoyed a honeymoon through my stateside combat training at Tucson, El Paso, Denver, and Topeka. Our train trip, via Salt Lake City, ended in Tucson, Arizona two days later. There, I joined the 380th Bomb Group, organized at Davis-Monthan Field two months before. The air group consisted of four squadrons numbered the 528th, 529th, 530th, and 531st. Each squadron had nine B-24s, so our entire group consisted of 36 aircraft. I started my duty in the 530th squadron.

We were in Tucson about ten days, and then transferred to Biggs Field at El Paso, Texas, where combat training in B-24s began in earnest. It was at El Paso where I really got to know the colorful characters who would become friends and find mention in our letters.

The colonel who commanded the group was William Miller, a former senior pilot with American Airlines. With little experience with four-engined aircraft, the Air Corps got many of its early command pilots from the civilian airlines.

Major Fred Miller, our squadron commander, was another experienced civilian pilot who put his gong-ho spirit to work whipping us into airworthy crews. Jack Bratton, another squadron commander with similar flight experience, eventually made a 30-year career out of the service and retired as a colonel.

On one early stateside combat training flight, I was Major Miller's navigator. We were returning to base under overcast skies, and my instruments told me that if we continued on the particular course and altitude he selected, we were going to smack into a 12,000 foot mountain. I called this to his attention, advising either a course or altitude change. However, Miller, with all his experience, was not about to take the word of a green navigator and remained on course.

I immediately rechecked my calculations and charts, and went back to the flight deck with my parachute. I told him, "Major, you either change course, or gain at least 2,000 feet of altitude right now, or I'm bailing out!" Miller, seeing I was serious, apparently thought he'd humor me by acquiescing to an altitude change. When we reached the point where I said the mountain was, we looked down through a break in the clouds and saw the peak a few hundred feet beneath us. I believe that flight set the tone for the enduring friendship and respect we had for each other from then on.

It was during the El Paso training period that our ten-man aircrew welded into the team that would stay together in overseas combat. Crews were intended to be permanent, as reliable teamwork was a critical component of bomber flight operations. As part of that equation, good personal rapport bred confidence in each other.

John Farrington was our command pilot; Alfred Paris co-pilot; John Perry, bombardier; and myself as navigator. Tech Sgt. James De Groat was our engineer and gunner; Tech Sgt. Howard Sleighter, radio operator; Staff Sgt. John Lardin, radio operator and gunner; Staff Sgt. Daniel Glendon, assistant radio operator;

Staff Sgt. James Lovett, tail gunner; and Sgt. Louis Glavan, top gunner.

Under Fred Miller's rigorous tutelage, we were probably the best trained squadron of the group. From El Paso during January and February 1943, we flew almost daily training flights over the army's bombing range at Alamogordo, New Mexico about 100 miles north of our base. Typically, these flights lasted from two to eight hours.

Life in El Paso was not all work. The off hours provided time for Betty and I to enjoy each other as a newlyweds. After sharing quarters with another couple, we rented an apartment, where ever-resourceful Betty set up housekeeping.

Juarez, just across the Rio Grande in Mexico was exciting, accessible, and cheap. That's where we discovered 'Tequila Daisies' a drink that an enterprising waiter introduced to us at lunch one day. It consisted of tequila, lime juice, and grenadine and was very smooth. After three of them each, we walked out into the hot sun after lunch and almost passed out.

On another day, I got a surprise as I was walking along the windy flight line at Biggs Field, and paused by a parked jeep to light a cigarette with a match. It kept blowing out, and a hand from the jeep proffered a Zippo lighter. The hand and lighter were property of Captain Clark Gable, of recent 'Gone with the Wind' fame. He was now a gunnery officer with the 351st Bomb Group training B-17 crews there.

At the end of February 1943, our group shifted operations to Lowry Field in Denver, Colorado. From there, we started making very long distance flights to the California coast, and throughout the western states. The purpose of the flights was to sharpen cross country navigation, and over-water flying skills. We also learned about the existence of unusual

winds aloft. One of our flights at 30,000 feet managed to carry us east to Iowa, contrary to the best of my navigational calculations. It was only during World War II with the advent of high altitude flight, that aviators learned about these 100+ mile-an-hour meandering ribbons of air that flow from west to east in the northern hemisphere at high altitudes. Today we know them as 'jet streams.'

One flight to California for coastal patrol practice, put us into March Field at Riverside, for an overnight stop. There, an amusing incident illustrated how old friendships can transcend military protocol. Part of the old Chanute Field crowd who I knew growing up was Sam Connell, then a captain. At March Field, I saw him walking with another officer and I shouted, "Hey Sam baby! How are you doing?" I ran up to him and he threw his arms around me. Then I noticed there was one star on his collar, and the other officer with him, a colonel, said, "Lieutenant, you don't call the general Sam, baby." Since we were in public, he was probably right, but Sam eased the situation and said, "This guy can."

In Denver, as in El Paso, there were plenty of playful times at the Lowry officer's club, and dancing and dining at Denver's famous Brown Palace Hotel. It was wintertime in the Rockies, and the first time Betty, a California girl, had ever heard really cold snow squeak underfoot.

Betty and I, and Jack Bratton and his wife were staying at the same motel in town. One day while he had to fly and I didn't, he asked me to meet his father who was coming to visit him by train from Tennessee. Jack warned me that his father wasn't used to big city congestion, and could I meet him at the station. I arranged for a car, went down to the station looking for someone described to me as a slight man who would probably look confused.

The train came in, and I saw a man as Bratton described confidently leave the last car with one huge suitcase and one little zipper bag. I went up to him and asked if he was Mr. Bratton. He replied, "Yep, sure am." I said, "I'm a friend of Jack's, he's flying today, but I'll take you to the motel where we're all staying." When I tried to help with his one big bag, I could barely lift it. He warned, "Be careful with that bag, Son." When we got to the motel I horsed the big bag in, and he said, "Put it down here, I want to show you something." He opened the bag, and it was full of nothing but pints of Jack Daniels bourbon. He said, "I hated to see Jack go overseas and have to drink that lousy Yankee whiskey, so I brought this up for him to take on the trip!" He gave me a pint and then stayed for about four days, regaling us with stories of young Jack growing up in Tennessee. That whiskey lasted until we got to Australia.

Our training flights from Denver continued through March 1943. In the first week of April we went to Topeka, Kansas, to pick up the brand new B-24s that were to become ours for the fighting overseas. We spent about two weeks there calibrating the instruments of the new planes. Then we waited for orders to arrive telling us whether we would be sent to Europe or the Pacific.

Betty, of course, joined me at Topeka for what we expected would be our final days together. The brass confined us to base, but it was possible, by hook and crook, to get passes to leave for a few hours. Liquor sometimes greased the process. Many of us just went over the fence at night to meet our wives. Fred Miller found out about my nightly sojourns, and told me I'd be walking tours if he caught me. That was the ignominious way they punished officers.

Then, Topeka was a dry town with no booze sold retail. I had two bottles of bourbon and offered one to the base master sergeant who asked, "Do I have to kill for it?" I said, "No, but how about some passes?" He asked how many, so I hopefully suggested, "About 50 should do it!" To my surprise he agreed, and I found myself custodian of some prized passports to family happiness. Ironically, Betty reported that Fred Miller's wife was also in Topeka and, of course, wanted to see him. Miller learned of that, and when he asked about a pass, he learned that I had all we were ever to get. After his remark to me about walking tours, I'm sure the last thing he wanted to do was ask me for a pass. But he had to see his wife and came to see me. I smiled, handed him two passes, and didn't say a word!

If it seems that I had an influence beyond my lowly rank as a 2nd lieutenant, it was probably because I was 28 years old. Most lieutenants were still in their early twenties, and many captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels I served with were my own age. That might explain how and why my views on certain matters carried weight, and how I was often able to pull off the capers I did.

Finally, the day came signalling the end of my honeymoon with Betty. Orders were received granting a six day leave, after which we were to fly to Hamilton Field near San Francisco for further deployment to Australia. Betty and I went to Hoopston, to visit my parents, after which I returned to Topeka. Parting was bittersweet, as a great unknown loomed before us. However, little did we know then that fate would bring us a reprieve from separation.

On April 22, 1943 I flew out of Topeka for Hamilton Field, while Betty remained in Hoopston planning to extend her stay another week or two. At Hamilton Field, I wrote the following to Betty while I had the stateside opportunity:

Hamilton Field

April 25, 1943

Betty darling,

This is in a hurry but pardon my scribbling. I talked to your mother today but was unable to contact Clayton and Sadie, tried several times.

Darling, it was wonderful to talk to you the other nite. I love you with all my heart, and I'll never be happy until we are together again - however I realize we must make the best of a trying situation and with faith, love, and hope, I know we will be reunited again. No one could be cruel enough to part us now, when we have so much to look forward to. You have been everything to me a wife could be, and never will I forget the last rapturous months we spent together. With all the obstacles to our being together - the first day we got here Fred Miller asked me what plane you were arriving on - I might have seen you, but I think it was best as it was. My family so enjoy having you there, and I can't be too selfish I guess. I am as acclimated to the idea of leaving now as I ever could be, and we really got pretty good breaks as it was. One is inclined to forget the good things the fates throw your way and only remember the bad ones.

We have been very busy here, and I have been rushed every minute. I can't tell when I am leaving, but darling, when my letters start you will know. I tried to think as you told me Friday, but all that happened was I fell out of bed that nite. My Sweet, all I have to do is close my eyes and I see your face before me. I love your picture so darn much and give it a kiss at least four times a day. I have only one ambition at present, and that is to come back to you.

I never knew how sweet life could be until you came into my life, and always, darling, always my heart and thoughts will be with you, whatever the outcome may be. Let's have faith as you say, and I know I will come back to you, my darling, my sweet.

Roebury is going to drop you a note one of these days. After the veil of censorship has been removed. He, Sam Poon, and Lippincott and I played three rubbers of bridge at 12pm last nite. Willie did OK.

Darling, I hate to end this short, but I have no more time. All my love, all my thoughts, everything I have is yours, forever and ever.

Your loving, Bill.

Hello Muddy and Daddy, Marge and Pat. I love you all and miss you like hell. Always, Bill.

The next day, April 26, we were ordered to proceed with the long over water flight to Hickam Field, Hawaii, the first stop on the way to Australia. However, a few hours into our flight, we developed trouble in one engine and had to shut it down. Our pilot John Farrington asked me if we could possibly make it on to Hawaii. I told him, "Hell no," and gave him a course back to Hamilton Field. Farrington radioed our situation back to Hamilton and they, of course, concurred, adding it would be easier to replace an engine there than in Hawaii.

Shutting an engine down in flight also requires 'feathering' the propeller so that it presents no drag to the air. Our problem was that about every half hour the propeller would unfeather itself and 'windmill', just like it was running. Whatever the problem was, it resulted in a drag that made the plane difficult to fly. Farrington and co-pilot Paris learned that the B-24's auto-pilot didn't work well with one engine shut down. They had to take turns keeping pressure on the plane's rudder to maintain the course back.

When we finally got into the air space of Hamilton Field, the tower told us we were going to have to circle for half an hour, because they were then sending off a flight of twin-engined B-25s to Hawaii since there was a 20-knot tail-wind the B-25s needed to make the long flight to Hawaii.

While we were circling the dead engine's propeller started wind-milling again, so Farrington radioed Hamilton's tower to clear the decks, we were coming in. About 500 feet from the end of the runway, and 500 feet in altitude, we dropped the landing gear. Then, the wind-milling propeller froze with its blades turned in the normal flight position. That sudden extra drag dropped us from 500 feet to 50 in what seemed like seconds, and we headed for the drink.

Farrington, pushed the throttles to the maximum, at the same time pulling up the gear to give us just enough extra lift to clear the end of the runway. He then quickly dropped the landing gear and we finally landed safely to everyone's relief. It was a masterful job of clinch flying.

After we found quarters, everyone went straight to bed except me. I was thinking about Betty, and couldn't sleep. I stayed awake until early morning when I knew a maintenance crew chief would come on duty to assess the needed repairs. When one came on duty, I asked him how long it would take to get the plane ready to fly. He said, "Well, if we're lucky it should be ready to fly within 36 hours." I gave him \$20 and told him to take as much time as he thought it needed to get it right, as I didn't want us to have to ditch enroute. He said, "You know it could take as long as a week to really check everything out."

Finding this unexpected time stateside, I rushed to a telephone to call Betty at my family's home in Hoopston. When I called, my mother answered. When she understood that I wanted Betty to fly back to San Francisco immediately, she said, "Bill, you know Betty's three months pregnant and shouldn't be flying like that, and you're going to have to leave again soon anyway. Why don't you forget it, and let her stay here?" I said, "Mother, she's my wife and I want to see her." So I got my father on the phone, and convinced him to get her to Chicago and winging my way.

He did so, and she found a flight as far as Des Moines, Iowa. From there, she managed a connection to Las Vegas. On the leg to California, they were going to bump her for some war-priority person. But she met a United Air Lines captain who was a passenger on the flight, and explained to him that I was on my way to combat, but was still in San Francisco, and it was her last chance to see me. He graciously gave up his seat, and arranged to ride in the cockpit with the crew.

That's how she was able to rejoin me for one glorious, rapturous week, of dancing, dining, sightseeing, and being together without a care or interruption. One afternoon at the corner of 19th Avenue and Slope Boulevard in San Francisco, we casually kissed each other goodbye thinking we'd still have some time with each other later that evening. But when I got back to Hamilton Field, the repaired plane was ready to go and we were summarily ordered out. It would be almost two and a half bitter and lonely years until we saw each other again.

The Flying Boxcar

I have logged hundreds of hours in the 'Liberator' B-24 heavy bomber. Most of that time was in a plane our crew named 'Fyrtle Myrtle' a model B-24D, built with over 1,250,000 parts at Consolidated Aircraft's San Diego plant. I don't recall a 'Myrtle' connected with our crew, but it rhymed with 'Fyrtle', which signified that three of our wives were pregnant when we left for overseas. The names and nose art painted on most bombers evolved from similar personal sentiments of their crews.

The B-24 was a dream or a nightmare to fly, depending on which pilots you talk to. Farrington never knocked the plane. Probably as the command pilot, it wouldn't have been good for our morale if he had. However, when co-pilot Al Paris and I reminisced together in 1995, he said he thought it was a terrible airplane to fly. His memory of the plane, its history, and flying was acute. He amplified some facts I had either forgotten, or never knew because as navigator, I was too busy to notice. Navigating kept me busy all the time when we were flying. Using a bubble sextant to shoot and work out a three-star fix, and calculate a line of position took about 30 minutes in those days before electronic calculators.

During the 1920s and early 1930s Army brass, with the exception of General Billy Mitchell, still didn't think aviation had much of a future. The notion of a big four-engined bomber was especially beyond the pale, as the Army thought them an offensive weapon that the United States would never need. By 1934 thinking changed, and the Army started development of the B-17 'Flying Fortress' designed by Boeing. It was a four-engined plane designed to fly high, fast, and deliver a massive bomb load to a target.

By 1939, Army planners wanted a better bomber. Specifically, they wanted a plane to fly at least 300mph with a range of 3,000 miles, and able to operate at 35,000 feet. What emerged from the Consolidated Aircraft Company's drawing boards in San Diego, was the B-24.

It looked like a flying boxcar, but had an extremely efficient, 110 feet wide 'Davis wing', named after self-taught aeronautical designer David R. Davis. The elegant wing was placed high on the 18 feet high, 66 feet long fuselage of the plane. The B-24 sported four 1,200 horsepower Pratt & Whitney engines, and normally carried about 2,500 gallons of fuel. It could carry 500 more gallons in two 250 gallon tanks that could be added in the bomb bay, although at a cost of some bombs. The plane's cavernous fuselage allowed it to be adapted as a long-range cargo or passenger transport, or photo-reconnaissance aircraft, besides its primary role as a heavy bomber.

More B-24s were made during the war than any other single airplane; over 18,000 compared to 11,000 for the B-17. Early models cost about \$375,000 to build, but when production got rolling, the price came down to about \$215,000 each. They were produced at Consolidated's San Diego and Ft. Worth plants, and under contract by Douglas Aircraft at Tulsa, and North American Aviation in Dallas. Ford Motor Company got into the act by adapting auto mass production technology to aircraft manufacture. They built a new plant at Willow Run near Detroit, and produced thousands of the Liberators.

Before the United States entered the war, early B-24 production went to the British for use as ferry command transports, and by their coastal command for reconnaissance duties. The Australian Air Forces also ordered early B-24s as well. It was the British who named it the 'Liberator.'

The plane we picked up at Topeka, Kansas, was a standard version with the characteristic greenhouse glass nose that provided great visibility, but little protection for the nose gunner, and bombardier. After we got to Australia, the greenhouse nose was replaced by an armored nose turret with twin 50-calibre machine guns. The plane carried ten 50-caliber machine guns, two in the nose, two in a top turret, two at each right and left waist positions, and two in the tail.

A 50-caliber round is a formidable projectile. A half-inch across the bore, weighing almost two ounces, it travelled about 3,000 feet per second. One round could easily shatter a big V-8 engine of a modern full-sized pickup truck. The twin 50s could fire about 300 rounds a minute. When flown in a tight formation, a squadron of B-24s could concentrate enormous firepower against attacking fighters.

The B-24 was designed to have a maximum gross weight, including payload, of about 58,000 pounds. We often had to fly it at 65,000 or more pounds when long missions required the maximum amount of fuel and bombs on board.

Liberators served in every war theater. They flew the tragic low-level raid on Romania's Ploesti oil fields, where the Germans were ready and devastated them. The B-17 Flying Fortress got more notice in the public mind because the 8th Air Force and the European Theater got more publicity. But the Liberator's great range made it better suited than the early B-17s for work in the Pacific, where over-water flights to Japanese targets were very long.

The plane had minimal heating and few creature comforts. We brown-bagged our meals, mostly sandwiches, and carried thermoses of coffee aloft. The cabin wasn't pressurized, but there was an oxygen system for flying over 10,000 feet. We seldom flew over that because it took too much fuel to climb to higher altitudes. The plane's 30,000+ ceiling was more important in Europe where German anti-aircraft guns were very effective and capable of reaching high altitudes. The Japanese ack-ack never equalled Germany's.

In case the plane had to ditch at sea, the plane had two life rafts stowed in compartments on the top of the fuselage. To bail out, the B-24 provided several emergency exits. Crews could leave by the nose wheel well; the astrodome used to make star sightings, which was forward of the pilot's location; a top hatch just behind the pilot's flight deck; down through the bomb bay; out either waist gun positions; or down through the main hatch just forward of the tail section.

The debate over the flying characteristics of the plane in comparison with the B-17, will no doubt never be resolved to the satisfaction of the old aviators who flew them. However, the consensus was that the B-17 was a much more forgiving plane to fly. The B-17 could fly itself with simple trim settings. The B-24 could fly itself only under ideal conditions of speed, altitude, and normal gross weight. Otherwise, it demanded the constant attention of its pilots to hold course. This was an exacting task when the planes had to fly in formation, and became a nightmare when a B-24 lost an engine. This, of course, we already discovered for ourselves on our first attempt to fly to Hawaii.

Once familiar with the B-24's idiosyncrasies, many pilots spoke of a growing affection for the plane. It could capably fly almost every kind of mission from high altitude bombing and reconnaissance, to tree-top strafing and bombing. The plane could take quite a beating and get her crew home safely.

The Air Corps used the Liberator only in World War II. After the war, they scrapped most of them to make the proverbial pots and pans. However, many remained in service with foreign airlines and governments. Some saw service as cargo transports, and fire-fighting slurry bombers. They too, were soon retired when better airframes suited for those civilian tasks were developed. There are a few flying to this day in 'collector' airplane clubs.

I keep a scale model of one suspended from a corner of our family room as a conversation piece and memorial to many memories.

Part II

On to Australia

Getting our Act Together

First Combat Missions

Business Picks Up

An Adelaide Vacation

Terror in the Sky

On to Australia

May 1943

On May 4, 1943, we left California for Hickam Field in Hawaii, flying over 2,400 miles of open ocean. Such a trip was the acid test of navigational skill.

Navigation depends on observing the sun, stars, or landmarks and calculating those sights into lines of position on a chart with the help of an accurate timepiece and tables. An ocean doesn't provide a navigator any landmarks. A one degree course error over 2,400 miles would mean missing a destination laterally by about 40 miles. It's easy to make errors while averaging out celestial sights, or in any of the extensive math calculations needed to reduce a time and sight to lines of position. Fortunately, I had a gift for math, and the discipline to proceed with calculations methodically. During the 13 hour flight, I had made some bets with the crew about my estimated time of arrival at Hickam. I bet we would arrive within 20 miles, and five minutes of my projections, and it turned out we were only 3 miles and 1 minute off.

When we arrived at Hickam, I saw a big sign in the flight operations room that said, "If Lt. William McFerren 0-736015 comes through these quarters immediately call Colonel W. C. Farnum at Hickam Field." Cush was now commanding officer at Hickam, and his wife Louise had written him that I would be passing through on the way to Australia. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, they sent most dependents back to the States, including Louise, who stayed with my family in Hoopston until she found a place for herself.

I called Cush, and he came over to meet me within five minutes. He told me to tell my crew that I would be his guest, and to leave his address and phone number with them in case we got sudden orders to leave. When we arrived at his comfortable quarters, I started to take off my clothes to put my pajamas on, because we had been flying all night. He said, "Bill, what the hell are you doing? We're going to a party tonight given by the head of the American Broadcasting Company. I've arranged a date for you, and we'll have some fun." I acquiesced, as an order from a superior must be carried out. There were some very attractive Chinese girls there, but just newly married to Betty, I didn't have any incentive to get too sociable.

Pearl Harbor remained the headquarters of the U. S. Pacific Fleet throughout the war, and its commander was Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. As commander of a major air facility in Hawaii, Cush had constant business with the fleet commander's staff, and socially, with the Admiral himself. Thus, one other evening, Cush invited me along to a party with Nimitz and his top commanders. As I recall, there were about 40 people present, mostly admirals and generals, and no one below the rank of major except second lieutenant me. I wrote Betty and my family about the evening and apparently my spirited mother sent a note to Cush to pass along to the Admiral that elicited the latter's reply to her:

Commander in Chief
United States Pacific Fleet
July 13, 1943

Dear Mrs. McFerren:

Colonel Farnum has just this moment left my headquarters after presenting me with your note of June 28, which I greatly appreciate. I particularly hope that I may be able to live up to the high expectations of your son and yourself.

It was a great pleasure to meet your son, and I repeat again that I hope to have the pleasure of pinning a medal on him under conditions and surroundings similar to those of the ceremony he witnessed at Hickam Field.

The information which you have just given me of the four prospective fathers in the crew of the "Fyrtle Myrtle" will henceforth command my special interest in that gallant ship's future.

Be assured that every officer and enlisted man of all the services in the Pacific is united in the determination to bring this war to an early and successful conclusion. With the support of men and women like yourself we can not fail!

With kindest regards and best wishes.

Sincerely yours,
C. W. NIMITZ

During my five day stay in Hawaii, I also managed to sharpen my gambling skills. It started when I won a stake shooting dice. I then sat in on a poker game that got down to two other players who had won most of the money. During a hand of five card stud, I had a pair of deuces showing, and my opponent had a jack, queen, king and an ace showing. Any one of them paired would beat me. But he made a psychological mistake. He bet the whole pot, which was \$750. I suddenly thought to myself that he just doesn't want me to stay. If he wanted to sucker me along, he normally would have bet a couple of \$100. I called him, and he didn't have a pair. He tried to bluff it, and got caught. I also found a couple of bridge games with stakes at five cents a point and did well. My mathematical gifts included being able to count cards as well as cope with cosines.

The stay in Hawaii was a wonderful civilized interlude before we had to leave for the Northern Australia outback via an island-hopping flight plan. The first stop was to be Canton Island, which was nothing but a small airstrip atoll about 1,700 miles southwest of the Hawaiian Islands. It was built specifically as an aircraft ferrying point to the Southwest Pacific.

About a month before, the famous aviator Eddie Rickenbacker missed the island due to a navigational error, and had to ditch. He drifted in a life raft for 40 days before they found him. There wasn't much room for navigational error with such a small island, and I had estimated our arrival for seven o'clock the following morning. When that time arrived, Farrington asked me where the island was. I said we should be there, and when he dropped his wing, it was right below us. Again I had some wagers outstanding on that leg as well, and ultimately collected six bottles of scotch.

Canton Island was as remote a duty station as they got. When we landed, the local ground crew chief assigned to our plane, said, "I'll give you \$75 for every bottle of whiskey you have aboard." I said, "No, we'll sell you one bottle at the retail price, providing that you do a good job servicing our plane." I arranged for a bottle of bourbon, and we got the royal treatment. Liquor as a commodity, would prove to be a prized medium of exchange at various times during our war service.

From Canton, we flew 1,300 miles to Fiji, thence 800 miles to New Caledonia, thence 875 miles to Brisbane, Australia, staying overnight at each stop. Brisbane, in the middle of Australia's eastern coast, was where General MacArthur set up his headquarters after evacuating the Philippines. Answering to MacArthur, was the headquarters of the Fifth Air Force, of which we became a part.

After an overnight in Brisbane, we flew about 300 miles north to the coastal area of Townsville, where Fyrtle Myrtle was to get its nose job. They retrofitted most of the B-24s with the original plexiglass greenhouse noses with an enclosed armored nose turret. It was designed to offer greater protection for the gunner and bombardier. While they did this, we were in the Townsville area for about two weeks. Ultimately, our destination was to be Fenton Field, a remote airstrip with almost no facilities, about 100 miles south-southeast of Darwin, the major seaport at the tip of Australia's Northern Territory.

It turned out we were sent to Australia instead of Europe because John Curtin, the Australian Prime Minister, and General MacArthur, pressed President Roosevelt for a heavy bomb group. The Australian military and political consensus in 1943 was that a Japanese invasion of Australia was imminent. Curtin didn't need to convince MacArthur, who needed all the reinforcements he could get to shore up defensive positions of Allied forces under his command.

The strategic situation in early 1943 still did not look good for the Allies in the Southwest Pacific. While we slowed Japanese forces during the naval Battles of Coral Sea and Midway a year before, they still controlled a line that included the Dutch East Indies, Malaysia, Singapore, and northern New Guinea. Australia was short of defenders as most of their regular troops were fighting with British Forces in North Africa.

It miffed many Allied Pacific commanders that Washington's priority allocated most military resources to the war in Europe in 1942 and 1943, even though it was the Japanese that officially brought the U.S. into the war. Under this 'beat Germany first' war policy, MacArthur and other Pacific commanders had to beg for the ships and planes they needed just to contain the Japanese where they had advanced. The deployment of our bomb group to northern Australia was one of Washington's concessions to the Japanese threat to Australia.

The 380th's prime mission was to use its long-range B-24s to conduct armed reconnaissance duties for MacArthur's exposed western flank. Based on that intelligence, we were to bomb airfields, shipping, oil, and mining facilities in Japanese-held territory. The Japanese war effort depended on the oil and mineral wealth of the Dutch East Indies. We were to harass the Japanese, and force them to redeploy their planes and troops to defend those areas behind their extended lines. This would prevent them from massing their forces for an assault on the Port Moresby area of New Guinea and Australia itself. By all war accounts, the strategy worked. Our group, and others in Australia, had a strategic effect against the Japanese that belied our numbers and the damage we inflicted.

By the end of May, with our nose turret modification complete, we arrived at Fenton Field to settle in and literally build a working airfield and base of operations. Other flights of our group had proceeded us in April and early May, but we still had not received the bulk of our ground support personnel. They travelled by ship from California, and were still arriving. So began days of setting up camp, and getting oriented to what would be expected of us.

None of the preceding facts could I tell Betty about in our correspondence, which really started in earnest when I reached Australia. All correspondence originating in combat zones was subject to military censorship. That precluded mention of our location, anything to do with operations, missions, command structure, the fate of specific personnel, or indirect references to same. Thus my letters of the period reflect some vagaries, and frustration about not being able to tell specifically what was happening, to whom, or where. I have added the venue of my letters in parentheses for reader information, and annotated 'censored' where material was cut out by the censors.

Letters - May 1943

(Hickam Field, Hawaii)

May 8, 1943

Betty my darling,

It seems so long since I kissed you goodbye, but in reality it has only been a few days. Darling, that last week together was the most wonderful I have ever spent, and I shall always be grateful for it and remember it regardless of what may come to pass in the future. My first real test was quite successful with course and ETA OK. I really got a kick out of navigating. It is wonderful to see an old friend again, and he has been marvelous to me. Some day we will have to share together the wonder of the place where I am now.

Every day and waking moment at nite brings more sweet thoughts of you and our wonderful life together. The four months of our married life have brought more happiness than I thought could come to anyone. All I live today is for the time we can once more be together. I hurts me a great deal that I won't be there when Junior or Junioress arrives, but that's the way things go, I guess. I would be interested in knowing who mentioned the Dillinghams. Someone did in San Francisco, but can't recall just who. Perhaps it was Rene and Scotty. All of Clayton and Sadie's friends were so charming, but after knowing those two, you would expect to find that, as birds of a feather flock together.

Cush expects to be back to the States the latter part of this month if all goes well. I know how happy that will make Louise and Bill, as it has been so long for them. I gave Cush a good picture of what a swell son he has, and to say the old man was pleased as punch is putting it mildly. He is looking forward to meeting you at last, as Louise gave you a well deserved terrific buildup.

With little experience on censored letters, it is difficult for me to tell how and what I can write. Please let me know if there are any deletions from my letters so I can get an idea of how I am doing.

Our trip was uneventful but a lot of fun. After no sleep all last nite, I arrived where I am to be welcomed with a party the following night. I just held up and that was about all, but since then have had a chance to catch up on my sleep. Believe it or not, but I am up to my old tricks again. I awoke in the middle of the nite to find myself groping for the other side of the bed only to find no one there. It was terribly disappointing to say the least. Darling, you know how much I love to make love to you, although I must admit I was terribly languid after that last nite together - Wow!

War news I have received here has been quite favorable to say the least, although we all know the path ahead is long and arduous. I still can't help thinking what a wonderful place the world would be if all the money, energy, and initiative employed for the pursuit of this war were expended for the improvement of living conditions in the United States and other countries. What wonderful homes, schools, churches, recreation centers, transportation facilities, would be at our command under those conditions.

Never will I be able to thank Sadie and Clayton enough for all they have done for us, and your family for being so sweet and helping us out in so many ways. I deeply regret that I have been unable to spend more time with your mother and father and Stanley, although I must admit I feel very close to them despite the short time fate decreed that we could spend together. I wish I had your mother's wonderful power of description to paint a picture of the beauties of nature I have seen lately. California is beautiful, but I think I have found a good match for it.

Last nite Cush and I dictated a letter to my family. I wanted to write you first, but he was insistent on getting that message off, and as his guest, naturally I quickly agreed. However, the letters should go out at the same time.

I hope you had fun seeing your old pals on the way home. Give my best to P.J. when you see her. We certainly had fun in LA together, and I shall never forget my 'courting' days, darling.

For some reason or other, I have more confidence than ever that we will be reunited. I have good reason to believe that I may be home for Christmas. If so, it will be the best one ever, 'cause, darling, I love you with all my heart and soul. The little Jap girls around here are cute, and I haven't even leered at them. Darling, you are everything to me, and honey, I just never can tell you enough now wonderful, sweet, loving, attractive, marvelous, perfect you are, my darling. I will be trying to contact you at those appointed times.

All my love, baby, Bill.

P.S. My best to your family and everyone else. Tell your mother I would love to hear from her.

(Hickam Field)

May 10, 1943

Betty darling,

Pardon the pencil but I wanted to get this note off to you tonite. Today has been wonderful, and my only wish is that you could be with me. I met today, due to Cush's diligence, Admiral Nimitz, General Emmons, General Hale, etc., in fact every big shot on the island. To say that Cush has been marvelous to me is putting it mildly. He knocked off work the first day I was here, and took me everywhere. My writing is very sloppy due to the fact that I am very fried at this point due to a wonderful party he is having with me. But despite all the Hawaiian gals, darling, my only thought is of you. We took some pictures tonite inside, which will be forwarded to you in the near future.

Sweetie, I am so jealous tonite because a recent bride and groom are staying in the house, and I would give so darn much to have you with me. I have boasted about you so darn much tonite, and Cush on the basis of Louise's letters, backs me up at every point. It is so nice to have a darling that everyone thinks is so swell. I hope the flowers we sent for Mother's Day get thru all right, that is a problem as you realize. These people out here have given me a greater desire to participate in actual combat than I have ever had. Admiral Nimitz told me today, "I hope, Lt., I have the honor of decorating you in the future." I said, "Either you will decorate me, Sir, or I will have had my ass shot off!"

Darling, the only reason I am sending this poorly-written letter to you, is to verify the fact that drunk or sober, dead or alive, I think of you always, my darling, my sweetheart, my all...

I kiss you tonite in my heat (or heart).

Love baby, Bill

(Hickam Field)

May 11, 1943

Betty darling,

I am afraid that my letter of last nite was a little incoherent, so I better follow it up today. Last nite as I told you, we had dinner with the Dillinghams and took some pictures which will be sent to you as soon as they are developed. Tonight they are returning the favor, and also we are going to a cocktail party given by a friend of Cush's - another colonel - the boys are kidding me about all the rank I am running around with. Perry and Paris have been soused since they hit here. I do not expect to be here much longer, but cannot say when I will leave.

Darling, I try not to think of you too much. That sounds funny, but as long as I keep busy and don't think too much, the pain of our separation is not so great. However, remember dear, you are always in my thoughts, and my love for you is greater than any feeling or emotion I have ever had. Never could any man ask for a more perfect wife, my sweet.

We were all thrilled by the favorable war news from Africa, but not so thrilled about the coal situation. Personally, I think they ought to shoot Lewis and I know lots of boys in the army what would volunteer for that assignment.

I was unable to get any word thru for mother's day, but tell Mom I am thinking of her. She must have been a wonderful mother and companion to you to produce such a lovely daughter. The care and thoughtfulness of a mother is directly reflected in the way the child turns out. So I say she did a honey of a job. Of course, the old man always has a hand too, and I am looking forward to being somebody's "old man".

We are going to church tomorrow, as Cush is very active in the parish here, and often gives the sermon when the minister is away. As you know, darling, I am not very religious, but I'll give a prayer for you, 'cause it certainly can't hurt anything.

Cush is a fine executive officer, and his wife would be proud of the job he has done over here. I have always liked him, but I never have respected him as much as I do now. I can't give any information that would help the enemy, but I think I can tell you the Japs are going to catch hell in the Pacific from the air in the next year. Apparently our production is beginning to function from the planes I have seen pouring thru here, which makes me feel good as misery loves company. You no doubt will be interested to know that American civilians in possessions outside of the U.S. are subject to the same rationing as in the states, so we all are sharing our part of the burden.

I have had some fun playing poker in the daytime. I came over here with \$80, and now have \$165. The three other boys and myself thru in \$10 apiece to buy a phonograph and a flock of records. It is possible that we might end up in an area

sometime or other where radio reception might be limited, and we thought some of the other fellows and ourselves would get a kick out of some music once in a while. One record we got was 'Begin the Beguine', and darling, I'll think of that first nite we met every time I play it. I do love to dance with you so much, and we will have to do more of that when we get back together again.

I have seen a lot of old friends lately. It is amazing how many acquaintanceships I have made since I have been in the Army. I am going to write Sadie and Clayton today - as your mother and father have access to my letters, and as my time is somewhat limited, I know they will understand if I don't write them separately.

I have seen very few of the boys from Mather. I had hoped to run into Don Brendt out here. Been unable to locate him as yet. I hope to see Gus too, but no one knows about that. I saw this decoration ceremony yesterday as I told you, and even cynical me was impressed, to say the least. There is something about a band that gets one - Admiral Nimitz told me he was looking forward to the day he could pin one on me. Well, I'll do my damndest, darling, for you, my family, my crew, my friends, and last but not least, my country.

I'll be thinking of you tonite, darling, and oodles of love and kisses to you my Sweet. I now have a strap to keep me in bed! My best love to your family. I love you, darling, Bill. P.S. I love you XXXXXXXXXXXX slap!

(Townsville, Australia)

May 18, 1943

Darling,

How to you like the stationary? Al and the boys brought a flock of it over from the states. I haven't written you in the last few days so will try to make up for it in this one. I can tell you I am in Australia, but of course, not where. It is a marvelous country, and I will tell you more about it later.

As yet, I have received no mail, but think it will start coming soon as Al got a letter from Mickey this morning dated May 6th. However, he has not received any mail she had written to him previously. I believe that I shall get your mail much quicker if you put my organization and squadron in front of my APO no. etc. I will send you a new number very shortly.

We had one unfortunate accident in our outfit - the boy who knew P.J. at McClellan was in swimming and dove into shallow water, breaking a vertebrae in his neck. He will have a tough pull to make the grade. All the other boys are in good health.

Australia is quite a place to say the least. It is greatly under-populated for its size and the majority of the population is sprinkled around the coastal areas with the major portions of the interior virtually uninhabited. Great portions of this latter area would not be fit for cultivation, but much of it would.

The cities and towns we have seen are quite similar basically to ours, although the architecture is more like that we saw in the nineties, and not terribly pleasing to the eyes. Women's clothes are not as attractive as those of the American girls with longer skirts and poor lines. However, the WAAFs look very smart in their uniforms.

Everyone has been quite hospitable to us here, especially the Aussie officers. We have gotten to know several of them very well, and they have done everything they could for us. The girls seem very well disposed toward the Yanks (from observation) mainly due to the fact, I believe, that the women as a group are much better educated than the men, and are impressed with the better education and greater consideration toward women displayed by the Yanks. This of course is a broad rule, as some of the Aussie men I have met are as charming and well educated as any of our friends in the states. In addition, my friends who have been over here tell me the Aussies make damn good soldiers. The only arguments usually are between one American and another. Jack flattened a Lt. Colonel and a 1st Lt. the other nite for making the most insulting remarks I have ever heard.

Incidentally, Jack and Fred have been wonderful since we have been over here. Jack has a crew, and is just one of the boys. Of course, he still is operations officer, but he is doing his level best to be a good fellow and is succeeding admirably. He told me the other nite, that I will never know how badly he felt about the way all of us felt toward him at times back in the states. He will be OK, I guarantee. Fred has also been a peach, and can't do enough for us. The colonel is still eager but we stay away from him. Jack told me when Cantrell and Gessinger were killed back at El Paso, he decided he would use the iron hand to see that all of the men had the best training possible to prevent recurrences of such a tragedy as that.

The language here mixes up somewhat, especially in reference to certain local idioms. One of our boys asked a WAAF for a date, and she said "So sorry, I am knocked up!" (which means she already had a date). He said, "that's OK, baby, then neither one of us have anything to lose." When a boy is introduced to gal, in order to show his intentions are good, he says, "May I see your home?" Of course the WAAFs living in barracks then reply, "So sorry, men are not allowed, but I'll meet you at such and such a place." One of our would-be wolves fresh from the states pulled that line, and to his dismay he found his potential victim really lived at home, and he ended up spending a "delightful" evening playing checkers with her father instead of out on the beach with daughter.

Last nite I had dinner with an English navy captain, and he was darn interesting. While we were chatting one of my Yale classmates who commands a sub-chaser descended on me - we had quite a reunion.

Several nites ago another interesting spectacle took place - a certain gentleman (not I) whom you knew quite well was strolling along the beach and saw an attractive damsel walking ahead of him in bathing shorts. Breaking into a run, he ran her down only to find to his embarrassment it was an Aussie soldier in shorts. I'll let you guess who .

Darling, when I left, I knew the pain of being away from you was going to be great, but I never realized it would be such a sickening ache as it is. All I do is day dream of ways I could get back, of wonderful things that could happen so I could call you up from San Francisco and say, "I'm home darling." Perhaps in the past a man may have loved a girl more than I love you, but I frankly don't see how, because you see, darling Betty, every day and every hour and every minute since we have been together I have fallen more and more in love with you, until my love for you is a veritable obsession with me. I shall do my best to be a good fellow and keep up my spirits, but, honey, I will never be happy again until you are back in my arms where you belong, Sweetie.

I just can't even tell you how much I miss you and how much you mean to me. I knew it must be fun to be home again with your family and Yaqui. How I envy them to have you with them, and how glad am I that you have such a loving and wonderful family to care for you while I am away. I can't wait to get your first letters, darling. I know they will be here soon.

I haven't seen Gus yet, but have a lead as to his location. Well, Sweetie, back to work and remember every minute and hour of the day my thoughts and love are with you.

Best all, I love you darling Betty. Bill
P.S. I love you so damn much.

(Townsville)

May 19, 1943
Betty darling,

I had the darndest dream about you last night, honey. It was wonderful being in the same room with you and talking with you. Yesterday was Monday here but it was Sunday back home, so it might have something to do with our trying to think of each other on those times on Friday and Sunday. As I understand it Friday at midnite and Sunday at noon your time. As I told you in my letter yesterday, I day dream so much about us and our being together that sometimes reality and fantasy intermingle so much in my mind that it is hard to discern for sudden flashes which exists - maybe I am going nuts!!

The time we have been separated has gone so slowly that I hate to think of the vast expanse of time ahead of us before I can return to your arms and you to mine. I have found that drinking makes me terribly morbid and unhappy, so I am in the process of cutting that out. I am glad now we didn't bring anymore stuff with us than we did.

In order to keep my mind occupied with other things I have tried to meet as many of the officers from other branches of the service and nationalities. The Australian officers have been very kind to us, and the other day while Fyrtle was getting her face washed, we went out to the dog races. It was quite a spectacle with all of the bookies singing out their prices. Knowing nothing about dogs and very little about these in particular, we didn't wage very heavily. You can bet as little as a bob or shilling which amounts to sixteen cents.

I was quite amused, however, by a dice game two American privates were running behind the stadium. They were really fleecing the Aussies in no uncertain terms. You could bet that they would come up with a number over seven or under seven. In a third circle, you could bet seven would come up in which case they paid 3 - 1. As you know, there are 36 combinations of the dice, and only three of them make 7, which puts the true odds on 7 at 11 - 1, instead of 3 - 1.

The boys would balance the money bet above, and below seven. Then if it didn't hit 7, they won all the money bet on 7, and if it hit 7, they took all the dough in the other two pots. While I watched their little racket, they made over five pounds or about \$17.

The money exchange was quite complicated at first, but now we have gotten on to it fairly well. For the first couple of days we had a lot of fun trying to fleece each other on exchanges of money. At the present rate of exchange the pound is valued at \$3.28. For 3/6 or 3 shillings and 6 pence or about \$.54 in our money, you can get a marvelous dinner in the town near where we are temporarily stationed. There are 20 shillings in a pound, thus they are worth \$.16 in our money. They also have a 2 bob or 2 shilling piece, called a florin, and a sixpence and thrupence piece, whose names speak for themselves.

I am certainly very glad I brought the air mattress as mattresses are very scarce. I am looking forward to the first time we can take our pride and joy on a camping trip with us. That should be lots of fun.

Well, dear, the boys are yelling at me to get back to work, so, honey, guess I'll have to cut this short for now, but will write you more tomorrow. There was a period when I was unable to write, but estimate this is the seventh letter I have written you, so I shall number them from now on. This is the second letter from here. I found out today that the letters Al got were brought thru by one of the boys from San Francisco so it will probably be still some before I get any of your letters, darling.

Honey, I just love you to death and as I told you yesterday, all I live for is the day when we can see each other again. My best to all and all my love to you. It was wonderful to kiss you in my dreams last nite. I hope you are feeling swell, and know you must be at home.

I love you, darling. Bill

P.S. all the kisses, love, caresses, all I have, darling, is yours.

(Townsville)

May 22, 1943
Betty darling,

I have been a bad boy not to have written in the last couple of days, so I'll make this a long one to make up for it. You will notice from the above that I have a different APO number, so until further notice write to that one.

We have had little activity as yet, as we are in no vital area at present, but our time should come soon. In the meantime the Australian officers where we are stationed have made our stay very pleasant. If you were here, dear, it would be almost like a holiday. However, Fyrtle's face lifting job should be completed soon, and then back to work again. As yet, I have been unable to locate Gus. If Marg would send me his APO no. I might be able to get in touch with him, as I could drop him a line, which would be delivered in a few days.

As yet I have received no mail over here, but that is not unexpected, as I haven't been in one place long enough to allow it to catch up with me. I was given to understand that I have some in a certain place, but it may be some time before I can pick it up. I can't help worrying some about you, darling, and hope that you are in fine fettle. I only wish that I could be with you in the months to come. All I dream of is various wonderful circumstances under which I might be coming home to you. I have had many dreams of you, and frankly two of them were very pleasant. Of course, all of them were, but I think you know what I mean.

Perry and I have become very close friends over here. I think with all due modesty he was impressed with the job I did coming over here, as I hit every place dead on with my ETA very close, on one leg being only 30 seconds off. He is really a damn good egg, and we have had a lot of fun together. The other nite he and I had dinner at a club with two Australian WAAF officers, comparable to our WACS, and had quite an amusing time. Needless to say, all I could think of was that you were with me, instead, but you have to pass the time somehow, and needless to say, darling, as I have often told you, there could never be anyone but you in any respect. When anyone loves a girl as I love you, Sweetie, there can never be anything but mutual love, loyalty, trust, and respect. Some people may laugh at that, but I know it is true in my heart. John and Al are fine although Al, especially, like myself, can't be very happy away from our loves. Al is really wild about Mickey, and justly so, I think, as she appears to be a very swell gal. Jack feels very badly that he had a spat with Nancy the nite before he left. He admitted to me that he is very hot-headed, and often says things he wishes he could take back. Nancy is very sensitive, and instead of hanging one on him as you would me if I spoke to you like that, she shuts up like a clam.

I still believe in our policy of always saying what we think and talking things out. We have never had a fight, darling, but I know that if we ever did, we would never go to bed mad. I know that I have been very provoking at times, but you are so understanding that you just passed my bad moments by. I don't know how a mug like me should be lucky enough to marry anyone as sweet and lovely as you are, dearest. Some of my Australian pals kid me because I talk about you so much, and say that they are certainly going over to the states after the war if it is possible to get anything half as nice as I say you are. Well, I don't think they will go wrong. In a way, I feel sorry for the American girls over here in various corps, as there are so few of them and so many men that they are spoiled to death and it is hard for them to keep their heads. However, they seem to hold up pretty well under all the attention they get. Some of these guys get leave down in Australia, and haven't even seen a woman in months so they practically go crazy over what is here.

Honey, I have been very seriously toying with the idea of writing a book. A history of our own experiences starting back in September and that of our group. It is not particularly original as White already wrote up one group, but I think with the right approach it would be terribly interesting, as one thing I am sure is - our life has not been dull. I realize that many of those days were not much fun for you - sitting in a hotel room waiting for a phone call, but darling, when you consider all the things that happened not only to us, but those we know so well, and all the things that will happen to our outfit over here. I am sure that it would be interesting at least to us to have a record of that, and perhaps even to other people too. I am going to start work tonite, and maybe I won't have time to even finish it. Maybe I will be too lazy, but anyway instead of boring other people with those thoughts and memories that are so beautiful and wonderful to me, I can bore a piece of paper that doesn't have to listen anyway.

At one place I was in, I was in contact with some Navy personnel and was I surprised to see one of my classmates at Yale whom I knew very well. I hadn't seen him since graduation, and he had much news to give me regarding other members of our class that I had completely lost track of. He has been combating the subs, and I only wish censorship didn't prevent me from repeating some of them to you.

You can tell some of our gals at home that they don't know what the word ration means as yet, compared to what you find in a war area as this. Here people really know what the war is. I had luncheon with an Australian officer today, very cultured and well educated, who has been married for three years, and has only seen his wife five weeks out of all that time. He has a year-old child whom he has never seen, so I guess we shouldn't be too discontent with our separation, although it's still different when it happens to you.

I haven't seen anything of Fred for several weeks, as he has been at a different place. However, he got a terrific kick out of your being in San Francisco. He said he left word with the Clipper people to notify him when you arrived over there so he could let me know. He is really a damn good egg, and I think he is as fond of me as I am of him. By the way, he told me that in general, V-mail comes out here quicker than air mail, while the reverse is true on mail from here to the states. So if you happened to want to get a letter over here particularly quickly, V-mail is probably the best bet. I am not too crazy about it myself 'cause I can't say enough in one sheet, although I suppose you could continue it on several.

You will note that I write only on one side now. That's so if the censor clips something out, it won't spoil the other side of the sheet too.

Darling, I have to close now, but not without saying that you are always in my thoughts and my dreams, Sweetie, because, dearest, I love you with all my heart and the thought of being back with you again is like thinking of Utopia. My best to all, Sweetie, and I'll always be with you in thought and heart regardless of whatever happens. Goodnite my sweet, as I finish this, I'm looking at your picture and now I give it a kiss to seal this with.

All my love dear, Bill

(Townsville)

May 24, 1943

Betty darling,

Just a note to tell you I am well and as happy as I can be without you, darling. I have covered quite a bit of territory since I saw Cush, and every day takes me farther away from you, darling. But never in my heart, because all I have to do is close my eyes and you are there before me.

Fyrtle has been behaving very well, and we are proud of her. Knock on wood for that. In not too distant a time she will get her nose really wet. Well, the sooner our job is done the sooner we can be back together. There is little news I can

give except I hope to see Gus tomorrow or the next day. It has been a long time. Remember darling, my thoughts are always with you, and I love you more than anything else in the world. My best to all, and I hope to get one of your letters soon. Oceans of kisses - sweetie - I love you to pieces.

Always, your loving, Bill.

(Townsville)

May 25, 1943

Darling,

I received your first letter today, only it was no. 5. It was dated May 8, and was the one written from P.J.'s just prior to your departure from Corona. I shall probably receive the first four in the near future. By this time you should have received my first letters sent to you enroute. In order that I can be sure to hear from you regularly, I would suggest mixing in a V-mail every couple of days or as often as you have time to write.

Sweetie, you have no idea what your letters mean to me. I have read that one about ten times already. I was sorry to hear P.J. had lost so much weight, but once she goes back to work, no doubt she will put the meat back on. I am interested to hear the conflicting stories regarding Goldie that you were going to send me as soon as you got back home. There are always two sides to every story, I know, and Goldie has had his own way pretty much of his life. However, he is very honest by nature, I believe, and P.J. being young as she is, might be inclined to fit the facts to suit her convenience. I like her a lot, however, after the bitter argument I had with her regarding children, I am rather anxious to know her reaction to your condition. I hope she did not try to persuade you that we have done the wrong thing, because darling, I am sure in my heart that we will both be very happy in the future about Junior. Incidentally, I shall have to give him or her hell for kicking you so much. However, if he is not somewhat precocious, I won't believe in heredity.

I am indeed disturbed that everybody has been starving you of late. I must admit I didn't treat you so well regarding your tummy at the early stage of the game, but I am glad to hear you feel I made up later. Honey, all I want is the opportunity of keeping you happy for years and years. All I can think of is you, and devious means about how I could come back to see you. However, I must admit, that day seems far away, and because of that I am not very happy.

I have seen Paul once since I have been here. We all miss our loves so darn much. John received several letters from Betty that there is definitely an addition coming on, so if Mickey reciprocates, our crew will have done their bit for posterity with Perry's various unnamed ones spread from California to Alaska.

Incidentally, you will recall the officer in our group who was accused of various misdemeanors with a gal in Denver. He turned up over here is now married to a gal over here. He didn't waste much time. Guess he decided crime didn't pay.

While I think of it, I wish you'd write Mary Ohman and ask her the solution to that bridge hand - it has been driving me crazy, to say the least. Regarding mental telepathy, I have had dreams galore about you, but no message from the zenith as yet. We'll have to sue that guy in the Reader's Digest.

Regarding people Louise suggested to look up, I covered all of them at that one place as you should know by now. Cush really showed me a swell time while I was with him. He should be back in the states about this time, I imagine.

As I have told you in previous letters I have gotten to know many Australian officers very well. They are very good company, and I already count many good friends among them. A navy captain made a very intelligent remark today at luncheon. An Australian officer was lamenting the fact that many of their systems of doing business patterned after the English were so out of date. The captain commented that an Englishman who leaves native England for one of the commonwealths takes with him a picture of things as they were when he left. At a new home he tries to abide by that picture while at home in England the picture changes. I think that is very true. However, considering their comparative infancy, lack of population, and various obstacles, I think they have done a remarkable job over here. However, with all the industry and just darn hard work they have put in, they could have been fifty years ahead by adapting newer methods of approach. Rome wasn't built in a day, though, and I see a great future for Australia after the war, with a greater population, improved transportation, and a more streamlined system of conducting their business affairs. (Censored) Australia is very modern, and there all the leading universities are centered. (Censored) areas are behind them thru no fault of their own. Their educational system needs a bracer, like that of the middle and far west

states of our own country needed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when all of the culture was mainly centered on the Atlantic Coast.

People may censure America for various things, but there is no country or nation whose educational system reaches as many people as ours does. In fact, when one gets away from the United States, it appears so clearly how many things we have to be grateful for, and proud of, and you, my darling, are the thing I am most proud of.

My main dread of dying is because I would lose you, Sweetie, and God nor anyone could ever know how much you mean to me. As yet, I have seen little activity, although some of our boys have had plenty. However, our turn should come very shortly.

I haven't written my family for several weeks so when you have time pass on what news I have. I would like to write them more often, but I feel you have first priority on my letters. I love them all so much, and would like to write more, but Sweetie, you come first.

The boys all send their regards, I have a swell crew, and we all get along so darn well, which makes the pain lessened in being away from you. I was a bad boy and didn't get started on my story today, due to the fact that I had to do some favors for a couple of Australian officers who have been very kind to me. By the way, the boys don't read my letters, as the outside would indicate. I will be careful not to put any military information in them, as we are not interested in that when we write to each other. My love to your family.

Everything I have is yours, darling, Always, Honey, I love you. Bill

(Townsville)

May 28, 1943

Betty, my darling,

I finally got off letters to Sadie and Clayton, Cush, and my family. I am doing my best to keep up correspondence, but, if in the future, there should be a blank for a couple of weeks, don't let it worry you, because you'll know I am somewhere where letters are slow in getting thru. As yet, I still have received that one letter - no. 5 - read it again today, darling. You know how much mail means. However, the first part of next week I should get a flock of it, as I received word there is a lot for me at a certain place. I ran into a bunch of boys on their way back to the states today. Certainly wish I was going with them. They have been out here a year or so, and have seen plenty of it - were they happy!

There isn't much news as yet. We are still marking time, but Fred almost busted his neck the other day, however the Gods were with him, and he came out without a scratch, a little chastened though, I think.

I spent this afternoon playing football, build the body, you know. As yet my weight has stayed the same. So maybe I'll produce a midget also. Haven't seen Lee since I have been over here, but think we will all be together very shortly. Ralph is over here now with his contingent. They had an uneventful crossing as far as I know. Ware is in the hospital with an impacted wisdom tooth, ha, ha! News not so good. King is missing in action, but we still have hope for him. Poor Leon, I sure liked him a lot. Saw Haugie the other day, and he said to send his best to you. John is still somewhat dumbfounded over the role of prospective father. I sort of like it, darling, only wish I could be with you. I told Paul Olsen you rode out to Chicago with his gal and thought she was very swell. He beamed at that.

As yet I am an author in mind only - lazy bastard, I am dear, but I'll get it yet. John Perry is struggling along at this point with a lousy pen, so I'll let him use this one now, as it doesn't belong to me, and he hasn't written any mail since he has been over here. I'll try and get a little something off to you every day, and when I start getting your mail, honey, I'll answer them as they come along.

Darling, if I increase in eagerness over my stay here at the rate I have in this short time, you are going to have a rough time of it one of these days, my sweet. Give my regards to Junior, and apologize to him for that last seven days before I left.

Honey, I love you to death, and again all I can say is I live for only one day - I dream of you always, dear, awake or asleep. All my love, darling. Bill.

Getting our Act Together

June 1943

During June, my letters offered Betty reflection and philosophy. We had much free time on our hands after building a reasonably comfortable place to live in the Australian outback and waiting for the rest of our ground support people to arrive.

In the interim, part of our Group was ordered north to Port Moresby, New Guinea. Bratton and Miller's squadrons joined forces with a veteran bomb group there to get some combat experience. It was policy in our theater of operations that replacement groups not fly combat missions without first flying with some experienced crews. So from Port Moresby, some of our people flew missions with seasoned crews of the 90th Bomber Group, to harass Japanese footholds in New Guinea and nearby islands. Our crew stayed behind and I didn't see Bratton and Miller for a couple of weeks.

The 380th Bomb group's orders came from an Air Vice Commodore of the Royal Australian Air Force. Operationally, we answered to an Australian Air Command working under General George C. Kenney's U. S. Fifth Air Force. One benefit of that chain-of-command arrangement was that we were 'pseudo-Aussies' and every week they allotted us two 24oz. bottles of 12 percent Australian ale. It was the long-standing privilege of every self-respecting Australian and British officer, and by default, that now included us. Depending on my mood at the time, one bottle was really enough to dispel or enhance the feeling of loneliness and separation from Betty.

May had been a time of movement and activity. I didn't have much time to think about missing my new bride. Now, sitting on our heels at Fenton Field, I had plenty of time to think about Betty. It was a little over a month since I left her, and love's intoxicating grasp on me did not make for a pleasant withdrawal.

Japanese reconnaissance flights noticed our arrival in the Northern Territory.

Not long after we got to Fenton field via Darwin, they bombed us one night. There was little damage, but we immediately dug slit trenches so we'd have a secure place to go during an air attack. A slit trench runs in a zig-zag pattern that can provide protection no matter the direction of an attack. They didn't follow up. The Japanese never did have the capability to bomb effectively at night. During the day, Australian Spitfires on the coast could intercept and contend with them easily.

One day during this slack period, the medics asked our crew to dig a 10'x10'x10' hole for garbage. I took a shovel and attempted to penetrate the hard, dry, ground, but it would have taken forever to dig that hole with hand shovels. I'd heard some Australian engineers were using dynamite to build a nearby road, and got an idea. Since everyone got a cigarette ration, I asked Farrington, who didn't smoke, to give me one of his cartons.

I took the cigarettes and a jeep, and set off to where the Aussies were. When I found the engineer in charge, I explained our problem to him and said we needed some dynamite and someone who knows how to use it. I said I had a carton of cigarettes to exchange. He readily agreed, and I returned with about six sticks of dynamite and an explosives man.

With a post hole digger, we dug a hole and packed it with dynamite. One of the boys pushed a cap in the top, lit it, and ran like hell. The six sticks of dynamite just barely made a dent in that soil. So I took a couple of more cartons and went back for about 36 more dynamite sticks. These put quite a hole in the ground. Colonel Miller thought we were being bombed because of all the explosions going off. He hurried over and asked, "What the hell is going on here?" I replied, "Your medics wanted a 10 x 10 garbage hole - well, there it is." He said, "Well, I'll be a son-of-a-bitch!", and decided it was best to let Yankee ingenuity flower as it will.

Cigarettes, like booze, were a money substitute with local farmers and aborigines in our outback economy. Then, four packs of cigarettes would get you six steaks, two pounds of butter, and a 25-pound cake of ice. Unfortunately as more of our people arrived with their cigarette rations, inflation set in. Prices for local goodies went up, but it was still a favorable exchange from our perspective.

One idle mind among our group discovered that a razor blade bent in the neck of an empty beer bottle made a frightful whistling noise when tossed from a bomber. The evidence was the scattering of natives when dropped near their villages from low altitude. Unfortunately, during one such test exercise aloft, some bottles struck and damaged one of the vertical stabilizers in our tail section. This mishap, plus some needed adjustments to our new nose turret, scheduled us back to Townsville for about two weeks worth of repairs.

We decided to make the opportunity a liquor buying trip with money collected from our improvised officer's club. I collected about 3,000 Australian pounds each worth \$3.28. In Townsville, I contacted the person in charge of an Australian liquor warehouse and asked if he could arrange for some liquor. He assured me could take care of us, probably thinking we wanted two or three cases. When I laid all that money out on his desk, he damn near died. I wanted scotch and vodka. He said, "Well, I can give you some scotch but not that many cases." All told our order amounted to about 40 cases of rum, 30 cases of vodka, 10 cases of scotch, and 10 cases of bourbon. However, it was a bonded warehouse and the liquor couldn't legally be sold for consumption within Australia without paying a tax. So I said we were taking it to New Guinea, and he prepared the necessary papers to that effect. We then loaded it aboard our plane, and took off to complete the legal fiction, landing about an hour later to complete our repairs.

During our stay in Townsville, I met the skipper of an American LST who formerly taught at an eastern university. He was married, had three kids, but he told me he didn't like his wife. He met some 18 year-old native girl in town and was carrying on a torrid affair with her. He said after the war was over, he was going to go back to live with her, and he did. But, his native flame didn't keep him from asking me, "Do you know any girls here in town?" I told him, "Sure, some Australian WACS." He started counting, "Let's see, there's four officers from your crew, five from mine, we'll need nine girls plus one for me." So I arranged for the ten girls by getting a hold of one girl who arranged for the others. I coordinated all the booze and steaks, and we all had a great time. Of course, we all drank too much. When we got ready to return to the airfield, slightly tipsy John Farrington got behind the wheel of our truck and promptly drove us into a ditch. He had a tough time living that down, but we all took advantage of every opportunity to have a few drinks and fun before we had to return to the bleak outback.

Unfortunately, not all the fun ended upbeat. Freddy Miller had returned from New Guinea, and managed to join us in Townsville where he got himself into trouble. At the airfield we all stayed in a group of four identical barracks surrounding a central shower and lavatory. Naturally, we also had access to the Allied Officer's Club. That's where festivities went to excess one evening. As the night wore down and booze took its toll, Freddy stumbled out of the central bathroom and headed for the wrong barracks. When he went to where he thought his room was, he loudly banged on the locked door shouting, "Open up!" The voice of a captain replied from inside, "Go away, I need my sleep." Freddy said, "You better get the hell out of my room." The reply, "Bullshit, this is my room," prompted Freddy to make a run at the door that broke it from its hinges. He then grappled with the officer inside, and threw him out the window.

The next thing he knew he had four military police on top of him who then threw him in the jug. It looked like he might get court-martialed out of the group, and even kicked out of the air corps. Fortunately for him, a guy who went through flying school with him was on the hearing board looking into the incident. The upshot was they fined Miller \$600, big money in those days. He was lucky to get off so lightly.

Another day at the officer's club in Townsville, I ran into a navy officer who was one of my classmates from Yale. "What are you doing here?", I asked. He said, "I'm commanding a sub-chaser, and we're in for repairs. Things are terrible, I get shot up every trip, we don't have enough armor." I said, "Why can't you get armor here?" He said, "I have to have a requisition." I suggested he show me his ship so I could see what he was talking about.

He readily agreed, and while escorting me around the vessel, mentioned he had 20 cases of Johnny Walker black label scotch aboard. Knowing how things worked, I asked, "How many of those cases can you spare?" He offered, "Oh, fifteen." I said, "I think that might just be your requisition."

We piled the scotch in a jeep and went out to the airfield to call on the engineering officer. I said, "I've got a friend here that needs to beef up his armament." He replied with the standard answer that we would have to have a requisition. I said, "By the way, he's got an extra 15 cases of Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch." The officer replied, "That's sounds like a requisition, alright." He got on the phone and shortly we were joined by a group of sergeants. Collectively, they had the needed skills to get the job done. They went down to inspect the ship the next day, and drew up necessary work plans. In a few days, they had installed enough 50-caliber and three inch guns that it looked like a miniature battleship when they finished. All for 15 cases of scotch.

The arrival of mail was a better morale booster than liquor. It was the balm that took away the sting of separation, and kept a link to the saner world of the home and family. There were long periods of no mail, when we were away from base. During those times, it was particularly difficult to cope with the insanity of our business. However, it often took three to four weeks for a letter to arrive from either from either direction. Due to our remoteness, it didn't arrive every day. It piled up at distribution centers and came in bunches. So Betty and I could not easily reply to the last letter sent like normal correspondents. We each received and replied to batches of them.

As our repair and recreation time in Townsville slipped away, we found ourselves back at Fenton Field in late June, finally preparing for our turn at combat.

Letters - June 1943

(Fenton Field, Northern Territory, Australia)

June 1, 1943
Betty darling,

I am still waiting hopefully for your mail to get thru. Apparently air mail is very slow from the States to where we are. So I would suggest you make every other letter V-mail, as, darling, it is hell not to hear from you. To date, I have gotten just no. 5 dated May 8th.

Our camp life is not bad at all. We are well isolated, but we enjoy it all right. Living in tents is very healthful, and when we are not flying, a baseball diamond (in the rough) provides plenty of amusement. The only injuries I have incurred to date were a skinned knee and arm sliding into first base. I was glad to see Lee, and he is in fine shape. He played ball with us today. I have started a campaign to take off weight under his tutelage as in the tropics too much weight is not advisable. Jack and Fred are not with us at present, but will join us shortly. Hillman has been very busy, and the Colonel really keeps him in the air plenty.

Yesterday afternoon there was little to do, so we went fishing in the nearby stream. Our luck, as normal in that respect, was not too good, however, we had a lot of fun.

Haugie's brother was killed a couple of weeks ago in North Africa. He feels very badly about it naturally. His brother was also in the air corps. He was older than Haugie.

I am interested in hearing whether your allotment is coming thru OK. In case it is not, send me a cable and I will have our finance department trace it. I hope you received my cable sent May 29th regarding our six months anniversary. As I said in the cable, Sweetie, just all my thanks for all the happiness you have given me since we met, and since we have been married. I didn't know life could be half as sweet as it has been with you.

The days here are very warm, but fortunately it is very cool at nite. I have gotten a great kick out of some of the baby kangaroos and wallabies (a midget kangaroo) that some of the boys have made pets of. The dogs raised hell at first, but now they pay no attention to them. Several dogs were brought over from the States much to everyone's surprise. They make an oxygen mask for one of them, and he rides along on all the missions, for good luck, I guess.

To date, I have not been able to contact Gus, but I wrote him some time ago, and should get an answer soon. Our mail is very slow here, and only comes in on an average of twice a week. I hope Junior has been treating you in a gentlemanly and lady-like fashion, although as you said, if he or she takes after their old man, you are probably having a rough time of it. I almost got in a fight last nite, as a certain guy began giving me this argument that a man coming to combat had little right to get married and certainly no right to have children. He said it was unfair to the girl, that if there were no children she could forget him easier, if he didn't come back, and secondly it would be easier for her to marry again if she didn't have a child. P.J. gave me the same argument, but darling, I still feel if we can risk our necks, the gals can take a chance with us, as this is everybody's war.

You have often said that your only objection was you would like to do more toward the war effort such as working in the shipyards, etc. Well, I say that the wife of a boy out here is doing twice as much, because you are showing faith in him, gambling with him, and taking your own chances, so I say you more a soldier, than one of the gals putting rivets in an airplane wing. However, it is really silly arguing either way as good old Mother Nature seems to be the one who makes the decisions, aye what, honey!

I still have the scout knife, dear, and it has stood me in good stead many times. However, every time I take it out, I think of you, darling, as I do about twenty times a day anyway. I am still having a lot of dreams about you.

The one last nite was very funny after I woke up, but terrible at the time. An old girl friend of mine came in, and threw her arms around me, and just then you walked in and hung one on her chin - good for you, dear. Darling, I miss you with all my heart and soul. I love you, Sweetie, sincerely yours, Bill

(Fenton Field)

June 2, 1943

Betty darling,

It seems very hard to believe that only six months ago today, we were married in the quiet of that little church in San Francisco, after that preceding hectic week. So much has passed since that time, darling, and all of it was happiness. Even the bitterness of parting is sweetened by the thought and knowledge of loving and being loved. It makes one even happy at times despite our separation, because no one has lived until they have loved and have had their love returned, and frankly, no one can really love in the full sense of the word until they have lived with the object of their affections. I know my love for you is much deeper now than it was when we were married, since as you say, one becomes a part of another.

Honey, what a wonderful pleasure it was to get your marvelous letter of May 17th, no. 12, with the note enclosed for Doc. Now I have received seven of your first twelve letters. I was so glad to hear that you had received two of the four letters I wrote you from Cush's place. Walter Dillingham is Cush's executive officer, and is really a peach. His wife is also very attractive as is the rest of the family.

Honey, I got such a big kick out of your burning most of your old letters and memoirs. I would love to read the ones you saved. Fortunately or unfortunately, I have never made a practice of saving letters except the ones you send me, which I read and reread, because they really cheer me up. To tell the truth, honey, the first three weeks when I hadn't had a word from you, were really blue. I tried to call you one nite, but it was impossible to get a line thru, and from where I am now, it is out of the question.

I really got a kick out of the entries in your diary of Sept. 19th and 20th, and also the one three weeks after you came up to school. It certainly bore out what my father often told me. My mother would be giving me dissertations on the type of girl to marry, and my old man would laugh like hell, and say, "For God's sake, Marj, you ought to know well enough the gal does the picking, and when she makes up her mind, you are a dead duck." Well, honey, I am certainly glad I didn't have a chance, because I certainly went home with a wonderful hunter, if my father's philosophy is true.

By the way, when I wrote Clayton and Sadie a week or so ago, after I posted the letter, I suddenly remembered that somehow or other I forgot to send my regards to Bert and Angie, as I mentioned most of the other people. However, knowing Clayton's great gift of diplomacy, he will probably tell them I sent my remembrances. If you could send me the names and addresses of the Irish family that gave us the champagne, Renee and Scotty, Bert and Angie, the Johnson's, and the people next door to Clayton and Sadie's in the country, I will drop them each a V-mail at the first opportunity. I am glad that your friends liked me, darling, and it was nice of Bert to say what he did. Who knows what the future will bring, and I too, love California. I don't know, however, honey, whether it's because of the state or because you are one of its native daughters.

That certainly was news about P.J. I hope things work out for her, because I just have a hunch Goldie would never have kept her happy. He did OK when he was pushing her around, but once the procedure was reversed, I am afraid Goldie was thru. I guess anyone can't be as lucky as we are, where it's a question of give and take on both sides, without either one of us, so to speak, having to act other than naturally. I know I must have been somewhat of a problem when I would have too many, but we didn't ever have any real arguments, did we, darling?

The outdoor movie is a great source of entertainment over here at these camps in the wilds. They have a screen set up, and then all they have to do is run a truck up with a camera in the rear, and let go. Hollywood provides the films, equipment, etc. for the boys - a very nice gesture, I think. We have three or more shows a week.

That sleeping bag was a real present on your part, dear. It is terribly comfortable, and the mattress works fine. I put the whole contrivance on a cot, and am as snug as I can be without you. Will have to try it together, sometime, sweetie.

It amused me to receive your inquiry in one letter regarding the scout knife the day after I had written you assuring you it was still intact. However, I have one confession to make. I lost my wallet at one place, but fortunately without any money in it, as I had my money on a clip attached to a horsehide attached to a belt strap. However, I had a lot of notes, passes, etc. in it. Nevertheless the loss was not serious and it will probably show up.

All of the boys who came by boat are here now after an uneventful trip. We have not seen all of them yet, but I expect to see Ralph shortly and I will tell him you heard from Mary. What about the bride hand?

Sweetie, I shall certainly do my best to learn to ride well after this is all over. I really like it despite all the rumpus I used to make about it. Anything I do with you is fun, and everything that I enjoyed doing before meeting you is so much more enjoyable when you can share it with me. I am so glad Jaqui gave you such a warm welcome when you returned home, although I must admit I envied him being able to plant that big smack on you. I'd like to have been in the corral instead.

I have heard nothing from my family as yet, but am curious if they have had any news of Bill Sells recently. Would appreciate if you could obtain his APO number without arousing any worry on their part. As yet I have heard nothing from Gus.

My proficiency as a baseball player is now increasing. Our crew has a team and we have had lots of fun with it. John Farrington is very good, and he has been giving me some coaching. I always played golf in school in the spring, so I never learned much from the great game of baseball, except enjoying it as a spectator. I am getting brown as the devil, and with my protein diet and no beer, I should reduce that center bulge somewhat. Enough for now, darling. I love your letters so much, and they mean so much. Honey, you are the most wonderful thing that ever happened, and I love you always. All I think of is you, my darling, my sweet.

Loads of love and kisses, Bill.

P.S. None of your letters have been touched by the censor.

(Townsville)

June 10, 1943

Betty darling,

I have been away for awhile, so that will explain a lapse in letters between June 5th and the present date, as it was impossible to write during that interval. We are all in good health, but I will tell you right now I never missed you more than I did last nite. To tell the truth, I couldn't sleep a wink, and all of my thoughts were with you. I frankly don't know how I am going to endure this separation, but I guess there isn't much I can do about it. I have tried to keep as busy as possible and not think anymore than necessary, but I can't help it, darling. There is an eternal yearning in my heart, mind, and body for you and you always. All I live or care for is to come back to you, my sweet. And this place is driving me nuts. It is true that everyone has been swell to us, and the country is very picturesque, but nothing impresses me very much when I am away from you. Regarding mail I got a batch today, and what a pleasant surprise. The latest letter I have had from you was dated May 17th but I have received now all but one of your first twelve. In one letter you said you were going to try a V-mail the next day. I got the air-mail, but not the V-mail, so I guess it is just a tossup.

I like air-mail better because it seems more personal and you can say a lot more, but I guess it is a good idea to mix in a V-mail once in a while. I hope you have gotten all of the letters I sent you. I don't write every day because of obvious reasons. I can't. The days I don't fly I write, although I switch dates of letters around somewhat so no one could tell how many missions I fly.

Regarding my promotion I haven't seen Fred or Jack for some time, but understand 2nd Air Force turned down all promotions just before we left the States and now Fred is trying to put it thru over here, which is a tough job, as MacArthur is famous for the slowness of promotions in his command.

I haven't written that Bill Sells was killed until I was sure that his family had been notified. Poor Willy. He was a swell guy, and one of the best pursuit pilots down here. He was out on a reconnaissance mission, got in a dog fight with a Jap, and shot him down. However, the Jap injured Bill's landing gear, and instead of bailing out, Bill tried to make a crash landing, but the ship nosed over and blew up. I had luncheon yesterday with one of his classmates and he said they were all sick about Bill, because he was such a damn good boy. I am going to see his wife on my first leave. As you know, he married an Australian girl.

John has lost a lot of his eagerness since we have been over here. He really looks out for our best interests, and never asks for trouble. He will never take a ship up unless it is really in good condition, and I feel very confident with him. I guess he knows how many married boys he has in his crew including himself. So he'll never ask for trouble, but will always do his duty.

You may be somewhat curious as to why I put my name on every page - that is the rule here. I guess so someone wouldn't slip a page in a letter that wasn't supposed to be there.

Doc really got a big kick out of the note you put in the letter for him. It was very sweet of you, honey, and I am always proud that you do such nice things. Doc has been swell to us as always, and we are really lucky to have him in our outfit. Outside of being a damn good medico he is a swell morale and health officer, and is always thinking of our best interests.

Our crew has been building a cesspool for him in our spare time for the mess hall, to provide additional sanitation. Doc's idea is the old ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. He has designed all our living quarters, and placed them in the most desirable spot from that standpoint. We make frames, over which we put our big tents, and then mix concrete with the dirt here, to make a good floor. Our tent is next to the dispensary, so we can keep a bottle or two of beer in the ice box when there is room - nice aye!

I played bridge the other night with Roe, and we had a lot of fun. Lammie Poor is a very good player, and he and I play quite well together.

Darling, believe it or not but I went riding the other day!!! I am afraid the poor horse didn't know what the hell was going on, but we didn't part company. So that is a step in the right direction. I had gone down to a certain place to pick up some supplies, and there was a stable nearby, so out I went. I imagine Yaqui is somewhat chagrined about being walked, but darling, the only thing is what if he got a little too frisky? I know you are an expert horsewoman, but even the best can't keep a horse from breaking into a run. I don't mean to be a killjoy, honey, but I don't want anything to happen to you or Junior. We can always have another child, Sweetie, but you must realize that sometimes it is the mother too, who suffers. I know you wouldn't take any risks, but I really wish you would ask the doctor what he thinks about that. I don't want to be an old maid, dear, but if anything ever happened to you, I don't think I'd bother to come back from a mission. Please don't be worried when you receive a cable because I'll be sending them periodically, whenever I am close to an office where I can send one. I am so curious to hear how my mail has been coming thru as all you have acknowledged are the first ones you received - two from my first stop. Darling, I love you always with all my heart. Days away from you are hell, and nites are twice as bad. Have fun, Sweetie, and I'll be back one of these days. I love you, darling, my precious baby,

Bill

P.S. I had to use RFD in the cable they won't let you use P.O. box.

(Townsville)

June 12, 1943

Betty darling,

I have been a poor correspondent the last few days, but frankly life has been so dull and I have been so unhappy, I was afraid to write because it would just be depressing. I will be glad to get back to work instead of sitting down at the place we are at waiting for them to finish fixing something for us. When we are busy, the time passes so much quickly, but when we are sitting on our fannies, it drives me crazy, because all I can do is think of you, and how much I miss you, and when I'll see you again. The thought of coming home to you, darling, seems like a fantasy, something for which I live, and yet something that will be forever just away from my grasp. Being away from you seems like a bad dream, but unfortunately I wake every morning to find it a grim reality. I have not had a chance to get any mail for ten days, so I have that to look forward to when I return. Your letters cheer me up so much and I live for them, darling. I shall try to make them more cheerful in the future, but as you know, Sweetie, I have never been able to hide my feelings from you, either when we are together or in a letter.

However, it stands to reason that things would be as they are now when we are apart, because when our happiness was so complete when we were together, darling, naturally night must come when the sun has gone away. You made me very happy when you said that Junior was a happiness even if a nuisance at a time when I am away. If I only could be there, honey, when your time comes. I know the father usually is much more of a detriment than an asset, but I'd still like to be there.

One bright spot the last week was a chance meeting with another college classmate. We had dinner together on his ship, and had a lot of fun talking over old times with a bottle of brandy. He was recently married too, and has not seen his wife in ten months. So as misery loves company, we really had a high old time talking about how much we missed our loves, and how wonderful they were. I had planned to see more of him, but he had to leave unexpectedly. He was one of those guys whom I liked but didn't know intimately at school, and after seeing him and talking with him, regret very much I didn't cultivate his friendship in college, as we think so much alike about everything in general.

However, it is quite possible that six to ten years ago, we would have had little in common, because my ideas, desires, and beliefs have changed so drastically in the interlude, and perhaps his have too. As I remember Dave in the old days, he was somewhat narrow-minded and reticent, but the ensuing years have given him a sense of humor and a greater sympathy for human feelings.

There is no doubt that as you grow a little more mature, not necessarily, but usually in years, and always in mind, the things people say and do, especially those closest to you, are not judged point-blank, but first with the question why did he or she say that or do that - in case it does not meet with your immediate approval.

I think one of the reasons, Betty darling, I love you so much is because we never play games with each other and always we are perfectly frank with each other. I chortled to myself when in reference to food, you mentioned the incident at El Paso when you justly gave me hell for only offering you a drink when all you wanted was something to eat. I loved the determination in your eyes and chin, sweetie, and if you always handle everything in that manner, I don't think we'll ever have an argument about anything.

As I told Dave the other nite we were talking, I have done plenty of dumb things in my life, but the most intelligent thing I ever did, and the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me was when I married you, my darling. I shudder when I think what I would have missed if I had kept that other date the night I met you in Laguna. You gave me life at its zenith when I had nothing before. I can't forget my waking up Goldie that night and telling him, "there's something different about this gal, Goldie, I don't know what it is, but I've got to find out". Didn't I, Honey? Wow!!

I just stopped for a moment Sweetie, and lit a cigarette. Suddenly I realized I felt a helluva lot better than I did when I started this letter. When I write to you, I always feel like I am actually talking to you, and when I talk to you, honey, it always makes me feel good.

A rather amusing incident occurred the other day. Some of the boys stole a very handsome fighting cock from a certain locale as a mascot. They decided to take him along on a mission for luck, but to their dismay they found that despite the fact he had been very well behaved previously, flying made him nervous, and you know what a chicken does when he is nervous? He first flew up on the pilot's shoulder, and left his mark, then on the co-pilot, then all over the dashboard. His next direct hit was on the radio operator's head; they finally put him up in the top turret, but when the gunner took his seat in that position, he received a sad surprise. Needless to say, that was Jake's last mission. To add to his popularity Jake then proceeded to get everyone up the next morning about five o'clock. A day later he disappeared, and all S-2 or intelligence can report, was that a member of the crew was seen tracking him with a hunting knife in his hand thru the brush, and that two hours later the wonderful aroma of chicken cooking wafted its way from the kitchen. I don't think it would take Scotland Yard to solve the disappearance of poor old Jake.

I'll try to write more interesting letters from now on, dear, but in the meantime, darling, always remember that I love you completely, in every way. Darling, there is no way I can fully express how much you are a part of me, even with Junior giving you notice in his subtle little way. Oceans of kisses and hugs, dearest. You are my love besides being my wife. Bill

(Townsville)

June 16, 1943

Betty, my darling,

This will probably be in the form of a magnum opus, and since I am sure to a certain extent of what I have to say, and since my thoughts certainly won't offend in any way whatsoever the ire of the censor, I'll use both sides of the sheets, and make up for my lack of communication in the past two weeks. I have been a little under the weather, honey, but am in tip top condition at present. For the past two hours I have been walking in the moonlight in a not unattractive spot by myself, thinking of a million thoughts, mainly of you. I thought to myself how lucky I was to ever have found anyone as wonderful, as sweet, as tender, and yet fun too. I told you once before the first night I met you that I discussed with Goldie this person I had met. There was something different there, and yet I could not pigeonhole it, analyze it or tell what it was, and probably never will. But this I know, my darling, in every person, normal or abnormal, is one great desire to be respected and loved.

In each of us is there so much egotism for better or for worse. And each one of us, from top to bottom, has their best side and their worst. In reality, God and the devil lives within us, each at their habitat. Circumstances, events, training as in a horse, luck as in a gambling game, and various other sundry factors have their bearing in the shaping of every

personality, and yet from the lowest to the highest, we all want to be loved, and certain people, and those only, can bring out and inspire the best, and vice versa.

When you meet that person that is 'different', as I said before, then the best is brought out in you. As a brilliant mind remains dormant in the presence of a bore, so it flashes when appreciation brings it forth. There are perhaps many things that are important in life, but the greatest of these is love. For the latter, everything can be sacrificed and forgotten, given, or forgiven, because to be really loved, and return the same, renders the only real happiness that can come to man. It is true that a person can have great feelings of exaltation and uplift from accomplishment of a sorted nature, i.e. power, and self-aggrandizement in all its forms, but never can that bring real happiness. Never can that replace the emotion one has of being in the arms of your love, and by that, I mean in no way the purely physical sense. There are a lot of problems we all have to face, but Utopia is at hand when the latter condition exists.

All the world seems shut out, my darling, and everything is warm and fine when I know you are close. I think you must know what coldness means, because there seems to be a chill in me when we are apart, and when I am away from you, there is a restlessness within that will never give me peace. I spend hours thinking of you, and yet when I start to write, I am completely worn out. I devise devious means to keep my mind occupied at every moment, so those horrible longings will not attack me. The longing to see you near me, to hear the sound of your voice, the touch of your hand, the wonder of your caress, the music of your laugh. I dream of amazing strokes of luck that will bring you back to me. Of ways I might come home, of the expression on your face when I returned unannounced. Of the days and nights together if such a wonderful thing can happen. In other words, my Sweet, I really live in a realm of fantasy half the time and grim reality, the rest. When we are parted, frankly, I don't live, I just exist.

I told you in previous letters that I have done a considerable amount of reading lately, and that, added to my general disordered state of mind at present, has made me think and consider many of the ideas, ideals, beliefs, philosophies, etc. that used to fascinate me at various stages of life. And about all of the political influences, both international and otherwise, that are responsible for us being apart. I recently read again a book that particularly impressed me when I was seventeen - "The Middle of the Road", by Sir Philip Gibbs. Your mother and father must undoubtedly remember it well, because it created quite a sensation when it was first published in 1923. This weather-beaten edition I read was particularly interesting because of the penciled remarks in the margin by its previous owner or rather shall I say its original owner, for the flyleaf bore the bleak signature, 'Katherine Norris, 1923', and the remarks in the margins were of the same hand.

If you have never read the book, I would definitely recommend it, and if you have, you will understand when I say, that never can I understand better the feelings in Bernard's mind, because I have everything that he didn't have - an understanding and intelligent, loving wife. Further, after this war is over, there are going to be many Bernards and many Joyces, and the one thing that pains me deeply is the fact that I don't believe that any of our leaders know what peace to write.

Darling, you and I certainly owe it to the child we are about to have to do everything in our power that a repetition of this horrible blunder on all sides will not be repeated. After every war, people say never again, and yet they sit back in their own little worlds, and bang! - it comes again!

I fully realize now that the world has grown too small for any group or any nation to isolate themselves from the world. Revenge is one of the strongest and vilest emotions in mankind, but it will always exist.

I was talking to an Australian WAAF officer, corresponding to our WAC, last nite at a dinner given by a couple of Australian flying officers, and she made the stupendous remark, "The war is just a battle of capitalism." Well, I suppose in a way, part of that is true, but that is only a hundredth of the story. When people are too lazy to think or investigate, they grasp at all covering shelters such as capitalism, labor, communism, etc. They make no breakdown, they just blanket everything. In other words, they use the opposite reasoning that made Socrates famous as Plato's puppet, they say, "One Russian or one German, or one employer, or one laborer, is a bastard, therefore all of them are. Frankly, in the United States in the last ten years the real 'forgotten man' has been the white collared worker, educated, etc. and supposedly the lamp and exponent of capitalism. I honestly believe that if we do away with big business in the United States, we will end up a second rate nation. Unless labor is represented by their own, and not the racketeers that found it an easy touch after Prohibition died its eventual and prolonged death, and unless capitalism so-called, gives the boy out of school a break, and is not represented by Doug Hertys or Falls, but rather by Knudsens and Kaisers, and unless the government keeps its blundering nose out of competition, and unless your barristers feel that the role of a congressman or politician of sorts is not a dishonorable strata, then my Sweet, we are in for a hell of a time.

And even if all these things come to pass, after a peace of some kind arrives eventually from this bloody chaos, nothing will have been won if the conquered nations are starved to death, and England screams for a status quo thirty years old, and a thousand years old in justice. To me, France is what I would term 'languid', Germany like a north wind, blowing like hell whenever it has the power, and Italy like those little fire crackers we shoot off in bunches. A lot of noise, but that is about all. I firmly believe Russia is interested only in Russia. Their fingers have been burnt at every end, including at the knuckles.

Japan is definitely a problem. She has to spread a bit somewhere, and in her cunning and unimaginative, and yet, very complicated manner will always pick the hard way of accomplishing that purpose. With the money she has already spent, she could have bought what she has conquered, and with the money we have spent we could have bought Japan, lock, stock, and barrel, although God knows who wants her.

The thing that infuriates me the most, is to see the best of our boys, and of the enemies too, killed so needlessly because of the mistakes of a chosen lot of numskulls that have guided the destinies of these various countries. Darling, I have a lot more to say, but I'll continue it tomorrow. I love you, honey, more than you will ever know or comprehend, and regardless of whatever happens, your happiness is my main desire. As I finish now, I have closed my eyes for a moment, I see and feel you in my arms, and I have just kissed you, so deliciously, good night.

Always, darling, your, Bill

P.S. I hope I dream about you tonite!!!

(Townsville)

June 19, 1943

Betty darling,

The letter I wrote you the other nite may have been a little far fetched, but that was the mood I was in, and I didn't have you to talk to. I never realized what an escape valve you always were to me, because when anything was on my mind or troubled me or interested me, you were always there to lend an attentive and sympathetic ear, always able to pour oil on my restlessness or dissatisfaction with certain things about me - i.e. some ways of the army or personalities that I was thrown up against which conflicted with mine.

As far as the latter is concerned, everything has run quite smoothly and serenely. I have seen very, very little of Fred and Jack, but the times I have seen them they have been milk and honey. I really am quite fond of them both, especially Fred. I felt very sorry for Jack one nite when he told me practically in tears how it felt to be hated by every man in the squadron. Perhaps I wrote you that, but he said he felt it was his duty to be an 'iron ass' after Cantrell and Gessinger were killed in the States, to see that the boys were trained as well as possible. He feels somehow he was partially responsible for that, although I assured him he was not. He was also upset about his tiff with Nancy the nite before he left. Nancy is very sensitive, and Jack is rather impetuous in his speech at times. He told me how Nancy helped pay his way thru school, and how much he loved her for what she had done and what she was. I told him I thought he had gotten a prize in Nancy.

Fred is probably the real one to be pitied, because he deserved a stronger personality than Jane. The latter is harmless but so ineffective. Fred got off to a very bad start over here. He and Jack got in a fight the first week they were here with two officers that had been here a long time. It wasn't our boy's fault, but they got the blame. Then Fred tried to windmill a motor on the ground and ran into another plane, damaging both of them. There was a rumor that the board might knock him down a grade, but I hear and hope it will blow over.

I think you and I with Ginnie and Lee to open our eyes, understand him a lot better than most of the boys. That nite at Denver when we sat in the mess hall and he told us about his life, made me understand him a lot better. I guess he realizes it because he always makes a fuss over me when he sees me, and always asks about you, always managing to throw a nice compliment your way. It is really a delicious feeling honey, to have a wife you can always be proud of, and whom your friends admire so much. However, I'll have to stop day dreaming so much about my coming home to you, or they'll lock me up as a crazy man. Already sometimes I catch myself not being about to tell where fantasy stops and reality begins.

I can't sleep without a million dreams. Some of them wonderful and others terrible. They are all bad in that when I awaken and find the good ones were just a dream, I am disconsolate, and the nightmares leave me with a grim foreboding. Last nite I dreamt I received a wire my father had died.

Come on, McFerren, you have to stop writing like this. Here I write you dear, to cheer you up and make you glad to hear from me, and then I wander off, and just tell you everything that comes into my head.

The last letter I had from you was dated May 17, and I can't wait to get back to my base after several weeks of absence to get my mail. At your last writing you had only received two of my letters. I don't write as often as you do, Sweetie, but I try to make them longies when I do.

Our boys have been doing very well, but we have to pay the price once in a while. We lost P.G. Smith last week, and the boys are very sad about that. Also little Stoner, Powell, St. Denis and Corpening. We have hope for them all, though, as they were just missing and may be paddling around in a little rubber boat. If they ever report me missing, darling, don't give up hope for awhile because I guarantee to do the best I can to come back to you and Junior.

You have heard about the gals walking home, well, the other nite two of our boys went out with a couple of Australian nurses, and when they took them home, their transportation went off and left them, and the boys had (censored) mile walk back to town on a very cold nite, clad only in their sun tans. To say their ardor was chilled is putting it mildly. Incidentally, before you get in any cracks, I wasn't one of them. I have been very true, my dear, although I don't think I have to tell you that, I may have been somewhat of a rascal before I met you, darling, but now, well the rascal's more stodgy than a reformed sinner.

I can also say the same for Al. All he has done to date is harbor a gleam in his eye. Reny is rather funny about women. He makes no effort toward them unless something is practically thrown in his lap. I guess the burnt child fears the flame. John Perry and I have become much better friends that we ever were back in the States. He confidentially told me he thought I was a pretty hot navigator, which was quite a concession, coming from him. I really am very attached to my crew, as it should be.

As you know, Bill Massie got fifteen days sick leave, but spent it all in California without going to see Charlotte, much to my disappointment, as she is very much in love with him, and I am a romanticist at heart. Perhaps he knew best, I don't know. I still think it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. He is back with us now.

Colonel Miller has made quite a showing for himself. He has flown twice as many missions as any of our pilots, and has a ship, several good bombings of installations, and about six Zeros to his credit. You have got to give the old boy credit, he has plenty of guts, and he can fly with the best of them. He wouldn't ask any of the boys to do anything he wouldn't do, but the catch is there isn't anything he wouldn't do.

Darling, I wonder if you could send me a large picture of you in a folder, so I could put it up in my tent. I love the one I have and carry with me always, but in the tropics one perspires a lot, and I am afraid it will be a little worse for wear in a couple of months. I'll have Fred send thru a request if you will comply. I have a funny little habit of taking your picture out and propping it up in front of me when I write to you, my love, so it almost really seems you are in the room with me.

Darling, I have another great problem. I have no one to tickle and massage my back, etc., now that we are apart and it certainly is a helluva situation, especially because you did it so expertly. Even if I did take advantage of your good nature too much.

I am proud to report that I have not as yet lost the scout knife, or the sleeping bag. The latter is a great comfort to me, and we will have to try it together sometime, although I admit with my big fanny and your present condition it would be a rather tight fit at present, but I rather fancy that time will take care of both of those obstacles, aye, baby??

I have to stop for now, Sweetie. I love you so darn much. I am miserable every moment I am away from you. Oceans of kisses, hugs, caresses, and all my love to you forever. You are my great love, darling, and a man only has one great love in a lifetime. Bill.

P.S. My best to your family, they are so swell!

(Townsville)

June 20, 1943

Betty darling,

It is terribly late, but I wanted to get a line off to you before I went to bed. I wrote you more at length this afternoon, but since I haven't written enough in the past several weeks, I thought I'd try to make up for that lapse.

At the place where we are at present our crew plus a few other buys had a lot of fun having a few beers and talking about everything in general. Al and I had quite a verbal battle with a couple of those bastard cynics who say war marriages are crazy and thoughtless on the part of the boy. As you know, I always like a good battle, and with all due modesty my tongue was as lucid as it can be, and I left them puffing for replies. In fact, there are times when your (impersonal) mind seems to comprehend everything, and then at other times it is very dull, but in the words of the vernacular, tonite was one of my good nites. You probably don't care much for the abbreviated spellings such as "nite" that I picked up from reading that bastard paper, the Chicago Tribune (good in sports and comics, though) but that's the way things go.

You know we have all strange thoughts and often you wonder at the source. In other words, you catch yourself thinking, 'why did I say that, what backed that opinion up, where did I learn that, how could I have sponsored that idea', much later after the words had left your mouth.

Well, tonite, among other things and most importantly, I remembered some of the things your mother had written us when we were at El Paso, and other things she conveyed to me either in words or expression that nite we were together at Corona. I remember she wrote so distinctly that anyone is crazy, or not in love, unless they want to be eternally together. If they needed a so-called vacation from each other, definitely something was wrong. And further, she remarked how little she and your father had been apart, and how miserable were those comparatively brief times. God knows how true that is. I thought tonite how much I regretted the fact that I had been able to see so little of your mother and father and Stan, and as I thought about that, another idea came to me and amazed me at first, and then made me very happy. So happy as I gave it more consideration - until your mother and father met me that nite in San Francisco, they knew nothing of the rascal their precious daughter was to marry, and yet they received me with open arms. And from their letters and the nite I spent with them, I knew they were genuinely fond of me.

The point, my Sweet, is that if a mother and father do their job well, they can put perfect confidence in their child, and know that sooner or later happiness will be found by that child. I adore and love your family for what they are, but, in addition, I love them just a little more, and esteem them more highly for having such confidence in the girl I love. One and several times you told me that to you, one of the most paramount things in life was to learn thru hardship and otherwise to make your own decisions, and that it had been your experience that, when you had reached the stage where you could make those decisions, right or wrong, you found it an error when you allowed your firm determinations to be swayed by someone else's advice.

By that, you and I do not mean that we lend a mute ear to any advice or anyone else's ideas. Far to the contrary, the meat of the thing is that at all times we listen carefully and fence mentally, but at any one given time when a decision is necessary, we weigh everything we have conjured or learned before, and then say, 'this is the answer'.

That decision may be based on instinct, intuition, experience, heredity, a spoken word or a line, and sundry other things we have read, but anyway, my darling, that was our decision. You may think (although I know you don't, because you understand everything so darn well) that I sound like a homespun philosopher, but after all, dear, until we are together again, only philosophy will keep us alive. You probably will have a good laugh at the last statement when Junior gives you a good kick to let you know you are certainly alive, and he or she certainly will be in a very short time.

Tonite as we sat in this brave representation of an officer's club, God knows where from where, I thought of another thing as the fourth of five records played in cracked dignity "Begin the Beguine", of that wonderful nite in Laguna when that tired but game band with the interesting pianist for a drink as their pittance played that piece for us - and more than once. And then I thought too, darling, of me telling you how little time we had, and we must skip those first five dates. Well, anyway, I guess everything has been on that ratio with us all the time we have known each other and have been together, because, although I am prone at times to use a lot of hackneyed expressions, it seems like I have known and loved you since eternity began, or since I breathed the wonderful nectar of life.

It seems incredible that only nine months ago tonight, and this is another Saturday nite, or rather Sunday morning over here, we were first together. Perhaps I should be more grateful for the wonderful happiness we have had together, and that any more would be an extra bonus, but I can't feel that way, honey. I feel my paramount and only desire is to be with you again. I know what happens to those who are selfish, but I wouldn't be honest if I didn't tell you I put you above everything, home, country, all. That is a terrible thing to say, and the Gods may wreak their vengeance, perhaps, too soon, but at least you can always know you were completely and irrevocably loved by one man, your husband.

I am always, yours, dear Betty.

Bill

P.S. after reading this epistle, I see what the Australians mean about their 12% ale.

(Townsville)

June 21, 1943

Betty darling,

Pardon the pencil, but I am fresh out of ink and wanted to get a note off to you before I went to bed. The news is still the same as the last week. I am still away from my home base, and dying to get back in order that I can get my mail, as it has been quite some time since I have had any, not due to your fault, darling, of course, as you are wonderful about writing and I appreciate your letters so much.

Today there was nothing much doing, so five of us including John and Al had a cut-throat game of hearts, where Willie came off pretty well, and John gave most of the party. We were playing for a tuppence a heart, and John ended up losing æ2«, if that means anything to you. The pound is worth about \$3.28 in American money, and there are 20 shillings in a pound, and twelve pence in a shilling. A two shilling piece is called a florin and a half shilling is called a six pence. They also have a thrupence, a pence, and half pence. Very easy after you get on to it, I think I explained it before.

In your last letter that I have gotten, dated May 17th, you said you were going to check up on your allotment, but, in case it isn't coming thru, you should cable me immediately, so the group finance office can check up on it.

Tonight we saw a good but fairly old picture which I had not seen, "Yankee Doodle Dandy", with James Cagney. I really enjoyed the picture immensely, as I have always had a great admiration for the Cohan tribe, and the picture depicted them much as I imagined they were from hearsay. I was sorry I missed "I'd Rather be Right", as the play was supposed to be a scream, and with my general political feelings, I no doubt would have gotten an extra kick out of it.

As you know, darling, I have been inclined to be very hesitant in creating any false optimism regarding the progress of the war at any stage, and although I can't help feeling it is a long row ahead, developments of the past month have certainly been very favorable and it really looks like we are going some place, at least in one theater of operations if not in another. From the papers it appears the Italians are in for a tough time of it this summer, and if the Germans have to draw troops out of Russia to bolster them, the Russians should make things plenty rough, with the R.A.F. and our air corps giving them hell in Germany.

We naturally haven't got as much to work with as yet as the boys have in Europe, but things are definitely picking up, and the Japs will know they have been in a war before this is all over.

They are brutal and ruthless fighters, but the Aussies and our boys aren't Sunday school children either, and the Air Corps has certainly been holding up its end to date, in my way of thinking.

I am rather fond of the Air Corps, because, although it took me away from you for a time, it gave me you in the first place. So I guess I haven't any kick coming.

I have been trying to work out some kind of philosophy, or some way of not thinking of you so much, so I won't be so continually miserable while we are apart, but so far I haven't worked out anything along that line which is workable at all. You are constantly in my thoughts, and whenever I am alone I catch myself up to the old trick of day dreaming of my homecoming, and of all the wonderful things attached to that Utopia. It is great fun, almost ecstasy while the daydream lasts, and I keep building it up till it reaches strange and gigantic proportions, but when it is over, and I am unwillingly returned to reality, it leaves me cold and tired, miserable and frustrated.

The old saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder for somebody else", can certainly not be true of people really in love. It works the other way rather. I have always had you on a pedestal to a certain extent, but now I've got you so high, it is hard to see you. It would be terrible if you fell and injured Junior, he would really raise hell then.

Darling, when I get back and receive your letters, I'll have a lot more to write about, but in the meantime, Sweetie, I love and miss you terribly, and not many waking moments pass without my thinking of you and my great love for you, which has resulted in the greatest happiness I have ever known when we were together, and the deepest misery that has ever gripped me when we are apart. I love you, my dearest wife, with all my heart. Bill.

(Fenton Field)

June 24, 1943

Betty darling,

After waiting so long to get back to my home base to get my mail, it was a wonderful surprise to find 19 letters from you waiting for me. Sixteen of them were V-mails ranging in date from May 24th to June 11th, plus three air-mails dated May 18, 24, and 28th respectively. Apparently a lot of my mail has not come thru, as I have written quite a few. I sent you four long letters last week, and from now on, I should be maintaining a "one every day" schedule which I couldn't for a certain period. There was also a letter from Clayton with the picture you referred to, plus a couple from my mother, and two from the War Department. One was a notification that your allotment was being sent thru, and the other stated that due to the fact that they were unable to locate any such place as Hoopeston, Illinois, they would have to have further information before they could comply with my request for transportation for you from Tucson to Hoopeston. What an insult. I'll have to take it up with our Chamber of Commerce.

In the meantime, I am sending them further pertinent data which should move the payment of our claim. In reference to your question regarding the per diem due to me, I have been forced to use that money to live on temporarily as I have received no pay at all over here as yet, and for a period of time was billeted at a hotel where I had to pay my own expenses. As soon as I get straightened around, I'll try and send that on as promised. In a way, I wish I had gotten your mail in normal sequence so I could answer each letter individually, but I shall try to cover all material over the ensuing period of time. One thing I would suggest very strongly if it is no handicap in writing, and that is to typewrite your V-mails. The one you sent me that way was wonderfully clear, but in some other cases, it was difficult to decipher them, due to errors in photography.

You can tell your mother I certainly enjoyed the letter she sent me, and also the rhymes you two conjured up. We also got a big kick out the excerpt from the Tribune regarding Fyrtle. There was a little bit of exaggeration regarding the number of planes, but it wouldn't be the Tribune if there wasn't some error in the facts. I also received a letter from Cush with the pictures taken one nite a his place. His letter dated May 30th advised me that he was still awaiting leave to the States. I am having the snaps censored and then will send them on to you.

I was certainly surprised to hear that Marg was in California, as I had understood her plans were to go the other way. It certainly should be fun if you all could go down to Laguna. But I must admit I envy you like hell, because one of my dreams has been of the time we could go back there together. That spot has such wonderful memories for me, although, as you say, darling, we actually had a very short time down there.

I am glad that you liked Betty Hindley, as she is a swell gal, and used to be an old flame of mine. What is her husband like these days?

Give Marg my love and tell her I would like to hear from her, although that is probably unlikely as she is a lousy correspondent. Also tell her I have written Gus several times without receiving any reply. If his APO number is not 923, please let me know.

When I think back how casually I kissed you that last time, it makes me burn in one way and laugh in another, because so many times before we thought it was really goodbye, and that time I was sure it wasn't. Perhaps it was better as it was. I don't think I have ever written you that I worked like an Indian to keep us from going that nite. There was something wrong with one of the compasses, and I worked like hell to prevent our leaving. We were originally scheduled to leave at ten and I kept us there to 3:30am, but they finally sent us anyway.

From your reports you certainly have been very domestic since I left, what with cleaning everything, etc. Oh God, darling, I wish I was with you.

Regarding your question with the WAAFs, we have only been out with any of them once, and that was on a party given by a British captain. They are probably very nice, but I found them rather dull as I have found every other girl since I met you and that is no baloney. I guess there is nothing more stodgy that a wolf that has had his teeth pulled.

Al received a letter from his mother telling him that Mickey has been going to a doctor because her insides are upside down or something, and that she didn't know whether she was pregnant or not. Inasmuch as we are grossly ignorant regarding the feminine makeup in most respects, we would appreciate any light you can shed on what may possibly be wrong with Mickey. Naturally, we blamed it all on Al for being too eager, and speaking of eagerness, Sweetie, I certainly went about crazy when I read one of your letters telling me how eager you were. God, I want to be home with you.

Sweetie, I don't want to be a pessimist, but I wouldn't build up too much hope on Christmas. It is nice to have something to look forward to in the not too distant future, but there is such a thing as the disappointment that follows when your dreams don't come true. I have never felt as helpless and thwarted in my life as I do now, because all I think of and dream of is coming back to you, and there isn't a goddamn thing I can do about it.

I know I have my duty to carry out, but that doesn't help matters any. I know one thing - if I ever get back to the States, they'll have to put a gun in my back to take me away from you again. I love you darling, with all my heart and soul.

Your loving husband, Bill

P.S. My love and regards to Junior - has the little devil been kicking you much?

P.P.S. Tell P.J. I enjoyed her note so much.

(Fenton Field)

June 25, 1943

Betty darling,

I learned today that I am not supposed to write on both sides of the sheet, so I hope my last dozen letters have not been sent back. Anyway, I am adhering to my one-a-day schedule so you should be getting more mail from me from now on although not quite as frequently as previously.

After the crack about my sister's ability as a correspondent, except to Gus, I was deeply chagrined to receive a very nice letter from her today, and then recalled you said she was sending me Gus's APO number. It was the one I used in writing him. I hope they don't send the letters all back to the States.

Today, we have been working very industriously on our new abode. Needless to say, my scout knife came in very handily in various departments of construction. We are building a very firm structure with a concrete floor and tent over the frame. We intend to prepare it for the rainy season, and build a nice deep slit trench in case the Japs decide to come over and pay us a visit. Knocking on wood, I have seen no bombs fall as yet, and am not looking forward to it, although the boys who have been thru it say it is quite a sight, with the ack-ack, etc. and the fighters in hot pursuit. However, being a peace-loving soul by nature, the less we get the happier I will be.

I am afraid that any of your unspoken surmises as to my whereabouts or activities are incorrect. However, we will find out how close you were in your thoughts when I get home, and censorship doesn't raise a screen between us.

I am going to write Sadie and Clayton tomorrow as well as Marg and another letter to Gus. We have been very busy today working on our home, and I am a little tired at the present time. I skipped a movie tonite to be sure and get his letter off to you, darling. Movies to me have always been something to do when there wasn't anything else to do, and anytime I can talk to my best girl even if it is only in a letter, you may be assured that the cinemas will have to get along without my presence.

Joe Vick is also living with us at the present time. John has to check him out as a first pilot to replace a man who inadvertently shot himself thru the foot and will be laid up for some time. Maybe I should have done that so they would send me home to you, but I couldn't do that, darling, as much as I would like to. I came out here for a purpose, and until I have justified the money, time, and training, the government tied up in me. I wouldn't think it right to return, despite the fact that there is nothing I live for and crave than that. Somewhat of a paradox, perhaps, but I know you understand.

I have run into several of my classmates at Mather, but none that I believe you knew. I certainly feel badly about Leon. He was one swell kid, and the army lost a good man. Perhaps, and I entirely hope, he is still alive, but those goddamn Japs can't be relied on as far as prisoners are concerned. They are certainly barbaric for a supposedly civilized people, but I think before this is all over, we will be able to play their type of game better than they do.

Please give my best love to your mother and father. I shall write them soon, dear, but in the meantime, I can only send remembrances. Also say nothing about (censored) until it is verified.

Darling, I am so eager sometimes I almost go crazy, but then I just take a cold shower, and go to bed. I miss you, Sweetie, more than you will ever know in every way. You made me so happy when you said you were so pleased about our parenthood. I think we are lucky too. I love you, darling, always. Bill

(Fenton Field)

June 26, 1943

Betty my darling,

As I am a little sleepy and very chilly at the present time, this will be a little on the short side. Lt. Garron just returned from a base near to here, and we were certainly glad to see him back. We had purchased a case of beer on our way over here, so Lee came over to have a bottle with us tonite, and we had a lot of fun talking over old times. We are still very busy at work on our new area, and tonite we discussed various methods of improving and carrying out the original plans. Sanitation is a great problem in these out-of-the-way places, and unless everything is planned from that standpoint at the outset, you can run into serious trouble eventually.

I am afraid we are going to lose Jack, as he is scheduled to go to group as ass't operations officer. We don't know who his successor will be, but it might very possibly be John, of which I would very much approve. When Lee returned, he explained carefully to Al and myself, curious these men, what no doubt is Mickey's problem, i.e. a uterus that is tilted, which can easily be corrected by an operation, and in many cases by various treatments. Lee accused Al of being impetuous, which gave us a good laugh. You may be interested to know that General MacArthur congratulated our group on certain activities we were involved in, which made the boys feel very good.

We missed a big show which went on while we were away, darn it! However, there is plenty of stuff ahead, and I hope we stay around, and whole, to bear our share. The boys have remained very cool despite a few bad breaks they have had. They are really a grand bunch, and God knows they are doing their best as White very aptly put it in his story, until the signal 'bombs away' comes thru, you are working for Uncle Sam, and from then on for yourselves and the ones you love back home. How true, dear. Out in combat the majority of military formality is forgotten or overlooked by this time.

We are supposed to be well disciplined and intelligent enough to know our respective places and jobs without going thru a lot of blatant display and obeisance. At many advanced bases in the early days, Jap snipers watched for salutes, and then knocked off the officers involved so that formality is dispensed with on the front lines, unless reporting formally to a superior officer. My morale has improved perceptively since I have gotten out in the sun and done some hard work. There is nothing like hard work for the soul, I guess. John is rigging up a contrivance which definitely resembles some odd form of medieval torture which is supposed to do wonders for reducing the front and back. I do want to get in darn good condition, baby, because I figure when I get back home, we will have a lot of loving to catch up on, and I really want to turn in my very best performance, if you know what I mean.

Sweetie, I am afraid I am going to be so damn eager when I get home that I won't be able to cultivate your mind for at least a week. Oh honey, I love you so darn much, and long to be home with you with a passion not quite pure. In the daytime I dream that I can be talking to you, playing golf with you, riding with you, and at nite - Oh Honey!

Always, Sweetie, your loving husband. Bill

(Fenton Field)

June 30, 1943

Betty darling,

Only extenuating circumstances have prevented me from writing for the last two days. From morning till nite we have been working like cats and dogs to get firmly entrenched in our present location, and the fruits of our toil is a very presentable habitat, and for the conditions and things available, I think we did very well to date. We have a nice deep slit trench by our abode in which we can hide per chance the little yellow bastards pay us a visit. Our concrete floor turned out very well, and we built a bamboo extension on one end to store baggage and hang our clothes.

We live right next to Lee and naturally see a lot of him. I am afraid we are going to lose Fred as he is scheduled to take over another outfit. I honestly hope and pray that does not come to pass, as I think he is a damn good guy.

Yesterday, I received two air mails from you, baby, dated May 22 and 28th respectively. I was at loss to understand why you had not received more mail from me. However, it should be coming thru. Mail leaves here very slowly and sometimes it will be four days before it is even picked up from the box.

We are slowly getting things whipped into shape, but Rome can't be built in a day. However, we are all getting really tanned as we wear nothing but shorts and shoes. I burned like hell at first, but now am getting a nice tan on my back. When I was peeling and rather uncomfortable, I would certainly like to have had you beside me to tickle my back. Gosh, honey, I miss you so darn much in every way. I really haven't been away so long, but it seems like an eternity.

Lt. Chesser's wife is expecting, as you know, the first of August, and he is already showing signs of nervousness. He is determined that they are going to have a boy, which is very silly, it seems to me. All I want to hear, darling, when your time comes is, 'mother and child doing well.' I really can't see the difference whether we have a boy or a girl first, because we'll have time later to have a boy if our first is a girl. Don't think from that I intend to keep you eternally pregnant, but I think we both want more than one child eventually.

We haven't been paid as yet so I won't be able to send any extra money home for awhile. I should be getting some more V-mail from you soon, as the last one I got was dated June 11th, and some of the boys have gotten mail from the States dated June 22nd. It is all luck, I guess.

I haven't had the pictures from Cush censored as yet, but will send them on within the next couple of days. By the way, darling, I don't think I ever thanked you for sending my mother the flowers for Mother's Day. It was very thoughtful of you, Sweetie, you are always so wonderful that way.

In one of your letters you mentioned how you wished so much you could be over here, and that you were jealous of the gals we took out one nite. Well, to tell the truth, darling, that was one of the dullest evenings I ever spent. When you love one girl as much as I love you, it isn't much fun being out with someone else, in fact, it makes the agony of being away from you even greater.

I have had a lot of fun with Ralph since he arrived. You know what a great sense of humor he has, and we all were certainly darn glad to see him again. He also lives quite close to us, and we have a lot of fun bitching about everything in general. It wouldn't be the army if we weren't raising hell about something. Our main topic are certain individuals in group, not of the flying variety, who appropriated various materials because they were here first, and then tried to leave us out in the cold, but we'll fix that.

Tomorrow we hope to complete our barbecue pit as there are some wild cattle in the area, and we would like to have some more fresh meat. The food has been fine, but nothing like doing your own cooking.

I hope you were able to make the trip down to Laguna. There have been so many nites, my darling, that I have lain awake staring at the stars, thinking of that great stroke of fate and fortune that sent me to that wonderful spot on the eventful weekend we met. We all want to fall in love and be loved, but I never knew that when it did come, it would be more wonderful than even my wildest dreams. You have made me so happy, my darling, even if the wonder of that happiness tortures me now that we are apart. We all know that under combat conditions our fate is always uncertain, but somehow, although I have never been a particular optimist, I have a hunch the fates may let me come back to you, and darling, I can't tell you how much of my time is spent dreaming of that day. There won't be a time when we are flying that I won't be fighting for that purpose in addition to knocking off the bloody Japs. Before I write, there seems like there is a million things to say, and then I forget them all, but one thing I never forget, my love, is that you are the most precious thing in the world to me. I love and miss you with all my heart. All the love and kisses you can send in a letter without burning it. Am I eager, honey!!!

But only and always darling for you. Bill

First Combat Missions

July 1943

It was too bad the nature of our business was such that we couldn't just enjoy ourselves as tourists. In better circumstances, the fabled South Seas where we were would have been the envy of any world traveller. Fenton Field was about 15 degrees, or approximately 1,000 miles south of the Equator.

Most of the world's exotic, remote, and pristine archipelagos and seas lay just north of Australia. Seas with the names Coral, Banda, Timor, Flores, Ceram, and Arafura, were the aquatic highways of island peoples for millennia. They connect the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea, and Australia. The shallow coral reefs, and deep trenches of those waters were a wondrous mosaic pattern of blue-greens as seen from our flying observation point a few thousand feet above.

Below, on the islands, were the proverbial jungles of paradise with rare tropical birds, plants, and peoples that anthropologists and botanists of the era had not yet even discovered. War left most of it untouched. The impact of a few thousand humans and their infernal machines could be absorbed easily within our 850,000 square mile battle area without serious effect.

The most dangerous force in this paradise was the chaotic weather. It was more an enemy to us than the Japanese. As close to the Equator as we were, the mean temperature during the Northern Australian seasons only varied about 10 degrees. The mean was about 80 degrees, but ranged from chilly nights to over 100 degrees during the day. The temperature of the surrounding tropical seas is the highest in the world, over 80 degrees throughout the year. The daily temperature range generated complex weather patterns and ocean currents that caused extremes of weather and rainfall in our area. When we arrived, rain on the coast and inland at Fenton, was less than an inch for all of June, July, and August. In September, the wet season began by the gradual arrival of a monsoon that brought lots of rain. It would peak at 15 inches a month during January.

Offshore, the daily temperature variation influenced by the warm seas, bred ferocious thunderstorms that made flying planned routes to targets tricky at best. We learned to skirt these storms, adding extra miles to long missions, taxing fuel reserves to the limits. Sometimes, a storm couldn't be avoided, and the experience for a lumbering four-engine bomber was as traumatic as an aerial confrontation with the Japanese.

On one flight we couldn't avoid a thunderhead that looked like the mushroom cloud of what the world would later associate with an atomic bomb. Flying about 3000 feet high, we entered that cloud, and suddenly were hurtling upward nearly a mile a minute, with our airspeed dropping to 90 miles an hour. Our wings were shaking as if to bid us farewell. The B-24 stalls out at 120 mph, but the updraft forces proved stronger than aerodynamic principles. I don't know how many of us nervously wet our pants, but many of us did.

Waiting for what seemed like an eternity, we finally emerged some 30,000 feet up on top of this enormous cloud. Then just as suddenly we caught a down-draft of equal intensity and down we went at the same rate, wings still attempting to wave goodbye. John Farrington and Al Paris must have used every trick in the book just to keep the plane right-side up. A few hundred feet above the water, the down-draft weakened and we were able to regain altitude and continue with our mission. It shook us up, but we learned a valuable lesson about the capricious South Seas weather.

The military situation definitely turned against the Japanese in our area by July. Our early raids on bases and facilities they held in the Dutch East Indies had confounded their plans for further conquest. They thought they were out of the range of Allied air forces, and our audacious long-distance raids surprised them. As predicted, it forced them to divert personnel and material to shore up defenses of their remote air and war production bases.

It permanently canceled their invasion plans for Australia, and New Guinea. On July 6 they made their last raid against our base at Fenton Field. Protected by vigilant Australian Spitfires that intercepted their attacks at the coastline, the Japanese couldn't conduct the reconnaissance to assess our true strength. Had they known how thin we and the Australians really were then, they could have persisted and decimated us, as their supply lines were shorter than ours. We emerged the winners of a strategic bluffing game.

The 380th's early operations in May and June had cost the 531st Squadron all of its nine aircraft. Enemy action, weather, navigation errors, mechanical failures, carelessness, and inexperience took their toll. As a result, they reassigned us and

the Fyrtle Myrtle from the 530th to the 531st as a way to rebuild that squadron. This meant uprooting us from our 'new abode' at Fenton Field. We joined the 531st at Manbulloo, an airfield about 80 miles southeast of Fenton. But it was close to the town of Katherine, and some semblance of civilization. Fenton Field proved too small to hold the entire bomb group, so two squadrons operated out of Fenton and two out of Manbulloo.

The group's headquarters remained at Fenton and this caused us some irritation. They required us to stop at Fenton after a mission for an intelligence debriefing before proceeding to our own field. After 10 to 12 hours in the air, stopping at Fenton, then flying to Manbulloo, often at night, did not make for happy warriors. If there was a better way of debriefing before the days of electronic mail, no one thought of it.

A careless incident that lost a plane occurred on what we called a 'fat cat' trip to pick up fresh food, booze, other essentials in Sydney. Major Everett Ware, the deputy group commander, piloted the B-24, and I was one of a couple of dozen passengers. After loading up, we prepared for the 1,800 mile return trip to our northern base. The navigator on the flight, advised Ware that he should take on additional fuel for the trip, as on board supplies were marginal. Ware ignored him saying he thought there was plenty on board.

Enroute, an electric problem shorted out the radio, and in the confusion, concealed the fact that the flight had drifted off course. When they discovered this problem, Ware for some reason ignored course corrections, and we arrived at the northern coast but not where he intended. We were lost, very low on fuel, we couldn't do anything but attempt an emergency landing.

Ware rejected a beach landing in favor of a wheels down landing in what looked like a smooth grassy area behind the coast. As we touched down, it turned out the 'grass' was six feet high and tough. Immediately the nose wheel collapsed and about 25 tons of B-24, full of food and booze abruptly stopped in a mere 100 yards. It caused bumps and bruises to crew and passengers, with one airman receiving a serious ankle injury. Luckily, I didn't get hurt. The first aid kits on board took care of most of the injuries, and controlled the serious ankle problem.

That night, there was little water to drink. We decided to open up, and spend the night consuming a case of sparkling burgundy to relieve a bad situation. A deployed emergency beacon was how Fenton Field found out about the whereabouts of their missing plane, and another B-24 was dispatched early the following morning to survey our situation. As the plane appeared on the horizon looking for us, someone in the crew fired some flares to pinpoint our location. However, the flares descended still lit and ignited the dry tall grass into a raging fire that winds swept toward our stricken bomber. Nothing could be done and the fire engulfed the plane, effectively liquidating the taxpayers \$300,000 investment. Courtesy of the Australians, we finally got back to Fenton by truck a couple of days later. Their fee for the rescue and ride was most of the remaining booze. The buck stopped at the top, and the hapless major lost his job.

I made my first combat mission on July 10. It was an 11 hour, 1,700 mile round-trip armed reconnaissance mission to Sorong on the extreme north-west tip of New Guinea. We were to survey the Japanese-held port and to attack any facility or shipping target that presented itself. We made the trip without any enemy resistance, probably due to the element of surprise. On July 18, we made a night mission to Makassar, a western seaport on the main Celebes Island about 1,200 miles northwest of Manbulloo.

The problem was we couldn't fly there directly, as we would have to pass over the island of Timor, held by the Japanese. Thus, the flight involved skirting Timor both coming and going. We returned with what could have only been a few drops of fuel in our tanks. We learned in the school of hard knocks about the fuel requirements we needed to cope with skirting Japanese fighter bases, plus the fickle weather systems enroute.

During one of these early missions we met up with two Japanese fighters. I then learned something about the stoical nature of our expert top turret gunner Sgt. Louis Glavan. He was from North Dakota and as a kid, learned to shoot quail on the wing with a 22-caliber rifle. They selected Air Corps gunners, in part, by their ability on the skeet range. It's a good example of shooting at a moving target. When we were training in El Paso they got him out on the range to see what he could do. His first effort busted 23 out of 25. The next round he busted 25 out of 25 and later, he knocked down 97 out of 100 skeet. He was a hell of a shot.

When the first Japanese fighter attacked us, it scared the hell out of me.

I saw him coming down at us from about 11 o'clock and Glavan just held his fire. I kept asking him, "Louis, when are you going to shoot?" He said, "Relax Lieutenant," letting a burst of tracers loose to get his range. The next burst nailed the Jap. As the second fighter closed at the same angle and speed as the first, Glavan had him in his sights and got him too.

Episodes like this, proved an invaluable learning experience about the personal idiosyncrasies of our crew. It instilled confidence that each person knew his job and would do it without the others having any cause to worry. These first missions created a cohesive crew that worked harmoniously under the stress of missions to follow. Another flight to Sorong on July 24 wrapped up our July combat operations.

Meanwhile life at Manbulloo had settled into repeating what we had done at Fenton - build a hospitable living environment for ourselves. As our new base was close to a civilized town, we had a source of ice. This was a godsend during the 100+ degree days. It eliminated the need to make occasional 'high altitude training flights' to 30,000+ feet for half an hour to chill beer.

There was a slow moving river near us, and during the hot sunny days, I used to take an air mattress and relax on it. Once, while I was paddling along a guy from the shore yelled, "Get the hell out of there, there's an alligator after you." It was actually a salt water crocodile, and they are really dangerous. I turned and saw him coming toward me, and paddled like hell to get safely to shore. Once there, we decided it would be him or us, and later, we laid in wait for him with automatic rifles. He finally crawled up on a sandbar, and on the count of three, we let go with about 40 rounds. That ended any future swimming and sunbathing problems.

In our spare time we added to our fresh food supply by fishing. We had fishing gear and lines in our survival kits, which we used in the river and several good-sized ponds nearby. Some guys in our group would fish with explosives, and while this resulted in fabulous catches, was less than sporting by my fishing philosophy. Surprisingly, we caught the same kind of fish I caught back home, small mouth bass and catfish. We would shoot wallabies, a type of small kangaroo, and bait our hooks with their livers. What the hell other species, it was wartime and humans were killing each other. All life was cheap, and we needed irresistible bait.

Mail service was turning into a massive problem for the transport command and us. The volume of personal air-mail from combat areas going in both directions started to compete for space in aircraft with essential wartime supplies. The government devised the V-mail system to attempt to cut the weight and volume of mail. V-mail was a one page printed form with sufficient space for a message that would then be photo-copied on micro-film. The film would be shipped and a print-out made at the receiving end, which would then be sent to the addressee.

The authorities asked us to use V-mail instead of regular letters as much as possible. There wasn't much room to write a long letter, and you needed a magnifying glass to read the result. Such was the nature of the references about the efficacy of V-mail in our July correspondence.

Letters - July 1943

(Fenton Field)

July 1, 1943

Betty my darling wife,

We have been quite busy today unpacking and arranging everything in our new abode. We are really quite proud of it, and if the powers that be decided to transfer us to another locale, you would probably receive a notice from the government that I was going to trial for murder. This is a quiet life out here except when missions are scheduled, but I rather enjoy it. At least as much as I can enjoy any place when I am away from you, my love. That last week we had together keeps coming back to me. I'll never forget what a thrill it was to hear your voice that afternoon I called Sadie to let her know you were coming, nor will I ever forget how wonderful it was later that afternoon to come in when you were napping and take you in my arms, nor darling, the time that followed when Clayton and Sadie so diplomatically left us for an hour, and we laid down to have a nap.

Oh, Honey, it is so wonderful to make love to you, talk with you, play golf with you, in fact just wonderful to be with you, and God knows, I miss it like hell. I had a wonderful dream about you last nite. We were out in the moonlight on top of a hill, and I took you in my arms - at the crucial moment I woke up. What a hell of a note!

Lee said Ginnie wrote she had heard from you. Wouldn't it be fun if the four of us could be back in any of the places we were together. It was sweet of you to write Mrs. Potter. They were so kind to us. At the other end of the story was that hotel in Denver. You had reserved a room for that second nite. I really got a kick out of that incident, sweetie, especially when we came down from that joint and saw the soldiers with the two 'babes'. When I think back, we really had a lot of funny experiences, and one thing I am sure of - our life together when it could be together was certainly never dull, from the time I met you in Laguna, till that afternoon I so casually kissed you goodbye with perfect assurance I would see you later in the afternoon.

One of the boys just came in with a swell letter from Clayton. He and Sadie were about to move down to the country. Also, I forgot to thank you for the pictures you sent me. I loved the ones with Yaqui, and also the one Clayton took. You mentioned the dress, darling, I love you in anything or vice versa.

I know it must not be much fun for you, honey, being at the home base without a helluva lot to do, but when I get back we'll make up for that. I especially wish I could be with you at this particular time, but the fates didn't see it that way, I guess. Another thing, don't get discouraged if you don't hear from me from time to time. I write at least four to six letters per week, and if they don't show up at times, you'll know they are on their way. I know how much mail must mean to you, because all I live for are your letters, and when none appears, I am disconsolate. The last V-mail I received was dated June 11, and the last airmail the latter part of May. V-mail averages about ten days faster, but sometimes that is switched around. The trouble with V-mail is that they are so darn dinky unless you continue them from one sheet to another, but that is a hell of a lot of trouble.

I am really getting a mighty fine tan now, and I have ceased to burn on my back. However, my nose still keeps peeling, and resembles a fugitive from a month in a bar.

You will note I am using the stationary you gave me, it was in my locker which I opened recently. I was delighted to find the malt tablets in there, but at the rate the boys are devouring them we won't have many left to take on our missions.

Your sewing kit is also going to come in very handy, and thank God you gave me colored towels. The other boy's white ones look like hell by this time. Darling, you sent me out so well equipped, and with your love to keep me safe. The sleeping bag keeps me warm, and I mean the one you got me. We cut a gasoline drum up the middle on one side and thru both ends, folding it open to make a very nice laundry tub with one side to soap in, and the other to rinse. We have had very nice showers and latrines built for us by the Aussies, and Lee's eagle eye has seen that all sanitary measures possible have been taken. If you use your bean, plus a little hard work, there are wonders that can be accomplished with very little.

We are quite fortunate that we don't have any mosquitoes. Some of the areas in the Southwest Pacific have a hell of a time with malaria, and it is very unpleasant to get it as it keeps coming back with little provocation.

Regarding our attempts on mental telepathy, I think we better give it up as a bad job. I can't tell you the exact difference in time for obvious reasons, and as even the day is different there isn't much to do; but just remember, my sweetheart, you are always in my thoughts and dreams, and sometime, God knows only when, I'll be coming back to you. I love you so much it is a literal hell not to be with you, but I'll do my best to be happy and hope you can do the same. One of these days if the fates are willing we can live again. Goodnite, my love, I hope I dream of you, Sweetheart. Your loving husband, Bill.

(Fenton Field)

July 3, 1943

Darling Betty,

I missed writing yesterday as the time allotted for writing letters had to be filled another way. Our 'house' or frame with tent covering and bamboo addition is near completion and it really looks damn good. We took cement bags and loaded them with dirt, and lined them around the edge of our slit trench so now it looks like a regular fortress.

Today we have been preparing the materials to lay a concrete floor in the enlisted men's and officer's mess. It will be quite fancy, as also will be our club when it is finished. When we aren't flying, there is little to do, and the time goes a lot faster when we keep busy. A new supply of magazines came in today, so that will help to keep our minds off other things.

I received today a letter from you, dear, that had gone astray and had been following me around. It was a V-mail dated May 23, in which you were talking about much of the superficiality around Hollywood. Also you said, darling, really how little you asked for happiness - that we could be together again, and have a place to raise Junior serenely - darling, how wonderful that sounds. As one grows older, a lot of your ideals and ambitions change. I remember when I was in college, I wanted to make a wad of money, and assume an important position in the business world. Now, that seems relatively unimportant. I would like a medium income, and enough time off so we could play together now and then. Clayton had the right idea when he didn't tie himself up with a large outfit. Being your own boss means so darn much.

I frankly don't think I want to go back to the can company after the war. A large corporation is OK in some respects, but not for me. Darling, when I think how wonderful it was when we had to fight for everyday and nite we spent together, I can't conceive the greatness of the joy of being with you all the time, and knowing every day when I come home from work, you would be there.

I don't think that Lee has been able to maintain his one letter a day schedule which you mentioned in your letter. However, I'll do my best, honey, and keep them coming as regularly as possible. He uses V-mail, but I can't even get started in a V-mail, especially with my large hand, and this way, I think air mail is faster while from you it is the opposite.

I haven't had a letter later than June 11th, so I hope everything is OK. I can't help worrying a little darling, as you are so precious to me, and if anything ever happened to you, I don't think there would be much for me to live for.

One of the greatest suspenses when we have planes out on a mission and we aren't on it, is waiting for the ships to return. We really sweat them out, as we know how many left, and the count starts: one, two, three, four, etc. It is really hell when the time passes and some are still out. Sometimes they will land at another base, in which case we won't know they are safe for awhile.

John Farrington has turned into quite a barber. At the present time his is performing an operation on Bill Massie. The latter has grown some beautiful sideburns, but personally, I tell him they look like hell. Bill lives right next to us. We have all the comforts of home, except the most important, you dear. We built right next to a pipe from the pump to the dispensary, so we have running water, a shower fifty feet away, and a latrine about the same distance tripled or 150 feet. It is quite a setup.

The light we have here is swell. We bought a couple of kerosene lamps with mantles that will really light a room. We got one for Doc, too. Ralph and I have been busy or rather will be busy the next few days fixing up our S-2 and navigation room. The building is finished, and we will have to do a lot of work on the inside in the way of maps, etc.

Radio Tokyo announced last nite that they were going to do a lot of bombing tomorrow, although naturally we don't know whether they will try to celebrate the Fourth over our area or not. Sometimes I wish I had made the grade as a pursuit pilot, as it would be a lot of fun to shoot some of those yellow bastards down - although it is fun to dump bombs on them.

Please give my very best to your mother and father and Stan. They are really swell, and even if I didn't see much of them, I love them very much.

And, darling, do I love you, my sweet honeybunch. Sweetie, you are just a perfect wife, and that's all I can say, whether it be in the drawing room, the kitchen, and last and certainly not least, the bedroom, wow! Gee, I love you, honey, Always your loving husband. Bill

P.S. We are going to have a party now, in our tent.

(Fenton Field)

July 5, 1943

Betty darling,

I received three letters from you tonite, one was #3, dated May 5th, and written from the Fresno Station. The other two were in reality - one letter dated June 21st, which is pretty darn good time. I also got a card from Riverside dated the latter part of May. The period from June 10th to June 21st hasn't reaped any reward yet. I can't understand why you haven't received any letters for over a week, dear, as I try to write very regularly. You don't know what your letters mean to me, honey. You say such wonderful things, honey, and you write such wonderful letters, it really seems like I am talking to you, and God knows how I love that. Sometimes I think I am going to go insane if I don't see you that very day, and then somehow I keep going on, and try to concentrate on some other subject. I agree with you that if one works like hell as you have said you have been doing, it does make things a lot easier. You are so smart about everything, and seem to handle every situation so damn well.

I agree with you that it is wonderful to find the person you love, and stop wandering from one place to another and one person to another. Your pal down in Santa Ana is certainly in that position, and I know how she must feel, as I did that for a hell of a long time before I met you, darling, and then my life really began.

I know I was terribly unhappy before that time, and eternally restless, and until I met you, my love, I didn't know what I was looking for, and what I wanted in life, but now I really know, and if God is willing that I come back to you, my greatest dream will be realized, because I love you always, forever and forever.

In reference to Nancy, I haven't seen Jack for a long time, but he will be back with us soon. Things have changed a lot over here recently in our organization, and Jack will have his old post with us. Major Ware (censored..) and I think he will be OK. He is a very nice fellow, and I think he is with us 100 percent. Fred is not well at all, so I don't know what will happen to him. He may go into group, he may take over another squadron, or he may go to the hospital for awhile. I hope things work out for him, because I am very fond of him, but I do think that Jack will be a better man away from Fred because he tries to mimic him, and he can't play the part, while he can do a damn good job just being himself. I am going to jump him for my promotion as soon as he gets back, which will be shortly I believe.

Lee is going to be in Gus's vicinity, shortly, and will mail this letter there, so you should get it posthaste. Tell Marg Lee is going to contact Gus and as soon as I get a leave, I shall go down to see him. He really wrote me a swell letter, said he felt he almost knew you, and that from all reports you were really a honey, with which I heartily agree.

Our boys have been doing swell lately, and I think we will make a good show here before we are thru. Our new C.O. would like to get us home by Christmas, but that is asking a hell of a lot darling. I want to see you so badly, I could cry. One of these days we will be back together, though, my darling, and then I will be in heaven again.

Honey, I am going to cut this short, as Lee has to leave and I want to get this off with him. Don't worry about me because we will be as careful as possible without interfering with the efficiency of our missions. Ware said last nite his main ambition was to take us all back to our wives, sweethearts, and families.

Flash! Do you know that Mickey is pregnant. Al is as happy as a kid with a new toy. I guess the Tribune was right when they said there were three prospective fathers in our crew. What foresight on their part. Mickey is terribly happy about the idea, and I don't blame her for that, because I know how we feel about it. It will really be wonderful having our pride and joy, and any companions nature may bless us with.

I was down to a neighboring field the other day, and guess what we found in a field - some chickens. We caught the six, bought them from the owner, and brought them home. Boy, were they good!

Tell Marg I shall write her soon. I appreciated her letter a lot. She and I have always been great pals, and we have had a lot of fun together. I am so happy that you two hit it off so well.

Give my love to your family, and I'll write again soon, darling, which means tomorrow, baby. I'll think of you a lot tonite. What a dream I had last nite - wow! - and I didn't wake up too soon.

Goodnite, my darling wife, you are so precious to me. Bill

(Fenton Field)

July 8, 1943

Betty darling,

It seems so long since I heard from you, but in reality it has only been about four days. I know how you must feel when my mail doesn't come thru regularly. Tonite, I heard there was mail for our outfit over at another area, so I rushed over there and spent two hours sorting, and when I didn't find any I was really disappointed.

Fred and Jack are back with us, and we were glad to see them. Fred feels very badly about losing the squadron, but there are so many things involved it is hard to hit the real reason. The Colonel was provoked with him for the accident he had, the fight at another place, and certain other individuals had been knifing him while he was away. In addition, Lee, correctly or not, had given the Colonel the impression he was not a well man. Besides that, the Colonel apparently wanted to discipline (censored) for talking back to him, so he sent (censored) to us, and if after Fred has been thoroughly examined physically, and is found OK, he will probably get another squadron. (Censored) is a swell guy and a good C.O., but I sort of feel sorry for Fred, because I like him a hell of a lot. I like Jack too, but most of the boys still hate his guts, and are sorry to see him come back. That is about the general situation as far as the change is concerned, and those are my opinions, and may be somewhat in error, but I have gotten a pretty good line on the whole thing. Dennis and Hebner are back with us, which makes us very happy. I hope things will work out OK as far as Jack is concerned, but I am afraid of the setup at present.

As soon as Fred got back here, he told Ware to send my promotion thru, and that is the story on that. In the states you only have to be a 2nd Lt. three months before you can be promoted, but over here it is 8 months. The first time they sent it thru in the States, I didn't have three months, and the second time they used the wrong kind of form, so now I am screwed until the first of September. I think it is a damn dirty deal that men sitting back in the states can be promoted in three months, while out here in combat it takes eight months. You know who is responsible for that, and I don't have to mention any names.

I sent you a letter day before yesterday, that should beat this one by a week. Our mail only leaves here about twice a week, and God knows how long it is held up at other places, but they do the best they can, and we are lucky to get the service we do get.

There is so damn much I would like to tell you, but we can't say anything about our missions, bombing, etc. I can say, tho, that do date I myself and our crew have done very little flying due to a series of events, but I think Fyrtle will see plenty of activity in the next couple of months.

Lee hasn't returned as yet from his trip, so I don't know whether he was able to contact Gus or not. It will be some time before I'll be able to get down to see him myself.

Curtis Skull, who was supposed to die in a week, is very much alive, and the doctors think he'll make the grade. In fact, one was optimistic enough to say that he'd be walking in two years. That is lucky or something after you have broken your neck.

Darling, I miss you so darn much. I can't even tell you how much, and I just don't know how I am going to bear this situation, but there isn't much I can do about it. War is such a headache and such a heartache, nothing is ever gained really by either side, it is just a question who loses the most. People are so stupid anyway, but I guess they'll just keep on fighting as long as someone has something someone else wants.

The Japs, the yellow bastards, are a game opponent and that's for sure, but once Germany falls, they won't have a chance, and they should know that. As long as Germany is in the war, we can't completely defeat them.

Well, darling, I have to close now, but I'll be thinking of you tonite and wishing you were beside me so I could caress you and hold you close. That is the most wonderful feeling in the world, to feel your lips and all of you close to me.

Then all the rest of the world seems far away and now I am far away from you. Oh darling, I love you so. Always, your adoring husband. Bill.

(Fenton Field)

V-mail, July 10, 1943

Darling,

I never thought a thing like a concrete floor would come between us, but I missed writing you yesterday due to the fact that we were laying the floor of our abode. We started at five in the morning and ended at ten at nite. It was quite a struggle as we had little experience with the various intricacies of laying concrete, and in our present position it is difficult to obtain materials for personal use. However, we kept pitching and after digging our sand out of a creek, dynamiting our gravel out of a hill, and slurring our cement, we purloined a mixer and started to work. By the time we got thru it was ten at nite and I was so tired due to digging, picking, lugging, laying (not the kind we like) that all I could do was to fall in bed. We kept up our work today, reason for the V-mail, but, honey, I wanted to get a letter off to you, and I will write at great extent tomorrow. Baby, I love you to death and due to lack of space, will end this. Bill.

(Manbulloo, Northern Territory)

July 16, 1943

Betty darling,

I have been a bad boy about writing the past week, but there was a good reason for that, which I will explain to you at a later date. I got a letter dated June 14th from you yesterday, and it was the first in ten days. So I was sure glad to get it. I have only received two letters dated later than June 11.

You will note that I am no longer in the 530th, nor is any of our crew. John is operations officer of the 531st, and John Perry and I have not yet been told whether we will have our same jobs. We sure hated to leave the boys, but that's the army and you have to do what you are told. We were especially provoked after doing such a terrific job on our abode, which was the show place of our squadron, but c'est la vie, c'est la guerre. I especially hated to leave Lee, he is such a grand guy and good doctor. I won't see him more than once a month now.

Fred and Jack got back, and Fred is now on this way to a certain town for an operation on this throat. Major (censored) is our new C.O. at the 530th, he is a swell guy. We have Capt. Brissey in the 531st - I like him a lot too. The setup is OK but I still hated to leave.

Lee talked to Gus and told him where I was, although Gus knew pretty well. Gus is fine, and I expect to see him in the next couple of months if all goes well.

I am very provoked with my family for not telling me about Bill Sells, and then when they did tell me, not sending me his wife's address. I knew about it as soon as I got over here, and all this time have refrained from writing his family. Sometimes my mother doesn't use her head, however, her intentions were good, I suppose.

Not so long ago, we gave the Japs a good going over, John Perry is a mighty fine bombardier. The boys are still down on Jack. I think it would have been a better move to have shifted him. He is back in the squadron in his old job, and they don't go for him. I feel sorry for Fred, though he may not fly for a long time, and that is his life.

Darling, your last letter was wonderful, and I certainly got a kick out of the postcards. I wish I could have been down at Laguna with you. One of these days we will have to go back there together.

You have certainly been doing a wonderful job as a business manager. When I get paid, I'll send you a little extra to help out. I owe Dr. Waugh the \$38.00, it had been so long ago, I had forgotten it. I had so many bills I forgot about that one, after the accident. That will clean me up with the medicos.

Gee, honey, you don't know how it makes me feel when you say you are so lonely when you go up to bed, because I miss you so horribly, and there are nites when I think I'll go insane if I don't see you right now. If we are ever together again, it will take a team of horses to drag me away. I love you so darn much, and all I live for is to come back to you, Sweetie. I just love you, and that's all there is to it, in every way. Al and I reminisce so much - those four months were perfect. Bye for now, You are wonderful, my darling. Always, your loving husband. Bill

(Manbulloo)

July 17, 1943
Betty my darling,

I have been somewhat lax about writing the last couple of days as I have been a little under the weather lately, but I feel OK today. We have been busy fixing up a new place to live, and it is a hell of a job after all the work we had done on the other place. The boys we are with are a good gang, but we naturally miss all the chaps we trained with and knew so well. However, Olson and his crew are with us. You recall you rode out to Chicago with his girl. The boy you referred to whose sister you met is in our outfit - however, he hasn't too good a reputation either with us or before he came in the army. I understand he did a stretch in the reform school for an episode with some high school girl.

I went fishing the other day in a nearby stream but without success however. Some of the boys went down and dynamited the place, and got a flock of them. That is a lot quicker, but not as much fun. I still have my scout knife, I am happy to say, and find plenty of use for it, including opening bottles. We get a ration of one quart of beer a week, plus some other spirits which are sold at our club. However, you can't drink much in this climate without getting a hell of a hangover, to put it mildly. One nice thing about my present location is that we can get ice now and then. Cold water makes a swell drink, I find.

Alfred is very elated about his prospects of fatherhood, as is Mickey. Al figures they hit the jackpot at Topeka, perhaps our alarm clock had something to due with it. Dr. Pepper you know. Boy darling, do I miss your cuddling and your loving. You always took such good care of me in every way, in the kitchen, in the bedroom, in the drawing room, and on the golf course. I was just thinking again today how wonderfully lucky I am to have such a versatile and intelligent wife, and honey, I am certainly glad you are no cold potato, because I really love to make love to you.

Has P.J. been married yet? You haven't mentioned her in your last couple of letters, so I am rather curious how that came out. The four of us certainly had a whirl in Sacramento, and I shall never forget those wonderful weekends we had together. It was terrible then when I could only see you once a week, but God, that was heaven compared to this. Here it will soon be three months since I last kissed you in San Francisco. God, if I had known I wouldn't see you again that nite, I certainly would have given you a hell of a lot better farewell kiss before we pulled out.

I imagine Louise is very happy to have Cush home, although the latter told me that in a way he dreaded to go, because it would be such hell when he had to leave. Boy, honey, if I ever get back to you again, they'll have to take a rifle to get me away again. I want to do my share, but when we come home, I want to stay there somewhere in the states so we can be together.

The war news from the other side of the world is very encouraging. It looks like Italy is a dead duck. When Sicily succumbs, it will be a cinch to bomb hell out of the rest of the country. The Italians asked for it, when they knifed poor France in the back.

I think Herr Hitler is going to have his hands full before the end of this year. I personally don't think he is in a position to fight on two fronts, and once he weakens his eastern wall to protect the west and south, the Russians will really give him hell, to say the least. As far as I can see, the Japs will have a rough time of it once Germany is out of the war and all of our air power can be switched over here. Air power is really the big factor in every way, and as soon as our navy makes up their mind to that, the better off they will be.

I haven't been paid since I have been over here, so I should be fairly well fixed when I do get paid. All we spend money for is to gamble with. You probably think we shouldn't waste our money that way, but it is our only source of amusement, and you would go nuts over here unless you had something to divert your mind now and then.

Please give my best to your family, darling. I love you so darn much and there isn't many days I don't suffer like hell because I am away from you.

Always, my sweet, your loving husband, Bill P.S. A great big hug and a million kisses.

(Manbulloo)

July 18, 1943
Betty Darling,

I have just had a hey day reading a flock of mail from you, it bunched up again, and I got fifteen letters today, from June 7th, to July 5th. Those last air mails have come over quick, and the two you sent July 3rd arrived all at the same

time. Apparently you haven't gotten all of my mail, as you should get a letter at least every other day, but it should get there some time.

I couldn't figure out for a while what my cards were for. I thought you were trying to tell me something, but at least the letter came explaining all. It was a good idea, but I don't think I'll need them over here. I also got that letter with the dirty crack about my letters (regarding frequency). I write more than the rest of the boys by a long shot. You must realize that it is hard to write every day because of certain activities. Some of our 'trips' are long, and we have to spend the next day sleeping. Even Fyrtle gets tired, although she has behaved like a little lamb.

Regarding my 1st Lieutenantcy, you have to have eight months service as a 2nd before they will promote you over here. So that means the 1st of September. I am squadron navigator of the 531st, although after my last mission I got lost, and we had a hell of a time getting home, we landed with ten minutes of gas, whew! The boys were damn nice about it, they said "after all, we all make mistakes." I was only an hour from home when we got lost. I was plenty scared and I don't mean maybe. Well, honey, that won't happen again.

John has done very well. He has really laid them on the target, and that last one was a beauty. I don't know how many Japs got killed, but it sure blew hell out of everything. I am short on time, but will catch up in the months to come.

Regarding my serial number, I have put it on about every letter, but in case you didn't get it, it is O-736015. By the way, I am sending you a small money order, so look for it in the next weeks or so. I haven't any blanks now, but will send it on soon. We finally got paid after all.

We stopped up to see the boys in our old squadron yesterday. Lee was glad to see us, as was Ralph, and the rest of the gang. Fred is down at (censored) for his operation, and I am afraid he is thru flying for a while. He feels pretty badly about it, as flying is his life, and I don't think he feels he has a hell of a lot back home. Boy, do I feel differently about that score. Darling, you are such a wonderful wife and I love you so darn much.

I know I must have sounded morose in some of my past letters, but now that I am a lot busier things are different. It is hell just sitting around, that's when your personal troubles get you down, but I'll be a good boy, work hard, and one of these days if God is willing, I'll be coming back to my love. Always, honey, I love you, and you are so precious to me.

Your loving husband, Bill

(Manbulloo)

July 19, 1943

Betty my honey,

I have decided that instead of writing one long letter every day or so, I'll write you every day so you'll get more mail, so in keeping with that policy, here goes, my love.

I read some more of your letters today, that I received yesterday, as I didn't want to have all the fun at once. I was glad to hear that P.J. is so happy. I know she'll make Kent a swell wife, and vice versa, if you say he is a good guy, that is good enough for me. I got a big kick out of your descriptions and that wonderful line about you might have done a little wolfing if I hadn't put you in a condition that definitely curtailed those activities. Well, baby, I'll tell you something very funny. You and I know that we trust each other so completely as far as our mutual loyalty is concerned, that neither of us would ever have anything to worry about. We might flirt a little, but that would be all.

Well, anyway, one of my pet peeves used to be those guys that played around when their wives were in an expectant state, and I told myself that if I ever married I'd certainly never be a bastard like that. One nite a few weeks ago before we arrived at our base, actually longer than that, I was at a party with some navy officers on their boat. They had a dinner and had procured dates for all their guests. This gal I was with got a little stewed, and started playing up to me. She got mad as hell because I wouldn't even kiss her, and when I told her why, she thought I was insane. So you see, I guess we fixed any wolfing on either side when we laid Junior's keel. The funny thing is that while I am over here, I am about as eager as I ever have been in my life, but that eagerness is only for one gal, honey, and that's you. I'll really give you a rough time when I get home. I am about recuperated from that last week in S.F. Boy, we really pitched some woo, didn't we, honey. I laughed like hell to myself the other nite when I thought how we were in bed together and how after I got to Clayton and Sadie's that afternoon - they were certainly diplomatic, weren't they?

I received the letter with all the addresses and I'll start knocking off all those letters. I got a big kick about your story regarding the modern appliances. When I get back home, you'll have to show me what they are for, as I shall probably

have forgotten by that time. Our setup where we are now is much inferior to that where Lee has his eagle eye on everything. We sure hated to leave that gang, but after all you forsake all your civilian equities as Ralph Oman put it when you enter the army. So you have to take your disappointments as they come along, and keep your chin up. And don't worry darling, I'll keep my chin up. Naturally no one will be able to tell their future, but I just have a hunch everything will work out OK.

One thing about our present setup is that we have to fly every other mission with another pilot. He is good, but I am superstitious about our crew, and I would prefer to stick with John, but there again we have nothing to say about the setup, so that is that.

I'll write again tomorrow, darling, you are so wonderful about writing. I love your letters, and do I love you!! Give my love to your family, and give Junior an extra strawberry shortcake for me. Always, darling, I love you. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

July 20, 1943

Good morning, my darling,

You see I have written three days in a row, So I am really trying to keep my promise. This morning I received a letter dated June 7th, which had gone all over hell's high acre, in which you offered to be my secretary. Boy, what a secretary, I'd like to have you here to take a little dictation, on my lap, or somewhere else.

I am quite chagrined to admit that the book is still a good idea and nothing more, but I am going to start on it as soon as we finish our new home. Al has been after me on it too, so I'll really get to work and start turning something out.

I just read your letter regarding the bridge hand and that is darn good. I see how it works, and I'll explain it to you when I get home after one of our riding lessons! Ha! Ha! I am afraid this time I won't be able to get out of it, so I am resigned to my fate. As soon as I get back, we will start in, only I want a nice quiet nag to start with. It would be rather ironic if I get thru all this over here, and then go home and break my neck on a damn horse. Come to think of it, maybe you better get me a sturdy pony - plenty sturdy.

All of the boys are in good shape, and Al is like a little bantam rooster over his prospects, however, I know how he feels, darling. It is such a wonderful feeling to love someone as much as I love you, and then to know that out of that love there is to come a child created by it, and to which we can give our affection. I know you will make a wonderful mother and still be a wonderful wife. You told me one time that women who completely forgot about their husbands once they had a child gave you a pain in the fanny. Naturally, I was glad to hear you say that, because, although naturally Junior has a good portion of your time, coming to him or to her, I'd like some too, my love, because I always have such a wonderful time with you.

Damn! The wind just blew all my stationary all over the place. I love this stationary a lot, as it is so light. Have you had to pay extra postage on many of my letters? At first I didn't know that you are only allowed a half an ounce for overseas mail. Regarding mail, I would suggest you rotate V-mail and air mail. Your air mail has been coming fine lately, but sometimes it falls way behind, so that way I would be sure to hear from you frequently in any case, and I like the air mail letters a lot more naturally, as you can say a lot more. I wrote you a lot of mail that apparently you had not gotten. I have gotten most of your letters as some of the early ones showed up recently. I still haven't been able to get the correct cable address, so I guess you would have to send it to my APO number.

As you say, the wet season will start in about three months, and then it is really rough. I am afraid Christmas is out of the question, but I do think I'll see you for your birthday if things break right. Boy, honey, that will be a wonderful day when I can call you up and say, "Honey, I'm home."

The news from the other front is certainly encouraging. I read today where they bombed Rome for the first time. It doesn't look like the Italians will last very long, and when they surrender, Hitler will really have another front to reckon with. It looks like things are picking up, but we still have a hell of a long way to go to my way of thinking.

As far as our outfit is concerned, like many others we had a lot of bad luck to start with, but I think now that the boys have more experience, they'll really go to town. It takes a little while to become accustomed to actual combat, and to learn the various tricks of the trade both in respect to those of your adversary and your own too. After that, things are not so bad. The Japs aren't as tough in the air as some people crack them up to be, they are plenty game, but they like to live too.

Well darling, enough for now, and I'll write more later. I have some work to do now, so I'll have to get on the ball. Give Junior a pat, and tell 'it' I am thinking of 'it'. All my love, dear, and I'll dream of you tonite.

Oceans of love and kisses, Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, July 21, 1943

Betty darling,

I don't go for these V-mails, but we have orders to use them now, as there is too much air mail, so I shall be a good boy and comply. Everything is going all right, and we have had no trouble as yet. Fyrtle is still behaving very well. I got a letter from my father saying Bill Sell's wife had reached Hoopeston, and that she was very attractive. I feel badly about Bill.

I received your letter with all the addresses and will try to catch up as soon as possible on those letters. As I am in good financial shape at present as soon as I can get in a money order, I shall send a nice present for Junior home. It should be enough to pay off most of the money I owe the bank. I think I owe them around \$75, and I shall try to send a money order for that amount. I have slightly augmented my income by a little game I was teaching you. It is certainly nice to have a wife who is such a good business executive while I am away. After we finish paying your father, the bank, and with Yale out of the way, we should have a few bucks when I get back. However, it seems to me we should give your family something each month for you and junior. Knowing them, they will probably laugh at that, but I would like to be supporting you, darling, if you see what I mean.

Honey, I miss you like hell, but am following your advice and am being as cheerful as possible. I love you so darn much, honey, and I want you to be proud of me in every way. Your adoring husband, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, July 22, 1943

Betty my honey,

I am still trying to get that cable address for you and should get it by tomorrow. There has been no mail for the last few days, but should be there soon. It comes in bunches, about six at a time.

I went swimming today in a nearby stream and the water was really wonderful. As I was lying on the beach, I tried to transpose myself to Laguna Beach with you beside me. It was a wonderful idea, but then a fly bit me, and brought me back to reality.

I just talked to a fellow about that wire and you can cable me with the code word 'Amabor'. That is the way I understand it. In order to test the efficiency of this address, send me a cable as soon as you get this letter, and I'll send you the dough for it. I want to be sure I will hear the news of or around Oct 1st, pronto, as I'll really be on pins and needles about that time. You know how it is, one doctor for the mother, and three for the father.

We haven't had any movies lately, as our camera is on the blink, and we have two good films here now, and no way to show them.

All the boys send their regards - they are quite intrigued also with the idea of fatherhood. Mickey laughed like hell when she found out that instead of having her uterus tilted as I wrote, she was merely pregnant. These damn things are too short, but we have to play ball with the postal authorities. Bye for now and I love you to pieces. Honey you are sweet, I love you. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, July 23, 1943

Betty my sweet,

Another day and no mail for anyone came in. We really live for it around here, and it makes the day when some comes. We are now the proud possessors of eight fat roosters. We bought them from an Aussie, and put up a little pup tent next to our large one, with some boards on two small makeshift cross trees for a roost. The roosters seem very content, and we feed them plenty of mess hall scraps, to fatten them up for the slaughter. I don't know why they don't stray away, but they stay close to home. We have a watering pot for them which we fill each day, and they have quite a time with it. They really are quite amusing - one of them really rules the roost! He always eats first, and sends the rest of them

a'flying when they come near to him. Some other boys have a fighting cock on the other side of the camp, and one of these days we are going to match them up if we don't get too hungry. I have been sleeping a lot better.

I guess I am getting resigned to my stay over here. Haugie is down here, and also Olsen, so we have a little clique, as I don't know most of the other boys in this outfit so well. Fred is having his throat fixed. I love you honey, more later.
Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, July 24, 1943

Betty my sweet,

Another day, another dollar, aye, baby? We haven't had a mail sack for five day's now, which is a hell of a note, don't you think? However, the war news is swell, and my guess is that Benito will fly the coop before long. If that should happen, the king would take over, and I don't think he is a very strong character.

Our boys have been doing especially well of late, and we haven't done badly ourself. I wish I could tell you what the hell we are doing, but you know how it is. The chickens have been raising hell every morning, and unless we kill them soon, someone is going to give us the axe. Tomorrow will be the day, I think. Doc. Garron gave us two bottles of scotch, so I think we will have a little party then, and have some of the boys over. The roosters flew in the tent at five this morning, and one of them perched on Perry's bed, and crowed wide open. Perry got out his 45 about five seconds too late. I really hate to kill them, as they have been a lot of fun. They eat everything, including raw meat. The folks at home would probably be mad as the devil if they knew we were feeding our chickens meat. Darling, I miss you so terribly, and love you so much, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, July 25, 1943

Betty my love,

It is hard to believe in about ten days it will be three months since I saw you last. It seems like three years, my love, and boy, do I miss you. No mail again today, but tomorrow should bring some results as I hear some came in, but it isn't distributed yet.

At this point Alfred is sharpening his hatchet, and we are starting to round up the roosters. They sure can run like hell. We have a spit already for them, plus ice (a real treat) and some steaks we bought from an Aussie farmer. So we should really have a feast. I am the authority on cleaning them as another chap and I had to clean 99 of them every Saturday nite for six weeks, so eight shouldn't be much trouble.

Regarding cables, use 'Amborn', or something like that. All cables as I understand it go to (censored) and are forwarded from there, but you probably can find out better than I regarding that, as there is no place where I can inquire.

Gee, these things are too short, but I'll send one every day, and you'll at least hear from me frequently. I'll write a long one tomorrow. I love you. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, July 26, 1943

Betty, my darling wife,

I hit the jackpot today, with two air mails and two V-mails from you, all in good time - they were dated from the 6th to the 10th of July, and it was a tie on V-mail and air mail. I hope your missing allotment has shown up. Keep after them, baby, apparently my mail has been coming thru slowly although June 30th was quick enough.

We roasted our chickens last nite, and they were really great. Also the scotch and sodas tasted wonderful - the first in six weeks.

Darling, I know you are careful when you ride, and I didn't mean to nag like that. Regarding my statement as to what I would do if anything happened to you, I was just trying to tell you how much I love you, dear, and how much you mean to me, and am afraid perhaps the moment made me a little dramatic. Don't worry, honey, I won't fail you in any way, and by God I'll come back to you some way or another alive and kicking. My morale is about as high as it ever is when I am away from you, and I'll keep it that way.

Still no money orders, but I still have the jack. Honey, you are so wonderful. Send the picture soon. Gee, baby, I'd like to be with you tonite, and Sweetie, 'am 2 eager for you always. Bill

(Manbulloo)

July 27, 1943

Betty darling,

I am getting tired of co-operating with V-mails instead of air mails so think I shall write you a slight opus via this style. Things have been going along in a fairly well-ordered pattern. I have been doing an awful lot of swimming, and the rest of the time when we are not flying or planning missions, we play cards or read or write letters. I know I should have written you more often honey, but I do my level best to get one off every day, but sometimes certain things interfere with that schedule. The news from the other front has definitely been encouraging, but there is still a lot of rough fighting ahead, and people at home shouldn't get too complacent about everything, as our forces are really on the offensive for the first time in the war, and there is a hell of a lot of territory to gain back. However, with plenty of cooperation at home and abroad, the boys ought to make things pretty hot for a long period to come. I don't mean to sound like a pessimist, but I have seen before the results of false optimism in war time.

Lee Garron was to see us yesterday, and it was good to see 'chancre mechanic' as the boys call him, again. We got him some roosters to take back to the other camp, and one of them apparently had diarrhea because he did quite a job on Alfred when he was trying to put him in the cage we had rigged up to take back in the plane. Lee didn't seem to be in too good spirits, because he hadn't gotten all of the cooperation in the squadron that he would like. We sure hated to leave him, although our flight surgeon down here is a hell of a nice fellow too, but there is just one Lee.

Regarding the middle name for our pride and joy that wouldn't work very well in reference to a bombardment outfit. The chap you referred to with 26 was in pursuit, any planes we get are knocked down by gunners when they attack us. However, Hal Grace did get one the other day from his position.

I have been very lax about writing my family, so I wrote them a long letter last nite. I hadn't written them for a month or so -bad boy.

I know Yaqui is gentle as a lamb, darling, so if you want to ride him, that is OK with me. I know you wouldn't do anything in the world to jeopardize Junior or yourself.

Some days I think I am more or less resigned to life out here, and that the time will speed up, but then a day comes when my longing for you is stronger than ever, and I think I shall go nuts if I don't see you that very day. Silly, I guess, but honey, loving you as much as I do, I can't help suffering like hell that I can't be with you.

I especially dread the period before and after the 1st of October, because the suspense will be terrific. God, I wish I could be there to hold your hand at least when Junior is raising particular hell. Oh well, there are a lot of couples in the same boat we are, so I guess we have to be good soldiers about the whole thing.

Referring to middle names again, my suggestion is that if we have a boy, we give him no middle name, and if we have a girl, give her anything you desire. I think Garvey would be nice. I have found from bitter experience you spend half your life filling out forms and William plus the last name fills most spaces.

As I wrote my family last nite, the paramount issue now is to win this war all out, but when that is accomplished as it will be, a second great paramount issue of the peace or treaty will follow. I don't want to see our son go off in twenty-five years from us and his sweetheart, or to have our daughter's heart broken if her loved one failed to return. I am plenty damn sick of the sound or appearance of the word war, both from a selfish point of view, and from an altruistic point of view. God knows people could buy outright the countries they fight - with the money they spend on war plus some others thrown in for good measure.

Well, darling, enough for now, I love you to pieces, and honey, I miss you so terribly. How I would like to wake up one of these mornings and find you beside me and feel your warm arms about me. Oh baby, I'll try and get home soon. My love to your family and everything I have is always yours. Bill. P.S. A million kisses and hugs.

(Manbulloo)

July 31, 1943

Betty, my wonderful wife,

I just received tonite five wonderful letters from you dated from June 28th to July 1st, plus one V-mail dated July 15th. Honey, they were such wonderful letters, and I was so proud of you. So proud because you write so wonderfully, think so clearly, and so dam honest, and just because you are you.

I particularly enjoyed your letter in reply to the long one I wrote you about world affairs in general, and I can see where you did take exception to my remark about the gov't. etc. However, one must realize that despite the fact that the majority vote does elect, one has to consider how those votes are gained, i.e. party machines, etc. And also one must remember that some presidents and some parties or rather groups in power go beyond their normal duties to usurp power and interfere with certain devices of business procedure that has usually been that of the entrepreneur. However, honey, I thoroughly agree with you that we cannot remake the world, and that certain human failings will always cause the problems such as we have today. I do think, though, in line with your ideas on education, that if people in general paid more attention to what was going on when things are going well, that the sudden shift of scenery would not arise without us being able to do anything about it.

Tomorrow I am going to experience one of those things your mother wrote her book about. and all of those experiences are very interesting. I always think of you darling, when I experience such things.

Honey, you make me so terribly happy when you face all issues so squarely, and I agree with you that fantasy has it limitations. You must remember that many of the things I said a month ago were written when I was sitting on my big fanny and not in the thick of things. Now it is quite different, and I am determined to face whatever comes courageously and in a fashion of which you approve. I can tell you realize as well as I, my sweet, that the fine things people do in life in many instances are done because of the faith one person has in another and not because that person had that faith in himself before. So you see, although your love makes me sad because I am away from you, in turn, it makes me strong because I would never do anything to let you down. The reason, quite obvious, pure and simple, not complicated at all - I love you. Bill

Business Picks Up

August 1943

Our business with the Japanese had now picked up vigorously. We were flying reconnaissance missions to assess what they were up to in all the major seaports and airfields they held in the Dutch East Indies. In Brisbane, MacArthur organized his forces to retake New Guinea and the Philippines. His staff constantly needed to know about Japanese movements and strength on the western flank.

Shipping was the only means Japan had to transport the prized resources of the Southwest Pacific 2,750 miles north to their home islands. On all their shipping routes, they were vulnerable to increasing Allied submarine activity, surface ships, and attack from carrier-based aircraft, and our land-based bombers.

However, unlike a fixed land target, a ship in motion was very difficult to bomb conventionally. The Norden bombsight, designed for a calculated bomb run against a fixed target, was useless against a ship that can take evasive action. To counter this, General Kenney's staff devised a technique called skip bombing for use against ships.

In principle, it was like skipping a rock across a pond in a series of low trajectory bounces. They developed the tactic to use primarily with the versatile Mitchell B-25 twin-engined medium bomber. Flying just 200 feet off the water, they dropped a 250 pound bomb toward a ship at 200 mph. The bomb would be released about a quarter mile from the target vessel. When it hit the water, it would skip along the sea, penetrate the hull, and explode by delayed action fuse.

Skip bombing's success with the Mitchell bomber prompted Kenney's air staff to try it out with the B-24. We practiced the technique on a beached freighter off the port of Darwin. It was another practical art in our bag of destructive tricks. Once, during a skip bombing attack on shipping during bad weather, we knew we hit the ships, but the bombs didn't go off and we thought we had duds. We had forgotten about the delayed fuses, as post-strike intelligence confirmed our success.

On August 13, we flew one of the longest missions of any bomber in the war. This mission, and follow ups to the same target, earned us a Distinguished Flying Cross and a Presidential Unit Citation. Balikpapan, Borneo, was the site of a major oil refinery that supplied the Japanese with about half their lubricating oils and 60 percent of their aviation gasoline. Balikpapan was as important to the Japanese as the famed Ploesti refineries in Rumania were to the Germans.

Headquarters planned the raid with old intelligence information about the target. The element of surprise precluded any pre-strike reconnaissance. Our primary purpose was to destroy the refinery and sink as many ships in the port as possible. We also wanted to let the Japanese know that nothing they controlled was safe from our long reach into the bowels of their supply lines. We planned a 12 plane night attack to add to the surprise, but under a full moon to aid our visibility.

The strike would be 2,700 miles round trip. We used Darwin as a staging area to shorten the trip. With 3,000 gallons of fuel and full bomb load, we taxed the limits of the B-24. It took all of Darwin's 10,000 foot runway to get aloft. At the target, half the planes would attack shipping at masthead level, and half would make a conventional bomb run at 7,000 feet. On the way, the flight had to cope with three weather fronts that proved too much for two planes who had to abort the mission.

About midnight, we arrived over a fully-lighted refinery. It was like shooting a sitting duck. When we dropped our bombs, the Japanese initially didn't realize they were under attack from the air. The low level attacks quickly convinced them otherwise. They doused the lights, but by then the light from the explosions and fires kept the targets visible. We got a few holes in our tail from anti-aircraft fire, but it was a very successful strike. All our planes returned to Darwin, some with only a few drops of fuel remaining in their tanks.

The flight took 16 hours, and was the equivalent of flying one way from San Francisco to New York. Two days later we sent a couple of aircraft to make a post-strike assessment of the attack. A couple of days after that, we struck again, to let the Japanese know that our first attack wasn't a fluke. They apparently got the message. They pulled forces from New Guinea to Balikpapan, and to protect their other now clearly vulnerable targets in the central Dutch East Indies.

Generals MacArthur, Kenney, and the Australian air command were jubilant at our performance, thus the recommendations for the DFCs and unit citation we received later.

As important as that mission was, my most satisfying mission was one we made later in the month on the port of Babo in north-west New Guinea. Babo was home to a big Zero air base. The month before, we lost three planes of our group during attacks on that well-defended port.

One of the problems was a weather front consistently hanging over the Babo area during that time of year. It precluded attacking in formation where we would be better able to defend ourselves. However, during the planning for the mission, I remembered from navigation school that this type of foggy weather front did not go all the way down to sea level. It left about a 400 foot clear space underneath. I recommended to the planning staff that we fly the last part of the mission under the weather until we got a few miles from the target. Close to land we knew the weather always cleared and we could take the formation over the top of some protecting hills around the coast to bomb at 3,000 feet.

The Group's staff liked the idea, and we flew the last part of the raid over the sea at 300 feet. That's tough flying, you have to be paying attention second to second. When we got close, the weather cleared as predicted. We pulled up over the tops of the protecting ring of hills, and were right over the target and surprised Japanese. They didn't get a fighter in the air, and we left a suitable swath of destruction on their parked Zeros.

Fyrtle Myrtle's specific target at Babo was a marked Red Cross hospital. The intelligence staff told us it wasn't a hospital at all. It was an ammunition dump that the Japanese had disguised as a medical facility. It was risky business to attack it, because if the intelligence proved faulty, it would have meant a gross violation of the rules of war. If we had attacked a real hospital, Tokyo Rose would have had a field day in the radio propaganda war. Bombardier John Perry let go a string of 500 lb. bombs on the target. One made a direct hit, and confirmed our information. The place blew up with a terrific explosion. As soon as we bombed, we headed into the clouds again. After our return, Colonel Miller asked me about staying on an extra three months after my tour of 300 combat hours was over. He offered me the job of group navigation officer. He would promote me to captain on November 1, and make me a major when I reported for the job on December 1. I hedged my bets. There was a conflict between a sense of duty, the extra money that the new promotions would mean, and getting home to Betty.

Letters - August 1943

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 2, 1943

Betty my darling,

Although I am a lousy typist, I decided that I could get a lot more on one of these darn things this way, as I am afraid a lot of our airmail back to the states will be going by boat. Your mail has been coming thru fairly quickly, although it is inclined to bunch up a bit as you haven't my new address in use as yet. Honey, just think that seven months ago we had that very wonderful tho hectic day. We certainly have covered a lot of territory since then - wow! I would really love to be back and spend our anniversary with you, but c'est la vie, c'est la guerre. My morale has picked up a lot lately, as I have been quite busy on the project I came over here for, and as a result, the time goes a lot faster. Besides, your last letters have been especially wonderful, and I am so proud that I have such an intelligent wife. By the way, I just talked to Bill Massey on the phone, and he is going to try and send you a cable for me today. I wanted to send you one two days ago, but other things interfered with that. Please send me one as soon as possible, so we can find out if they come thru all right. I'll really be on pins and needles, come the latter part of September, and you my love will probably be on worse than that. This is a helluva time for them to have a war - no respect for motherhood.

I had a nice letter from Louise, and she was really on the top of the world after Cush's visit, not let down at all after he had gone, but just very thankful for the time they had together. That's the way we are too, aren't we baby? She also said that Marg had a wonderful time with you and your family in dear old California, and hated to leave. She said Marg would have liked to have stayed out here for the duration if she didn't have other obligations. Now, I just can't understand that, not much. Be sure and tell Madeline and the two Stanleys how much I miss them too. Oh hell, we will see each other one of these days in the not too distant future.

You might be interested to know that Perry did a particularly constructive job, or vice versa on his last play. Myrtle has been behaving like a perfect little lady to date, and we are quite proud of her. I am beginning to think that the aeroplane is here to stay. All the people back in the states are probably wondering about the automobile and sirloin steaks. Oh well, I guess they will live thru those problems.

They say that the Japs get along on a handful of rice, and according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica they are classified as human beings. I always did think that some of our scientific manuals took a lot for granted. It is pretty hard to judge intelligence, and the intelligent course, but I am inclined to agree with you that we cannot remake the world or human nature and if you do your own job well, and love and care for those whom you love and love you, that's about all a man can do. My ambitions and tastes have changed considerably in the last few years, especially the last ten months, and now a life that at one time seemed rather commonplace now assumes the mantle of Utopia.

You see, before I had never been in love and that certainly changes a lot of things, and how! Regarding your not writing me for a few days, when you hadn't heard from me, that is the most natural reaction in the world, and I am pleased that you have written me so darn much anyway, and so touched that you are always so honest with me. You are just perfect, honey, and I love you completely. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 3, 1943

Betty honey,

I managed to get so much on the letter I wrote you yesterday this way I am going to try this system from now on. I still haven't found out whether the boys got the cable off the other day or not. Yesterday we went out and practiced for a while. It seemed like the old days back in the states, and that I should be coming home to you after we landed. I understand from my mother that Kate and June Trego are in Tucson, so I imagine that the Kopecky's lost the house. You said that you heard from Helen and that Jerry was out at Chanute. Did you ever get the glasses? Well, baby, there is only two months now before Oct. 1st, and I think that you have done very well not to have gained more than nine pounds. The exercise you have gotten riding and swimming has probably been a darn good thing, as Doc says that it is best not to gain too much weight under the circumstances.

I talked to Jack Bratton yesterday on the phone. He said that Nancy was in good spirits, and that she had spent half her last letter sending her best to Doc and myself. Nancy was certainly a darn nice Gal, and with Ginnie too, we had a great bunch there in Denver. Boy, would I like to be walking along the fairways with you right now, even if that free, easy

swing of yours might be somewhat curtailed at present. Those games were an awful lot of fun and we will have to have more when I get home and when you are not in the painful throes of giving me riding lessons. Knowing what a determined young wife I have, I am resigned to eating off the mantelpiece for weeks at a time while my rear end cools from constant contact with Equis Extraordinaire. You will have to put in a good supply of liniment, and come to think of it, that will be a darn good excuse for a good massage, and speaking of massage, and back scratching, Sweetie, I received a present today from a certain fresh young thing back in the states that purported to be a back scratcher. It is a very handy little instrument, although our native girls think that is taking bread out of their mouths, as they were working up quite a business in that respect. I had to stop at this point and replace the bearings on the typewriter, which I burned out with my two fingers. I use two now instead of one.

Regarding the situation over in Italy, it looks like they are in a really tough spot, and I would not be surprised to see them give up one of these days. The Germans are catching hell too from all reports, both from the air over Germany and on the Russian front. There is no question but things are definitely looking up. Now, if production at home keeps up with the rate and intensity that the boys are fighting, we will really get somewhere. I was so glad to hear that P.J. is so happy - please send my regards to her when you write her next time. Honey, I miss you so darn much - the last few days the time has gone so slowly, and it seems like an eternity before I will see you again. You made me so terribly happy when we were together that all I can think of is to be back in your arms again. I thought last nite of some of those wonderful 24 hr. passes we had, when I didn't have to rush back to the post at the crack of dawn, and we could have the whole day to ourselves. That was real luxury, for sure. And the excitement of anticipation when I was jumping the fence to come in and see you at every conceivable hour of the day or nite. How I would love just one of those forbidden excursions right now, but instead, our meeting place for now is a dream. Well Sweetie, come what may, you can always be sure I love you always and forever, my darling, B.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 4, 1943

Betty, my love,

It is hot as Hades today, and I have a headache from too much Aussie beer which we get once a week, so therefore it must be love, my sweet, if I write you under such handicaps. I received a letter from you yesterday dated July 18th, which you wrote in bed - wish I could have helped you write it, altho there may or rather might have been some distractions. I also received at the same time a letter from Sadie and Clayton, saying that they were so sorry not to have gotten my mother's wire in time about Cush being in San Francisco. Oh darling, would I like to be there with you! Three long months ago today we kissed goodbye. It seems like 20 years ago. Whoever said the time would go quickly out here is full of baloney, it goes slower than hell. You might be interested to know that the Colonel said that the last mission we were on was the best executed one to date. It was really a lot of fun too. Now that John is operations officer he can't fly all the time, so we had another pilot for that trip.

I wrote Gus to look up Fred who is down his way for an operation on his throat. Also Doornbos is down at Gus's place for some medical attention. I hope Gus can locate them, as the time passes very slowly in the hospital.

Last night we got some steaks from a secret source and broiled them over a fire, to eat with our beer ration. They were really delicious even if they are hard on the waistline. We have been very fortunate as far as food is concerned, as we have a source of fresh vegetables, which is quite rare in most combat areas. I had my teeth cleaned last week, as for some reason or other, the water seems to stain them no matter how religiously you brush them. Ware, and some of the boys from my old squadron had a close shave the other day, but everything came out all right. Remind me to tell you about it when I get back to the states.

In order to pacify my family I am writing them at least once a week. Some of the boys had letters which did not reach their destination because they wrote on both sides of the sheet. I hope that did not happen to a lot of my early letters. I have a hell of a time running over the end of the line here, as I am there before I know it.

Regarding your crack about canners' surpluses there ain't no such things, lady, and haven't been since lend-lease went into effect. I would also like some good Democrat to explain to me why Roosevelt vetoed the anti-strike law, after Lewis had pushed him all over the lot. Personally, I think that Roosevelt was as much to blame as Lewis, as he has let labor get away with murder, and he had the power to prevent that strike and the resultant loss of coal and steel production. Boy, I sure hope he gets licked in the next election, altho with crooks like Kelley of Chicago and Hague of New Jersey garnishing votes for him, and most of his Washington henchmen playing politics instead of working on the war effort, he will be a tough hombre to lick, especially since very few of the boys overseas will get a chance to vote. I think that Clare Luce said a mouthful when she said he didn't have any foreign policy, but just used England's. I

realize that it doesn't pay to squabble about politics but I want this damn war to end as soon as possible, and anything or anybody that slows up the movement toward that end gets my blood hot, be he Republican, Democrat, or Holy-Roller. Well, honey, there are a lot of things about politics and national affairs that I don't know beans about, but one thing I do know is I love you like the devil and miss you like hell. A big kiss, Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 5, 1943

Betty Darling,

I just talked to Bill Massie, and he did not get the cable off to you until August 3rd, and he had to send one of those abbreviated jobs, so I shall be rather curious to see how long it takes to reach you. I have found as far as my correspondence is concerned, that if I assign one particular time each day to write you, I get a letter off to you every day. While otherwise I am inclined to miss you now and then, I fully realize that now, and for the next two months you will especially want to hear from me, so my love, I will really keep the bearings on this contraption burning, even if I end up with stumps for fingers. I always love to write to you anyway, it is merely a question of getting started. Suggest you use a magnifying glass if these are hard to read. Yesterday, as it was very hot, I spent most of the day in the swimming hole. It is really a godsend to us as it provides a lot of relief from the heat plus a source of recreation. It almost makes our transfer worthwhile even if we did lose our beautiful house and lots of our friends. However, we have made a lot of new ones, so we will get along OK. Our new flight surgeon is a swell guy, and the S-2 boys are lots of fun. One of them has flown with us a lot, and we really kidded him the last time. Intelligence had given us this long lecture about staying awake at all times, and observing everything that takes place on the way to and back from the target. Then this joker goes out with us and sleeps the whole trip except when we were in the target area. He won't forget about that.

We finally got a bulb for our motion picture projector and had a show last night for the first time in weeks. We are really poor relatives of the group at present, but that doesn't bother us. The show was Rape or Reap the Wild Wind, with Paulette Goddard, Raymond Massie, and Ray Milland. It was a pretty fair show, but Massie took the limelight as usual. He is really a fine actor. I shall never forget him on stage as Abraham Lincoln. That was the best performance I have ever seen. There are not many of Massie's school left. The movies have taken care of that, but after all the legit catered to a chosen few, and the flickers reach everyone. Still I really go for some of the old-time actors. Ask your mother and father if they remember William Hodge. His son was a close friend of mine, and I had the great pleasure of knowing his mother and father intimately. Mr. Hodge was the possessor of one of the keenest senses of humor I ever contacted and many weekends I spent at their home bring back some of the most pleasant recollections of that very formative period for a boy from fourteen to twenty.

I recall the deep infatuation I had at fourteen for Bill's sister who was only ten years my senior, and although already embarked on her stage career, I still couldn't understand why she thought I was a bit too young. I am certainly glad she did think so, because then I wouldn't have met you, my love, and found the greatest happiness that can come to a man - to marry the girl he really loves, and discover for the first time how really sweet life can be, even if the pain of being away from her is great, because in a way there is a sweetness in that pain from the anticipation of life with her to come. Yea, verily, it is better to have loved and lost, then never, my darling, to have loved at all, and the recollections of the heaven I had with you really keeps me going our here - and your love makes me strong. Kisses, Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 6, 1943

Betty Sweetie:

I am really keeping up with my one letter a day schedule, and hope it can last. However, I many miss tomorrow. From present indications I should see Gus around the first of September if all goes well up until that time. I will be nice to see the old boy again, as we can console each other. I doubt if Gus will get back to the states for a long time, but naturally I won't tell Marg that. I shall probably stay with Don Brant who has a house in a town nearby Gus. There are not a hell of a lot of the boys left that went to our first station. Haugie, Hinckley, Fisher, Hebner, Morris, and myself. I talked to Capt. Kelley, and he said his wife had just bought a car, and driven out to Los Angeles to live with Hebner's wife. Kelley thought it was rather dumb, as he had his money tied up in two cars already. He said she probably bought the car to get new tires and a full tank of gas. Mickey is up at Santa Rosa or was until recently. She was going back to Minneapolis in the near future. I wonder what happened to Harry and Willie Mee. I think that they went the other way,

and if so, are undoubtedly right busy at present. Incidentally, the officer who was charged with rape at one of our stations ended up over here and almost came back to the group as a replacement. News flash - Jack Bratton is now back with the 530th and Ware is back in group again. That will make Fred happy as he wanted Jack to succeed him. Farrington is glad that we are where we are, as he didn't have much use for Jack. I still like the latter personally, but that is as far as it goes. Some of the boys think that the Colonel is touched in the head because of some of his recent moves, but I suppose the old boy knows what he is doing, at least I hope so. Hillman has done a good job over here, and he is one guy that you can really depend on. He got his captaincy and also himself engaged to his gal in Tucson.

I see that TIME says General MacArthur is the third choice for the Republican nomination with Tom Dewey leading the parade. Whoever the Republicans put up will have to carry New York and Pennsylvania. Dewey is about the only man that could do that, and I doubt if he can for sure. It seems with all the people in the U.S., the Republicans could put up a really strong man. They will have to if they want to beat the Magic Voice.

The news this morning is certainly encouraging with the fall of Orel and Catania. Now if we can take Munda down here there will be real progress on all fronts. I think Italy's harbor lights are about out, and if they continue the bombing of Germany at the present rate, hers will be dimming too. You can't fight a war without supplies and if they bomb all of her main industrial centers she will be in a helluva fix. However, bombing doesn't take territory, but it certainly softens up the opposition, and perhaps Germany will decline to fight on her own soil as she did in the last war. One thing or another, I wish they would get the damn thing over so I can come home to my honeybunch and catch up on a lot of missed loving. Baby, I am really eager for you, and that is no fooling, even with your slightly increased waistline. If I keep talking like that you will think I married you for your body, when it really is your mind I love, it says here in real small print. Ha, Ha, - you can't beat me up for that crack over here, but I'll certainly catch hell when I get home, but it is fun catching it from you, darling, as everything you do makes me so happy, and I love all of you so much, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 7, 1943

Betty honey:

When I wrote you yesterday I told you that I would probably miss today, but I have such a good record for this week that I couldn't afford to spoil it. Fyrtle is still behaving very well, or otherwise I wouldn't be writing to you at this point. I received the nicest letter from Mom and I certainly appreciated it a hell of a lot, and will answer it today if the bear doesn't get me, as it is really boiling at his point. One fortunate thing about this neck of the woods is that it cools off at night, so we can at least get a good sleep, and you know how I love to sleep, except when certain extra-curricular activities interfere, and oh Sweetie, what interference.

Laundry is quite a problem out here, and now I know what the ads mean about tattletale gray. My technique is improving somewhat, but I still have a devil of a time with it. Besides our clothes get so darn dirty from the particular brand of dust we have over here. It took me a whole day to wash the following items: four shirts, four pair of trousers, two pair of khaki shorts, three towels, one sweatshirt, and four pair of cotton shorts.

In case Mickey has not contacted you, her address in Santa Rosa is 803 Fifth Street. However, Alfred figures she has probably left by this time. I received a letter from my mother yesterday, in which she told me how wonderful you had been about writing, and just generally what a marvelous wife she thought I had. Well, I guess I'll have to agree on that point, because baby, I think you are pretty wonderful myself. I am glad that you are beginning to get more mail from me, and there should be plenty on the way. There are one or two periods that may be a little skimpy, but there was a good reason for that, and I know you will understand, because you have such a wonderful understanding and make such a perfect army wife. I don't know whether that sounds like a compliment, but it was meant as such, and a very good one at that.

There are a lot of girls that are swell companions when everything is going smoothly, but the ones that are still in pitching when disappointments come their way are the ones that count. The fact that you take our separation so bravely helps me considerably to be strong when it would be so easy to sit around and feel sorry for myself. Certainly, one of the greatest human failings and the cause of deepest trouble is self-pity, and if I ever showed that, give me a good kick in the pants, even when you make me wash out the bathtub, hang up my towel, and not squeeze the toothpaste from the top. Gad, lady, come to think of it, you are just a darned dictator, but I love it!!!

The war news is again encouraging, and I hope it keeps up that way because the sooner this holocaust is over, the sooner we can settle down to the most exciting thing I can think of - life with you and Junior. Incidentally, at the rate our pride and joy has been belting you in the tummy, if it is a boy, he will be a great football player and if we are lucky

to have a girl, she should be a great ballet dancer. You know, I really don't care which it is because it would be nice to have a son, and wonderful to have a charming and ornery gal like her mother. All I want is to get that cable saying, 'Mother and child doing nicely'. I love you so much, my darling, and our reunion is my favorite dream. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 8, 1943

Betty sweetie,

The mail has been coming in slowly, and I shall be glad when you get my new address, as the old one delays our mail about three days extra. I am rather curious as to how long these V-mails are taking to go your way. Perhaps I should mix in some air-mail just to make sure that you hear from me regularly. You are so wonderful about writing, and I am going to try and reverse the usual custom of writing very frequently at first and then slowing up by writing much more frequently now and in the next few months than I did at first.

I received one letter from you last week, which I believe I neglected to acknowledge. In it you inquired about the joke I sent Clayton. It is a little vulgar, but quite amusing, so here goes, I thought I had sent it to you. It seems that a soldier went down on leave to one of the Southern Australian metropolises, and stepped into a bar to have a drink. He saw a very pretty girl sitting at a table by herself, and asked her if he could buy her a drink. She acquiesced, and as the water approached the table, he said, "which would you prefer, beer or champagne?" "Well", she said rather thoughtfully, "I think I should drink champagne, and I shall tell you why. When I drink the latter I have the most wonderful thoughts. It makes me all bubbly inside, and I dream that I am on a perfect gem of an island in the South Seas, lying in the nude on the soft warm sands with the fragrant tropical air sensually playing about my body. As I lay there in supreme contentment, a tall handsome man comes up from the sea, walks to my side, kneels, and runs his hands over my pleating flesh. Unable to resist, I surrender to him completely and voluptuously. Then, much, much, later he goes down to the sea, and fills a silken basket with pearls, returns, and pours them over my body creating a sensation divine." "But", she said, gazing raptly into the eyes of the soldier, "when I drink beer, I fart!"

Last nite we had a double feature, as we have a new projector that has a darn good sound outfit. The first feature was "The Glass Eye" with Brian Donlevy, Allen Ladd, and Veronica Lake. I personally think the latter stinks, but it was a good show. The other was a wild and wooly western, but anything is good out here. We also had some good pictures of the 1942 football season, plus Popeye. As I recall, I wasn't particularly interested in football last fall as a certain young lady from Berkeley was keeping me definitely occupied at the Senator, so I finally found out how all those games came out. I was really tired as it was too hot to sleep, and I hadn't been able to get any sleep in the nite before. That back scratcher you sent me helps a lot, but there are some nites that really require your personal touch, and no substitute is satisfactory. I am afraid that there will be even more of those nites as time goes on, my darling. Sometimes I think that I will scream if I don't see you in the next few hours, and then I realize how silly that is, and get a grip on myself. I have stopped my daydreaming out of necessity, as it was making me too miserable, and accomplished nothing whatsoever. God, it will be wonderful when we have the real thing. It still seems so darn far away, and time passes so slowly. It even went quicker at first than it does now. Oh well, we are darn lucky to be alive, and there are a hell of a lot of people that have many more problems than we do, and as your mother said, miles apart we are closer than some people are in the same room. I love you darling, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

V-Mail, August 9, 1943

Betty, my sweet,

The mail has been very slow for the last week for everyone, so I shall probably get a bunch of it when it does come. It would be nice if it worked out that letters came in the same order that they were mailed but we can't have everything. They sent my first in again, and dated it for the 1st of September, as then I will have been a second for eight months, which is the requirement in this theater of operations. For a captaincy it is then six more months, but promotions are not my main interest - getting home to you and Junior is by far the paramount one. However, all comes in good time as the Bible says, and I hope that the Bible is right. I am going to send you some money tomorrow by radio, as they say that is the safest and quickest way, so I shall be curious as to how long it takes.

Last nite we got hold of some steaks and watermelon, and had a great time. We iced the watermelon and boy, was it good. We also had some very delicious liquid refreshments, so it was quite a treat. However, you can't drink much out

here as it knocks the devil out of you, and I have been a pretty good boy in that respect. Then again, we never know when we are going out hunting, and it is not advisable to fly with a hangover.

I have had a hard time deciding where I am going to spend my week's leave when I get it the first part of next month. I want to see Gus, and yet I would like to spend it with the other boys. However, I think that Gus is going to win out. He would no doubt like some first hand information about home, and as he has been over here quite a spell, I think I'll play ball with him.

The wind has come up a bit today and cooled things off perceptively. I don't know what we would do without the swimming hole on some of these sweltering days. I really dread the prospects of the rainy season in a way, but after all we didn't come over here for a picnic, and we are darn well off compared to lots of the troops in some of the worst hellholes of creation. I am not much of a homespun philosopher, but whenever I feel particularly low, I just think of some of the other boys, and then I am picked up.

However, a recent issue of TIME magazine really made me boil, when it was pointed out that our June production was way below expectations because of false optimism, the strikes, and bungling on the part of the government. I would like to see some of the politicians down on the battle-line for a while, and then maybe they would get something done back home. If some of these bastards don't think they are making enough money, let them try fighting as a private at fifty dollars a month. After this war is over, we have plenty of fences to mend at home, and I don't mean maybe. It is about time we get some honest and capable men down in Washington and it is our own fault, individually, if we don't do something about it. For a long time some of the most capable men in our country have shunned politics, because of all the dirt and filth attached to it, and papers like the Chicago Tribune offer nothing but criticism without making any constructive suggestions. As you say, the government is the people, but goddamn it, you have to have the right people. The better educated people are the most to blame, because they have the brains to do something about it and don't.

Enough for this editorial. I'll write a nicer letter tomorrow, and win, lose, or draw, I love you, honey. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 10, 1943

Betty dearest,

The mail situation this past ten days has been very poor, one letter in all that time, but there should be a flock along soon, as none of the boys gave gotten any. I know how you must feel when mine is slow coming thru, but there is plenty on the way as I haven't missed a day for over two weeks. Please don't think that I am complaining, as you have been too wonderful about writing, but at this point I am getting a little bored with the dull routine between missions, and I think a few days leave down to civilization will be a big help. Group has given our outfit a rather raw deal on films, and co-operation in other ways, but we will get along. Our C.O. is a darn good guy and due to a lot of petty fighting that is going on at present I am very glad that we were transferred, tho we were all highly displeased at the time. Higher authorities have given us permission to refer you to an article appearing in the (censored) magazine called (censored). That was a lot of fun.

There isn't much news around here at present. Yesterday I wrote my family an editorial on the situation at home, after I had sent one to you, as I was still burned up. Al was reading part of it, so he copied part out and sent it to his uncle who is quite politically minded, to read to the Rotary boys. Sometimes I regret that I didn't stay in the newspaper business especially at times like this. It is certainly a nice thing when all Wallace and Jesse Jones can do is to throw mud at each other, plus indulging in some minor fisticuffs, which 'amused' the President, when a lot of boys are out risking their lives against the Japs and the Germans. Personally, I think that the whole New Deal stinks, and the sooner we can knock Roosevelt and his cohorts out of office, the better off we will be. I realize that this is no time for bickering among ourselves, but I also most firmly believe that anyone in high authority that hinders the war effort should be kicked out in a hurry, and there are too damn many people in Washington that are first a politician and last an American. I hope that when Congress is home for the summer, that the voters will let them know their wishes. With the maze of red tape that accompanies our present brand of politics, a lot of bungling can be covered up. But it is time that the people knew the truth and did something about it. We want to win this war and win it in a hurry, and further than that, we want to arrange things that Junior will not have to suffer the consequences of another one a few years from now. By an isolationist policy the United States has made herself the scapegoat of two European and Asiatic brawls already. She should realize by this time that only by military might can peace be maintained. It is a hell of a lot cheaper to keep a strong peacetime army and not fight any wars than to keep a weak one and fight every twenty five years.

Germany will always be a ferment of discontent and the Japs will never be satisfied until they rule the East. It is possible that the Japs will see the light after the war is over, but I doubt it. With some additional territory to that she had before 1931, she could become a great nation, but I am afraid that it is everything or nothing with her, so she will probably get the latter.

Anyway, honey, I love you like hell, miss you terribly. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 11, 1943

Betty my Honey,

After talking about sending some money home for so long, I finally got some off to you this morning to the amount of two hundred bucks, which was a little less than I had originally planned, but hope to augment that in the next couple of months. It was nice of Dr. Waugh to offer to forget my debt to him but I think that we should pay him as soon as it is convenient. You should have the money I sent you by August 25th, but the time varies. Enough of finances at present. I am trying to save as much as possible, but will probably blow a few bucks if and when I go on leave.

The mail situation is getting desperate at present, as no one has received any for some time. However, I know the drought will break soon. I am lucky to have received as much as I have, and don't think I haven't appreciated your diligence, sweetie. I was a little erratic at first, but I think that I am making up for it at present. I am afraid you may not hear from me for the next couple of days as I have a lot of work on hand, but as soon as that is finished, I will get back on the machine. Incidentally, the boys kid me a lot about my lack of dexterity as a typist, and tell me that I will get the Purple Heart for bloody fingers, but really I am improving.

FLASH - Bill Perdue, one of our S-2 officers, and a swell guy just came in here with a letter from you dated July 29th, so I hungrily stopped to read it. You were telling, honey, what a calloused gal you had been in the old days, and how you had changed. Well, honey, I know what you mean about being touched about things, and it doesn't take much to bring tears to my eyes when I think of you. I know that if one has really loved and experienced great emotions because of that love, you have a feeling and appreciation of such emotions when you encounter them in other people, whether it be in a story or real life.

Regarding our reunion, I think that one of the things that eventually made me most miserable and finally stopped me from daydreaming was because all I thought of was that I dreamt of meeting you where we left, of surprising you at home, of coming home at Christmas time when you were visiting in Hoopeston and coming in on you unannounced. God, there were a million different settings but the main thing was that you were there and in my arms, and it was heaven. When I was thinking of it and was lost to the outside world in my dreams, I was in Utopia, but the return to reality was like a bad hangover after a terrible drunk. However, baby, I shall still keep thinking of that day, because that is what I live for and fight for, and also my darling, I am just no good without you. The bee must have his honey and you are mine. Well, we are going on four months and that is not much from the standpoint of the time left to go, it is a lot better than if I had just arrived, and these three months plus ahead of me.

In a way over here it is like a convict serving a term - nothing to look forward to but trouble until the term is served. God, there is very little I would not give to be back with you now and the months and years to come. I fully realize that mothers have their babies very competently without the presence of fond Papa, except at the laying of the keel, but I would still like to be there. I didn't know how deeply a man can love and how wonderful a girl could be until I met you my love, but now I feel it to the fullest extent, and am as thankful for my love and yours. Loads of kisses. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 12, 1943

Betty darling,

I did not expect to be able to get a letter off to you today, but you never know what the score is over here. Things change so rapidly it is hard to forecast the future. The mail is still not too good, but I was certainly relieved to hear from you yesterday. Alfred is very disgruntled as he hasn't heard from Mickey for three weeks. I can't understand why you hadn't received my change of address by July 29th. Maybe I better go back to airmail, but thought I would use them until I got some comment from you regarding them due to the request made to us to cut down on airmail. I also received a letter from Gus. My last letter took two weeks to reach him, and it's the same to reach me. Something is screwy somewhere.

I have been carrying on a correspondence with the adjutant General's office regarding travel reimbursement for you from Tucson to Hoopston, and that should be forthcoming in the near future. They apparently could not read my writing, and thought the town involved was Hogeston, the dopes. I had it printed in one place. In case you are not getting all of my letters, I will repeat again that I sent you two hundred bucks on August 11th and you should receive it within two or three weeks of that date.

We were told recently that Christmas presents sent from here to the states have to be mailed by September 15th. In case I don't get down to civilization by that time, darling, I'll send you some money to buy presents for our families, and I'll see if I can surprise you with something. God, how I would like to spend Christmas with you, but the way things look now that will be out of the question. However, we can still keep hoping. Gus mentioned to me in his letter that Marg's letters were beginning to sound cheerful for the first time. I am afraid she has not been as philosophical about things as you have, honey, and I hope she writes him more cheerful letters, as I know he must be getting rather blue. However, he does have the advantage of knowing that he will get back eventually, but separation is still rough no matter what the conditions are. Some days you think you just won't be able to bear it another second, but some way or another you keep going on, hoping for the day when I have you in my arms again, sweetie.

This morning we had a housecleaning, and I did some more laundry. I am getting a little more proficient at that pursuit. Last night we had a good movie, we are finally getting them more regularly. The one last nite was George Brent and Brenda Marshall in 'You Can't Escape Forever'. The nite before we had Melvyn Douglas and Joan Crawford in 'They all Kissed the Bride'. I am glad that we didn't go to many movies when we were back in the states, as all these old pictures are new to me. We were too busy to bother about movies, weren't we honey? I would rather do things myself than watch someone else, but now that I am away from you, I enjoy them as a poor substitute. One thing, though, memories are wonderful, and I have such a bountiful supply of marvelous ones to draw on, starting from that lucky nite we met in Laguna, until I kissed you goodbye in your favorite city. I am still cussing myself for not having done a better job of kissing you goodbye in the street that day, but I guess it was ordained to be that way, because all of those times we thought it was the last kiss, we got a reprieve, and when the axe did fall for sure, I didn't really think it was coming. Darling, I love you so deeply and long for you horribly.

Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 15, 1943

Betty honey,

At last the mail famine broke, and I received five letters from you yesterday, and they certainly came at an opportune time, as I had just put in the two toughest days to date. If you pay close attention to the papers, you may be able to figure out what I was doing. Darling, your letters pick me up so much, I particularly enjoyed the one you wrote August 2nd. It was certainly the sweetest letter I have ever received, and boy, did it build up the old ego. Regarding my bitching about the slowness of promotions it really doesn't bother me, and I guess the old army adage is true, that if the boys don't squawk about something, there is something wrong. Incidentally, in that connection, my promotion went in again today, and Capt. Brissey said they would keep sending it in every day till it went thru. The latter is a swell C.O., and we get along with him very well. It is unfortunate that at the present time there is great dissension between the squadron and group personnel. We all knew it would eventually arise, and the outcome is still in doubt. However, we still fly our damndest, and will continue to do so regardless of anything else because that is what we came here for.

One thing I do know, and that is I am fortunate to have such a damn good crew. There may be better pilots than John and Al, but I don't know where. John Perry has done a superlative job, and we have only killed fish once, and that time the bombs didn't go off anyway. My darling, I would love to tell you about our latest foray as it was a beauty. This may sound funny, but every time we start the run over the target, I say under my breath, 'Dear God, I love Betty so much, and please let me come back to her'. You know I have never been terribly religious, but you change your mind about a lot of things out here. However, one thing I never change my mind about, and that is my great love for you.

You mentioned that the sailor sent his best. Well, send him mine. Honey, all my life I have noted how jealousy can distort and kill the best things, and I have always said to myself that when I married the girl I loved and the one that loved me, I would always give and receive perfect loyalty and trust, because with those two, love does not really exist. I know how much letters mean to boys in the service, and if you want to write to a hundred of them, I think it is a swell idea. I am so eternally thankful for all of the happiness you have given me, that I would be a poor sort of guy, if I begrudged a little bit of sunshine to someone else.

I can't understand why you have not received more mail from me and why you hadn't received my change of address by August 2nd. However, for three weeks I have written you every day except the last two. When I mention I missed a day you will know there was a darn good reason for it. I told you in July that our crew had not seen as much action as the rest. Well, we are catching up fast, and I don't mean maybe. I am glad of that, because when they start sending crews home, the ones with the most time will undoubtedly go first. Some corporal stationed in the states said he thought it was a bad thing that our men did not really know what the war was all about, and all they thought about was going home. I'll bet dough that bastard hasn't got closer to action than a brawl in a bar. Most of us have a vague understanding of the political and economic significance of the war but you can't blame us for wanting to get home after our bit is done. I love you darling. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 16, 1943

Betty, my love,

I received a letter from you last nite in which you said you were perturbed that I hadn't received more mail from you. Well darling, I am never going to mention lack of mail again, as I know how I felt when you wrote me that you hadn't heard from me for ten days. All of our mail is on the way, so when I write you about lack of reception, you will know that I am just letting you know what mail has arrived, and then you will understand why I have not referred to things you have brought up. Now that you have my new address it will speed things up at least four days. Your letters are so wonderful, and I am so proud of you, that you can write so well, since when I married you I thought you were illiterate and had only been wearing shoes for a short time. Ha, Ha, you can't wring my neck over here, boy oh boy, wait till you get me home.

Hinckley has been grounded because of a nose ailment. Any kind of fine dust irritates his nose considerably, and he will have to be transferred to another theater of operations. If he is lucky and plays his cards right, he may get back to the states, the lucky dog. He had a lot of trouble at El Paso with the dust there. Incidentally, he got a letter from Jim Barkley who is now in England after serving a stretch down in North Africa. Jim says they have a good setup over there, and that it isn't bad at all. He didn't mention any of the other boys. I thought Mike would be with him, I am very curious as to where Harry and Willie Mee are. It is funny that you have never heard from Ruthie, but it is quite possible that she never received your letter.

Two days ago I received a cable from my mother from Michigan. The address on the blank I received had my name, serial number, and the word, 'Ambosa'. However, I think that you are supposed to include organization as well as APO number. I wish you would send me one, so when the critical time comes, we will know whether a cable will come thru in a hurry, because honey, I am really going to be plenty worried at that point, and I don't mean maybe. God, I would give a lot to be able to be with you, but the war just doesn't have an respect for motherhood.

I wrote the Sells a long letter. The first one I prepared did not meet censorship regulations, so I had to rewrite it. None of your letters have ever been touched. I am sure I mentioned that Fyrtle received her first scar recently, but it was very slight. However, it made us mad that our baby had been touched, so we will really try to give the Japs hell the next time we go out. I really enjoy the missions, and I know that the more I can have behind me, the sooner I can think about coming home to you. It is really quite a thrill when you are in the target area, and the ack-ack starts coming up. It is very insidious looking, and at nite it has a deadly beauty. Some of it looks like someone is standing down there with a gigantic roman candle pointed at you. I especially love to watch the bombs go away, and then see their fury when they strike. It is indeed quite a sight. It is horrible that people reach the point where they glory in destruction, but that is our stock and trade at present, and like any other job, assignment, or pursuit, one must do the best job he can.

When I think of boys like Leon and Bill Sells, it makes it a great pleasure to do our duty. Darling, I love you so deeply and do I miss you, but all will come in good time. Your time estimation was very good. Lots of kisses. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

August 19, 1943

Betty my sweetheart:

This letter may not be very logical as I just had a rather rough time, but I wanted to get a line off to you tonite as I have missed the last two days. We have really been fighting the war over here lately, and I am about ready for a little leave. In other words, the hunting has been swell, but rather rough. When I returned, I was so thrilled to receive your cable.

Five days is not bad time, and the code address on the wire was 'Ambosa'. Honey, I am a little incoherent at present, but God darling, I love you so darn much. I said my little prayer again at that certain time, and everything came out all right.

I think that after I have had twice the time I have had at present, I will be ready to come home, because all of us can take so much. Sweetie, I had the most horrible nightmare recently after coming home from a mission. I dreamt that you and I had a fight, and we had separated, and I had been persuaded to marry some other girl, and you had done the same. I woke up screaming, and the boys thought I was a little crazy. Well, maybe I am, but darling, it is only because I love you so darn much. All I can think of is you, and coming back to you. Sometimes like tonite, I think that I will go insane if I don't see you, but I realize that is very childish on my part. I am doing my best to do my part, but I just can't help my feelings at times, and this is one of them. You have become so much a part of me that without you I am just not worth a damn.

Baby, whatever happens, and whatever is our fortune or misfortune due to this damn war, just remember one thing and one thing always, and that is you are loved as completely as a girl can be loved by one man, and honey, I have a little latin blood in me somewhere that tells me when I love anyone as much as I love you my love, it is really the works. If I could only talk to you when I feel the way I do now, it would mean so darn much, but what the hell can a man do. I certainly hope that certain altercations in our own group are settled shortly, because it is tough fighting a war against the bastard Japs without arguing among yourselves. However, when we go out to bomb, we still do our best job as individual crews, but in the long run our score will be a helluva lot better if some of the boys in high positions will figure out that we are fighting a war, and not an old ladies' sewing circle. We have a swell outfit as a whole, but there are a couple of guys that really screw the works. I have been a good boy regarding having a few drinks, but right now I am a little boiled in more ways than one, and that is why I am using the typewriter.

I have had about three hours sleep in the last two days so it did not take much. My last job of navigation was my best, and I am not boasting. I hit the target and home dead with my ETA a minute off at both points, despite the fact that it was a rather long trip, and I had to be right if we were going to get home at all. You will never know how much strength your love has given me, and loving you, like I do, how much determination I have to come back to you. Sometimes the times we had together seem like a fantasy, something too good to be true, but then I think again, and I say, I'm coming back to you my sweet, if I have to swim the Pacific, and it is a big ocean, and I am a lousy swimmer. I fully realize that it has not been any picnic for you, despite the fact that your mother and father are something out of this world, and do I love them, and so I am so darn proud of you that you can keep your chin up, and make me feel so darn good when you compose those masterpieces of yours. Honey, I think that I have read that letter of yours dated August 2nd regarding Saturday nites and what they mean to you and us at least ten times.

I also so much enjoyed that letter you wrote me after I had gone off at such length about the general political and economic situation. Fortunately or unfortunately I am one of those guys that loves wide open discussion about things, and I have never had much respect for the people who agree with everything that is said because it is too much trouble to disagree. Take Charlie Dyer, I have fought with him on about every idea that he ever advances, and yet we are the best of friends, and always will be.

Regarding sentimentality, baby, I have always been very definitely on that side, and as I wrote you before, when you have really loved and have experienced the deepest of emotions, it is natural that you have a more concrete understanding and appreciation of those feelings in other people and in reference to other events. You know, honey, to me marriage is a partnership proposition from a realistic point of view, and both parties have so much or so little to give. The way I look at it our partnership (outside of Junior) has certainly netted the following results disregarding even the wonderful fun we have had together. When I first met you, my sweet, you were a very independent young gal, who figured that you could handle your whole life very admirably without any help from anyone, and it is true that after the training your mother and father had given you, plus your innate ability to handle situations and fend for yourself, you could live a life or sorts without anyone giving you much of a helping hand. However, because of that very situation you had little sympathy for human frailties, and you really had no idea how sweet life could be when you not only fought for yourself, but also for the person you loved.

In other words, you were slightly smug, slightly dissatisfied, you felt you could do a helluva lot somewhere. You didn't know exactly where, you felt you were in a position to help your gal friends run their lives, and you were a pal to many boys whom you respected and liked, but that was as far as your scope had reached. I am not saying this from conceit, I am just stating facts from what you have told me, and that is always the gospel as far as I am concerned.

Now, as far as I am concerned, I was a very worthless person that you met in Laguna. Despite the care of a loving but slightly indulgent family, plus a darn good education, I was completely lost. Because of certain stupid assumptions regarding people in general I was content to drift along, snatching momentary amusement of sorts with anyone who came my way and struck my fancy. If I had any philosophy, it was 'eat, drink, and be merry, for who cares if there is even a tomorrow.' I never took the time to see any depth to any of the gals I knew, until I met you, and maybe that was for the best, as I might have been 'hitched' to someone nice, but not anywhere near as perfect as you.

You have really turned me around, baby, and tho this damn war is keeping me from reaping the benefits of your perfection, I know the day will come when I will once again know the happiness and contentment that being with you has meant. You have cured a wanderlust that had plagued me all my life until I met you.

At this point of the nite, I think I'd better leave any other analysis of my prior life and attitudes for another time, as the need for sleep is rapidly drawing down on me. Before that happens, know that you are the most wonderful wife anyone could have, and I am so darn lucky you are mine. I hope I have sweet dreams of you tonight. Love, Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 20, 1943

Betty my love,

I almost didn't get off a letter today, as I was so darn tired. I slept most of the time. However, I didn't want to spoil my record of writing you every day that I am not out on a mission. Our time is really piling up now and if our luck will hold for a few more months, we can start at least thinking about the prospects of going home. I think, though, that your guess of a year will be pretty close. That seems like a long time, but we are going on four months, and that is a lot better than if I had just left. It seems like an eternity and not several months.

I wrote Marg last nite after I had written you. She certainly thinks that you are tops, and I just can't understand why, I told her Gus had said that her letters were beginning to sound cheerful for the first time, so I hope she keeps writing him in the same vein. Our leave has been temporarily canceled, so I don't know when I will see Gus. I am about ready for a little break, as we have been flying so much lately, and it is a little hard on your nerves after awhile. When you do get back, the humdrum of camp life is small respite. However, things are really not bad at all, and I always have to have something to complain about, as long as I am away from you, my sweet.

Al got a letter from Mickey in which she mentioned she had just heard from you. If you see Mickey, dear, you might mention in a subtle way that she ought to write Al more often, as he almost goes crazy when he does not hear more often from her. One time it was over three weeks before he heard from her, and I don't think that she writes him more than once a week. Al is a swell guy, and I hate to see him so upset. He has enough problems as it is. Tonite some of the boys got hold of some steaks, so we are going to have another barbecue. That isn't too good for my waistline, but very good for my disposition. I have ranted and raved so much about the political situation at home that some of the boys call me 'senator'. It really makes me boil, though, when I read some of the things that are going on down in Washington.

One thing I really need over here, sweetie, is a good fountain pen. I know that it is hard to get them back in the states (impossible here), but if you could swing it some way or another, I would certainly appreciate it. I had one at El Paso, but I lost it somewhere or another.

Incidentally, I think that I have located the other scout knife, and I still have the one you last gave me, which is quite a record, don't you think. My sleeping bag is also still intact, so things aren't so bad after all, even if I did lose my wallet, but fortunately without any money in it.

The mail situation is getting slow again, and I heard today that we would not have any more before the first of the month. I hope that is not true as I am looking forward to the arrival of your picture plus letters too. You are really wonderful about writing, honey, and don't think that I don't appreciate it. This past month I have tried to show my gratitude in a more concrete way by really keeping the bearings smoking on this machine. My best to Mom, Dad, and Stanley, and a million hugs and kisses to you. I love you, Betty darling. Willie (a big kiss again).

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 21, 1943

Betty honey,

It is really cool today, and it is certainly a welcome relief from the usual heat. From your letters I would judge that it has been pretty hot at home too. However, the real heat is yet to come and that is during the wet season which is coming closer now. We are certainly not looking forward to that. News around here is rather scarce at present, and what there is to talk about I can't talk about. However, if you pay close attention to the news reports, you should know what we are doing, as thru Cush you should know the exact sector we operate in. The Japs have really been catching hell from the air out here, and the boys have done a darn good job with what they have to work with. I am beginning to think that Germany is going to have a tough row to hoe in the coming year, and that the end of 1944 might be her finish. If we can maintain a high enough production of war materials at home to keep our boys supplied, because in the today's kind of war, you really have to have things to fight with.

My mother and father's wedding anniversary is either the nineteenth or twentieth of September, so I think that we should send them a little remembrance. I am ashamed to admit that I don't know when Mom and Dad's is due, but I know you will take care of that. We ought to keep a little book with the dates of our loved ones birthdays, anniversary's, etc.

I would suggest that you have my mother forward any government mail addressed to me to you, as that check for your travel time may come thru and with your power of attorney you can cash it. I hope that by the time you receive this letter that the money I sent you will have arrived. I plan to send the same amount again, as soon as I can collect some of the money which is owed me. I have tried to save as much as possible, so we will be in good shape when I get back. When my promotion comes thru, I am going to increase your allotment about 40 dollars per month. I hope that your back allotments have come thru, and I would appreciate it if you would let me know how they stand at present. I figure that things are going to be rather tough for awhile after the war is over, and it would be nice to have a little backlog for the lean periods. I, of course, regret that I didn't manage my finances more astutely before I met you my love, but there is no use crying over spilled milk, and I think that we will always get along all right in that respect, because I know that I can make money, and I figure you are just the gal to see we hold on to it. I was certainly lucky to find a gal like you who is utterly feminine and yet with a darn good head on her shoulders.

There are very few boys that save a darn thing until they fall in love anyway. No man is happy until he does fall in love, and being very restless without love, he throws his money away trying to find some kind of false happiness. As I have made this letter more of a business letter, I will make one more suggestion. I think that we should in the near future start an educational fund for Junior, putting so much each month into an account for that purpose. Then if things are tough when it come time to send Junior away to school, we won't have anything to worry about. I love you darling. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 22, 1943

Betty darling,

It is really a lovely day today as the wind has come up, and cooled off everything so nicely. There is little news around here. We just fly and sit, and the sitting part of it is the hardest. It is even hard to get up a good poker game these days as most of the boys are broke, or are saving their money for leave. It looks like it will be some time before we will go on leave. In the meantime we are really piling up the time. I want to get in as much possible before the wet season begins, as I imagine activities will be somewhat curtailed during that period. I had a little extra cash after a small crap game yesterday, so I sent you seventy dollars by radio this morning. As we cannot send more than one order per month to the same address, I sent it to the Bank of America, and would suggest that you notify them it will be coming in. Because of the above restrictions, I put it in my name, as our account is a joint one, and therefore won't make any difference.

The mail is slow coming in, and the last letter I received from you was dated August 4th. Very little mail dated later than that has come in for anyone. I guess the transports are so busy with activities in other areas that they don't have time to come our way too often at present, so we will have to be patient. I got a letter yesterday from Uncle Mac. The two girls, Aunt Marie, and himself have been out on the ranch for six weeks, and the girls have been doing a lot of riding. He said Shorty was rather provoked that they kept Marie out there so darn long. I know how he feels, but wait till he has to be away from there as long as I have been away from you, my love. It seems like nigh on to four years instead of almost four months.

The war news still continues to be favorable, and it looks like the Germans are in for a rough time in the year to come. The Japs are also finding out that we are not such pushovers as they must have thought after their first great succession of victories at the beginning of the war. I have a healthy respect for the Australian troops and the part they are playing. Their pilots are going a damn good job too. There are also Dutchmen in this theater and they seem to know their stuff too.

God, honey, it is certainly getting close to the time when Junior will be making his or her appearance. I am almost getting nervous already, especially after I dreamt last nite that a cable came announcing Junior's arrival. I know the last month is the most difficult, and when you feel particularly bad, remember my love and thoughts are always with you. You are so much a part of me, that any thought I have of life, love, and the pursuit of happiness revolves around you, my sweet.

We have started work on our new habitat to prepare it for the wet season. It was a little discouraging at first after all the work we put in on the other place, but we have forgotten about that now, and are very content with our present setup. One has to take things as they come, and just do the best job you can, despite the lack of cooperation we get from the group officers. I love you, honey, with all my heart and soul. You are wonderful. Oodles of kisses and hugs, Bill

(Manbulloo)

August 24, 1943

Betty, my sweetheart,

I have been using V-mail for so long that I thought I would drop an air mail in for a change. Incidentally, your V-mails and air mails make about the same time at present.

I missed writing yesterday, and I took your friend Fyrtle to the ball game. She is a very amusing girl, and I am glad you told me to look her up. We had a swell time, although the other team wasn't very good. When I returned, it was a great thrill to find seven letters waiting for me, three from you, three from my family, (dated May 11th, June 11th, and August 3rd), and one from Gus. Yours were dated August 3rd, and two dated August 6th. They were swell, and I was glad to hear you had some mail from me. By this time, you should have an awful lot more, as I haven't missed a day except when I couldn't write due to business. I love to write to you, and once I get a schedule started, it was easy to maintain the one a day pace.

You mentioned that my letters had a lot happier vein. Well, you see dear, prior to the first part of July, I hadn't done a darn thing, and the combination of being away from you and still not having anything to do to keep my mind occupied really got me down. A man has to keep busy either with his love or his work to be at all happy. Since that time I have flown one hell of a lot, and at the present time our combat time is well above the average for the group. Because we have been so busy, and I am getting in part of the combat hours necessary before I can come home to you, it is natural my whole frame of mind changed. You have several times mentioned that you have tried to work like the very devil, so you wouldn't think about our separation well, that's the way it is with me too.

I was so proud to read about all of the wonderful work you have done making clothes. You are really versatile, my love, and I certainly am interested in hearing what you are doing. I have always taken a great interest in women's clothes, so don't ever get the idea that you are boring me when you write about them. I expect to see you wearing my trench coat when I return, as I sadly remember you remarked what nice material it had one day - c'est la vie. You know, Al's main complaint is Mickey never says what she is doing, so you see, we are vitally interested in all the things you do.

The arrangements you have made for Junior's arrival sound darn good to me. I was really amazed at the reasonable prices, and I would suggest that you give the doctor ten bucks or so extra, and I will make it up. After all, he's got to live too. Also I don't want to sound like an old lady, but please stay in the hospital long enough, darling. I know what a wonderful physique you have (boy, do I) but it does not pay to be overconfident about one's strength after such an ordeal. However, I know Mom will take you in hand if you try to get up too soon.

Regarding the tight squeeze I wrote you about, with all due modesty I must admit that my navigation has been damn good of late, and recently on a very, very, long trip when we had very little gas to spare, I hit base dead with my ETA one minute off after flying thru weather most of the time. On my last mission I flew by star fixes the whole time, and hit both the target and home dead. John told me yesterday he was terribly pleased about my navigation, so don't worry

about me, dear, I'm really in there pitching. However, I still like to tell you about the times I screw up as well as the times I do well.

One thing I would like to get straightened out, honey, and that is the fact that you apparently think I think you are not emotional enough about leave takings, close shaves, etc. You have mentioned in seven letters, so it must be firmly fixed in your mind. I know I was very silly that nite in Topeka, when I said you were so darn calm. Well darling, one of the things I have most admired about you is the way you can take fortune and misfortune. I don't expect you to cry in your beer all the time, in fact, in all my letters I want to bolster your morale as much as possible.

So please get the idea out of your head that it makes me feel better regarding our separation if I know you are eating your heart out. I know you are anyway dear, and you don't have to tell me about it for me to know. It was my fault that I gave you that idea, but let's forget it, honey, as it makes me feel silly as hell.

I got a long letter from Louise day before yesterday in which she enclosed a letter you wrote here. Boy, she is really sold on you, honey, and that idea of a reunion in Hawaii really sounds wonderful. We'll have to see that goes thru.

In my mother's letter yesterday, dated August 3rd, she told me again how wonderful you had been about writing, and how in every way what a swell gal she thought you were. She said that with your ability for writing you ought to write a book. I haven't gotten very far on mine, so maybe we can write one together after this is all over. You really write a marvelous letter, and I have read many excerpts from them to the boys, who were slightly jealous to say the least.

Concerning my serial number it was smart of you to notice the discrepancy and it would be advisable to send a correction on it. The number is 0-736015, without any 9 in it as they put on your allotment. You have not mentioned lately whether your allotments are up-to-date now, and I would be interested in hearing about that.

You mentioned Ware in your letter. Bratton replaced him, and he is in disfavor with the big boy at present. I can't tell you the details yet, but I think Ware will come out OK. He is a swell guy, and a damn good officer. The fight is at a crisis now, and I'll keep you posted as to the outcome. Gus wrote that he has seen Phil Doornbos, but has not been able to contact Fred as yet. I hope they both come back with us.

I am glad that you got the cable, darling. I was hoping to go on leave soon enough so I could send you a present for the 19th of Sept, but that is out of the question at present. Well, sweetie, I'll have to start signing off. I love you so damn much, and no one could miss anyone more than I miss you. Please give my best to Mom, Dad, and Stan, and tell Mom I haven't forgotten I owe her a letter. I'll catch up one of these days, but lately we have really been busy fighting the war.

Please remember, honey, all I live for is you, and I'll really try and bolster your morale instead of tearing it down in my letters as I no doubt did for a while. Oodles of kisses, hugs, and caresses, Sweetie, and I too live for the day when you can pick up the phone and hear me say, "Honey, I'm home!"

You are my darling, my love, my life. Bill P.S. Don't forget a kiss for Yaqui.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 25, 1943

Betty my sweet,

It is hot as Hades today, and as I just ate too much luncheon, this letter may be slightly on the dull side. I will be curious to see how the travel time compares on the air-mail I sent you yesterday, and this one. From your last letter I would judge that my V-mails are taking about two weeks and up, but that is due to the fact that mail going out of here takes a long time to reach the clearing point to the states at present. The latest mail any of us have had is August 6th, so you can figure that things have slowed up a lot. I was glad that my cable finally made the trip, even if it was four days late. However, I was slow in sending it, that is Massie didn't get it off until the first, so that wasn't so bad. Again, I want to tell you how genuinely interested I was to hear about all the work you have been doing on your wardrobe.

The main complaint most of the boys have about their wives' letters is that they don't tell them all the things they have been doing, and when you are in love, everything that interests and is important to your gal, is important to you. I received another old letter from my mother today, and again she told me at great length what a swell gal she thought you were and how wonderful you have been about writing. It made me feel awfully good to say the least. Honey, I promise not to write you any more melancholy letters. I feel a lot better now that I have gotten into the swing of things, and you have enough on your hands at present with Junior without listening to any tale of woe from me. Anyway, the

first couple of months are always the hardest, and as the time goes by, you can think to yourself that the time to go home has been lessened that much, and instead of being a point in the far dim future, it perhaps may be only six months or so ahead. Besides, your strength makes me strong, and I shall never let you down if I can help it in any way.

Hinckley left here a week ago, and it is quite possible that he may be back in the states shortly. Whenever he does make it back, has promised to contact you, so you may hear from him one of these days. He is a lucky kid, and I am very happy for him. Well, baby, one of these days you and I might get that break too. However, we were sent over here to do our part, and although it is unfortunate, we can't very well fight a war if everyone stays at home, and I do feel that if the boys have to go out, I want to be one of them. I am not one of those guys that is wild with patriotism, but I have a conscience that doesn't give me much peace when I sit back and let someone else do all the dirty work. After all, they kill a lot of people back in the states in automobiles, and I just figure that when your time comes, that's it regardless of where you are. As far as our separation is concerned, I guess all the good things in life have a price, and I figure that with all the joy and happiness we have had together, we can afford to pay a pretty good price, don't you, honey?

I know that many times it is very difficult, especially when one is blue, or at nite when I go to bed, and lie awake thinking how wonderful it would be to have you in my arms, and feel your lips close to mine, and the beat of your heart, but that will come my love. I love you, sweets. Bill P.S. I also miss you like hell when my back aches.

(Manbulloo)

August 26, 1943
Betty sweetheart,

I decided to mix a few air mails in with the V-mails, so here goes. I realize it seems much more personal to get air mails, but as they had requested us to write V-mails extensively, I have tried to play ball with the postal authorities.

After being told we probably wouldn't get any more mail until the first of the month, I was pleasantly surprised when I received a letter from you last nite dated August 9th. Your letters all make me feel so darn good, darling, and this one was no exception. I am glad that you are receiving more mail from me, and I will be interested in finding out how long the V-mails are taking.

As I have mentioned in my last few letters, sooner or later you work out some kind of philosophy to go by and keep your spirits up. You mentioned in your last letter that you wished you could have been over here the nite I went out on the boat. Well, that's all I thought of at the time. Since then we haven't even seen any girls, as since the latter part of June I have been in a combat area from which all the civilians, etc., have long ago been evacuated. They do have some Aussie nurses around here, but their average age is about forty, and they are good nurses, but that's as far as it goes.

Alfred's morale has increased perceptibly as he has heard more frequently from her this month. He was really worried for awhile. I guess Mickey is still in Santa Rosa with her mother. I will have to get on the ball and write Louise and a lot of other people today, as I have kept my correspondence up quite well to you, but have let the rest slip a bit. Clayton is grand about writing, and I still haven't used that list of addresses you sent me, so Willie will have to get on the ball.

I wrote my father to find out how much I owe the bank, I think it is around \$275, and when we can afford it, I would like to get that paid off. I think I shall be able to send you some more money in the next month if I can collect some of my debts, and in case any of my letters have not been received, I have sent \$270 to date. In case the boys are broke when we go on leave, I may have to delay that a month, as they only get one leave per four months, and I seem to have more money over here than the rest of them due to a little promotion in some poker games here and there.

We really spend very little except for our board, and a few pounds here and there for supplies and liquor when we can get it. We have a very nice little club, but I don't go for the Australian concoctions very much, and it is practically impossible to get American whiskey over here.

Of course, one of our main topics of conversation is the question of how long we shall be over here. There are so many factors that can effect that, that it is rather difficult to make any good guesses. However, we do not expect to be home for Christmas, and I think your guess will be pretty close, and if all goes well, I expect to see you again about the same time of the year as when I left you, my darling.

Oh, how many times I have thought of that last lucky week we had together. That was really a wonderful break, and I shall never forget it. Fyrtle did pick a perfect time to act up, and since then she has behaved like a little lady, for which we are thankful. You should see her now, with the name of each member of the crew painted on the outside of the ship

at his particular position. The ground crew also have their names on the ship in various places. In addition, you paint a bomb on the side for each mission, plus the planes you shot down, and the boats you sink. I can't very well tell you what we have painted on to date, but when we come back, I hope to have a good set of pictures of her.

Your picture has not arrived as yet, but I am expecting it any day now, mail, that is, packages seem to take quite a time. Well, honey, I have to sign off now, as I have a little work to do, plus getting a haircut, which is quite a thing out here in the wilds. We have quite a good barber, and you sit on a box while he shears your locks. My hair seems to be standing up very well in this climate, in fact, it seems like a little new has been added if anything.

Darling, I love you so much and so completely. My thoughts are always with you, and one of these days it won't be just thoughts. Loads of kisses, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

August 27, 1943

Betty honey,

I received another letter from you last nite dated August 9th, and it was a V-mail. You can really get quite a bit on one of those darn things if you single space them with a typewriter. However, I am glad you are sending more air mails, and the only reason I use the other is because we have been asked to.

You mentioned my getting lost once again. Well, don't worry about that as all the rest of my missions have been OK, and this part of the country was new to me at the time, and besides, I had left part of my maps at home.

I finally wrote Louise and Bill yesterday, and now if I can write all those people in San Francisco, I will be up to date. I finally answered that letter dated Dec. 29th, from my old gal friend in North Africa. I figured that it rated a reply. By the way, I wondered if you ever heard from Jim Roebury or not. He said he would try and give you a ring for me when he got back to the states, but I think I forgot to give him your phone number. By the way, I think I lost it myself, and although I think it is 8700-01, you better set me straight on that.

You remember Mackall the other ATC navigator? He really pulled a hot one on Major Colleran on the way down. He gave him an ETA to one place two hours earlier than he expected to arrive there. After they had run an hour past the false ETA, Colleran was fit to be tied. Besides, the co-pilot who was in on it, kept telling Colleran all the way down he had a terrible premonition something was going to happen, and the last time he had such a premonition, ten men got killed. By the time they hit the field, Colleran was so nervous, the co-pilot had to land the plane.

We still haven't heard any more about our leaves, but at the present time I figure it will be a least a month. I hope it does not come around the 1st of October, as I don't think I would have much peace of mind being away from here and the possibility of your cable. Speaking of cables, I sent you one yesterday, which should reach you by the 2nd of September. It takes two days from here to reach the cable office. Just think, darling, we will have been married eight months by that time, and only four of those will we have spent together. I am certainly thankful that we were able to be with each other as much as possible during the months preceding our marriage. Most of our mutual decisions have turned out darn well, and the only times we have been wrong is when we didn't follow our hunches, like when something told me to have you fly to the coast from Topeka.

However, that turned out darn well anyway, so we can't squawk about that. I know my family thought I was a little crazy when I called that nite, and I certainly love the way you trusted me at that time, which proves that when two people are in love, they have to follow each other, and not listen to other people's opinions.

As it is lunch time, I think I better go put on the feed bag. Wish you could figure out how we could get some corn-on-the-cob over here smothered with butter. It is the season for it at home, and the old yen starts.

If I have time, I shall write you a V-mail later in the day as I feel quite talkative today for some reason or other, and I should prefer to do my talking to my favorite, and one and only gal. I love you dear, so darn much, and miss you like hell. Bill

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 28, 1943

Betty my love,

Here I almost missed a day on my writing schedule, but I couldn't do that. However, I am afraid that I shall have to miss tomorrow. I heard a very wonderful rumor today, but I'm afraid it is only a rumor. It was to the effect that we might get home by the first of the year, but I am fearful that it is too much to expect. Still, it is fun to dream about such things. I still haven't heard any more news about my promotion, but I should get the dope in a week or so. A lot has happened lately, and because of change in personnel it may be a little while before I get any action on it. However, it has gone in to headquarters from Group.

The mail is still coming in dribbles, and the latest letter I have had from you is August 9th. You probably think that I spend a good portion of my letters talking about mail, but I know that you, like myself, want to know what letters have been received, and those which have not. I got a letter from Marg today. She had a rather hectic experience recently. A chap she knew that had recently gotten a medical discharge from the air corps dropped in to see her at Truro. He said he would be back shortly, and soon after that someone came in calling for a nurse, and Marg went over to his house to find out that he had shot himself, and he lived only about an hour. God, I can't see why anyone would do a thing like that, even if they were ill from an incurable disease, because I figure always that while there is life there is hope.

I also received a community letter from Louise and my mother. I guess they are having a darn good time up in Michigan, and at the particular time that they wrote me, they were in very high spirits to put it mildly. I am sorry that Daddy couldn't have made the trip too, as he hasn't had a vacation for some time, but he writes me that he is very busy at the canning factory at present. That should be swell for his hay fever, as I remember I used to sneeze my head off when I used to work down there in the summers.

By the time you receive this letter, Junior will undoubtedly be raising particular hell with you, and sweetie, I would give a lot to be with you, and console you somewhat. Everyday I get more and more impatient to get home, and it seems like the days are endless, but the time is passing, and one of these days perhaps, you will hear the phone ring. Oh honey, I really can't wait to get back to you. Everything is so perfect when we are together and so damnably dull when we are not. I know that I was going to miss you like hell out here, but I didn't know that it was ever going to be as painful as it is right now. However, I know that we will weather the storm, and one of these days we can have a real life together, without having to count the precious hours before I have to leave you again, as it was our fortune before. However, I certainly think that we made the very best of the time that we did have, and always will I remember the wonderful happiness we had in all the places we covered before I came overseas.

I know that this has not been a very newsy letter, but I am so darn restricted at a time when I have so much to tell you. However, we will have a blow by blow description when I get home. I love you, sweetheart, always and always,

Bill, lots of kisses.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, August 30, 1943

Betty my darling,

When I returned yesterday, your letter of August 4th was waiting for me. It must have been held up a little because the V-mail of the same date came a week ago, and I also have had two later airmails. Don't for God's sake worry about your mail, as I have gotten oodles of it and you have been wonderful about writing. We have certain slow periods, and I just try to let you know what has arrived and what has not, so if I don't answer questions you ask me, you will know why.

You asked where my cousin Lee was. As far as I know from what mother writes, he is at some camp about eighty miles from where we were last stationed in the states. I understand he is in line for a promotion, and will have to go to Washington for medical treatment.

Regarding our own activities, the chances of an earlier return that originally figured seems possible at the rate we are going. We have done some very constructive work lately, although we have complied with your hope as far as certain encounters are concerned. However, there are many ways to skin a cat, and we have done that. The boys are all in good health, and send their best regards. John Farrington and I are both still sweating out promotions, but expect action by the end of next week. All of the first pilots with enough service should make captains in the near future. Dennis has already gotten his, and I expect Jack to make Major. Despite the fact that I am not with the same outfit, I am still

interested in the boys and seen them every now and then. I like our present setup just fine, and now do not regret the switch, although I do miss one particular pal.

Capt. Brissey tells me his mother wrote that he received quite a write-up in the San Francisco paper around the middle of August in reference to a very important job. As I navigated for him that trip, you will no doubt be interested in referring to it if Clayton can locate it. I have flown with him three times, and he has been nice enough to say I have done a damn good job for him. The last time we lead a whole formation thru heavy weather right into and over the target. I felt pretty good after that trip. However, I would naturally prefer to fly with John all the time as we trained together instead of rotating, but the former knows his stuff too, and in the army, you just do what you are told.

The last few letters I send were airmails so you may have a lapse for awhile, but by this time you should be getting them regularly, or I have spent a lot of time for nothing. I fully realize how important letters are when we're separated, and I shall continue to do my best in that respect regardless how busy we are. In fact, modestly, I think I have done pretty good considering the amount of flying we have done the past month and a half.

Please give my very best to Mom, Dad, and Stanley. He must be having quite a time with his job. It is swell that he could get a good ration card as it is rather hard to get around at all with an 'A card'. I know that Junior is undoubtedly raising hell with you at present, but just think, there is only a month to go. You have really been a wonderful sport, as I have never received one complaint from you regarding the little devil.

All my love, sweetie, Bill, and a million kisses.

(Manbulloo)

August 31, 1943

Betty my darling,

At the present time your loving husband is suffering from what is commonly known as a good hangover. A service show with gals, etc. came thru here, and we threw a party for the company last nite in the way of a steak fry and liquid refreshments. It was funny to see women again, and talk to them. I think everyone had a good time, but we are paying for it today. Doc Hubbard sang a duet with one of the girls which was quite good. He has a very nice voice, and he really likes to sing. You recall you and Ginnie had a hell of a time trying to find his wife in Denver one nite to bring her out to the club.

Honey, I have some really good news, but you better keep it to yourself as some of the other boys don't want to tell their wives yet for fear they will get up false hopes, but I think you would rather know the setup as it goes along, and get a kick out of good reports and swear when there are bad ones. We were officially told today the number of combat hours we have to have before we can expect orders to go home. At the present time I have one half of the necessary number, and if all goes well, I should be coming home sometime in January. Doesn't that sound good, honey? It really cheered me up a lot, and I know it will you too. Of course, that may be subject to change but I don't think it will. Al doesn't want to tell Mickey yet, but I know this is going to be a darn tough month for you, and the more good news, the better your morale will be, I say.

I received some old mail from my mother today, back in July. I can't understand why her mail has taken so long, because the address on these last letters were correct. Before, she hadn't put my outfit on it. She sent me a copy of the letter Admiral Nimitz wrote her, and has undoubtedly sent it on to you by this time. She also told me about sending you my baby pictures. Wait till I get home, if they are like I think they are, I'll christen her with a champagne bottle.

Of late, my luck at the gaming tables hasn't been so hot, so I probably won't be able to send you any more extra money for about a month. It is about our only pastime so that's why we play so much. We have had quite a few movies lately, and I hope they keep coming. Nite before last we had "Powers Girl" which was very amusing. Benny Goodman was excellent, and I like that blonde deadpan singer of his. She was very good in stage door canteen too.

Yesterday afternoon one of the pursuit boys came over and put on quite a show for us. He was really good, and went thru his whole bag of tricks. He could really fly.

You haven't made any comment as yet about my V-mails so I thought I'd switch around a bit, and alternate. I still haven't missed a day since July 20th except when I was flying, so you should be getting some mail soon. I have been looking for your picture, and it should come along soon, as it is over three weeks now since you sent it. In case you didn't get one letter I wrote you, I could use a fountain pen very nicely if you could pick one up somewhere or other. I realize that they are very hard to get at present, so if you can't procure one easily, don't worry about it.

Your serving kit really gets a lot of use, and I am darn glad you sent it along. Give my love to Mom, Dad, and Stanley; and give Junior a pat for me. For you, baby, all my love and kisses, forever and ever, and add a couple of days to that. I sure love you, honey, and boy, do I miss you, and am I eager!!! You are wonderful. Bill.

P.S. I love you. P.P.S I love you terrifically. P.P.S. Boy, do I love you.

Adelaide Vacation

September 1943

By now, I had logged about 140 hours of combat time. I needed 300 to qualify for stateside duty and return to my beloved Betty. September operations didn't add much more time to the tally. We flew only two combat missions and had to abort another because of engine trouble. A much-needed seven day leave in the southern Australian city of Adelaide also cut down the opportunity to log more combat time.

One of those missions showed the difference in perspective from the staffs who planned our missions, and we who had to fly them. Ambon was an island about 800 miles north of us where the Japanese had an extensive air base and harbor to supply coal and other provisions to their forces. On September 3, the planning staff ordered a mission to attack its harbor facilities, but specifically said to leave all the shipping alone.

When we arrived, we came out of the clouds and saw that the harbor was full of ships. As we dove down to make our bomb run we noticed that there was one particularly huge transport sitting there. Despite orders, bombardier John Perry was dying to bomb it. It took a heated discussion to convince him that we had to pass it up and conduct the mission by the book. Finally, Perry insisted that when we got back we should find out the reason we had to pass up such a target of opportunity.

I could easily do this. Besides being squadron navigation officer, I had also become its intelligence officer. That job required me to get the flight logs from each airplane on a mission and make a preliminary assessment of target damage. Through our own staff, I then reported results to Australian headquarters in Darwin. While talking to the Aussies, I asked why we specifically couldn't bomb shipping on that mission.

They told me knew about the shipping in the harbor, and there were six submarines on their way to intercept any convoy from there when it sailed. They'd be sitting ducks for torpedoes, which are more accurate and certain than aerial bombs. Ultimately, we heard that they sank 26 ships, which was probably a much better score than we could have achieved, and a lot less risky. As only one part of the tactical plan, we were not privy to the larger picture as seen from headquarters. The result was that we didn't question operational orders from headquarters after that.

Also, after a mission and debriefing, it was informal policy that every member of the flight crew got two shots of 'medicinal' whiskey from the flight surgeon. This was an added incentive for us to get things in order on the flight back, to insure that debriefing finished as fast as possible.

There were some non-combat flights that month as well. On one, I flew as navigator for Colonel Miller on a trip to Fifth Air Force Headquarters in Brisbane. Apparently about the time we arrived, some high ranking official was also expected. When we landed at Brisbane, the tower thought we were the VIP flight and instructed us to taxi to the reviewing stand. I was the first one out of the plane. When Miller noticed all the troops at attention, he called to me from the cockpit window, "Tell them at ease." So I barked out "At ease," and they realized we were not who they were waiting for, and directed us to a less distinguished part of the field.

While there, Miller had planned to stay at the hotel where MacArthur and the other big shots stayed. Because of my lowly rank as a 1st Lieutenant, the hotel clerk said I couldn't stay there. Miller got really irritated and informed them that "He's my navigator, and I never let a navigator out of my sight!" The hotel caved in, as we were just there overnight. I appreciated Miller's going to bat for me. His support was also probably part of his campaign to instill a personal rapport, and convince me to stay on as group navigation officer.

My facility for navigation and averting disasters was pretty well known by then. Once, coming back from a long mission, we ran into about a 150 mile-an-hour head wind that was severely cutting into our fuel reserves. As the fuel crisis deepened, I started shooting two-star fixes that were a lot easier and faster, but less certain than the longer three star fixes in determining an exact position. Constantly updating our position, I was giving Farrington a series of one degree course corrections.

Suspecting the worst, he finally said, "Bill, what the hell is going on, why are you giving me these minor corrections?" I said, "Because unless we come directly into Darwin, we are going to go into the drink." When we finally approached

Darwin, there was so little gas we didn't run a traffic pattern, we just flew straight into the strip and touched down. When we got down to the end of the runway, two of our four engines shut down for lack of fuel. It was that close.

On September 13th, we got seven days leave, which meant a carefree vacation in civilization. They sent us to Adelaide on the south coast. Adelaide was a sedate, beautiful city, located in the middle of an extensive grape, citrus, and truck farm region. The area was much like Southern California.

Until we arrived, units of American servicemen hadn't visited the city. Accordingly, its city fathers had put in a request to Allied headquarters in Brisbane to be put on the leave circuit for the added money it would bring to the local economy. They rewarded Adelaide with the visits of the 380th Bomb Group. As I learned later, we were the only American military group to visit the city on a regular basis during the war.

Since we were the first American officers to take leave there, the American Counsel gave a dinner party for us. During dinner, I met a girl by the name of Katherine Rymill, who turned out to be a real athlete. She asked, "What sports do you like?" I said, "Well, I like to fish and I like to play golf." She said, "Well, I don't fish, but I do play golf, would you like to play in the morning?" I agreed, of course, and she made arrangements to pick me up about eight.

We went out to the local club where the old caddie master managed to find me a set of clubs. I bought some balls, and as we got to the first tee, I said, "What's your honor?" She said, "We'll match for it." She won and approached the men's tee. I asked, "Don't you play off the women's tee." She said, "No. I play the blue tee." She tee'd her ball and hit a drive over 200 yards right down the fairway. She made many more straight shots that round, and wound up shooting a 73. When I got back to the clubhouse, I remarked to the old caddie master, "Miss Rymill is a hell of a golfer." He said, "Well, she's probably the best woman golfer we have ever had from Australia, she once beat Patty Berg." Little did I know I was playing with the Australian women's champion. The people we met in Adelaide were delightful and hospitable. Like folks on the U.S. home front, all of Australia was on gas rationing. Many resorted to charcoal-burning devices that generated a gas that powered their vehicles, even busses. We had the foresight to bring some five gallon cans of 100 octane aviation gasoline with us. They could use it for their cars in exchange for ferrying us around, and other favors. It had to be cut with kerosene or it would have burned up the engines of the old flivvers people drove. Between the gasoline and cigarettes we had with us, we had no lack of grateful acquaintances who helped us with our tour of the city and area.

The Australians, like my wife Betty, are great horse enthusiasts. About the third day we were there, we went to an amateur horse race that posted a £100 prize for the winner. Just before the race was to start, the announcer asked if anyone in the crowd would like to substitute for a jockey that was ill. Our bombardier John Perry volunteered. Besides being a good bombardier, Perry proved an able horseman by winning the race and the prize. The additional funds just added to the merriment of our vacation.

Our hosts fixed us up with dates. My lady was the daughter of the owner of the hotel where we were staying. After five months away from my wife, it was difficult not to let the booze, good times, and parties carry me away. I managed like a real trooper. However, I remember my dad told me that, after you get married, if you ever stray, even if your wife catches you in bed with another woman, deny it.

The grapes around Adelaide made good wine. We toured a big winery where we learned that the Australians added fizz to almost all their wines. Of course, Champagne and Burgundy were sparkled for a long time, but they sparkled the Rhine and Moselle, and just about everything else the vintner could conjure up. Touring wineries and breweries was an essential part of our 'spiritual' revival in Adelaide.

Upon my return from leave, besides accumulated mail, there were two cables. One was from Betty announcing the birth of our son on September 11. The other from my father saying, "Congratulations on the birth of Bill 3rd. You're so awkward, I never thought you'd make it." The paternal dig was because he was an expert using tools, I was not. Mechanical aptitude was never my strong suit. Being a new papa was great, but a remote experience for me 8,000 miles away from the blessed event. I found myself starting to sign letters home to Betty 'Bill Sr.', happily getting used to my new role and circumstances on the home front.

From the time Betty and I parted in May, I used my luck at gambling while overseas to send extra money back to her, augmenting her allotment. I did pretty well for a long time, but in September for some inexplicable reason, the cards did not fall my way and I started to lose money. It portended a run of bad luck that culminated in late October.

Betty's letters written from late September 1943, now follow my own. Ironically, I never received or even read them before 1995. Due to a four week delay in the mail, her letter of September 26 arrived at Manbulloo after I got shot

down and reported missing in action. The mail officer returned it and all others with the notation 'return to sender - missing in action.'

By the time they made the return trip, Betty had received her official telegram of my status from the War Department. When these letters started to pour in, she just thrust them aside in grief. They remained unopened, neatly tied in bundles, for 52 years until we rediscovered them in the Spring of 1995. It would be an understatement to say that reading them kindled emotions and memories I thought long lost.

Letters - September 1943

(Manbulloo)

September 2, 1943

Betty Honey,

I was a bad boy yesterday, and did not write when I could have, so I shall see that does not happen any more. V-mail of August 19th came today, and there must be a skip in there somewhere as the one before that was dated August 13th. However, that happens quite often as they don't just seem to keep in order. Just think, honey, this is our eighth anniversary, and one of these days we will be counting in years. I hope that my cable has come by this time as I tried to time it so it would arrive right on the date, tho it is hard to figure any time schedule.

It is swell that P.J. is with you now. I am terribly fond of her, and we certainly had a lot of fun together in Sacramento. Those were really wonderful weekends. Where is P.J.'s husband now? I understand that he had been wounded and wondered how long he would be inactive. Also I am extremely interested in what they are doing with boys sent back from the combat areas. I would like to get a teaching job when I get back, as that would keep us in one place, and those boys at Mather had a pretty soft time of it and could spend plenty of time with their wives which is the most important thing to me. Golly, darling, I just can't wait to get home to you, and it seems like ten years since I left.

I talked to Lee Brissey this morning, and he said the date of that article in the San Francisco paper was August 15th. You should be able to locate it as I understand it was given a fair amount of space. Then, knowing the subject, I know that my family would be interested in it too as it was supposed to be quite a thing.

I haven't gotten any more dope about my leave or my promotion, but there should be some poop on both soon. You better get after them on your back allotments right away, and if no action is forthcoming we will immediately take steps from this end to rectify the situation. By the way, if you need any dope as to procedure, I have been informed that the Red Cross knows all the dope as they check down a lot of back allotments for servicemen's wives. As I understand it, you are two behind at present. I think that is inexcusable as if that happens often, there are many families that depend on there allotments for sustenance.

The war news continues to be favorable on all fronts but the political situation is not so hot. The boys are still playing the old game, and that does not help things a helluva lot. Well, I guess like the poor, we will always have them with us. The Japs are getting their share of trouble over here, and from all the reports they seem to be bombing hell out of Germany, tho a lot of our boys have to pay the price for that. People should remember that when they read the reports, and it says so many planes were lost.

Honey, I think of you all the time, and last nite I had a wonderful dream about you if you know what I mean. It was really wonderful, and I hope I have more like it tho it is a very poor substitute for you. I won't be able to write tomorrow, but you know how that is. I love you my darling with all my heart and soul. I hope Junior is behaving, the devil. I love you. Bill, lots of kisses.

(Manbulloo)

September 4, 1943

Betty my great passion,

Boy, did I get the jackpot as far as mail is concerned when I got home yesterday. Seven long air mails from you and one each from my mother and father. You answered loads of questions I asked you, and the letters received fill in completely the space from the 12th to the 21st. That is pretty fair time for the letters coming that way from the states. Now that I know, I will concentrate on air mail too for awhile, and mix in a V-mail about every four days.

Golly, baby, can you write wonderful letters! You really have the gift for it, and the things you say to me really leave me floating on air. Loving you as much as I do, it is wonderful to hear such sweet things from you. I know you love me, darling, but all of us love to be told so again and again, and told so wonderfully and completely.

I was really thrilled to hear that the great event may take place the 19th, as that is just so much less time to wait. As far as the time element is concerned, that is still no concrete indication of a Christmas present if you get what I mean, as any doctor can tell you that it can always be a couple of weeks on either side. However, I shall keep mum about it until more concrete news is forthcoming. However, I am really on pins and needles at this point, and will be until that cable comes. A mission is child's play compared to your condition and that wasn't meant as a pun. All the boys send their best wishes for an easy time of it, and inquire after your welfare at all times, especially Alfred. The latter is still a little provoked at Mickey as he only got three letters from her in the month of July.

Jack Bratton also asks about you on every occasion I have contacted him. He is really a darn good boy personally, but operationally he kept trying to mimic Fred, and with his age and particular personality it just didn't go over very well.

I am sure that your disposition hasn't been as bad as you made it out to be, and besides, if it were just half as good as it usually is, no one would kick very much. In addition, I think an expectant mother should have a few allowances, especially when her Sweetie goes off to war and leaves her behind to face the music alone. I fully agree with you that the main thing is to keep busy. When we have missions, the time goes very quickly, but the rest of the interim it drags like hell, and that is putting it mildly.

I am certainly glad P. J. can be with you, because she is a very energetic young lady, and the last thing that could ever be said of her is that she is dull. She has a very quick mind and a lot of life, and even when I didn't agree, with all her ideas, I couldn't help admiring the fight she put up supporting them, even when she knew she was on the verge of defeat. I was very happy to hear that Kent is just separated from her temporarily, and had not been sent back to overseas duty. I really don't think we will have to worry about that if this session turns out OK, but if we did, I think we will be able to handle that situation all right as I have learned plenty in that line over here.

Personally, I don't think combat personnel are good for more than one overseas stretch in one war, if they put in the number of combat missions we are in the throes of putting in. It really does take a lot out of you, and I must admit I am still just as nervous when we go over the target as I was the first time.

I was glad to hear that you are now only one allotment behind. However, if you are not caught up by October, I would suggest writing a rather strong letter, or shall I say firm one. You might point out in your letter that due to an addition in the family, it would be necessary for you to receive your back allotments in order to make ends meet.

I hope that by this time you will have received the money I sent you. I shall have to check with my old man as to the amount involved but I think the \$270 should about cover it. However, if you are short, we can catch that later. I don't like the idea of borrowing from your Dad, and would like to try to avoid that as far as possible in the future. I know what a swell guy he is, but I know that both of us feel very strongly on the subject of people standing on their own feet.

I especially feel that now, because one of my greatest faults for years was an absolute irresponsibility as far as money was concerned. I just used to drift along and figure that if I ever got in trouble, my family or someone would get me out of trouble. As a result I usually spent more than I earned seeking something which was missing, and until I met you, I didn't really know what was missing. In the meantime, I got smashed up in that wreck, which lost me a hell of a lot, and I also did some speculating which was not very successful. This will explain why I have never paid Yale back, and the note to the bank, which you no doubt must have wondered about and which I can't recall whether I explained to you fully or not.

Howbeit, I learned my lesson well, and I think you will find me a very responsible person in the future. I had to find someone to live for, fight for, and earn for, and now that I have, I am confident that I can live up to what I expect from myself, and what you have the right to expect from me. You have done a whole lot to my whole way of thinking, and because of our mutual love there is so darn much to live for. That is the toughest thing about being away from you now - and taking chances of being separated from you forever. But I think we will make it thru, and if we don't, you will know we damn well tried like hell.

In this game over here you can tread two extreme roads. You can be overly cautious and not fulfill the job you were sent for, turning back always in the face of danger, or you can throw all caution to the wind and up a hero, or in a coffin. We try to travel a sort of middle road, always getting to the target, but not asking for trouble. In that, I think you stay alive a lot longer, and in the end you will accomplish just as much. At the same time you mention your own self-respect and that of the men you are fighting with.

To me marriage is the great partnership from beginning to end. I think you and I have done our darndest to put into it all we have (in bed or otherwise), and it makes me feel so darn good to hear you say that I do make life so worthwhile

for you in every way, because that is exactly what you have done for me. In fact, if that partnership took a balance, I think we would find plenty of assets and would have to hunt like hell to find any liabilities.

One of the true tests I think is the amount of fun you have doing the smallest or largest things together. You make a golf game more fun, a card game, a meal, a walk, a talk, a drink, a train ride, a joke to share, and as far as those nights, oh honey.

In reference to the latter, I was talking to an American Colonel some time ago, who is married to a well-known educator, Phi Beta Kappa, and lecturer. He told me after several drinks that contrary to what most people thought, for the first ten years, he explored her body, for the next ten her mind, and now he has a swell combination. Well, honey, I think we started off with a darn good combination in that regard, even if we did ring up one record, and I did keep you undressed a good portion of those four months. I don't mean to be vulgar, dear, but I do have to have my little joke.

I am going to enclose a little note for P.J., in response to her very nice one. I was so happy that you got her a wedding present and one she liked so much. Regarding the pottery, that sounds like a darn good buy. We are really going to be well equipped when we get ready to set up house keeping. That will be marvelous. I am also looking forward to seeing our wedding presents as most of them came in after I left.

I didn't comply with your suggestion about writing on both sides of the page as some of the boys have gotten them back, and we have been instructed very definitely to the contrary.

Well darling, this will have to do for today, but I will try and write more long ones, as I fully realize they are much more fun than those darn V-mails even when I do single space them on the typewriter.

My very best to Mom, Dad, and Stan. It is swell Stan has his pal down there with him, and I am glad the summer has been so constructive for him. All my love, sweetheart, You are wonderful. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

September 6, 1943

Betty my wonderful wife,

I have been very busily employed today catching up on a lot of back correspondence so I saved the best to last. I wrote Cush two long ones or rather one long one in response to two of his, and also wrote my family, plus the people at the can company. Tomorrow I am going to catch up with Clayton and Sadie, whom I also owe. However, I have done the best I can to keep up my letters to you as you are and always will be number one in every respect. This morning I reread all of those wonderful letters I received from you the day before. You can really write letters for anybody's dough, honey, and you shall never know how much they do for my morale. They do make me terribly home sick and very eager, but that is a rather sweet pain in a way.

There has been little activity for the past two days for our particular crew, but a little respite was very welcome at the time. However, I want to fly as many missions as possible as they come along, because the sooner I can think of coming home to you, as you well know my love, is all I wait for and live for. I really don't mind the missions at all, although naturally I get very nervous at times. The main good thing, about them is that the time goes much faster. You find that the longer you are over here, the slower the time seems to go, although you do become slightly more calloused to the pain of being away from your loved ones than at first. It is not that you love them less; the fact is you suffer so much at first that you work out some kind of philosophy to keep yourself from going crazy.

The prospect of going home seems like a beautiful Utopia far, far away, and some thing which will never come true, but as the time goes by (one of my favorite songs) you begin to think that there is a chance of making it thru all right and then you really begin to sweat out every mission and the time between seems to go so much slowly. However, letters as marvelous as you write help so much to bolster up our spirits. It is such a wonderful thing to be loved and to love the way I love you. Just loving in itself seems to make a greater and finer person out of anyone, and the thoughts you think and the acts you perform seem to be on so much a higher plane than before. The sun is brighter, the stars are prettier, and life in general takes on a new meaning.

Plato once wrote that in heaven or above there is a set of perfect forms – beauty, love, wisdom, justice, truth, etc. He further claimed that when a child is born, as it comes from heaven, it knows the perfect forms, but as it is exposed to the various temptations on earth, its eye for objects, people, or acts on earth that partake of those perfect forms is dimmed, and hidden by the screen of human faults. He points out that there is no such thing as perfection on earth, but

there are many things animate and otherwise that partake of those perfect forms. As long as you lead a good life and are appreciative of the finer things, you can see the touch of those perfect forms in people and things around you. However, if you become selfish and the less unimportant things demand your attention, your vision for the parts of the perfect forms on earth are blinded. Well, my belief is that love can certainly clear your vision in a hurry, because I appreciate so many more important things, and feel like doing so many nice things since I fell in love with you, my darling.

It has made me considerably more sentimental than previously, but I find that rather nice. I have always liked Plato's belief in reference to the birth of a child than that of the Catholics, whose belief is that the child is born in sin, and has to spend the rest of its life redeeming itself. In the first place I cannot possibly see how the product of two people deeply in love could be born in sin, as because of that great love, it would seem to me to be the very counterpart of sin, win, lose, or draw.

Enough of my homespun philosophy, I probably sound like a college sophomore even if I do feel that way. The article you entitled 'War Baby' has received many favorable comments by the boys that have read it, especially the prospective papas like myself. There are really a bunch of the boys sweating it out. Mrs. Fisher was due several days ago, and her husband is getting slightly nervous at this point. Well, my sweet, your time will be coming soon, and if it is pretty tough, if it helps at all, remember that all of my love and thoughts are with you. I am so happy to hear how thrilled you are about Junior's arrival when it comes. I know it has not been any picnic having to go thru all the problems of pregnancy plus the ultimate result with me thousands of miles away, and don't think that I appreciate the fact that I have never had one complaint on any score.

You have been a wonderful sport, and when I get home, I shall try to show my appreciation in every way I can. (no cracks - I could think of a dandy to that statement).

In case I never mentioned it previously I have not read "The Prophet" as far as I can recall, and would be very glad to receive a copy of it.

We were very thrilled to hear of the invasion of Italy, and I don't think that the Italians will be in the war very long unless the Germans send a very large army to support them, which it looks like they are not in a position to supply. The Russians are keeping them quite busy, and I figure the large scale bombings are not speeding up their production of war materials markedly. Things have progressed very favorably down here, and I think the Japs know by this time that it isn't all gravy in warfare, and that we have some boys that can fight a little themselves. I think that we are not as decadent a nation as they tried to make us out, although there are a few individuals in high places back in the states that really burn me up. However, I shall try to stay off that subject in the future, as it is rather unpleasant, and I think I have sent you enough 'copy' on that point to let you know very well how I stand regarding that end.

I have gotten in such heated arguments on that score and written so many 'editorials' on the subject to everyone including Congress, that my friends have been calling me 'senator' and kidding hell out of me. However, I don't mind that because I learned a long time ago that if one delights in ribbing other people, one must learn to take it in the best of spirits. That was a hard lesson to learn, but one well worth the pain.

By the time that you receive this, the crucial moment will have just about arrived, and I know that it will be some time before you will feel like writing, so don't worry about letters until you are really back on your feet again. I know that Mom and Dad will keep me well informed of all pertinent developments. Because of your general darn good health and vitality, I am not as worried as I might be, but I must admit I am still plenty darn nervous, and I will really be sweating out that cable. You know that all my deepest love and greatest hope for an easy time of it for you is with you honey, and all I can say that when the time comes, I love you more than anything in this world, and God bless you, my darling. Oceans of kisses and a million hugs. You are the one I love, Bill.

P.S. My love to Mom, Dad, and Stan - they no doubt will be doing plenty of 'sweating' too!

(Manbulloo)

September 6, 1943

Betty darling,

After receiving seven letters from you yesterday imagine my amazement when eleven more came last nite! They were all air mails and were dated from July 6th to July 29th. Everyone got a flock of mail from those approximate dates, so all of that mail must have come by boat. Honey, you really write such wonderful letters, and I certainly had a field day reading them. Naturally, it would be much preferable if they came one or two at a time, but we can't control that and I

almost feel gluttoned when I read so many at one time. In fact, I would read a few, and then read some more. It was wonderful fun, although I must admit it made me so homesick for you, I cried.

From those letters I learned for the first time about the present from the can company people and I shall write them immediately. Also, about the eleven dollar check which was owed since January, 1942. I hope you can collect it OK.

The letter from the Potters was darn nice, and I also enjoyed the letter from Louise that you enclosed. The article entitled 'War Baby' was a honey, and I gave it to Al to send to Mickey. She really covered my thoughts on the subject very adequately.

Your notes to Jack and Fred also came in your letter of July 10th, and I imagine you have wondered why they have not been acknowledged. I called Jack today to find out Fred's address, only to find out that he is expected back in a very few days. Jack did not know as yet what his capacity would be, and it is hard for me to guess, due to the number of things that have happened lately. Ware is in disfavor at present as I wrote you, and I have no idea what the Colonel will cook up for Fred as he is so darn unpredictable. However, I am glad that he is going to get another crack at combat as it means so much to him, and I still think his is a darn good man for anybody's dough.

I was certainly thrilled to hear that my wife is such a fine carpenter, dressmaker, upholsterer, and God knows what else. Darling, you are really a very versatile person and I mean that from the bottom of my heart. One of the first things I admired of you outside of your feminine desirability was your capability to handle all situations, and the tenacity with which you tackled every problem which we faced. As I recall, I made things rather difficult for you for the first bunch of weekends in Sacramento, and you really put up a great fight, but it was wonderful to lose, wasn't it honey?

I so much enjoyed your letter in which you referred to all those crazy but wonderful weekends we had last fall. I don't think any couple had more fun in their sparking era. That weekend at Davis was the prize, plus all the problems we had the next day to which you referred. Golly, that was fun, but after all that is the way everything has been for us since the first time we met. Honey, it is so marvelous to be in love with someone as wonderful as you are, and to know that you love me as much as I love you, if that is possible. However, we will call it a draw on that score. People used to tell me that in all cases one or the other was more in love, but I think that we have disproved that theory.

You asked me about a sentence which I wrote and told you not to say anything. Well, my mother sent me the news that I relayed to you, and it was common knowledge before I left but they decided not to tell me, so that should set you straight on that.

I finally wrote the Wolcotts and the Scotts and will catch the other two addresses as soon as possible. I also owe Clayton and Sadie a letter, but I sent them a EFM message a couple of days ago as a recompense. Tell your mother I also haven't forgotten her, but I figured she could get most of the pertinent dope from my letters to you. My mother has written that she has had wonderful letters from both you and Mom, so I guess the McFerren's and the Garvey's are really keeping the postman busy.

You asked about Christmas; what I need most is a fountain pen and pencil set (pocket type) and I certainly could use a lot of that light stationary such as you use. We are very short on that. One more thing, if it were possible to get hold of some of those plastic playing cards, or good cards of any description, we could definitely use those, as that's our main pastime when we are not flying. That about covers my list as far as I can think. I am afraid that two of those items will be rather hard to procure.

I am hoping to go on leave in time to get you a nice present but if I don't, I have other devious means to accomplish that purpose. It would be too wonderful if could spend Christmas together, but I am afraid that's asking too much at this point. I am really getting terribly restless, and sometimes I think I am going to go crazy if I don't see you soon. However, I shall do my level best to be as good a sport as possible. It is awfully hard though at times as you well know.

I was terribly sorry to hear about Liston Bascom as he was a darn nice guy. They seem to lose quite a few of our boys in those big raids, but I guess it is a case of no puttee in, no takee out. However, a lot of us have to pay a helluva price for all this damn foolishness.

I had a nice long letter from Cush dated July 22nd, which also arrived yesterday. I guess he had a wonderful leave and everything went off just fine. However, my mother wrote that Louise was slightly provoked that he did not pay more attention to Bill, but I guess we can't have everything. I am certainly looking forward to the time when I can land at his place and call him up to let him know that I am on my way home, and have a short reunion with him. I know that you will like Cush a lot when we have that meeting in Hawaii after this damn war is over.

To say that I drooled was putting it mildly when I read your report on those wonderful malted milks in Corona. We shall have to see that my father has a chance to sample them as he is quite a connoisseur of that particular drink, and we shall see him hang his head in shame after all that boasting he did about those inferior jobs at the Ritz. When it gets hot over here we get very thirsty, but we do get ice quite often, which is quite a treat in a combat zone.

It was swell that you had a chance to see Mrs. Price even if it did necessitate a flying trip to town. From all your reports she must be a swell person and I am sorry that we did not get over to Berkeley, but I always seem to think of some excuse for us not to go.

I know the typewriter is not the best method of communication, but due to the lack of paper and pen (hint-hint) it is the best thing available at present. Everyone is busy tonite answering all the mail that came in so I couldn't borrow one.

Darling, I am rather tired from our last mission, so this is going to be a little shorter than I intended. However, honey, just remember you are always in my thoughts and I don't think that any man could love any woman any more than I love you, even if you did dream that I got drunk instead of going to bed with you. Darling, what a horrible thought, even if I practically did do that one nite when I went to sleep on top of the bed, and you had to crawl in one corner. Baby, I love you terribly and miss you like hell. A million kisses. Bill

(Manbulloo)

September 8, 1943

Betty darling,

I really can spell your name but that was a slip in my typing which is not too hot at best. Yesterday I was a very bad boy and did not write so I am making up for that by writing tonite on a nite that I usually don't write if you follow me. Things worked out in such a way today that I saw a lot of our old pals again, and they all wanted to be remembered and were very solicitous of your present condition and asked to be immediately notified of all pertinent developments.

I had a long talk with Lee and Jack, and both sent the best of everything to you. I hope that Lee becomes group surgeon if he wants it. From talking to him I couldn't make up my mind whether he wanted it or not. Jack has been doing a superlative job in his new position, and all the boys are very proud of him. He has really played ball with everyone, and when I was over at my old squadron there were no complaints about anything, so things must be going extremely well, as you can well remember how we liked to bitch about everything. Jack said he would like to have us back a hell of a lot, but of course that is out of the question. John's captaincy came thru yesterday so my promotion should be thru soon as they went to higher authorities at the same time. If Chesser had known what we was doing back in the states, I would be in line for a captaincy now, but that is life, and promotions are not too important, but when you do the work and hold the job, you would like to have the corresponding rank which the table of organization calls for.

Incidentally, in reference to Chesser he lost a hell of a lot of money when his spouse gave birth to a very beautiful young lady, as he was so darn sure that it would be a boy that he took all bets on that score. However, his general pig-headedness on that score was well in line with his general personality (meow-meow).

It was certainly nice to have a long talk with Lee again, and I have missed the old boy at lot. He was on leave in Sidney recently, and as the girls are rather eager, he said he had a hard time preserving his decorum, mostly due to the pals he had with him. Some of the boys had one gal up at their flat, and locked Lee in a room with her. As she was divested of clothing at the time, he had a rather hard time of it, but camera fiend that his is, he persuaded her to act as a model for some shots, and to let him go as far as anything else was concerned. You know Lee, and Ginnie is the only gal for him as you are for me, tho the censor may laugh at that if he has ever been in Sidney from all reports. However, I am going to a different place and life is some what different there. However, you will never have to worry about me, and I know that, and if you don't, I will tan your very nice fanny.

Darling, your suggestion about adding the bleach for our laundry would be swell, but we no have got. Yesterday I did quite a job, as I carefully hand washed the following items: 20 pairs of socks, four towels, six pairs of shorts, six shirts, and three pairs of trousers. It took me all day as due to the dust, you have to go over every inch of every side very carefully with a brush. I was glad when the ordeal was over, and needless to say it took most of the day, and that's putting it mildly.

Last nite I received a V-mail from you dated August 25th, and I was glad to hear that my mail is coming thru. I am concentrating on air mails now, so you may expect plenty in the near future.

Several U.S. senators were by our way recently, and I was glad to see that they were getting out to see how things were going along. When you are in an area, you can appreciate a lot of things much more greatly than from reading a lot of stuffy or exaggerated reports. There were both parties represented which I thought was a healthy idea. They seemed to think that Germany would be out of it in another year, but I guess one man's opinion is good as another in that respect because there are so many factors involved that are difficult to evaluate from day to day.

To me, one of the hardest things to figure is the role that Russia will play or want to play after the defeat of the Nazis. Many people fear her but I feel that she will be pretty worn out with fighting after this is all over, and not particularly interested with world domination. She has plenty of fences to mend at home, and many of her own resources and productive capacities have barely been touched as yet. One thing for sure, without her support we could never defeat Hitler without paying a tremendous price. Regardless of what attitude she takes after the war, she will have contributed that much, and that point should never be forgotten.

The European nations that we fought with last time were quick to forget the support we accorded them after the last war was over, and we may well expect the same situation after this one. I have feared for a long time that after suffering major casualties in the European field of operations, after the fall of Germany we might be left to bear the brunt, and possibly the entirety of the Japanese war by ourselves. However, I have been given to understand by good authority that Churchill has pledged his full support, and the economic condition of England will undoubtedly be such after that phase is ended that she will not be well in position to repudiate her world.

I do not mean to keynote disharmony in our war effort, and our enemies would love us to harbor the thought that we will be left in the lurch, but on the other hand you do have to look out for yourself once in a while, and it is best to have strict understandings in such cases and not haphazard hopes or presumptions. Therefore I was glad to hear that Churchill had irrevocably pledged his support on the second and last phase of this damned war.

Honey, I am very tired tonite, so will continue more tomorrow. By the way, I darn near forgot to tell you that we went fishing recently in a stream, and had very good luck. We caught a flock of bass and some wonderful channel cats. We immediately cleaned them, and fried them in bacon fat and to say that they hit the spot was putting it mildly.

Gee, sweetie, I sure miss you like hell and every day I am counting the hours to the time when I can hold you in my arms again, and give you a big kiss, and---CENSORED!! All kidding aside, baby, I really love you, my darling wife, and all I want to do is get this goddamn thing over and come home. Keep your fingers crossed on the first of the year, or shortly thereafter. If God keeps with us, it might be possible by that time.

Give my best love to Mom, Dad, and Stanley. And honey, there is still plenty left for you, and I don't mean maybe. Say hello to P.J. I hope you have received the note I enclosed for her by now. As I did not expect to see Jack, he has not gotten yours yet, as it only came a few days ago. All my kisses and hug - I love YOU. Bill P.S. Honey, am I eager - oh boy!

(Manbulloo)

September 9, 1943

Betty my sweet,

It has been hot as Hades today, so I waited till tonite to write you. Besides John was celebrating his promotion last nite, and none of us felt too sharp today. We cooked some more fish, and they were really very tasty. I intend to fish a lot more, as it is fun, and makes the time go a lot faster, and the fish are damn good. We finally gave up raising chickens as a bad idea, as they were waking everyone up at the crack of dawn, and if the boys had just come back from a mission it made it hard for them to sleep. Besides, the darn things are a lot of trouble to clean if you ask me. We have a darn good mess anyway, so it is not important to get food on the side as it is in some combat areas where their main sustenance is bully beef.

The 530th has asked us to a party tomorrow nite, and if we are not sent out on a flight, we hope to go. Bill Massie sent his regards to you as did Dennis. Both of them are busy in their spare time sparking two of the newly arrived American nurses at the field hospital near their base. Bill of course is still interested in Charlotte, and corresponds with her regularly. Have you heard from her lately? I thought she was a darn nice gal, and I hope that Willie follows that up after he gets back as I don't think that he will go wrong there.

Last nite we had a show call "Ghost of Frankenstein" which had a very high odor. I lasted about twenty minutes, and then wrote a couple of letters before the party began.

Apparently operations are progressing very satisfactorily in Italy from all reports. The Italians would be wise to save a lot of bloodshed by giving in now, as it seems quite hopeless for them to hang on for long. The Russians seem to be going full blast too, and the bombings of Germany continue without respite. I'll bet the Nazis are sorry they started those bombings of London now, as they are getting there principal back with plenty of interest. No country can stand up forever under such pasting, and the damage to their industries will show up soon in respect to the amount of material they can supply their troops.

By the time you receive this letter if the doctor is right, it will be about time for Junior to make an appearance. At the present time I am scheduled to go on leave on the 13th, and return the 22nd so I should be back here by the time any news comes thru. There are only two crews that have not had leave, and one of them is ours. I had hoped to spend my leave with Gus but that now seems out of the question, as our orders read to another place, and there is no way I can get transportation to see him, as the distance involved is so great, that aircraft is the only feasible means of travelling and there will not be a plane going his way at the time. For several weeks I harbored the wild thought of trying to make it back to the states on leave, but I can't get orders, and if anything went wrong and I didn't get back on time they would court martial me so fast it would be pitiful, and being absent without leave in a combat area is a very serious misdemeanor. Anyway, if things go right, it won't be so darn long before I will really be coming back for awhile and one day that we might have together would be just a hell of a teaser. Cush had to go back by boat so I couldn't be sure of transportation.

My mother writes that Pat has been on a strenuous diet, and had lost a lot of weight. I wrote her that if she kept it up she would have a streamlined figure like mine (ha,ha). When I first came over here I lost about 20 pounds, but I am afraid that I have gained a good portion of that back. I try not to eat much, but you really get hungry over here. However, if I haven't gotten down when I get back I'll be on a strict diet under your tutelage. One trouble over here is that we get quite a few starchy foods, and you either eat them or else. They do the very best they can but fresh vegetables are hard to get, and when you have just one canned vegetable, it is hard to stay away from the potatoes.

There isn't much news today, and when no mail comes in, I am afraid that some of my letters drag somewhat, especially when we write every day. It is rather funny - the days that mail comes in, and I can read your wonderful letters, I feel inspired to write scads, but when there is a lapse it is hard to keep spouting, as our life, or most of it is very routine, and the only exciting part which would be a great subject to write about, is banned by censorship.

We will really have fun when I get back going over all of the things that have happened over here, and seeing how much you have been able to guess, or read between the lines. I think that I can give you a fairly accurate chronological report even though all my notes will have to be kept in my mind as diaries are taboo for obvious reasons.

Sweetie, I am going to cut this short and see if I can do a better job tomorrow. I hope Junior is not raising too much hell with you. Honey, I just love you so damn much and life without you is unbearably dull. I just count the days till I can come back to you. You have been such a wonderful wife and playmate in every respect, and all I can do is thank God for giving you to me, and try to show my appreciation by being as good a husband as possible. A thousand kisses and hugs, my love, I miss you like the very devil. Baby, I really love you and do I wish I was with you.

Bill

P.S. My best to Mom, Dad, and Stan. No mail went out from here yesterday, so I am going to put two letters in one envelope as I am a little short on them at present.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, September 10, 1943

Betty my sweetheart,

Since I have used airmail for the last week, I thought I would stick one of these in today. I put my last two letters in the same envelope so you should get an extra dividend when that one gets there. By the time you receive this, it will probably be September 19th, and that is a real anniversary for us. The more I think of it, the more I realize how lucky we were for our meeting to blossom out into the great happiness that has come to us with all of the various obstacles that followed the path of our romance.

The boys tried so hard to persuade me to go to Long Beach instead of Laguna that weekend but something made me go anyway. Then there was the complication of the date you had and the one I had. It really took some tall talking to get

out of both of those to put it mildly. The next week Goldie was the only guy that you knew out at the post that could have found me that nite you had so much trouble getting thru the guards.

Then it all might have ended at that if Mrs. Eddie had not persuaded you with her letter to go to Berkeley. After that first weekend in Sacramento, I think the ultimate end was inevitable even if I did harbor a lot of silly ideas about not marrying during wartime. And after we had decided to get married we had the stupid idea of waiting till Feb. 17th. Harry Long was a great help to me during the period where I couldn't make up my mind what to do and you were so wonderfully sympathetic and didn't try to guide me one way or another.

Harry kept telling me I was an utter idiot if I let you get away, and that the only way to hold a girl completely was to marry her, and that I couldn't expect you to wait that long. All the time Goldie and P.J. were so set on being married and P.J. kept asking us if we were going to follow suit. In the end they did the talking and we did the acting. After we had decided to be married Christmas, it looked for awhile like we would never make the grade with all of the complications that followed due to the fact that I always had to fly at the time when we thought everything was set. Clayton certainly was a big help, and it looked for awhile like the ceremony would have to be performed enroute as in the case of the Kopeckys. I will never forgive that Lt. Hilton for being so darn unpleasant when we returned to Sacramento. It was certainly a lucky break that we could get all of the girls on the troop train. It seemed for awhile that we would never find a permanent post, and they shuttled us from one point to another. Those first days in El Paso were really very funny, with the four of us in one tiny room, and Helen having such a time with Jerry when he would try to sleep. That's one problem you didn't have very often with me, did you dear?

As I look back, we did pretty well as far as loving was concerned, and boy, do I enjoy making love to you. However, as you said, Junior may have some remarks to make on that subject one of these days. God, honey, all you have brought to me since Sept. 19th, is oceans of happiness and more of it. This is one of those days I am wild to be with you. I don't know whether I can stand it much longer. I love you. Bill

(Manbulloo)

September 12, 1943

Betty honey,

After four days of no mail, two wonderful airmails dated Aug. 26th or rather 23rd and 24th respectively were waiting for me. In the first you advised me that you had no mail for a week, and I felt pretty badly about that, but in the next one you notified me of the arrival of five V-mails, so I felt a lot better. Today we were notified that subsequent airmails would go by boat from here to the states, so I guess I will have to go back to V-mails after concentrating on the others after you expressed a decided preference for air mail.

My typing is still of very inferior nature but I do feel that there has been a little improvement even if it does take me an hour instead of an hour and a half to write one letter as it did at first. I still have a hell of a time with the end of the line as you advised, even when I use the stop. I start thinking of you and all the things that I want to say to you and before I know it, there comes the darn end of the line even at my snail-like speed. I shall return to pen and ink as soon as I can lay my hands on a pen, as I don't like to keep borrowing someone else's, tho come to think of it, if I send mostly V-mails, the typewriter will be much better as with single spacing you can really get the contents of at least a four page letter on one page, this is for a person who writes as large a scrawl as I do.

We are all every elated about the surrender of the Italians tho I imagine that there will still be considerable fighting in that country before they get the Germans out. The Germans have always enjoyed having the battlefield in someone else's back yard and when it came to their own, they were always quite content to terminate hostilities as quickly as possible. However, this time they are getting a little at home due to the efficiency of the bomber as a long range weapon of destruction. As I wrote Sadie and Clayton day before yesterday, the Germans must realize that they will be defeated eventually, and a lot more lives could be saved on both sides if they kicked the Nazi Government out here and now and ended that phase of the war.

I personally don't think the Japs could hang on for a very long period of time if all the material and men centered in Europe could be released for operations down here, especially all the transports and naval craft because in most respects this fight down here is a naval one both in respect to supply lines and striking power. Of course air power is tremendously important, but anyone can just look at a map and figure the above points out.

The heat has really been severe lately, especially around the middle of the day, and one is in a continual state of perspiration. I take an average of about three showers a day, and we are indeed fortunate to have a place nearby where

we can swim. We have had a lot of fun fishing of late. Due to the rather limited time we can devote to it, it usually consists of setting a series of trot lines usually baited with Wallaby liver as the latter are very plentiful around here. We have caught some wonderful channel cats and also a great number of bass. The cats usually run about two to three and one half pounds, and the bass around a pound and a half. We have also gotten quite a few turtles which make marvelous soup. The fish we steak, roll in salt and flour, and cook over a hot fire in bacon grease. Fresh out of the stream they are very tasty to put it mildly. I have always loved fishing a lot and have never gotten my fill of it. When I get back, we will have to take Junior on a fishing trip.

Golly, darling, there are so many things we have to do, and the reason there are so many things, is because everything I do with you is such wonderful fun, be it outdoor or indoor sports, if you know what I mean.

I know Yaqui must be very perturbed and puzzled at this point at being deserted so completely, and I can hardly say that I blame him much, but C'est la vie, C'est la guerre, C'est la femme. I guess we all have our crosses to bear at this point and your beloved horse has his. Darling, I definitely promise that after the war, I shall become a model equestrian under your tutelage. You have been so wonderful about participating in all the sports I enjoy (you know my favorite one - boy - do you - wow!) that I certainly intend to master the intricacies of riding if it kills me. You will have to start me out on a nice tame job to begin with, as it would be a hell of a note if I got thru this damn war and came back to you only to break my darn neck on a pony. Please give Yaqui a big smack for me because you love him, and anything or anyone that you love I love because you are my whole life, darling. Some men go in for a professional career, some for the arts, some are collectors, some hanker for dough, but I go for you, baby, in a great big way, and I can't think of a nicer, more interesting, more constructive, more amusing, or more inspiring subject and goal as a life work. In fact it ain't even work.

Tomorrow we are supposed to go on a week's leave in Adelaide (no cracks - that is the name of an Australian city). I would much prefer that our leave did not come at this particular time, but it is either now or not at all, and frankly I think that will be darn good for us to get away for awhile as this place is getting in my hair (I know the answer to that one - what hair dear?). but anyway if I am going to pass the months to come as a sane man, I think a little respite from our routine will be well in order. We are the next to last crew to go. I had hoped that Lee would go at the same time, but he went several weeks ago with Jack Bratton.

In case I didn't tell you, Fred's throat operation was very successful, and he is coming back to be attached to staff in an operational capacity, at least so the present rumor has it. His thyroid condition had resulted in his noticeable loss of weight and rather nervous condition, and Jack tells me that due to the operation he is now in the pink, which I was very glad to hear, as he is a good boy for my money. I am sure that if the operation had been performed earlier, that he would have surpassed even the superlative job that he did as far as getting the boys ready for combat, because despite his apparent severity as a disciplinarian, he did turn out a darn strong squadron from the standpoint of air corps efficiency, and in this game you have to be good to stay alive, and in the long run the best trained men are the ones that come back.

It is true that some of the best men are lost due to tough luck, but overall efficiency pays off the big dividend, and the big dividend is to return to the one we love so dearly.

Sweetie, they want the machine now for typing some reports, so I will have to sign off, but just remember whether your letters come thru regularly or not that you are always in my mind nite and day, and I don't think anyone could love any gal as much as I love you, my pet, and that is for sure. In the words of that famous patriot and the father of our country, George Washington, "You are the Nuts, baby". Incidentally, the reason he was father of his country was because all of the houses were ten miles apart and he was the only man with a bicycle. A million kisses and hugs, I love you sweetheart. Again I love you, still I love you, always love you, in fact darling, I just love you.

Bill . P.S. I learned a few minutes ago that I am no longer a lousy second Lt. at long last!

(Manbulloo)

September 21, 1943

Betty my wonderful wife,

You will never know what a thrill, surprise, and excitement it was to return from leave and find the wires waiting for me announcing Bill's arrival. You see, I figured that about the 20th it would be time to start worrying, and before I really started sweating you out, Bill was here. I sent a cable a short time ago which should beat this letter by a

considerable margin. I am so excited at this point that this letter will be a little incoherent. I tried to write with a pen but my hand shook so much I had to revert to the machine and this job was the only one that I could find to use, so pardon all the capitals. One thing I still don't know is what day Bill made his appearance, but all the dope will no doubt be along soon. However, don't worry about writing till you are back on your feet as no doubt Mom and Muddy will send me all the details. I hope that you had an easy time, sweetie, and that Bill did not cause you too much trouble.

The boys send all their best wishes and congratulations. Of the last four babies born to our group, all were girls, so the other fathers are telling me we are darn lucky. Confidentially, I hoped like hell it would be a boy, but I didn't tell you that, and a girl would have been wonderful too. Your letter concerning naming her Anna came a little late but I think that would be swell when we have a girl. I have been unable to contact Lee as yet but phoned up the news. He was very busy due to a little mishap in the squadron. Regarding Phil Doornbos, Gus sees him frequently and he will be up and around shortly. Due to certain regulations there are certain things I just can't write, and I have not tried to hold out on you. Every outfit has so much tough luck but it is darn hard to take.

I still can't get over the feeling of being a papa. I sort of go around not knowing what the devil is going on, and the boys are having a big laugh at my present condition, but they said to tell you that they are very happy for both of us. Besides the wonderful news I have been also very spoiled by all the wonderful letters I have received from you in the last two days comprising about seven V-mails and ten air mails. Honey you write such marvelous letters even if they do make me feel like tearing the place down to get home to you. God I wish the time would go a lot faster than it is at present.

One thing that perhaps sounds silly but loving you as much as I do, I wish I could be home to see you nurse young Bill as I think that is a very wonderful thing, but I shall have to wait for Anna for that. Golly, honey, the way I talk, you would think I intend to keep you eternally pregnant, and that is not the case at all, but some day in the future we will probably decide that Bill should have a sister or a brother.

In answer to your question I wrote to TIME about the subscription for Aunt Marie's birthday the eighth of the month. The only other one to take care of is Clayton's which was the fifteenth of last month. I agree with you that Clayton's young son is like a wild man.

I must confess my love that we all were very bad boys about writing while we were on leave, but I shall certainly make up for that by writing two a day for the week to come. That is small penance but the time just seemed to disappear. I tried to call you from Adelaide but could not get it thru altho I waited 18 hours for the call. We had a very nice time at that place but I can tell you without reservation, I was a very good boy except that we imbibed a little too much sparkling burgundy once or twice.

I was fortunate to meet some very charming people down there and they really opened up their homes to us. Adelaide is a very wealthy but conservative community and very pretty. Believe it or not, but I even went to one of the art galleries. I also played golf with the former Australian women's champion, Kay Rymill. Every time I would dub a shot she would say just charge that up to the excitement of being an expectant papa.

All of the people who were so nice to us asked to send word of the great event so Alfred dispatched them a wire a short time ago as they were so genuinely interested. It was fun playing golf with Kay, but darling I would have given anything in the world if it had been you instead. You would have liked Kay tho as the first time we met and she found out that we were expecting, she said, "Darn it, you know you want to talk about your wife, so give me the details", which I did for two hours, and your ears should have burned.

Honey, here is a funny thing - the nites of Sept 19th and 20th, I dreamed that I received a wire from you saying that Junior had arrived and it was a boy. Then I get back here on the 21st and here is your wire along with one from Muddy and Marg. I hope Junior Bill won't give us hell because he beat the regulation period by two weeks. One of the boys over here had a record. He was married for two years - hadn't seen his wife till leave-time and the heir made the trip in seven months plus two weeks.

Honey, a terrible thing happened - after telling Jack and Fred about your notes, they were lost in transit. I they don't show up I shall repeat the messages as I read them both. Haugie sends his love and best congratulations. He said that besides being a wonderful cook that you were really versatile. He said he was going to drop you a line right away.

The magazine with your picture in it plus the write up and your letter just arrived and did I get a big kick out of it. I really like that picture of you and wonder if we could have some enlargements made of it. The picture you sent has not come as yet but it should be showing up one of these days. Some things take an awful long time to get thru. While I

was in Adelaide I made arrangements to have an opal ring made up for you, but it may be a few months before it is completed as it takes an awful long time to get things like that completed over here due to certain restrictions.

Al is hearing more frequently from Mickey at present but your subtle idea was very good I thought. Regarding the missing page, I can't figure that out as I always read my letters thru and the censor must have misplaced it. To date, not one of your letters has been opened, so you can figure out the setup on that point. I imagine, however, that your V-mails are read by someone.

Regarding your letter on the subject of politics, I got a big kick out of it to put it mildly. My biggest reaction was that I was proud that I had a wife that was smart enough to write such an intelligent letter, secondly I was chortling at the expression you undoubtedly had on your face when you wrote it, and thirdly I felt definitely put in my place for arguing in generalities with my very sweet 'braintrust'.

After you have recovered your strength to be in condition to make your rebuttal to mine, I will send my rebuttal along. As it is, with Bill's arrival, I have suddenly lost much of my former interest in politics and am much more interested in you two as to progress and not Congress, as the words imply two opposites and I like to tackle one thing at a time.

At the present time it is about 120 in the shade and as I am very soaked with perspiration I shall stop for now and write you again tonite. Darling it is so wonderful to love someone like you and to know that we now have a very concrete reward and token of that love in the person of his nibs, young Bill. I know that we will do everything possible to make him glad that he favored us with his presence even tho, as the years pass, we may have to warm his little fanny for him once in a while.

Regarding the education fund, I am a little at a loss as to what to say due to lack of knowledge on all particulars. In as much as I trust your judgement implicitly, you decide what is best. If I were over there I would take the responsibility so don't think that I am passing the buck. There are a lot of angles to consider such as what you get back if the payments lapse. In general the bond idea sounds logical to me. Most of those funds are of most benefit to people who have to be forced to save if they are going to save at all. And I don't think that is our case.

However, there is always the consideration that something might happen to both of us, and also that studies might come hard to him. Well, we'll look at all angles. Darling I love you do damn much. Goodbye for now, to Bill's wonderful mother. Bill Senior

(Manbulloo)

September 24, 1943

Betty my love,

After promising to write twice a day, I found out I had a little business to transact, and as a result I missed yesterday. Darling, I can't tell you how terrible it is to be over here and know that you had to go thru everything you had to while I was so darn far away, and now I can't be with you after Bill has made his appearance. Honestly, it is about driving me nuts, and I don't mean maybe. Honey, I have never longed to be with you as much as I do right now. I still can't get over the idea that we have a son of our own, and I am still somewhat in a daze at the idea - although I knew it was coming, the reality is quite a different story, and I love it, except for the fact that I can't be with you. I talked to Jack yesterday for a few moments prior to business, and he said to send you his best love and congratulations. He also said to thank you for the letter and that he would write soon. I still haven't been able to talk to Lee and Fred about the wonderful news.

Darling, I just about cried when I received your pathetic letter dated Sept. 10th, in which you said for some unknown reason you felt slightly under the weather. That must have been the beginning of Bill's progression. Sweetie, it was so thoughtful and wonderful of you to write me under such circumstances but darling please don't think you have to write when you are under the weather. As it is you have spoiled me to death, and none of the boys can understand why a guy like me gets so damn many letters. You are just too good to me, and that is all there is to it. When I get those wonderful words from you, I go around like someone fresh out of an opium den.

I am dying to get all the details such as what kind of a time you had when Bill was born, how much he weighed, whether the fond relatives thought he was beautiful like you, or homely like me. With your looks and my brains he should really go some place - ha, ha, - you can't slug me over here, my love. Golly honey, I am going to try to fly as fast as I can because I just can't wait to get home to my family. Doesn't that sound funny, but wonderful too.

You asked me about the other pilot I flew with. It was Lee Brissey until he was transferred a few days ago much to our dismay. However, I guess his successor will be OK. I am getting so used to changes and disappointments that I just try to take things as they come along and make the best of things. We have our crew together and that is the main thing.

Regarding Christmas presents forget about that. I had a letter from Muddy laying down the law about that. We might just send some little remembrance for all and let it go at that. I have been worried to death about getting presents over to you, and then I decided when Christmas became a problem there was something wrong, and we have a lot more of them to come.

Honey, I hate to stop now, but I am so tired that I am punchy with four hours sleep in the last two nites, and Myrtle says she is tired as hell too. I'll write you a magnum opus tomorrow after I get some sleep as things have been rough, and even over the target I think of you instead of the damned Japs. You are my sweetheart. Bill

(Manbulloo)

September 25, 1943

Betty my love,

I am really going to get after this letter writing as I feel very badly about not doing any better while I was on leave. However, concrete penance in the way of lots of letters instead of abject apologies is much more in order. Honey, I am just dying to hear about everything but that will all come in good time. I imagine you are very busy at this point taking care of Bill's demands, and will be for some time. I hope you are feeling very well physically as I realize that lots of girls are left with many temporary repercussions. Gee, honey, it just about drives me crazy that I can't be with you now, and naturally I am dying to see Bill tho I imagine he doesn't look like much now, tho your own always looks a helluva lot better than someone else's.

We still haven't gotten much dope about the length of our stay as it depends on so many factors such as replacements, the extent of activity in our particular theater of operations, and the particular speed in which we get our individual time in. Plus that, are just good breaks. It is possible that some of us after we have gotten in our time may be kept over here for a few months till the new boys are organized but even if that did happen, it would have one advantage that we would not have much chance of being sent out to foreign service again.

Also under those conditions we would be grounded and not be running as much risk of not coming back at all. Inasmuch as John has only been able to fly every other mission he is behind us in time, but next month he will fly all the time so we should creep a lot closer to our goal. That boy is really a great pilot, and I feel fortunate to be with such a darn good crew.

This morning we put an asphalt floor in our tent and we think that it will work very nicely. We were unable to get concrete at our present location as we did at the other place. The wet season will be on us soon and we want to be prepared, as I understand it it's a little rough when the rains come. Darn this machine it keeps sticking which explains all of the smeared letters. However, I shall write you a longie longhand tonite which may be a little more coherent than this.

I feel sentimental as hell, but this darn thing doesn't help me very much, to say the least. Besides at nite it cools off a little and you can write without having perspiration streaming down your face and on your hands as is my present state. Golly, I didn't know what heat was until I hit the tropics. One nice thing about flying is that it is nice and cool up in the air especially when you are up at a fair altitude.

Oh darling, I love you so darn much and it is such an agony being away from you, even more so at a time like this. I'll do better tonite, baby, but until then all my love to you and Bill. How do Mom and Dad like the idea of being grandparents and Stanley an uncle? How things happen - I love you, sweet.

Darling, I just don't know how I could be so lucky to have someone as wonderful as you are. In fact, in my opinion, you are the perfect wife, sweetheart, lover, and mother all wrapped into one, even if you are a Democrat.

Your loving husband, Bill

(Manbulloo)

September 25, 1943

Betty my darling,

As I told you this afternoon in that rather non-descript letter I wrote you, I would settle down tonite and get a decent letter off to you, and, honey, just as I got this much written, Alfred came in with your sweet, wonderful, and priceless letter of Sept. 11th which must have been written a very short time after Bill's arrival.

Darling, it was just too damn sweet and thoughtful of you to write so darn soon and undoubtedly when you were not feeling too darn good physically altho perfect mentally. I shall always treasure that letter my love because like everything else you have been to me, it represents what a fine and wonderful person you are. And Honey, all I do is thank my lucky stars that I have you to love and can be loved by you, because no woman could make any man happier than you have made me, and I am damned sure Bill is the most beautiful baby you have ever seen as you said in your letter.

I am going to write on both sides as I am sure what I have to say will have nothing of military importance, and I have a helluva lot to say. After all it's not every day in the week that some mug overseas can write to his best gal and tell her just how wonderful she is just after she has brought into the world a staunch representative of their mutual love and admiration. War is hell, my sweet, but our love is one thing no one can take away from us regardless of what happens, because love as an emotion, a feeling, an understanding, a respect, a relationship, and a constructive partnership is something that outlives everything be it good or bad.

I once told you that I was terribly in love with you when we were married, but that until we had those few but precious months together, I realized that prior to that I didn't even know the meaning of the word, and that is for sure, my one and only. As time goes on, there is a deepening of understanding, affection, and respect that can only come with perfect co-operation between two people in every way after they have lived a brief spell with each other. Some people seem to take years to reach that point, and many poor unfortunate souls never attain that end, but I feel we have long ago reached that stage and feel fortunate and humble that so much happiness with you has been my lot. It makes up for all the pain and suffering when we are apart, and as I said once before, everything has its price and I figure we can afford a rather dear one. Besides, as Bill grows up, we want him to be proud of us as I know we shall be of him, and I don't think he would be crazy about the idea years hence of his daddy sitting at home when his and our country's life blood was at stake. Regardless of what anyone thinks of war in general, I still believe your country right or wrong, and God knows we can't win for Bill or ourselves by sitting at home. Someone has to do the dirty work, and I have always liked to do my own and not have someone do it for me. It is true that I sometimes criticize harshly some of our representatives, but after all, that is part of democracy, and as I recall, that is one of the things we are fighting for. At this point I probably sound like a football coach between halves, but sometimes when it is particularly difficult being away from you I have to sell the idea to myself by writing those words to you. You see, honey, whenever I was low or blue, you put me on the right path by talking to me (and Oh, so sweetly) and now that we are separated physically, although our thoughts are with each other, the only way I can talk to you is in a letter, as that mental telepathy didn't work worth a damn. When a child is young, it is his mother or father that tries to lend a helping hand when things are a little mixed up. But later it is her husband or his wife that he confides in, talks with, laughs with, lives with, and fights for and with.

You will never know or perhaps you will at that because you know me so darn well how happy and thrilled I am about Bill. Loving you as much as I do, there seems nothing more wonderful to me to be able to try to pass on to a token of our love all of the things we have found can exist in life when you give and take equally and irrevocably. I can tell you now and always that there never could be anyone else for me, darling, because when I found you, I found alive all the things I have always admired and respected the most.

People used to ask me what I wanted in a girl, and I always answered a gal with understanding and a sense of humor. Well, I certainly got those with a tremendous dividend besides. Wow, do I like to make love to you, joke with you, argue with you, indulge in sports (outdoor) with you, in fact, darn it, just be with you and now, darling, we can add to the wonder of our love, Bill who will be so important to us both now and in years to come.

In one of your letters you asked me if I intended that we go on a political campaign after I got home. Hell, no, honey. I just meant that people in civil life by playing close attention to what is going on, by community organizations, can see

that the right men are put up, backed, and elected to office. Many of us would be greatly surprised how just letters to our local representatives, and on up will influence their opinions because many men win public office without even knowing what their constituents want. Unless they make very obvious blunders, they hear very little, and every man is human after all. I shall reserve for a later date your very timely and well-considered and written letter regarding several of my flat statements.

I have always made a serious endeavor not to talk out of turn without being able to back up my opinions, and I shall try to show you that I was not too far off base some other time. That is a subject that is very difficult to debate in a letter without one or both of us getting the wrong impression of the other's idea. You see, impractical. We would like to see the government run like an efficient co-operative or corporation. I agree with you very heartily that the white collared workers are the forgotten men and women, I am definitely for unions, but very definitely against the racketeers who have found that labor can be a racket.

When I get home, I'll throw more cases at you than you ever dreamed of. As far as big business is concerned, you are right that certain companies have held up the war effort terribly, and I can give you other examples besides those you enumerated, but still, my sweet, in the long run the big outfits gave us the progress that we can boast today, because after you have been around a bit, you will find we are damn lucky we can live in the good old USA. And as long as we or our country lives as a democracy, we shall and will always continue to take advantage of our prerogative of saying what the hell we think of things in general. I had twice as much respect for you when you lit all over me that if you had placidly agreed with me tho feeling much differently about the subject.

I further feel that this is neither the time or the place to go into too much length on that subject as I am so excited about you and Bill that I don't think I could convince anyone whether white was white or black black.

I think that Lee will be the big boss in the medical dept. now that Lyman has done or is going back to the states for medical treatment but there has been so decision on that point as yet. However, it is possible he might turn it down, but I don't think so. I suggest you say nothing to Ginnie about that until she brings it up herself. Regarding the other things you wrote her, that was perfectly OK, and I know so well how naturally curious you are about everything over here, and it kills me I can't tell you more, but if we censor our enlisted men's mail, it wouldn't be quite fair if we tried to slip things thru ourselves. They are very strict about information on casualties for obvious reasons, as much misinformation has been transmitted in the past with the best of intentions. Any rumors you heard about Phil are unfounded as he is very much alive and kicking. With the exceptions that have already been announced, all of the boys you know best are still with us, thank the Lord.

Well my love, I better cut this short both for your benefit and that of the censor's. A million kisses and hugs to you and Bill (Gee doesn't that sound funny - you and Bill). Please give my love to the grandparents and Uncle Stanley.

Honey, I just dream all day of the time when I see you again, and God willing it will not be too far away. I sent you three letters since the news came before this, but I think I shall revert to pen and ink as somehow I seem to write more lucidly tho long-windedly this way. I love you - my perfect wife and mother. Your husband who misses you like H.

Bill SENIOR

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, September 26, 1943

Betty honey,

Inasmuch as I intend to write twice a day for awhile, I figured I might as well make one of them a V-mail so some mail will get thru regularly. If I didn't make it clear previously I first received your cable and the others on Sept. 21st. Apparently they came in several days before that, but of course I would be away at that time. I told you before that I knew it would work out that way. Since then I have sent you five air mails, as I had to miss one day due to the fact that I was very busy. You probably thought something had happened to me after such a period of silence, and I wish the boys had forwarded the cables on, but there is not much I can do about that now.

I have read that wonderful V-mail and reread it again and again. You know, the one you sent the very day that Bill came into the world. That was so sweet of you to write me then, darling, and I shall keep that letter always. The minute I looked at it and before reading it, I knew it had been written after Bill's arrival, as you started out 'Since' and from the scrawl tho very legible, I could tell you were maneuvering under difficulties as you have such a damn nice hand, dearest, and your spelling is always so correct. Golly, you will never know what a great kick I got out of that letter.

Haugie just came in and said he had dispatched a letter to you in last nite's mail. He said he so much appreciated your letter, and he has been enjoying himself very much kidding me about the role of fond papa.

Mickey and Betty Farrington seem to be progressing very nicely in their conditions, and I get a big kick out of excerpts in their letters about calcium tablets, drinking lots of milk, and that tired rundown feeling, that sounds strangely familiar to me. I misspelled that last word, and I didn't have a baby tho I thought I would have kittens for awhile if you know what I mean. Golly, the time went slowly enough before, but now it seems to go twice as slowly. You know in a way it is just as well that Bill didn't arrive on the 19th as we rather hoped for awhile, as now we have two occasions in Sept. to celebrate instead of one. It would be like a child being born at Christmas which I always figured would be somewhat of a gyp from the child's point of view. My father's birthday is Dec. 27th, and half the time he is practically forgotten.

I don't know whether I wrote you this or not, but I suddenly realized about a month ago that there was only one day's difference in my age and that of my father's at the time of our marriage. Wow, that could be construed two ways.

We are all buoyed up considerably by the favorable war news at present, but darn it, they just can't get this thing over quickly enough for me. It seems like it will go on forever and then some. Hitler and Tojo certainly have no respect for motherhood outside of producing cannon fodder and that makes me mad as hell at them as well as for lots of reasons. Tonite I will write in more detail, my love, but until then everything I have in the way of love, affection, admiration, and everything else is yours and Bill's. Give that handsome fellow a kiss for me, and save a big one for yourself my darling wife. I love you. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

September 27, 1943

Betty my wonderful wife and Willy Jr.,

I really hit the jackpot as far as mail is concerned today. Sweetie you are just too sweet to write so often and at such great length so soon after your big ordeal. Golly, I really appreciate them so much honey, and it makes me feel guilty about not writing more often when I was on leave, but I'll try to make up for that. It was impossible for me to write a second letter yesterday, as that Australian girl friend of yours dropped in. She said she enjoyed the ball game a lot, as she said that she had never seen the game played the way that we play it. I would certainly give plenty to see Bill at this stage, but perhaps it will be possible to get some pictures of him after you leave the hospital.

I was delighted to hear that he was so well-behaved, and I certainly enjoyed your description of his thoughtfulness when he came in for 'dinner'. That is one thing darling that I would have loved to have seen as I think it is a very beautiful thing and I can well understand your having a lump in your throat. However, from the sublime to the ridiculous I chortled at the cartoon in ESQUIRE depicting two babies talking things over. One of them was imbibing from a bottle, and the other said, "I wish to hell they would get me on that as I am tired of getting ashes in my eyes all the time". Well, that is one thing Bill won't have to worry about, sweetie, as you don't smoke. Incidentally I am trying to cut my smoking down some but it is impossible for me to cut it out entirely.

I received letters from you dated Sept. 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th, plus three dated Aug. 25th, 26th, and 27th respectively. The latter must have come by boat and I am afraid I shall have to go back to V-mail due to a notice posted today advising us that airmail delivery from this side could not be guaranteed as of this date. For awhile I shall stagger them. I also had some swell letters from my family, and Marg. Tell your mother that I certainly enjoyed her letter and will return the favor shortly. Where have I heard those words before? I had to laugh at my father's letter, the devil, it was really a masterpiece. Among other things he said he was certain that your reputation could stand an eight and one half baby, but that he knew damned well that my questionable one couldn't. Ha, ha, - if he only knew. However he will have a hard time explaining to me why one of my sisters took eight months even. The main thing is that Bill is here and that all is well, and I guess we can stand a little kidding as I recall that we are two people that enjoy some fun with someone else ourselves.

There was a lot of truth in one of your letters where you pointed out that perhaps things do work out for the best and that it might not have been too good for Bill's welfare if we had been traipsing around the states together for periods prior to and immediately following Bill's appearance. Well anyway, all we can do is be as good sports as possible and hope like hell that I can get home soon. I have well over half my time in at present.

Hinckley received a letter from Barkley before he left from England. Jim liked it fine over there but did not mention any of the other boys. I do not know what has happened to Mike, Harry, or Willie Mee. They were a grand bunch and we really had a lot of fun with them. That weekend in Salt Lake City was a picnic. I certainly like that Utah Hotel a lot, but none can replace the Senator in my affections along that line. We will have to go back there some day. Gee, those were wonderful days and nites, baby. I agree with you that we have a marvelous store of memories, but sometimes it is hard as hell to live on those.

I was sorry to hear that P.J. has been under the weather and when you see her tell her I hope things improve for her quickly. It was terribly thoughtful of your father to give us the money as a baby present but I agree with you that we should not take it. However I shall leave that up to you, as I wouldn't want to hurt their feelings in any way as they are both so swell, and not being over there it is hard to tell how the wind blows.

Regarding the education fund I didn't write my family anything definitely as yet - however, I feel like you do that we should paddle our own canoe as far as possible. Regarding the allotments I was not quite sure as to what month was missing from your letter. The first one should have come around the first of May for my April pay. You see the government pays you for a month after the month is past. By now you should have received five allotments in all, and there will be another one due the first of October. By checking with the bank you can determine which one is missing if any. Enough of business except that you should be getting your travel pay soon. I just wanted to answer your questions as they were raised.

The card you sent to Fyrtle and the boys came today and they got a big kick out of it. Betty Farrington is in Denver, and Mickey is still at Santa Rosa. Her letters have picked up quite a bit. In her last she mentioned that she had a nice one from you.

In case you didn't get one letter I sent you my, first went thru the first week in September. After about three more months they will try my captaincy. If I had received my first in the states, I would be a captain now, darn that Chesser. I am glad he had a girl as he screwed the works. Jack is doing a swell job now and everyone, even his severest critics are saying very nice things about him. I am dying to see Fred but have not been able to do so as yet - however, I think I will after the next job.

You have not told what the anguish of childbirth is. I shall never forget the description of my applied physiology's prof in college. He said "Boys, if you want to imagine what it is like, imagine that you were to defecate a football". A little vulgar I thought, but certainly descriptive.

Regarding the Republican Party you have really been throwing some body blocks at me of late. Wait till I get home, I'll tan your little bottom good for that. All kidding aside, I know they aren't perfect by any means, but we are fighting dictatorship abroad and I don't want to have to fight it at home too. Incidentally, here is a good story a major told me the other day when he was here on a visit. It seems that a company of marines were about to leave Guadalcanal, and one of their members was bemoaning the fact to his sergeant that he hadn't ever killed a Jap, and he hated to go home under such conditions. Well, said his top kick, "That's easy, go down next to those foxholes by that hill over there, and yell 'Hirohito's a son-of-a-bitch'. Some Jap will get mad and when he stands up you shoot him". The marine thought that was a swell idea, so away he went. After about an hour he came back looking very sad. "What happened", said the Sgt. "Well", said the marine, "it worked and it didn't work. When I yelled what you said, two Japs stood up and yelled back, 'Roosevelt's an SOB' - well golly, I couldn't shoot two good Republicans."

Honey, it is hard being separated, but when two people love each other as we do, it does help that we know what wonderful things can lie ahead and we are appreciative of all the good things that have come our way. Darling you make such a perfect wife that it would seem all you do is work like hell thinking of new ways to keep me happy. I had to laugh at a letter I received from Marg. She was sorting thru some old letters and found one from me dated Nov. 11th, 1942. In it I said I was very much intrigued with a girl by the name of Betty, and that if it were normal times I would ask her to marry me. Ha, Ha, a little thing like a war didn't stop us, did it, darling.

As I am dripping with perspiration at this point, I think I'll cut this short for now. I love you and Bill, Sweetie, with all my heart and soul. Give the little devil a big kiss for me, and tell him that funny looking man called Daddy will be home to both of you one of these days. Give my love to Mom, Dad, and Stan. They must think I am very thoughtless for not having written, and I will do that tomorrow without fail. You are my honey, and God, do I miss you (and am I eager). I love you. Bill P.S. That guy was crazy about cable rates. The rate for 25 words including address and signature is \$2.72. That leaves you about sixteen to seventeen words.

(Manbulloo)

V-mail, September 28, 1943

Betty my love,

I hate to go back to V-mails but there is not much I can do about it and I shall write you a lot of them. You were asking about Hinze. Well, he is sitting right across from me at this point. As you know, his wife lives in San Francisco, and her address is 1863 8th Avenue, and the initials are F.S. He sent his wife your address yesterday.

I think that I wrote you that Mrs. Fisher had a little girl early this month. She is still back in Waterloo, as far as I know. I was told that I could now tell you that Paul Stansbury is missing in action, but we still have hope for him. You recall that he was a pal of Reggie's, the chap who was so helpful to us at Topeka. It's no fun to see those boys we knew so well not come back. However, when a plane does not come back, there is always a chance that they bailed out.

You asked what the wet season is like. From reports it rains like cats and dogs for several months, and naturally life under those conditions will probably not be too pleasant. You have to be very careful as far as mosquitoes are concerned as malaria and dengue are very common out here. Neither have any severe after effects if the patient is properly cared for but they are not too pleasant at the time. However, our medical dept. is taking all precautions so I don't think that we should have too much trouble along that line.

In case you have not received my letter of yesterday, you can tell your agent at home that he is way off the ball about straight cable rates. I have sent you two straight cables, and the rate is a little less than three dollars for twenty five words including address and signature. That left me about seventeen words for text which is quite reasonable. For most purposes the EFM messages will fill the bill, but in case something special came up that is the rate, and I would suggest you tell that guy there he better learn something about his business. The last cable I sent you was wired on Sept. 21st, the day I returned. I am curious how long it took as they put a Rush-Rush on it.

Honey, all I can think of is how cute Bill must be and how lucky he is to have such an attractive mother, and golly, does his old man wish that he could be with both of you. Sweetie, you have been just too wonderful about writing so soon after Bill's arrival, and the things you say to me, darling, really leave me floating on air.

I finally took the bull by the horns and wrote Muddy and Daddy how we felt about the educational fund and told them that tho it was sweet of them, we wanted to paddle our own canoe. I also told them that you had figured out that the bond idea was much better. As soon as I finish this letter I am going to write Mom and Dad on the same score. I suddenly realized that I had more or less passed the buck to you which is no way to treat my sweetheart. I agree with you very heartily on the idea of buying things on time so to speak. You are certainly a great little business manager, and I certainly needed that as my great problem has always been not making money but holding on to it after I got it. My leave left me a little broke, since we purchased a wonderful short wave radio that we can pick up all the stations at home, and a lot of books, I shall not be able to send any home for a month or so. However, I shall try to be as economical as possible from now on.

By the way one of the boys here has an aunt who lives in Laguna. Her name is May King, and she lives on Center Street. I just thought that by some coincidence that you might know her as she has lived there for a long time.

The heat increases in intensity, but we are slowly getting used to it. A nearby stream is a great godsend to us and swimming is our main recreation. As our pump has been busted for the last couple of days, the stream also serves as bathtub, place to shave, and laundry tub. To date I have not been successful on obtaining any bleach, but some of the boys are getting some in Adelaide. We forgot that when we were down on leave.

You would be surprised at the selection of reading material we purchased. The majority are classics and we also have books on Plato, poems, and scientific manuals plus several texts on Latin and advanced mathematics. Ralph Ohman is teaching several courses on law for his boys. He was amazed at the large number of chaps that signed up for his classes. The busier you can keep your mind on such things, the higher your morale is and the quicker the time passes. Hillman just arrived for a three day visit and sends his heartiest congratulations. He is really an OK guy, and he always gives us his fullest cooperation in every way.

I had to laugh when in one of your recent letters you advised me that if your writing changed I would know that the nurse had come into the room. You little devil, I knew that they would have a hell of a time keeping you flat on your back for long. As I recall, there was only one time I could, and even then I almost lost to a nut waffle several times.

Yes, dear, it is all right for you to have other clothes besides housecoat and slippers. That is, after I have been back for several months. I can hear Willie plaintively asking, Momma, why do you and Daddy stay in bed so much?

Marg wrote that the other day Amy Hamilton's little girl asked her why she didn't have a baby. Marg told her that she would when Gus came home. "Oh, don't be silly," said the little imp, "have one right now." Well, maybe tomorrow would be better as it is rather hot today. One boy who has been over here for eighteen months was advised by his wife recently that he was the 'father' of twins. I understand that he was slightly provoked.

Brissey's successor arrived, and I hope that things work out OK. We had such a swell setup previously that I hope that things are not spoiled by the new regime, as we have really been operating very efficiently and had been even leading the good old 530th in practically everything. Of course, we had two crews from that outfit, plus one of the best ones from another. I hope Fred comes to see us soon as I have a lot of things that I want to talk to him about.

Honey, you are the most wonderful wife that any boy could have. I love you so completely and I just think that I am about the luckiest guy that ever lived to have you, and baby makes three. You are always in my thoughts nite and day. Gee, baby, I love you. A million kisses and hugs to you and Bill. Hello, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

September 29, 1943

Betty darling,

The mail continues to pour in, and I received three yesterday, the latest dated the 19th which is not bad at all for air mail. I also had a very sweet letter from Louise Braden in which she advised he how happy everyone was about Bill's debut, and that they had a party where both he and ourselves were toasted. I am very fond of Louise and John as I know you are. I reminded me of those records we made that day when we were there for lunch, and gave me a swell idea. I wonder if it would be possible to find a place around Corona where you could make one and send it over as we have a Victrola. You might even get Bill to hiccup as I understand he is already following in his father's footsteps. So he drinks too much already. Well, that is a hell of a note. I guess I will have to mend my ways in order to set Bill a better example. However, darling, we will have to crack a bottle of champagne when I get back for Bill, but not over his head.

Business has been slow lately, but the bank will be open again soon, I am sure. We get impatient when we don't get a lot of missions, as the more we fly the sooner we can think about coming home, tho the way things look right now I should be back before your birthday at the latest if all goes well. I thought it might be sooner, but there are a few complications. However, Hillman promised me last nite that he would do his level best to see that I get a fair break on the deal. He is very fond of you, and said some very nice things. He said to send you his heartiest congratulations. He is impatient too, as he has a gal in Tucson that he wants to marry. The dumbest thing we could have done was to wait till after the war to get married. As the saying goes, it is better to have loved and lost then never to have loved at all. Regarding pictures on Myrtle, she has not been spectacular but damned consistent as we have only missed the target once and that was because of weather. In the long run it is consistency that pays off and not one lucky hit on a big boat. I feel that our group has done a very satisfactory job to date. We have make some mistakes but that is only natural, and we have turned in some darn good work too, for which the top general down here has commended us. I agree with you that Alfred should get a promotion, and I think he will in the next month. They will try to put John's captiancy thru about the same time. You see when we came down here, they transferred the navigation officer out, but not the bombing officer, so Farrington could not make John bombing officer without creating a lot of ill feeling and we did not want to get off on the wrong track.

I wrote Muddy to get a little present for you from me and I hope that it has gotten there by this time. I just didn't want you to think that I had forgotten the 19th. You are probably a little hurt that I didn't write much when I was on leave. I haven't any alibi except the other boys were as bad, and when we hit civilization there just seems like there is so darn many things that we want to do and such short time to do it in. Anyway, Sweetie, I love you and Bill like the very devil, and oh, do I want to come home. A million kisses and hugs, I love you darling, Bill.

(Manbulloo)

September 30, 1943

Betty my sweet,

Tonite when I returned from practicing some bombing in Fyrtle, I was very happy to find four marvelous letters from you dated the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st. Golly you are wonderful about writing and I certainly appreciate it a hell of a lot as I just live for your letters. I am glad that my little present arrived in time and that you liked it so much, tho, honey I was just figuring that you would not have much use for it when I get home, ha, ha. We certainly have a lot of loving to catch up on and I don't mean maybe. As far as the babes over here are concerned I am plenty eager but only for one gal and that is you my love. It is no fun being away from you for so long, I wish that the time would speed up a little.

I was very sorry to hear that Bill Reineke is missing in action in England but very happy to hear that Liston is a prisoner of war and not killed as originally reported. You are right that this war takes a helluva toll among the best of our boys. It is a damn shame, but there is not much we can do now, but later we shall have to see that this darn thing does not happen again.

So Willie is still drinking too darn much. I guess that heredity is very strong, altho I had hoped that we would get your good looks and my brains. I guess I pulled that once before, darling, I don't really think you are illiterate, after all, your mother and father were married.

Regarding the allotments I talked to our adjutant and he said there was little that we could do that could not be handled much more expediently from your end. I would suggest that you write them, and state that reference to their files will show that the allotment became effective for my April pay and list the dates of the allotments received. Then I would advise them that due to a recent addition to the family with attendant expenses, it was necessary that allotments in arrears be forwarded immediately in order for you to meet your obligations. I would further advise them that your lawyer had suggested that unless immediate action was forthcoming the case should be forwarded to the war department to ascertain why the wife of an officer on active duty could not receive her allotments on schedule in accordance with the plan devised by that body. I would make a very formal business letter out of it so that they can immediately ascertain that you are cognizant of your rights. If after that no action is forthcoming we will write a very strong letter to the Adjutant general's dept.

Sweetie, I am very apologetic to both you and Yaqui for the very careless misspelling of his name. I am happy to hear that you will be able to ride him again shortly, and I am so happy that you will be able to leave the hospital now. I know how you are itching to be up and about again, and I am darn appreciative that you have been such a good girl about staying in bed. I have complete faith in your good judgement and know that you will take good care of yourself for me. Your idea of the picture of Bill for the family is swell. They will love it and I can't wait to get my set. I love you both so damn much. You are my sweetheart. Bill

Mrs. McFerren's Letters - September 1943

Corona, California

Sunday, September 26, 1943

My Dearest Sweetie pie,

The only thing I don't like about this business of being so busy is that it cramps my time to write to you, and that is an activity in which I could indulge unendingly. Well, maybe presently I won't be having to write, and I can talk an awful lot faster than I write so that problem will solve itself, I guess.

I have a bit of a case of writer's cramp tonite as I wrote P.J., Louise, and Cush today, and guess my hand isn't back up to par yet or sumpin. Wrote P.J. a straight from the shoulder letter telling her to go back to her husband and shed both sets of in-laws in a hurry or they might be on the toboggan. Wrote Cush to say 'hello' and 'thanks' for the nightie and \$10 for our pride and joy. I put some stamps I had with it, and got him a bond.

It's almost time to feed him now, bye the bye, so I'll have to terminate this presently. The enclosed clipping gives you an idea of what is apt to happen to war babies. Gruesome, isn't it? I shall certainly try to see to it that nothing like that ever befalls our Sweetie.

Gosh honey you should see the stack of letters that has suddenly rolled in. Here I worked like a little spartan a couple of weeks ago and got somewhat caught up on my correspondence, and now you should see how far behind the 8-ball I am. So what do I do? I write to my honey instead of the 50 million people to whom I owe letters.

Today was the great day, the day I saddled Yaqui and rode without a qualm. I was a beautiful day - cool and foggy. Monday - It got to be feeding time as you can guess. So our cherub and I went into session together and off to bed. To go on - my ride - it was wonderful. Just the kind of a day I love. My little old horse loved it too. That's the kind of weather that gets under his skin and makes him feel like a two year old. He had no idea of going out of a walk. We've done nothing else but for so long. He felt so good, his head was up high and his fine little ears pointed right straight forward, and every step was as tho he were walking on coil springs. Presently when I asked him to speed up, he was so surprised he hardly knew what to do. I was expecting a few bucks of fair quality but all he did was hop a little feebly, and slow down snorting and puffing. I had to laugh. He is just so fat and out of condition that he's practically incapable of anything but a walk.

The cherub just woke up and I brought him out to the kitchen to stay awake till 6. He slept like a top all last nite, and I think if I see that he stays awake from 5 to 6, he is tired enough to sleep well at nite. Honest, sweetie, you should see him. He is a prize. Really, he is an exceptionally cute baby and I am trying to be very unbiased in making that statement. The trick he pulls that I think is the funniest of all is the way in which he waves his mouth about when he is hungry. He opens it wide and twists his head as far to one side as he can, just hoping for something edible. Just like a little bird one of the nurses said. But if nothing edible comes along, he will gnaw your shoulder or sleeve or any other part. He's really ferocious!

9:40pm. Damn it - I love to write to you more than anything else in the world and here I am getting gypped out of it! You have only received three letters from me since I've been home, two of which were plenty poor excuses, and you can see how chopped up these last two are. Honey, I'm sorry but I'm terribly afraid the era of the letter a day has come to an abrupt end, and not because I want it to, you can bet on that. Perhaps presently I shall be able to get my schedule so arranged that I will have a little more time but for now, I'm a busy little gal.

Honey, one thing, you have mentioned several times apologetically that you are sorry you didn't manage your finances more astutely in your single days. Well, sweetie, forget that song because I'm sure that 99% of the exponents of American youth have handled them no more astutely, and after all, you had a nice juicy wreck to boot. I know there is no incentive to save when one has no aim or goal in particular for which to save, and after all, I didn't have any money either when I met you. And I'd been independent for some time. It's so easy to spend money when you're searching for happiness. I think your desire to pay off the old debts is very commendable, and I'm happy as a lark to get them out of the way. Say no more about it.

Darling, there is loads more I would love to say to you, but anon, My love, as our cherub has a case of colic and is screaming his head off so I must run give him an enema. Sweetie, I love you so, and it is just as tho I were drowning,

had to take a breath and couldn't possibly. When I think how madly I want to see you and how totally impossible it is.
Good night, my sweet adorable husband, Betty.

Corona

September 28, 1995

Dearest darling,

As I sit here and prepare to write my greatly curtailed daily letter to you, I have many thoughts in mind, the foremost of which is the hazy possibility that if some of your calculations turn out right, it could possibly be less than four months. But I feel somewhat the same way about that as a life-term prisoner might feel about a promised parole. I'm not counting any more on such good luck than he is. I still hope for a year, and anything less is 'money in the bank', to quote you. Then just think how pleasantly surprised I stand a chance of being! See? Naturally you must feel the same way as you too are very familiar with the unpredictable ways of the army, and it is still possible for it to change its mind on the number of hours necessary etc., or to tack on a few extra missions for good measure. Oh Sweetie, how wonderful it would be to have you here in my arms this very instant!!

I hope the packages in the mail to you travel OK. I tried all over Riverside today to buy some of that heavy wide brown gummed tape that seals them closed so securely, and like safety razors, alarm clocks, wind proof cigarette lighters, new cars and so on infinitum, the other things that are gone with the draft, the brown tape is a species extinct. So, hope string does the job.

The pen, that's another war casualty. I tried to find you a good Waterman or Sheaffer and settled for a Wearever at a very inexpensive price. It seems to be the thing everyone is buying these days as a substitute. I tried the point and it's not too bad, and the saleslady told me that if it is kept closed tightly, the vacuum will not leak, so perhaps you can make out with it.

Bye the bye, Sweetmeats, have you still your scout knives? I shall be truly proud of you if you bring them back with you. I had a long telegram tonite from your mother. She evidently had received the gloomy epistle I wrote the night before your cablegram arrived. She wired to tell me that you hadn't received hers of Aug. 7th, to cheer up, probably you were on pass. I wired her right back to tell her I'd heard from you. I guess you were on pass. What a predicament poor Lee got himself into with that gal! Of course, I will say nothing about that as he can tell Ginny himself.

Honey, my love, the old story, time to feed Jr.! I shall work out a schedule presently whereby you will receive longer and better letters, but for now, good nite, dearest. xxxX Betty

Terror in the Sky

October 1943

The reality of war got very personal when the Japanese shot Fyrtle Myrtle down on October 26. Our combat month began on October 5 with another reconnaissance mission north to Sorong and some neighboring islands, to photograph Japanese facilities, shipping, and defensive activities. MacArthur's ground forces were preparing to invade New Guinea and needed more intelligence on Japanese positions. On October 10 we made a raid on Makassar in the Celebes island group to destroy harbor facilities and oil storage areas.

On October 13 the 380th got orders to shift part of the group to Port Moresby on the Southeastern coast of New Guinea. MacArthur asked 5th Air Force's General Kenney to 'bring everything he had' within easy striking distance of Rabaul, New Britain. Rabaul was a big Japanese supply base serving its forces in the Solomon Islands and northern New Guinea. MacArthur's ground forces wanted Rabaul neutralized to cut down the supplies available to the defending Japanese. Kenney gathered 86 aircraft from various U.S. groups, and whatever the Australians could provide. We were among the 12 planes the 380th Bomb Group sent.

We left Manbulloo that morning, and arrived in Port Moresby in the afternoon. As we were getting out of our plane, we noticed a P-47 fighter land, and a pilot wearing civilian clothes got out. I asked the ground crew chief who it was. "Why," he said, "that's Colonel Lindbergh." I said, "You're kidding, what the hell is he doing over here?" He said, "He's working for Republic Aviation, and he's been demonstrating to the pilots over here that the P-47 is a good aircraft against the Zero. Today he went up and shot down two Zeros."

When I went into the flight operations shack, I approached Lindbergh and said, "Colonel can I speak to you? He said, "Sure, what's on your mind, young man?" I told him about how as a 12 year old boy in the 1920s, one of my fishing forays got interrupted because of him. I related how in the distance I heard our town's fire whistles suddenly start blaring on and on. "It was because you had landed in Paris," I summed up. He got a big kick out of that.

From Port Moresby, we flew to Rabaul about five days in a row, but had atrocious weather working against us. During the entire time, a persistent cloud cover prevented us from reaching, or making any effective bomb runs against targets. Our biggest accomplishment was not running into each other in the soupy weather. Our air effort against the Japanese came to naught, and by October 20 we were back at our base at Manbulloo.

Colonel Miller, our commander, was still after me to agree to stay on after my tour was up. While I wanted to get home to Betty, and my son, it was war. When they praise you for your skill, and they need you, it's hard to shirk the responsibility. Then there was the matter of money. My only personal income at that time was my lieutenant's pay. Betty's parents weren't rich, and it embarrassed me when they gave us \$1,000 for a wedding present. That was a lot of money in 1943, and I wanted to return it to them.

Also, my status in the military hierarchy would benefit from the rapid promotions to captain, then major, that came with the new job. Two days before I got shot down, I told him I'd stay.

Our target on the fateful day of October 26 was Pomelaa, a nickel refining plant on the main Celebes Island. Plans called for 12 planes in the raid, six from Fenton Field and six from Manbulloo. The six from Fenton Field never joined us for a variety of mechanical reasons. Two from our Manbulloo group also aborted for mechanical problems. Only four aircraft flew the mission. Again, orders said do not bomb shipping. The target priority was a plant that supplied over 60 percent of the nickel the Japanese needed for the alloys that went into their aircraft production. Also, any delay chasing shipping targets would keep us over the target too long and expose us to Japanese fighters based 100 miles to the north at Kendari.

The post-war record of the mission is unclear about the reason, but one pilot broke mission discipline and diverted after a sizeable transport ship. Two other planes and we completed our runs at the target from about 5000 feet, and were ready to head for home. We called the other plane on the in-flight radio net and ordered the pilot to break away from his attack on the ship and get back in formation. He replied, "Leave me alone, I've gotta get that ship."

Farrington decided to wait for him to provide support and protective cover. I warned him, "John, we can't afford to spend time over the target." He ignored me, and we spent about 25 extra minutes in the target area. That was just enough time to allow the Japanese Navy Zeros to scramble from Kendari and reach the area. It was only about a 15 to 20 minute flight for them once they received news of the attack on Pomelaa and took off.

It was about noon and by now, I was so mad at Farrington I yelled at him, "That bastard ought to be court martialled," adding, "I just got married, we've just had a little boy, and I'll be damned if I want to lose my life over somebody deliberately screwing up a mission and targeting my ass."

Finally, we all cleared the target area and the four of us formed into a diamond formation heading home. While we were having lunch, the Japanese intercepted us at the southeastern tip of the main Celebes island. About a dozen Zeros came in on us from dead ahead. Our new nose turret never responded properly, and their first burst of cannon fire hit us there, instantly killing bombardier John Perry, nose gunner James DeGroat, and fatally wounding Farrington. The shells also set fire to a pressurized hydraulic reservoir that operated the nose wheel. At the time, I was up on the flight deck right behind Farrington. When they started shooting, I ducked behind one of the armored plates on the flight deck, which saved my life.

Howard Sleighter and I tried to put the fire out, but the hot hydraulic fluid had too much of head start, and we couldn't. The plane was lost, Farrington had died, and now as senior officer aboard, I sent Sleighter back to the waist area to tell the crew to bail out. Losing altitude by now, we were down to about 3,000 feet in a shallow, but irreversible dive.

Sgt. Louis Glavan was firing away from the top turret. I reached up, slapped his leg and said, "We gotta get out of here." He came down from his turret and we opened the top escape hatch and signaled Tracy Dumont, our new co-pilot who had replaced Al Paris, to jump out. Part way out of the hatch, he froze and wouldn't jump. So Glavan and I each took one of his feet and flipped him out, hollering after him not to forget to pull the release cord on his parachute. Glavan went out ahead of me, but he didn't survive. He could have hit one of the vertical sections of the tail, or if he made it down, sharks might have caught him, or he drowned. After he left, I pulled myself up into the escape hatch. Just as I did, the plane blew up, and I was in the air, dazed, and in a free fall.

After I overcame the initial shock, I pulled my rip cord about 500 feet over the water. My chute opened, and the sudden quiet was overwhelming as I drifted down. It was a beautiful day about one o'clock in the afternoon. I thought, 'Oh, God, what if this is my last day?' I hit the water, and went down about 20 feet. While under water, I was afraid of my getting tangled in my parachute shrouds. As soon as I could, I grabbed the front snaps, released the chute, and kicked away from it. Then, I pulled on my Mae West, the popular term for a chesty-looking inflatable life vest, which shot me up to the surface.

I looked around, and I saw two life rafts floating some distance away. Somehow, when the plane blew up, the inflatable life rafts located in compartments on the top of the aircraft miraculously deployed. It seemed like it took me forever to swim to those life rafts. Once I got closer to them, I saw that Tracy Dumont had made it down and was already in one of them. After personally helping to toss him overboard, I was relieved that he had regained composure enough to pull the rip cord on his parachute.

I still had my survival kit, which had emergency food, first aid, other supplies, and extra ammunition for my revolver. When I got to the raft, Dumont was still somewhat dazed. I handed him my survival kit, and he clumsily tossed it over his shoulder. It missed landing in the raft and sunk. After all the trouble I took to preserve the kit, that really made me mad. Once in the raft, I looked around, and saw that we were not far from the rescue point for that mission. I suffered some superficial scalp burns and bruises during the bail out, but I felt lucky to be in one piece. I thought we had a chance to reach the rescue point.

We paddled toward the escape point towing the other life raft. There was a chance of picking up the guys in the waist area who bailed out ahead of us. At a flying speed of about 120 knots, every minute means we travelled a couple of miles. This accounted for all of us survivors being scattered over five miles of ocean. Howard Sleighter, and the crew in the rear had jumped a couple of minutes before Dumont, Glavan, and I did. Once on the sea, I figured we were about 12 miles from land, and 900 miles from home base.

By now it was about two in the afternoon. About 45 minutes later we saw a Japanese patrol boat bearing down on us. The Japanese, of course, would have alerted their coastal command to look for two downed B-24 crews. The returning formation lost the plane with the hotshot ship chaser as well. The Japanese were probably eager to get their hands on some living members of the 380th Bomb Group that had been harassing them for these many months.

As the patrol boat approached, I checked my pockets to be sure that I had nothing that would compromise us. The only thing I found was a letter from my wife. She had written it three hours after our son was born. In it she had scrawled, 'we had Bill III today. Honey it wasn't too bad. It was like falling off a high bar.' I'd kept that letter with me since I received it, but because it had her address on it, I tore it up and pitched it over the side.

I could see that the patrol boat was well-armed with cannon and machine guns. When I pulled my revolver out, Dumont still not thinking too clearly, asked in panic, "What are you planning to do, shoot it out with them?" I said, "Tracy, don't be a nut. They've got the heavy armament, I just want to get rid of this gun, so they don't think we're hostile and fire on us."

I was about to become a prisoner as I had dreamed just two nights before. I mentioned this in my October 24 letter to Betty. I was about to begin two years of physical and emotional hell in the hands of the Japanese.

Letters - October 1943

(Manbulloo)

October 1, 1943

Betty my sweetheart,

I have really been a good boy today and have written four letters due a long time ago, all to people in the can company including Mr. Lake, my two former roommates, and my immediate boss. Now I have those off my conscience, I can settle down to writing my favorite wife, gal, mother, etc.

News is quite scarce at present. We have found that the radio was a great idea and it helps to pass the time considerably. We are doing a lot of swimming due to the heat, and spend the rest of the time writing letters, reading, and chewing the fat when we are not flying. I think it best to advise you that my return before Christmas seems out of the question. I didn't want you to get up any false hopes and then be disappointed, as I feel sure that you would rather know the facts as far as I can give them to you, since there is no point in trying to kid ourselves.

I am very happy to know that you will have Bill as a companion now while I am away, and I am sure that taking care of his wants and welfare will help the time to pass a lot faster. As I wrote Muddy and Daddy, this thing of being a papa is great. The initial 'work' is so darn pleasant, and the ultimate result is such a wonderful joy. Incidentally, I could stand some of that 'work' very nicely, and I am sure you will feel the same way in several weeks.

In answer to all the kidding Daddy gave me about Bill's slightly premature arrival, I gave this explanation. I told him that after that last week we had together in San Francisco, Bill probably decided he had enough, and decided he better get the hell out of where he was for fear I might come home unexpectedly. Ain't I the vulgar one, but as I told my old man, it takes a rat to catch a rat, and you have to fight fire with fire, I guess.

I try to imagine in my mind what Bill looks like at this point and your wonderful letters help so much to fill out that picture. Gosh, honey, I wish I could see you two, and when you take the pictures I hope that you include some with you both together. Your ideas of sending Muddy and Daddy a large one is just a perfect idea, and I am sure that there is nothing that could please them more. I can tell from their letters how elated they are about our pride and joy, tho how anyone could not fail to feel that way is certainly beyond me.

I think I wrote you that the group sent our crew in for the Distinguished Flying Cross, but I rather doubt if we will get it at this point, as a lot of others have been turned down, but naturally I would like to get it as Bill might like to have it when he gets a little older.

Honey, the more I think about it, it is amazing to me that we have only known each other a little over a year. So much has happened in that time and it is all been good except being separated from you, but I guess we can't have everything. It is amazing further to me how well and completely we know and love each other, and I feel that in that respect we have arrived at a mutual admiration, understanding, and respect that few people ever attain, and then usually after a much longer period of contact. I guess we just clicked from the start, and as you said, the ultimate result was surely inevitable. Sweetie, you and Bill are just perfect. I love you with all my heart. A big kiss. Bill

(Manbulloo)

October 2, 1943

Betty honey,

Here is our favorite anniversary next to the nineteenth again, golly, the months are really rolling by and it seems hard to believe that we have been married nine months, tho Willie is undoubtedly a constant reminder. It so happens that his birthday is the same day of the month as mine which is somewhat of a coincidence. I just can't wait to see pictures of him, as I still am very much of a novice at this game of being a papa, and would like to see what the result looks like.

I sent you a cable day before yesterday which should beat this letter by several days. Last nite I received an air mail from you dated Sept. 7th. I had to laugh at the difference in your letters just prior to Bill's arrival, and those after he made his appearance. All of your letters are marvelous but the subject matter changed considerably. I also had letters

from Marg, Louise, and Muddy. Apparently Hoopston in general is very elated about Bill and I certainly think they should be, as besides being ours he is undoubtedly very exceptional.

Speaking of pictures, sweetie, as soon as you can, I wish you would have more pictures taken. The one you sent me August 2nd arrived today, and I was delighted to get it, but I don't feel that it did you justice. I like the one in the magazine a lot better. It would be my suggestion that you try some with your hair done up as that other one done that way was swell. I would also like to have a good photographer take one of you and Bill in the near future. Louise said that she was going to try and get you a lot of film in Chicago. I am also going to write a friend of mine and see if he can get you some, as he is a fiend on the subject of photography and should know all of the angles. What size do you use?

In two days we will have been apart five months which is one more month than the time we had together after we were married. This is no way to do things, and I wish the army could see things my way. I am just not worth a damn away from you, and to say that I am homesick for you today as always is putting it mildly. The time seems to go so darn slow, and when a guy loves anyone as much as I love you, it just ain't good.

You made a reference to Bob Ravey. A correspondent met some of the ships and took the names of all of the members of the crew, and sent them to their local newspapers. It so happened that he did not contact us, so that is the dope. You should now know the reference to the San Francisco paper as it was the same. I cannot understand why the reference to TIME magazine was censored out, as S-2 gave us permission to send it and it was not censored out of my letter to my family or any of the other boys. C'est la guerre. I guess every censor has his own ideas on the subject, and perhaps they had not been advised regarding that particular reference.

Tell Bill that his old man is dying to get back and see him and his lovely mother, and also tell Bill to tell his mother that I think she is simply wonderful and that I am very eager for her, altho I am afraid that Bill already knows about that. My love to Mom, Dad, and Stanley. You are so sweet, honey, and it hurts so much to be away from you.

I love you my darling. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

October 4, 1943
Betty sweetie,

Well, honey, here five months have elapsed since I kissed you so unsatisfactorily goodbye in San Francisco. At least we know that we have that many months of hell behind us, and that is just five months that does not stand between our seeing each other. I think your idea about a sleeping pill that would put us asleep until it was time for me to come home is swell, altho I am afraid that as far as you are concerned, Bill would raise hell about that, even if he does enjoy falling to sleep at the oddest moments. Business has been somewhat slack the last week or so but I have reason to believe that it will pick up shortly. I would rather be busy as the time goes so much faster, and the more work, the sooner I can be headed back, and after all, that is the only thing that matters to me as you well know. After practically frying from the heat for about three weeks it has cooled off a little, which helps a lot.

Last nite after several very, very poor pictures we had a darn good one, "Stand by for Action", with Charles Laughton, Brian Donlevey, and Robert Taylor. I was quite amusing and the boys kidded me about certain portions of it where a large number of babies were picked up at sea.

One type of picture that we get damn sick of over here is the war propaganda bunch. They are so darn obvious, and some of the lines really stink, such as in reference to a former football player, "there is now a bigger game in the world today, and Frankie is dying to get in it". The boys really shriek at such drivel, and the draft dodgers that write such things should be strung up. I don't mind them staying in Hollywood if they would just keep their traps shut. This is nothing stirring or heroic about warfare. It is just a grim business, and all of this sentimental palaver about it makes all of the boys that are really in action sick at the tummy to put it mildly.

There isn't a damn one of them that doesn't want to get home as soon as possible. They do their jobs and do them darn well, but all of this 'light of freedom' hooey leaves me very cold. I have always believed in 'my country, right or wrong', and I want to do my share, but this attempt to glamorize war is out of place. It is high time that the public is given a much truer picture of the grimmer aspects of war. On the way home I would like to drop a few eggs on a couple of Hollywood studios that I can think of. Pardon me for being so vehement on the subject, but I have always detested sham.

“Thirty minutes over Tokyo” was one of the few good articles that I have read on the subject, and that boy did not spare the facts. One thing I know is that I shall always fight my damndest to see that Bill’s generation will not have to go thru this darn thing. I am now firmly convinced that the only way to keep peace is to be so darn strong that no one will start a fight. It may cost a lot to maintain a large army and navy but if you just avoid one war in a hundred years that way, you will have saved a lot of money. Such a program would also take care of the unemployment situation in poor times.

The government might well have spent the money assigned for relief for the purpose of building up the navy and air corps. Human nature is such that there will always be individuals, groups, nations, and combination of nations that will take by force what spoils they can lay their hands on unless there is someone there to stop them. I realize that we can’t police the whole world ourselves, but as it has grown so small, it may be possible that with England’s help, we will have to. That has already been suggested by several individuals in Congress, and it may be the only solution. I do hope that once the war is won, people will not become too complacent, tired of the horrors of war, and drift along and allow the foundations of another one slowly build up again.

Enough of my editorial for the day, sweetie, as I am a little hot, I probably went into too much length on that subject as I do when I get started on domestic government. When I start ranting, it is not from the standpoint of politics or party affiliations, it is just my very humble opinion on what I think from very limited observations is best for the group as a whole.

Sweetie, you know that all I want in life, is to live a peaceful life with you and our children, but I further realize that some day Bill and his sisters or brothers will want the same thing, and it would not be quite fair to them, if we did not at least stop and think for a moment what might be in store for them.

You know, ever since we first met, there has always been some restriction on our seeing each other for other than a limited length of time. At Mather, the weekend brought the only joy for a week, 24 hours of heaven, and all thru training it was a battle for us to be together much more than that. And then when we had that six day leave and later that unexpected wonderful week in San Francisco, we always knew that those happy days were only a prelude to a long and painful separation. The thought that I could come back to you and think, ‘I shall never have to leave her again’, seems like some sort of rose-colored Utopia, that only exists in imagination and never in reality.

Even when I was only sixteen I told my mother that to me, far and away, the most important decision a man made was the girl he married and that his most important task in life was building a happy life for her and with her, and for whatever children they might be blessed with.

Well, my darling wife, I feel that some way now only a hundredfold more so. I realize that one must not be impatient, but sometimes it is pretty hard when I love you do damned completely. I realize, tho, that it has been equally if not more difficult for you, and I shall never forget what a grand sport you have been about everything, from the time we first met on thru these months of hellish separation, the most of which you had pregnancy as an additional problem.

You will never know my feelings, or perhaps you will at that -as you know me so damn well, when I received your cable that Bill had come into the world. It was really wonderful of you and Mother Nature to give us a boy first, honey, as confidentially, I did hope like hell that it would be that way. Please give him a big kiss for me, and to both of you always will belong all of the love and affection that I have in my heart. Always, darling, I love you. Bill

(Manbulloo)

October 6, 1943

Betty my sweet,

I missed writing yesterday as I was very busy, and I do have to get my business finished before I can think of coming home. I am beginning to think your original idea of your birthday will be about right, tho I still have hopes that we shall be pleasantly surprised, and I am trying to keep as many irons in the fire as possible. Anyway this is the sixth month coming up, which helps a lot.

I received a letter from Gus today, the lucky dog. However, he was lucky to be able to go any place if you follow me. There is little news at present. I have started playing bridge again to pass the time. I found that I was a little rusty but you remember very quickly after you play for awhile again. As far as riding is concerned, I must admit that I have done very little of that since we reached the combat area. At the present time I have seven tenths of the necessary hours which is some consolation. I really am so damned impatient, but will try to abide my time as well as possible. I am glad

that they circumcised Bill as I recall that it was a very unpleasant operation when it was performed on me at the age of eight, and he probably didn't know what was going on. I was glad that Muddy and Daddy had my tonsils and adenoids taken out when I was two, as it was a cinch then, and both can be nasty later on in life.

I hope that you will be able to get some pictures soon, as I am really in a hurry to see what our pride and joy looks like. By the time that you get this letter, he will be a month old. Egad, how tempus fugit. The boys keep kidding me, and telling me that Willie will be shaving before I ever see him, but I hope that my stay will not be quite that long. Al says that he wishes Mickey had given forth by this time altho that could be really embarrassing as he didn't even meet her till early March. Betty Farrington is due some time in September. John says the horrible truth was that they hadn't quite planned it that way, but one nite he went to sleep with his motor running. Now who would do a thing like that?

Incidentally, sweetie, have you gotten much kidding from your pals about Bill's slightly early arrival? The boys have had a lot of fun with me, but I don't mind it a bit as if he had come in six months, I wouldn't care. We love each other so darn much, sweetie, and I just think we are lucky as hell to have him at all. I have always loved children (you have probably noted the characteristics) and it has always been one of my primary desires to have a son born to the girl I love and myself. However, I didn't originally plan that I should be eight thousand miles away at the time.

I have pretty well caught up on my correspondence except for a few odds and ends. I have been so spoiled by mail that it hasn't bothered me a bit when none came in for anyone the last couple of days. You have really been marvelous, sweetie, and Muddy also wrote me how surprised and delighted she was to hear from you so soon after Bill had his coming out party. Give Mom, Dad and Stan my love, and sweetie, you know how completely I love you.

Willie, you are my sweetheart. Pop!

(Manbulloo)

October 7, 1943

Betty my love,

Due to the heat this letter may be a bit dull, but I shall try to do my best. Last nite we had a good show, "Slightly Dangerous" with Lana Turner and Robert Young. Miss Turner does not appear to be the intellectual type so the boys enjoyed her antics thoroughly. I have finally dug up some good bridge players so that should help to pass the time. After the movie we consumed some steaks on our broiler and had some ice cold sparkling burgundy which we secured in Adelaide. It was quite a treat, and our guest of the evening was an AP correspondent who has really been around. He was very interesting and we had a lot of fun. He took our names and said he was going to send something back to our local papers. We got gypped on that other deal, as we were one of the very few that made both trips. Not that it matters as far as we are concerned, but I know how your friends, sweetheart, and families enjoy reading such things.

I was disappointed that they gave Sumner Welles the sack as he is a chap of rare ability, despite some objectionable characteristics he has. However, as TIME said, Hull always gets his man, and Mr. Welles apparently erred in not handling Cordell a little more diplomatically. I hope that by this time the slight gap in my letters resulting from leavitis has been filled by my subsequent letters as I have been a good boy on that score since I returned.

I imagine by now that in keeping with certain other tendencies, Bill has been weaned to Budweiser or Papst Blue Ribbon, or perhaps it is just a little early for him to display his old man's thirst. Out here our main love is beer due to the heat, and if we could get more than our ration of two bottles a week, I am sure that no one would drink anything else. You really get thirsty in these climates and I have found much to my surprise that water makes an excellent drink. It took me a little while to get used to its flavor, as I understand it is an acquired taste, but after that it went down darn easy and I didn't have to hold my nose at all as I expected.

This morning we had the critique of our last mission which always fun in a way to hash over the good points and the errors. I have always liked the critique idea, as much valuable information can be gained from various suggestions arising from problems encountered. John is doing very well as operations officer and I would not be greatly surprised to see him go a step higher. His great conscientiousness back in the states is now beginning to pay dividends, tho if I had been in his shoes, I would have had my sweetie with me, and jump the post at every opportunity. However, it takes a lot of different types of personalities to make a world, and we all have different desires and ambitions. I have only one, and that is to get home to you and Bill as soon as possible. I try to hurry up the time when I am away from you and try to slow it down when we are together, but it just works in reverse for some reason or other. Take good care of yourself

and Willie (as if I had to tell you), and one of these day we will be in each other's arms again. I love you darling, so damned much. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

October 10, 1943

Betty my sweetheart,

Business has been so pressing the last couple of days that I have missed two letters, and honey, I am afraid that I may have to miss several more, but I shall make up for it, and when I don't write you can figure that is just so much more work toward my coming home. Months are still hard to figure, but I am hoping that we get a break shortly after the first of the year, the boys say I am crazy, but I have a hunch.

Sweetie, your wonderful letter of Sept. 27th came this afternoon and was I glad to get it, as no one has had any mail for about a week. I certainly stand corrected on my spelling, and I indeed intend to improve my education after I get back. Perhaps you could tutor me after the first month when I let you out of bed. It sounds to me like Bill is keeping you very busy and probably will even more so when he starts spending less time sleeping. The Dixie cup diapers seem like a swell idea. We will certainly have to approach the War Production Board about releasing more of them. Golly, I can't wait to see him, wet panties and all. One of the boys who has been a papa for seven months, said, after several drinks the other nite, "Damn it, I haven't even had a chance to have my son wet me." We appreciated the helpful hints on doing clothes that you sent. I think I should get a Purple Heart for all the scars I have on my fingers from sewing buttons on the other day. Honey, I really need you for so darn many reasons.

I agree with you that we have two wonderful families. In a letter from my mother today she said, quote, "If I were to pick a gal for you Bill, from my point of view, I never could have found as nice a one as your Betty." I also had a letter from Tate Duley advising me that he and Bob Gannon really celebrated Bill's arrival by first having eight drinks, one for every pound, and then having eight more just in case he had been twins. Some people are never satisfied, as I wrote him. He advised me also that Bob's definition of a horse show was a bunch of horses showing their asses to a bunch of horses' asses showing their horses. I figured you would give him a little talk on that subject when you meet him. He asked me if I had heard about the very nervous husband who as he took his wife to a hospital the nite before the great event, timidly asked, "Darling, are you sure you want to go thru with all this?" Mother Nature should have a big laugh on that.

You recall we were joking about the nurse who wrote me from North Africa. Here is a real coincidence - the other nite I saw her in a news reel, and the next day I received a letter from her congratulating us on the heir 'to come'. I didn't get around to answering the El Paso letter till August. She said they had one rough time when they were strafed and had to throw the patient in a sewage ditch and jump in afterwards. I shall have to let her know about our pride and joy. In fact, I have been letting the whole world know about it.

Clayton's letter hasn't come yet, and I am looking forward to it a lot as he and Sadie are so darn swell and have been so marvelous to us. By this time any lapses due to leave should be finished by now as far as mail is concerned. I'll try and write a long air mail tomorrow. I love you so darn much, you and Bill. Bill, Sr.

(Port Moresby, New Guinea)

October 11, 1943

Betty darling,

I wanted to send Bill a cable for his first birthday but it so happened that it was impossible to do so as I could not get to a cable source. I did not think I would be able to write you this week, but got an unexpected opportunity. I am looking forward to returning to base so I can get some mail, however, may have to wait some time before I can get any mail from you or anyone else.

We are very busy to say the least. I was glad to see Fred again as he is with us and so is Lee. As to where we are, I can't very well tell you that, but if you (censored) it shouldn't be hard to figure out.

I can't get over the fact that Bill is already a month old and I haven't even seen him yet - that is a dirty gyp. Fred said to send his very best congratulations, love, etc. as does Lee. Oh, honey, I wish that clock would spin fast, as I just can't

wait to get home. The next week or so should pass quickly enough, but I hate to think of the other months to follow before I can see you and Bill. I can just hear him saying, "Mommy, who's that funny man that comes to see us."

Some of the boys that were sent back from other outfits got 30 days leave, and then were assigned as nuclei of other groups. However, I'll worry about that when the time comes around. The main thing is to get home in the first place. I am really getting homesick, now, and we have only put in five and a half months over here to date. There are some guys over here that have 18 months, but they weren't flying all that time. I still intend to make it by your birthday. It is wonderful to have such a wonderful wife and son but it is hell to be away from them, darling. I love you so completely, and without you I am so damned dissatisfied. However, I'll try and be a good boy, and not be impatient. I just can't wait, tho, to see that Golden Gate bridge under the wing of a plane. They showed a picture of it the other nite in a show, and you should have heard the boys yell.

It has been hot as hell today, but the shower that is coming down now cools things off. I am glad you finally received the references on the articles in various publications. We were told we could make them - you referred to the censor having to struggle to read your wonderful long letters. Sweetie, I am sure he would enjoy them, but no mail from the states is censored as far as I can see.

I was happy to hear that Jean Reineke's brother is a prisoner-of-war and not killed as first reported. It is no fun being captured but better than being killed, except over here, where it is six of one and half a dozen of the other. However, while there is life, there is hope. Anyway, things are getting pretty hot for the Japs in some areas, and I have a feeling they will get a lot hotter.

I thought perhaps I would run into some of my classmates where I am now, but so far haven't seen any of them. I guess they must have gone the other way.

Sweetie, I have to cut this short, as I have a lot to do right now, but darling, in case I haven't told you before, I love you so terrifically, and no boy could have a more perfect wife than you are. Gee, sweetie, we have had fun together and I just can't wait to see you again.

Give Bill a big smack for me on his 1st birthday even if it is one month. No doubt he is walking and talking by now as I know how exceptional he must be. Give my love to Mom, Dat, and Stan, and honey, all the love and kisses and affection I can muster is yours. Always yours, darling. Bill P.S. I can use the stationary, I think.

(Port Moresby)

October 14, 1943
Betty Darling,

The place where I am now is really hot, and at this point the perspiration is really running down my face. The only way to keep cool when we are not flying is to get in a shower and stay there. The time the past week or so has passed fairly quickly, and I am beginning to think I shall at least make it for your birthday. I am getting my time fast enough to come home sooner, but there is always the problem of replacements.

I hope by this time that you will have had a chance to take some pictures of Willie, as I can't wait to get some pictures of him. I also hope you will have an opportunity to have some pictures of yourself with Willie made. They will be nice to have, Sweetie.

I had an awfully nice dream about you last nite, honey, only I woke up too soon, damn it. Golly, I long for you my love, and it seems like an eternity since we said goodbye for awhile. I never wanted to be home so much in my life, and this is certainly a hell of a time for me to be away. However, I am sure Bill will keep you plenty busy and as a result the time will pass a lot faster. I love you darling, with all my heart and soul. A thousand kisses and hugs. Bill

(Port Moresby)

October 15, 1943
Betty darling,

We have really been busy lately, and as I wrote you before, I will not be in a position to keep up my correspondence for the next week or so. I can't wait to get back to our base so we can get some mail, as it has been almost two weeks now,

without any, and undoubtedly there is a lot back there for me. As I wrote you, Lee and Fred are very happy about Bill and sent their best wishes and felicitations. We had a long talk last nite and we were laughing about all the fun we had together at Denver, Topeka, and other places. Fred said he knew damn well I was going over the fence all the time. Well, honey, when I get back, they will have a hard time keeping me on any post, I can tell you that, because, darling, we have so many things to catch up on. Just think that on the 19th of November we will have been apart as long as we were together after meeting each other. I love you so much, darling. Kiss little Willie for me. All my love, Sweetie. Bill.

(Port Moresby)

October 16, 1943

Betty honey,

I would really like to be with you today as it was one of those that was particularly blue. I am getting damn sick of everything over here at this point, and I don't think I ever wanted to be home more than I did today. One reason I particularly feel like that right now is because I am not in a position to get any mail and that plays such an important part in keeping up my morale when I am away from you, my darling. It all comes down to the fact that I have been away from you too damn long, and that's all there is to it.

The last couple of days we have just been marking time, and that gets on my nerves to say the least. I just can't seem to speed the time up, darn it. I keep thinking how wonderful Bill must be, and how I would like to hold him in my arms. It is wonderful to have a son, but hell not to be able to see him. Fred Miller tries to tell me they are just a problem, the first year, but I just can't see it that way. One minor consolation is that they have a lot better movies where we are now, and every nite. Last nite we saw Fred Astaire and Joan Leslie in "The Sky's the Limit". It was very amusing and we got a big kick out of it.

The weather has been very humid, and one is continually bathed in perspiration. I take about four or five showers a day to keep cool and clean. Last nite I dreamt I was home, and when I woke up, it was so realistic that I reached over to put my arms around you, and when I found you weren't there, I just about cried.

I still feel very badly about the fact that I was such a poor correspondent when I was on leave, especially since that was the week after Bill was born. He was born the nite before I went on leave, and no wonder I had so many dreams in Adelaide about receiving wires from you. I feel so sorry for Mrs. Swan. I understand that her baby has arrived, well, at least she has that.

Darling, I am sure that I wrote you about the magazine you sent me, and I appreciated it so much. I was so proud of you, and enjoyed your picture, write-up, and letter so much. Al and I were talking this afternoon about Topeka. He said he was very happy you were taking good care of the alarm clock, altho he holds it responsible for Mickey's condition. However, they are very happy about that.

John thinks I will be sent home after I get my hours in. Golly, honey, I would fly every day if they would let me if it meant getting home sooner to you. I didn't know how much pain separation can cause till I fell so completely in love with you, and I didn't have any idea how much life could mean when you found the perfect girl. You are just the answer to everything I ever wanted with a great big dividend of loveliness in all things thrown in for good measure. I just never knew any girl could have so darn much to offer. You are so wonderful to love, laugh with, talk with, do things with, and you take such wonderful care of me, baby, golly, I miss you.

The world news continues to pick up. It seems that the Russians are winning a lot of ground, and the Germans are slowing up in Italy. As far as this area is concerned, the Jap is slowly losing ground as we get more stuff to fight with. However, there is still a long way to go. As the saying goes, we have just begun to fight. The first year of the war the Japs took a helluva lot of territory and have had time to develop that territory. It will take some time to get back what was lost, and then take their own. I think this war will last longer than the news commentators in the states so blithely prophesy. We have to laugh at some of the stuff they hand out, but the stuff the Japs hand out is ten times worse. They are the biggest bunch of liars. Japs captured at Guadalcanal thought they were fighting in Australia.

Enough of war, darling, all I want is a little peace with you. Golly, honey, it seems like a century since I held you in my arms.

Please give Willie my love and tell him his old man can't wait to get back to see him. Also, give my love to Mom, Dad, and Stan. I miss them too. When I get back, we will have to have sometime with them as I only saw them twice. War is hell.

Honeybunch, I just love you so much I can't put it in words. You know how I feel, darling, and I hope God lets me come home to you soon. You are so sweet. I love you. Bill

(Port Moresby)

October 17, 1943

Betty my love,

I hope that in another week I shall be able to resume normal correspondence and will be able to get your mail. Last nite I was talking to a chap from the outfit which is housing us at present, and he told me his wife was born in Corona, and now lives in San Bernadino. Her maiden name was Barbara Tilson, and his name is Lt. Hodges, he is a bombardier, and a darn nice fellow. He majored in dramatics at Loyola, and was just getting started in that game when the draft caught him in 1941. Barbara's family still live in Corona, perhaps you know them? There isn't much news that I can give you. It is hot as hell to say the least, and we will all be glad to get back to our own base.

Darling, I long for you so darn much, and it just seems like the time will never pass. However, I hope that three more months will see my stay over here end. There is so darn much I want to tell you, and will have to tell you, so I hope that you can find time to keep your scrapbook up. I love you, honey, you and Bill, so much. Always yours, Bill.

(Port Moresby)

October 18, 1943

Betty my honey,

I finally got hold of a machine where I am now, so maybe this letter will be a little more coherent than the other notes that I have scrawled off to you whenever I could get a chance. We are very elated tonite as we are going back to our base which means mail. As I told you before, the last letter I had before I left was Sept. 27th, and since then we have not had a chance to get any mail so we are looking forward to several weeks accumulation. We live so much for mail over here, so it will be a heyday when we get back.

The rainy season is just beginning now, and I can see that it will not be any picnic. After the rain falls, there comes a humid period when one is continually bathed in perspiration which means that you are just about wet all the time. However, things like that will just mean coming home to you and Bill so much more fun, and your wonderful letters and the knowledge of your love places me in a position to take any inconveniences that come, altho naturally I like to bitch, as when you get things off your chest you seem to feel a lot better. Probably the explanation for profanity. I think that the English teachers are wrong to some extent when they say that profanity merely shows a lack of vocabulary. I know some boys over here that have a darn good vocabulary as far as Webster is concerned, but find such a lingo unsatisfactory for certain conditions and events. I don't mean by that you will have to put cotton in Bill's ears when I get home, but merely the fact that sometimes cussing is good for the soul.

I am happy to inform you if I haven't before, that I have now flown two thirds of the maximum amount of hours one can expect to fly before being sent home. Of course, the last third will probably seem to take the longest but it is still a step in the right direction. Since I did not fly a combat mission till two months after I got over here, you can figure things out for yourself.

Darling, I am so much in love with you that the thought of being actually with you again seems like something out of this world. When I am busy flying I can keep my mind off of you to some extent, but even then I think of you, and the rest of the time you are constantly on my mind. I never knew how sweet love could be and life could be until I met you my darling. When I think how many hours I wasted at home before I met you, and how much just a small percentage of that time would mean with you, it drives my crazy. Oh golly, honey, the time just has to pass a little quicker so we can be together. Everything is so right when I am with you, and just so darn blue when I can't see you. We have always had to fight for hours together, but I do feel that we made the most of those that were granted us.

Honey, I can see from the type that you are going to have a hell of a time reading this, but I will continue in the hope that you can at least wean the fact out of it that I think you are just perfect.

By this time you should probably have had a ride with Yaqui. I hope that I spelled his name right this time, as he will probably justly take a good nip at me the next time I see him if I didn't. I must confess that at present I have done no riding due to lack of material - ha, ha. I did give some consideration to practicing on some of the kangaroos, but they have a rather queer gait, and I figured it would be better to start from scratch rather than acquiring some bad habits which you would have to break me of, and you will have a tough enough job as it is. The first thing is to get me on a horse at all. At present I am trying to learn to play a snappy game of ping-pong. Some improvement at this writing. Please give Willie a big kiss, and sweetie, in case you don't know, you have all my love, forever. Bill (no pen - that wasn't a hint, just facts)

(Manbulloo)

October 19, 1943

Betty honey,

From now on you can expect your mail more regularly now as we are back at our own base. Boy, was I glad to get mail. There were seventeen letters waiting for me so it was quite a field day. I was sorry that you had to wait such a long time for my cable, but by now you know the reason for the delay. You were so sweet about the lack of letters when I was on leave, but I assure you if we get another leave over here I will write as I have had a very guilty conscience ever since about that.

Sweetie, I was so thrilled to get the pictures of Bill. He certainly looks wonderful and we got a big kick out of the one with his mouth open, looked like he was waiting for a stein of beer. The second lot should be here soon as in your V-mail dated Oct. 5th, you said you were sending them the next day. I can't wait to get them. Regarding pictures, we can take them over here and send them home as long as they are passed by the base censor. I felt rather foolish when I thought about writing you to have some pictures made with your hair up when I had forgotten that you had it cut short for the summer. I like it that way and I do hope you can have some pictures taken.

I got Clayton's swell letter and will write him today. It was swell of him to have the cigarettes sent to our squadron and I know that the boys will appreciate them a lot. I lost the addresses of the two other couples I was going to write, the ones in the country and the people that gave us the champagne.

Incidentally, honey, as the liquor situation is going to be very bad and get a lot worse, if you could pick up a bottle now and then and put it away, it might come in handy later on - all the boys are writing their wives to do it.

From all reports Bill is keeping you plenty busy to say the least. I hope it cools off over there soon, as I know how difficult it is to get things done when it is hot as hell. I certainly wish I could be there when Willie wakes you up, it might add a little spice to that interim. Al says we should call Bill Dr. Pepper with his ten, two, and four schedule. I guess you have the right idea in getting him plenty tired during the day time so he will sleep at night. Last night I dreamt that I woke up to the tune of Bill cussing. It was a very pleasant dream.

I feel that Kelley was off his feed when he wrote that we would be home by Christmas, but I do think that if things break right it may be the latter part of January. I have two hundred hours at the present time. However, it usually takes longer to get the last third than the others.

Regarding when I come back, it would be wonderful if my family could come out to the coast. However, I shall have to report to Salt Lake City first, so my suggestion would be that when you get a cable from me regarding a date in San Francisco that you proceed to Clayton and Sadie's in a hurry with Bill and enough clothes for a couple of weeks. Then, if I were assigned to the eastern part of the U.S. we could go to Hoopston, and if not, back to California, because when I get back, I intend that we shall be together every minute as long as it does not jeopardize Bill's health. I agree with you that it would be best to cut Bill's travelling to a minimum.

We are supposed to get thirty days leave when we get back. Boy, I am practically drooling when I think about it. It is just heaven when we are together and no good when we are apart.

Regarding travel pay, please send all correspondence on the subject immediately to me, as we will get it out of them. Also write them that inasmuch as the application was made on April 4th, and as the delay in payment was not due to any negligence on my part, will they please reply by endorsement why the claim can not be paid inasmuch as all of the

other boys were able to collect for the same thing. We will write them too as soon as I get their letter to you. There is no point in letting them pull that stuff. It makes me boil that an officer overseas cannot get action on money owed to his wife. They better come thru with that back allotment damn quick.

You have done a wonderful job managing our finances and I am sorry that we had to pay out so much for my debts but that's water under the dam now I guess.

It made me plenty mad when I heard about the sex pervert writing threatening letters to Louise, I hope they shoot the son-of-a-bitch.

It was darn nice of Ginnie and Lee to send you the present. Also, I shall call Ralph and tell him how nice it was of Mary to offer the diapers. Mrs. Swan had her baby, she at least has that, I feel very badly about Lloyd. This war is no picnic.

At the present time Alfred is being checked out as a first pilot. He is not crazy about the idea, so he will probably stall along until we get our time in. I saw a lot of Fred and he is swell. He likes his new job as group operations officer, and is doing a lot of flying. That is his profession, so he is happy. Jane and Daphne are in San Antonio, that is Jane's home. They never made it out to California. Mickey is due in January, and has gained twelve pounds to date. Betty is due in December and has been having some trouble with calcium deficiency. She is taking tablets, but I guess even they were not enough. I guess you know as much as I do about the rest of the girls.

Phil Doornbos is back in the states. I wish he could have been up here before he left. If I had known he was going back I would have sent him your address. Hinckley never got home, they made him an ass't operations officer with one of the troop carrier outfits. He is grounded and will probably be over here for some time. His wife is in Sacramento.

Irma Dyer sent me a cute story. It seems that an English lady who considered herself self-appointed protector of the village morals was upbraiding a workman for drinking, as she said that, 'with her own eyes' she had seen his wheelbarrow out in front of the local tavern. The workman made no verbal defense, but that nite he parked his wheelbarrow out in front of her house and left it there till the next morning.

As it is a bit warm at this point, I think that I shall sign off for now. The heat is really intense and it gets up over 110 during the day so I appreciate what you are going thru. Anyway, it is nice and cool 'upstairs'. Darling, I love you so much and you are the most wonderful wife and mother in the world. Gee, I miss you baby, but I'll be back one of these days. All my love to my two sweethearts. Bill

(Manbulloo)

October 19, 1943

Betty darling,

I dated this letter wrong as it is really the twentieth. Since my return I have been busily employed catching up on my mail, and I have done pretty well except one I owe to my friend in North Africa. I will have to let her know about Willie.

At the present time it is hot as hell and at this point I figure the worse trick that we could play on the Japs is to give them some of this country over here. As the saying goes, it isn't the heat it's the humidity and I don't mean maybe. One really drips all the time. Say, is it possible to get canned beer anymore? I was just thinking that you might get a case over here by breaking it down and sending it in several packages. Boy, we could really use that and I don't mean maybe. We really get thirsty, and you know my thirst. However, I promise to be a good boy and keep such activities at a minimum when I get home. Another thing we miss like hell over here are Coca-Colas. At the present time we are trying to get a machine that makes them.

There isn't much news today. I have a mountain of laundry to do at this point but I am trying to wait for a cool day. You know how well I can procrastinate, my love. On the subject of spelling the word is spelt cognizant, I do believe. Now who is illiterate???

We have taken up pitching horseshoes and ping-pong to pass the time. Your letter about the proposed pack trip to the high Sierras practically had me in a plane on the way back home. It really sounds wonderful, and if I get thirty days leave, we may be able to work that in. You will probably have to tie me on the horse, but that should be interesting too and I know that under your tutelage even I can learn eventually. If you are willing to learn golf, the least I can do is

learn to ride fairly well, but I hope that we take it in easy stages. It would be rather silly for me to get thru combat and then break my neck on some hayburner. I love horses (at the track).

I see that the joke I sent you came out of NEWSWEEK. I was glad to hear that P.J. is back with her husband and I am glad you gave her the pep talk, altho I would be inclined to have given it to her with a hair brush. It is about time she ties a can to that old lady of hers. P.J. does OK by herself but every time she gets with her mother all hell breaks loose. I am very glad that I have such an intelligent, understanding, and attractive mother-in-law. Take a bow, Madeline. Incidentally, Farrington said to tell your mother that he thought she had very nice legs, the wolf. You should have heard the line he handed the gals in Adelaide.

Of course Willie spent all his time in the museums and browsing in the bars, I mean the libraries. Well, baby, I raised a little hell but I was a good boy if you know what I mean. I guess you took most of the wolf out of me - pulled my teeth so to speak. I hope that Willie has dried off my this time. Do you housebreak a boy like you do a dog? I imagine not. Regarding washing your thinsies, you do it well honey, ha, ha. If I could get home to you, I would be willing to do anything. Tell Bill I think he looks swell. I love you. Your loving husband. Bill.

(Manbulloo)

October 24, 1943

Betty darling,

The weather has been so hot that I just couldn't write yesterday, as I was dripping wet all day. A poor excuse but that's the way things go. I shall try not to let it happen again.

Last nite I got an air mail dated Oct. 10th, and a V-mail dated Oct. 8th. Apparently the letter of Oct. 5th with the other pictures of Bill got held up some place. Mail has been very erratic lately, but we are getting used to that.

Al and John wrote you last nite and their letters should be along soon. We are quite bored with the life over here at present. The time just won't hurry and we haven't been doing much flying recently. I have revised my figures and believe now that it will be February or March before I can even think of coming home. Since Lee Brissey left, we have a different setup which results in less flying time for our particular crew. However, I shall try and be a good boy as you told me to and not fret too much. I had hoped that bill would make the time go faster for you, but I realize that we can't kid ourselves, it is just no good at all when we are apart.

I had a lousy dream last nite, it was the most realistic I ever had. I dreamed I had been captured by the Japs, and boy, was I glad when I woke up on my downy white couch. Our tent seemed like a palace. I shall have to be more discriminating in the future as far as my dreams are concerned.

My bridge game has picked up as we are playing a lot now to pass the time. Haugie is playing with us and does very well. He is really a damn good kid. The water has gotten so warm that swimming is not quite as refreshing as it was at first, but it does cool you off, and we have some wonderful mud fights. So mature, these air corps boys. Al pulled a hot one the other nite. He got good and plastered, and started walking down the hill to our tent from the club. As he walked along he kept tossing his flashlight up in the air. Finally he tossed it way up in the darkness, and it came down and hit him in the head, creating a large bump. Undismayed, he threw it up again and this time it hit him just below the eye making a nice cut. Then he fell in the slit trench skinning his legs, then we put him to bed!

John Perry is quite intrigued with a very attractive red-headed gal he met in Adelaide. She has a lot on the ball and John gave her quite a rush while we were down there.

Our movies have not been so hot of late, but I hope they will pick up. They send too many serious war pictures, and "B" westerns, instead of light comedies and musicals. We have seen so many silly air corps pictures that we are about ready to scream.

Gosh, I seem to be bitching about everything. It isn't really so bad, only once in a while I get out of sorts. I am so darned impatient to get back to you and Bill, that I am rather hard to get along with these days, I guess. I love you so damn much, sweetie, that everything seems so stupid when I am away from you. I know I should be a good sport, but sometimes I just can't kid myself.

I have caught up on all my correspondence to other people now, so that is out of the way. Bill must keep you awfully busy, and I wish I could be there to walk him when he wakes you, and get back in bed and make love to you. I am very eager for you, my sweet.

I am glad the missing allotment showed up. As far as I know, I don't get anything extra from the army for Bill. However, we do get a deduction on our income tax.

It is now time for chow, Sweetie, so I shall sign off until tomorrow, besides, the wind is blowing everything all over the place. I love you, my darling, with everything I have and miss you so terribly. A million hugs and kisses, Sweetie. Bill

P.S. My love to Mom, Dat, and Stan.

(Manbulloo)

October 25, 1943

Darling Betty, my sweetheart,

At the present time I am nursing a pair of dishwasher hands as I completed my laundry this afternoon. You see, my system is to wear every clean thing I have and when I run out, I wash the works, a helluva system, but that's the way I operate. Right now I feel in very good spirits after completing a tremendous task, indulging in a good mud fight, having a good swim, and with a fresh change of clothes and a stiff drink under my belt, writing to my honey. Besides that, I foresee business ahead which always makes me feel better, as that means so much time under the dam. The last letter I wrote you, I realize now, was not particularly cheerful, but sweetie, we long ago realized that we could never kid each other so I just write to you as I would talk to you - the only difference being, that if I could talk to you, I would never be blue.

I think that they should have sent Jesus Christ and Plato out to combat because both of them being wonderful philosophers, they could really have gone to town out here, and that is for sure.

I called Lee and thanked him for the lovely present they sent you. Naturally he didn't know anything about it, but he was very pleased. He is coming over for a visit this week, and we will have a lot of fun chewing the fat so to speak. I must get Ginnie's address and send her a line or so. I don't think anyone could get along better than the four of us did. We will have to continue that foursome back in the states. Of course, P.J., Goldie, and ourselves didn't do so badly but that end was not destined to work out. It was funny how they were so sure they were going to be married, and kept urging us to do the same while we kept quiet on the subject, and eventually how things worked out. I hope that P.J. uses her head and makes her own decisions as I am sure that she will end up behind the eight ball if she listens to her apparently stupid mother.

It just occurred to me that I better mention the fact that I tried to see if you would be able to catch me up on a misspelling that I sent you for fun. The word cognizant is spelled as I just wrote it, but I sent you the spelling 'cognizant' to see if you would look it up after all my dirty cracks about your illiteracy. I am willing to bet I get a correction back damn soon, ha, ha. However, at the rate mail is coming in for the whole outfit, it will probably be some time before I get an answer on that.

Tonite I have a snappy bridge game rigged up so that should be fun. My favorite partner over here has been on leave so we are taking on a couple of boys that think they are pretty tough. I shall send the results day after tomorrow, as I don't think that it will be possible to write you tomorrow.

The heat continues relentlessly and I shall be glad to see some cool weather soon. When we went on leave, we practically froze to death as southern Australia has their winter when we have summer at home. It was really chilly.

I hope that the second set of pictures comes in tonite as they were mailed the fifth. Air mail is very irregular, sometimes I get it damn quick and then again it takes a helluva long time. Anyway, baby, I love you to pieces, and I just can't wait to see Willie wet or dry. Give my best to everyone, and always remember you are on my mind and in my heart. A million kisses, dear. Oceans of love. Bill

Mrs. McFerren's Letters - October 1943

Corona

October 6, 1943

Sweetie, Did you hear about the near-sighted snake that married a rope? I got that one from Red Skelton last nite.

I am putting a small camera and two rolls of film in the mail to you with this letter. It is not a Christmas present, I'm just taking advantage of being able to send it without a request. I don't remember if you know how to fill it or not. It's the one I had with us all the time. I left it in the leather case as I thought it might be handy. If you sit down and think real hard, you'll be able to figure out how it fills, because it's very logical and easy. Muddy is responsible for the two rolls of film. I don't know where she got them as they're practically extinct. She also is responsible for the leather case these snaps are in. You can store any number of pictures in it. If you can take the two rolls of film she unearthed, they can be developed when you get back. Perhaps you should wrap them in wax paper as there's some talk of film mildewing over in your damp climate. These snaps will give you more of an idea of your son, don't let the dog's legs sticking out from under the cot the bassinet is on confuse you.

The sky is constantly filled with sluggish little two-winged trainers doing everything from the first climbing turns and stalls to spins and spirals. There is something in the human mechanism that finds a way to apply almost anything and everything to yourself. I sit and think about those cadets up there doing their very darndest to master the work before them, and yet, some, a predictable number almost, are doomed to wash out. I say doomed because each one will be broken-hearted when he finds he wasn't cut out to be that most esteemed of all esteemed flyers - a pilot.

Of course, all the time I am thinking of you, sweetie. Of the days gone by when you were first a cadet, determined to be a pilot like all the rest. I think of your first days at Santa Ana, then of the thrill you must have known when you climbed behind the stick of your first little biplane, at last actually launched on the real McCoy. And then, of the bitter disappointment you must have felt when the thing you wanted most was suddenly denied you after 8 actual flying hours, and you summoned all the guts you had and made that momentous comeback to the board's accusations of your mistakes.

What I am driving at is this sweetie, maybe we aren't so darn smart about knowing what's best for us after all, maybe lots of things are blessings in disguise. At any rate, we are scarcely masters of our own fate, are we? What irks us most now may be something for which we are very thankful later on. I don't know what got me started on that, I guess I think of it a lot because there is hardly ever a moment when the roar of at least one plane is not audible, and usually it's a lot more than one.

Darling, the awful last thing. I just weighed this and it's within an ace of 2 ounces. Two ounces being all you can send via air mail, so I'll not dare include another sheet. I'll write more in another letter tonite. Love and lots of xxx's. Betty

Corona

October 7, 1943

My Darling husband,

It is a red-letter day today for me as I received the first letters from you since you heard the news - Sept. 25 and 25 - the one you typed in the afternoon and the 10 page long hand written at night.

It's funny, no matter how philosophical I am, my morale steadily degenerates as the days pass with no mail from you. I wasn't worried 'cause I knew you had been on leave and I didn't expect any till Oct. 6, and it arrived today. (How'm I doin' as a dopester?). Also your cable was reassuring, but it's just the boost I need from the wonderful things you say in your letters, I guess. The long one you wrote Saturday nite was really wonderful, and honey, I am so glad you are satisfied with me as a spouse, because there is nothing that is more fun to do than spend 24 hours a day doing my level best to please such a perfect husband as you are. I really mean it. I have no other aim in life. That is why I'm so benumbed and devoid of ambition while you're away, because you, who are my entire incentive, are not here to do my best for. I think that's why I have such a wild desire to eke out a few leisure hours from tending Bill and helping with household duties, and to sew on some projects I have outlined, so that upon your return, instead of being greeted by a bedraggled, haggard, worn-out looking hag, I shall have a few duds that will please the most critical eye and make you proud of me.

I realize I could buy some things as far as you're concerned, Sweetie, you're so darned sweet and generous, but I guess I'm just spoiled at having made my own things for so long and having 'em fit me like I want. I'd rather dream up an outfit exactly like I want and then make it to my own specifications instead of walking my feet off and not finding it or settling for something inferior. You are such a wonderful incentive to me to always do my best. Oh darling, I do love you so. You know they say that to be a woman, her love is all her life, while to a man, it's only part of his. Well, if that's true regarding you, you do a wonderful job of concealing it, dear, 'cause you make me feel awfully important, and it's sure true for my part, because you are all my life.

Our brat has decided that his mother only needs 3 hours sleep a night and has gone on a campaign to sleep like a log all day and raise the roof at night. There's something about the male side of this McFerren family that likes to keep me awake at night!! I could get up and walk him I suppose and put him to sleep, but at the hours he chooses to perform, I can barely pry one eye halfway open and glare at him, let alone get up and walk him. Why, I couldn't even walk myself!

It's the first time I've missed you so desperately for anything besides morale and loving. Isn't that an awful slam, honey? But, you know what I mean, something so material and down-to-earth. Our life together is so out-of-this-world, but boy, this is something plenty practical for which I need you. I'm helpless for a change, and I hate being helpless without you here to help me. Don't get all upset about it, dear, I'll make out OK, but it's just one more reason why I miss you. Gee, you know every time the phone rings I jump - I think every time I hear it how perfectly ecstatically (is that a word?) happy I'd be if I heard your voice on the end say, "Baby, I'm home!" Oh Honey! But darling, you know what you said in one letter I got today, that you might have to stay over a few months after your time was up and do some ground duty in organization of a new outfit etc., but that it would probably eliminate the possibility of another stretch of combat duty. Well, sweetie, it's like forcing yourself to go to the dentist, but I sure hope you stay, if that's the setup because I could stand that a lot better than I could ever stand another goodbye, I know that.

After all, we steeled ourselves for a year's separation and I have never let myself count too strongly on anything less. I have always sort of held the belief, 'I'll believe it when I see it' regarding an earlier return, and we can take it a lot better if you stay over a while after you're thru flying because you'd be relatively safe. I've always maintained that I could stand five years if you were behind the fighting lines out of the way of combat, a lot easier than I could stand five months of actual combat.

Darling our cherub is the sweetest imp you ever saw and I simply can't wait for you to see him. Well, of course I just put him down because he wouldn't be quiet and he's screaming his head off in the other room but then he is awful sweet usually.

As you probably know, I received a letter from Hoggie. It was very sweet of him to write me a congratulations note. Incidentally, I phoned Mrs. Bascom today to find out Liston's address and it seems he can receive mail, so I shall write him a letter, perhaps it'll get there by Christmas. As far as presents to German prisoners goes, it seems the only practicable thing you can do is thru the Red Cross, to order an extra pound ration package. Since we haven't made any contributions to the Red Cross, I think it would be nice for us to order a package for both Liston and Bill Reinecke for Christmas, don't you?

You know I feel terrible that I haven't done more voluntary work on this thing. I let you go Sweetie, but that was not voluntary, you know. I have Bill III, but that too, wasn't planned. I haven't rolled a bandage nor spotted a plane (plane spotting by civilians discontinued, by the way, by army orders) so I feel the least I can do is to write a few letters and try to make 'em as peppy as possible. If they do anything for any soldier's morale, be he still in our forces, or in a prison camp, it's worth it, for you gotta have morale before anything else clicks, I know. You see, when some time elapses between your letters day by day, tasks look harder, work looks more mountainous and I grow more discouraged. And when I receive your letters, suddenly the sun shines again, no work is too hard, no project too gargantuan. Suddenly I've got the world licked - easy, just like that. Not that I expect my letters to do that for anyone else, I was just elucidating on 'the value of wartime correspondence', or 'why a letter a day, keeps the blues away.'

I received a deposit slip for \$225 from the bank today. Wonder if it was the missing allotment or just the one due now? Bye the bye, you get an increase in pay for our child, don't you honey? Gosh it pays to enlarge, eh? Gee 1st Lieutenant McFerren, you should be drawing a nice fat check now, shall I send you a piggy bank?

Sweetmeats, I haven't yet received your first letters written after your leave so I am still on pins and needles as to what mischief you got into. Bet it was good to see some real civilization for a change, eh dear? By the way, you said not to say anything to Ginny about Lee's probable promotion. Gee, I'm sorry but I didn't see anything touchy in that so I

mentioned it in my last letter to her, supposing of course she knew all about it. I didn't say much only to congratulate her on her hubby's becoming a 'droop from group' with a gold maple leave to match. Am I in the dog house?

What do you mean you imagine Bill doesn't look like much now??? The very idea. Why darling, he was creamy and round the very minute I set eyes on him and the image of his pappy 28 years ago. None of this red-wrinkled business for our child. I will have lots to say on the subject of our economic discussion, big business, etc., etc. I see that you are really broad-minded on the subject and not at all inflexible. I admire your very fair views and your willingness to change them if you're convinced. However, I doubt if I shall have the time to clarify a few points for you in my letters in the future, so will just have to save that hot argument for when we're face to face, and I really don't care if we forget it entirely, as I'd be a sure loser in a personal argument since I know I'd never get a chance to have my say.

Besides, I'm going to be so busy telling you how much I love you during the next 99 years of my life when you're back, that I doubt if I'll ever have time for such trivial differences as politics. You just go ahead and be a stubborn old Republican, honey, it's the only thing I can think of to disagree with you on, and after all, we must have something for food for argument now and then.

I have just re-read part of your long letter again, and I guess I'll just have to write a rebuttal to your speech on economics as I've got an answer for everything you said. Can't let that many good answers go to waste. However, I'll wait till a future letter to carefully take your arguments apart, dear, it's too close to Willie's meal hour.

Darling, I love you, I love you, I love you. Regards, with apologies to my husband for the plagiarism, but that's just what the score is anyhow. Come on and ring, phone, with my honey on the wire. Slathers of love to you, my Sweet. Betty.

Corona

October 10, 1943

Darling,

It is 9:30, I have been delayed in starting this by various activities on the part of our cherub, the Standard Symphony hour is almost over. They have been playing the most de-licious music, Strauss waltzes and others of my favorites. I am sitting at the dining room table, pen in hand, thinking of the time to come when at the end of the day instead of writing to you, you will be right here to talk to.

Mom just read me a quip from the Reader's Digest - a young Lt. overseas who does not like to write letters has a clever device. He starts the letter with 'Dear So and So' and a few introductory lines, then cuts off the rest of the page as the censor might do, leaving the words 'affectionately yours, Bill' at the bottom. Sharp eh?

I've been working on Xmas - the card list. I've managed to eliminate some of my list, but think it might be nice to send a card to everyone who gave us wedding presents, so it totals close to 60, probably more when I think of them. A photo store close to here has a special on Christmas cards, print your favorite negative on the cards which are very nice, they sent me a sample with one of the prints I sent you on it, they are very reasonable and if we have Bill III's picture on them it will save sending snaps of him to people. Incidentally he just demanded some attention so I am holding him at present and he's threatening to scream in my ear. Honestly, you should see him when he's hungry. He is just determined to be fed, he open his mouth wide and waves it frantically about.

Back to the cards, does that suit you OK, honey? Another advantage is that I can order them by mail and that is something these days. Saves you walking your legs down to stumps and then not finding what you want. I have also resorted to buying some baby things thru a mail order catalogue. What do you know? I just got sick of the shopping situation so sent for a Sears Roebuck catalogue. It's so much nicer just to sit at home and write down what you want, make one check for all of it, and pick it up at the post office. For things like a baby bassinet and baby panties, I think we can trust Sears quality, tho I wouldn't exactly recommend it for an entire wardrobe.

I struck a stone wall on what I suggested to you, about getting Dat to take a pittance from us now that Bill is here. He thought it was the funniest thing he'd ever heard of. The only way I see around it is to buy them something for Christmas that's worth about what we figure it's been, and that's unreturnable.

I am at last getting that present for Muddy and Daddy for Sept. 20. I wrote and told them they had an I.O.U. for it, that it would be a trifle late. I'm having one of the shots of Bill enlarged and framed in a nice lucite frame. I tried to get a picture taken of him, but the afternoon that I had the appointment, he slept all afternoon, and I gave up. Darling he says

he's gotta be fed this very instant, so I won't start another sheet, tho I'd love to write volumes, you know it. I love you so and miss you more than words can tell. Always and always, your Betty.

Corona

October 11, 1943

Bill darling,

I am still in a stymie as to what you did on leave and when you took it. The letter telling me about that has yet to come. One thing that has me in a quandary is the fact that the cablegram which I received Friday, Sept. 24 is headed 'the place you took your leave in Sept 24.' Does that mean it came thru in one day, and does it mean you were still on leave Sept 24th? That can't be since I have a letter before me dated Sept. 24 and you said 'Things have been rough since we got back from leave.' I know that there are still two letters outstanding as in yours of Sept. 25th, you stated you had written three already since you learned of your parent-hood. I'm guessing honey, and of course I have looked up Adelaide on the map - quite southerly, isn't it? I was surprised to find how far south. How far does Myrtle live from there? I have my own ideas, but I am curious.

Today you will note is our infant's first monthly birthday and to celebrate, I gave him a sun bath which he enjoyed a lot. It is a beautiful day today, warm, sunny, no wind. You can tell it is fall tho because the sun is so far to the south, giving you a good blistering now, I guess, sweetie. If you get back here in the spring it will make one summer right after another for you. Hope you like summer.

I'll give you Liston Bascom's address if any of you care to drop him a line. There may be some fellows there who knew him quite well. You must either block print or type the letter, I guess so the German censor can read it, and it must be on air mail paper. In the left-hand upper corner where your return address usually goes put 'Prisoner of War Mail.' Put your name and address on the back. The address is: 2nd Lt. Liston A. Bascom, American Prisoner of War No. 1952, Stalag Luft 3, Germany via New York, NY.

Maybe I gave it to you before, can't remember, so here it is in case you can make use of it. I know he'd enjoy hearing a word from some of the 43-1 boys of dear old Mather. Remember the chocolate malt tablets? I'll bet I made mine last longer than you did. Just ate the last one. They remind me of Topeka. Everything I put my hands on reminds me of some phase of our life together, and what sweet memories.

Later - It's after dinner now, dear. I'm sort of good-feeling tiredness tho. I did the first strenuous work today since Bill's arrival, and it feels good to be tired for a reason and not just because I ain't got no pep. Mom and I broke up some dead trees that blew over in the hurricane this spring, and the yard looks much better.

I had a letter from Gus tonite. He writes an awfully nice letter, really sounds like a swell fellow. Also told me he heard very lovely things about you and your work, sweetie, from various members of your outfit whom he had contacted.

Sweetie, my love, you have sometimes cut your letters short because you were tired, and that is a very good reason, because you just can't write any interesting blurb when your p.o.'d, can you honey? At least I can't. I feel totally uninspired, so I'll wait till tomorrow to try to write anything intelligent and morale boosting. Meanwhile, dear, you know you are the apple of my eye, and all I think of 24 hrs. a day is having you back with me where you belong my beloved husband. Always, your loving wife, Betty.

Corona

October 12, 1943

Darling,

At last, I got it - your letter written first after you got the cables. Oh, Sweetie, your letters make me feel wonderful. I feel so lucky to have a husband who is so sweet and thoughtful and intelligent and who understands me so perfectly. The letter you wrote on the typewriter with all capitals, the first one, was really tops. You know, honey, I kind of go for your letters, not to mention the guy that writes 'em.

Skip the business of bothering with the notes to Jack and Fred, they were just written in an odd moment anyhow. I'll write V-mails to everybody for Xmas. Xmas cards would be a little out of place since I don't expect it will be a very 'Merry Xmas' over there.

Incidentally, talking of Christmas, it won't be long now, and then it won't be long after that till you are home, wow! I was downtown this afternoon and stopped in the baby shop which is run by one of my old schoolmates. Maybe I told you before about Marian, her husband is a major in the Air Corps, "CO" of a squadron of Mitchell bombers in N. Africa or Sicily. He's been gone a little longer than you have, and she's expecting him home for Xmas. Louis is the Corona hero as he was on both the Tokyo and Rome raids and is palsy-walsy with Jimmy Doolittle. He's an old Corona High School grad - it seems Marian is having the same trouble with Louis that I am with you - that he may have to stay a while after his combat time is thru, to help organize a new group, but we both agreed we would be happiest if our hubby's stayed that extra few months thereby cinching their stay in the good old U.S. because a second good-bye would be too much.

It was certainly sweet of you to think of me when you were on leave long enough to wait 18 hours for a phone call. How many hours did you say? Eight? Oh you say you waited an hour? Anyhow honey, I appreciate it, and boy would I have turned that hospital upside down if a call had come thru for me. If it had come Sept 11th, I would have broken all records and been the gal who danced for joy on the first day of confinement. They couldn't have held me in bed with ropes if that call had come five minutes after Bill was born.

Sweetie, I am so thrilled about the prospect of receiving a ring from Australia. It will mean so much to me, especially since you had it made special. You know how I love jewelry. I feel that a piece of jewelry lasts forever, is not like a garment which is worn a few years and discarded. Therefore as a souvenir, or for sentiment's sake, I am particularly partial to jewelry, and I can hardly wait to see the ring.

Darling, was that just a typographical error or did you mean to refer to me as 'Brainbust'??? Ahem! OK, I'll lay off the politics. I thought I got that all out of my system in high school anyhow.

Gee, sweetie, regarding the sex of our offspring, were you really keeping it a secret from me about wanting a boy? I kind of had a hunch. Not from anything you said or did, but just a hunch, and confidentially, I was scared to death we'd have a girl because all my friends have been producing boys and I thought sure it was our turn to have a girl!

A very lovely 100% virgin wool sweater in baby blue arrived tonite from Angie and Bert who say they have heard from you and will write soon. I had a letter from Clayton recently, or rather I should say a carbon copy of the one he wrote you, with a penciled P.S. on the back to me. It would be fun if we could spend a few days in S.F. when you get back.

At last the picture for Muddy and Daddy is ready to send. It's really a very decent enlargement, and in a lovely lucite frame. I think they will forgive the delay, considering. Muddy has gone to work on this (I can't think very well with the radio going and Stanley talking football to me) she has gone to work on this film business in earnest. Now there are four rolls of film here for our 620 camera and I'm sending another 127 to you tomorrow which she unearthed.

That crazy Goldie. I had a letter from him today - now get this - he addressed the last two to me c/o Frank Garvey and I said 'who is this Frank Garvey?' It's Stanley! So today my letter comes addressed to me c/o Stanley McFerren! I told you he's at Washington U. - St. Louis, Mo. studying military government, didn't I? He likes it very well tho doesn't like having to learn Italian. He says his work may take him to California in December and hopes to see us. Gee it would be fun if you were back then and we'd have a good old reunion. It seems he has bought a block of Kansas City Star stock in partnership with Dorothy Maloney - that's his old girl friend, isn't it?

Sweetmeats, from here on this may be rather illegible because Willie is have his 10pm meal and I'm holding him with my left arm when I should be holding him with my right and tho it's rather awkward, it'd be awkward'er to write with my left hand. Nothing, not even our Cherub's appetite is going to cheat me out of my good-nite chat with you, for frankly, that's the high point of my day. All day long I think of things that I am going to say to you in my letter, and then at night proceed to forget most of them.

One, tho - if you were worrying that you should miss seeing our little pig partake of his nutrients, rest easy, because unless I miss my guess, I intend to nurse him till he's old enough to eat out of a spoon or at least for a good while. Two reasons: it's heaps easier, and it's heaps better for him. You'll probably be sick of the spectacle by the time he's weaned. He takes twice as long to do it as the baby book says they are supposed to, but then he's gained twice as much as it says he is supposed to also, and so probably is getting twice as much as he's supposed to. I guess he comes by his appetite honestly from both sides.

Sunday afternoon about an hour after Stanley had dinner, and two large helpings of everything, he asked Mom very naively, 'When do we eat?' And of course I have not forgotten some of those momentous breakfasts you ate in El Paso.

I'm glad to know that my air mails go uncensored. Then I shan't have to be so cagey as I have tried to be at times in the past. I got all your double-talk about TIME etc., and have found the article to which you refer, also the Aug 2nd one. Sum fun, Sweetie, now I want to see your name in headlines!

All yours but two or three have been opened, but nothing has been cut out for a long time. The only thing the censor's seem to take exception to is reference to places in Australia to which members of your group have gone, and distances. I got the distance your cousin Lee lived from our last station in the states tho! There I go speaking craftily to avoid that censor who won't even read this.

You know it is a funny thing. I think as I analyze the situation. I like to have you tell me I'm intelligent, (ahem!) but if I hadn't been intelligent enough to marry you, honey, I don't think there is anyone else in the world from whom I'd consider that a compliment. What I mean is that with most men, most girls always reserve a little of their so-called intelligence so as to never display a distressing amount of it to the unsuspecting male. But you don't affect me that way. I just go ahead and lay my cards on the table 'cause I know you can beat my hand every time. It's just one more illustration of how we don't have to play games with one another, and how much firmer foundation for a real love that is than when people are constantly fooling each other.

It sounds as tho you had a grand time on leave. Gee, Sweetie, you're really in there pitchin', playing with golf champions and the like. Oh well, better to've loved and lost than never to have loved at all! To think, I'm beaten out by a damn woman golfer. If I could have only got you on a horse, I could have proved I can do something besides love. Seriously, I'm awfully glad you got down to civilization as it must have seemed pretty good after living in the jungle for so long. I imagine that golf game did seem pretty good. How was your game? Still in practice from that warm-up we had around the Denver course?

Sweetie, Bill is asleep and I am nearly asleep so I had best quite while I can still sign my name, my darling. I love you, I love you, I love you. All my love (plenty of it, too) from your devoted wife and son. Betty & Willie.

Corona

October 13, 1995

Bill darling,

What a lovely surprise to receive three V-mails from you tonite. After getting the two air mails yesterday. I had resigned myself to a few days of mail famine. You are certainly spoiling me, dearest. These I received today were the two parts of your Sept. 28 message and the one of Sept. 29. Of course, I missed hearing from you terribly while you were on leave, but I understand perfectly, I wouldn't ask you to write on the precious few days allowed you to live like a white man.

You asked when your first cable arrived. I think I've already told you, but in case I didn't it arrived Sept 24, 9am, pretty fair time considering it was sent the 21st, don't you think? I'm still guessing about the heading of Adelaide on it.

I just transferred the theater of operations to the upstairs. Bill was saving his 10 o'clock meal, he went to sleep, my arm went to sleep holding him, so I decided it was high time we adjoined to the boudoir. Now I am sitting in bed writing, and oh, how I miss you, darling - I really do. It is my dream that soon instead of having to sleep under this down comforter all alone, I'll have you to help me keep it cozy, or to help keep me cozy, I don't know which.

I'm sure you've received my V-mail by this time telling you all six allotments are in. I tried to find out which one was missing by asking the bank but to no avail for you see here's how it works - when they get the check, they credit it to my account and send the check back and send me a deposit slip. Well, by the time I get the deposit slip, the check has left their hands and all they know is that my account is credited with \$220 but they do not know the date of the check. I could have asked them to watch for the date but they'd probably forget and besides after the first one slipped thru their fingers, it wouldn't do any good to know what the rest were anyhow. So I just sat back and hoped and wrote firm letters, and presto! Here on Oct 7, arrives my missing allotment. By this time you have probably heard the sad story on the travel pay. I told you once but just in case - here goes again. The govt. is making no provision for travel pay for dependents of officers being assigned to temporary stations after April 26, '43. Well our only hope is that your

application is dated before that, but I hesitate to act on it. What do you think? I have all the papers concerning it, your application, etc.

And, the education fund. Honey, I'm awfully glad you wrote your family about paddling our own canoe. I agree with you whole-heartedly that insurance such as that is usually for people who must be forced to save. I always sort of wonder if you were smart if you couldn't invest your money so as to get a better return? It's possible, isn't it? I was not given any of the particulars, but your question of what happens if payments lapse is indeed a smart one and then too, I seem to remember hearing of some insurance companies going broke or being embezzled or something. If you carried insurance, the ordinary type, for a year or three years at a stretch, you couldn't lose much, but I'm leery of this long-term bs. More on that when I see you.

Your stories, both about the baby getting ashes in his eyes, and the Jap Republicans were rich. You always tell the best stories, darling, you have a genius for sorting out the really clever ones and leaving the corn strictly alone.

Sweetie, I never thought I'd hear you make a statement such as you made about your smoking - quote - '...it's impossible for me to cut it out entirely.' It's that word 'impossible' that I take exception to. Why don't you just say, 'I don't want to cut it out entirely?' You can't tell me that when you have the accomplishments to your credit that I know you have, and when you possess the determination and will to succeed that I know you do, you can't tell me that anything that simple is impossible. Improbable, yes, but impossible, no, nothing is impossible for my sweetie-pie. Honey, my love, my one and only, my precious husband, it is for one reason only that I object to your smoking - it's because I know, and have the figures to prove, that it plays hell with your health in later years. I could go on and on, but I'll save that till you are back too.

Oh, you're in for it alright, dear, anybody can see that. I just hate to think of your developing anything from smoking, anything that would keep us from enjoying and thrilling to all the precious moments of life that should be ours together.

It was awfully nice of you to write Mom and Dat. They appreciated it a lot and were flattered that you should take time to write them. However, you need not write them if you are busy as of course I relay all the news to them and even let them read one of your letters now and then (which I carefully censor first of course).

I thought the agent must have been crazy about those cable rates, but he's just sort of crazy in general anyhow so we'll just let it pass. I'm certainly glad the folks didn't pay him \$30 for a wire, he'd have probably put \$27.28 in his pocket!

Your physiology prof's description of childbirth was very funny, and tho it may be correct in general, I can see that he has never given birth to a child. In the first place, no part of Jr. was as large as a football (I think his stomach may be now tho) and in the next place when things have proceeded that far, you are completely 'out' anyhow, that is if you have a good Doc you are. The last I can remember was hearing them say, 'What color hair is it going to have? Oh, it hasn't got any!' Then black out, then Jr. was in the bassinet beside me and I peered at my deflated stomach with great satisfaction and felt remarkably good. I said to the Doc "Is it all over?" And he smiled amiably and said, "yes, you can go to sleep now." (I'd gone to sleep between pains at first). I looked at him and said, "How can I sleep with you pummeling my stomach like that?" He was kneading my abdomen like it had been a piece of bread dough. And that my dear husband, is the complete story - nothing to it. I don't think the football description is too accurate because as I remember (it's very hard to remember the pains) the worst of it was long before the football part, but probably not as bad. Heck, you know what I said as soon as it was all over? (after swearing silently to myself numerous times during the procedure that this was to be my only child). I said, "Fuzz, I could do that again tomorrow."

I hear the roar of planes overhead - a nice, secure, comforting sound to me, but such an erie sound as it must be to those S.O.B.s of Japs who know that roar stands for tons of death and destruction dealing bombs soon to be released on them! This afternoon late, as squadron of fortresses roared by. It reminded me of the time in Denver when you put on the show for the general and swept low over Westward Ho. I also raced outside this afternoon to a heavy roar of a single plane, and peered directly up at the stately and slender silhouette of a square tailed Liberator. You know, it's funny the worm's eye view of the two planes gives the B-24 much more of a slender silhouette with terrific wing spread, but on the ground, you'd name the B-17 as the more gracefully proportioned of the two.

Sweetie I tried to have a print of that picture that was in that magazine made for you but the studio that took it doesn't have the negatives any longer. I have a lot of clippings which I will have to trot out for you when you are here to show you what a publicity hound your wife used to be. I used to get my picture smeared in the paper every now and then, usually for riding a horse, but now the horse and I have faded into oblivion, tho something happened the other day that swelled my ego some. A man was here at the place doing some business with Dat. I just glanced at him and he looked familiar and I guess I looked familiar to him but I went on about my work. That nite Dat told me that he got to talking

to the guy and he was Gene Thomas, a quite good friend of my horseback days, but we hadn't recognized one another because I was in shorts and he had on a cap and work clothes. He noticed Yaqui and said he'd thought he looked familiar and when he found out who I was said, oh yes, he'd seen Yaqui perform a lot of different places.

In fact he rode a rescue race with me on Yaqui, one of the last gymkhanas at Idyllwild, and we got 2nd. It just kind of pleased me to have him remember my little old horse, cause if I do say so myself, Yaqui has done some flashy performing at those Idyllwild shows and we have a flock of ribbons and trophies to prove it. Enough of that stuff. They always say you can brag on your horses and your dogs, but I use up my quota on my horse.

Oh, one more thing honey, before I say goodnight, and it's 12 midnite so I'll be saying it pretty soon, in regard to the education fund, you suggested that Bill's studies might come hard to him. Sweetie, how could you suggest such a thing? With you for his pappa, the only reason his studies might come hard to him would be that he caroused all night and slept thru classes all day and gambled all his dough away so's he couldn't buy fy-bate notes. Ha, ha, honey, I'm getting even for some nasty cracks you threw my direction. Seriously darling, I can just tell he's terribly intelligent, honest I can.

Why, do you know that I even think Mom and I hurt his feelings by laughing at him last nite? He made some very loud and vulgar noises and looked startled as much as to say, 'Who did that?', and Mom and I roared, and you should have seen the reproachful look I got for the next half-minute. I positively writhed, because he looked so hurt.

Well, dearest, here or there, you are the cause of my losing sleep. Here, well you guess, alarm clock and the like; there, I write to you till all hours of the nite. Do you like women of 50 with bags under their eyes? (I hope).

Good night, darling, I love you more and more, please hurry home. xxxXXxX, etc. Betty.

Corona

October 14, 1943

Sweetheart,

You are so wonderful about writing. After I got those three V-mails yesterday, I was sure I'd seen the last of your mail for a few days at least, but no, another V-mail today, Sept. 26. I am just overwhelmed with it all and I wish you were here right now so's I could show you my appreciation in a more material way - know what I mean, honey?

Our brat is screaming and it's only 9:15, 45 minutes to go. I picked him up and still he screamed, so I have deposited him back in his bassinet, but I shall weaken presently and go back and pick him up again.

I'm proud of you, First Lieutenant McFerren, never again will I go out with a lousy 2nd Lt! That would be great if your captaincy went thru in three months, but I thought you said in the South Pacific it took 6 months for it. I hope Chesser doesn't put his foot in it again. I'd like to see you wearing those twin bars you've earned. Captain McFerren - sounds nice, eh? Major McFerren - that's nice too. Lieutenant Colonel McFerren, hmmm, let's see, Colonel McFerren is nicer. How about a star or two? Gad, I hope the war doesn't last that long!

I've got to go pacify the cherub just a minute. He says it's definitely time to eat and how! Anything, his fist, my shoulder, he's not particular.

I don't recall Paul Stansbury, tho the name is familiar. Oh, yes, now I do, that tall, rather good looking chap who had his girl friend out at the officer's club at Topeka. Gee, I'm sorry. It is tough. Let's hope he 'chuted to safety.

No, you didn't tell me about Mrs. Fisher's little girl. That's great, give my congratulations to the proud pop, did they beat us to it? At any rate we beat the field on Fyrtle Myrtle, eh? You don't mean to tell me Al and Mickey are trying to beat our time do you? I thought they were expecting in January.

Sweetie, do be careful about those mosquitoes. After missing all that Jap ack-ack, I'd hate to have a little mosquito ground you. I still wish you were back under Lee's eagle eye.

I'm glad you are satisfied with my business management dear, tho I'm afraid I am not worthy of the praise you give me. However, I am perfectly confident that one way or another between the two of us we can do a pretty fair job of holding on to the money that I know you can make. I have a lot of ideas on the subject. Incidentally, I am not convinced that bonds are the ideal solution to that education insurance idea. You know the more I think about it the more I --- (honey, do you know what? I figured wrong on that thing in the first place ---- no I didn't either - omit). Well as I was saying, the more I think about it the more it sounds like an awful lot to get back on your investment, and

investments that pay off too well are apt to be shaky, I mean. Darling I don't know what I meant. I got interrupted. I was talking about the ed. ins. in that last few involved sentences. Nuts, enough of that type of drivel. I'm so much in love with you it is a pity to spend valuable time talking business to you. The news reporter is on and it sounds like you had quite a picnic at Rabaul. Something was said about it's being 50 to 60% of the enemy's S.W. Pacific air power. Sounds like another Pearl Harbor with the tables turned. Wow! Honey, news like that is music to my ears.

About the phonograph record, I'm not sure if there is a place in Corona where you can make them, but I'll look into it. I'm afraid I won't be as good at talking a monologue as you were when you made that wonderful one for me back at the Bradens that day. Also I don't know whether I'll be able to coax Bill to say a few words. May have to resort to sticking him with a pin to get results. Isn't that terrible?? I can't see why the picture I sent you ages ago hasn't gotten there. I'm afraid it may have been lost en route as I sent it ages ago. I wanted to get a print of the one on the cover of that farm bureau magazine for you, but found they didn't have the negatives at the studio where it was taken, so I sent you a large one like the small one you have.

I am amazed at the amount of culture being acquired by our boys in the south seas - spending their money on Plato instead of Scotch and attending law classes - wow! That sounds almost like propaganda.

That was sweet of Ronnie Hillman to send me his congrats. I hope he gets with it and marries that Tucson gal as soon as he lands in the good old U.S. I just don't pay to wait, does it, dear? I suppose you explained to Ronnie in 2,650 well chosen words why it is better to leap and look afterwards.

Honey, Bill has gone sound asleep, and needs a diaper change as well, so I guess it's finis for tonite. I'm sorry my letters of late haven't been quite as good as in the past, but it keeps my mind constantly agitated when our child squawks, and for some time, I haven't been able to concentrate like I like to when writing you.

I am also becoming more nervous, and have a hard time to snap my mind back to the issue at hand, as there are so many things on it. If they don't send you back soon for your nerves, they better for mine. Damn it, but I love you my o.a.o. Nite and oodles of kisses. Betty

Corona

October 14, 1943

Honey,

I no more than got the date written on this letter than Stanley phoned that he'd lost the keys to his car, so I'll have to dash down after him - continued later, dearest.

Dat went down to get him so that settled that. He played football over at Colton tonite, and I guess lost the keys en route. By the bye, that bashful kid you remember meeting last January in San Francisco has certainly changed. He plays on the first string and seems to be doing OK. Played four quarters in the game today and Corona won 20 - 12. Colton has always been our arch-enemy so the Corona team feels pretty good.

You know dear, I want to tell you again for the 101st time how I love my rings. I am so proud of them. They are twice as beautiful as anyone else's around here. Young newly married women always make a practice of saying "Oh, may I see your rings" to one another, softly grasping the other's hand to peer at the sparkler and purring, "Oh they're beautiful," as they quickly estimate the size and compare it with their own. Well, honey, mine is the biggest and most beautiful! Aren't women perfect cats?! I cleaned my rings today and the diamond sparkles like mad. I love it so, you were such a darling to deck me out so well, Sweetie.

Sweet-pie, our cherub is a perfect doll. He's sound asleep now, but is apt to wake up any minute. It just slays me that you have to miss while he's so darn little and cuddly. You know, it's funny, I can't quite figure out why new fathers are 100% in favor of having boys, and usually feel gypped if they have girls, when in the future it is going to be girls in which they are most interested.

Ha, Ha, I have laughed more than once about that mess Chesser got himself in - his just deserts I'd call it. Poetic justice or something.

Oh sweetie, damnit, I have sat here for ten minutes without a thought in my head. Stanley and Dat are trying to make a long distance call to Colton about the keys Stanley left in his locker up there, and Mom keeps reading me excerpts from the paper. I used to be able to concentrate under such conditions, but my powers of concentration are definitely shot

now. All I can think of is how heavenly it will be when you are here, when you are the only thing I have to concentrate on and the only thing to distract me! Sweetmeats, after all we've been thru, and all we've been deprived of, God, we should really be able to appreciate the joys of a normal married life once they are granted us. Many times I feel just like screaming or crying or otherwise giving vent to my pent-up emotions, and once in a while I feel just like quitting, but not for long, because if all of us quit when we feel like it, just where would that get us?

Honey, my brain is numb. I'm not going to try to write any more. We're having company for lunch tomorrow, but after tomorrow I shall try to write you during the day when I feel fresher and there are less distractions, as there is not much point in writing any more demoralizing epistles like my last few have been. All my love to you, dearest, always and forever, Betty

Corona

October 16, 1943

My dear Sweetie,

My, but you should have heard the lovely things that were said about our cherub today! His ears should be properly burning! The Linns were over for lunch and my have they raved! Myra and her daughter Mary love kids anyhow and wee Willie sure got the lion's share of the attention. Incidentally did I tell you that he has smiled several times a day in the last week? Oh, my, he's just so precocious. He weighs 10 lbs. 10 oz. today and exactly five weeks old. He has slept till 4 or 4:30 the last three nights and I have high hopes it will soon be 5:30 or 6 before there is a peep out of him. I gave up that last wild attempt to break him of that 2:00am snack as just too hard on him and me, and now he is nearly sleeping the night thru on his own hook.

The Linns had Jane's wedding pictures along today, Jane being the daughter who is a Wave Lt. and was married recently to an army captain. Chuck being in California, and Jane being at Hunter College, they arranged to meet in Kansas City for the ceremony as both of their leaves were the short stingy kind that the best people are getting this year. One of the pictures was very striking, Jane in her white dress uniform and that adorable Wave hat, Chuck in overseas cap with bars glistening, really something to show the grandchildren.

I finally did what I swore I was not going to do, read the conclusion of "Queens Die Proudly" in the May Reader's Digest. It's a second "All Quiet on the Western Front". It's really terrific. That story and the picture "Air Force" sure bring home the horrors of war to us sitting safely by our little firesides here in America. I thought of Capaletti, that navigator we met in El Paso, and Major Fairfield in San Francisco, and realized what charmed lives those members of the 19th Bombardment Group who are back in the states must have with the terrific odds against them and the lack of support they received in those early unprepared days. Not that it's any picnic now, but things were certainly A-1 disorganized then.

Did you hear about the private who sent his clothes to the laundry and when they came back he was a captain in the Australian tank corps? Yes, the Richfield Reporter says it really happened.

You know dear, there are more and more planes up all the time. We see an extra lot of them right here because we are in line with a pass over these mountains and March Field. When I dash out to see what the roar is and it turns out to be a lone Fortress or Liberator, it's not just a winged four-motored, buzzing hunk of steel and props up there. It's a plane, sure; but there are men in that plane. There's a pilot and co-pilot, a bombardier and navigator who probably started out to be pilots too, and are now happy in their own capacity. There's an engineer, radio man, gunners - most of those boys probably have sweethearts or wives, and whether they're on a training flight or a test flight or whatever other kind of flight the army sees fit to send its men on, those wives and sweethearts are waiting somewhere to welcome them home, and won't breathe just quite easy till they do just that either.

Gee, darling, when you think of all the people interested in and affected by just one lone plane aloft, and then you realize what countless thousands of planes are in the air all over the world every day, and then you realize that the number of men in those planes is only a tiny portion of the number wearing uniforms - uniforms of all colors - men of all races and colors - and all loved by someone, family, friends, and relatives - you just shudder to think what this horrible holocaust means. Those damned so-and-sos who started this mess, the ones who really started it I mean, not just the common people who have to fight it - ought to be slowly tortured almost to the point of death, revived, and then have it done all over again, again, and again, and I think I personally would take great delight in doing it.

Those boys you are fighting aren't the ones who are responsible, they're the kids we'd be meeting and shaking hands with if this were peace and we were world travelers. They're the kids Frank Kurtz of "Queens Die Proudly" fame competed against in the olympic games, and they're the kids that are going to have to help rebuild the world when this mess is over. I'd sure like to see those few fanatical leaders who have waved the magic wand that makes them our bitter enemies instead of friends, I like to see them get only a fraction of what is coming to them. Even that would be far more than they could possibly live thru.

I have a rattle and a couple of other toys I sent for here on the table. Can hardly wait till our cutie's is old enough to play with them. Oh sweetie, I can just scarcely wait till you are here to help me enjoy him, it just isn't fair for me to have him all to myself.

An orchestra on the radio is playing a song that makes me think of that dance we attended at the officer's club at Biggs Field - what fun that was! Remember how you had to stay at the field and I came out. You sent me an S.O.S. to bring some grog and I was broke or something and didn't bring any but just a few drops that were left in a bottle at the apartment - we went outside and killed it in one swig and it was only enough for a taste for you and I proceeded to have the time of my life. Then we finally wrestled a taxi away from some other eager couples and went home and broke down the bed, and I mean that literally dear. Remember how we drafted the good old milk bottle so's we could resume activities?

Oh honey, those memories are all so wonderful, but I agree with you that sometimes it would be nice to have something besides memories spread from the Rio Grande to the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River to the blue Pacific. Sweetie dear, keep flyin' fast so's you can come home to your family in a great big hurry. I love you and my every thought is either of you, or because of you. Betty. P..S. Sweetie, I'm getting the telephone jitters. Every time it rings I jump, and one of these days it is going to be your voice on the other end.

Corona

October 17, 1943

My darling,

Another day. Sunday is just like any other day when you have no Sweetie to enjoy it with. Bill and I overslept this morning, and got behind with our schedule so he is just starting to have his supper now even tho it is 6:45. After we finally got up this a.m. and wee Willie had his bath and breakfast plus the tomato juice and cod liver oil that are now part of his daily menu (the latter is very distasteful to him but I hypocritically make sweet sounds and smile as I administer the vile stuff). I washed dishes and then since we had the irrigation water today, I did a family laundry in the machine while Mom irrigated the garden.

In a damn dry country like this you are at the mercy of either the water company or the rain Gods, you see, and thru the summer when you can't count on much help from the latter, you answer the beck and call of the former. On the great day that you 'have the water' all hands turn out to utilize it in every way possible so as to best stand the drought between irrigations which occur from one to two weeks apart. In between times you use it with discretion and on the one day when you could enjoy having enough water, you are too busy using it so as not to miss it too much when you haven't lots, to enjoy it's plentifulness on that day. Such is life on the farm.

So went the day and about an hour ago Mom had finished the garden so I left our cherub under her watchful eye and went out for a quick ride on Yaqui. The evening had already turned cool and it'd been over a week since I'd been on him so the little devil played wild horse. He wanted to buck and jump all the time and actually worked up a little sweat doing it. As soon as I got back it was time for Bill's dinner, then it will be time for mine, and then I'll turn out the great ironing that I had sprinkled and ready to go. Tomorrow morning I'm going to Riverside with my old girl friend Pat Hendrickson to do a bit of shopping and get back in time for Bill's 2:00 meal. I haven't seen Pat for years, she's just moved back to town. We used to be best pals all thru high school, but I haven't seen her much since.

I'm going to enclose a letter I received today from P.J. Thought you might like to read it. I kinda think she's on the road to happiness from some of the things she said - that gal's perceptive. I believe she has what it takes, and if I may say so, the credit is all hers and not her families'.

Sweetie, you have your nerve sassing me for sitting up in bed at the hospital when you played golf before your guts knew your appendix was even out. Pardon the vulgarity, but just couldn't seem to think of any other way to say it! I guess that's one of the 50 million things that make me love you so much, you're so ornery, dear.

What do you think of this? I have a date to one of the Saturday nite dances at the Legion Hall in Corona. Yes, with a young and handsome fellow too. Well, of course he's only 16, but he does a pretty fair sort of jitterbug, and if I'm not careful he'll ruin my style of dancing for anybody but a Southern California high school jitterbug.

Yes, Stan has actually consented with some coaxing to escort his decrepit old sister to a dance. I can't get too far out of practice because that's one of the things along with many others that I'd like to catch up on my beloved, when you are home. We never got much of a chance to enjoy dancing with you after we were married (or before it either, if you will remember how long we'd usually stay in the Empire Room of the Senator). All the nite clubs are always crowded to the hilt and I think we only attended two real dances - one at El Paso which was really tops, and one at the Brown Palace in Denver.

We won't go into that again, but I did get an awful nice corsage the next day. All the wives out at the officer's club that day who knew why I had it, found themselves wishing their husbands got drunk more often and repented so remuneratively. Gee, honey, I never will forget how funny it was when you tried to stand up straight in that taxi when I finally got you home!

Recently I have found myself counting the months and days till the middle of January. Often I count them and each time it's a little less. Right now it's three months - when you get his letter it will be two and a half months. You see, I figure that is the nearest possible date at which I can start really jumping when I hear the phone ring. You know, honey, we ought to have some sort of a code arranged so's you could give me a little bit of warning. Say, for instance, you could send me a fixed text 'gram saying something prearranged so's not to be giving out military info. The only scripts I can remember from the selection of FTs are 'Son Born' and 'Daughter Born'. Why don't you send me one of those just before you're leaving, then I can at least have enough notice to put clean sheets on my bed and gas in the car so's I can dash in L.A. and meet you.

I have it figured that you will phone from Frisco and let me know by what mode of transportation you are coming south and where and when I am to meet you. Of course, Sweetie, if for any reason you can't leave Frisco, just say the word and Willie and I will be up in a jiffy even if we have to thumb our way.

Bye the bye, I wish you'd tell me how many hrs. difference there is from where Betty and Myrtle live. I could do a better job of visualizing what's happening over there if I knew.

Time for dinner now hon. Nite for now, my sweet adorable husband, I live for the day I can live with you, and there's no foolin about that, my love - you are my o.a.o. xxxXXX, etc. Betty

P.S. P.J. The "Pat" P.J. mentions is her old boy friend. He's a navigator back from New Guinea in case you're interested in what happens to navigators back from N.G. I think I'd like Uvalde. I'd even like Almagordo if I were with you dear.

Corona

October 18, 1943

Hello my Sweetie,

Today it is raining, and rain is really good for my spirits. It's the first rain of the season and things were getting pretty dry. We're all glad to see it. Lots of other things are good for my spirits. It sounds like great gains in the South Pacific if Jap planes downed mean anything, and then those wonderful words at the end of the communique, "all the allied planes got back except two fighters."

Another cheering thing was my trip to Riverside this a.m. I actually got everything I set out to get - perhaps that was because I didn't set my goals too high but nevertheless to return home with your shopping list all checked off is a nice feeling. I am particularly thrilled over the makin's for a dress I assembled today; if I'm not mistaken it'll suit your taste per-zactly. It's rather dark purple with one single large purple sequin trimming, and the pattern is very simple. Now if I can only get time to make these things I have planned all will be well. I also worked a shoe deal that pleases me no end because I didn't have to spend a stamp and saved money besides, not to mention netting the smartest pair of shoes I've seen for awhile. I'm simply swimming in shoe stamps - what with my unspent No. 18, Bill III's, and your No. 18's and all three of us have a new one come due the 1st of November. Wouldn't Ginny Garron envy me? The funny part is now that I so successfully revived an old pair, I can't think of anything to spend my stamp on! You wouldn't care for a few shoe coupons, would you, dear? How are your shoes holding up? In fact how is all the paraphernalia you left the states

with standing the gaff? Maybe you will be back here by the time it wears out, then you'll be sure not to be able to find anything to replace it! Oh, things really aren't so bad as that tho, you just can't be so particular - that's all.

In one of the department stores was a little sign staring you in the fact as you entered. It said, 'Leave your old costume jewelry here. The boys in the South Pacific need it to trade with the natives.' Honey, I thought you were kidding about those bangles! The little sign didn't say what the boys wanted to trade for. Hmmmmm.

Marion Keller went with us - she's the one whose husband was on the Tokyo raid and is now in Sicily. It seemed awfully good to have a real first-class bull session with another deserted army wife - misery loves company, you know.

Honey, your description of the wet season sound pretty icky. I'm glad you have the swimming hole so close by. Perspiring like that, you're apt to lose all kinds of weight. Now don't overdo it and come home skin and bones! Just think of all the things we have yet to do for the first time together, dear; we've never even been swimming together (speaking of swimming holes) we've never enjoyed snow sports together, fishing, horseback riding - I could go on and on. Oh there's so much to look forward to and all of it is so much more exciting and so much more fun when we enjoy it together. Little Willie is just finishing dinner now, and it's time for my dinner, so again I say adieu to you before I have even gotten started. Betty P.S. Darling, oh Darling - Four V-mails from you tonite, but no time to answer them now. Manana, my sweet. I'm floating on air.

Corona

October 19, 1943

Bill Darling,

First, I want to tell you what a perfectly marvelous husband you are. If I'd been allowed to pick out the every quality of the man I wanted to marry and then have them all welded into one, he wouldn't have added up a bit different, in fact probably not as well, for we often don't know exactly what we want, and find, upon trial that many things not previously thought of are terribly important too. Honey, the only thing wrong with you is you're not here! Gee, Sweetie, I'm so much in love with you, I can't see straight, and now that our cherub has arrived it's even harder being separated from you.

However, dragging out the good old foo-losophy - five and a half months (or 'maths' as you spelled it in one place!) lie behind us, and surely that is the worst of it. What's before us won't be that long and you won't be in the air as much, of course. I'd love to have you just go up and fly those needed hours right off one after another if it meant your coming home that much sooner. But since conditions prevent, it's sort of nice to know you've got your feet on old mother earth a little more frequently.

Honey, how exciting about you being recommended for the D.F.C.! Naturally I'm thrilled pink and hope you get it, but it doesn't make me too happy to think what you might have had to do to get that recommendation. Sure Bill would like to have it, what about his mother? Believe me, she'd think that was pretty nice too. But don't get me wrong now - if they turn it down don't you go out and try to do something to garner in another one, cause I'd be happy if you were only a buck private without any decoration a 'tall.

The letters that arrived were Sept. 30, Oct. 1, and the double job of Oct. 4. Of course, you know by now that the missing allotment has arrived, so all those wonderful ideas you gave me for a strong letter won't be necessary, tho they certainly sound as if they would do the job, especially that part about I'll see my lawyers, etc. etc.

The record of Willie hiccuping and me sentimentalizing is practically on its way to you, dear. I am going to take him downtown to make it just before feeding time, so's he'll say a few words for you - perhaps not a hiccup but a squawk or two.

More baby presents arrived yesterday - I simply haven't had to buy a thing! One was from Mickey Paris and one from my old poultry prof & his wife. Also I had a lovely long letter from Jimmie Hinze which I shall answer soon and one from my old landlady in Berkeley. She is such a sweet little old lady and I shudder to think what a shock it would give her if she knew what hectic weekends her mouse-like little roomer used to spend in Sacramento! Oh, those were the days, Sweetie, with the fall months stretching so unendingly ahead of us and the uncertain future only a figment of the imagination not to be reckoned with till the evil day it arrived.

Darling, the things you say have me breathless. I thought you were a pretty snappy lover in the flesh, but you're not too darn slow even on paper - it does seem remarkable that we have known each other only 13 months today. Do you really think that other people are often not as lucky as we are in knowing and understanding one another so well? If so, I am sorry for all those who do not know such joy, 'cause its really sumpin! Frankly, I doubt if a very large percent of married women after a year of married life (oops! do you see what I said! Well, it does kind of seem like it, doesn't it, because there never was much of a break between before Jan. 2 and after!). Anyhoo I doubt if many married women still pinch themselves after a year of it, just to see if it's really true. Somehow I find myself feeling that we just always understood one another as we do today. You were always so sweet and thoughtful and frank, and sincere, that you simply inspired trust in me from the very beginning. You can believe that or I would never have battled for an hour and a half that nite to get in the Santa Ana Air Base to keep a date with someone whom I didn't trust pretty implicitly. Nor would I have come back the next nite if I had believed it was all a line.

I don't know, Sweetie, you were just sort of made for me, and every minute of life I've known with you has been heaven. Do you realize we've never had anything that even borders on a real disagreement! We won't say "quarrel" or "fight" - nasty words those. I guess we just never took time out from our loving, but I never could think of anything to fight about even if we'd had scads of time. Of course, there's politics, but I really don't care very much about that, and know less. I just argue with you for the sake of an argument. I'd always back down to keep things from getting too hot, because I suppose you're probably right anyhoo, but a nice salty argument is fine now and then, isn't it, as long as it's not about anything really essential.

Mom and I spent the afternoon visiting, and you know dear, I certainly give all the babies the once over (I'll leave giving the babes a once over to you dear) and at any rate, they just don't stack up to ours at all. Ours is so much cuter, honey, honest I didn't know they came so adorable as Willie - he's such a lamb.

That was a very snappy answer you gave your Dad to his kidding about Bill's untimely arrival. I knew I could count on my honey to take care of anything that involved the King's English. I got quite a kick out of Daddy's good-natured kidding. Confidentially, I wonder if our cherub was early or not? Could be. I'm really guessing.

Sweetie, it will be perfectly OK with me if you lay an egg or two on the Hollywood Studios with whom you have a beef. If that hooley about the glamour in war makes me sick, I know how it must nauseate you, and I'm all for obliterating it the quickest way. Clear track head, Sweetie, bombs away?

There are millions of nice things I want to say, dear, and if I were only talking in place of writing I could say them, but damn - I ain't talkin. One of these days we both will be talking and then some, eh, honey! Good-nite, my darling husband. xxx and all our love from both of us over here to pappy over there. Betty.

Corona

October 20, 1943

Sweetie Dear,

Guess what our precocious child did today? He laughed, yes really. He looked right up at me and grinned and then he went "heh, heh, heh," very quietly! I don't know what the joke was, but I know it was a laugh and they're not supposed to do that for several months yet. He smiles often now and honest, it's too cute for words. He's just so precious, I can just hardly wait for you to see him. Right now he's having dinner and he started in so fast that he choked and I had to hold him up and pat him. Gee, honey, do you know all about burping babies, or will I have to teach you? It will be such fun when Bill can have a father on hand to enjoy him too.

Dat hasn't come home yet so I don't know how the mail situation is but I don't dare hope, because I was so lucky night before last with those V-mails. I can't be piggy, and you are so wonderful about writing that I consider myself extraordinarily lucky.

The news reporter said today that Clark Gable is on his way back in Hollywood after going on five bombing missions as a real photographer. He is coming back to edit a flying fortress combat picture, then is going back to combat. That picture ought to get your approval, honey, because I'll bet after being out in actual combat himself, he won't let any glamour hooley thru. "Air Force" was another one that didn't look at it thru rose-colored glasses either. The people back home need more of that kind I think. The reporter also said that since Italy is out we no longer refer to the enemy as the axis but as "gerps" a combination of German & Jap as you can see. Might shorten it to "jerks" I'd say.

I heard a Mexican station this a.m giving out with some of that real Mexican music, and of course you can't guess what that made me think of. Not Domingo's and inch think filets, not Lobby No. 2 or Tivoli or Mendoza's, not much! Then the first piece that I heard on another program was "I've heard that Song Before". The same recording of it that was played continuously on the nickelodeon at the Biggs Field officer's club. That didn't bring back many memories either - much. Gosh everything I hear, everything I touch, my every thought reminds me of the past or makes me look to the future.

It is like swimming across a stream - when you're on one side you're busy living, playing, laughing, and the same goes for the other side. But when you start in to swim it, all you can do is swim and keep afloat till you reach the other side, and that's just what I'm doing - just treading water to keep afloat till I reach the other side.

10:00pm Wow! Sweetie - the greatest news since the invention of the sewing machine! Guess what? Your Ray-Ban glasses arrived in tonite's mail. Yes, Helen actually sent them at last and wrote a nice letter too. Evidently, she wasn't even mad at my pestering her for them so much. Well, that takes care of that. The missing allotment and the glasses both accounted for - we're out of the red.

I'm in luck as far as the mail situation goes, for I did receive a V-mail from you - Oct. 6, and the fact that you only have 3/10 of the hours ahead of you is nuthin but good. I also had a letter from Muddy tonite in which she relayed news to me of the exact number of hours and I'm thrilled to hear how many! Golly, I've heard of lots of people being sent home after less time than you have in already. You're in there pitchin', Sweetie. It seems General H. relayed it to Cush, Cush to Louise, etc. - been rubbing elbows with those starred lads again, eh, dear?

I'm sending on a letter from Louise and little Bill. I sure go for that gal, she's got what it takes for my vote. And by the way, honey, have I told you recently how perfectly wonderful I think your family are, gee, they are just so terribly sweet and understanding.

Just took little Willie to bed - now to continue - also a nice letter from the Zooks. Also one from an old girl friend of mine I used to ride with in the mountains, she's now training for the ferry command and has in 12 of her 35 required hours.

How careless of "Mother". I mean the part about going to sleep. Well, I guess I am not alone. I must look up Betty Farrington and find out if she has perfected a technique for keeping him awake any better than I have. I see you fellows have been having some very confidential bull sessions a lackaday, I suppose Willie III's careless conception is not a secret from Mother and Alfred. How about Alfred, has he made it 100% for the sleepy air corps or does he prefer to know what going on?? Oh well, a joke's a joke whether it's on them or us, eh, honey? Sweetie, aren't you rather presuming signing your letters Bill, Sr.?

Daddy still has priority on that title. What would he become if you copped it? It seems so funny to have you sign them "pop". You know I'm having a hard time getting used to the fact that I'm a 'mother'. The part about Bill III seems as natural as anything, and he's so completely adorable that I love him wildly, but just the fact that I'm a 'mother' - that still seems funny. I don't feel any older.

Did I tell you before about Sammy Agens, the little crippled Jewish boy? Sammy and I have been friends for years. He's a remarkable person - born without the use of his legs, he traveled in a wheel chair till about the age of 15 when he determined to learn to use crutches. His next achievement was to ride horseback which he does expertly now, and has owned several horses. He has taught himself many skills, not the least of which is being an expert violinist and violin repair man. He is now working at the San Bernadino Air Depot repairing precision instruments, and owns and drives his own '42 Hudson car. Sammie drove up tonite to see our offspring and in the course of conversation it came out that he is repairing instruments among which are a gyro-horizon and a turn-indicator or some such thing - do they sound familiar? Sammie is a remarkable person and sure deserves the best.

Honey, my love, I must drop your family a line yet tonite, so again I chop off this letter to you long before I want to. I love you, darling, only you will ever know how much. xxx Betty.

Corona

October 21, 1943

My darling husband,

As a cadet and lover you were wonderful, as a lieutenant and husband you were superb, as a Captain and father - well I'm anxious to see just what adjective I can fill in the missing space with. I think maybe Sid Graceman could help me out because didn't he coin "super-colossal" and "magnanimous"? Anyway, honey, once you get the chance I know you will be the most perfect father a boy ever had, our offspring has awfully good taste in fathers I think!

Yes, dear, I have noticed characteristics in you that denote your love of children, or your love of something at least, if you know what I mean! How could I miss it! So you've been getting a little riding about our 8« mos. baby - well I know you can take it dear, and hand it back again. Girls aren't like that - they won't kid you about a thing like that, but they will raise their eyebrows and mention it to someone else. That's one reason I've appreciated the true friendship of some fellows - that behind the back business is something you don't run into there.

I don't know, I guess maybe women just don't have enough important things on their minds to keep them strictly on their own business. You'll find there are a few women who do not try to 'make something' of everything they hear, and usually those are the ones with active ambitious minds who are either busy with a career or are capable of inventing ways to keep themselves always busy. I don't know what made me think of it right now, but I suddenly thought how everything is relative - you know, when I used to sit up and wait for you to come home at midnite there in El Paso, and sit curled up in a somewhat uncomfortable chair reading some story in Ladies Home Journal in which my interest was only lukewarm, I thought that was dull, and even somewhat nerve-racking since so many crashes had been occurring. But I'd trade any minute of any day I've lived since May 3rd for an evening of that. Now that just goes to show you how perspectives change, doesn't it?

Bill is almost thru his dinner - I find that by maneuvering carefully I can hold him with my left arm and get a letter written to you in two jumps - the 6 o'clock and the 10 o'clock feeding.

I feel very good as I am well launched on a large sewing project. Yesterday I got my new suit all cut out and that was a job, and this afternoon I got the jacket fitted and basted, so I feel quite smug, I really believe you'll like it, honey.

I took some more pictures today and will take them to the developers tomorrow when I go down to see Dr. Roos for my 6 weeks examination. There isn't much point in my having an examination as I feel so darn good, the only part that bothers me is my dang stomach muscles ain't what they usta be, but I'm taking daily exercises that should do the trick. The pictures should be good - we got one of Bill and Yaqui and I, and I think it'll be quite cute.

10pm Well your young son is out after raw meat again! And how! Wow, what a roughneck. Ouch! Honey, just as you say, "I wish the time would go faster." Gee, doesn't it drag?! How to live two lifetimes in one lesson - just put several thousand miles between yourself and your sweetie. Eight thousand miles, gee, I can't even imagine what distance that is. Nearly three times across the continent. It almost scares me when I think how far that is. Oh honey, damn it, make that time pile up fast so's you can come home to me right away.

Well, what do you know? Bill just went to sleep eating. I've never seen his daddy to that, but I've seen him go to sleep doing other things. I guess I can classify their relative importance from that. Oh me, what a slap in the face.

I decided to change his diaper to wake him up, and what in the world do you suppose? It was dry, and I hadn't been near him for two hours, as he'd been asleep. Foiled again! I certainly can't call my shots with him, sometimes I can't change 'em as fast as he can wet 'em, and now this. Our unpredictable child. Well, he's eating now anyhow.

You know, honey, I have been analyzing my self and my family. I think a very good way for one to discover one's own faults is to look objectively at your parent's faults and try to recognize them in yourself. One that I have discovered I have is in relation to work, and I think I have some of the same tendencies along that line as my Dad has. He has in a way become a slave to work. He has almost forgotten how to play and even if he hadn't he works so hard that he is always too tired to enjoy himself. Not that I have that characteristic at present, but at times I recognize such tendencies in myself and it is something to guard against as it is not fair to others.

What I mean about myself is that I place too high a value on accomplishing things and am apt to put it ahead of other things, when in reality, you should favor neither work nor play but achieve a perfect balance, for work without play becomes drudgery, and play without work becomes empty, pointless and totally lacking in significance and satisfaction. Sometimes I think that my Dad is apt to have a lop-sided sense of values, spending too much of his precious time on something unworthy of it, while more worthy projects go unattended to.

Naturally, he hasn't time for everything, and so must choose. Well, I know full well that I am apt to be guilty of the same thing. Often times I find myself placing material things above intangible things, when in reality it is probably the latter that will outwear the former. Take for instance the decision as to whether to spend a certain amount of time making a new dress or improving my mind by catching up on some back reading. Invariably I would choose the material object.

As far as I'm concerned, I can't find any faults in my mother, only a stack of virtues, most of which I could aspire to until doomsday and never attain. At any rate there's a goal for me to work toward. As far as that goes, my dad is the closest thing to an angel that ever walked the earth, I was only being objective. And now, dear, it is 10:45 and Bill is snoring in my arms so good nite, dear, you are the material thing on which I place the highest value of all ten thousand times over and you have taught me lots of other values that I had never had sense enough to see for myself. You're for one, honey, and that's as sure as the stars that shine. I love you darling, nite now, Betty.

Corona

V-mail, October 22, 1943

My dearest sweetie, Exactly six weeks ago tonite I wrote you a V-mail and I am feeling so much more chipper tonite that I was then that I decided to celebrate with a V-mail plus a letter! The letter is already sealed, but seriously, the reason for this V-mail is to tell you about the phonograph record. There were a number of deterring influences and confidentially, it's pretty feeble. Bill didn't seem to want to say much, and there were too many people listening for me to say much but such as it is, it's on its way to you with this letter. I would send it air-mail, but you can only send 2 oz. that way, so plain old first class via boat will have to do the job. Darling, I would give an awful lot to have had everyone just sort of evaporate when I got a hold of that microphone, so's I could have been alone with you, to say what I really felt, but somehow I never have been able to be very sentimental for an audience. Guess I'm just savin' it up for one big splurge when I get you alone together! Nite dearest - and say hello to the boys for me please.

Love, and lots and lots of kisses to you, sweetie pie. Betty

Corona

October 22, 1943

Hello darling,

Who do you suppose has been tinkering with the clocks and calendars to put them in low gear? I wish somebody would speed them up a trifle because something is screwy with time - the days go so darn slow and yet I seem to get nothing done for a lack of time! Now figure that one out.

Well, honey, the record is made, and should be on its way to you tomorrow. However, it is not very good for a lot of reasons. Bill didn't feel like saying much, and what he did say was weak and ineffectual in comparison to what volume he can put out. Then I had a million sweet and sickly sentimental things I wanted to say to you but there was an audience and I got cold feet - which left me without any script so to speak. Then too, I could just visualize an audience on the other end, and the kidding you'd get if I gave them a chance!

It wasn't the same as when we were all standing around the mike and you felt you could shove the thing at someone else if you ran out of blurb. Of course you could talk all day in a situation like that, but I must admit this dang thing had me somewhat stymied. It even stymied Bill too as even tho he'd be talking when I stuck the mink in front of him, he became so interested in it that he'd stop vociferating and inspect it closely. At any rate, however feeble it is, it's on it's way to you Sweetie-pie. I wanted to send it air mail, but you can only send up to 2 oz. via air mail, and I believe this package runs over that so I'll send it first class and hope the boat is a fast one. I found a manilla envelope to put it in to make it look more like an envelope, but it's slightly second-handed.

I'm enclosing a clipping that makes me boil - how anyone can have an opinion like that and not have something wrong with head is more than I can see! Just how much aggression has Russia ever been guilty of? When she took some of Finland and Poland, it was only after the Germans had taken strategic parts of those countries first and Russia had to get on the ball and protect her own borders.

She has never manifested any desires for world domination, in fact, she worked hard to gain collective security thru the League of Nations, in which she received no cooperation from the good old U.S. If I were a Russian and I knew that

very many Americans had said such things as this Green said, believe me, it would be all over with the U.S. It's false accusations that cut the deepest and are hardest to forget, and another thing, these people who say, "all the lend-lease aid we've had from Russia is that she has serviced some of our ships in ports" ought to be brought to trial as traitors with the Russians pointing to over 6,000,000 dead as against our 85,000 or 85,000,000 if Russia weren't keeping Hitler so busy engaged.

The Russians are suffering the ravages of war over a great portion of their continent while our soil remains untouched by foreign bombs. They are gallantly dynamiting their Dnieper River dam which was a token of their wonderful community spirit, having been built by thousands of Russian hands who donated several hours of their own time to do their bit to achieve this public-spirited miracle, the equal of which the U.S. has never known. Some fascists have the nerve, the crust, the brass to say, "All the aid Russia has given us for lend-lease is blah, blah, etc." Where is their sense of values? Perhaps they'd like it better if she paid us for the paltry few airplanes, guns and drops of butter we've begrudgingly sent her, not in holding off our common enemy, but in solid gold, of which we have so much already that it's ceased to be a world standard of value, and since you can't eat it, wear it, or fight with it - it just ain't worth beans!

Some people that made unqualified remarks like that don't know which side their bread is buttered on, and had best get their feet in the boat and learn who their friends are if for no other reason, from the desire for pure self-preservation after this mess is all over.

Phew! I'm all out of breath and besides it's time for Willie's meal so I think I'll call it quits, darling. He weighed 10 10oz at the doctor's office this afternoon. Oh, honey, he is so darn adorable that it just slays me you are not here to see him. Have I said that before? Well, it does slay me. He'll still be cute, I guess, when you get here, but I just want you to see him now. Good nite my love, I think I'll run upstairs and get a V-mail blank and write it to you explaining a little bit about the cheesy record. I always like to put anything that I want to be sure and have reach you on V-mail, but for orations such as this discourse, V-mail blanks are not quite adequate.

Good nite my sweet husband. Do I miss you and am I eager! Remember what I said about six weeks after Bill III's arrival one time in answer to a question of yours?! Well, I'm waiting, honey -All my love and kisses always, Betty. P. S. Have I told you recently how wonderful you are, darling?? Well, you are. You're more than that, you're ideal, adequate, perfect, and on top of that you're everything I could possibly ask for in a husband.

Corona

October 23, 1943

Bill Darling,

Another one of those darned Saturday nites that are packed and jammed with reminiscing. Memories are a darn slim diet for 140 pounds of eager young woman to live over five and one half months on nuthin! But - however, I haven't lost any weight so if any of me is wasting away it must be the soul and not the body! Five and one half months, yea, even a few days longer, doesn't that sound like an eternity. Something you'd rather not think about when it's in reference to time spent away from your Sweetie.

Gee, darling, doesn't it seem ironical that you and I waited 27 and 23 years respectively to fall in love and then had to be jerked apart when we were only beginning to live. However, when I find myself indulging in such thoughts, I have only to consider the fate of the population of occupied countries in Europe and I realize that we are vastly lucky. Yes, everything is relative, Gad, I'm going wacky on that relativity business. Me and Einstein. Well, it is tho we haven't got a thing to kick about (good old faithful foo-losophy). Remember the theorem I evolved about how it might be a blessing in disguise? Well, it still might, but I like my blessings in full dress, not incognito. Oh well, hell, time will pass, it always has for the past 6,000 years anyhow, but it's this next 6,000 that's bothering me.

Dat hasn't come home yet, so I don't know how the mail situation is. I wish he would get here - wow, he just phoned and you should have seen Mom jump to the phone - you see it's 10 o'clock and we've been sitting here doing a little plain and fancy worrying as Dat and Stanley went off with the truck and trailer early this a.m. to get some implements. They darn well should have phoned before this, and I'm all set to pour it on when they get here. After all you gotta discipline these damn men - worrying you grey headed unnecessarily.

That's one thing among innumerable others that I love about you, dearest, you always kept me posted via telephone. I could always rest assured that you would phone the minute you got the chance if you were late or out on a flight, so I never worried because there was no uncertainty. I knew you would call. Honey, you know, as I think it over, I realize

that you and I really have got something rare among married couples, a complete and unadulterated trust and confidence in one another. I trust you and your judgement so much that I really think if I got a wire from you where you are right now saying, "Come" - I really think somehow or other I might actually make it. That's just how completely I trust you. Gosh, honey, I wish you'd hurry up and get home to me so's I could have a chance to...

Now it's tomorrow, Sunday, and I'm giving Bill his 6:00 meal which he said he was just sure he was never going to get. The little rascal he's so eager for his meal each time you'd think it was whiskey. And another thing he takes after you in is that he is somewhat of a nite owl. He hates to go to sleep right after dinner, and would much rather come out and be held at the dinner table and watch us all eat, and I really think he sleeps better when I bring his bassinet out into a room where we all are and where the radio is playing loudly than he does in a quiet room by himself.

There was a football game today that would have interested you, dear, Army vs. Yale. It so happens that all the good Yale men are in the Army and consequently Army won by a score of something like 40 - 7. Incidentally a boy on the Army team was Glenn Davis who figured in all but one of the touchdowns. Well, this Davis had played on a Southern Cal. H.S. team last year that played the Corona H.S. team Stan played on. That was the only game Corona lost. Stan is puffing himself up about it!

Your sister Marge is psychic. I had been bemoaning the rubber pant situation, as babies' rubber panties are a war casualty and the substitutes are the bunk. Here in the mail last nite arrived two pair of very choice panties that should be a great factor in helping to keep him dry. That same thing happened with two other articles of baby clothing. No sooner had I decided they were necessary and I should buy some, here the very thing I wanted arrived in the mail as a gift.

Speaking of being economical, we saved about \$15 on the baby carriage idea as I wouldn't have one of these tremendous wooden affairs for anything and I think I told you I had decided to renovate the one that Stan and I were wheeled about in. It is really very choice for us as it folds up to a quite small size for shopping. With a little cream-colored paint, a yard of brown leatherette, and a bit of welding which the nice man did for me free for nutin' it has been transformed into a very snappy town car for our cherub. I have been working on it all day, and am filled with pride in the accomplishment.

The war has played havoc with bassinets also, the one we are using now is very good looking, but his piggy child is rapidly outgrowing it. So I sent for one and got a letter back 'indefinitely out of stock'. So - another renovating job for the little woman. There is an old crib which I am cleaning up prior to a paint job tomorrow. There's more than one way to skin a cat as they say, and besides think of all the money we're saving.

Later - Bill has now been put to bed for the third time and is still screaming, so I have decided to let him yell for awhile as picking him up seems to be of no avail now. I guess it's gas, and that's just the bugaboo all babies have to put up with at times.

Who does the enclosed pictures look like? As far as I'm concerned its none other than the great lover Haugstad. Give Hoggie my love and tell him I said I'd send him some jewelry for the native girls if he can use it.

A grand letter from Muddy yesterday said they would be sure and come out when you get home. Gee, honey, it's 1,000 times worse than waiting for Christmas ever was. I shall certainly make good use of any film you can commandeer for me, honey. I took some other rolls yesterday of our cutie, and they will be developed tomorrow and on their way to you the next day. I hope you have the others by this time, as I know you must have been pretty anxious for them.

Your Oct. 2nd letter was in the mail Dat brought home last nite. What do you mean you are a novice at being a papa? Not from what Daddy said regarding your reputation and a 8« months baby! Ha, ha, honey, I'm just getting even for some cracks you made under the protection of 8,000 miles.

Darling I just re-read you last letter and I'm dewey-eyed, you're so wonderful - I love you so terribly much.

Always, your Betty.

Corona

October 25, 1943

Bill dearest,

I wish you could see our cherub now, I even just wish you could hear him. He's having dinner and for some reason he got very hungry beforehand and when he does that, he eats with such gusto when he finally gets his food that you can hear him gulping all over the house. Incidentally, the door to new worlds suddenly opened to me yesterday when I ventured to give him a bottle of goat's milk and he took it just as tho he'd been doing so all his life. There was a couple of ounces in the bottle and he downed that plus all of what I had without a quaver, but he was a little groggy afterwards from overeating. Now I am no longer chained to a four hour schedule, if I should want to miss a meal, the bottle can be brought into use. Must be inheritance, dear, that made him take the bottle so easily.

He also had a taste of another new food recently - orange sherbet - just a speck on the tip of a spoon, and he loved it, smacked his lips for more. Today we took him for his first ride in the go-cart, and that too met with great approval. It is a very snappy rig - has the adjustable back to the seat so it can either be like a bed or like a chair with graduations in between. We fixed it so he could sit up just enough to see where he was going or where he had been as the case might be if we were pushing or pulling him.

Darling I am simply luxuriating in V-mails. Your Oct. 7 one arrived today and gave me the usual boost I get from all your letters. You do write such marvelous letters and I feel so lucky to receive so many of them. I keep them all for two very good reasons, no.1, sentiment. That is very important. You couldn't bribe me to toss one away as each one is different and means so much to me. I'm just plenty misty often when I get thru reading your letters. No.2 - they serve as somewhat of a diary, and when you get back, we may want to refer to some of them in connection with my newspaper clipping file when you give me a play by play description of the whole thing.

You know honey, I have a lot of ideas how things ought to be run after this is all over and before I get any further - you referred to my being a Democrat. I've been thinking about that. I don't think that Democrat and Republican are quite the terms to use any more - they are out of date. Personally, neither one really means a thing to me if I had to give a definition. I think better terms today would be Liberal and Conservative.

People sort of assume that the words Liberal and Democrat are synonymous, but when the south is Democratic and those damn old southern senators howl about 'states rights' when it is suggested that the Federal Government take over voting qualifications and eliminate the poll tax - well, I think that disproves that immediately. So I am neither a Democrat or Republican, OK? Well, as I was saying - ideas.

For one thing I think that a college education should be more universal as it is in Russia today. The government provides free college for the youth of the country there, and what better way is there to provide a large trained corps of experts with which to populate and advance one's country? There is much being done in this country along the lines of vocational guidance in the public schools today, in that the end is provided but nothing is said about the means. College is so completely out of the question for the great majority of young people, many of whom have much better capacity for higher learning than some of the students enrolled in universities at the expense of mom and dad.

What started me thinking about this is Thomas Browning, who is a story-book character if ever there was one. He is a little man, 77 years old and an English citizen still, even tho he has lived in Corona for the past 40 years - has been a friend of the family's that long too, and I don't think there has ever been a minute of that time that he stopped talking. He is literally a talking machine. He used to emphasize the quantity of his speech by screaming it at the top of his voice. Age has modified the quality, but not the quantity. He is a good man, so good and kind-hearted that he brought his goat in the house and put her up on the tables to milk her. He did not need all the milk so would feed part of it back to her. He wouldn't kill the ants that infested his house because, "they deserve to live" observed he. The rattlesnake according to him, "is such a fair creature. It always warns you before it strikes." However, in spite of all these unusual characteristics, he has a very keen and perceptive mind. He is drawing a pension of \$30 a month and needless to say lives in poverty. He always has lived in poverty as he has absolutely no education and is not particularly adaptable. Mom and I were talking about him and said what a marvelous veterinary he would have made as he has such a keen mind, good memory and great love of animals. He would have been a real addition to any country in that capacity, but as it is, his life has been to no particular avail. He is not even married so as to have given any children to the world.

Now, if you will think about the many people you know, lots of them are square pegs in round holes, or at least oblong ones. And chances are they are not any too happy there either. How did they get there? They just drifted - no particular aim or goal - so took the easiest road each turn, or, in many cases it was a case of a promising personality with definite

aspirations but financial matters either of his own or at home prevented continuance of school, necessitating that the first job opportunity be snapped up, even tho it might be entirely out of his line.

Chances are that if finances are not any too good, he will hang on to that job and try his best to make good at it, always harboring that secret longing to be a doctor or a dentist or a scientist or engineer. And isn't it usually the people who actually enjoy their work that turn out the best results? In both of the aforementioned cases, definite vocational guidance or public college training would have been the answer, and how much better off the country would be than to be saddled with either of the people I described, just the type who are on relief when a depression strikes.

I think it would be sort of like a country's investing in insurance - insurance of a higher standard of living and against poverty, sickness, crime and all the other evils of morale, etc., that go hand in hand with lack of sufficient funds to provide the minimum requirements of life. It's funny, isn't it dear, how your line of thought changes upon becoming a parent? We have got a job to do, and it's to help provide not only the end, but the means.

You know, another thing that's worrying me is this second front business. You just don't know what to believe, there are so many irons in the fire and so many sides to each, that none of us can begin to know all the facts, but I do remember the U.S. saying something about a 2nd front in '43 and now there's rumbling of a 2nd front in Spring of '44.

All the time the Russians quietly ask us, "are you serious about this second front business, or do we have to fight this thing out alone? We can do it if we have to, we're just asking because we want to know." And they mean it - if they've accomplished to date what they have, there is no reason why they can't get to Berlin all by their lonesomes. It'll mean more blood shed to them, and Russian girls and wives and mothers love their men at the front just as American women do, but if they have to, they'll scrap it out alone, only look out, U.S. when the peace is being made - your voice will be about as effective as some guy on Catalina Island calling signals to a football team in the L.A. Coliseum.

Now it may be that we are right in delaying that second front which is inevitable if we want to keep face, but it may be that large interests which are at present coining money off this mass murder, would not like to see an armistice come too soon and have started wheels in motion to delay any real action on our part as long as possible. Perhaps they are living in a blissful fantasy and think that we can wait till the Russians have Germany with the "U" of Uncle already on her lips, then gloriously the good old U.S. jumps on the bandwagon and as Hitler expires, we cheer "Look what we did."

Now I am not a communist, but if it happens, our reputation will have suffered a pretty black blot in the eyes of the future leading European power. Well honey, do I qualify for Senator-ess? If I don't, I'm still out of breath, so will change the subject. Being alone, or I should say without you, so much gives me lots of time for thought and I just put down a little of it. Darling, being without you is about the stiffest medicine I hope to ever have to take. It's about as uninspirational to me as a coke without bourbon would be to you. It's cheering to think that the majority of the time must lie behind us tho isn't it? That's about the only cheering thing however. You know I feel like some kind of a heel when I find myself talking like this, because I know I haven't anything to kick about compared with the situation you're in.

I'm glad you've been able to cook up a little bridge game, as that can consume a lot of time, if time's what you got too much of? I'm also happy to hear of your experiments with water as a drink, sweetie. Do a little more research on that, will you? Incidentally, your son makes a dreadful face when offered water. It has to have sugar in it before it suits him. Oh dear, and him so young. Honey, it's good nite for now. Always, always remember that I love you more than anything else in the world and your son and his mother will turn a triple handspring when that phone rings and it's you. 'Nite dearest from your ever loven' wife. Betty.

Corona

October 26, 1943

Bill dear,

A lovely letter arrived from Daddy tonite in which he enclosed a clipping from the Danville paper telling of a steak and beer feed in a jungle camp in Australia. There were many odd chores performed in preparation of the orgy and the names of the different officers performing them, and someone by the name of McFerren iced the drinks.

How coincidental, dear, and you always took over that end of things. That fellow McFerren must be stealing your lines. Daddy also gave me some info given him from Col. Cousland regarding the numbers 200 and 250, with a question

mark after the latter. Gee, there I go talking the double-talk again to evade the censor whom you say never opens my mail. I'm so used to it now I don't believe I could just break down and state bare facts which I am lead to believe are touchy subjects from what you say of them. Lackaday. Anyhoo, it would be wonderful, wouldn't it? I'll get everything ready and even bake a cake for you.

Don't forget that telegram 'son born' or ' born' or something equally crazy to give me the high sign when you're leaving as I'll be sure and not faint dead away when you phone. This last stretch is dragging like the dickens. The closer we get to the time, the slower the days go and the more eager I get. I'm almost scared - I don't know if I can stand so much happiness. How-evah - dear - no matter what lovely promises and wishful thinking I may hear from other sources - you know whose figures I take the most stock in when it comes right down to brass tacks - and that's yours. If you say my birthday, then it's my birthday OK? Only let's make it your birthday, as then can be a double celebration as it will be our offspring's six months one.

I'm going to go get him now as it's past time for his 10pm feeding and the rascal is still asleep. Just a minute.

He's wide awake now and very busy. He slept very soundly since his 6 o'clock meal and I'm so proud of him. He's really an awful good child and cries very little. All the trouble we were having at nite is now ironed out beautifully (knock on wood) and he sleeps till five every morning. Soon I hope it will be six. He's cooperative in every way - seems to love every new food I try him on and it never makes him sick.

The photographs I promised you have yet to be gotten from the developers. Dat has forgotten two days in a row to get them. Oh, the joys of living in the country. And speaking of photographs, you said you wanted me to have some taken - do you think that would be smart dear, as at the rate the last one traveled, this one would hardly reach you before you are packing your things when you consider it would take me a while to get it taken and printed as you know how fast service you get nowadays. So as it would take as long, how about waiting till you are back and we'll have some taken together. You know we never did have any wedding pictures together, neither do I have one of you since you got your bars. I guess you can tell I'm allergic to pictures, but honestly, aside from that, I think it would be better to wait and do it right.

I have an idea about giving money to the Red Cross. I received a refund of \$7 + some cents for the bassinet and a few other things that were not in stock, so I'm making old things do in place, and not spending that refund. I'll just endorse the check to the R.C. I don't feel that we should give too much away, as we are apt to need it come travelin' time, but I do think that from time to time we should give them something as I don't know what this war-torn world would do without them.

Our English shepard dog Skippy has taken a real maternal interest in Bill. I had him out in the yard in this go-cart today. He was lying quietly, snorting and puffing and waving his arms, when suddenly he grew dissatisfied and let out a wail. Skippy had been sleeping by the back door. She instantly leapt up and trotted across to the cart and thrust her head in and licked him tenderly on the face, wagging her tail questioningly. She worries terribly every time he cries and feels that she should do something about it.

Well, honey, Bill says nix, no more, he's fed his face and he wants to sleep so I guess that's the story. I was thinking last nite how much different our schedule will be now - I mean our bedroom - than it was before you left. Funny, isn't it? Darling I must go now and put Willie to bed. Good nite, sweet. I'll kiss your son for his father. Wish he'd kiss me for his father. Love, love, love, Betty.

Corona

October 28, 1943

My darling husband,

I missed writing you yesterday and it wasn't because of a mission either. I went to see "Gone with the Wind", but I'll make up for it tonite if things don't go amiss. I got home at midnite to find Dat had brought me a V-mail dated Oct. 10 from you, dearest, and maybe you think I wasn't happy about that. Gee, sweetie, in all your recent mail you have given me the prospectus for the 1944 Homecoming Day, and tho it varies from day to day in your estimation, I love to be kept posted on what your newest hunches are, and also it make me very happy to know that you're thinking so much about it.

That's just what I do constantly. I count the days and jump a little more each time the phone rings. I'm going to be as Jittery in about three months time as you were around Sept. 20th - 30th. Now that it's getting within reach, time seems to have slipped back into triple-compound low gear.

I am one of the few people in existence that have never seen "G.W.T.W" at least I thought so till we got to the theater and saw a line over half a block long. However, I think most of the people must have been trying to see it for the second time, for I didn't know there were that many people in the world besides myself who hadn't seen it. It was as good, I thought, as everyone had said. In fact, I'd say perhaps the best picture I had ever seen. I'm sure it's the best screen version of a book I've ever seen, the characters were so perfectly as I had imagined them when I read the story - the same both in personality, appearance, and the reaction they created in me. I still wanted to take Scarlet and shake her for being so darn dense - she literally couldn't see the trees for the forest.

10pm Gee honey, I was lucky because I received your Oct.16 air mail today, and here in yours of Oct.10th you said you would have to miss a few days, so I was all reconciled to a famine of letters. Well, as you say, when you do miss writing, dear, it means just that much more flying time and Oh Boy, you know what that means, honey!!!

Your Oct.16 letter, as you remember, was written while you were at a spot where you could not receive mail. I immediately referred to my newspaper file for the several days following that date and have lots of ideas on what you were up to. It all sounds good, honey, and I am anxious to find out if most of the doping I have done is up the right alley or if I am completely all wet.

Sweetie, you know you said that John thought you might go right home when your hours were in. How perfectly heavenly. Gee, I would throw about six fits, but my love, what about this deal of your staying over on the ground for a month or so to help organize the next outfit and thereby assuring us of your staying in the states for good. God, I couldn't stand a second good-bye and another stretch like this sentence I'm now serving. You know how you hate to go to a dentist but you hate the toothache worse. Maybe Yaqui can arrange to dump you off in a bed of cactus or something if anything is said about foreign duty again.

Gosh, lover, I'm just in a sort of trance when I'm reading your letters, and maybe you think I don't know what it is to dream you're there and then roll over only to find you gone. It's the most desolate, hopeless, empty feeling imaginable, much worse than never having dreamed at all. God, you just want to scream, or cry, or run real fast anywhere, or just anything to give vent to that awful feeling that's inside you and won't come out. It's hell and I don't mean maybe. What I wouldn't give to have really been there when you woke up. Oh Sweetie! I don't know how I ever did such a good job of falling in love after having so little experience with being in love, but somehow or other you made up for that lack of practice and poof! I really did a good job of falling so darn hard it didn't even hurt. It was just like floating along on a magic carpet when suddenly on May 3rd, someone jerked the carpet out from under me and I'm still floundering around in space trying to recapture it. Gee, Honey - gosh.

I'm terribly sorry for Mrs. Swan - there is nothing more to say but Damn the Japs. Things like that make me know that I wouldn't have to think twice, not even once, it'd be just automatic if someone thrust a Jap in front of me and a gun in my hands. I'd relish it, I'd even like to shoot his fingers off one by one (just call me Annie Oakley) and then slit his throat. Sweetie, nothing in the way of high class torture would be too good for those guys, preferably Tojo and Hirohito.

My love - it's good-nite for now as our son has finished desert and is snoring in my arms. Darling, whenever you're feeling blue like you professed to be Oct.16, just always remember that come what may, I love you desperately, and please spend your worrying time worrying about you and not Bill and me. Gee, sweetie, I miss you. Always and always, Betty.

Corona

October 29, 1943

Bill darling,

Every time I write a date on the top of a letter to you, I feel somewhat the same as a kid who is marking the days off the calendar till Christmas, only more so. And you should see me read one of your air mail letters. After I've read several pages and fear it's nearly the end, I glance quickly at the bottom of each new page to see whether that's all or not, and if it isn't the concluding page I give a sign of relief and devour it much as a man might enjoy his last hours if his hanging had been postponed another day, and if it is the last page, I read each sentence twice to make it last longer.

Oh honey, I miss you so darn much, and long to be with you more and more. I don't know - I should have learned by this time, whether I have or not is another question, that we are not masters of our fates, and if you can come back the minute your hours are in, why a bird in the hand's worth three in the bush (or is it 2?), and maybe fate will be good enough to us to let that be all anyhow. I know of several returning air corps officers who have been stationed in the U.S., to heck with this being practical and smart, I want you home the quicker the sooner, and will cross bridges when we come to 'em - we always have. I don't know why I should suddenly have started in worrying about tomorrow, when it was always today we lived for. And that philosophy always worked OK too - live for today, think for tomorrow, and let the future take care of itself. And that's just what I'm going to do - let the future take care of itself. If you come home immediately, needless to say that will be the biggest holiday ever, and if you stay on the ground for awhile, that'll be OK too, in a passive sort of way. Enough of that - it's raining today and how I love it. I guess you always love rain if you've been brought up in a dry country with stock that needs that rain to bring up the green grass. Rain always makes me feel kind of like a new person with a fresh start in life, that sort of everything's going-to-be-alright feeling. So far it hasn't been much of a one but it looked like more.

Bill gave a little cry and woke me up last nite just as it was starting to drizzle, and I got up and rushed out to get the crib that I had painted that afternoon. It was sitting under the trees, and hadn't got that wet, thank goodness.

Yesterday was an intermittenly beautiful day, the sky was very clear and blue with fleecy white clouds which covered the sun now and then, but most of the time it was heavenly. The air had taken that crisp, fresh, almost electric quality as tho something were going to happen, but nothing did. How I would love to be going for a horseback ride with you thru these mountains I love on a day like that.

6:00pm - I've been to town since I started this - and I got the films at last. Enclosed are three of them, the other three are going to Muddy and Daddy - (two weren't much good) and I'll send you the other three as soon as I get the reprints made. I think it's better to send them to you in two installments like that because then you're surer of getting at least part of them, but if the letter with all of them got lost, it would take so long for me to know you hadn't received it. I think some of these are pretty good. They're all at six weeks. I have some more snapped in the camera but the roll isn't finished yet.

Darling, I received a package in the mail today that thrilled me very much. It was from a Mrs. Chauncy H. Murphey of New Canaan, Conn. (I will have to check with Muddy before the thank you letter, so's I can make it a little more personal, as I've never heard her mentioned, but know she must be a dear friend from the gift she sent). It was a picture of you at a tender age. I'm just thrilled pink to have it.

Also in the mail I received a letter from Carl Stevenson which I'm sending on to you as I thought you might enjoy reading the news therein. I paid a visit to Doctor Coos this afternoon and was just in time to have 4 o'clock coffee with him and the office staff. Lots of things come out in informal chats you'd never know otherwise. I guess I was lucky to have him as it seems he has been turning away quite a few potential mothers recently. Says the crop of war babies is too much for him as his specialty is really diagnosis, X-Ray, and surgery. I didn't know that he turned any away when I first went to him. If just confidently walked in and plunked myself down, and said well here I am.

Another lovely letter from Muddy yesterday - she certainly writes wonderful ones. Oh yes, and one from Daddy recently too. What a sense of humor that guy has got! I go for him in a big way.

Well honey, for some reason I feel pretty tired tonight - maybe hiking around town did it, so this'll be all for the present my darling husband. You know how much I love you - missing you is like swimming under water - you have to take a breath after awhile and I'm getting pretty short of air - hurry home dear! Love, love, love, love, Betty.

Corona

October 30, 1943

My Sweetheart,

Today was one of those days when I hated everybody, especially myself. I hated myself for wanting to spend the time for the luxury of a ride on Yaqui, and for wanting the time for the luxury of making my own clothes, and then I went right out and took a ride anyhow, and it was wonderful. You know the minute I swing my leg over the saddle and plant my boot in the stirrup, the petty annoyances that have been irritating me all day long vanish and I'm the carefree gal that rode that same little horse home for keeps with a grin from ear to ear over eleven years ago.

I can appreciate the beauty of the hills, the majesty of the graceful eucalyptus trees, and the dignity of the wide level floor to the valley that stretches below like a well-planned stage setting, with me as it's lone spectator. I rode up on the crest of a hill overlooking the valley, a spot that is a favorite of mine late in the afternoon. There, with the road winding snakelike down the gravel wash, with Mr. Weerick's hayfield, orange grove, ranch house, barns, and implements like a tiny toy farm, with the tin roofs of our barns farther away. The entire floor of the valley stretches 25 miles across to the Sierra Madres, and above, poor unfortunate cadets who are getting in their hours on this late Saturday afternoon buzzing about the sky. I feel very small, very insignificant, very much like just another character in this panorama, the scenario for which has perhaps already been written, and which will unfold only after patient waiting. No amount of straining or tugging will reveal any sooner what is around the corner. It's kind of a relaxing feeling, relaxing, because you realize how completely small and unimportant you are and how very little there is that any of us can do about what happens in our lives.

So now, Sweetie, all's well with the world. I wish you had Yaqui over there with you so's you could go for a ride on him and explore some new parts of the jungle and get your mind of war, Japs, navigation, Myrtle, and all the other things you must find yourself mulling over constantly. You know you can go berserk just beating your thoughts down the same track for too long a time. I have Yaqui, and you have, - well, you have two bottles of beer a week!!

That's a poor substitute tho I think you might wonder why I didn't say, "I have Bill", but honey, I can't look at Bill without seeing you and feeling a lump in my throat. He is so like your early picture, Sweetie, and honest, he is getting so good and he just smiles all the time. He's a real cherub if there ever was one.

Sunday - Another day, honey, and how I wish I could practice what I preach all this fatalistic so-why-worry stuff - it looks swell in theory but in practice - nix - I've got jangled nerves and that's all there is to it. Dat brought home your letter of Oct.11 last nite (I'd already gotten Oct.16 written from the same place) in which you told me about returning warriors getting 30 days and then being nuclei of new outfits.

Honey, I've been thinking of all the places that are worst for sinus trouble and maybe we could spend the 30 days there. Or you might even have an operation for it - that always fills people up with a good chronic case. Also I considered varicose veins but I don't think you could get a nice galloping case of them in 30 days unless we pumped some air in your veins or something like that. Breaking legs or ankles or scarlet fever would have been swell at Topeka, because immediate action was all that would have helped then, but now we have a little longer and could do with something a little less violent. Darling, we will think of something if the need ever arrives, because, well - just because this is hell enough for one lifetime.

The censor cut out part where you said "I can't very well tell you where we are but if you (blank) it shouldn't be hard to figure out." Did you say, "have been reading the papers recently.." or something to that effect in there? I referred to the clipping file and have some ideas. Some censors seem to object to things that others overlook, as I remember you having said similar things in other letters and they were not touched.

Tomorrow is November 1 - each new month that rolls around I count as a big milestone toward that happy day when I kiss you hello, darling. That only leaves two more months in '43 - and if you make it by my birthday as I know you will, or sooner as I hope you will, why then over half the time, yes, well over half the time has gone by. I'm going to do a little potent hoping for February even, with just a glimmer of a chance for a windfall before that. Oh sweetie, time drags so. Oh for a knock out pill that would take care of things for, say, four months.

Bill is so lucky; he doesn't know what he's missing by not having you here, and so is perfectly happy. But not so with his mother. I only hope I don't go off my nut, and here you would return just in time to enroll me in the crazy house! Gee, honey I love you so terribly. You're so completely for me; for 24 years I wondered what was missing in fellows I went with and began to think maybe it was me, and then in one nite I found out. Yes, sweetie, the price of happiness comes high, I guess, and we're paying part of it. Why the hell doesn't somebody hand me my ration card? I haven't spent a happiness stamp since you left.

Good-nite, my dearest - it looks like time to prepare for bed and then Willie will want his meal - and then - another lonely nite, and you know what I mean. Maybe we can even break that old record, eh, dear? I'm storing enough energy to double it I think!! All my love always, Betty

Part III

Captivity and a Trip to Japan

Prisoner of War

Freedom and Repatriation

Captivity and a Trip to Japan

A million thoughts flooded through me as the Japanese patrol boat approached. It was standard myth among our troops that to be killed or captured by the Japanese amounted to the same thing. Skeptical of rumor and myth, I didn't know what to expect. Always an optimist, I had to hope that the essential decency of human beings would prevail, even in war-time. As they approached us, any philosophizing about my calamity gave way to coping with the moment, and hoping for the best.

When they came alongside, they dropped a ladder and beckoned us to come on up. On deck, they stripped us down to our skivvies and motioned for us to sit down. None of them spoke English and they left us alone until about 4:30pm when the officers went down to eat. As soon as the officers went below, a Japanese sailor motioned for me to stand up. I stood up, and then he hauled off and hit me in the nose. I used to box when I was at Yale. In my shock and anger, without thinking, I lashed out at him and he fell to the deck. He started to get up, and I nailed him again.

That gut reaction was a mistake. The others quickly responded, beat the hell out of me, and I came to my senses and realized this was not a college game. That was the last time I hit any Japanese while I was a prisoner. They finally fed us some tea and a couple of rice balls, and left us on the forward deck that chilly night, still scantily clad. We damn near froze.

The next morning we docked at Kendari. I recognized it, because we bombed it on a previous mission. There, they put us in a jail. That night the voice of a Japanese guard I never did see asked me in English, "I have a wife in Los Angeles, do you think she's okay?" Hoping to win a friend, and not knowing anything about his wife, I tried to give him a reassuring answer. I said something about how decent and fair Americans were, and he should not worry. He might have heard about the U. S. Government's policy of rounding up Japanese-American families and resettling them in camps. After the war, that policy appalled me. Many Japanese-Americans served with distinction with our armed forces in Europe, and while many didn't know it, in the Pacific as well.

The next day, the fighter pilots who shot us down came to see us. One of them asked in good English, "What do you think of Japanese pilots?" I replied, "They're damn good, they shot us down!" I really did have respect for Japanese pilots, and tried to flatter them. It paid off because in return for the compliments, they gave me package of cigarettes. Japanese cigarettes were terrible, but they were better than nothing.

Two days later, we heard American voices. Lardin, Sleighter, Lovett, and a photographer we had with us, had made it to an island. There, they arranged with the natives for a boat and some provisions to take them back to Australia. Long before the war, the Australians had been trading with native islanders, and had set up a coastal network that remained friendly to Allied forces. The boys had appropriate charts for their trip, but the Japanese caught them at sea, brought them to Kendari, and they wound up in adjacent cells to Dumont and myself.

John Lardin told me he didn't have a Mae West on him after we ditched. He and Sleighter swam eight miles to shore. He said that after he had been swimming a couple of hours, he looked back and there was a big shark following him. He never looked back again, just kept going. Luckily, he and Sleighter were competitive long distance swimmers.

Two men were still missing, Louis Glavan, the top turret gunner, and Daniel Glendon, one of our waist gunners. No one but the sharks could possibly know what happened to them.

Then the interrogation started. Dumont and I followed standard procedure and told them this was our first mission. This was only half true, for it had been Dumont's first mission, and my 19th. The questioning went on all day. Primarily, they wanted to know where the designated escape point was. Unfortunately, that day we had a photographer on board who was not a regular member of our crew. I had never met or even seen him before, because he had boarded the plane

while I was getting my weather briefing before we took off. The first time I laid my eyes him was after we were in prison.

We found ourselves in trouble when the photographer told them things they wanted to hear. It was he who apparently spilled the beans about the existence of an escape point, and told them that only the pilot and navigator knew where it was. Actually, our entire crew knew about the escape point. They quickly recognized a willing stool pigeon, and flew him to Tokyo for what I assume would be better treatment.

Since Farrington our pilot was dead, the Japanese focused on me as navigator to get the information they wanted. When I refused to talk, they started to beat me, kicking me in the groin, and otherwise making live miserable. Somehow after all that, I managed the composure to point out that I, as an officer, would know more than a private.

I explained I was not privy to the means that might be used for our rescue once we sent off a distress signal by radio. I said they might look for us by air, or sea where we ditched. I told them I couldn't know about pre-arranged escape points since it would be impractical to establish them to cover all ditching possibilities. The rank-conscious Japanese believed me for the moment and let up on me.

The Japanese eagerly wanted to learn about our escape point. They had apparently learned that either a PBY 'flying boat' or a rescue submarine would rendezvous at that point precisely one week later looking for survivors. In the area where we went down, within sight of Japanese-held territory, they assumed it meant a submarine would arrive for the rescue mission. They wanted to get that submarine.

A day or two later, they decided that I probably knew more than I was letting on, so they tried the ultimate psychological ploy on me. In the morning, they took me from my cell and tied me to a tree. A squad six young Japanese soldiers with rifles marched in under the supervision of an officer. He said that I was going to be shot unless I told them what they wanted to know. He even 'iced' the situation by offering me a last drink and a cigarette so I could think about it.

I didn't give a damn about myself any longer. I figured I would soon be dead, and mentally said goodbye to my wife, son, friends, and parents. I resolved not to endanger the lives of 90 American submariners who also had sweethearts, children, and wives. As a military man, you know what you have to choose when it's your life or 90 others. When I told them I wasn't going to say anything else, the officer ordered them to cock their rifles and get ready to fire. True to my heritage, I thought, 'If I'm going to die, I'm going to do so with pride and self respect.'

Then the officer made a downward motion with his arm, but they didn't fire. They repeated this sequence four times in all, and even today, I can't recall how long it took. It seemed like hours, but the whole episode probably took place quicker than I was experiencing it. After the war I learned that the Japanese staged a similar mock execution with another captured 380th Bomb Group crew. I don't know about those guys, but I was never so scared in all my life.

The next day, they decided to change their tactics. They brought me before a high-ranking Japanese officer who they said was an admiral. He was a slight man, in his forties, who spoke good English. He courteously introduced himself to me, and had them bring me some clean clothes, a pair of pants and a khaki shirt. Then he said, "I'm very upset that we mistreated you, and it won't happen again while I am here." However, he started questioning me, and I kept telling him I didn't know how to respond to what he was asking.

Trying a softer approach, he ordered some food for me and asked, "Do you like Sake?" I said I liked anything with alcohol in it, and that got a laugh out of him. He said, "Well, why don't you and I drink a little Sake together?" Of course, I agreed, and his aides delivered a quart bottle of sake for each of us. We started drinking and talking pleasantries.

What he didn't know was that I had a high tolerance for booze because after every mission, I drank a fair amount of vodka or scotch to relax. As we neared the bottom of our sake bottles, he ordered two more, and shortly began to show the effects of the alcohol. After we put a serious dent in the second bottles, he passed out completely.

There were three other Japanese present during my session with the admiral. When he passed out, they couldn't contain their embarrassment. They took back the clothes, kicked me in the groin again, and threw me back in jail. I thought to myself that at least I taught one Japanese a lesson about drinking against an American. I mused that the treatment I received was par for what happens to an experienced Yale drinker when he beats the competition.

After 19 days at Kendari, they drove us by truck to Pomelaa. I thought they were taking us there to execute us, since this had been our target. When we arrived, we could see the nickel mine damaged by our bombs. Unfortunately, I could see that we had missed the power plant tower, as it was still standing. My fear of execution proved unjustified. They

loaded us on a small ship for the day's sail to Makassar, another of our targets on the west side of the main Celebes island.

Once we got there, our own group flew over and bombed us. Fortunately, the Japanese were decent enough not to blame the raid on us. At Makassar, there was an American prisoner, a P-38 pilot the Japanese shot down at Babo. He also confirmed that our earlier mission there blew up an ammo dump marked as a hospital. They held us at Makassar about four days, then put us on a ship bound for Balikpapan in Borneo, which was the port and oil refinery we bombed twice.

On that ship we were the charges of a Japanese chief petty officer who seemed to be about 50 years old. He treated us well and wouldn't allow anyone to hit us, but this decent treatment didn't last very long. At Balikpapan they put us in a former Dutch jail. We were there three weeks, while the ship was undergoing some repairs and took on a cargo of bauxite, an ore of aluminum. The food was terrible, and we had to relieve ourselves in our small cell through a hole in the floor. It got to be one awful stench.

With repairs and loading completed, they put us back on the ship with our destination now Singapore. The same chief petty officer was in charge of us. I found out that he had been at Annapolis long before the war when the Japanese government donated and planted cherry trees there. He liked Americans. I told him I didn't think the war was a good idea, and he agreed with me.

On the second day out, a Japanese sailor came up and hit me in the face, knocking me down. The old chief saw the incident, grabbed the man, and beat the hell out of him. That was the last time anyone hit us on that trip. The best treatment I got from the Japanese was on that ship.

On Christmas Day 1943, we arrived in Singapore. There, while I was up on deck for the customary afternoon tea, the chief sent for me. When I arrived at his quarters, I found him sitting on a mat with a bottle of whiskey. He got up, shook hands and said, "Today is Christmas, let's you and I have a drink." He ordered some food, and we spent a few precious moments that transcended the fact that we were at war. When we were through eating, he said somewhat self-consciously, "Now get out of here, Christmas is Christmas and war is war."

We left Singapore bound for Japan in a convoy of 15 ships; 11 transports, and four escort vessels. About three days out, while on deck one afternoon, one of our convoy's ships about 300 yards away exploded. A torpedo hit it. In short order, I heard other ships blowing up. The convoy was under attack by American submarines. They sank seven of the transports and two of the escort vessels. Our ship had a narrow escape when a torpedo passed closely by our stern. We turned back to Singapore and picked up another convoy. With them, we set sail again for what turned out to be calm week's voyage to Japan. Underway, I used to look at the moon at night, and think how it was the one thing Betty and I now had in common.

We put into some southern Japanese port during the night, and they put the six of us on a train to Tokyo right away. There, they sent us to Ofuna, an interrogation camp about 30 miles southwest of Tokyo. This turned out to be the worst camp I was in during my time in Japan. I got there January 2, 1944, which was my first wedding anniversary, and I thought it was one hell of a way to spend it.

During all this time and trauma, I resolved that I was going to pull through. Whatever was in store for me, I would get back to Betty and my young son. I was going to do whatever it took to survive that was consistent with military expectations and my sense of personal honor.

On November 2, 1943, about a week after the Japanese captured me, the War Department sent Betty the dreaded telegram reporting me missing in action. The news travelled quickly to my family and friends. Letters of consolation, support, and explanation poured in to Betty. Bravely, she continued to write me in hope I would be found, so I would have mail from home awaiting my return. But even her gallant 'chin up' attitude had to wane, when her letters still came back marked 'missing in action.' My correspondence had now ended, and the impact of those early traumatic days of my captivity on the home front unfolds in the letters from Betty, family, and friends.

Mrs. McFerren's Letters - November 1943

Corona

November 1, 1943

My extra special favorite Navigator, Lieutenant and Husband,

Our pride and joy is sunning his cute self and I am sitting on a box beside him to keep off marauders such as the cats who are envious of his comfortable looking basket, and Skippy the dog who feels she should come by periodically and lick his bare skin. Not to get caught dawdling away a single minute that I could spend writing to you, my beloved, I come armed, pen in hand. You know at the rate our son is growing I think perhaps we may equal the Andrew Jackson Bratton's record of their Andy who weighed 14 pounds at three months. Our brat is seven weeks old and weighs about 11 pounds. If he can gain another three pounds in the next seven weeks, we will put them to shame - you can tell A.J.Sr. that for me.

I just discovered that the son of our new neighbors, the Weiricks, is a Yale grad - he's 24 and just commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Marine Corps. I shall have to congratulate him, I mean Mr. Weirick, on having a Yale man for a son - nothing like the best I always say. My but the air is buzzing with good war news today. Oh, it's later now, I forgot to tell you Willie is having his dinner.

Later still.. Oh darling, darling, I am constantly getting the most wonderful surprises - tonite four V-mails arrived, and here I had figured on a good long wait since you were away from home port. They were dated Oct. 14, 15, 17, 18 (the 16th, an air-mail, having arrived almost a week ago). A funny thing, remember the one you typed on Oct. 18th just before you came home? It came thru in the same time as the others but it wasn't photographed - a little mimeographed slip of paper was enclosed which said it had not been photographed because it was too faint. Of course I read it easily in the original.

I was a dunce to send you the pen with the rest of that junk. Why I didn't wrap it separately and send it first class mail is more than I can see. Anyhoo, it's did, and maybe you'll get it in time to get back to the states with it.

Your letters as usual were wonderful. They make me miss you so, as if I didn't already. It just wrings my heart to have you miss seeing our cherub now as he is just too cute. He uses that big grin of his at every opportunity, and how good he is in his bath! And how he loves to ride in his go-cart, and how quickly he quiets down when I get some music on the radio.

Also in the mail tonite was a letter from Ginny and one from Mary Oman. Ginny's was chatty, said Jane Miller had disappeared? Do you know anything on the subject? By the way, Fred was probably just trying to soothe you by saying brats are no fun the first year anyhow, or maybe his wasn't, thru no fault of his own I am sure. Meow! I am glad to receive his and Lee's greetings and felicitations, it is nice to know they are that interested.

So Fred knew you jumped the fence eh, dear? Well we thought so all the time, didn't we? However that was genuine surprise on his face when I met him in the officer's club at Topeka, I don't think he knew you jumped the fence that first hectic week at Topeka - that week when I pulled such a brodie at the Kansan about Mrs. M. B. Welch, and you had to perjure (how do you spell that word) yourself, and go down to the desk and get a room.

What times those were, what gay, hectic, exciting, unpredictable days we lived. Remember Lee phoning all over the Middle West to catch Ginny before she got to California? And how could we forget the O.D. Reggie who befriended you and offered g.i. transportation to the incarcerated 380th? Or the morning the boys marched thru the 380th gate just to make it official - at 5:30 in the morning.

Gee, I sort of got off the track with my reminiscing. I started to say a letter from Mary Oman said that Capt. Cochrane is in a hospital in Topeka, as is Phil Doornbos, and she knows all about everything, and will tell me at the drop of a hat if I don't already know. Of course, I'll write her immediately, gee, I'm just about popping out of my skin, Sweetie, at the thought of being so close to actually knowing something, not just guessing. Oh, darling, how wonderful it will be when you are back here where you belong and this awful suspense will be over and we can quit worrying about the censor and talk. True to the sex, I'm just eaten up with curiosity.

The wet season must be highly unpleasant. Tell me, is there a hurricane or two thrown in for good measure along with all that humidity? Golly Darling, you will certainly be dehydrated. I guess you will learn to drink water for sure now. Tough luck.

I didn't know Barbara Tilson, but Mom knows who her family are and we'll contact them. Maybe they know something we don't. It's always fun to compare notes.

Sweetie, my darling adorable husband - maybe you just think I wouldn't have loved to have been able to share that pleasant dream with you. Wow, honey, would I? Remember once you said, I think it was in the old days at the Senator (woo! woo!) - you said you got a kick out of my pouncing on the bed (with you on it of course) with a mighty flying leap? Well had I that opportunity now, dear, I'd make those 1942 leaps look like a snail on his way to the dentist. I have a nice 1944 version all arranged for you honey, I hope you're in training, cause here I come!

You are always in my heart my sweet, and that's not just an idle song title. I love you so. Betty

Corona

V-mail, November 4, 1943

My darling,

Morale is a funny thing - just what is "morale" when you get down to it? Is it a high blood sugar content or a brain wave? I think it is the latter for I haven't been able to stuff down enough food in the last two days nor sleep enough winks to have the first, but my morale is noticeably better, so it must be brain waves I'm receiving from you. After all, Sweetie, what's "missing" - we won't let a thing like that stop us, our love is too strong for that. It is so strong that something makes me want to continue to write you and it's the same something in you that will keep you alive and safe till you are found.

You won't let yourself be lost - you won't, you can't. I have had three V-mails from you since Tuesday nite and I know you are alive - one of them ended, "...and I'll be coming back to you one of these days", and darling you've never let me down yet. I trust you so completely. If my love gives you strength then darling, nothing will stop you for I love you so tremendously, so infinitely, so very very much and forever, my precious one - your own wife. Betty.

Corona

November 6, 1943

My darling,

Another Saturday nite - you add the rest, it's old copy, I've said it before. You know what Saturday nites make me think of. This particular Saturday nite is just four days from last Tuesday nite - a nite I'll never forget and a nite that thank God, I shall never have to live again (looks like a little repetition on "nite" there - excuse please). Last Tuesday seems at least a year ago - never, never in all my life has the time dragged so. I missed writing you last nite dearest, because - well, I didn't really miss writing you. I did pen off a letter to you but I didn't send it to you. I sent it to Mademoiselle Magazine.

You see suddenly I realized that grand magazine which does so much to build 'morale' on the home front, had completely forgotten the army wife whose husband is a question mark. By that time I had evolved some pretty good philosophy on the subject and incorporated it in this letter.

So I sent it to them in the hopes that if they will print it, it might help others in the same boat with me. It may seem funny wanting such an intimate thing as a letter to my husband to appear in print for the eyes of the nation to read, but honey, I want the world to know how I love you. I'm proud of it, glad for it, and unashamed of anything I say to you.

You know darling, I have finally arrived at a type of thinking that satisfies me. I have thought how you would have been disappointed in me for giving up so despairingly the first couple of days - after all, do we give up when there's a fighting chance? Did we ever have more than a slim fighting chance? That was all we ever asked, wasn't it? OK, so I said to myself - remember the time back at the Senator when you said if a fellow was willing to go out to combat, the girl he loved should be willing to stay home and raise a child, and we agreed on that.

That involved having a lot of guts, and faith, on the part of either party. Well, if I want you to do your part out there, I'm not going to be much help giving up back here. And then I remembered in one letter you said, "If I am reported missing, don't give up Darling", and in others you have said countless times - "I'll be home one of these days".

Honey, your word is good enough for me. I've always trusted you completely, and this is a helluva time to quit if I may say so, so - well, what else is there to do but decide, of course you'll turn up. And, Darling, when I get you in my arms again, it's going to take the whole air corps assisted by the Marines and the Navy to pry me loose!!

And honey, here's something else. Maybe something will slip and they won't find you right off. But Darling, you've got your scout knife along (I hope), and you can subsist on tropical fruit and stuff and I'm just so damn sure that you're alive that I'm going to come out and get you myself. In fact, I don't think that will be any surprise to you. Here's how. Presently I shall join the WASPS, which happens to be the Women's Air Force Service Patrol - Ferry Command in other words.

Well, I should be a pretty fair sort of a pilot after a good many hours with that outfit, and when this mess is all over, I'll pick up a plane and trot down south of the equator and fly the wings off it till I find you, and that my darling is for sure. Willie? Well, here's the way I figure that. When you said back at the dear old Senator that if a fellow was willing to take a chance, his girl should be willing too, I decided you were right, and I took a chance. Now if Bill's two parents have that attitude, wouldn't he have it too? If he were old enough to talk, he's say, "sure I'll take a chance with you, mother." By flying, I would be actually releasing a man for active service to go out and kill Japs just as surely as tho I were killing them myself, and how I'd love that. And when it's over and I come out to get you, Bill will be old enough to come along. Honey, you and I will see it thru - I know we will.

It's time for our cherub to have his 10 o'clock feast now. You said you thought it was a beautiful sight - more like a pig at the trough - sound effects and all. Goodnite, my love, you belong to me and that is that. Betty

Corona

V-mail, November 7, 1943

My adorable darling,

Tonite I rummaged thru my trunk to get out a pair of slax and guess what I came across? Your dressing gown. The one you sent for from home and then never had time to wear. It's a beautiful robe and I'm looking forward to seeing you in it, dear, and, not in it!! Well honey, things are looking up - a letter from Clayton last nite said he had talked to Major Fairfield, that officer we met who had been out there with the old 19th B.G., and the major said he gave you a 50-50 chance. Hell, darling, that's shorter odds than we ever had before. We can't help but win. Honey, as you said, long ago we realized that we could never kid one another, and so I write just as I feel it.

It may make you feel a little sad - some of the things I say, but I'm not very good at play-acting, and this is just how I feel. And Sweetie, I realize that this will slow down your homecoming because I suppose you will have to wait for another plane and fly out your hours - hell - but I'm resigned to it. Just thought I'd tell you so's you wouldn't have to break the sad news to me. Good-nite, my Sweetheart, and I know you will come thru - I won't let you be lost. That's all there is to it. I just won't let you. All my love is yours, always. From your favorite wife, Betty.

Corona

V-mail, November 9, 1943

Sweetheart,

Your Oct.24th air mail arrived yesterday, and suddenly I got a hunch, a strong one, that I'd get some word of same sort today. Now when the mail comes, we'll see if I'm right. Your letter was as you said in your Oct.25th V-mail, rather blue - but honey, I'd so much rather have you write as you feel than try to puff up a big soap bubble of joy to try to make me feel good. I think I'd see right thru it anyway. We'll just go on being us, and I guess we can take it, eh?

Today I rode up to Weirick's and in chatting with Mr. Weirick, he commented that he had been in the air corps in the last war - was shot down over Germany, Nov. 6th, before the armistice was signed. No parachutes then, so he crash-landed, was reported missing for a long time, then reported killed - and is today very much alive and a good neighbor. So I am doubly encouraged.

That was an erie dream you had about being captured by the Japs. God grant that there is nothing in premonitions - it gave me a very strange feeling nevertheless because it was only three nites before you cracked up that you had it, and mentioned how realistic it was.

Dad just brought the mail and a letter from Betty Farrington. She must be a swell gal and has a real fighting spirit. I love you more than life itself, my dear, and each nite say a silent prayer for you. Always, Betty.

Corona

V-mail, November 14, 1943

Darling,

The last two weeks have been the nearest thing to hell I ever hope to know. Letters keep pouring in - everyone without exception says to have hope, 'he is so resourceful, he will come thru or he will be found'. Well, Goddamnit, I wish they'd get busy and find you. It is nearly driving me crazy to have to sit passively by and wait for someone else to find you. If it weren't so completely fantastic, believe me darling, I'd get our there and find you myself. I'd beg, borrow, or steal a plane that could hop as far as Pearl Harbor and points west - if I couldn't learn to fly it myself I'd find somebody that could and by gosh, we'd pluck you off that island or out of that rubber boat in a hurry.

It is just plain hell to sit by and wait for someone else to do a job that is as important as all this. I also am about ready to cuss everybody in that outfit and real good and proper as I have not received a letter from them yet, and Oct.26th is nearly three weeks ago. Phil Doornbos has written me many generalities but so far I have no facts. Oh darling, I know you won't give up and I'll be damned if I will. You've got to come back to me, my precious husband, I just won't hear of anything else. I love you always and forever, you know that. Betty.

Letters - Family & Friends 1943

Hoopeston, Illinois

November 3, 1943

Dear Betty,

Uncle Chas. and I want you to know that we are thinking of you all the time, and trying to will you the strength to see you thru this great sorrow. It would have done your heart good to have heard all the people who called me and who stopped me this morning to ask if it was really true about Bill, Jr. He was so well liked and loved people so. Marjorie and Bill are very brave. It is such a consolation to them that Bill, Jr. leaves such a grand wife and son. You are as close to them as their own daughter and they couldn't think more of you. All our sympathy and love, Aunt Irma

Hoopeston

November 3, 1943

Precious darling:

Our hearts are bleeding for you and our blessed baby more than for ourselves, most of all for you, the beloved wife of our son. Somehow it just doesn't seem possible Bill is gone and God grant he will be found safe. He is so vital and he must live. Daddy said last night that God could not let those young fathers die, and God would not, but devils in the shape of men might. We found out from a newspaper printed on October 28th that the mission was over Rabaul and only one ship was lost. I read it at the time and prayed that one ship was not Myrtle.

Honey, I hope you won't mind that we had the crib shipped this morning. Daddy wanted to send it as much as I did. It is so little to do and gave us a bit of comfort. Your beautiful letter came this morning and we have read it over and over. Hoopeston is mourning with all of us, dear, and hopeful of hearing the joyous news our darling has been found. Oh God, if only we could have given our lives for Bill's so he could have come back to you and his son. We do thank God for that baby, and you, our daughter. Daddy sends his love with mine. He sobbed all night and hasn't been out today but will write you tomorrow, darling. Marge will arrive here next Tuesday. Pat was pitiful over the telephone. God bless you, dear. Lovingly, Muddy

Northern Territory, Australia

November 3, 1943

Dear Betty,

I don't know how to start this letter nor do I know what to say cause I'm sure it's as great a shock to me as it is to you all back home. I don't know what the Army sends home to inform you of Bill, but whatever it is don't lose faith that they all are alive somewhere.

I have been co-pilot to 'Myrtle' every trip 'cept the last one and by some quirk, or act of God or whatever, it may be I was taken off and a new boy put in my place! Of course I can't help think that if I'd been along maybe something I could have done would have changed the course of events!

I have packed all of Bill's personal belongings and they will be shipped back to you. I know that the will that Porky has to see his wife and new son will win over any obstacles he will meet. If there is anything I may do please don't hesitate to call on me. Sincerely, Al Paris.

San Francisco

November 5, 1943

Dear Betty,

This is probably the hardest letter that I have ever written. We received your card yesterday, and all we can say is that we offer you our deepest sympathy. You, all the family and ourselves must not lose hope, because as Major Bill Fairfield says he has a 50/50 chance of surviving. His big plane is well-constructed and cannot be shot up easily, it might be damaged but usually they can make a landing either on the sea or on the beach. Since the islands of the group

are quite small the plane could travel a few miles to make such a landing; also, Bill is such a resourceful fellow he will no doubt be able to take care of himself until rescued.

I have just written to his commanding officer, requesting more details and as soon as I hear anything will advise you promptly. Keep up the chin and we know everything will come out alright.

Sincerely, Clayton and Sadie.

P.S. Had an airmail from Bill only a couple of days ago. It was dated:

October 20th. Will save this for you and send it on as soon as several of our friends have read it. They, also, are deeply shocked.

Hoopeston

November 7, 1943

Dear Betty,

You have been in our hearts and thoughts so much of the time -and this is my third attempt to write you words that would express our true feeling, but they just don't seem to come. We are all hoping that Bill will come back to you and the baby and that you will have word quickly.

We want to assure you again, Betty, of our friendship and affection and earnest wish that you call on us for anything we might be able to do. We were so fond of Bill - and had put you in a special spot in our affections after seeing you here and knowing more of you and your philosophy through your letters to Marjorie and Bill. We send you our love and every kind wish. Yours, Marie P. Trego

Denver, Colorado

November 7, 1943

Dear Betty,

I tried to get in touch with you by phone Friday without success. I received word Tuesday evening, the 2nd, that Bus (John) has been reported missing in action since October 26th. From what he has written, I feel sure that he was no longer flying with his original crew. However, I know that by this time you would have had any news. I did talk to Al's wife, and she tells me he has been checked out as a first pilot, so by this time no doubt has a crew of his own.

I tried to cable Captain Hadley, intelligence officer of the squadron, but the cable was canceled at the west coast. So apparently the only hope I have of getting any definite information is through his wife, who lives here, or what 'Porky' might write to you. Would you let me know whatever news you might hear?

I learned through a friend some time ago that the 380th Group replaced a group located at, or near, Port Darwin. Bus seems to feel that this information was quite important and wanted me to let you know - so they must still be near there - west, I think. I'd also appreciate any news of John Perry, as Milly, the girl with whom he went here in Denver, is quite worried about not having heard from him. Bus wrote that you and 'Porky' (I've never heard him called anything else) had a baby boy. May I offer congratulations to you both? I'm expecting to go to the hospital about the middle of December.

Many thanks for anything you can let me know. I'll be waiting to hear from you. The suspense is one of the worst things about the government's brief 'missing in action' reports. I realize it sometimes drags on for months. The bottom seems to have dropped out of everything. However, I feel sure, as capable as Bus is, if anyone could pull through, he will be able to. Sincerely, Betty Farrington.

Topeka, Kansas

November 7, 1943

Dear Betty,

The War Dept. infrequently issues mistaken information although occasionally this happens. The distinction between 'missing in action' and 'killed in action' in that area is, with few exceptions, one and the same. You will, in due time,

receive more information in regard to events before Bill's failure to return from a combat mission, possibly from the War Dept, and I'm sure from Bill's many friends in the Group.

For your benefit I don't wish to falsify the facts nor disillusion you. You have asked for my opinion and I know you wish me to speak frankly. Upon the strength of the wire you received, I don't expect his return. I sincerely hope to be proven wrong. You asked in your letter for some information as to the location. The group is located in northwestern Australia to permit raids on enemy bases on islands across the Timor Sea. Such raids necessarily are made almost entirely over water and this fact greatly reduces the possibilities of rescue, conceding the point that a successful water landing was made. The possibilities of rescue from Japanese controlled land are remote too, even if parachuting or crashing there successfully. My view, and I believe this was shared by all others, was to never be permitted taken prisoner by the Japanese.

Shortly after my arrival in Australia, several crews of us were sent to New Guinea, there to be attached for temporary duty with bombardment groups awaiting the arrival of the rest of our own group in Australia. It was while stationed in this jungle land and returning from a night raid (my fifth raid) on Rabaul, New Britain that I crashed in the sea. Two of my crew - the engineer and top turret gunner - went to the bottom with the ship while the rest of us soon were rescued by boats witnessing the crash. Of the survivors, I was the only one severely injured, namely broken thigh bone and shattered knee. In about three months I will be recovered and returned to the fray. While at the 105th Hospital in Australia your brother-in-law (I've forgotten his name) who was stationed there, called on me at Bill's invitation. I am deeply grieved over the news. Bill (Porky to us) was one of the best, and I'm thankful that he left some of his kind, William III, before his untimely yet glorious end. If there is anything that I may do for you, please do not fail to let me know. Sincerely yours, Philip A. Doornbos.

November 7, 1943

Dear Betty,

I've hardly thought of anything else since your card came with the news of Bill. There just aren't any words of comfort that I can write to you for I know you'll have to find that in your own way. It surely makes me feel very badly because I know you so well and I know just how terribly you do love him. Keep on having faith and hope and surely good news will come. Every day you read of boys who are rescued - some even after long periods of time. Really, Betty, there's all kinds of good chances that he will be found. Surely now, more than ever, your little son, yours and Bill's, means such a lot to you. You and Bill had such wonderful happy times and yours is such a perfect love - what could be more heavenly than this child resulting from that love. He's all yours and such a dear real part of Bill. I hope you know and understand the love and sympathy for you in my heart. Give my regards to your folks and be sure to write. With Love, Gertie

November 8, 1943

Dear Betty,

What heartaches these days bring to all of us, and who knows better than I the words 'missing in action' and the full import of their meaning and the terror it strikes to your heart. However, Betty dear, there is always a good chance for them to get out, and so many of the boys have gotten down that you just must keep your hopes high and don't give up; it may be a while before you know definitely, but your Bill is in God's hands, and trust his divine judgement. God Bless you dear, and that precious little Bill. Sincerely, Mrs. H. L. Reinecke

November 8, 1943

Dearest Betty,

Your letter was received today and Oh Betty dear, I was so very sorry to learn that you too, are having to suffer the agony that the phrase 'missing in action' brings. All of we Reineckes know what you are going through and there is little we can say to ease your thoughts. Remember, however, that missing in action can cover so much! Knowing Bill, as little as I did, I am so sure nothing will happen to him. It just can't! He is so happy-go-lucky and so full of life I know he is still all right, and please - you believe this!!

Please keep me posted Betty as to what you hear. I'm so anxious. I imagine wee Willie is growing like a weed. Give him a big kiss for me and to you I send my love. And to you, too, I want to say "keep that ol' smile smilin'." You told

me to do that - sho' nuff I did and everything is now all right. Rest assured that Bill will be in our prayers Betty; and He hasn't failed us yet! With love, Jean

Boston, Massachusetts

November 10, 1943

Dearest Betty,

As you know, I'm not much of a letter writer and find it quite difficult to express my thoughts, theories, and principles. Right now I can't say a thing to make you feel a bit better. The one thing I'm certain of is that if Willie had a chance he'll come through. Why one should believe so completely that Bill will return I don't know. The fact remains and it helps me. To say that you've been wonderful is putting it mildly. When Bill hears about it he'll be so darn proud of you. If Willie doesn't turn up your future will seem pretty bleak, but Willie III won't give you much breathing time if he's like his Daddy.

Before too long news should start trickling in. I talked to a boy in Boston last Thursday and he told me some amazing statistics about the boys getting back in the Pacific. He even said 500 men a month were getting back from Germany via the underground. Gosh, Betty, this is the most disconnected letter I've ever read. Like the rest of the family I'm wandering around in a daze. By golly, I still think he'll be back. Think this is all I'll write. My composition rates an "F" but how about giving me "A" for effort. My love to your family and you, Marge (McFerren's Sister)

November 4, 1943

Dear Betty,

The news of your husband's 'missing in action' came as a shock to me. I know what a trying time it is for you. As you undoubtedly know, so many airmen are able to land on small islands in that area and make their way back to Allied lines. So, carry on and keep praying and hoping for at least a year, before you lose hope of news from your loved one.

Accounts of the Hamburg raid we read gave us little hope that Liston would come thru, but as you know, he did. We have had two letters from him. He seems to be well and in good spirits. The co-pilot, bombardier, and three of the enlisted men are also prisoners. We hope to hear that others of the crew have been reported safe. With best wishes for early news of your husband, I remain sincerely yours, Delcia S. Bascom P.S. We pray this war may end soon so all our boys may come home. Give your small son an extra kiss for me.

Hawaii

November 15, 1943

Betty dearest,

I have delayed writing you hoping to hear more news, but now I won't wait any longer. How can I tell you how much I sympathize with you? I can't, but when I tell you I have loved Bill as a son and that his loss has hit me the closest since General Tinkers, then you will know just how I feel.

I am so grateful for the five days we had together on his way down. He talked and talked all about you and told me all about your courtship, honeymoon, and the few wonderful times you were together. He was so happy in your love and so glad about the coming baby. If ever a man sincerely loved his wife it was Bill - and I know Bill's entire attitude toward life in general, the War, his family and his part in it all was just ideal. He made so many people here like him at once and one friend said, "Cush, I sure like that lad, he is so keen on his work and his entire attitude toward it all is just right."

Well Betty dear, you and I, and Louise and Marge and Bill, are all suffering together. We will carry on and I hope someday I can do for your little boy, Bill's son, what Bill did for my boy Bill. My Bill loved your Bill so much and he is hurt now and feels his loss. Goodbye now, much love and I'll just say that and no more. Cush.

November 16, 1943

My Dear Betty,

My heart ached when I read your dear, sweet letter. I could just see Lt. McFerren as you two stood talking to us when you said 'goodbye' and went away. Lt. McFerren had that fine, sweet face that just warmed your heart when he talked. I remember the last words I said to him, "If you have to go over, I hope you will be coming back," and he smiled so big - and he may be coming back, Betty. Let us pray that he will. He may be interned somewhere or a prisoner, and I know it is hard to think even that, but there are hopes, as long as you have not been notified of death. It really does my heart good to know that you enjoyed your stay with us, even tho' for such a short time and we value your friendship so very much.

The housing situation seems to be getting more desperate every day. I feel so sorry for the poor little old couples, just tramping the streets looking. We have four army couples with us now, but there just are not enough rooms to meet the demands of the people.

Well, Betty, I want to thank you again, and express my appreciation to you for writing to us. Words are inadequate to express my sympathy to you for the sorrow and anxiety I know that you are going through. Sorrow is so much a part of life, and it is so hard to accept sometimes, but let us hope that your husband is alive, somewhere, and I know that we will pray that he is. If you have any further communication about him, Betty, we would so love to hear from you again.

Sincerely, and with love, Mrs. J. E. Webb

November 16, 1943

Dear Betty,

I don't know how to tell you how sorry we were to read that your husband was reported missing, and how strongly we hope that he will yet be found safe. This was an eventuality you must have been prepared to face; yet I know your loss is no less great and the suspense of waiting for more definite news must be hard to bear. Believe me, our thoughts and very best wishes are for you. As ever, your friends, Fred and Ruth

(Australia)

November 17, 1943

Dear Betty,

Just a short note to let you know I have heard the bad news about Bill, and to let you know how dreadfully sorry I am for you and Bill III. Really, I was shocked but I can imagine how much harder it is for you. My thoughts and sympathy are with you, but don't give up hope, Betty, as there is still an excellent chance that he will be found safely.

I believe I know in what action he was lost, and if that is so, we are receiving information that they are daily picking up people lost in the same engagement. So keep your chin up. At this point I feel terribly helpless, but if at any time I can do anything for you, Betty, please let me know as I should be more than delighted to do so. Air Corps men are constantly coming down this way and I shall keep my ears open and pass on any news I hear. Again, Betty, I am sorry, but keep your chin up and don't give up hope. Sincerely, Gustav Kaufmann

Topeka

November 18, 1943

Dear Betty,

The many questions you have are natural, and who else is better qualified than yourself to desire some intelligence regarding combat activities?

Answering your questions, not specifically but generally: fighter cover protection can only be given within the range of fighters. Since all the raids which would be of interest to you are from 7 to 10 hours, no fighter protection is possible. Likewise, most raids on difficult targets are made at night, or at least that part of the raid is at night including the target and the most dangerous sections. Night raids may or may not be in formation: usually a part of it is which may cover dispersing and joining. Ack-ack, of course, is encountered only over small and concentrated enemy areas. It is generally inaccurate but in its intensity anything may happen. My experience includes getting my ship damaged

(aileron blown off and wing tip perforated) by it and recall several ships which didn't return, presumably because of anti-aircraft batteries. This was at the hot spot of Rabaul, New Britain.

Another hazard encountered at night is enemy night fighters, operating outside the area covered by ack-ack, and within operating radius of their base. Personally, neither I nor my crew encountered them, although this isn't remarkable because of poor visibility. Those who do see them, often don't return to report. They are there however. It merely is a matter of avoiding them in the darkness which of course, works both ways, as the night fighters have their own difficulties in locating their prey.

Night raids do negate air battles as between fighters and bombers almost entirely, however. Seldom is more than one run made over the target. This is self-explanatory. When necessity demands a second run over the target because of malfunction, it will be accomplished only when circumstances permit. A target, if it is large enough to warrant hazarding a flight to in the beginning will be large enough to absorb every stick of bombs available.

Bombing a transport or battleship is different. Here bombs wouldn't be released at once, thereby permitting a second or third run in the event of missing. This too, would be governed by circumstances, for it might be wise to string them all out and attempt then to get out yourself, if enemy fighters were observed or in the process of being held at bay or driven off.

It is my opinion that a Zero is equally capable of attacking regardless of the altitude selected by the bomber in question. Yes, it is a common occurrence for returning bombers to have on board wounded or killed personnel. Medical and first aid kits carried on the ships have saved many lives. Before informing the next of kin, the organizations and War Dept. allow a sufficient time to elapse to preclude sending out false or mistaken information.

In my particular instance, my brother was notified by wire that I had been wounded in action. This meager advice was followed by letters giving the rate of my progress. I soon was relieved of the 'serious' part of my injury and my family was told I would recover. I believe this covers generally the questions in your letter, not very explicit and lacking all attempts at elaboration, but sufficient for your satisfaction, I trust. I am now doing well, locally speaking, on crutches. Where distance is involved - such as forays to the library, etc., I rely upon a wheel chair. Just when I'll be returned to duty isn't too definite but, as I told you before, is expected sometime after the first of the year. My unattached status concerns me, for I hope to be assigned where I want, but must take whatever is ordered in good stride. Again, let me assure you that I'll welcome any opportunity to help or inform you. Sincerely yours, Philip A. Doornbos

Denver

November 18, 1943

Dear Betty,

Al's letter and yours came yesterday morning. He told me just about what he did you - though he was a little more definite. He enclosed a letter Bus had started to me the 17th, and said, "I don't know what the censor will let go through, but there were eyewitnesses that they all parachuted out safely so the worst thing that can happen to them is prisoner-of-war. We've done everything in our power to locate them and will continue till they are located."

I was so elated all day that when Mrs. Hadley called me last night with almost contradictory news it was a definite shock. She read what her husband had written twice, and I wrote it down as exactly as I could remember right after her call. He said something like this (apparently was crying as he wrote): "I thought I'd become accustomed to the horrors of this war, but it seems to become worse and worse. My favorite crew did not return from the last raid. They were my favorites not only because of the fine quality of their work, but because they were truly wonderful fellows. (This is not exact, you understand, but as nearly as I can remember. He mentioned no names, for fear of censorship, no doubt) One, a former Yale student, was a father of five weeks, and another to become a father in about a month - the C.U. boy about whom I've written you. They were shot down over enemy territory. The plane was seen to explode in mid-air and crash into the sea. Some of the crew got out and the Japs strafed them on the way down. (Then there was some more about 'the little yellow bastards', and so on) I think it more likely this one fellow (Bus) was still in the plane -better off (or something like that). There is a chance that he'll get through, but it seems very slim. Another plane involved in this story turned in a truly amazing performance though finally shot down, it got ten Zeros. Some of the crew were saved."

I put that last in because of the article I'm enclosing - it would seem to be the same plane referred to in the article. Which means if some were rescued, there's a chance for those in Bus's plane, too - and they must have been near land for this Liberator to collide with a treetop.

I have absolutely no false hopes about this thing, Betty. I feel Capt. Hadley's account is based on as nearly as possible to what can be termed 'the truth' - for he, as intelligence officer, is the one who debriefs the flyers after they return from a mission, to find out just what happened.

Of course, in the stress of battle, mistakes could easily be made on which plane, etc. But Al apparently wasn't on the mission at all. As for the strafing, Capt. Hadley doesn't say what the results were, and I judged from his letter that the fellows who did get out might have a chance. Their knowledge can't be too exact, or we would have had a different kind of telegram from the 'missing' reports. By all means, don't stop hoping and praying. But if you feel the way I do, you'd rather have the facts - whatever news there is, at any rate - now than later.

There is special room for hope in the fact that Al's and Capt. Hadley's reports are so definitely contradictory. If only Al's is correct! Who knows - perhaps the next mail may bring further good news. Sincerely, Betty F. (Farrington)

(Northern Territory, Australia)

November 20, 1943

Dear Betty,

I know anything that I can say would be of little comfort. Will to the best of knowledge give you the details you wanted to know. Before writing anything though, it's only because I know you can take it right on the chin. Betty, whatever you do, always remember that one of your smiles is worth a thousand tears. It happened during a daylight raid a short distance from the target. According to the reports, about eight parachutes were seen to have opened. At the time they were a short distance from land. I realize this isn't a very optimistic letter and I hate to write such a one. Guess that's all the details I can give. Hope it helps a little. Betty, please remember I'm a friend and if I ever can be of any help don't hesitate. Your friend always, Armand

Washington, D.C.

November 21, 1943

Dear Betty,

Word has just come from Davis telling of the report that your husband has been reported missing in action. This is trying, wracking suspense, but I do want to add my word of hope and faith that he will return - for so many, many, of those gallant lads have, even after long periods of uncertainty. We are all pulling for you and standing by, hoping for brighter news.

I expect to return back to the South Pacific early in the new year. I am leaving shortly for the west coast and hope to be home for Christmas - last year I spent the day in the air flying over the Equator, with dinner cooked in the bomb bay of a PBM. It has been a privilege to be associated with such grand chaps that are carrying on our fight in the skies - or everywhere else for that matter. It makes we oldsters very proud - and very humble. All tribute to you wives and sweethearts who gladly encourage them on. You are holding the torch high - even if loneliness has been so much your position. Best wishes go with you and may good news come soon. Sincerely, Knowles Ryerson

November 21, 1943

My Dear Betty,

I received your sad news yesterday - as I had been out of town for a couple of weeks. My first thought was that it must be impossible as I couldn't conceive of anything happening to Mac. I do know, however, and I say it because you know it too, that in event of emergency, I know of no man who would be better able to get out of it than Mac - because of his resourcefulness and his love of life.

Last night I canceled a date - and stayed in - listened to some records and played my violin. This morning I went to church the first time since last summer - and I will continue to go. We, as you know, had the same situation in our family. I believe that you will find hope a very wonderful thing at this time, and a belief that despite the chaos of everything, there is still a power that works to tie ends together and eventually works to bring order again. It looks as though I will stay here a while longer, but I will finish up at Stanford (Don't hold that against me). I am looking

forward with great pleasure to seeing young Mac - and have been wondering if his is a chip off the old block, or is it too early to tell?

It certainly made me feel good Betty, to have you say that you valued my friendship - and I want you to know that you can always count on it. Well, let me hear from you when you feel like writing. Best regards, Goldie

Denver

December 7, 1943

Dear Betty,

I've been a long time in writing, but feel sure you'll understand. I've had so many preparations - Christmas and others - to get out of the way first - and things at last seem to be getting fairly well organized. The next two weeks should tell the tale, and naturally, I'm hoping it'll be only one week! I'm so happy you were able to take little Bill and visit Bill's parents. You should all be able to encourage each other. I know how wonderful it's been for me, having Bus's folks nearby.

Though my hopes were at about the lowest possible depth after I had talked to Mrs. Hadley, I've found since that they simply can't be squelched (old high-school term). Yes, Capt. Roark wrote me the same thing he did you - and the sentence you quoted was the most definite thing he said in his letter. His letter was written Oct. 28th. Capt. Hadley's was written the 31st, and Al's the 3rd of November.

As you say, the fact that Al's was the most recent is encouraging indeed. Mrs. Hadley called when she heard from her husband again, but he mentioned nothing more. I received a letter from a friend of Bus's in the South Pacific today. He's on some of the islands apparently north of New Zealand (for he'd just returned from a rest-leave there). Al Paris had written him about Bus - I'll quote what 'Boots' had to say: "Will you let me know what happened? All I know was their plane was on fire and had to bail out. Did all of them get out? Where were they? Is there any chance?" So it seems Al wrote a little more (or a little different) news to him. How I wish I, too, could know if they all got out OK.

Boots also quoted something from a letter Bus had written him, which he'd copied in his diary. It's in regard to two other boys who were with them in training, and who had been located with Boots. "Hathaway, I know, was reported missing. I don't know what happened to Epple." Anyway, Bus wrote Boots, "Remember this, some of us have to go, and some of us are meant to go before others. However, if we let things like Hath and Epple get under our skins too damn much, we injure our own chances." Just a little more proof of the spirit in which I think all the other boys are fighting this war - one more reason to be proud of them.

Have you heard any more from Al? I wrote him some time ago. I think I'll write Mickey to see what she has heard from him. She should be having her baby soon now, too. Did you ever hear anything from Capt. Garron or Capt. Oman or his wife? If only we could get some news that would seem to agree with something else we have heard! However, the fact that there are contradictions is room for hope in itself. I'll be waiting to hear from you. How long are you remaining in Illinois? If you come this way on your return, be sure to call. Love, Betty F. (Farrington)

Prisoner of War

One retreat from diplomacy is the idea of devising legal niceties to regulate the organized violence of war. Oblivious of the absurdity, most civilized nations did just that in the mid-19th Century. At meetings held at The Hague, Netherlands, and Geneva, Switzerland, diplomats and lawyers conjured treaties that provide elaborate rules for war combatants, the safety of civilians, and treatment of prisoners. Japan, the United States, and the other countries subsequently involved in World War II, agreed to, and signed these treaties.

However, it's certain that no fighting man who becomes a war prisoner will reject the protection and rights a treaty may offer just because the notion of rules for war is logically ridiculous. No doubt most captured airmen, sailors, and soldiers survived and returned to their families because of the restraining influence of the Geneva Convention which specifically governs the treatment of prisoners of war.

In part, the Geneva pact mandates that prisoners be given food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention comparable to that of the armed forces of the country holding them. When questioned, war prisoners need give only their name, rank and service number to their captors. Officers cannot be forced to work without their consent. Japan's diplomatic and military leaders were fully aware of these treaty provisions, but allowed their troops in the field to ignore them. Apparently, they thought their many quick victories in the Pacific would force a negotiated peace from the United States and its Allies. It didn't occur to them that the war would be long, they would lose, and have to answer for their ill treatment of prisoner of war.

The prisoner of war problem between Japan and the Allies was also a fundamental clash of cultures. The wartime Japanese Imperial leadership drummed into its military recruits that surrender was an unthinkable disgrace to the Emperor. Death was preferable to dishonor. From my experience, this propaganda affected younger members of Japan's military more than it did its senior officers and mature non-commissioned personnel. If the idea of being a prisoner was repugnant to the Japanese themselves, it was no wonder their contempt for Allied prisoners.

Thus, it amazed the Japanese that Americans wanted their families to be notified of their capture. The prevailing view of most Japanese troops in the field seemed to be, 'Why would any soldier dishonor himself and his family by admitting he had been captured?' It was in this cultural context that I, and thousands of other Allied prisoners, experienced a bizarre mixture of cruelty and kindness while we were prisoners of the Japanese.

When horror tales about the atrocious treatment of Allied prisoners started to leak out, there was a storm of international protest from the press, international relief agencies, and neutral country observers. When they knew they couldn't win the war, the Japanese leadership sensed they could be indicted as war criminals unless they treated their prisoners as required by international law. Even so, in the prison camps, they made only a minimal effort to conform to the Geneva provisions. The early beatings, threats, and intimidation I suffered when I was first captured by capricious field troops, didn't get much better in the prison camps on the Japanese home islands.

While officially treatment was supposed to be fair, we now had to deal with eccentric prison guards who personally vented their frustrations on us as their country and Emperor were being progressively disgraced on the battlefields.

In theory, being a prisoner had some good points under the terms of the Geneva Convention. You were now out of the war's combat zone, couldn't be killed legally, and would be repatriated when hostilities ceased. As your pay continued to accrue with your home country, you had a lump-sum forced saving account awaiting you. Officers didn't have to work, and it meant you now had time to recuperate, and just wait things out without much fear. The difference between theory and fact was the difference between being a prisoner of the Germans or the Japanese. For us in Japan, it was no picnic.

The Japanese constantly harassed us with strict regulations, the slightest infraction of which would often result in physical beatings. It was illegal, but it happened capriciously and often.

However, discipline among the Japanese themselves was very strict. When a camp commander entered the compound, the Japanese guards and Allied prisoners alike, were supposed to greet and salute him. One time we gave the necessary obeisance, but the guards, not expecting their commandant, were still in the barracks drinking tea and playing cards. The commandant bellowed for them and they came peeling out to assemble before him. He was so furious that he

struck the leader of the guards in the head with the butt of his pistol, and inadvertently killed him. It was the only time I ever saw anyone killed in a camp.

That camp commandant was just a sergeant, but with the progress of the war, the Japanese became more sensitive to complaints about the treatment of prisoners, and officers replaced sergeants as camp commanders on the theory they would know more and exercise restraint. Camp personnel rotated frequently, as it probably was distasteful duty to supervise 'dishonored men'.

Unlike the 'brainwashing' experienced by many Korean War American prisoners, where ideology played a big part in the conflict, there was no organized political or psychological propaganda directed at us. However, in one-on-one conversations, the Japanese would tell us that much of the territory they conquered for their 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere' had historically been in their sphere of influence for hundreds of years. They did not encourage us to learn their language. What we did learn, we just picked up day by day. As opposed to German prison camps, we had no English reading materials supplied to us, no games, or much of a recreational nature. However, since the Japanese were great baseball enthusiasts, they did provide baseball and softball equipment, and organized games for us. In one camp, there were two American teams, with me managing one, and a Jap guard managing the other. When my team won, the Jap manager was furious and hit me. I couldn't strike him back or I'd have been a dead man. He was just a bully with the circumstances stacked in his favor.

General prison camp routine was to awake at dawn, assemble in ranks outdoors no matter what the weather, get counted, and participate in a ritual bowing to the Emperor. As this routine became daily more aggravating, I took to muttering softly for my buddies' ears only, "I hope you die, you son of a bitch." Everyone laughed like hell, and the guards couldn't figure out what we were laughing at, so rather than appear dumb, they laughed too.

Food was terrible compared to what we were used to. The morning meal was usually just a thin watery bean paste soup. Lunch and dinner were either rice, or barley with soy sauce, fish heads if they were feeling generous, and a vegetable. Overall, the three very light meals we got each day contributed little by little to acute malnutrition.

Each prisoner section would send someone to the central kitchen to get the food, which was then dished out in the barracks. Once, we caught one of our guys keeping all the vegetables for himself, so he was dealt with appropriately by a few of our own boys. There are always a few bad apples among our own, but I was never aware of any actual collaboration.

As hungry for food as we were most the time, we didn't have the energy or luxury to think and talk about women and sex. The subject would arise only on the rare occasions when we got a little more food. To add to our general discomfort, we slept on straw tatami mats in bunk beds without the soft mattresses and pillows most of us took for granted.

Yankee ingenuity provided certain amenities. We improvised playing cards from the cardboard bottoms of tea cartons. Highly-prized American cigarettes became a quasi-legal tender in the camps. Each Red Cross package contained two packs. We were supposed to get a relief package once a month, but I only remember receiving three the whole time I was a prisoner. The Japanese dragged their feet distributing these sought after prizes, and most goodies slated for us were pilfered by the guards or found their way to the black market.

Early in the war, because prisoner of war administration was such a low priority for the Japanese, their prison camps held all ranks of servicemen and civilians lumped together without discrimination. Later, they began to segregate military from civilians, and officers from enlisted personnel, to allow prisoners to organize themselves into orderly hierarchies, with each group selecting a representative to deal with the camp commandants. A requirement of the Geneva Convention, it also made it easier for the Japanese to administer the camps by encouraging a sense of self-discipline among prisoners.

The Ofuna camp was run by the Japanese Navy primarily for interrogation. We were a mixed group of about 150 Americans, British, Canadian, and Australian military personnel and some civilians from Wake Island. I was there from January to October 1944. It was a disease-ridden hell hole. However, to be fair, even for Japanese troops, medical attention was almost non-existent, so I guess they thought they were not violating the equal amenities clause of the Geneva regulations.

Swiss representatives from the International Red Cross inspected periodically, and consistently complained that not enough essential medications were on-hand. The camp doctor was a real bastard, and several prisoners died from deliberate lack of medical care and malnutrition. He was subsequently tried and convicted as a war criminal.

I'll never forget my first night there. Shortly after I was thrown in a cell, a voice through the thin wall called to me, "Hey, you over there, are you a new prisoner?" I said, "Yeah, who are you?" The voice replied, "I'm Greg Boyington, just call me Pappy." He explained that he was a marine fighter pilot, and was shot down in China. He had arrived at Ofuna about a month before I did. He reiterated standard policy that I should tell the Japanese that I was on my first mission, and to pretend that I didn't know much. He said they used forms when they questioned you, and to tell them some arbitrary number when they asked questions, which seemed to keep them satisfied. Boyington, was the famous ace who commanded the 'Black Sheep Squadron.' He was a terrific guy from Washington state and I got to know him well. At the end of the war he received the Medal of Honor for shooting down over two dozen Japanese planes.

One morning he got into trouble when we shared a cigarette that I managed to steal from the guard's sleeping quarters. Pappy took his half and ducked in the latrine to have a drag. A guard returned and caught him. They dragged him out in the middle of the parade ground, stripped him, and made him stand at attention for hours. They had respect for Boyington though. When they beat him and he would never utter a sound.

They started questioning me again a few days after I arrived. An interrogator we called 'Handsome Harry', who spoke perfect English grilled me. He wanted to know how many planes we had at Hickam Field in Hawaii, how many at Canton Island, and how many at Brisbane. Noting his pencil and form, I took Pappy's advice and told him I thought there were about 200 planes at each place, and it seemed to do the trick. They questioned me about once a week after that. I guess they were trying to see if I would forget what I had said the week before so they could catch me in a lie, which would mean a beating. Fortunately, I have a good memory and didn't trip up.

Because the Japanese traditionally love bathing, we were allowed a hot bath in the community bath house each week, but not without an audience. When we went in to bathe, some girls who apparently worked discretely for the Japanese guards, would make it a point to come and watch us. If a guy was well-endowed, they'd acknowledge it saying 'takusan, takusan'. When someone was small, they'd giggle and say 'sukoshi, sukoshi.'

Food was particularly scarce at Ofuna not only because it was in very short supply, but because on delivery day, the guards stole about a third of the prisoners' allocation. Over a short time, I lost 60 pounds and my weight came down to a little over 100 pounds. dripping wet.

I can't remember a night when I didn't go to bed hungry. My feet were in terrible shape from beri-beri caused by a deficiency of vitamin B. Increasingly, I had a great difficulty walking, and developed skin problems and diarrhea from general nutritional deficiencies. We ate any living thing we could get our hands on. One day we caught a cat and cooked it. It wasn't too bad.

They didn't work officers at Ofuna as a matter of course, and we passed our time walking the perimeter of the camp and commiserating with one another. But sometimes we would be assigned to carry pots of feces out of our latrines for the Japanese to use as fertilizer on their gardens. It was a recycling practice common throughout the orient and developed over centuries to get the best return from limited land area and grow food their large populations.

As the war seriously started going against Japan during 1944, the guards at Ofuna routinely started to beat us every time the Allies conquered a new piece of territory. Mostly, they beat us with their fists. When Tinian Island fell to the Allies, they took 30 of us out to a field and beat us with baseball bats. They struck me repeatedly in the kidneys, and afterwards, I started to pass blood in my urine. Because of that beating, I had to undergo surgery after the war, to correct a problem that subsequently developed in my urinary tract.

A curious fact emerged as I reviewed war crimes testimony that I and others gave after the war about the ill treatment we received at the hands of the guards at Ofuna. Another officer testified that before being questioned, he was given a slip of paper which said in substance, "You are not a Prisoner of War but an unarmed enemy, and your position here can be regarded as an extension of hostilities. If you behave well and answer questions properly, your treatment will be governed accordingly, and as well as existing regulations permit. The safety of your life is not guaranteed."

I personally, did not remember receiving such a notice, but whoever contrived such a bit of legal obfuscation probably thought they were hedging provisions of the Geneva Convention in doing so. How many other Allied prisoners were so warned, I can't say, but clearly, Japanese prison camp personnel might have thought it thereby gave them license to do whatever they wanted to their captives. This clever legal ruse to contravene the Geneva provisions was blatantly illegal, but might also explain the Japanese attitudes towards prisoners at the time.

By Fall 1944, the Japanese knew that world attention focused on their prisoner of war atrocities. To improve their image, they offered us the opportunity to record a message to our families that they would broadcast over Tokyo Radio. The broadcast could be easily received by short-wave receivers in the United States, especially on the Pacific Coast.

We didn't want to appear as collaborators in a propaganda ploy, but we wanted desperately to get word to our loved ones.

At the time, Betty didn't know whether I was alive or dead. We agonized about whether it was all right to do this. Our senior prisoner officer made the decision that we should do it. The possibility of our families receiving some news that we were at least alive, outweighed the perception that we were helping the Japanese clean up their act. I made several messages and Betty received three.

My first radio message was broadcast in October 1944, almost a year to the day after I was shot down. It was the first word Betty received that I had survived the crash of Fyrtle Myrtle and was a prisoner of war. She and our young son were at home with her parents, when the phone rang late one night with a long distance call from a woman in San Gabriel, California who said, "I have a message from your husband for you."

She damn near died. She told me she started to write down the message as the 25 words were repeated to her, but after when she looked at it, there was nothing on the paper but a bunch of unintelligible scratches. Within a few days, she received confirmation of the same message from four or five other short wave radio listeners along the Pacific Coast.

After the war, I discovered that a man named B. O. South, who owned a bar in San Francisco, tape recorded as many of the broadcast P.O.W. messages as he could. He then made them into records, and sent them to the respective families who could play them on a record player. We still have the ones Betty received. When she sent him money to help with the cost of the record and postage, he returned it explaining that since he was physically unable to be in the service, this was his contribution to the war effort.

We visited him after the war in San Francisco and thanked him personally. He told us he had recorded over 7,000 messages. Many other radio hobbyists did the same thing, providing welcome relief and news for families whose sons were initially declared 'missing in action' and turned up as prisoners of war.

After nine months at Ofuna, I had become seriously ill with dysentery and malnutrition, plus complications resulting from the blows to my kidneys. The Japanese moved those of us they thought might die to Omori, a bigger camp on an island in Tokyo Bay, where there was a better chance of getting proper medical treatment.

The transfer to Omori was probably the luckiest thing to happen to me, and equally sick Tracy Dumont, during our entire experience in Japanese captivity. It literally saved my life. It was a camp with about 800 prisoners. The food was better because they assigned me to a barracks with a bunch of former British convicts who managed to steal lots of it for themselves and others. These guys told me they had been in British colonial jails when the war broke out, and the authorities offered them a pardon in exchange for serving in the army and fighting the Japanese.

The British organized them into an ad hoc military unit, and they dubbed themselves 'The Royal Scots'. They were great fighters until they had to surrender to the Japanese at Hong Kong. There were about 30 of them at Omori. Many had been burglars, they were adept at stealing almost anything. However, true to the well-known adage about 'honor among thieves' they did not steal from a fellow prisoner.

They managed to steal enormous amounts of sugar, shrimp, crab meat, and anything else they could get their hands on at the wharves where they were forced to load and unload ships. They stole right under the eyes of inspectors who checked them daily as they came back from work details. Each of them sewed many little pockets in their clothing to conceal purloined booty such as sugar.

One of the first evenings at Omori, a Royal Scot named Fitzgerald saw me starting to eat some rice, and said, "Lieutenant, you're in pretty bad shape, don't try to eat that rice, it's two-thirds barley and it will make your diarrhea worse." I feebly protested that I was starving. He told me not to worry, he and his boys would feed and take care of me.

He produced some crab meat and sugar. It was an odd combination, but it tasted like ambrosia. Fitzgerald was also able to arrange for some medical bismuth compound that finally arrested my diarrhea. Up to then, I was so weak and the diarrhea had gotten so bad, it took two of them just to get me up from squatting over the hole in the floor that served our sanitary needs. Those guys were wonderful to me, and I know I would have died if it hadn't been for them.

Once, when we were low on sugar, another of the Royal Scots, named Patty, a small, tough, wiry Irishman volunteered to get some. Since there was no sugar ship at the wharf, he had to go to the warehouse, at great risk to his life. He shimmied four floors up a chute to get it, but somehow he managed and came back with the goods.

Another time, using an audacious and risky strategy, he brought back a can of crab meat. The Japanese would check us returning from the wharves by making us file by the inspectors with hands up in the air so they could pat us down. It

was a fast process, they just looked down each body, never up. The way Patty managed to purloin the can of crab meat was by removing it from his pocket and holding it discretely in his hands above his head. After he passed the checkpoint, he put it back in his pocket. He and the rest of those Royal Scots were one brave bunch.

The Japanese Army operated Omori instead of the Navy. They allowed us to write a 25-word letter to send home through the Red Cross. Unfortunately, many letters never seemed to get to the Red Cross or sent. There was an American lieutenant colonel in camp by the name of Jim Walker whose mail wasn't getting out. My luck was better, so I volunteered to include a message to his wife in one I sent to Betty.

He gave me her maiden name, and the address of her parent's home in Newport News, Virginia, where she was staying. I contrived the message: 'Dear Betty, I'm in good health, and kiss our Bill for me. Please tell my sister, Fran Lewis in Newport News, at such and such an address, that Jim sends his love.' It got through, and Betty managed to get her phone number and tell her about her husband. It was the only message she received that he was alive.

Contrary to the Geneva Convention, at Omori they ordered officers to work. Once when I was on a work detail digging a trench, a guard started giving me hell, saying I should shovel faster. I told him I was doing the best I could. He called the camp commandant, a bastard of a sergeant, who came over and hit me a couple of times for good measure and blustered, "I'm going to send you out for some real work." That turned out to be another lucky break for me. He sent me to the nearby railroad yard to unload box cars with a couple of Japanese civilians.

One of them was an older man who poked at my shrunken stomach the first day I worked with him and said, "Damae, damae" meaning 'very bad.' I told him I was very hungry. After I ate my meager lunch of a rice ball and cold watery soup, he gave me a great big, hot, sweet potato that he had cooked in the ashes of the little fire where we warmed our hands. I never ate a steak in my life that tasted as good as that sweet potato. To this day I relish sweet potatoes and yams. That kindly old man even gave me cigarettes.

Another day we saw a truck loaded with crates of red apples coming towards us. He said in Japanese, which I was beginning to understand, "Keep an eye out." As the truck passed, he grabbed a crate of apples and tossed it to me. I hid it under a tarp. When it was time to return to camp, I didn't expect anything, but he divided those apples evenly between us. Other times we stole tuna, and whatever other food we came across. Over time, I gained back twenty pounds and a semblance of better health. While working with them, we were pretty much on our own, as they didn't need to a guard us since a Caucasian had little chance to escape or hide in oriental Japan.

I developed a good relationship with those two Japanese. They hated the war as much as we did. With their help, I was constantly able to get small amounts of additional food to supplement the camp's meager diet. Sometimes, I was able to steal and eat enough during the day to forego the evening meal, which I would pass along to Tracy Dumont, who was still very weak.

One day we found a Japanese-English dictionary in a boxcar. I took it back to camp and gave it to Lt. William Harris, a Marine Corps Annapolis graduate among us, who was a linguist. He had never studied written Japanese before, but by sneaking as much time as he could when the guards weren't around, and comparing it with what he learned orally and Japanese script, he figured out how to read a newspaper headline. We arranged to swipe newspapers from the guard's quarters while they were out making their ritual morning obeisance to the Emperor. Harris turned out to be brilliant, and after a month, he could get the gist of the news in a Japanese newspaper or magazine.

We were badly out-of-touch during all those months with no news of the war that we had left so abruptly. The uncertainty about what was going on was dreadful, and morale suffered tremendously, but now with our new independent information source, we could indirectly keep up with the war's progress. Our challenge, was to learn to filter through the Japanese propaganda to get a glimmer of the truth.

The Japanese were terrible about what they told their own people about the course of the war. For instance, Harris noted a story about the Allies losing seven aircraft carriers down in the Philippines, and other incredible war hyperbole. Later, as we caught on to the flow of how they handled war news, and when he could find no more mention of the Philippines, we correctly figured that the Allies must have taken back the Philippines. Another outrageous story described how many men and how much war material we lost on Okinawa. When that story appeared no more, we correctly figured that we had retaken Okinawa. Fortunately, Harris and his 'news service' remained with our group until the end of the war.

About a week after I arrived at Omori in late October, 1944, I saw a big four engine plane that I couldn't identify, flying at a very high altitude over Tokyo. It looked like a reconnaissance flight to me. Similar flights continued for several days, revealing to us that we must now have air bases closer to Japanese home soil, operating with the new

longer range bombers that we knew were on the American drawing boards. I learned later it was one of the new B-29 Superfortresses.

A know-it-all American colonel in camp said, "The Allies won't bomb Tokyo until the Germans are out of the war." Since I had some personal experience with the timing of reconnaissance flights and follow-up bombing raids, I offered to bet him a portion of my meager rice ration they would bomb Tokyo within ten days. Only two or three days after that, B-29s dumped the first bombs on Tokyo.

From our island prison in Tokyo Bay, we witnessed many B-29 raids, and saw many of our planes get shot down. This was tough to take, but we knew it meant that the war must be going well, if our planes were now regularly bombing the Japanese home islands.

Over the next couple of months, the bombing intensified, and about mid-January 1945, to the surprise of both the Japanese and us, American carrier-based planes appeared overhead. Our camp sirens started to wail and in a couple of minutes, the sky was full of carrier-based Navy Hellcats. The implication was clear that American carriers were operating with impunity near the coast of Japan. The Japanese couldn't believe it.

Now, however, we found ourselves in danger of being injured or killed by 'friendly fire'. We begged for paint to mark the roofs of the barracks with the letters 'POW', but to no avail. Though the bombing was good for our morale in one way, it's horror and proximity caused some of our guys to crack up under the strain. We could easily understand what the Japanese civilians were going through under the constant attacks.

I continued working in the railroad yard and one day, we heard bombs falling. The peculiar sound of their descent, and some gut instinct, prompted me to warn the others to get over to the other side of the track embankment. We did so and, sure enough, the bombs hit where we had been working. My instincts and hunches have always served me well.

At Omori, an amusing incident took place involving a U.S. Navy Commander also named Fitzgerald. He was a submarine skipper captured with his crew when their boat was forced aground in shallow waters by a Japanese sub chaser. A scrappy Jap guard in camp loved to draw a circle on the ground and challenge anyone to step inside and take him on. He was the camp bully-boy and none of the other Japanese guards liked him.

One day he taunted Fitzgerald to get in the circle with him. Fitzgerald said he'd do it if he could defend himself. What the Jap didn't know was that the commander had been a boxing coach at Annapolis. When the contest began, Fitzgerald surprised him with some quick boxing tactics and knocked him cold, to the uproarious delight of all the other Japanese. The bully had met his match.

In March 1945, Swiss Red Cross observers found out about various camp violations, including working officers at Omori. The Japanese devised an evasive tactic by spreading us around to different camps, so it would be harder to keep a constant track of us. They moved me to a makeshift camp in a brick yard on Tokyo Bay on the outskirts of Yokohama. I was there for what proved to be a dramatic three months.

The camp commandant at Yokohama was the tallest Japanese I had ever seen. He was six foot four and had been a hurdler in the 1936 Olympics. He turned out to be a real prince, and wouldn't allow his guards to beat us. This was characteristic of other Japanese who had travelled extensively outside Japan, and knew Western cultural ways.

He also offered us a deal. If we planted a vegetable garden, he would let us keep three-fourths of the produce, with the remainder going to the guards. We started a good sized garden on a slope in back of the camp, but ironic circumstances that developed shortly, kept us from reaping the fruits of our labor.

It was now May 1945, Germany had surrendered, and Allied resources and air power shifted to the war in the Pacific. General Curtis LeMay transferred from the European theater to take command of the 20th Air Force, a B-29 wing in the Pacific. He devised a strategy of indiscriminate incendiary bombing of Japanese cities. We had captured Iowa Jima to provide a badly needed airbase just 750 miles south of Tokyo for the new long-range and powerful P-51 Mustang fighter.

Without this fighter cover, previous B-29 raids had to bomb from around 30,000 feet to avoid Japanese interceptors who couldn't effectively fly or shoot that high. Now with fighter cover, they could deliver heavier bomb loads with deadly accuracy from 6,000 feet day or night.

May 26 turned out to be a day of reckoning for Yokohama and our garden. The devastating Allied air raid that day started in the morning with what seemed like hundreds of P-51s. They came in without the bombers to engage and eliminate Japanese fighter aircraft on the ground and in the air. From our camp we watched with morbid fascination

what turned out to be a massive dogfight with Japanese Zeros over Yokohama. The P-51s mauled the Zeros and after finishing with them, strafed ground facilities including our unmarked camp.

Fortunately none of us got hit, but they came close. There was one older guard at Yokohama who was particularly decent to us. He was a bit on the rotund side so we called him 'Fatty.' During a strafing run, he got so scared he started to tremble and simply froze in place. As one P-51 bore down on us, I pushed Fatty in a slit trench and jumped in on top of him. He made a good pillow to land on, and later gratefully credited me with saving his life.

Without Japanese fighters to worry about, that evening two waves of B-29s from Tinian Island came in low with incendiaries that set Yokohama ablaze and resulted in a fire storm. Right next to our camp, a three story building got hit with naphtha jelly that literally splashed all over it. The awesome power of the attack both elated and scared the hell out of us. It also destroyed part of our camp and our garden. The next morning, with the city still on fire, more B-29s came in with delayed action 2,000 pound demolition bombs that ruptured the city's water mains. This ended efforts to contain the raging fires.

After that raid, I knew the Japanese were really in trouble. Yokohama had been a beautiful modern city before the B-29s incinerated about four and a half square miles of its center. If similar raids were happening to other Japanese cities, and if I wasn't killed in the meantime, I knew the war would soon end, and I would be on my way home to Betty and my young son.

A few days after that devastating raid and damage to our camp, they told us we were moving to Niigata, a major port city on the northwest coast. Ground transportation was non-existent so we had to walk through the burnt out city of Yokohama to the train station. Before leaving, the guards warned us not to smile, saying, "We'll shoot anybody who smiles." There was nothing to smile about, because it was truly horrible. We walked through the ashes and saw charred bodies and parts of bodies; men, women, and children, young and old alike, all dead and decaying. The stench was sickening.

We transferred to Niigata by train, and on arrival, were sent to one of two camps that held about 500 men each. Our sympathetic Japanese commandant at Yokohama did not come with us, and so at Niigata we were now back to the brutalities of a petty prison camp management. They beat us for no apparent reason. It was probably just the guards' frustration at the way the war was going against them, and maybe fear for their own future.

The American navy mined Niigata's harbor, and occasionally we saw a ship hit one. Some prisoners worked on the docks, while others including myself, helped build air raid shelters. Allied planes allocated Niigata its share of bombs as well.

At Niigata, one prisoner was an American doctor from Indianapolis. He was desperately short of medicines and devised a scheme to get some. He put the word out among the Japanese guards that if any of them got a venereal disease they should come to see him. He learned they would lose pay and rank if they got caught with a venereal disease.

The first night after his offer, three guards showed up. He told them the quantities of the particular medicine he needed, and within a short time, they delivered all he asked for. The guards either had to steal it or find it on the black market, as it wasn't something in their normal supply pipeline. When the savvy doctor had specified quantities he needed, he made sure the amounts were far more than it took to cure the three guards. He had plenty left to treat a variety of ailments afflicting our guys. Yankee ingenuity had come through again.

While escape in Japan was out of the question, at Niigata we did consider one possibility that would take us off our island prison. The camp was next to an airfield where twin engine bombers routinely warmed up their engines near the fence. Three of us were working on a plan that might have had a slim chance of succeeding. Besides myself, there was my long-time fellow prisoner, Lt. Col. Walker, a pilot and former deputy air group commander, and Noel Quinn, an Australian torpedo squadron leader who had been shot down at Rabaul on Christmas Day 1943.

Quinn was downed when he hit a cable stretched across the harbor while on his way to torpedo a ship. He was constantly griping about his bad luck. Once while he was telling his story again, I said "Why are you complaining, Noel, those nice Japs sent you a cable for Christmas!"

Our escape plan involved jumping the unguarded fence and stealing one of the Japanese bombers. Usually, a single unarmed mechanic started and warmed up those planes. We figured that if we timed it right, we could scramble to the plane and overpower him. I was to be navigator, and had made a rough map with a flight plan to Russia which I sewed in my pants. Fortunately we didn't have to test our escape plan as the war ended only a couple of weeks after we started to seriously think and work on it.

Life at Niigata continued routinely until August 15, 1945, when the camp commander called all officer prisoners together and asked, "What is an atomic bomb?" We told him we didn't know, which was the truth, but we suspected something big had happened. Indeed, unknown to us, atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and August 9 respectively..

They told us a truce was now in effect. I was so happy I thought my heart would burst. They asked us if we wanted the guards pulled out of the camp. We told them they could certainly take them out of our barracks, but not out of camp, as we feared the wrath of the local civilians. However, this fear proved to be completely unfounded.

On August 23, they supplied us with buckets of yellow paint and told us to mark the barracks roofs with large 'POW' lettering. Actually, that order came from our own forces who wanted to air drop supplies to us, and needed to know precisely where the POW camps were. We were free men at last, but still in limbo, as we would not be repatriated to our own forces for several days. As grim as my stay with my Japanese 'hosts' was, I knew where I stood. I was alive, and I could be reasonably sure Betty and my son were. There was a predictable routine, and we prisoners were a support group for each other. I learned to accept the fickle nature of my captors and hope for the best.

My wife Betty did not have this psychological luxury. I cannot imagine the depth of despair she experienced not knowing for sure, at any instant, whether I was alive or dead. How she managed to survive that first year after I was reported missing in action, and she had no word at all about my fate, I will never fully appreciate.

Fortunately, she was not alone in her grief. Our families, those of the crew of Fyrtle Myrtle, and a network of people in similar circumstances gave her support beyond measure. Until she found out I was alive, she based her hopes for me on letters from friends in the 380th Bomb Group, and other people familiar with air and military operations.

From them she received conflicting stories about exactly how many parachutes were seen emerging from our stricken plane. Betty told me afterwards that she had a very strong faith that if I had been lucky enough to be in one of those parachutes, that I would find a way to survive and come home to her. Also, from the home front's prisoner of war network, she bolstered hopes with remarkable stories of missing men subsequently confirmed alive.

When in October 1944, she received my message via Tokyo Radio's late night broadcast, it gave her morale an incredible boost. She resumed her letter writing, however slight the chance of my receiving them might be. The Japanese limited incoming letters to 24 words. These now follow along with letters of our family, the families of surviving and lost crew members, and others. They were written starting with the report of my being declared 'missing in action' by the War Department, and continue during 1944 and 1945. They poignantly portray the depths of grief, depression, and hope by those who waited valiantly at home.

Mrs. McFerren's Letters - 1944

Corona

March 8, 1944

My Dearest,

It's been over four months now since I picked up a pen to write you your daily letter. Four months - do you realize that four months was all the time we spent together after we were married? And now the time since we kissed good-bye is nearing a year - time you should be coming back, and instead, here I am still writing to you - the only difference is that now my letters are few and far between.

I write them only when I think I can't stand it a minute longer. Tonight was one of those nights. I don't know why particularly, but my morale was lower than usual, and I hated myself for it, for I thought of you, and thought how at a time like this I must be worthy of you. Oh, God, Darling, how many times have I wanted to end it all and refrained because I knew I had no right to be so selfish. How many times I have pictured you coming home unexpectedly. I have visioned the clothes you'd be wearing, the color of your skin, the look on your face - just as futile as the day dreams I used to dream when I was a child.

I have thought of our reunion - forgive me Sweetie, if some of these ideas are completely berserk - I think I am slightly off the old nut. I have thought of seeing you again after all these deadened years of just living - just existing - no sunshine, no darkness, just grey, misty, twilight - lukewarm nothingness. I have wondered if that something that burned within us will be dead - if the "e" strings will have all been tuned to "a" instead and we'll fail to respond to the old stimulus.

I have wondered if this endless waiting will in time become a complete existence with the thing waited for, an anti-climax. And then I curse myself for wondering. I have just re-read your letters dear, some of the ones written early in July, and I am reassured again. But the human mechanism can only take so much, and often I have wondered how much that is. For while we both suffer mental anguish of equal proportions, yours is physical as well. Not a pretty thought.

Perhaps this thing that blossomed in full flower from us, will only be a little dormant - with careful nursing and cultivation we can coax it back to the dream of wild abandon and recklessness in which we lived before we kissed good-bye.

Oh, Sweetie, I loved you so wildly and so completely, and I would as soon be dead as face life without you. God, please do not let it be so, tho I know I do not deserve it. Darling, all I do is think of our life together, every detail is as vivid in my mind as tho it were all before me in technicolor and with sound effects. A million common little everyday things are constantly flashing such pictures before me in kaleidoscopic clearness. The deafening roar of the fast express as it passes within a stone's throw of the windows at the office makes me think of Denver and our cottage at the rear of Westward Ho. The prefix DR in my parts numbers reminds me that you studied dead reckoning. 'As Time Goes By', played over the inter-office P.A. system flashes a picture of all of us sitting around a table in the officer's club in Topeka, just before you left. I know it was one of your current favorites. The smell of a large clean grocery store in the morning sees me marketing at the Safeway in El Paso, and trudging up Upson Avenue to the Binkley, my arms loaded with good things to eat. Squeaky snow underfoot is reminiscent of our first days in Denver, when snow, kindly snow kept the planes grounded. Thank God, Darling, for our live for today policy. Icicles on automobile bumpers are like they were on Jarron's Chevy convertible at Colorado's coldest. Static on the inter-departmental communications system sounds much as it no doubt did on the inner phone system in Fyrtle Myrtle.

The notes of the piano in certain classical arrangements remind me so of Sunday afternoons at Las Ondas that I almost squint as I remember gazing out over the bright and silvery Pacific. The wide Pacific that now knows such secrets never dreamed of then.

Last night the radio played Cole Porter's immortal 'Begin the Beguine'. The words say something about "It brings back a moment" and "I am with you once more", and something about "by the shore". How true. I have only to close my eyes and there is Adrian, the exhausted organist playing it's stirring strains, and there am I, in seventh heaven, dancing with a cadet whom I had met only four hours before, but with whom I knew even then, I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

Darling, I can never forget one moment of that night as long as I may live. For 23 years I searched, and thank God I knew the very minute I had found that for which I was searching.

Now, 'as time goes by' - we have been apart over ten months - longer than the span of time from whence we met till when we parted. Honey, we did make good use of the time granted us, didn't we?

Oh, Honey, I love you so, and it is such complete hell without you. I need you so damned desperately, and I am so goddamn sick of being strong when all I want is you and you alone. Sweetie, you know it's always you. Everything I have is yours, Your loving wife, Betty

Corona,

May 20, 1944

Hello my wonderful husband,

Tonite I heard 'Begin the Beguine' on the radio and it took me back to a Saturday nite exactly 20 months and one day ago - it seems like yesterday that we danced together to that tune. It will always seem like yesterday I think, because it is so vividly etched in my memory - after all it isn't every day you meet the man you've been waiting for, and it is a day worth remembering.

"Oh, I have a collection of over 200 turquoises" and "We were old horseback riding companions in Arizona" (exit the other cadet) "You'll have to excuse me just for five minutes. I must go find Goldie and make arrangements about going home. I've been all over Laguna Beach looking for Goldie - up to Victor Hugo's and all around. Finally found him." Gee, Sweetie, you sure fooled me. I swallowed it all hook, line, and sinker - and not to mention the gag about "we have so little time."

I can see you telling me all that baloney, and I can see me believing you just like it were yesterday, and I'm so glad I believed you, because I want to go on believing you all the rest of my life. That's one thing that makes me so confident of the eventual outcome of things. Tho you kidded me outrageously about things that didn't matter, I have come to trust your promise implicitly. And when you told me in your letters and on that phonograph record that you were coming home to me one of these days, I know you meant it, and I know that right now, you know that I still believe you.

Of course, I know that many things in this damn war are outside of the realm of human control, but I also know that some people will do one thing with their breaks and others will do other things, and I'm just gambling that you got that break, because I just sort of think you did. For a guy that loves to gamble like you do, I just don't think it would be any other way.

Saturday nite - Laguna Beach, Sacramento, San Francisco, Tucson, El Paso, Denver, Hoopeston, Topeka, and San Francisco. I'll bet lots of people can be married all their lives and never make love on a Saturday nite in as many different states as we have! Wow, Honey, I mustn't let my imagination run rampant with me, because I certainly remember every detail of our married life like it were yesterday, and, well, just Wow!

Gee, you know I guess the wife theoretically isn't supposed to be such an enthusiastic partner along such lines, but I don't see any point in pretending. There is no use in my trying to play the shrinking violet when all the time I'm as hot for the whole thing as you are. I can't say no and mean yes. I just take the short cut and say yes. That also infers that when I say no, I mean no, doesn't it? Well, I do, except I remember a few weekends in Sacramento when I'd love to have been able to say yes!

Gee, darling, all I can do for entertainment these awful lonely Saturday nites is sit and reminisce, and I guess you're doing the same thing, only it probably isn't Saturday nite over there, and maybe you wouldn't know if it were, unless you have your pocket calendar along.

Sweetie, it is hard to say what is in my heart, mere words can never say it. I know that I am not alone, thousands of other young women have the same feeling all over the country tonite, and each day that passes, telegrams are received and more join our ranks, only I believe in giving thanks for my blessings and I do feel that of the thousands who receive such telegrams, I am among the luckiest 10%, or something like that.

Of course, I may modify that statement later on, one way or another, but the information I have received to date is far more encouraging than the follow-up news that comes to most families. Oh, Honey, our luck just has to hold, it has been so miraculously wonderful so far. The world is nothing but blackness now, but the sun will shine for all of us

another day, and somehow we will forget this awful war. Rather I should say, put it out of our minds, we will never completely forget it, for that would be a fine reward for those who have fought to win it.

We will remember it, and remember the forces that involved us in it, so that our little Bill III and all his pals will not have to kill other little Bill IIIs and their pals who speak a different language, and perhaps have a skin of a little different hue. Darling, no words, just good-nite and I love you, oh, so much. Your Betty.

Corona

November 5, 1944

Dearest Family,

Here comes a quickie.

I'm still snowed under in writing to notify friends of our wonderful news, so this will not be long. I did want to forward on to you a copy of the clipping the Lardins sent me. It is from an east coast paper, later this year than May 2nd, and gives some information I had not known. In the light of what they say about sending letters via the Jap Red Cross, I am writing Bill a little 24 word ditty today enclosing a picture of the cherub.

I can't seem yet to get any of the printed cards that the Japs like to have us write on, I think I will use them mostly because as long as they hold the whip hand, I certainly would like to please them in that regard.

It will seem strange to be writing to Bill again, knowing that there is a chance of his getting it. I have written letters to him occasionally, which I put away for him - it sort of keeps contact and makes him seem closer. But those letters will have to wait the duration to be read. Now to actually be able to communicate with him - I just can't believe it.

Here are a couple of shots of the cherub that I think are cute. They are blurry because I have to take them in the semi-shade in order to keep him from squinting. He has developed a new yell in the last few days - he opens his mouth and just yells at the top of his lungs for no particular reason. Just to hear himself, I guess. It is very funny. He walks rather uncertainly but has been known to traverse as much as three yards without holding on to anything. That is very unusual however. He has no fear about it, so I think he will learn quickly. I've never seen him in better health and spirits than he has been recently. He is just bursting with energy and enthusiasm.

The poem is lovely. I have made a copy of it, and am returning it to you. That was lovely indeed for you to send the flowers to church. So few people ever take time and trouble to give thanks, but just go about their daily way, taking for granted their good fortune, and grumbling over their misfortune. Mr. Lardin said that in the POW bulletin a while back he saw a picture of POWs in a camp on Java and he thought one of them looked exactly like his son. He got an enlargement of the picture from the Red Cross in Washington, but could get no names. His other son is a POW in Germany, and his daughter is an Army nurse, just back from Egypt, and now stationed in Tennessee.

I have reservations for December 1st for San Francisco. Jane Weirick and I are planning a little jaunt up to visit Sadie and Clayton, and Jane will look over California, and I plan a visit to Davis. I have hardly been off the reservation for six months now, and thought a little diversion would keep me out of a rut. Mom will care for Bill for the few days I will be gone, and I think it will sort of perk me up. All my love, Betty

POW Postcards

November 6, 1944

Dearest, It is wonderful to know that your health and spirits are very good. I can't tell you what hearing from you has meant. Love you, Betty

November 17, 1944

Dearest, A resume of the past year - Bill and I spent the winter in Hoopeston - flew both ways - families fine - miss you like hell. Love you, Betty.

November 21, 1944

Dear Bill, Betty Farrington was here yesterday. She and Johnnie are fine. I correspond with Myrtle's kin regularly. The Lardins are wonderful. Love you more than ever. Betty.

November 21, 1944

Dearest, I am in cold storage, so hurry home. (and it is cold without you!) Everyone Roger. Bill is a rascal. Were you ever like that? Betty

November 28, 1944

Darling, I joined a bridge club. Last night I was third high. Now just wait till I get you on a horse! Miss you sweetie, Love Betty.

December 9, 1944

Dearest, Spent last week in Frisco, at Clayton's. Darling, the memories flowed thick and fast. Hurry home and help me make more memories. Love you, dear, Betty

December 31, 1944

Dearest, This has to get through. It's New Year's eve - our second apart. Marge, Bill, and I will toast to you. Bill is walking now. Betty

,

Mrs. McFerren's POW Mail - 1945

January 13, 1945

Darling, Bill walks, talks a little. I offered him a bourbon and soda the other day. He yelled for more. I love you. Betty

January 25, 1945

Dear Bill, The radio is playing 'Begin the Beguine' - It brings back a night - a fresh cadet, a drink, ooops! There went my Heart! Kisses, Betty.

January 25, 1945

Dearest, Bill III had the DFC pinned on him today. Had dinner out and he was up till 9 with never a peep. Love you, Betty.

January 30, '45

Dear Bill, Cherub said his first word today - "Boy". He drinks everything. Darling; do you think there is anything in heredity? I love you Sweetheart. Betty

February 5, 1945

Darling, I reread your letters periodically and always get a terrific boost from them—and yen. Our families are fine. Bill sends love. Betty

IMPERIAL JAPANESE TELEGRAPH

SK

GENEVE 3698 23/22 2 POW HURYOZYOHOKYOKU TOKYO

OC37506 TOKYOCAMP FIRSTLT WILLIAM MCFERREN MISSING YOU YAQUI WILLIE FAMILIES FINE I LOVE YOU SWEETIE WIFE BETTY MCFERREN INTERCROIXROUGE.

February 6, 1945

Dear Bill: Charlotte married Massey. Harry Long is also married. Mee, Long, Bascom, Eudy, Amison, Knowling, Norton, Faurso, Blily, Cohen, McDonald, Banowitz, McNamara are guests now. Betty.

February 7, 1945

Dear Bill, Two cards from Harry Long today. Did you know 'mother' has a son? Marge is nursing in Riverside. I see her often. Love Betty

February 11, 1945

Dear, Life is pretty glum without you, but sweetie, one of these days the sun will shine again - Willie and the rest are fine. Love Betty.

March 12, 1945

Darling, Letter from Harry Long's wife. He joined your status June 1943. Goldie overseas administrating. Bill asked to ride Yaqui. Thrill! Love you, Betty

March 21, 1945

Darling, Something very wonderful happened today for the second time since you stopped writing. It is a thrill (C E N S O R E D). Love, Betty.

March 24, 1945

Darling, You're almost right about Bill shaving. Hurry home so's you can show him how. Both families tip top shape. I love you. Betty

March 25, 1945

Darling, When I doubted back in Hoopston that you could put a monologue to me on a record, I underestimated you. Love Betty

April 4, 1945

Dear Sweetheart, Took Bill to the beach. Did he love it! I am going to try to spend a while there with him this summer. Betty

April 9, 1945

My Sweet, Bill takes after his mother in one way anyway - he craves manzitas. However, he also like bourbon better than I did then. Betty.

July 23, 1945

Darling, We have more dates to parties when you get back than we can keep in a month of Sundays. Love you, honey. Betty

July 26, 1945

Dearest, Marge and I spent the night with the Farnums - getting into the base was different that once nearly three years ago. Remember? Love, Betty.

Letters - Family and Friends P.O.W. Period 1944 - 1945

January 10, 1944

Dear Betty,

Meant to answer your nice letter much sooner but have been having a session with the flu - just like two thirds of the rest of the people in town. Had to keep in fashion, I guess. It was grand to hear from you. Your letter was the first information I had on where it happened. Al Paris had written me that he understood that they jumped but didn't say where or give any of the circumstances. I sent your letter on to John's mother and you probably will be hearing from her. Her name and address is - Mrs. C. May Perry, c/o Barlum Hotel, Detroit, Mich. She is fine and has taken the blow well - John is all she has. Mr. Perry having died about ten years ago. I have been in Detroit twice since the news came and spent three or four days with her each time.

John had mentioned your husband many times. The last time was in the summer when he told me about the expectant fathers in the crew of the Myrtle - and mentioned 'Porky' as one of them. I see by your letter that Bill III arrived as scheduled. I gather from your letter that you knew the members of the crew. I envy you as, from what John told me, they were a fine bunch of men. It hasn't been so hard for me to realize that John is gone and may not come back because I had only seen him for four days in the last two years.

As you perhaps know, he was in Alaska from July 1941 until May of 1942. He was supposed to get a 30 day leave upon his return to the states but his orders were mixed up and he never made it. He was given six days in March - it took two days coming and going from and to Denver. So he only had four days here. T'was wonderful, but not nearly long enough. Two or three times I was all set to go and see him and then he would be transferred - so I finally gave up. We have been officially engaged, ring and all, for two years but never seemed to be able to get together long enough to get married.

Perhaps it is just as well - but John so wanted to be married that I'm sorry I didn't make more of an effort to go to him. I'm a firm believer, however, that everything works out for the best. You will note that my last name is Ahern. You addressed your letter to Peggy Kemp, but it reached me all right and was a natural mistake. I live with one of my married sisters, Mrs. Stan Kemp. I'd like to hear from you whenever you get any information, Betty, and I will let you know what we hear. I presume you have had the usual letters from the chaplain and the commander of the 380th Bombardment Group. I presume they were sent to all next-of-kin. Thanks again for writing, I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. I hope the New Year will bring you and your small son much happiness and everything you are wishing for. Sincerely, Peggy

(Australia)

January 12, 1944

Dear Betty,

Sorry I haven't written you in the last few weeks but I was 'somewhere in New Guinea' APO 503 for several weeks and my correspondence suffered considerably. I saw Bob Fleming at lunch today and he said he had received a letter from you requesting all of the details and so forth. I hope you have been able to tie in all of our letters and get a fairly accurate picture of what happened.

There's one detail, however, only Cush could give you because it was his doings with his white-haired friend who's boss! I told Betty F. that the rumor about them being strafed is not true and Paul Hadley had no business in saying so!! We have had several go like John, Bill, and 'Myrtle'.

I feel almost like a stranger in the squadron with all the new faces, very few of the old bunch left. I can't help think of all the fun we had in El Paso together - John Dennis and Willy Massey are among the few still around. I have only two more to go out on and I'll be able to close the book for good and I'll be mighty thankful. I haven't heard yet how Mickey and the baby are but as you can imagine, I've been sweating out that telegram from day to day for the last week! I'll close now Betty. I hope you and young Bill are in the best of health and spirits. As ever, "Alfred"

(Australia)

January 30, 1944

Dear Betty,

Just received your V-Mail dated January 14th and needless to say t'was nice to hear from you again. I hope my last letter to you was somewhat more enlightening than my previous letters. However, I tried to say all I could without stepping over the line cause then the censor would strike it all out. I hope Cush could give you all the details that I couldn't give you. I sure hope that when I hit the Golden Gate you'll be there cause I'd like nothing better than to see you and young Bill!

I told Mickey to jump on a train around March 1st and go back to Minneapolis, with the idea in mind of saving myself a lot of running around after I got my leave. I told her you had gone to Hoopston when your baby was quite young so there's no reason why she couldn't do it (don't you think)?

As to your question about the opal ring! Well, Bill and I spent a couple of days looking and then he looked with the O'Briens too, and as far as I know he never found anything suitable. He found a stone but they aren't allowed to make settings anymore so I think he gave up the idea. So to be absolutely sure I'll write them in Adelaide and find out for sure before I come home - OK?

I was pleased to hear about Betty Farrington's baby being a boy; you three gals did a damn fine job, guess the alarm clock did have something to do with it! Maybe, aye? Yes Thompson was one of the first to go home - he had a facial paralysis or something. A lot more of the old bunch (what's left) have gone home and we (me too) have our time in and are waiting for our orders.

I expect to be in S.F. around or about March, so if you want to see me be at your Aunt and Uncle's place in the month of March and I'll give you a buzz! OK? Well Betty, I'll close now, lots of rain here - rains for weeks at a time. Love, Al

February 26, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

I am glad I took time to write to all the families of the crew on which John was a member. From several I have gotten information that I had not previously had. This is particularly true in your case. We had hoped that the boys could have remained free and not prisoners. However, I too, am one that has taken the rumors of Jap atrocities with a grain of salt. I believe that while there is life there is hope. I presume from your letter that the radio news from Tokyo had been received in Australia by the soldier you mention, or at least where he was located.

It is a long time since my heart was as light as it is today and you may be sure that your letter is the cause. I have heard from several of the families of the crew members and they have all been very hopeful. I intend to write to them all today and spread the news you have given me. May the day soon come when your family is again united. Thank you again for your letter. Sincerely yours, Mr. & Mrs. Thos. Lardin

February 26, 1944

Dearest Betty,

Your letter makes us all feel good about the G.I. Aggie. Thank you for the news; Helen will take careful note of it. And we hope to have another Aggie eventually. I have thought of you a great many times since hearing the news of your great trouble. Only a week or two ago we read in TIME about the heroic crew of the 'Golden Gator'; but at that time we didn't realize the full implications. We had heard separately, however, about your brave and lovable husband.

Like you, we earnestly hope that Bill is a prisoner and will come back someday. I can share in your feelings somewhat, not only because I have a war baby and am anxious about my husband (he's taking training as a Navy bombardier) but because I'm spending two nights a week at the apartment of Alva Day Hansen in Berkeley. Alva is a former Aggie co-ed. Her husband, also an Aggie, Clay Hansen, was lost with a bomber in New Guinea. He had previously received the Distinguished Flying Cross for sinking a Japanese vessel. But he wasn't killed in action. The engine failed while the bomber was out on a mission, and it crashed in the jungle; all the men were lost. Alva has a daughter, born after her father's last flight had been reported.

Like you, Alva is bravely carrying on. She is attending college at Berkeley, finishing her botany major, in the hope of someday having a profession with which to support her child. She's a beautiful girl only twenty three years old. Knowing people like you and Alva is an inspiration to the rest of us and brings the war very close to home. Be sure to let me hear from you from time to time. I'm sending you my love, with all good wishes. Yours as ever, Celeste Wright

March 10, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

Thank you for your kind and interesting letter. It conveyed several bits of news which I previously had not known. I am very proud of every one of those boys on 'Fyrtle Myrtle's' crew. To have been squadron leaders, they must have been "tops".

My Jimmie is a very capable young man and I'm sure he was doing his job in the very efficient manner in which he did everything he ever undertook. To know that he's in danger has grieved me deeply. Am I right in believing that your Bill was a crew member of the 'Shufflin' Sue' (Jimmie's ship before he left the states)? Seems like I have heard Jimmie mention him. I'll have to look up my pictures of that crew and see how many of the boys were with him here in the states. Capt. Farrington was Shufflin' Sue's pilot so I judge he was also the pilot of Fyrtle Myrtle.

Jimmie spoke very highly of him, both as a man and as a pilot. What was your husband's capacity on the plane? Jimmie was the engineer-gunner with the top turret as his position. He loved being in the air force, and enjoyed every one of his missions. I guess they gave vent to the dare-devil in his makeup. He had four Zeros to his credit before he went down - at least he had reported that many to me. Maybe there were more.

I have neither written to, nor heard from Mrs. Farrington. I must contact her soon. She, I believe, is the wife who entertained her husband's entire crew at dinner one day before they left for overseas. Jimmie said she was very sweet. My, aren't you fortunate to have a youngster to help take away the sting of this tragedy? You at least have some of your family left. Altho we've been married five and a half years, we have no children. I have certainly wished since this happened that I did. Several months ago I went to the Red Cross but they said a service man had to be missing four months before they could take action. It's been nearly five months now, so I think I shall contact them again. They are doing wonderful work and maybe they can secure some information which will lighten all of our hearts.

I am working for one of our state senators - a position which I had before Jimmie and I were married and have had ever since. It's a good job and I enjoy it. The short wave broadcast from Tokyo does sound very much like it was our men they picked up. I wish I could feel as elated over the possibility of their being prisoners as you do. I just can't bear to think of Jimmie being tortured like he probably is being. Those little yellow demons are such beasts and stop at nothing. Prayer is our only consolation, I guess. Our boys are fighting for a just cause and I'm sure the Lord is watching over them.

I have never feared that Jimmie wasn't still alive, even before I knew when they went down. If it was humanly possible to get out of the damaged plane, he did. I dreamt he went down the nite he did. I saw him very clearly land and his chute come down around him. I don't know whether he was on land or water but he wasn't alone. Just one week later I got my wire saying he was missing. I still shudder when I recall opening that wire. That was the severest blow I ever had to take and I went down for the count.

The sting has vanished a little now, but my world is very empty. I am as sure as you are that our grief will be turned to joy in the not-too-distant future when our men are home again. I don't look for this war to continue too much longer. I would be delighted if some day I might have the pleasure of meeting each and every one of the people who are writing to me about our boys. We all have so much in common. Hearing from you has been a pleasure and I hope it will be repeated. My very best wishes to you and yours, Marion DeGroat

Corona

March 26, 1944

To the families of the crew of Fyrtle Myrtle -

This is in the form of a round-robin letter which I thought we might circulate among us, both to pass on any bits of news we may receive, and to insure that we all keep in contact with the minimum amount of writing and time involved.

I have enclosed a sheet with the names and addresses of all of us, and thought that each person could write to the name below his own on the list. If we each write just a note on the same sheet of paper, or another if that one is full, by the time it goes the rounds, there will be a word from each of us for the next ones to read. The letter will be rather fat by the time all eleven of us have added to it, but that will be fun. I think we could continue this for some time with very little effort. It would be nice for each one of us to state what his own relative's particular position in the ship was.

I am enclosing a clipping which you all may not have seen - it is from the Chicago Tribune of March 25 and is self explanatory. I thought that since the man in the foreground is so healthy looking that he may be a recently captured prisoner and as the scene is supposed to be Dutch East Indies, it just might be one of our boys. If so it will certainly be a revelation to know it. So please enclose the clipping each time. I have no news, save that Marion DeGroat informs me that her husband has four Zeros to his credit, which I think is something to be really proud of.

I might also mention that the so-called comic strip 'Abie and Slats' which runs in California papers is carrying the story of the Oct. 26th raid of Fyrtle Myrtle and the Golden Gator, under different names, of course. The story began March 21st. I am also enclosing a clipping which some of you may not have the opportunity to see. Please pass it on - I am sorry that I have not enough copies to give one to each of you. Bill was the navigator on the ship. Yes, Mrs. DeGroat, Bill did fly with your husband on Shufflin' Sue in Denver. This is all for now - and my best hopes and prayers for each of your loved ones go with it.

Betty McFerren.

I am sending this letter and clippings on to you as Mrs. McFerren has asked. I cannot yet believe that this thing has really happened to our boys and still firmly believe that they will be found soon. Hoping and praying, Mrs. Lovett.

My son's position on the ship was photographer. He had been in the service three and a half years. I am proud of every member of the crew of the Fyrtle Myrtle. I don't think I share the hopes of other next of kin. I would prefer to have my son gone than a prisoner of war to be tortured. My prayers will follow each member of the ship. I also pray for strength for each and every one of us to keep on. Evelyn H. Heppler

My son was assistant radio operator on the Fyrtle Myrtle. I believe him to be well and alive. With God's Grace I expect to hear from him shortly. Daniel always spoke highly of officers and fellow members of the crew. George J. Glendon

My brother's position was radio operator on the Fyrtle Myrtle. I understand that out of a total of 21 ships starting on the raid in which the Fyrtle Myrtle was lost, only 4 were able to complete the mission. I feel that men who could carry on with such odds, are still carrying on. Lester C. Sleighter

Our son John, was engineer and waist gunner on the crew of the Fyrtle Myrtle. We must feel that our boys deserve a chance to live whatever their position now. We are firmly convinced that the boys who were able to leave the plane are somewhere safe and will eventually return to their homes. We are therefore praying that you all will some day see your sons, brothers, and husbands. Mr. & Mrs. Thomas C. Lardin

In regard to our son, Second Lt. Tracy N. DuMont who was co-pilot on the Fyrtle Myrtle: he had just been transferred to this ship. He had several missions with another crew, was 26 years old and not married. He has had one year in the armored division in the regular army then two years in the air forces, finished his training at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma in July 1943 and went to Australia. That is where we received the last mail from him. Mr. & Mrs. Tracy DuMont and son Willard

My son was the top gunner on the Fyrtle Myrtle and he was in the service for two years, and it has been a year in March since I had last seen him. He went over last May. The only thing I can say is that I am praying and hoping that some day that all those boys return home safely. Mrs. Anna Glavan

May 23, 1944

Dear Folks:

The round robin letter came to me a few days ago. Have been trying to think of words to write to encourage us all in this terribly long wait to know the truth of the where-a-bouts of our boys, ran across this little poem, I read it daily:

‘On stormy nights while planes fly over head, I shall no longer lie awake in fear - sad news to dread. I shall not cry, for tears would grieve him so, I shall go bravely on, for he would have it so.’ Mrs. Carrie May Perry.

Dear Friends,

It has indeed been a pleasure to receive and read the bits of news and reactions of each of one of you. Our main thoughts are all on the same group of men and I think it grand that we can all know each other even tho it is only thru correspondence. I have no news to add. I do feel now that Mrs. Lovett’s son has been reported a prisoner-of-war that the rest of the crew are also. They have undoubtedly been split up and taken to different prison camps, so the rest of us may not be advised for some time to come yet. Our boys are fighting on the right side and I’m sure the Lord will guide them safely thru this ordeal. May our waiting be rewarded soon. Sincerely, Mrs. Marion G. DeGroat

April 9, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

Since reading your letter in the March Mademoiselle, you have been in my thoughts so many, many times. Your experience so closely parallels mine that it was like reading a summary of my ‘43 diary - even to having a bed collapse! I know precisely what you mean by living a lifetime of happiness in seven beautiful, exciting, and crazy months. I know too, the security, the happiness, the courage to face whatever may come, that one gets from complete understanding and a deep, lasting love.

Also, I know the horrible emptiness, the end-of-everything feeling, that consumes & deadens one inside when a War Dept. wire is delivered. And, I know the courage which your lovely letter portrays. I have been ‘concentrating’ that your husband is one of those missing in action, who has been fortunate enough to have been saved. And how I envy you your darling son.

When Bob put me on a plan in Oregon to rush to the side of my only sister who was near death in Pittsburgh, we expected that we would be parents in June. (But we were fated there too). When I reached Pittsburgh the wire was given me.

Bob had crashed while on a routine mission four hours after we had said goodbye. Forgive me if this correspondence is an intrusion, but somehow I feel a definite bond through our very similar experiences. May good fortune be with you.

Most sincerely, Kathryn Buck

April 19, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

I have received your round robin and sent it on, a good idea. Sorry not to have answered your letter sooner, was under the impression I had, until Mrs. Sleighter showed me I hadn’t. I had a letter from a Lt. Paris who was quite sure that the crew of the Fyrtle Myrtle were prisoners. We are indebted to you for the details in your letter, also the clipping in the round robin. Eastern papers do not seem to print many details of Pacific air activity. Howard felt his crew was one of the best and we feel he was quite right. As I mentioned in the round robin, men who could carry on in the face of such odds, I feel sure, still are. With the best of wishes, Lester C. Sleighter

June 7, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

I rec’d your card today. I hope you have better luck hearing from Mrs. Lovett than I have. Since I got her letter of May 24, I have written twice and also sent her a wire, but had no answer. However, I had a letter from Mr. Glendon

yesterday and between Mrs. Lovett's letter and his, I think I can answer your questions. She said, "I have been writing to Jackie now for over a month". She was under the impression that we had heard that John is a prisoner, which we did not. She wanted to know how we were addressing mail, and I gave her all the information I had. I think she is probably very lonesome and nervous as her husband and I think her only son besides the one missing is in the army.

Now to get to Mr. Glendon's letter. A very good friend of his has a son in the army, a captain in some home branch of the service. In fact he is in charge of the records of some of the missing. He had been in contact with the Air Adjutant General at Washington and had gone over Glendon's records. The records showed all the news we already have with this addition. I will quote this: "Of the eight who left the ship, none have been heard from except one who is a Jap prisoner. The Air A.G. points out that this doesn't mean that the others are not also prisoners, as the Japs are notoriously bad about notifying us regarding captured personnel."

From this I would take it that Mrs. Lovett had been notified by the War Department, probably late in April. I don't know if I ever told you I had a second letter from Sgt. Fausler. I asked him if he was certain that 10 chutes had left the Myrtle and told him that the War Dept. only listed eight. He said that he was absolutely certain of the 10 and told why only eight were reported. The planes or plane that got back to the base were in a cloud when the last two chutes opened. Since both Fausler and Statland, another one rescued from the Golden Gator say 10 came off I feel certain it must be true.

I had your round robin letter and mailed it to Mrs. Perry. I had a letter from her recently and she told me that she had been to see a spiritualist and had been told that her son was not in the 'spirit world'. I have not done that, but have never doubted that some day we will hear from John and will continue to do that for months and even years. Our other son, a tail gunner, is now a German prisoner, and we should soon be hearing from him. Our daughter, a nurse, has been in the army over two years and is somewhere between North Africa and home, and we hope to see her soon. As you say - here's hoping - and may all you news be good news. Yours, Mr. & Mrs. Lardin

July 13, 1944

Dear Betty,

Your letter was forwarded to me from home so please excuse the delay in answering. I'm spending this month at Pinecrest, a resort up in the Sierras. This is where I met Freddy three years ago; consequently, the memories are pretty hard to take.

It is a beautiful place though, lovely lake, mountains, etc. We're camping out (my Mom, niece, & I) so it's pretty rugged living, which suits me fine. Thanks ever so much for writing again. I lost your Corona address so was waiting for a letter. The article you've written, or are writing, interests me - it's a timely subject and should warrant publication. I don't imagine I could add anything new to the contents; just the same things that any and all army wives and widows probably feel. I've always held a grudge against the army for restricting the fellows like juvenile delinquents before they left for overseas; especially when it was a well-known fact that there were colonels, captains, majors, etc. climbing over and under the air base fence every night for two weeks before they left.

When I think of Freddy and Bill, and a few others that didn't come back, having to behave like fugitives from justice in that manner, and then having to go thousands of miles from home to die for their country without the solace of having felt, at least, that they'd lived every free moment to it's utmost - well I get plenty peeved.

Lives are such significant things compared to the paltry military jurisdiction controlling them. In other words, I'd put in a word of warning to future wives of the army-air-corps to the effect that the army just ain't human enough. To be sure, such things are to be expected when it comes to military authority during war-time but there's absolutely too much of it and during times of chaos, such as these, there's enough misery and unhappiness throughout the world without our own forces adding to it.

Hmm, I'm getting pretty belligerent, as I usually do when in a discussion of this sort, so I'd better make this brief. Oh, yes, Freddy has received the Air Medal, the "DFC", the "DSC", and the Purple Heart. The only two of which I've been informed of, officially, were the Purple Heart and the Air Medal. The other two, I read about in the paper - typical Army. I imagine they'll present them to me at Hamilton Field some of these days. As for the Congressional Medal, I haven't heard anything about it, I don't imagine it went through.

I've decided to go back to San Francisco State next fall. San Jose was swell, but the commuting was a little too much for me. I'd like to be near home because my Mom hasn't been well for the past six months and I'm about the only one

home to stay with her, so that I will. That 'mysterious' job I mentioned once was an air-line hostess job I tried to get, only widows weren't acceptable. It's all very discouraging to be a widow, it's almost the same as having a criminal record when it comes to jobs. Well I'll just get my degree and hope for the best.

I was surely disappointed to have missed you when you were in San Francisco. Circumstances seemed to have been wrong for us getting together. I'll be in S.F. all of the time now so maybe we'll get our connection straight the next time. I may even get to Corona, too.

You asked about the Hebners and Kellys. The Hebners are in Florida and Paul is instructing navigation on B-17s. I hear from both of them and the Kellys regularly. The Kellys are in Harlingen, Texas. Kelly is the chief operations officer of the whole base and it's a pretty permanent job - at least we all hope so. I may be going to Texas next month to pay them a visit. Mrs. K. has been urging me from April so I'm finally weakening. Well, I've managed to mess up quite a bit of paper with words, so I'll end this now. Thanks again for writing. Say 'hello' to little Bill for me - gee, I'd surely like to see him. Write soon, hmm? Love, Jimmie Hinze

September 4, 1944

Dear Betty,

If you will bear with me I'll try to type you a letter. Typewriters and me just don't go together but every once in a while I get the feeling that I must try to conquer this little machine. First of all, I loved your letter and, best of all, the picture of the baby. He is darling and his Daddy will be so proud of him. He looks so much like Bill and is so perky. I know that you get lots of pleasure out of him.

My Billy is back, safe and sound. He has been back about two weeks and looks just wonderful, even has more hair than he did. Combat has left its mark tho. He was here for about four days and will be back the 10th. At first it was just a little strained being with him, but that only lasted ten minutes and then it was as if we had never been separated. He is worried about himself, but he is going to work that out by himself, and I'm going to help him all that I can. Even after four days with me he was better and said that he was.

Of course, one of the first things that I asked Billy about was your Bill. After the raid on the Celebes a navy sub went over to the island trying to find the boys, and the natives told them that a Jap patrol had picked them up. So you see there is an excellent chance that they are prisoners. I'm holding the thought for you dear, and after all the way that you feel inside helps so much and don't ever let go. It means so much.

I'm still working for American Airlines and truly love my job, but I'm getting pretty weary. I haven't had a vacation since I started and it is beginning to tell on me. I've worked nights most of the time and have had to sleep during the days which hasn't exactly been easy on me this summer. I'm thinking of taking a month's leave of absence and just sitting for a bit. Then with Billy going to Santa Monica to that hospital for rehabilitation, I would like to go out and see him. I'm just a bit afraid of what the family would say, but Billy and I thought that we would talk it over with them for a bit. We shall see, and whatever happens it is for the best.

I don't see that you should feel that you want to do something for the war effort. You are doing more than your share raising your little Bill and all the care that he gets is more than your share for the country. Every day that he grows he will become more of a pleasure to you.

My mother is arriving for a little visit and Billy will be here at the same time. Won't that be something? Of course, you never met my mother and neither has Billy, but I can tell you that he has something in store for him. She is just different than anyone else on the face of the earth. I'm glad that I can be here to soften the blow. Loved hearing from you and hope that you'll write again when the young one is taking a nap. Always, Charlotte.

October 14, 1944

Dear Betty,

It seems our letters get farther and farther apart, doesn't it? But one does run out of things to say so quickly - at least I've found that true of my letter-writing of late. I've been expecting to hear anytime that Bus is to be declared dead officially by the government. I understand that's the customary procedure after the passage of a year's time.

However, that won't mean any change in my feelings - I'm still hoping to hear that somehow, somewhere the fellows are alive. I've written Mrs. Lovett again, in hopes she may have received some word from her son. Did your round robin letter ever return to you, or has it petered out somewhere along the line?

Little Bill must be quite the young man by now. I'm eager to hear all about him and his accomplishments to date. Does he still resemble his Daddy?

Johnny continues to grow by the proverbial leaps and bounds. He weighed 24lbs.3oz. at nine months - his last visit to the doctor. Has been crawling for some time, and pulls himself to his feet by the furniture. He's so heavy, I'm afraid he'll be slow in gaining his balance and walking. His hair is still very blond - perhaps will be curly. Has four teeth and two more coming through. There! I guess that's it. Of course, these factual descriptions give no hint of the endless mischief they can get into. (If Bill is walking, I'll bet you can verify that statement!). Johnny's latest escapade was getting into a bottle of bluing! You can imagine what a mess that was.

My plans are still indefinite as to when I'll return to Colorado. Both my folks and Bus's want us, but neither really have room. They don't realize how much space Johnny and his things take up. I'm getting mighty homesick, though, so... Bus's sister may be out on vacation in November. If possible; we want to come down to L.A. for a few days. Perhaps I can see you then - if and when. Love to you, Betty and Johnny (Farrington)

October 23, 1944

Dear Friend,

At 1:30pm today, Radio Tokyo broadcast a message from William Mc_____? Reception has been very bad for several weeks - therefore, I was unable to hear but very little of his message. "I am being treated well - all of my love to you, sweetheart." I hope that others who were listening were able to hear his complete message. I understand your name to be Betty McFadden - but the last time I heard it as McKaren. I also heard them say he is in Tokyo Camp, is this right? I have a brother in Zentsuji Camp. He was captured on Bataan. We have been most fortunate this year in hearing from him. He broadcasted last Dec. 22nd then in January we had a letter from him.

Nothing more came from him until July, then we received two cards and a letter. Another long letter and a picture of himself came in Sept. I keep hoping everyday that I will hear him broadcast again soon. The picture of him is heartbreaking - he is so thin and be-draggled looking. It was made on May 5th, 1943 and he said he weighed 123lbs. His normal weight being 187lbs. In his last letter he said he has gained to 137lbs. Also he mentions the 'death march' from Bataan - and says he is in much better health now than when he started that.

Since he has survived such a terrible thing as that - surely, he will someday be allowed to come back to us. From his letters in which he has given his weight at different times - we can easily assume that he weighed around 80 or 90lbs when he left Bataan. I only wish there was some way of letting those boys over there know of MacArthur's return to the Philippines. Perhaps they could hang on a little longer if they knew.

We couldn't help but notice the hint of futility in Cliff's last letter, as he said, "Do you folks at home remember us?" This is the first time any of his letters have carried anything but hope and assurance that someday he will come back. After being a prisoner for almost three years now - I guess the feeling can't help but be there in their minds - that we have forgotten!

I am more or less handicapped in doing my part for the war effort, so by listening to the boys messages and sending them on to their loved ones - I feel a little less guilty. And knowing how much it means to all of us here, to be able to hear, just anything, of our boys over there - makes me content to carry on.

I am keeping a complete file on all the messages and as each person lets me know what camp their loved one is in, his name is listed under that camp. It is amazing how each list is growing. Where was your husband stationed before being captured? I do hope the Tokyo Camp information is correct. Is this his first broadcast? Many of the boys have made, and are making, their second one. I'll be eager to hear from you. If at anytime I should hear more news for you, I will gladly let you know. Sincerely, Mrs. M. H. Jones

Hoopeston October 25, 1944

Dearest Betty,

Oh glory, if this letter makes no sense whatever, I know you will understand perfectly!!! As you are, we are so overjoyed and excited that we just cannot get our feet on the ground. It would have more than thrilled you the way Hoopeston reacted.

People one would never imagine weeping, cried their eyes out from joy and there was one universal remark that Bill's being alive was the best war news Hoopeston had to date. Down in the hospital it spread like wildfire and patients I had never seen before were congratulating me as well as all the nurses and doctors.

When I went off duty, I went to the Red Cross to tell them this A.M., they called, took all the data on Bill, serial number, group, birth, et cetera, and will report to Washington and try to get the address so we can write and send packages. Shorty is doing all he can too. It is the strangest feeling to lose the lump of lead inside and have it replaced with singing exuberance.

Gosh, oh gosh, how I can work now and not make an effort. Miss Keiran, head of the Red Cross in Danville, said she would try to find out how we can get a record of Bill's broadcast. I made two calls to Chicago to ask what station but got the wrong information.

When we called Pat, she cried at the top of her lungs and I could hear voices in the office asking what was wrong. Finally she said in an aside, still weeping like mad—"my brother has been missing for a year and he is alive and I am just crying with happiness." Then I called by beloved sister and she cried, but all I have done is thank God over and over, and laugh and laugh and laugh.

After I had your call I finally got Daddy (probably in three minutes but it seemed three hours). I was determined not to tell one soul until he knew and then called Marge and Louise as Marge had stayed there all night. They wanted us to come up P.D.Q. which we did and we nearly had hysterics at Daddy, for he sat down and drank two cups of coffee in gulps and he never drinks coffee in the morning.

Then people started calling and coming in all armed with bottles of wine or whiskey and it was a riot. Bless Louise, she was simply wonderful as she is always, got six big steaks and we came back here to eat after the station did not give us what we wanted. We wanted to call you Monday night but felt it better to wait until last night to see if you had the wire from Washington. Daddy came back from Kansas Sunday p.m. There is oil on our land but it may be awhile before they start drilling but ultimately we shall have something rather nice. After we talked last night I was worried for fear we should not have begged you to come on, for we know how much your family want you and Bill there, but we couldn't keep from telling you how much we want to see you and Bill.

Should you decide to come anytime, we want to pay all your expenses - and no arguments. We have had dozens of long-distance calls. I forgot to tell you that I met a Danville girl in the hospital yesterday whose four year old had an appendectomy and when I told her she simply threw her arms around my neck and cried on my shoulder. I am going to stop now and write postcards to everyone as I haven't time to write letters now except to my family. Betty darling, everything will be heaven for you and Bill one day and for all of us. How Bill will worship that dear little son of his and the days of agony will seem worthwhile. Love from all of us. Hugs and kisses. Devotedly, Muddy

October 27, 1944

Dear Betty,

Your wonderful, wonderful news arrived this morning. I practically wept for joy - not so much for myself, as for you. This may sound dramatic - but it's what I feel - and what I wrote Bus's mother - if our faith can only equal yours, we too, shall be hearing from Bus in the not-to-distant future.

For your faith has certainly been justified. I hope, also, that your good news came at a time when it could do the most good. I know my spirits had reached an all-time low this past two weeks. I had felt as you did, that with one crew member a prisoner, the others could not be declared dead - until I talked with the public relations officer at Lowry Field one day.

He assured me that in many similar cases, the others had been declared dead at the end of a year - that's why I wrote as I did. But under these circumstances - well, we shall see. Bus's sister will be out Nov. 18th for two weeks. I'm not

certain about coming to L.A., but if I do, it will be towards the end of her visit. Many thanks for your invitation, also we'll try to get together someday - if only for dinner or an afternoon. I'll let you know later definitely about our plans. I'll leave Johnny here. We're planning to see the U.of C.- Washington game tomorrow, so I must 'get me ready', and Johnny ready to be left in strange hands for the day. Again, hooray for Porky, and for you. Love, Betty (Farrington)

October 28, 1944

Dear Betty,

Just received your message! My eyes filled with tears when I read it, I'm so happy for you. After this whole long year of writing, your faith - your very wonderful faith has been rewarded. When you come out of the clouds of joy I know you're in, I'll be anxious to hear all the details.

I've never heard a Tokyo or any short wave broadcast so I'm pretty ignorant on just how it all works. Did it say 'a message to Mrs. McF.' or what? Give me all the details - the more the better. Now, I'm more happy than ever that I saw you this summer and for the wonderful talk we had that nite. If I hadn't seen you before this good news came I'd have never realized how very much you love Bill and how simply grand and brave you've been these past many months.

Everything is changed now isn't it! Life is good again and there's so much to live for now. You know I never was good at expressing my thoughts - but, I'm so sincerely thankful and happy in your great joy. Remember as I said to you before - when you get his address, I would surely like to write to him too, if the mail he can receive isn't limited.

Now that Bill has sent word to you and you are happy again, you've just got to come and visit us when things settle down. Well, this is all for now Betty dear. I'm not even going to try to make this a newsy letter for I know you couldn't possibly concentrate on the happenings of the Moles - or anyone at present. Please keep me posted on all happenings. I can hardly wait for a letter from you. With love, Gertie and Wes

October 30, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

We are so glad to know you have had word from your husband. I know it must have been one of the most pleasant experiences of your life. We want you to know that if such a thing is possible, that we are just as happy as you must be. I expect it will be a long time till you get any further word from him.

Since our other son has been a prisoner in Germany we know that mail does not come very fast. The last direct mail we had from him was dated May 6th, and service from Japan is much worse. I am enclosing something from the paper which I have been saving for a long time in the hopes that it might be useful sometime. I would like you to return the clipping when you have used it. I think you should write to the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C. and have the Prisoners of War Bulletin mailed to you. It is published monthly, and next of kin of prisoners and those missing in action may receive it. We get it and there is a lot of information in it. The July issue carried a picture of a prison camp in Java, and we are practically certain that one of the boys in it is our son John. I sent the picture with the round robin letter. We wrote to the publisher and they sent us an enlarged photo, but could furnish no names.

It is so long since I wrote to you that I am not even sure if I thanked you for the crew picture which you mailed. I gave it to our daughter when she was home. Mrs. Farrington had mailed us an enlargement of the same picture and we thought Mary would like the smaller one to carry with her. She is now located in an army hospital in Kentucky, which is better than Egypt.

I suppose that Mr. DuMont has written to you that they also got a radio message from their son. I judge that it came about the same time as yours. At least a letter came today from them the same time as yours. These letters mean a lot to us.

Since the plane was hit on the front, and both the navigator and co-pilot are safe, we feel sure that John, who would have been at the waist gun and therefore nearer the tail would have had a better chance to get off safely than they did. We both hope that you soon have more news and that it will be good news. Let us know any new developments.

Sincerely yours, Mr. & Mrs. Lardin

Hoopeston

October 30, 1944

Dearest Betty,

What a wonderful thing it was for the couple in S.F. to make the record! Needless to say we look forward no end to hearing it. I am ashamed I have not written you since last Wednesday but know you understand since getting your card. Our telephone has rung constantly plus the doorbell with callers or telegrams. How happy Bill will be when he returns and knows how much he is loved and how everyone has grieved, and now rejoices.

Last Tuesday a patient gave me one of the most beautiful poems I have ever read. Yesterday we sent a lovely vase of mums to the church and the minister read it after the card which read: "From the family of Lt. William McFerren, Jr., who give humble thanks to God for watching over him." I am sending you my only copy but hope to get another tomorrow. The minister thought it one of the most exquisite ones he had ever read.

I wrote nearly a hundred letters last week besides working two days at Lakeview, as they were very short. I let Rumsey Hall, Hotchkiss, Yale, and Culver know as they had asked me to do. The news went all over and every American Can branch got it. Please excuse brevity. I have some clients coming in five minutes and packages to do up, and tomorrow is my aide day.

A heart full of love, darling. I am walking in the clouds. Hug and kiss the blessed cherub for me. Nearly forget to tell you that Bob Fleming's ship was named something like 'Winnie Mae' but I am not sure. However, it was not Golden Gator, as he had pictures of the four survivors taken after they were in their rubber boat. I will send other stories Wednesday. Lovingly, Muddy.

October 31, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

Thank you for sending the news of the message from your husband, it does give a ray of hope. With the message so close to you, I can realize how much it means to you. I do hope the Red Cross can aid you, that you will hear more news of your husband. Mr. DuMont sent a message that his son had broadcast a message via enemy radio. I do hope every one else will soon hear from our loved ones. It was kind of you to send the news - I do appreciate it. Sincerely, Evelyn H. Heppler

Detroit

November 5, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

I rec'd your letter this past week, and intended writing before, but have had guests so was not in my room much until late in the evening. First I want to explain I live in Detroit at the above hotel, have a very lovely office position here in Detroit and am I glad I have been working, as my mind has to be on other things rather than on my sorrow and worry.

All of John's gov't mail were arranged for the Greenville, Mich. address, and I have left it at that to save complication and lost mail. If you were to write me again you may address me here at this hotel, Detroit, Mich.

It is so grand that you have had this message from your husband and I hope John is with him, but from all the reports we have rec'd this last year, I doubt if John can possibly be alive. His position in front being so exposed, I feel he was shot at once, and I have been told if a plane makes a nose dive, which the Myrtle did do, it is almost impossible for the bombardier to get out.

I may be wrong, and I certainly hope so, for any message giving information that he is alive would be most glorious news. At the time, I heard of the one member of the crew whose mother is in Florida, I wrote her and she replied he was found to be a prisoner thru the efforts of the International Red Cross and so notified the War Dept.

I felt then they would have found some of the others too, if they had been there. Since then I have realized that a parachute does not go straight down and they might be prisoners on different islands, for the Red Cross surely had the list of the entire crew to try to locate. I do feel you will be able to get a letter thru and perhaps a reply, if you do, no matter what the information is you receive, don't hesitate to write me.

Every time I come into the hotel from work at night I wonder what I'll find in my box besides my key. A year has past and I believe they cannot keep them listed at Washington as 'missing in action' more than a year. Last night I found a letter from the War Dept. in my box, brought it up here, and just sat and looked at the envelope, dreading to open it. But it was about the medal - DFC - that they are giving John, and I am to be presented with it. The medal, it stated, has been sent to the Commanding General, Sixth Service Command, at Chicago and he, in turn, will select some officer to present it to me. I believe I'll be called either to Chicago or to Selfridge Field, Mich. about 40 miles north of Detroit on Lake Huron. I feel terribly proud to receive it, but right now I feel it will be something for me to be composed and strong when I do receive it.

Am having a terrible time with this hotel pen - my fountain pen is being repaired. This writing doesn't look like mine and I do hope you can read it. I may finish this with a pencil. Did you meet, or hear your husband speak of Lt. Paris who was co-pilot on the Myrtle up to just one week before the last flight?

I want to tell you what he did for me.

I rec'd a letter from him just a week after I heard from the War Dept. last fall, and he spoke how terrible he felt and that just fate and a promotion to pilot of another plane was why he wasn't on the Myrtle's last flight. After John's few belongings were inventoried and started toward the states, he and a sergeant found an envelope in the squadron's safe that was not included in the inventory. These boys, paid nothing, and disobeyed gov't rulings and sent me the contents which were \$235. I heard from him several times later, and when he came home on furlough in March, I asked him to come to Detroit, but I've never heard since then.

The photo you sent me, arrived from Minnesota, too, and I wrote there, but he evidently never rec'd my letter. Who ever sent it to me from Minnesota had it enlarged and sent to Greenville and it happened to come there while I was up there to check John's clothes and put them away. I would have so loved to have met and talked with Lt. Paris, and wasn't it grand those boys sent that envelope of money to me, when no one but those two knew it was there or ever would. They might have kept it and no one would have been the wiser.

You spoke of the round robin, is there a second one on the way? I rec'd it very early in the Summer and everyone had written but two - surely no one would not return it to you.

I do appreciate your interest and all you have done to pass your information to all the nearest of kin, and believe I can not say more to you than I do think you are a 'brick.' With grateful thanks to you, and a wish that your message was from your husband, and that you can hear from him via a letter. Yours truly, Mrs. C. May Perry.

November 15, 1944

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

I have been doing some writing tonight and may as well finish. Mrs. Hepler wrote me today that her son has sent a radio message. I was really glad to hear that, for the more that are reported the surer it seems that John is safe. We have never tried to write to John. Since we have never had any indication that he is a prisoner we hesitate to try to write because of the fact - as you say - the Japs are so darn unpredictable. So we will just wait till we do hear.

We did receive notice from the War Department that after due deliberation, it has been decided to carry him as missing in action. The alternative is to declare him dead if they feel there is no reason to believe him alive. So they evidently believe there is reason to believe he is alive. The picture of the prisoners in Java did not indicate any physical deterioration. The one we think is John looks very well. At first glance shadows on the arms indicate emaciation.

We were much pleased to have the picture of Bill III. He certainly is a fine looking youngster, and I am sure both you and your husband (when he sees him) will have reason to be proud. We also received John's personal belongings this week. The package was quite small, but those things do not make much difference. Hope you soon have more news from the Pacific and that it is good news. Sincerely yours, Thos. C. Lardin

November 21, 1944

Dear Betty & Younger,

Received your letter the other day, and it certainly was swell. Can imagine how things have soared sky high as far as you are concerned & how Bill's folks would feel too. Guess perhaps I made it look somewhat hopeless when I saw

you. Think you have never given up hope though & it certainly pays off. Continue to keep the old chin up & I'll have dinner with Bill, you, and Bill Jr. before not too long.

Ray Morris - another one of Bill's classmates from Mather, is my roommate and he too, is pulling for you. We made the remark after getting your letter that Bill probably was playing poker with the Jap generals. Can still hear his familiar expression - "Well I'll have to write my old man to sell the outhouse for I just lost my *@#%!"

So the young guy is growing up. Thanks for the snapshot. He looks as if he's full of the devil. Wonder where he'd get that! As for what I've been doing since way back when - it isn't much. Have one hell of a time trying to keep out of trouble with all these training commandos. Have more things to comply with than Carter has pills. Actually believe these guys think they are winning the war. Think if it wasn't because of my folks I'd much rather be away from this C.S. place. Nope - had better stop for now. Write when you find time. As always, Haugy

December 8, 1944

Dear Betty and Little Bill,

I received your wonderful news - It must be like being reborn. It's a shaft of light for you - let's hope it keeps growing. I'm afraid any words I use will spoil - will be superfluous - just remember I'm still pulling with you - anxious too, that Bill comes out tip-top.

The Christmas holidays are drawing close - the Xmas packages are rolling in for the boys: fruit cakes, candies, cookies, tins of lobster, shrimp, chickens, and more - soap, razor blades, books, and so it goes. Little things, but still, the right things - treats for the belly, we really like them. Midnight snacks carry their own special treat, maybe it reminds us of our first stolen watermelon. Whatever it is, we like these little treats.

The outfit is donating candy, chocolate, and such to the local school children. I seem to be the collecting agency. We hope to have two or three wooden boxes filled, we just started today and have almost filled a box already. Our Christmas present to the French children.

I'm beginning to figure on a Xmas party - about the 23rd - so that it won't interfere with the family life of our dancing partners. It will be our sixth dance. They have really gone over with a bang, both the fellows and the gals - always clamoring - "when's the next?" My time is a little short - my first New Years resolution will be a nice long letter to you and little Bill. In the meantime Betty, Merry Christmas and may the coming year be the best yet. Carl

France

December 15, 1944

Dear Betty,

My morale soared 500% today at the news of Mac via the Tokyo Radio. Also the picture of your very fine boy - a chip off the old block if you ask me. Your question in regard to the French women -I can only answer from what little I have observed. The girls as a whole are attractive, that is in the larger cities. They know how to dress, walk, and carry themselves well. As you know the war is still a little rugged over here; the people or civilians apparently are pro-American when liberated - for obvious reasons. I will try to have a reunion with members of my old cadet class when we get to Berlin. Best regards, Horace

December 18, 1944

Merry Xmas Garv,

It's been an eventful year hasn't it? You've learned Bill is alive, and although a prisoner, you know in your heart that he will be with you again soon. Bill Jr. has grown, progressed from a tiny baby to an active little toddler. You have had a story published in Mademoiselle, a real achievement - and you've proved your courage by being so brave through all of your heartaches.

Garv, you have a happy year ahead of you. Kent, Johnny, and I although away from our friends, only a room to live in, are happier than we have ever been since this disastrous war began - and I'm thankful from the bottom of my heart that

we among the many separated, are allowed to be together. My fervent prayer is that everyone can be reunited with their loved ones in the very near future.

The war is taking a heartbreaking toll of our men. Not only in death, but in casualties such as deafness, blindness, shattered minds, nerve injuries, and the many other injuries obtained. It makes my heart ache, Garv, to remember that so short a time ago you and I were in college having a gay time - living life with never a thought to tomorrow, never a thought because we all felt so secure in our safe little world. And now it has shattered and exposed our souls, proven whether we were brave enough to face a heart-breaking tomorrow. And I'm proud to say that you've faced yours beautifully.

This year Xmas is for the children - the boys overseas or away from home - for lonesome wives and mothers. This year Xmas has a real meaning and although there cannot be 'Peace on Earth,' we can do our share to preserve 'good will toward men.' This Xmas our deeds should be for others that we may show our appreciation for our blessings. Count our blessings, that's what we should do, Garv, to face our tomorrows.

Garv, I miss you so much. So many times throughout this last year I've longed for your companionship and warm friendship. I miss our long talks, our Chinese dinners, our gay times. I only hope that some day we can be together again in a peaceful world with our wonderful husbands, and very extra special children. Your devoted friend, P. J.

February 16, 1945

Dear Bill, I think of our good days often. Bill Jr. is living image of you. Betty is in good spirits and lives for your return. Love, Palma J. Hoerster

March 5, 1945

Dear Bill, I have a seven months old boy. Betty saw him at three weeks. Bill Jr. is beautiful. Betty is in good spirits. Palma Jean Hoerster.

March 20, 1945

Dear Mrs. McFerren, I am a radioman stationed in the Marianas and in my spare time I tune in on the Tokyo prisoners of war broadcasts. This afternoon, your husband was one of the speakers. This is what he had to say: "This is 1st Lt. William McFerren speaking from the Tokyo POW Camp, to his wife, Mrs. William McFerren. My darling Betty, I hope you had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I want to send my best wishes to you and all our friends. I am looking forward to the day I can come home. Don't worry about me as I am in good health. I am looking forward to my first letter from you." I don't know whether you have heard from or about him or not, but it is my hope that this letter comes as good news to you. It was the sound of his own voice, and he sounded well. Sincerely, John A. Webster, RM 2/c

March 23, 1945

Mrs. McFerren,

Rec'd your letter today and it went in my scrapbook along with 809 other letters, cards, etc. Your message was recorded at 11am or between 11:10am and 11:40am on 3-20-45. It was the 1001st message we recorded. You see I am a truck driver and go thru Corona quite often in fact. I stop quite often at Marie's in Corona, if you don't know her, she has the restaurant at the west end of Corona, the last place on the left hand side going west. If you stop in there Marie will know "Jim" the Taylor Truck-a-Way driver.

She also knows about my hobby which I started over two years ago. She will be surprised to know I have added a Corona boy to my list. You can see by the number of the record - one thousand and one - and only 809 answers that nearly one fifth of the folks don't even answer, and thank you, or tell you to go to hell, or anything else. But it takes a lot of people of different ideas to make up this 130 million of us.

Now for my financial report. Messages sent to date - 1014. Rec'd in cash, stamps, cigarettes, etc. - \$72.54. So I have really and truly done very well. The cost is about 14 cents each now, but it was more when I first started. At that time it

cost me 22 cents for each record sent, which included envelope and postage. The postage then was 9 cents because I had to put a hard board in to keep the records from cracking, but now I have better records and they cost me less, because I get factory defects. They are good on one side and that's all I use anyway.

Around Xmas time we sent all the messages out special delivery air mail and that added to the cost but we made about 40 or 50 moms and dads happy at Xmas time. While I am away on the truck I can't listen to the 9pm program or 11:30pm My wife tries to get them but can't always succeed. But she always gets the 'Humanity Calls' 9pm program when it is re-broadcast at 11:10am the next morning, so your husband was on the air, or his message that he recorded in camp was played at 9pm on 3-19-45.

It is too bad I couldn't have been here and tried to contact you that evening so you could have heard the re-broadcast the next morning. So thanks for your dollar and you can be sure it will go to good use. We haven't heard from our oldest boy for over a week. He is on Saipan or Tinian in a B-29 outfit. Our second son is an air cadet and is still at home waiting for a call. He enlisted last June and was 18 last month, but hasn't been called as yet.

I guess that covers about all our work etc. If at any time we even as much as hear Bill's name, we will let you know. Lots of time the boys say, "Mom write so and so, in such and such a town, and tell them that son _____ is here with me and in the best of health and sends his love."

So if this happens, we have your address in our files and like we do for the others, we make a duplicate of the message and send it to these folks they mention. These are not counted as a regular message. I just add it to your card on the files along with the date and who said it, etc.

It does run into quite a little work keeping up with mail and the files and my other book, which I must say a little about. It is a pocket-size book, and in alphabetical order I have the status, so I can look at the State of Texas, and go down the line till I come to 'Brady' for instance. I know I sent a record to Mrs. So & So there on such and such a date from her son, John, or Joe, or Pete. So when the announcer names a town if I can't remember the name, I can check the town by name in my little book.

Well, I will close and hope I haven't bored you too much, but if you ever come into L.B. or L.A. try and stop off in Compton and pay us a visit and look over my scrap books. You are more than welcome to drop in anytime. Try and get here for a broadcast - 11:10am, 9pm, or 11:30pm. I think you will be interested in it. Your friend, James L. Eichen

March 29, 1945
Mrs. McFerren,

Rec'd your letter today with the newspaper article in it and it is in my second scrapbook. I have filled one and am well on the way to filling the second one. This a.m. I was home and made a record for another wife of a navy man, she lives here in L.A. I also got one for Florida. They only had two on today because Thursday for us or Friday for them, is the day they put on their weekly opera, a play written, produced, and played by all POWs. The name of this one today was the "Eyes of Mars". They are pretty good, that is some of them, but others are terrible. If you happen to go down to your Dad's place of business, stop and see Marie, and tell her who you are and you have heard from me. I know she will be interested as nearly every time I stop in she asks me about my hobby, and how I am doing with it.

One of these days I am going to get out that way again and if I go by when she is open I will stop as usual. It is one place on the road we can nearly always get some cigarettes. If I knew I wasn't going to work Saturday, I would take a run out there, but I may be on my way to Reno, Nev. by then. But I hope not, not until after Easter.

Tomorrow I have an appointment with some union officials to thrash over some more dope on the whys, etc., because they are sponsoring my work, or will sponsor it. In addition to recording the POW's messages from Radio Tokyo, I am going to take a portable recorder (which I am having made) to the bedside of our boys in the army and navy hospitals in Long Beach, Torrence, Van Nuys, Oceanside, Corona, and Beaumont. So about once a week I will get to Corona.

I guess I better close and write to a dad in Millsap, Texas I heard from today. He wants to know if it was his son talking or was it some one else. The announcer said at the first of the message, "written by seaman Odell Guess, who is now in the Holden Camp in Manchuria." Well, we will be looking forward to meeting you folks. If you ever get around Compton, try and make it for a 11:10am broadcast if you can. Your friend, James L. Eichen

August 5, 1945

Dear Mrs. McFerren,

Since I wrote you last we have heard from our son John. The message came through the government and was a copy of a radio broadcast sent from Japan. We got the news Friday morning. Part of the message was personal and surely was from John. Other parts seemed to us to be a form message. Among other things, he said that Howard Sleighter was with him. Does that agree with your husband's message? The message suggested that we write, so we have written to him by way of Tokyo through the Red Cross and can only hope that he gets the message.

I hardly feel up to telling all the next of kin about our good news when it is almost certain that some will get nothing but bad news. I think I will wait till the round robin letter gets here and add it there. I have already written to the Sleighters.

I have often wondered if you ever got your husband's DFC. As far as I know Mrs. Perry and Mrs. Lovett are the only ones that have. However, that is a small matter. I would trade a postal card from John for his. I want to thank you again for the interest you have taken in our case, and now I join with you in the hopes that the boys will soon be home.

Yours sincerely, Mr. & Mrs. Thos. Lardin

Freedom and Repatriation August - September 1945

The sudden ending of hostilities took us, and the Japanese by surprise. Harris's translations of the Japanese press could not glean the true situation that Japan faced, because it didn't get reported. About seven in morning on August 24, 1945, six U.S. Navy fighters flew over our camp at Niigata at 500 feet. A couple of hours later, while I was playing cards, I heard guys outside yelling, "Here they come, here they come." I ran out to see what was coming. The Navy fighters returned and started diving at our camp. The Japanese didn't fire on them. As they approached they started making victory rolls. It was the sweetest thing we ever saw, and we finally knew for certain the war was over.

During the next few days, American supply planes flew over and parachuted food, medical, and other supplies to us. There was one young Jap guard at Niigata who was a vicious bully. Everyone hated him. During one of those supply drops, as he was in the open compound, I saw a parachute coming down with a box heading toward him. As he was about to walk out of range, I yelled at him. He stopped just in time to get clouted on the head. It was one of the few times in my life I took sweet revenge on someone.

By then, my conversational Japanese wasn't too bad, and I could hold a polite conversation with the Japanese on a variety of everyday subjects. I found out the wartime martial spirit did not permeate the Japanese civilian population, as they harbored no personal resentment toward us. Japanese civilians would come up to us and say, "We were against the war to begin with, so please do not think harshly of us." They worried about what the American occupation was going to mean for them.

As the truce set in, the Japanese paid us the token monthly sum in Yen that as prisoners of war we were supposed to get according to the Geneva Convention. I forget what that exact amount was, but after winning a lot more in a poker game, I had about 30,000 yen, then about \$2,000.

With that, we went into the town and I bought a cow and two goats from a farmer for 3,000 yen. An American who used to work for a packing company slaughtered and butchered them and we cooked an enormous feast.

On September 1, the day before the official surrender on the USS Missouri, we visited the local town again, as I still had a lot of money left. There, a couple of Japanese businessmen told us about where the best 'house' was in town. They were very cooperative, and wanted us to be sure to remember their names as 'good fellows' for the post-war occupation. I, and three friends went to the address, and the Madam running it proved very pleasant. I told her how much money we had. She said she'd feed us, and her girls would take care of us. I said, "When you think we've spent our money, kick us out." It was a straightforward business proposition.

She gave us full value and didn't cheat us. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves in a Japanese hot tub and elsewhere. I have memories of a sweet little girl about 18, who felt genuinely sorry for me being a prisoner. By then, Betty and I hadn't seen each other for 28 months. For me, it was the aftermath of a terrible war, and almost two years of beastly captivity. I have never held myself out as a saint.

After the surrender, U.S. authorities had the Japanese send representatives of all the prisoner of war camps on their home islands to the Tokyo-Yokohama area to arrange for prisoner evacuation and repatriation. Major Fellows, one of our senior POW officers, went to Yokohama accompanied by a Japanese officer. There, they visited Admiral Halsey's flagship, to plan evacuation details.

Later, I learned a funny thing happened on the ship's quarterdeck. Fellows had this Japanese officer with him, and he turned to a navy petty officer on the quarterdeck, and said offhandedly, "Take care of this guy!" The petty officer still in a wartime mentality, misunderstood, and was about to pull out his gun. He thought Fellows meant shoot him, until Fellows explained he was to, "See that he is made comfortable."

After a briefing, Halsey ordered Harold Stassen, one of his aides, to follow up with our evacuation. Stassen, who subsequently become politically famous as a perennial U.S. presidential candidate, flew up to Niigata the next day landing at the same field where we had made tentative plans to steal a plane and escape a few weeks before. I remember him coming into the camp on a Japanese truck. Everyone was standing around and he said, "Boys, I came here to get you out. We were planning to evacuate you by ship, but since the trains are running, we're sending you down to an embarkation point by train."

Stassen summoned the local Japanese mayor and told him that he wanted enough railroad cars to move 1,000 men, and he wanted them in two days. The mayor replied that it would take at least ten days to get that many cars. With a little black humor, Stassen told a translator, "You tell the mayor, unless I have those rail cars in 48 hours, I'll order an atomic bomb dropped on Niigata." The poor mayor didn't know if he was dealing with madman or not, but he got the cars there in two days.

On the train to Yokohama, I made the remark that the first American woman I saw, I was going to kiss. When we arrived and passed through the station, I saw a WAC major. I said to myself, 'Okay, McFerren, put up or shut up.' So I just grabbed her, and gave her a big kiss. Startled, she pushed me back and glared at me. Since she outranked me, I quickly explained why I kissed her. She very sweetly forgave me, and added a kiss to boot.

At Yokohama, they dispatched us all to a hospital ship for a medical checkup. If you were able to walk, talk, or otherwise seemed in one coherent piece, they flew you out to Okinawa. I qualified, and when I arrived at Okinawa, a red cross official asked, "Is there anybody you would like to contact on the island." I didn't think I knew anyone on the island, but I said casually, "I don't know, but I served with the 380th bomb group." They took us into a dining room and gave us something to eat. Twenty minutes later the official came back and said, "Do you know your group is only 14 miles from here?"

While I was a prisoner, the 380th had been battling north from Australia, through the Philippines, toward the Japanese home islands. I arranged for a car, and drove to see them. At just 125 pounds, I'd lost so much weight that none of the few remaining old timers at group headquarters recognized me at first. When they finally realized who I was, it seemed to them that one of the legends of the group had returned from the great beyond. Airmen always enshrine the memory of their missing and fallen comrades. When the reunion was over, I finally found the group's clerk and asked, "What did you do about my promotion?" Embarrassed, he replied, "I hate to tell you, but we didn't do anything about it." I said, "Damn, that cost me plenty of money."

Coincidentally, the 380th was pressed into service flying prisoners of war to the Philippines, then the staging area to ship troops home. I flew from Okinawa to Manila in one of my old outfit's B-24s. At Manila, we joined a recovery group for prisoners of war. I was there for about a week, and although I still had my dog tags for some bungling reason, I couldn't get officially identified, or paid. I had to borrow \$20 from the Red Cross Center to send a wire home to Betty to tell her I was alive, well, and free again.

After about a week of being in limbo, I started to get angry. To me, MacArthur's people there didn't give a damn about us. They seemed to give priority to prisoners of war captured in the Philippines. Finally, after having some martinis, I decided to act. Thus fortified, I went down to the nearest motor pool and asked its sergeant, "Who's the ranking American officer in the Philippines?" He said, "General Kenney." I said, "Where can I find him?" He replied, "Over at Clark Field."

I explained my situation and irritation, and asked him if I could get a car and go over and tell Kenney how some of his P.O.W. flyers are now being treated. He said, "Lieutenant, you will have a car and a driver in one minute."

It was a 40 mile drive to Clark Field, and I found Kenney's quarters with its four star insignia. I approached, knocked, entered, and was met by an aide to the general, a WAC. She said, "Lieutenant, what's your business here?" Bristling, I said, "I came over to see General Kenney." She replied, "That's out-of-the-question, he's busy, he just got back from a trip. Why don't you explain yourself and make an appointment?"

I fired back, "Bullshit, I want to see him right now, I want to see the son-of-a-bitch. I flew for him. He sent me to Balikpapan twice." By now with my voice raised, I repeated, "I want to see him right now."

Suddenly an inner door flew open and out came a couple of more aides, and General Kenney himself. Kenney asked, "What's going on here?" Before anyone could speak, I said, "General Kenney, sir, I'm a former prisoner of war. I flew with the 380th out of Manbulloo. We volunteered for the two missions to Balikpapan." Then I told him what was happening to me, adding, "All MacArthur's people seem to care about are the guys captured on Bataan and Corrigedor. I feel sorry for them, but I want to go home too."

He had a fit as he listened to the rest of my brief story. He got on the phone and spent some time talking to someone, mentioning that, "They seem to be shitting on half my boys." My escapade, and Kenney's phone call, did the trick. He turned to me and said, "I just arranged transport for you on the SS Yarmouth. You'll be sailing tomorrow afternoon. I'm sending all you guys directly home," adding, "There will be 200 nurses on board to look after you." He then asked, "Can we offer you another drink?" His aides had already gotten out some scotch. They offered me a couple of scotches, then saw to it that I got over to a dining room for some food and coffee.

When I returned to Manila, a Colonel called me in and said, "Are you the guy that went and talked to General Kenney?" I said, "Yes sir, I was." He said, "You got me in trouble. Every hour I've got to call his office and report everyone passing through who was a prisoner of war from the Air Corps." 'Tough shit,' I thought to myself.

Kenney also had his staff arrange for immediate advances against back pay owed us. In my case, that was about \$4,000 for those long two years. I drew an advance of \$500, and immediately lent \$300 to a Norwegian merchant ship captain I was a prisoner with at Niigata. He needed it to get home. He sent it back to me several weeks after I got home. Living in a prison camp, you learn to judge a person's character pretty well. I just knew he'd return the loan.

I then sent Betty a cable telling her the name of the ship bring me home and when it was due. That in itself was an odd thing to be able to do after wartime secrecy. The next afternoon, the Yarmouth sailed with me and 3,000 other returning servicemen. During the two and a half week trip from Manila to San Francisco, I gained back 25 pounds.

In San Francisco, as the Yarmouth was tying up to the pier I quickly found Betty in the crowd. I noticed a woman with a prominent feather in her hat, and it was her. Whether clothes, perfume, or feathers, she always had a flair for attracting attention. Her aunt and Uncle, Sadie and Clayton Garvey, who had been like parents to us, were with her.

We stared and waved at each other for an awkward two hours before the gangway dropped, and I was able to get off the ship and hold her in my arms. We had not spoken a word to each other since we parted two and a half years before. My two-year old son, Bill III, was not at the pier that day. Betty had left him in the care of Louise Farnum at Santa Ana as Cush was then commanding officer of the Army Air Base there. Clayton and Sadie took Betty and I out to their house. Once there, they excused themselves saying they had some shopping and errands to run, and would be gone several hours.

I reported to the San Francisco Veterans Hospital the following day for a thorough checkup, which I passed with flying colors. After that, I called Cush at Santa Ana, advising him I had orders to report there. I suspect he had something to do with those orders. When I got to Santa Ana the next day, I finally met my son. He seemed awfully big, and didn't quite know what to make of his long lost daddy.

As soon as I could, I wrote letters to the families of the men on Fyrtle Myrtle who were lost. They still did not know the details of what happened to their sons after two years. Their heartbreaking replies, and letters Betty, family, and friends wrote when they knew I was free, now follow. They speak for themselves.

Mrs. McFerren's Post-POW Letters - 1945

San Clemente, California

August 24, 1945

Darling,

Again I say, I hardly know where to begin - first I feel that I ought to explain that poor excuse for a letter that I posted with the Red Cross last week - the idea had not even crossed my mind when suddenly I read in the paper where we could send them, ten minutes later I was in the RC office without a thought in my head, and none would come. I wanted to write longhand because it was more personal, and all that was there was a pencil.

Sweetie, is this all really true, or is it just another of those few and far between, but oh, so wonderful dreams of your coming back that I used to indulge myself in occasionally? My head tells me it's not, but my heart tells me it's entirely fantastic and impossible. The end of the war came so unexpectedly to everyone - we were all conjecturing, not allowing ourselves to hope for anything inside of a year's time - then suddenly Bingo! Peace. No one can fully comprehend what it means. Especially me.

Oh, Sweetie, I've waited so long for this time to roll around, and now that it's here, I'm not even able to get excited. My heart has learned to be on guard in these past two years, and now that I tell it to sing, what gives? A feeble whistle, I just can't believe it's true. That's what's the matter. I know it is, but something in me refuses to believe it.

Now look, let's talk about you - I'm dying to know what your reaction is to all this. No doubt it is easier for you to believe than it is for me, because it's actually happening to you, so probably you are doing enough getting excited for the two of us. Don't worry, honey, when you walk in the door, I won't be calm - WOW! To hear myself talking like that sounds exactly like the tallest day dreaming imaginable.

As I said before, I don't know where to begin - there is so much to tell you - just plain old orientation you might call it. First let me tell you that everyone who is near and dear to you is in the pink of condition and only awaiting the day you return to really turn one on. Our little Bill is the perfect specimen and tho' he definitely needs his Daddy's influence, he is, I am told, reasonably well behaved. The only part that I can vouch for is that I have just (and he is 23 mos. old) trained him to get his B.M.s in the proper place! More on that later.

You are probably wondering how your messages came thru. In the first place how in HELL did you get so many messages plus a cablegram thru to me? Your first one arrived October 21, 1944, and of course that was the greatest occasion of all as it was my first word from you in 360 days. Oh, Sweetie, you'll never know the thrill it was when I picked up that receiver and a woman's voice said, "I have a message from your husband for you." It was a woman in San Gabriel, California, who listens to all the Tokyo Radio short wave programs. She phoned me the night she picked it up and I heard the rebroadcast over the radio the following morning at 11:30. Lots of other people who listen regularly notified me by mail, and of course there was the government wire, and a couple in San Francisco made me a phonograph record of it.

Next time, honey, was March 20 of this spring, and that was the one you made in your own voice. The Souths in San Francisco also made me a recording of this one, which was the only way I knew it was your own voice. Maybe you think that wasn't a thrill - I was walking on air. Then in April, about the middle of the month, came your cablegram. That was awfully nice because it came thru the IRC and was my first official word from you. And then, Sweets, just a little over a month ago, July 10, came your last one - I notified Fran Lewis Walker at New Port News, and she was most grateful - so were all the family. I had four separate letters from different members of the family thanking me for your thoughtfulness. They must be a grand family.

The rest of the news in your letter was pretty grim to say the least, and I was certainly broken hearted to hear it. I had not held too much hope all along for John Farrington, but somehow had not worried over Perry's welfare - or Jimmie De Groat - his wife is a honey, and she had a great deal of hope. Of course I did not tell the families of those boys you named as lost, but I knew the news was good for the Lardins and Sleighters, so mentioned it to them, but didn't tell either of them who the other lucky families were, so the news wouldn't slip out. They were most grateful - the Lardins are top notch and have won the admiration of all the other next of kin families. We are all pretty well acquainted by this time, via the correspondence method you see.

Now that gives you a quick resume of how your messages have come in. I think you were simply wonderful to get so many thru to me, and to think that you never received one of my letters or pictures! I sent you a cablegram the early part of April which I suppose you never got. Damn, it was all so futile.

I am just racing thru all these topics that I have to talk about because I want to get it all into a reasonable amount of space as I haven't the remotest idea as to how much we are allowed to send, if we have to keep it under eight ounces, or just what. I talked to Mom on the phone this evening and she told me that there was something in the paper about letters to prisoners and she had sent it to me in the mail today. Well, I want this to be all ready to go when I get the instructions as to how to send it, but you see not knowing the rules, I think perhaps I'd better keep my first one down to normal size just to be sure it goes thru.

It seemed strange writing to you when I started this letter, but now it seems as tho' I had never stopped writing, except that I have so much news to relate. Look, Darling - I haven't run on at great length about my concern over you, and all that drivel - that's all behind us and for God's sakes let's not bring it up. I just wanted to tell you that because I didn't dwell on it didn't mean I haven't gained a few gray hairs over you, and that I haven't a lot of anxiety over you till the moment I have you in my arms - I think you know just how much anxiety I have known, for no doubt yours was equal to it. Nuff said. So it's all over now but the shouting.

It's really wonderful sitting here speiling off to you - twenty two months without actual correspondence (you can't call those 24 word ditties we were allowed to write 'correspondence') and I write to you as easily and fluently as ever - and that after a total time of knowing one another of seven months. You're an easy person to write to, but golly, I hope I don't have to keep you at the end of a three cent stamp much longer!

You said you hoped I had been in Hoopeton or vice versa - well, it's been both. I flew back to Hoopeton December 1st in '43 and stayed 5 months. Little Bill, then two and a half months old, did a lot for the family's morale. We had a lot of fun back there, because the parties went on as usual, and I drowned my troubles at each one of them. Mary Dyer's wedding was the high point (no, she didn't marry Bob Gannon - it was a navy Lt. whom she met while in the Waves). Louise and I really took over there - tell you about it later.

I worked at Food Machinery a couple of months when my patriotism got fired up to unholy heights by the release of the Bataan atrocities story, and Muddy took care of Bill days. But I was neither essential nor making big wages, so when spring rolled around I hopped the first plane west. While back there I received \$50 from Mademoiselle Magazine for an article I wrote about you two days after I got the 'missing' telegram Nov. 2nd. I bought this typewriter with it, and Daddy built me a little house to ship it out to California in. From the sound of that you might think something had happened to the allotments - nope, honey, you took good care of me in that respect, and they have never missed a month. I've put away some of it for a rainy day, and gee, I hope we have some rain pretty soon!

Gee, Darling, pinch me - I still don't believe I'm actually writing to you, writing you a letter that you will receive. All those 24 word jobbies I whipped off were written with my tongue in my cheek - I wanted to write of course, but I also knew there was little chance of it getting through to you, and if it did it was so rigidly censored that I hardly felt like saying "Darling, I'm eager - hurry home and take care of some unfinished business."

Oh, my Sweetheart, I can't even imagine how it will seem to be close to you once more - so much has gone in between - so much that has made you even more precious to me than ever. Honestly, Sweetie, I have come so close to losing you that I don't think I will dare let you out of my sight even long enough to go to the john! I'm really going to be your shadow, because boy oh boy, you aren't getting away from me as easily again as you did that gloomy Monday on the corner of Sloat Boulevard and 19th Avenue in San Francisco.

News? Let's see - Marge came out here last December, stayed at the ranch 'till January when she went to work at the Riverside Community Hospital and started living in Riverside, sharing an apartment with Dorothy Petrusa, Louise Farnum's sister. Recently Cush was returned to the states and made second in command at the Santa Ana Redistribution Center which was once in the dim distant past known as the Santa Ana Army Air Base and thousands of cadets called it lots of other names.

It tickles me when Marge and I drove out to the base to see him. We went to the gate and asked if Lt.Col. Farnum had phoned, and they said, "Yes, go right on in". Some contrast to that hectic evening three years ago when I beat my head on that stone wall and you thought I had stood you up. I now have a permanent pass to the place, not so much because I need it, 'tho I do quite a bit of shopping at the commissary, but just for the sake of principle!

Well, Cush and Louise own a lovely house in Santa Ana and Marge and I see them often. They say that if you get sent thru Santa Ana that if we want we can stay there. However, since we have a whole house here in San Clemente, I hope

we can live here for awhile. Chuck Kaufmann has been stationed at Mira Loma just out of Riverside for the past two years now. There are quite a few of the Illinois crowd out here.

You're probably wondering what is this San Clemente deal - the family bought this house about two months ago. It's really a cute place - I simply adore it. I guaranteed to live here till they could sell out in Corona and move down. Well, I think if you get back anytime in the next six months, and I hope that you make it in the first one of those six, we will have it completely to ourselves. Oh, Sweetie, it will be fun! It is only thirty miles from Santa Ana so if you have to be hospitalized or something there, perhaps you could live here and check in daily or something - we have a car, guess I told you. Nothing fancy, but it does the job till a new one comes along. San Clemente is 12 miles down the coast from Laguna and it is really a perfect beach.

Look, Love, all these ideas are merely suggestions. I don't care what we do. Sweetie, if you want to go out in the middle of the Mojave desert and pitch a tent (so long as you pitch woo too!) and live on cactus candy and beer, that will be alright with me too. And don't tell me I spelt alright wrong; I know it. I am cognizant of the fact! I am also sleepy as a little pup - it's way past midnight, and Willie knows no late hours of sleeping, so for the first time in twenty three months, I am concluding a really right letter to you, and what a wonderful satisfied, languid feeling it is to slip dreamily into oblivion for just one minute. I close my eyes, and feel your lips deliciously on mine, oh Sweetie, my spine is turning to jelly just thinking about it. Don't type so well with my eyes closed, do I?

I wish I didn't have to go to bed alone tonight even if I am sleepy!! All my love is yours, Angel, hurry home and collect some of it - x x x x x x x (just a sample). Betty.

San Clemente

August 25, 1945

My Sweetheart,

I'm getting you broken in right off the bat to these fly by nite memos. My second legitimate letter to you and it turns out to be a page torn from my bedside notebook and written in pencil. Oh me! No excuses - just haven't learned to incorporate my letter-a-day into my daily activities yet, and my family were scheduled to arrive for the week-end today but didn't get here till 8:30, making dinner a little late, hence the letter in bed. I wish it were something else in bed.

Sitting here writing you seems very like it used to two summers ago, and somehow I feel that if I write very diligently, mail a letter to you every day and put all my love and devotion into each one, maybe someday, somehow, it will bring you back to me just a little sooner. I can't even imagine that day. It is stormy tonite - makes me think of one Sunday at the Senator when it rained and you didn't have to fly. I don't think we even got up till 3 o'clock that afternoon. Weren't those wonderful days, darling? Remember how we used to think it was such a gyp we had to spend a week apart? I used to think I couldn't live till the following Saturday. Ha Ha! Sweetie, Bill is scratching his arm so I must put out the light before he does some damage. Good nite my dear, and take care of you for me. Love you. Betty

San Clemente

August 26, 1945

Darling,

My third letter to you in three days. Ain't I the lucky one? Look, I don't even know what I told you in my last two and tomorrow I won't remember what I said in this one, but just writing and talking to you is so wonderful that you won't mind if I just sort of cast caution to the winds and just jabber with wild abandon and probably repeat and re-repeat myself will you?

Gee, Sweetie, I have tried to figure out what you have been thinking about all this time and what thoughts and ideas are foremost in your mind. Of course I have no way of knowing this. For one thing you probably have a pretty clear idea of what you want to do and accomplish when you get back, or what you do not want to do and accomplish. Well, whichever way you want to jump, I'm prepared to jump with you, see? I have had enough of this having to make decisions for a while - frankly I'm sick to death of it. It is going to be wonderful to have someone to turn that burden over to for a while, I haven't a plan in my head that extends beyond the moment we meet, that is not more than one

plan which involves something about a bed. Perhaps you will concur to that idea. If you don't you'd better get a few pitchforks to beat me off with!

Probably you have not heard much ballyhoo about this 'problem of readjustment' for men returning home to their wives. The problem is supposed to be mutual of course. Well, darling, I have sort of laughed at them all the time and now somehow I feel more strongly that ever that if such problems exist, they're going to be duck soup compared with the ones we've gotten through. I know that I've deteriorated a lot from the gal you said good-bye to. A nastiness and smallness has crept into my nature, and something has come back to me that I completely lost thru knowing you; a quickness to nettle over some touchy subject. Also I am far more impatient, and less anxious to please. Golly, I'd better stop right now or you will probably dive off the side of the nearest ship rather than return to such a stink pot.

You have a lovely son tho' and he's none of those things, for he takes after his sweet pappy. Incidentally, that picture I sent in that Red Cross form 1616, I mailed in such a hurry from Riverside, it was the only one I had in my billfold. I hated to send one of Bill at five months when he is now nearing 24 months, but it was better than nothing, and anyway since you haven't seen any of him since 12 days, anything will be news to you.

I'm enclosing some more today and will continue to stick in a few. Try and bring them along with you as I'm not sure I have negatives of all of them, but I do want you to see them. Darn, but it will be nice the first day I actually hear direct from you with no detaining power to censor. Of course I told you that Marge is on two week's vacation from the Riverside Community Hospital where she is working. She is spend...(balance of letter missing)

San Clemente

August 27, 1945

See Darling -

See how good I am, I haven't missed a day since I got your address - and I don't intend to. You see that proves how taking a thing away for a while increases your appreciation of it once it is restored. I am sure that we always appreciated our time together, because even at that time it was impressed upon us very vigorously just how rare it was, but now it will be even more precious to us -that is for the first month, then can I throw a rolling pin at you, dear? Must make a note of that on my shopping list. Get a rolling pin, my husband is coming home.

Never did have one of those things - remember how you used to worry about your weight, darling, and I used to always tell you not to worry about it because combat would take care of that? Well no doubt it did, and now I will be helping you put it on in place of take it off. See how everything works out and there is no use worrying. I am practicing on Marge. She is in need of gaining weight as working has taken her down a bit. The first week she was here she gained eight pounds - then last night she went home with Cush and Louise, took a bottle to bed, came home today with an awful hangover and a pound lost. Gee, all my hard work. I probably would have done the same except that my family were here and I couldn't go last night, so I stayed home and got in bed by midnight after perusing a new Sears Roebuck catalogue, which by the way, was not very interesting. Funny the poor excuses you can find for not going to bed when you have to go there alone.

Golly, Darling, I don't even know where to begin - I have so much blurb to rattle off - Marge just mixed me an old-fashioned and it has given wings to my tongue but not my fingers, hence many mistakes. Did you ever know me when I was not apologizing for my typing errors? Probably not.

Oh, Sweetie, it has been so damn long since I have been able to talk to you like this, and for so damn long I didn't know for sure whether I would ever be able to again or not, and that my beloved, was by far the bitterest medicine I have ever had to, or ever will have to take. I know nothing can ever hurt me again like that did. It gives me a self confidence nothing else could have, a lack of fear for the future, because those days and nights following November 2nd were the most unhappy, most useless, most despairing I ever could have spent or could ever spend.

As far as I was concerned, the end of the world had come and I'd just as soon have gone along with it. I never gave up hope, honey, and anyone who knows me will tell you that. I always said even before I knew a single detail, that given half a chance, you would make it OK because you told me you were coming back and I knew you meant just that. However, I also realized that there are often circumstances beyond anyone's control, and that was what caused my morale to drop to a new low - that awful 'if'.

Well, Sweets, it is all over now, and thank God, it is behind us and not ahead of us. I can hardly believe that all this awful waiting has come to an end. That now I can look forward to seeing you in not much more than a month. The last time I looked forward to seeing you, with any assurance that I actually would was when you left, and that was a minimum period of nine months, which slowly dwindled to around six, or perhaps a little less if you flew fast enough - this sentence is getting pretty involved. Better start over. The last time was in 1943, and this is the fall of 1945. It's been long, but I'm not bitching you understand, I'm giving thanks.

I can't understand why we have been so lucky - and please don't take that bitterly. I know your life has not be rosy, far from it for these past 22 months, but maybe it was worth it. I'll make you know it was worth it when we are together, and you know what I mean. Get your mind out of the gutter. I mean I'm going to cook you some shrimp and an omelette and a lobster and a 2" tenderloin - cause darling, all I want out of life once we're together is to make you glad you married me. Oh, yes, and some OYSTERS.

Know what my aim is? I'm going to try to be an aristocrat in the drawing room, and economist in the kitchen, and wow, honey a prostitute in the bedroom, but at first what do you bet it will be more like the latter of all three??? Marge says she wants to write something and it must be in all capitals. Here goes.

HI THERE CUTIE. WHAT FUN IT IS TO BE WITH BETTY AND YOUR DEMON CHILD. THE ONLY TROUBLE IS THAT I THINK BETTY OVER RATES YOUR VIRTUE. WHAT A SWELL REUNION WE ALL WILL HAVE OUT HERE. STILL THINK YOU WILL BEAT GUS HOME. REMEMBER THAT YOU WANTED TO BE AN UNCLE BUT I THOUGHT IT MORE ADVISABLE TO WAIT UNTIL GUS CAME BACK. MEN ARE SORT OF FUNNY ABOUT THOSE THINGS THEY TELL ME. WILL WRITE A LETTER OF MY OWN LATER. JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT I AM TRYING MY BEST TO LEAD YOUR WIFE ASTRAY. BETTER HURRY HOME AND HELP.

Darling - I suppose you are curious to know about how I heard all the news, in what sequence, etc. Well, as I told you, November 2nd, Tuesday evening at about 7:30 came the little wire from the War Department. That was when the sky fell down. Of course I didn't know what to think, and I knew that until I had the details, I wouldn't know whether there was any use in hoping or not. They were ages in coming. The first was a letter from Al in which he gave no details but did say that he thought you all were OK. That was wonderful because it meant that information at hand gave him hope.

I got a plane reservation as quickly as I could to Chicago, and December 1st Bill and I left the LA airport in the evening and at 9 the next morning, Muddy, Marge and Helen Covert met us at the Chicago airport. While there most of the real information that I was to get trickled in. First I think was a letter from Haugie which gave me quite a few details all of them good. Presently Capt. Roark the chaplain came through with his two bits worth, and then came a letter from Lee Garron, in which he told me that he had very good reason to believe you were OK and tho your whereabouts might not be known for a long time, he thought that at the end of the war it would turn out.

Other news from the War Dept. trickled in, in fact, bits of news that next-of-kin have picked up here, there, and everywhere have continued to come in right up to now. Betty Farrington would get some, the Lardins would hear something, the War Dept. would come thru with something, then the big day when your first message via Tokyo came thru October 21, 1944, and I've told you the rest. I lived it, even faintly enjoyed some of it, but never with the wild gusto and abandon that I have as I have known life with you.

As I started to tell you yesterday and then got sidetracked, life will never be as it once was in the wonderful days of which we both have reminisced so much. It can and will be as much fun as that, as exciting as that, in a different sort of way, but it will never be the counterpart of those days. We must not disappoint ourselves in expecting it to be. We will have a new life, and any sort of life so long as I live it with you, will be just dandy as far as I am concerned.

Those precious four months that began and ended so abruptly must always be kept just as they are, unspoiled by cheaper imitations. They were the hilarious, careless, irresponsible desire to live all of life with a wild zest for living in the bare amount of time allotted us by fate. It was an attempt to squeeze our whole life time into four months just as Maria and the Ingles lived theirs in the four days given them in "For Whom the Bell Tolls".

Now Sweetie, we have the unusual sensation of having our whole lives ahead of us instead of right behind us. We can actually sit back and take our time without this ever present urge to hurry that was ever upon us before. I can't imagine what it will be like to have both you and time. No, I am simply not able to comprehend what it would be like.

Sweetheart, more tomorrow. I could write all night long, but I'd get sleepy and you'd get bored. I am looking forward so much to my first direct word from you. I look for it and yet I still do it with my tongue in my cheek as I used to when I allowed myself the luxury of day dreaming about things which I did not know could ever happen again.

Now it is true and only a little way in the future, but I still think of it with that same incredulity - life is funny. Guess what darling - I love you - love you yes, I love you, damn you, now hurry home and give me demonstration of what I've been hearing about these returnees! Kisses, Luv, etc. Betty.

San Clemente

August 30, 1945

Sweetie,

Here Marge and I have spent the evening sewing and all of a sudden we look at the clock and it is 2am!! Whee!

Today's radio news carried stories of the liberation of 500 POWs, including Marine Major Gregory Boyington, who had 26 Zeros when he went down over Rabaul on Jan. 1, 1944 as you know doubt know.

The details of what the prisoners had to tell regarding their life in camp was not pleasant, and I only hope you were not in that camp. Whatever has gone before - whatever the time since Oct. 26, '43 has brought, it is all a thing of the past now, Sweetie, and any difficulties you think may be facing you or us now will crumble like a house of cards compared to the problems we have faced and surmounted.

One thing I know is that my love for you has only been heightened in the past 27 months of separation. True, it was allowed to become more or less dormant for a short while, but at this point, I am so thrilled at the prospect of seeing you that I scarcely know how I ever stood the separation that lies behind us. You were so wonderful about sending me messages - it was so consistent of us. I shall always remember how you would always manage to phone me no matter what, when you'd have to fly late, or when you'd be coming in to town. You've always managed to keep in touch with me and try to keep me from worrying, and how you ever did it against such odds as you faced recently, I can't even guess. I only know how resourceful you are and love you for it.

Darling, I just want you to know one thing, and I won't dwell on it as I said before. My concern for you is great - but what's past is past, and what's in the future is so much duck soup so long as we live it together. What I mean is, hell, if you've contracted several vitamin deficiencies that make you feel like a damp washcloth with the jumping jits, so what, we'll take care of that. No matter what you've brought home with you, I don't give-a-damn because I will love helping you to leave it behind, especially if it's one of those geisha girls! How about that? Sweetie, I love you so darn much - all I want is to have you back, regardless, do you hear me?

It's extra late, my o.a.o., so I won't strain my eyes by this candle light much longer (Marge and I got hungry, we made some toast and coffee and ate it by candlelight).

We drove into Tiajuana today - just across the Mexican border. I'll tell you about that manana, as it surely brought back memories. I bought myself a silver necklace as a present from you. Wasn't that sweet of me? Music a little earlier this evening was from the St. Francis. Remember that drink we had there that Friday after we'd ridden the cable cars out to Fisherman's Wharf? What a week that was - a week out of a fantastic circumstance which was only one of many that happened to us. Nite Dearest, love you. Betty

San Clemente

August 30, 1945

My Darling,

When at last I sit myself down to write to you, the last thing I do each nite, I suddenly find that I have forgotten half the things I meant all during the day to say to you.

One thing I want to get said before I forget it is this - there are probably lots of things I should say, and lots that you may expect me to say, and certainly lots that I intend to say, and as I told you, forget before I get them written. What I mean to get across is this - I'll get 'em said, it may take a while, because this business of writing unrestrainedly to you is new, and I have to get back into the swing of it.

Not that it's hard, but I have to get back into the habit of remembering what I wanted to say and the ideas I wanted to get across to you. One of those things which I may or may not have mentioned is this; it has been constantly on my

mind needless to say, the day I hear directly from you is going to be a red letter day to end all red letter days in the McFerren household.

I have learned to wait patiently. These past 22 mos. have taught me that. Now I await that word from you which the government says should not be long in coming. One commentator even went so far as to say that he thought that the first of the released POWs would be back in the states by the middle of September. Of course I dare not hope to that, but then, it may not be so long.

Probably the reason that I am able to be so composed and apparently calm about the whole thing now is, that I simply can't comprehend it all, and what it means. I know that you will be with me soon but I can't really believe it. My emotions can't believe it tho my head says it's true. See what I mean? After all these months, years of waiting and uncertainly, steeling myself to wait still months and years longer, and then this. You just can't change overnight. I am still waiting with somewhat the same dull feeling of half dream, half reality, and I think until I actually see you, touch you and know that it is true in every way, that feeling will persist.

You probably wonder why I do not write more about our cute cherub. It is not because he is out of my mind, it is because I can't think of anything but you and our reunion at this point. You are going to come home to a little boy, not a baby. He doesn't talk much, in fact practically none, but he did say one sentence several weeks ago which I think I told you. He said, "See the little girl", just as plainly as you or I had said it.

He is a perfect cherub, and this is completely unprejudiced, he does have a straighter back, less of a pot belly and a better build all the way around that most of the kids you see at the beach. He is really a pretty fair specimen.

Perhaps I did not explain well enough about this place at San Clemente. The family have always wanted to live at the beach. They bought this place, and I guaranteed to live here until they could get their property in Corona sold. So far there is little prospect of their moving down any time soon, and I think that when you are back that we can have the place exclusively as long as we can use it. I don't think they will move down inside of six months, perhaps even longer, as my Dad has an idea of taking a long trip to South America or somewhere as soon as they sell out. Now, of course, this is entirely up to you, and we don't have to live here at all, but it is here and we can have it and it's only about 25 miles from the Santa Ana Army Air Base which is handy, especially since Cush is 2nd in command there. Just wanted to make sure that I had gotten all that straight for you.

The 11 o'clock news is on and they are telling of the liberation of the 500 some prisoners from that so called hospital. The stories make me boil and I think they will seal Japan's fate as far as any 'softness' toward her goes. Thank God it is all over. I hope you drew a better lot than those 500 boys did. I know you weren't in that particular batch because the reporter at 10 o'clock named all the southern California boys among them.

Any day now, a message may come from you - wow, Sweetie, I can't even imagine what it will be like after all these ghastly months of uncertainty to actually know. Oh, darling, hurry home so's I can show you how glad I am to have you back. I'm really going to shadow you, don't think I'll ever even let you cross a street alone because I know what it is to think I've lost you, and the next time you kick the bucket, I'm coming too. I'm going to be a plenty hard lassie to shake, in case you were wondering. There is so much to talk over, and so much philosophy to air. Of course your family in Hoopeston are on pins and needles. They have a party to end all parties planned for when we go back to Hoopeston. I'm going to start saving ice for my hangover ten days before cause that is really going to be a 'do'.

Clayton and Sadie have some bottles put away for you to help them crack. Gee, it will take us a month of Sundays to cover all the parties that people have promised to throw for us, and personally I don't give a damn if we don't get to a one of them. All I want to do is be with you whether it be in Times Square or a desert island. Oooh, I am dodging on that one, guess you're a little touchy about desert islands at this point. But you get the idea, don't you Darling. All that is immaterial, what I want to say is that wherever you want to be is fine as long as I'm there! Think I'll go to bed.

Oh, I must tell you the funny thing that happened when we were crossing back across the border into the US yesterday. The man asked me how much stuff I had bought over there, and cutting a little off the value of it, I said, "\$11.30 worth, you mean exclusive of what I'm wearing"? And he said, "No, it includes what you're wearing, what are you wearing?" I answered, "These earrings and huaraches," and he said, "And that's all you're wearing"? To which I replied (trust me to put my foot in it) "You mean what I bought over there?" He turned very red, and we both laughed till there were tears in our eyes. I had more than the limit, but he didn't have the heart to stop me then I guess, because I know I just kept laughing and drove off and didn't pay any duty.

Sweetie, I am so glad that we can write like this because it is good for us. I mean a separation such as ours with very little contact; only a total of four times did I hear from you and of course I won't suppose you ever got my cablegram

sent in April or any of my little 24 word letters, newsy little epistles that they were. Writing like this makes you more real, less of a fairy story hero that I might have dreamed up back in the dim distant past. And once you are back here with me, it will seem as tho the 28 or 29 months that have elapsed since you went away, 22 or 23 of which you have spent so gruesomely, never even existed - there will be just 'now', now, and forever. It is so nice to live in 'now' in place of in the past, as I have been doing so much.

Good-night, angel. I love you more than anything, and life once more appears well worth living, now that I know I shall live it with you, you louse, quit running thru my dreams just out of reach! xxxxx Love, Love, Love, Your, Betty

San Clemente

August 31, 1945

My Adorable Husband,

Another night closer to that day we're waiting for - it's worse than waiting for Christmas when I was five! About now I am starting to look for that first message from you, but I have told myself not to expect it for at least two weeks from now. I'm not exactly patient, just outwardly so.

You know, it's funny the weird thoughts that you can let yourself think. I have thought over every available sane thought and then at times I would indulge in completely insane ones - you probably know exactly what I mean. I wonder if you have thought some of these same thoughts - probably you have. It will be fun to compare notes on it. You start asking yourself questions. You ask every same question in the book, and then is when you start on the fantastic.

I've watched so many unhappy marriages, have been disillusioned about so many people whom I always considered the rock of Gibraltar, that I even asked myself if ours will really work like we think it will, and that my love, is the nuttiest of all nutty thoughts I've thunk. Probably a psychiatrist could explain it in some way, but to me it's just nutty. I will be curious to know if you have thought some of the same things. I guess the idea is that you see so much uncertainty about you, so many disillusionments, that you begin questioning everything, regardless, and in this particular case we have been separated for so long, that the security we knew in one another's love is not present as strongly as it was when we were together, and that is what makes me question everything.

Now understand, I class that as one of the insane thoughts, and I only told you as an illustration of such thoughts, not as a subject for discussion, for certainly if I ever had faith in anything, I have it in our future happiness. When two people are in love and are willing to give and take, as I think we have proven we are, there just isn't any question, especially when one of the people is you, Darling.

Sweetie, you know this is hard writing to you, in one way, for I have no way of knowing what new views you have on things, what ideas have changed in your mind, and how you will react to some of what I say. Of course I have not the slightest doubt but what you have changed as little as anybody with you in Japan, for you are so well able to philosophize your way out of things, and are so well master of yourself. I remember how philosophically you always took things over in Australia, and I always knew you would continue to do so.

Angel - here it is midnite, I always wait till too late to get started on these little notes don't I? Good night my one and only husband - that sounds rather odd doesn't it? I should have left the last word off the phrase. Oh, well, you get the idea. I hope I will not have to write good night to you for must longer, it would be so much nicer to breathe it into your ear. mmmmm - mmmmm oh, Honey. You know what I mean. Nite dear, Betty

San Clemente

September 1, 1945

Darling,

Here it is Saturday nite, but it's not just another one of those Saturday nites that I used to write you about 'way back in 1943 when you and Myrtle were still holding your rendezvous - it's the day the whole mess is officially over.

Just a few hours ago earlier in the evening, I listened on the radio to the official signing of the surrender on board the USS MISSOURI. That's enough to make any Saturday night a happy one whether it be spend at home or in the bright

lights. If someone had told me one month ago on August 1st, that in exactly 31 days the war would be completely over, and I would be writing unrestricted long-winded letters to you addressing them to an APO number, I would have probably told them to guess again. But here it all is, it's still unbelievable as far as I'm concerned. I'm simply not capable of comprehending it all, and what it means.

As I write the date, and reflect that President Truman proclaimed tomorrow, September 2nd to be officially V-J day, it strikes a bell - remember the 2nd? The 2nd of January I mean - that really started something, didn't it, Sweetie? I can hardly believe that we will be able to at last celebrate an anniversary together - our third one, about time I'd say. We have so much to catch up on - and we will have so much time to do it in - the rest of our lives.

One of the things that I want to catch up on is that horseback ride we were always going to take together when it was too windy or something else interfered. I am bringing Yaqui down here to San Clemente in a week or so, so it will be very easy as I have the use of another horse a few blocks away whenever I want him. Yes, I'll even sit across a bridge table from you in return for that riding date.

Darn it, another day and no message from you. Of course I know you'll get it thru just as quickly as you possibly can, and I'm really not counting on it for more than a week yet, but each day I keep thinking may be the day, and oh, how nice it will be when finally it is! You did so wonderfully in getting messages thru to me while you were still in enemy hand that I know you won't have any trouble whipping one off now.

Marge had to go home unexpectedly today - she had just a day or two ago asked for the weekend off in addition to her two weeks and gotten it, but this morning a telegram arrived in the mail as they always do down here advising her to be back at work this morning, as three nurses had quit. Of course she couldn't make it till tomorrow, but as Louise happened to have driven down this morning, Marge went back to Santa Ana with her and intended to catch a bus out of there.

Consequentially, I am all by my lonesome for a while, which doesn't bother me particularly, as I can get a lot of things done, which I have not been doing while she was here. Somehow I never seem to get lonesome down here - don't know why - I love the place so and there is the good old Pacific right out the sun room windows, and I know that you are right across it - I just never seem to feel lonesome, that's all. I used to horribly at home, in fact everywhere I have been since you went away, but here it's different. Somehow I feel that I have snuggled up just as close to the Pacific shores as I can and that in doing that I am as close to you as I can possibly be.

Oh Darling, it will be such perfect heaven to have the peace and security of your love once more. 'Time to say good night, Sweetie - please make the time hurry so that I can see you real soon, it's been so long. I love you with all my heart, dear - 1,000,000 kisses from Me. I ripped this little souvenir off one of my unmentionables for you, Sweetie - Nice of me, huh?

P.S. Marie Shoemaker has a baby girl, Sandra, born nearly a year ago on Sept. 25. Betsy Moore Hendley also has a second one, a girl, born almost simultaneously with Marie's. We will have to hurry.

San Clemente

September 2, 1945, Official V-J Day Wow!

Darling,

A good night note - couldn't miss saying good nite to my Sweetie on V-J day! This is one day that will always be a big one in our list of special holidays. Waiting to see you seems interminable dear, the time drags on leaden feet to be very trite. I read in the paper today where parents of liberated prisoners were invited to fly to San Francisco at government expense to meet their sons. I had been wondering whether or not I would be permitted to meet you at S.F. so I guess that solves it, I can. I've been wondering what is the best way to get there. Guess I asked you that before. Drive, fly, or what? I insist Marge should come, she insists she should stay home and take care of Willie while I go meet you. Wonder when Gus is coming. Perhaps you have already seen him in Manila.

Oh gee, Darling, this last period of waiting is giving me jangled nerves like I've never had before. Puleeze hurry up and get home. I know you'll probably have galloping TB or something else awful and we may even have to keep you under glass for a while, but all that is so secondary, if you will only be here. I love you Sweetheart, Always and always, Betty.

San Clemente

September 4, 1945

My Sweetie,

Guess what I just heard on the radio? You guessed it, 'Begin the Beguine'. Nothing could have painted a clearer picture of the 'Broiler' September 19, 1942 (oh, so long ago) and sleepy Adrian at the electric organ. Sure took me back. Remember how in our letters we used to reminisce and add up the months in relation to one another? We have quite a lop-sided figure to deal with now - seven months of knowing one another and yesterday marked 28 months apart - exactly a ratio of one to four. One month together for four apart.

Dear, things come high-priced, and it seems we are paying for our precious time - however for my part, I consider it worth any price. I hesitate to speak for you, Sweetie, for at this point, I am completely at a loss to know what sort of treatment you received at the hands of those yello-bellied sonsabitches. You know I have never been surer of anything than that I could cold-bloodily murder as many of them as I had at my command. I might shudder to grind a mouse under my heel (tho I have been known to do it) but it would be a real pleasure to grind those so and sos to a pulp.

It will be a great relief when I finally do hear from you, and have something to go on in my letters instead of shots in the dark. Tho we always did get along in the dark, didn't we, dear?

Today real excitement occurred in little San Clemente. I think all the beachcombers probably had beans or something equally easy to prepare for dinner tonite, as all of them remained at the beach till long after dinner time watching a navy bombing target wash ashore. It is a thing about 50' by 20' and shaped like a gable-roofed house. It drifted in and hit the pier quite a ways out then washed ashore finally. The city tractor was down there tugging away trying to get it up on shore, and presently a coast guard boat arrived from Newport, took one look and ran back again. To the best of my knowledge it is still there, and goodness knows how they intent removing it. It was quite fun anyhow, sort of like a picnic or something with everyone in great spirits having a wonderful time.

My family left today and my old roommate, (the one I stopped off in Fresno to visit when I last saw you in San Francisco) is coming tomorrow with her two children to spend a few days. Then it is nix on the company so I can get a little something done. I have done nothing but entertain company since I have been down here. I enjoyed it a lot, but I want to accomplish a few things other than cooking and cleaning.

I didn't write you last nite because I go involved in reading some of your old letters and it was just too late when I was thru. The sand man had already caught me. For tonite, dear, this will have to do - when I hear from you, I will be able to write fluently for volumes. Please hurry and let me hear from you. I know you will, I'm only kidding. You are wonderful about getting messages thru. You are wonderful about lots of things, in fact everything, except politics. Good nite, Darling - ummmm how I'd love to see you right now.... Love my honey, Your Betty. P.S. The cherub still won't talk much, needs his pappy to encourage him.

San Clemente

September 5, 1945

Dearest,

You will be getting bored with so many of my letters all at once. I had better start skipping a day now and then so's not to make it monotonous. (I know I probably spelt that wrong, but I don't care) - the same old line - miss you, can hardly wait to see you, to have you see Bill - it's a tried but true line.

Here's a little news I forgot to relate - with Liston Bascom in a German POW camp were Willie Mee, McNamara, Harry Long, Eudy Amison, Knowling, Norton, Faurso, Blily, Cohen, McDonald & Banowitz, some of whom I know and some I didn't. Harry wrote me that he married 'Margie'. They are childless he stated but he had a few ideas on the situation! Also, Bill Reinecke, Jean Reinecke's brother (remember Jean who came up to Sacramento with me that one weekend?) was with those boys. Also another boy, a bombardier, I know from Corona. The gang's all there you might say.

I have just written to Fran Lewis Walker in Newport News inviting her to come and stay with me a few days prior to her meeting hubby in S.F. Don't know if you'll come in together but it will be fun if you do and she and I could go to

S.F. together. Sweetie - my blurb runs low this late at night. I'd rather love than talk, oh, darling. Kisses, kisses from your ever loving wife. Betty.

San Clemente

September 6, 1945

Sweetheart, Gertie says I must hurry and write to you while I'm in this mood. What mood you say? Here dear this is what I mean...(lipstick). We have just been discussing life and things and of course the subject drifted to you. I have just relived our early life together for Gertie - including even the discussion of the shrimp and the 200 turquoises.

Oh, Darling, it has me all in a dither remembering all those wonderful little things that you used to do and say. I tingle all over when I remember that too-good-to-be-true, pinch me feeling I had when you and Goldie left P.J. and I on the steps there at Mrs. McQuiston's that first Sunday nite there in Sacramento. It was true tho' and it was just as good as I expected, better. Oh, Darling. Gertie is on of my old roommates at college in case yo wondered.

Sweetie, I miss you. Hurry home so's we can get acquainted all over again. Woo! Woo! Bill III sends love and a very slobbering kiss. xxxxx from us both. Betty P.S. Goldie is in France with the army of occupation.

San Clemente

September 7, 1945

Good Night, Darling,

I've been teaching Gertie a few card games (no, didn't make any money, dear) until we both thought the sand-man had overworked himself, so, honey, again I stagger off to bed by my little lonesome. Funny how you stay up as late as you possibly can and never go near a bed till there is nothing else to do when you're away from your honey, and how quickly you decide it's time to go to bed when you're with your honey, woo! woo!

Have you been eating lots of oysters, dear? Needless to say, I have glued my ear to every radio broadcast that says anything in regard to the released POWs. The paper Sept. 1st (which seems ages ago) said that they had released 30 camps from the Tokyo area - so I should be hearing from you soon. The stories of the treatment the POWs have been getting have me all in a dither, and make me want all the more to receive that first message from you so's I'll know you're alright and coming back to me. This last period of waiting is really something, that's all I can say. Bill is dandy still needs his old man to teach him to talk! Good nite dear, gotta get out of the way of that sand-man on his next round.

All my love, always dear, Your Betty.

San Clemente

September 9, 1945

Darling, Darling, Darling,

Don't ever expect me to talk sense tonite - this probably will be the most insane, incoherent, illiterate effort at letter-writing I have ever turned out, but ho, Sweetie, this is probably the most hilariously ecstatically happy moment in my entire life. It is the first moment in nearly two years that I have known that at this very moment you were alive and would continue to be so.

Darling, I can't even begin to tell you how I feel. Needless to say your message dated Sept.9th from Manila arrived tonight. Pat Gilliland who lives a couple of blocks away came over to bring it to me, and I think she was nearly as excited as I was. I had wondered just how excited I would get when I did receive this message from you. You see over this past period of nearly two years, I have become rather benumbed to emotion caused by good or bad news. I had thought perhaps to get really excited I would have to see you walk in the door. But not so, honey, wow! I think I whooped a whoop loud enough to be heard way up in the center of town. They probably thought the city was trying our some new kind of air raid alarm!

Oh, Darling, - two weeks! I can't believe it. I can't believe that in two weeks we will be together again - we have waited so long for this moment that it has come to seem more as a dream, impossible to actually materialize, but lovely to think about.

It is true, it is, it is, but I still can't even imagine how wonderful it will be to actually see you. I am so damn excited over just hearing from you that I will probably fall in a dead faint when I actually see you. Of course, I am planning to meet you in San Francisco, and will get a reservation on every plane for there out of LA for the next two weeks! Wow! That is all I can say, Wow! Yipee! That is the only way I can express how I feel. I turned a handspring on Pat Gilliland's parlor floor when I received the news, and what I mean is I usually can't even turn half a handspring but oh, Darling, darling, darling, what you don't do to me.

Oh, Sweetie, it's just so darn wonderful, so darn logical when you remember all the other things that have happened to us on such long odds, so darn unbelievable. How can we be so lucky? I am very humble when I think of the others who are not so lucky, who will not receive wires such as the thrilling one I have just had from you. I am very humble and will be grateful to the end of my days. It's just too good to be true, the same feeling I had when P.J. and I kissed you and Goldie goodbye that first weekend in Sacramento. Don't you think my typing is good tonight? Thanks.

It is midnite, Sweetie, and so to bed, but I will probably not sleep, but who cares? Who cares, who cares. I feel just like writing like Gertrude Stein. I feel just like writing like Gertrude Stein. I feel just like writing like Gertrude Stein, did I mention that I feel just like writing like Gertrude Stein. Time for bed. Time for bed. Time for bed. Time for Bill bed Bill - oh, honey, Good Night. A thousand kisses, and love, love, love. Betty.

Letters - Family and Friends Post POW - 1945

Hoopeston

August 17, 1945
Precious Darling,

Our joy knows no bounds and it seems like a beautiful dream that we shall see you, actually see you, touch you and just hug you to pieces. Betty and your adorable son spent four and a half months with us last year but we have not seen them since a year ago April.

The year, lacking four days, when we did not know if you were alive, was centuries long, sweetheart. Ever since we have lived on HOPE and have prayed for your safety. Everyone in both families is well and living for the day of your return. Pat has a wonderful job with Eastman Kodak and is down in Rochester until October 1st, taking Kodachrome training for her postwar job. Before she was in charge of V-Mail in the Chicago lab. Marge is in California and is with Betty and Bill for her two weeks vacation. Gus is in the Philippines now, and has never had a leave. Cush is assistant chief of staff at Santa Ana. We miss Louise and Bill terribly. Your three broadcasts and cable came through and brought us much relief and happiness.

Durgin Deland was taken prisoner in Belgium last December and liberated by the Russians in February. He is back in this country now. We shall kill the fatted calf when you get home, darling. We love you so much and are so proud of you. No words can tell you how much.

Your son had your DFC pinned on him at March Field last January. Betty was so proud of him as he kept his underpinnings dry and behaved like a veteran. He is a honey and so is his lovely mother.

I am down in the Red Cross in Danville and made a dash for it when I heard we could write you but it has to go out today. It is so glorious to have the war over and I pray God peace will last forever. I can choose one picture to send you and it is difficult to make a choice as they are all so good. My heart is full to overflowing with love and gratitude to God. Everyone sends their love and can hardly wait to see you, darling. Hugs and kisses. Your adoring Muddy.

San Clemente

August 28, 1945
Dearest Willy,

Long time no write and it seems almost unbelievable to be doing it now. Still have the last three letters I wrote you and which were sent back. A lot of water has gone under the dam since then. My status hasn't changed tho. Gus spent two years plus in Australia. Some time on Biak and is now on Leyte - I think. You'll be home before his is I think. He expects to go to Manila so maybe you lads will have that meeting overseas yet. Gus is stationed 15 miles from Bob Kaufmann. He's temporarily attached to the 133 General Hospital, APO 1005. Louise Farnum said the other day that she still thought we would all have a grand reunion out here. Betty really has been concentrating on fattening me up so she'd know how to start on you. She's a wonderful cook so I shan't worry about you gaining.

Betty has probably told you that I came to California last December 1st. Stayed with the Garveys for nearly two months and have been working in Riverside for six and a half months. Had lost too much weight for good health, so took these past two weeks off and have had a grand time being with Betty and trying to teach your sprout to cuss. He hardly talks at all so you'll have the fun of hearing him start. His preference for attractive small females is marked and affords all of us much amusement.

Gosh, Willy, it seems too good to be true that you now have a good chance to be back with us again. Betty never gave up hope for you - but about last summer I did. Now, if these two years haven't been too brutal you'll be with us again. Golly, Golly. It will probably be a while before you're back in shape again, but then again, we can't know for sure. Gather that the family are just beside themselves. Muddy has taken all of it pretty hard tho she's been a brick about it. I was just thinking, Marie Shoemaker had Landra, Elizabeth Moore Hindley had Donna, Mary Dyer Baisley had Doris, all in the last year. Speaking of Mary Dyer, I understand Bob Gannon is visiting Hoopeston next week. Mary's husband

is a Lt. in the Navy. After a leave in Hoopeston, he said he'd take any beachhead in Italy rather than another siege in Hoopeston!

Must be off to bed now, cutie. Betty turned in an hour ago. We'll all be anxiously waiting for news of you and hope you'll at least find some mail when you hit Manila. Bye for now, Loads of love, Marge. P.S. We have arranged that when you are in shape for a leave with Betty, I'm going to take little Bill so you can be alone. Also, if she doesn't get any sleep at night it would be hard for her to take care of littlest Willy in the day time! It's wonderful to be an Aunt - next best to being a momma. M.

Hoopeston

September 4, 1945

Dear Bill: We are sitting around the radio waiting to hear if you have been released. Since the Jap surrender everyone in town has asked me if we have heard anything. We are all fine but there have been several changes since you left.

Two years ago Ed Trego had a stroke and died suddenly in Washington. He would get so mad at the administration that his blood would boil and he simply blew up. Walter went in as president, and I went in as Sec-Treas and I worked there until March 19th this year when we sold the plant to Stokely, Van Camp. Walter was in terrible health and was not able to run anything and we could see it would be a losing proposition for us to continue that way, so we sold out in March at 175 per share. Walter died April 26th '45 so you see he was in very bad shape. He had hardening of the arteries and could not get well. We took stock for our stock, 7 shares of preferred and three and a half common for each share of ours and we had 1,500 shares. We figured the common at 10.50 per share and the preferred at 17.50. The preferred now about 20, and the common about 18.50, so we have so far made a swell sale. The preferred pays a dollar a share dividend and the common nothing but understand they declared a 10 percent stock dividend on the common this month.

June Trego got out of the Navy and has been going to be psycho-analyzed every day since July '44 so you see he was no help. Bill Trego is still in the Army, mostly in this country but was over in the Philippines for a couple of months this summer. He is home now on 60 day leave.

The crops are wonderful this year. Our sweet corn going three and half tons. Never saw such prospects for field corn and soy beans. We will need a late fall though as the stuff was planted late.

Mac and Marie are out at the Ranch breaking in Shorty who has rented a place in North Platte and they will live out there. Mac is gone so much I have to run the farms and buildings both and that keeps me busy. I imagine I could get you a good job with Stokely if you want it. They kept Gib Trego as manager but he does not want the job long. Glyde Timmons is out in Tucson for his health. Tom McLain had to quit on account of his heart. Frank Newman is old and wants to quit but they won't let him so you see we had a busted down organization. I think we were lucky to sell and get out of debt for once in our lives. Muddy has been working hard to get the house fixed up and we have a good cook.

She is Amish and a dandy cook, and we still have Dean so we can put you up in style if you quit fooling around over there and come back to Hoopeston. Bob Gannon is here and he said the battle of Hoopeston is worse than any battle he hit in Europe. Durgan is married. Some New York girl. Notice came last week.

We hear from Betty two or three times a week. She is wonderful about writing. Bill 3rd is a honey and he is all Muddy can talk about. Cush and Louise are at Santa Ana and Cush hopes to have you sent there. He is Chief of Staff there. Marge is at Riverside and has been with Betty for two weeks. Hope you have been able to stand up under prison life, and we are most anxious to get word from you. Pat is in Rochester working for Eastman. Love and kisses from all, Daddy.

Hoopeston

September 7, 1945

Precious Darling:

No word yet of your liberation and each day seems endless. Now that our forces are in Tokyo we feel we may hear in the next few days. The more we hear of the atrocities the deeper our anger and hatred of the yellow insects. I had no idea our hatred could increase any more but it has.

All of Hoopston is waiting to hear about you, sweetheart. Even people you hardly know call to ask. I have been on the water wagon for many months but think I may do a bit of falling off when we know that you are safe. We had dinner at Louise and John Braden's last night, just the four of us and played bridge. They are such dears. Their adopted son, Bob, was two years old last May and your Bill is exactly his size, height 35 inches and weight 33 pounds. Bob is full of hell and has a mass of curly gold hair. Trego and Katie's adopted son, Phillip, is adorable too. He is ten days younger than Bill and has the most astounding vocabulary for his age I have ever heard. He comes to see me often and we have long telephone conversations. He calls me Ami, giggles, tells me what he has been doing, makes kissing sounds and always asks for "Weese", Louise Farnum. Your cherub will have a whirl with the lads. Bill Trego, Jr. is a bit older and a large boy and very attractive.

Tomorrow night we are going to Alice and Earl Goodwines for dinner. All the younger generation except the Zooks are marvelous to us and we are most appreciative. We have never known Patty Hammond well until this summer and simply adore her. Ken is on the way home from Europe after two years and Patty is in a dither. Daddy told you all the news about business. Stokely is going great guns. The stock has gone up so much and continues to rise that we hardly know what to do about liquidating and paying off all our debts. With you back, which is all that really matters for our happiness, it will be nice to be out of debt.

Aunt Marie and Uncle Mac came back from the ranch last night but Shorty stayed out as they are selling steers now. Marie and Sandra will move this fall. Sandra has been a feeding problem but Dr. Sauer is doing a wonderful job with her. We took your sweet babe to him a year ago January. Betty was nursing him but he stopped gaining and we knew he was hungry. Dr. S. put him on a greatly increased diet and the lad gained nearly five pounds in two months. It is not prejudice when I say he is one of the most beautiful children ever and Betty is a superlative mother. She has been a thoroughbred through the heartbreaking centuries of worrying about you and her love for you is beautiful to put it mildly. Even if we did not love her for herself, which we do, we would love her just for that.

The crops are bumper ones this year. Daddy brought in a soy bean plant the other day that had 153 pods on it. It is a new hybrid called Lincoln. You cannot know the self-control it takes to write about everyday things but we know you want to hear. Oh darling, how we long to see you.

The house looks so attractive and will be more so when we can get some needed things such as stair carpeting and hall rugs. It is just waiting to welcome you, Betty and Bill. A heart full of love to you, sweetheart. I wonder if a mother could love a son any more than I do you. I prayed to God every waking moment to keep you alive and ever since we knew you had lived I have prayed for your safety. We are so in hopes that you will see Gus on your way home. Millions of hugs and kisses, precious. Your adoring Muddy.

September 23, 1945
Dear Mrs. McFerren,

After all these months of writing, when all was hoping, I can now write with certainty. Our son John was liberated from prison camp Sept. 4th. Since then we have learned that he was in Manila about Sept. 14th, and was awaiting transportation. One of our neighbor's boys, a member of the navy, was fortunate enough to see him on his ship. He wrote to his mother and she gave us the news. The report was that John is in pretty good shape. We are hoping that you have had equally timely news, and that you will be together again soon. That young son of yours should really be something special for your husband. He is a fine looking boy.

I don't know what you have heard, but the Dumonts, Sleighters, and Heplers have heard that their boys are OK. I guess I should not exactly say that. The Holman boy was flown home and is not so well. So far, I have not been to writing to some of the next of kin. Mrs. Perry wrote me and for some reason she seems especially to be pitied. She has lost everything if her son does not get back. We hope your news is all good from now on. Sincerely yours, Mr. & Mrs. Lardin

October 11, 1945
Dear Betty,

Mom forwarded your letter to me. I received it yesterday evening. I had already had notes from Mrs. DuMont and Mrs. Heppler saying their sons were safe, so I rather expected to be hearing from you soon. Betty, I can't truthfully say I

didn't rather expect the news your letter bore - especially these past few weeks - but dreading it, and disbelieving it, didn't lessen the shock and pain as much as I thought the passing of almost two years time would do.

Naturally, now, since we've yet had no word from the government, both Mrs. Farrington and I would like to know all the details as soon as possible. If you or Bill would care to write, we'd certainly appreciate it. We can't understand why we have had no word. I do hope Bill is well - what a wonderful reunion yours must have been! Though I'd be a liar if I didn't admit how envious I am of you, I do want you to know how happy I am for you both - and especially for little Bill. How proud Bill must be of him (and you), and how proud he will be of his dad. I won't write more now, Betty. If you are too rushed to write, perhaps you and Bill can come through Denver or the Springs. I certainly do want to see you both. Love to all, Betty (Farrington)

October 25, 1945

Dear Lt. McFerren,

We received your most welcome letter and are very thankful to you for writing to us concerning our son Dan. We have had no news from the government yet. We still receive an allotment check every month as Dan had a certain amount of his pay sent home each month. The last letter we had from the government was last November saying that he was still considered missing and was not officially dead. We are so glad that you and some of the other boys are back home. You can take your hat off to Mrs. McFerren, as she had great hopes that you were a prisoner and she always wrote cheerful encouraging letters to us all. The Holman boy was out to see us and he said Dan jumped out of the plane before him. Of course he could be wrong because I suppose everyone was excited at the time. We cannot believe that Danny is gone.

It seems like such a short time ago since I was talking to him. Danny and I (Mr. Glendon) were great pals. On his pay day he would treat me to a dinner. I shall not forget the time he said, "Do you mind if I have a bottle of beer? I want to build myself up so I can get into the air corps." He made it all right.

I am sorry for Mrs. Farrington. Also for the other members of the crew who gave their lives for this great country of ours. I was in the infantry in the last war and what I saw of France and her people is not worth mentioning. England and Italy I would give away to the Indians. I suppose you are very proud of your son, Bill, who is walking by this time. We are awaiting the return of my other son, George, who is leaving for home next month. He is stationed about twenty miles from Tokyo. He is in the Americal Division. He has been very lucky (never a sick day). He did come near getting hit a half hour before the war ended. The two boys were inseparable and George had hopes of meeting Dan over there. I have not received any of Danny's personal belongings. I will close now with the best of luck to yourself, Mrs. McFerren, and your son Bill. Sincerely yours, Mr. & Mrs. Geo. J. Glendon

October 29, 1945

My dear Wm. McFerren,

Your letter to me arrived last Tuesday, and while I have been expecting the news you gave me, it was such a shock, and I did have a terrible week. Am feeling better now, but so let down, for even though I kept saying John would not return, down deep there was that little thought 'perhaps.'

You can never know how very grateful I feel towards you for writing me, words just can't express it. To date I have not heard from the War Dept. but rather think they will mail me information before the November salary would be paid, as last year they reviewed his case on Oct. 26th, and advised that had decided to keep his status as missing in action. Now they know what really happened, it seems they would write me very soon.

I knew of five of the crew who were on their way home, but did not know about you. I know no words can help the scars you have had branded on your very soul, and how happy and fortunate you were saved too. Can just picture how happy your family is, to be together again and to know your military service is almost over. I do feel so sorry for Mrs. Farrington. She wrote me the first of the year about hearing short wave broadcasts from Bill, and said his voice sounded so natural, and in the broadcast 'he' spoke of Bill Jr. Have wondered so many times who could say things over the air unless there were spies on this side to advise.

I want to again speak of your thoughtful and kind letter. I know that was not an easy letter to write, but it was so beautiful - also told me just what happened. It is easier to accept this great sorrow when I know the circumstances. Just

a cold letter from the War Dept. would of left me still in the air wondering. Am so thankful John went quickly, it is better that way than to have to suffer from wounds or shock.

For two long years I have tried to steel my self for your message. Thought I could take it with my chin up. In a way I did, but I am simply heart-broken as it leaves me so alone in this world. Have felt as if I were plodding up a huge hill for two years, not knowing what was on the other side. Feel I have reached the top and stand there swaying in the cruel winds, for I see nothing ahead but loneliness and old age.

I do have a very nice position as accountant in a motor freight system office, am very busy all the time and that was such a big help this past week. Your letter came Tues. night, just couldn't get up at the usual hour but did at 9am, went for breakfast and sat in the lobby. That was a terrible place, as I saw so many fliers come and go. So came to my room, that meant just myself and four walls.

Finally put on my wraps and went to work. I assure you that was one sensible thing to have done, I simply had to apply myself to my figures, or that long tape wouldn't balance. Our bills are numbered with 6-digit numbers and did I have a time remembering what I must find in my files.

Yesterday I went to Ann Arbor via bus - an hour and a half ride, and friends took me out in the country about 40 miles, where I enjoyed a delicious home-cooked dinner. The meat was fried pheasant, it was so good. Came home feeling quite a bit like myself, for I know this is my sorrow. It must not be allowed to get me down and injure my health, for being so alone in this big city, I must keep going and fighting for happier thoughts - if that is possible. Again my I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your letter and I do so hope you may be able to come east and see me.

I expect to stay right here until all is settled with the gov't, so may be here a long time as the red tape necessary in cases like this usually means a long drawn out affair. My kindest regards to you and your wife. I can never repay you for what you did, but can always remember gratefully. Yours truly, C. May Perry.

October 30, 1945

Dear Lt. McFerren,

I want to thank you for the wonderful letter you wrote to Mrs. Perry. She called me when she received it, and although she was crying, she was shedding tears of relief and gratitude. We had not been at all hopeful, so your letter was not a shock. It is good to know what actually happened. When you don't know the details, your imagination can run wild and you can picture things much worse than they were. We are glad that John did not have a long time to suffer.

I presume the whole engagement was over in a matter of a few minutes, so that he did not have time to be frightened. Since it was his time to go, I'm sure he liked it just the way it was. His mother has become reconciled, and will stand up under the strain of getting things wound up in fine shape. She has been grand thru these past two years - particularly since John was all she had. She has no relatives - and I am the only person she has to lean on. Ever since John and I became engaged in Feb. 1942, she and I have been great friends and a consolation to each other. The War Dept. has not notified her yet - so we have given no publicity to his being gone. A day never goes by but what someone asks me if I have heard. She should be officially notified any day though - and then his many friends can know.

John often wrote about you and John Farrington in glowing terms. You must have had a good association. I'm very happy that you were able to return to your wife - and son, who must be quite a lad by this time - about 27 or 28 months old. I hope that you will soon regain your physical health, and that time will erase the unpleasant memories you must have of the past two years.

As for me, I shall put my ring on my right hand, put John's scrapbook, pictures, and letters with his uniforms - which I have, and hope that one of these days the world will look better and more hopeful to me. At least, I have fine memories of a grand person, who never did one thing to harm anyone - but instead endeared himself to all who knew him. It's hard to figure out why he had to die. I presume there is justice somewhere, but I can't see it now. Again, I'm glad that you are back, Bill, and could tell us about it. Enjoy yourself with your family and try to make up for these two lost years. The best of everything to you and yours, always, Sincerely, Peggy Ahern

November 19, 1945

Dear William McFerren,

Received your letter sometime ago about my son Louis. I am sorry to hear what you had to say, but if that's what happened, I hope it was for the best. As yet we haven't heard anything from the War Department. That is one reason that I haven't written to you. I figured that I would write to you then and tell you what they had to say, but as yet no news. When we do, I will write and tell you. If at any time you feel that you would feel free to write please do. Please give my regards to your wife Betty. It was very nice of her to write to us as she did. And may both of you be very happy in the near future. As ever, Mrs. Anna Glavan

November 20, 1945

Dear Betty & Bill,

Have certainly taken my time about answering your kind letter of a month ago. Even tho it spelled tragedy, I was most glad to have an on-the-scene account of Jimmie's fate. I wanted him back so badly but I guess when we sent you boys off to war we knew that you couldn't all come back.

Jimmie could not have died a more honorable death and that in itself is a great consolation. Your letter was the nicest one I have ever had, and I wish to thank you for telling me that which I may never have known. I feel now that it is all over and I have nothing to wait for and look forward to.

To date, the government is still silent. I received my monthly check the first of the month so I guess that is proof that his case has not been straightened out yet. Seems as tho two months should be sufficient time for them to make a report. However, as per your request, I shall just sit here and wait - after two years of it, a few more days won't make much difference. It was most heart-warming to know that you boys held Jimmie in such high esteem. I was sure it would be that way as all of his friends thought he was 'tops', to say nothing of how grand I thought he was. I have a lot of happy memories in which that guy played the leading role. Life without him doesn't look very bright, but I guess time alone heals all wounds.

I should be delighted to have you kids pay me a visit if your travels bring you up this way. You have given me a very clear picture of the whole situation but still I would like to talk to you personally, and to make your and Betty's acquaintance. Betty was such a good little soldier while you were gone. I had quite a few letters from her, and each and every one was so encouraging and full of hope that I couldn't help but get a firmer grip and hang tighter than ever.

You are very fortunate in having a wife like her to come back to. And little Bill - I'll bet he is just the grandest little fellow anyone ever had. Hope you kids bring him along if you do get up this way. I would like very much to write Betty Farrington but have hesitated due to the fact that you said to keep the information 'mum'. I imagine that you have written her too as the information you gave me relieved the nervous strain, even tho it was not the word I had hoped and prayed for.

Had a card of sympathy from Mr. Glendon this morning so I guess he knows, and I wonder if it wouldn't be alright for me to write him. According to your letter, he lost the same as I. Betty, let me hear from you once in awhile. Thanks again, Bill. Most sincerely, Mrs. J. C. DeGroat.

November 27, 1945

Dear Betty and Bill,

I hope you will accept my apologies for not having answered your letter immediately. I seem to have lost all track of time this month, and never get anything done when I should. Bill, thanks so much for writing me what must have been pretty difficult news for you to write. I was pretty much what I might have expected, but is still a rough deal to take.

I can't understand why I have heard nothing from the War Department yet. I have also had a letter from Marion DeGroat asking me for some news. Coincidentally, John Lardin was sent to the hospital here in Carson, and called several weeks ago. He has been to see us several times - spent Thanksgiving Day here at the house. He had little to add to what you had already written me, however.

John left yesterday for Pennsylvania and his ninety day furlough. I've been wondering if you are still in California, or have been able to come east to Illinois? I can imagine how eager your family must have been to see you. Please do try to stop, either in Denver or Colorado Springs, when you are passing this way. I only wish I had the place to ask you to

spend a few weeks with me. Anyway, I'll be depending on your stopping with the young-un, so we can get acquainted again, and so you can meet Johnny and the Farringtons.

Betty, you can imagine how difficult it is for me, even now, to accept, what is a practical certainty. My prayer now is that I will be able to be a good enough mother to Johnny to make him realize what a wonderful man his father was, and to rear him as I am sure Bus would have liked him to be. And you know that task (task isn't the word - it will also be a pleasure) should keep me plenty busy these next few years.

I seem to have little to say tonight, and even greater difficulty saying it, so I shall wait until I hear from you again. And I do want to see you all, soon. Best of luck to you, always. I am sure Bus never had two truer or finer friends, and I am proud to count you as mine, also. Love, Betty (Farrington)

Part IV

Epilogue, Heritage and Hindsight

My family has probably been involved in every war that the United States pursued since it's founding. On my maternal side, I am descended from Connecticut's Welles Family, which included Thomas Welles, one of that state's colonial governors in 1655. I haven't checked the record to find out how many Welleses were rebels or Tories during the Revolutionary War, but they were probably involved on either or both sides.

Another maternal family ancestor, Gideon Welles, was Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy. During World War II, Sumner Welles was Franklin Roosevelt's Under Secretary of State and my mother's cousin. Thus, I am a scion of warriors and diplomats on my maternal side.

My paternal side is Scots-Irish and more obscure. Records show many McFerrens in Northern Ireland's County Down, part of the British plantation colony established there over 300 years ago. My grandfather Jacob McFerren, left North Carolina for central Illinois after the Civil War. The story told me was that he did so, 'a step ahead of the sheriff, and only two bits in his pocket.' In Illinois, he married well, inheriting his first wife's estate when she died. In the late 1870s, he moved to Hoopeston, then very good farm country. There, he bought farmland around the town for \$3.00 an acre. That's how my immediate family found themselves principals of a bank and a vegetable canning company in Hoopeston by the 1880s.

My grandfather's only known children were my father and uncle, William and Donald McFerren, who remained life-long partners in the various Hoopeston family enterprises. As boys, they went to Hotchkiss, a Connecticut prep school, and both managed to get kicked out for some harmless but outrageous capers. During World War I, they were balloonists in the Army.

My father married Marjorie Welles in 1913, and I am their only son, born at home in Hoopeston, March 11, 1915. Following my family heritage, I too, went to Hotchkiss graduating in 1933, along with classmate Potter Stewart who became a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Potter was also my classmate at Yale. We bootlegged hard cider on the Yale campus together and kept in touch over the years. At Yale, I studied economics, greek and latin classics, comparative religion, and earned a bachelor's degree.

In hindsight, some war wounds leave physical scars, others are more subtle. It's been over 50 years since the war ended, but I still have the occasional nightmare recalling the terror of the bombing of Yokohama and Tokyo where I was a prisoner of war. I think similar memories affect most of us World War II combat veterans. However, we were conditioned to repress our war traumas. We came home to bands, bunting, and parades. It was the 'good war,' and no one suggested that any of us would suffer from a 'post-war syndrome' that might impact our lives and families forever after.

When I returned to the States the first week of October 1945, I was sent home for 'temporary duty' until my discharge as a captain in April 1946. I started having terrible nightmares about the beatings and bombings, and spent a good part of the rest of the year trying to resolve the feelings simmering within me.

The carefree, wild, pre-combat days of I and Betty's intoxicating love had seasoned with the passage of the two traumatic years. We had to become reacquainted with each other. Of course, we still loved each other, but now we faced different challenges and responsibilities.

We had a son to care for and raise. The next year, my father died suddenly after a short illness. This sadness was mitigated by the birth of our daughter, Anna. This joy also meant there would be no rest for the weary. The responsibility of having to earn a living and help raise a family, precluded any respite from the pain of the prior two and a half years. I had to hit the ground running.

We remained in California, and I went back to work in the food business. My family had sold their interest in the canning company in Hoopeston, and I took a salesman's job with Stokley Van Camp, the company that bought them out. Unfortunately, while calling on west coast grocery clients, I also had to be away from my family a lot.

I stayed with Stokley for two years, then heard about an opportunity with Uncle Ben's Converted Rice. I became its district manager for 11 western states, and also took advantage of an invitation to buy some initial stock shares in the company.

During the next seven years I continued to have to spend a lot of time travelling and making sales calls. While visiting Denver, I got to know a food broker by the name of Bill Snider. It turned out he flew one of the fighters that took part in the Yokohama raids when I was a prisoner there. He convinced me that being a food broker was a better opportunity than working for a food processor. In 1956 I sold my Uncle Ben's shares. With the proceeds we moved to Denver, bought half his food brokerage business, and built the house Betty and I still live in today.

Three years later, I bought Snider out, and reorganized a new food brokerage company with two minority-interest partners. We did well over the years, and in 1979 I retired and sold my majority interest to them.

While I was building my business in the 1960s and 1970s, I also got involved with politics. I helped raise a lot of money for what I thought were worthy candidates in local, state, and national races. As I wrote Betty during the war, I thought it important to identify and support candidates for office who would make an effort to change things. People who would work toward creating a political environment where my son, and his generation, would not have to fight in a war like I did.

Personally, however, the many years of drinking started to catch up with me on the home front. Besides having a few drinks to sedate my war memories, a few drinks were considered an acceptable part of business entertaining. I pursued business and drinking with gusto, not realizing I had managed to tune out both Betty and my family when I returned home.

In 1958, Betty suggested I look into Alcoholics Anonymous. I joined the program, but went back to drinking after 10 months. For many years I just kept my drinking away from the family. I don't think hiding it fooled anyone, and problems resurfaced on the home front. Thankfully, Betty insisted I again seek help, and I rejoined their program in the late 1970s, and haven't found it necessary to touch a drop since.

Our son Bill grew up, went to college, and became a U.S. Navy pilot in Vietnam. He flew the P-3 Orion, a multi-engined anti-submarine aircraft. He served with distinction, and left the service honorably when his tour was over. Now, he pursues his own interests, and lives not far from us in Colorado. After college, our daughter Anna married, and she and her husband ultimately moved to Colorado. They regularly bring our grandchildren down from the mountain foothills to visit us.

In 1992, at the same Lowry Air Force Base I passed through on my way to war in 1943, I belatedly was presented a Silver Star decoration for my war service. I was recommended for one when repatriated, but it never got processed in the post-war confusion and euphoria.

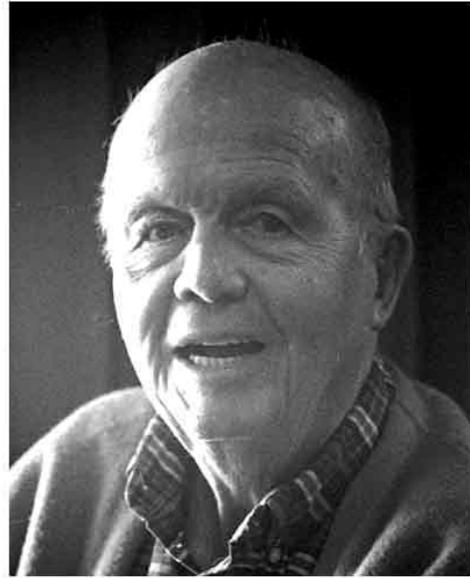
What I have chronicled is our family's wartime experience. It's probably not too different from many of our contemporaries. It's a tiny slice of the history of our age and generation. After 53 years, we are still a family. We didn't 'dream' about a good life in America. We defined it ourselves, and worked for it. Along the way, we've accepted our failures, along with our successes. When Betty and I married, it was for the long haul. To us, commitment to ourselves, family, and friends are what's most important in life. Cheerfully, we carry on.

Photographs by Wm. A. Boas.

William McFerren, Jr., taken at the time of the 1995 interviews during a visit of Alfred W. Paris regular co-pilot of the B-24 'Fyrrtle Myrtle' who was not flying the mission of October 26, 1943 when the Liberator was shot down over the Celebes Islands in the South Pacific by a group of Japanese Zeros.



Bill McFerren Al Paris



McFerren



McFerren

Acknowledgements

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