

Betty Deuser Budde

Letters, 1943-1944



Transcribed by Felicia Salazar

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Houston Municipal Airport Letters

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[January 11, 1943]
Monday 1:25

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

We're at San Luis Obispo, taking on passengers. The train has 2 engines now. I think we picked it up at Santa Margarita. The scenery's beautiful down here. So far none of the baggage has toppled down on my head. I expected it to long ago. The Marine (Fred Klatt) is going to San Diego. He took me in to lunch. I had a potato salad and milk (30¢) and he paid for it. The diner is just like in pictures. Riding is not smooth enough for writing and when going around turns it's hard to walk. You have to have good balance for everything - and I do mean everything! The Marine is rather quiet, polite, and very proud of his outfit. He lives on 64th Ave. in Oakland. Not very exciting and too small!

There are a military police and a shore patrol walking thru the trains. We have about twenty cars on this train. Approaching and leaving the main steps the loudspeaker goes on and a guy tells you about the country and the train. The train can do over 100 mph but he says we haven't gone over 75 today. Excuse the scribbling. It rocks like a boat.

There's a beautiful big blonde flight officer on our train but he doesn't sit near me (doggone).

My orchid is beginning to wilt. It won't last a week.

There's a little boy in front of me that keeps turning around, asking questions. He's cute tho.

We seem to have left the first engine at San Luis Obispo. Must be downhill from here. If another guy punches my ticket, I'll get sore and let him keep it. It's like a sieve already.

Thanks, Ma, for being so good. Hope you had a nice ride home.

Love, Betty

[Same envelope]
3 p.m.

Dear Folkses:

Just met the gal who was going to Texas from San Jose. She had two glamour girls with her, one of whom is going too. She gave me the telephone number of the lady to contact at the airport in Houston. They couldn't get reservations on the 8:30 train - have to leave LA tomorrow night. So I won't be traveling with them. From the info they've got, we pay \$20 month room in auto court and \$5.30 week for food and mess hall. Need slacks, shirts, and lots of marching shoes. So I guess I packed OK. Also need my flying books, they say, so you can send those 2 books in my second drawer from bottom - Navigation and Meteorology. Guess you can send them to the Women's Flying Training Detachment, Aviation Enterprises, Municipal Airport, Houston, Texas, in care of me.

We're nearing Santa Barbara now. Along the ocean. The sun is awfully hot. Fred and I have eaten ½ box of chocolates. I still have my lunch. The fruit will still be good

tomorrow. If I could only make it off the train with all my bundles without looking like a Laurel and Hardy comedy.

So far I haven't had a chance to feel blue. The trip is too interesting .

Soon as I get a chance to write a real letter, I'll tell you about the queer people on the train.

Love,
Betty

[Postcard]
[January 12, 1943]
Tuesday 8:00 am

Dear Mom -

Just have time to write this. Have to get some travelers checks and get my bundles out of hock. There were so many bundles I was loaded to the eyebrows so the Marine helped me off the train and I checked all the small stuff. Venice took me to dinner at the Riviera (\$2.25). Had to have a drink first - the Tom Collins made my head swim, but the squab dinner straightened me out OK. Wilshire Blvd is sure blocked out. I won't have a chance to mail any more letters till maybe at Yuma, so this'll have to do for all, BJ included.

All my love,
Betty

[January 12, 1943]
1 pm
Tuesday

Dear Mom, Pop, Helen -

They say we're only about 90 miles from LA and look at the time! Last station I noticed was Beaumont. I don't know where we are now but it's been awfully hot the whole way. I'm on the sunny side. Supposedly sitting opposite me is a Sgt. from Mississippi. He hasn't sat down yet. Kissed his girl goodbye at L.A., vanished into the diner and has been gone ever since. He's hanging around with other soldiers.

BJ's letter tells about the first part of the trip. Since then I've been looking at mags, scenery, and eating those swell Edy's chocolates. Good thing I still have yesterday's lunch. They're feeding a bunch of aliens, including Japs, so the diner is unavailable. After that I suppose the Army and Navy comes first. Sure wish I had my slacks here so I could curl up on the seat, tho there's no room cuz I have all my junk stacked up there.

Both times I finally got up and went into the washroom, the train stopped! For the past hour the scenery has been sagebrush (I guess) and mts and sand. I don't think I'll walk around much. Ahead of me are drunks, they say, and in the car behind me are the Japs. So I'll sit tight. Haven't talked to anyone yet, except a girl in the washroom. I'm glad I got the early train. At this rate the night train will arrive Friday morning.

1:30 pm

Just passed Palm Springs station but I don't see the resort. Only more sage and sun. Diner is finally open.

Love,
Betty

[January 13, 1943]
Tuesday 3:15 pm

Dear Mom, Pop and Helen;

I gave three letters to a soldier to mail at Indio, so if you don't get a letter from there, it's probably still in his pocket. The other two were for BJ and Fred. We're about 1 ½ hours late now. Started ½ hr. late and have stopped so much. According to rumors we have 150 undesirable Mexican and Canadian prisoners on board. People are still trying to get lunch. I gave the Navy couple across the aisle an apple and orange to keep them from starving. Good thing I had my yesterdays lunch with me. We've been rolling along near a body of water (the Salton Sea?) for miles and miles. It's sure nice in the middle of this desert. I suppose this desert keeps up clear across Texas. The bay district is sure a paradise next to this.

I've got \$50 worth of Travelers checks with me. And about \$20 cash. Haven't spent anything yet, except 38¢ for the checks. It's so hard to get into the diner I'll have to be the first one up tomorrow in order to get any breakfast. My chocolates are melting in the sun. It's so hot I took my redingate off.

Looks like a movie set on the shore of the water over there. Kind of half buildings like an old Egyptian town.

4:05

We've stopped - again! I don't know where we are but should be able to tell in a few minutes when we go by the town. For an awfully long time there were no towns - once in a while a few shacks or a date farm. We're moving again, slow.

The town is Niland. There's a bus waiting - going to El Centro. So we must be nearing Arizona, huh?

7:05 pm (new time)
Yuma, Arizona

Just crossed the Colorado River and here we are in Yuma. We don't come right into town but I can see part of it from here. I just got out for a few minutes. The porter said 10 min. stop but we're late as it is so I wasn't going to take any chances of getting left behind.

The sun just set and the lites are on in the train. Don't know whether dinner is being served. Probably can't get in anyway but I'll try cuz I'm hungry.

The desert was pretty but too much of it.

9:30 pm

Dear Folkses -

I feel much better now that I finally got to eat. Didn't have to stand in line long. For \$1.13 I got soup, salad, meat (kind of like a pot of stew), milk and ice cream. The Navy couple and a soldier friend of theirs ate with me. They're very nice. Lots of loud people here too. The Navy man (Harold) has had active service on a destroyer. His ship was sunk around New Caledonia. He says the Marines are really getting tough and savage and it's gonna be hard for them to ever adjust themselves to civilian life again. The soldier has been in only 4 days and loves it. Just a young kid.

Should've washed my teeth. Had whole onions in the stew. This train sure rocks. I can hardly write. The bunks are made up. Wish they'd stay up all day. Sure comfy. I can take my shoes off and stretch out. Feels so good! Haven't seen any scenery since Yuma. It's too dark. There's a piece of a moon out and stars but when I look out the window I can just see my reflection. I'm glad I got acquainted with Lois and Harold. They're a nice couple. Not newlyweds as I thought. He's being transferred to N. Jersey. Two cute girls on this car are going to meet their Army husbands. There's an awfully cute Border Patrol guy in uniform on the train. He has to take 8 prisoners off at Tuscan. There aren't any Japs aboard as I heard before. Just Canadians and Mexicans who entered the country illegally and they're sending them back. Some Spaniards and others they can't deport cuz no ships will take them over.

The time has been going pretty fast tho today dragged a little when it was so hot. I can't realize I'm really going so far away from home.

At Yuma there were two big fat Indians selling beaded jewelry. I didn't buy any. Gotta save my dough.

I'm alternating letters (which aren't readable anyway) between you and BJ so you can trade. I never know when I'll get to mail the latest. This'll probably go out at El Paso.

Gee, I'll pass clear thru Arizona and New Mex. without even seeing them. I sure wish I could've met Fred at Tucsan. I'm going to go wash my teeth now, so goodbye for now.

Love,

Betty

Wednesday

10 am

Dear family -

Doesn't seem like Wednesday. Time doesn't mean much except where we're going and how late we are. We're about 2 hrs late. Woke up in Lordsburg, N. Mex. The ride last nite was swell. With the lites out and shades up I could see the stars and moon and it was really pretty. I woke up at Tucsan about 3 am and watched a bunch of ensigns get on. Seems to be a big place but of course I couldn't see much. Sunrise on the desert is very pretty. The shadows make everything soft, while later the sun just makes it look hot and dry. New Mex. is a little different from Arizona on account of the shape of the hills.

There's flat desert then peaks of sharp hills. The crowd are more friendly this morn. My breakfast companions were the drunk of yesterday (now sober), a young lady, and a very young kid from New Mex Military Institute. He tries to act sophisticated, and smokes, but he's only about 15 and not dry behind the ears. The mesquite and cactus (or whatever it all is) is odd looking - funny shapes. This country doesn't look like any I've ever seen. I wouldn't want to drive across it cuz it's the same for miles on end and hot. This morn there was frost outside but it's warm in here. Wish I had my sun glasses with me. They're in the other suitcase I guess.

[Ends there]

[January 14, 1943]
Thursday 1:30 pm

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

My address in on the envelope so start writing. Call BJ and let her know. We're busy as heck filling out Civil Service Forms. We're not in the Army, really, but it's run by the Army so it's just the same. The train ride was really fun. Met lots of nice young people, mostly service men and wives, and saw lots of country.

All my baggage is at the depot. The four of us - Dorothy, "Tony", and "Freddie" - came up here to the Chamber of commerce Bldg in a taxi. There are mobs of girls here. Ruth Rueckert of S.F. is here. I'm going to room with her at the Alamotel. There are two motels filled and another to be filled. If you haven't sent those books, don't do it. Instead, send my Cowboy boots. They're good for the mud. I've always flown in tennis shoes, but Mrs. Deaton (in charge right now) says it's too muddy here. I'll tell you all about everything when I get time to write - maybe tonight or tomorrow. It looks like it's going to be lots of fun.

Houston is a big place - lots of shops and shows. Hardly any Texans tho. At least I haven't heard any accents. It's hot here but windy. They say we should have long undies but I think my new ones will fill the bill nicely. We have to wear nets on our hair on the field if our hair touches the shoulder, so I will. There's to be no publicity. No info can go out - only from Randolph Field. So I really don't know what I'll be able to tell you about it all. Best thing to do is not say too much about what I write from now on. They say it'll be about 4 months training but no one knows for sure. Will write more later.

Love,
Betty

January 15, 1943

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

At last I'm settled. This is a swell motel, everything's right up-to-date, the bathroom has a tile finish, and we even have running ice water. I don't remember when I wrote you last, but I hope you and Barbara Jean will trade letters some, so I won't have to remember what I wrote to each. It's been a lot of fun and I'm crazy about Houston. It's sure windy here, but hot too. The prices for food are cheap. When I get around to sending

things home, which I will eventually, I'll send my ration book. I won't need it here. We ate at the airport tonight and had a keen dinner - salad, shrimp gumbo or something, vegetables, roll, plenty of butter, milk, and gingerbread. The girls here before have gained weight. I saw Lewis today. The whole bunch is so friendly. This redhead, Freddie, I met on the train is an old pal of Eileen Hopps. We were issued leather flying jacket (size 42), zoot suit (like BJ's PAA outfit - size 40), and a heavy longsleeved sweater like Les' Xmas present (size 38). Mine fit pretty well except the pants are too short. I'll try to remember to take my picture so you can see the outfit. The sweater has been in mothballs since 1941 - so it really stinks! The bus brought us back here tonight. We had fun. One girl, about 5 ft tall, had a coverall size 44 and you couldn't see here hands or feet. She put it on and just stood there with no expression. We laughed like heck at her. They ran out of flying jackets so all the girls didn't get one. I did tho, and it's sure keen! We watched the other girls exercise today. What a workout! If that doesn't counter-act the food, I don't know what could. A handsome instructor gets up on a table - outdoors - and bawls out the commands. The girls really have it down pat. I'm afraid I'm gonna creak a lot for the first two weeks but after this training I ought to be able to curl up like a pretzel with nary a strain.

It's a beautiful night, smells so wonderful. Some of the girls were in, trying on their outfits and sharing my candy and it all seems like a college sorority. Most of the girls are good natured. It's sure a mixed bunch - from all over the states - lots of them such glamorous frail things, you'd think they wouldn't get any closer to a plane than the nearest terminal cocktail bar. The girls who have been here a month or so look healthy and happy and there's sure a lot of enthusiasm around here. I had time to unpack some things today and get straightened up a bit. Ruth, my roommate, is 33, married to a glider tow pilot at 29 palms, and is a nice girl. We both like pinochle, shows, and reading, and so far have no trouble getting along.

I've just had my shower. It's after 9 pm and we're to be picked up at 7:30 am tomorrow so I'd better get to bed. I want to write to BJ before I go to bed, though. Time just rushes by and when I finally get to writing I can't remember all I want to tell you. We get tomorrow afternoon and Sunday to ourselves so Ruth and I may go to town and see a show. It's about an 8 block walk to the bus. We're on the highway outside the city limits. The places out here look like Hollywood - drive ins, pretty stores, etc. There's a law against picking up anyone on the roads, so you needn't worry about us hitchhiking. Write soon - all of you. Say hello to Les.

Love,
Betty

[January 18, 1943]
Monday noon -

Dear Helen -

I have a few minutes before lunch so I'd better hurry. I'm in the cafeteria, the juke box is going, and there are girls talking all over here, so it's kind of noisy. I was supposed to fly this morning but the weather was bad so I've gotta wait till tomorrow morning. I thought about it all night for nothing. I did meet my instructor though. He's been here

only about two months. He's not too tall, brown hair, pleasant, I imagine he's about 28, from Arkansas (Pine Bluff) originally though he's been in Texas a long time. He has bitten his nails so far down it gives me shivers to look at them. I think we'll get along all right. He seems to be cooperative and good-natured.

We'll have our first ground school this afternoon and our calisthenics. Our physical instructor is swell - has a touch of gray hair at the temples, shining brown eyes and the picture of health. I like our flight commander too. He's got a face full of red freckles, and a big grin and is big and husky.

The problem of "going" is worst thing we've run up against yet. There aren't many johns anyhow. And when you've got slacks, zoot suit coveralls, and a sweater and jacket on, it takes a while to peel off.

Mail call this morning netted me one letter. It was from the Marine I rode down on the Daylight with. His name is Fred too, so I'd better be careful when I write that I don't get the two mixed up. Ruth's husband is Fred too, so the whole thing is confusing.

As corporal of our #2 squad of Platoon #1 I have to keep track of eight girls, report absentees, etc. Otherwise I haven't any particular duties. Miss Sheehy, the woman who interviewed me in S.F., will be here today. Miss Cochran should be here next week so I'll get to meet her. This week, being in Flight #1, I should fly mornings. So next week it'll be in afternoons. We don't fly much from the Municipal Airport - usually from Dado Field or Skyport. One girl flies over, and the other two who are to fly that ship later, go over on the bus and fly from that field. I sure hope you'll write to me cuz it's fun to get mail. They dish it out like in the Army. Has Paul started talking much? Sure would like to see him. Gotta quit now and get some of this swell food.

Love,
Betty

[January 18, 1943]
Sunday 3 pm

Dear Folks,

Got your nice letter at the field yesterday, Mom. Sure glad to hear you like Charlie now. I knew you would if you could just stop blaming him for what we're doing. It makes me feel swell to know you've made up!

I'm really enjoying it here. My only worry is that I'll lose contact with my old friends and be forgotten. Ruth and I get along swell. I guess you'd better swap letters with BJ cuz I just wrote her and told her what I've been doing. I hate to write the same thing twice. Hope Edith's cold is better.

We didn't get up until 9, had breakfast at 10, and now will have our dinner in about ½ an hour. On days that we're not at the field we have to eat on our own. There are two drive-ins just a few steps up the highway that are nice, inexpensive, and have good food. We have to take cold pills once a day for four days then once in four days I think. They're so big ○ and brown, so aren't hard to swallow.

There are three girls in our room now, all talking, so I just can't think... They all moved into the next room now cuz I just ignored them. I have a list of 35 people to write to, and I haven't even started. I showed the girls my locket bracelet and they all think

Fred is swell. Ruth's husband is named Fred, too. She has his photo on her desk. The room is pretty, with blonde glass topped furniture, light green walls, a big circular mirror over my desk, and shutters on all six windows. I've finally got my stuff all unpacked and scattered around. Starting tomorrow I'll be too busy to bother. The kids are waiting to go eat, so I'll close with love to all of you. Kiss Paul for "Bebby" -

Love,

Betty

[January 20, 1943]

Wednesday Morn.

8:30

Dear Folks -

My hands and feet are freezing but I'd better write now before I have to fly. Have to study too. I'm on the flight line. Got up at 6:15 and the moon was beautiful - big and yellow. The sun just came up now. Had a good breakfast then marched from mess hall to flight line. That's the length of the field. Yesterday was the coldest day here since gosh knows when. Broke records anyhow, also broke water pipes and all water was frozen. Even mud holes were frozen. 18° - boy, and with a stiff wind too. I don't know when I wrote you last. I guess it was Sunday. We have to make use of every minute. This week I fly in the morning and have ground school in the afternoon. Had my first flight yesterday in a Tandem Aeronca. Didn't do so well, but it was mainly to get acquainted with the territory. For at least 5 hrs. we have to go up with the instructor. Have different ships to fly each day, they say.

Whew, I had to come inside and get warmed up. My fingers froze. We were issued gloves yesterday but they're so stiff I can't move in them.

Yep, you can send my magazines but not the brown shoes. They don't fit. I'm wearing my tennis shoes for flying. It isn't muddy here, only out on the field, going to and from the ships. I got your Saturday letter yesterday and all the other cards and things but I still haven't the books. They're not really necessary but I'll have to try to locate them, as long as you mailed them.

They're talking about building barracks out here. They'll have to, accommodate the next classes. The food here is swell, even though we have to stand in line (inside) for it. We travel to and from the field in "The Blue Goose", a big truck-like bus. Cold in the mornings, but from the looks of it, the weather should be better from now on.

We have class right near the field - and you can hear the ships roar by all the time. So far we're having math, physics, theory of flight, and radio code. The code is fun. He taps out -- -- code and we have to learn to recognize the letters by sound. That's going to be fun. The others aren't very interesting, except that our theory teacher is a tall, dark young fellow who teaches swell.

We have to sign in every night at the motel by 8 pm. And lights out at 10. But they say we may go to a square dance at Ellington Field some night this week. I don't know what nite.

For dinner last night we had shrimp creole and "great northern beans." They really know how to cook. Best food I've ever had away from home. Ruth has classes when I fly

and vice versa so we don't see each other much except on the bus, at breakfast and at the motel. Right after dinner we leave the field. By the time we get back, take our showers, and write one letter, it's ten o'clock and lights out. Gosh, I don't get a chance to do anything. Got a couple of extra blankets last night so were warm as toast. Ruth fell down yesterday, skinned her knuckles and got a big bruise on her leg. Plenty stiff this morning.

Our calisthenics yesterday in the freezing cold were really somethin'. I had all my GI equipment on, bulky as heck (weighs about 20 lbs) and I tried to exercise. What a job! Couldn't even reach my ankles.

Wilda sent Lew that P.E. article. Wish she hadn't. We're not supposed to have any publicity.

Last night at 5:30, we stood retreat. Do it each night. A girl blows the bugle and we all stand at attention, just like they did at the fair. It's awfully nice.

The girls who fly open ships (upper classmen) wear huge fur lined leather suits. Look like Eskimo's or something. Look like they can hardly move in them.

I cracked my skin on the bed yesterday and got an attractive bruise. Just hurt for a few minutes. We didn't have to take our cold pills today. They didn't have any effect anyway.

Sure fun getting mail here. A girl brings stacks of it out and reads off the names, and a girl feels blue if she doesn't get any. I got lots of mail yesterday morning but none in the afternoon.

Sunday we had a bunch of girls together in "Cookie's" room. She and Ellen are our neighbors. Had a swell time getting acquainted. Everybody's friendly as heck so we get along swell.

Sure miss my family but as long as I keep busy I don't notice it so much. And we're always busy. Would like to watch Paul grow, but I guess it can't be helped. This training is really keen. I'm sure enjoying it. Doesn't seem like I'm so far from home. Not 4 days away anyway.

Our two dog mascots are kinda crumby. Both black and one has mange.

Mom, you'd sure like to drive around this place. The estates are beautiful - big homes, just like in Beverly Hills. The city is laid out pretty, with a cross-town drive and trees along the highways.

Well, I have to quit now and do some studying cuz I have to fly again soon. I hope! Each instructor has 3 girls in the a.m. and 3 in the p.m. Today I think I'm last of the a.m. to go up. Gee, these big ships sure make a racket! The Braniff Airlines leave from here. Am trying to get around to writing everyone but just can't find time, so say hello to everybody for me. We're busy from sunrise till 10 pm so have to get plenty of sleep after that.

Love,
Betty

[January 20, 1943]
Wednesday

Dear Pop -

You're always kickin' cuz you don't get mail so here's one for you. I usually address them to Mom so then she can open them when they come.

I feel so bloomin' healthy! The fresh air (and it's warm today for a change) and the food and exercise is swell. The calisthenics are just to keep us fit for flying, so we'll be strong enough to pull the stick back in a spin, etc. I like the marching. We don't do very much. Just from breakfast, to lunch, and to dinner. I missed the lunch drill today cuz I was up. The air was keen. Flew a Taylorcraft Tandem from the front for an hour. (Class starting, will finish later)

Well, it's 8:30 pm already. Had classes and a liver and onion dinner (boy, was it good!) and finally got back to the motel by 7:45. Everybody's tired. We had an hour of calisthenics before dinner that really loosened up a lot of muscles that were never used before.

I finally got my books. Thanks for remembering all those little things, Mom. We have PX privilage at Ellington Field so today the girl took our orders and went over to get them. I had ordered a ruler but luckily they couldn't get one. I'm glad you sent my other one. Also ordered a fountain pen, but they didn't send one back cuz I hadn't enclosed enough money. I can get a \$9.00 pen for \$5.95. Is that good?

I have Mom's photo on my desk and Ruth says she like to see a Mom's cheerful face there. I'm sure enjoying myself tho I do get lonesome for my family. But this is much more interesting than an office. Outside lots, and so many swell people around.

I had a pretty good flight today. Only mishap was when I climbed in I had my thumb in the door while two guys tried to slam it shut. They kept banging on it till I yelled "Hold it!" and got my swollen thumb out. It's ok now tho. Forgot about it soon as I got up in the air.

My watch strap came apart again. Every time it does I put it together and squeeze it with tweezers. Sure hope it doesn't drop off sometime when I'm not looking. I must be cutting a new tooth. My gums are sore way back in the rear where you'd think no more teeth could possibly get in.

We have to learn the metric system, or a part of it, for physics. I never studied that before. If I flunk in anything it'll be that. All about density and volume and cm³ and stuff like that. A few of the girls were school teachers so they'll set a high average. There weren't enough chairs in class today so I got to sit on the table in the back of the room. I always wanted to sprawl on the table. They're very informal on class. No rule about smoking in class either, so of course, some of them do. There are very few girls here who don't smoke. But I'm one of them, and will be until some company pays big money for me to advertise their cigarettes. There's a state tax on cigarettes here, so they're more expensive.

What have you all been doing with yourselves? Any blackouts or excitement? One section here had a test air raid but I didn't get in on it. We hardly know there's a war on here. Once in a while we see the headlines on a newspaper but otherwise this is just a school where we have fun and enjoy the Texas sunshine.

Only inconvenience here is trying to find time to wash my clothes, then find some way to iron them. I left some clothes in the basin to soak and a few minutes later the water was gone. Must've evaporated awfully fast cuz the drain was still closed.

Just ate two candy bars and Ruth thinks that's awful. So do I but she smokes, so I think I'm still one up on her. Rather have a batch of hickies than a pair of smoky lungs.

How's your grandson? Been running around much? Gee, I'd sure like to see him. Doggone it, though, I'm gonna stick this out and try to do a good job of it. It won't be so long before I graduate, I hope, I hope! And then I'll be seein' ya'll!

Be good and don't worry about your income tax. It's just like having the measles - you'll get over it if you just take it easy.

Love to all,
Betty

[January 22, 1943]
Thursday 14:00 pm

Dear Folks -

Waiting for class to begin so this'll probably be interrupted in a few minutes. Guess what? I soloed today! Yep - and as far as I know, it's first solo of our class. I better not feel too good, though, cuz then I'll do worse tomorrow. Didn't solo from Municipal yet, but from Dado Field, a dirt field, full of mud puddles and bushes, with PT's, airliners, and bombers for skymates, it sure keeps a guy jumpin'.

This is the first time I didn't enjoy a meal here. And who can blame me - boiled beef tongue and coddar, I think they called it. Just another name for weeds. It was awful. And every time I took a bite of tongue I kept picturing a cow, with it's ugly sticky tongue curled around a hunk of hay. Every bite I would imagine - "this is the tip", and "this is where it connects at the throat" - Ugh!

17:05 pm

Almost time for calisthenics - o'me! I ache already. A cute little cocker spaniel has been sleeping on my jacket all during code class, so I'll probably be scratching Texas fleas all night. Theory class was interesting today. We took a tour of the ships and saw actually how everything was put together on a plane.

20 to 10 - Well, this sure is a scrappy letter. I left the spaniel drinking a coke, out of a girl's hand, and went out for calisthenics. Wasn't so bad today but some of those exercises are sure awkward. Good thing BJ isn't here for them cuz we'd get to laughing all the time. As it is, I had to stop for a few minutes cuz I got to laughing and couldn't get my arms and legs to move at the same time. Trouble is, if you miss count or bawl it up, the teacher makes you get up on a table in front of those 100-odd girls and conduct the next exercise. Two girls did it today. I'd dig a hole and crawl in it before I'd do that. The teacher has a lot of fun out of it. He's swell.

Stood retreat again tonight. All the girls together. There are quite a number of girls here now, but I bet this is really going to be a big school before it's over with.

Guess I shouldn't have mentioned my solo-ing to the girls. They seemed sort of resentful and said I shouldn't solo before 5 hours. The girls I like best think it's swell though. That week at Quincy sure helped me. But I still am not good at it. There's so much to learn and sometimes I get so discouraged. I hope I can do good here.

The gals are jealous of all the fan mail I got today. BJ, Charlie, you and all the enclosures, made lots of mail. I eased the situation by telling them I asked Fred to bring his whole Company over if he comes (Make it easier for me with all this competition too).

Broke the zipper on my jeans and it just won't be fixed. I've tried every way I know how and it's still unzipped. Heck, I wanted to wear them and keep my slacks for good. Guess I'll wear my CAP slacks if I can find them. The zoot suit goes over it all anyway. They're keen. They have a deep knee pocket where I can keep all my scrap.

Haven't got my films developed yet but will try to find a place Sunday. The other girls have been working Sundays up to now on account of bad weather and they wanted to make up for lost time. We never get any time to ourselves, so they said we could have this Sunday off. It'll give me time to do my laundry; I've got a weeks wash piled up. Just don't have time to wash and write letters and study. Letters come first with me.

Gee, I hope Les and Mabel get things straightened out. He sure deserves some happiness. He's such a swell guy.

I've signed up for some accident-sickness expense policy. It's a group insurance and most of the girls are taking it. Amounts to about \$2.00 a month. Guess I should have something like that even though I know I won't get hurt. I'd like to start an endowment policy. What and how much to I pay?

How's about making Pop and Helen write to me? My letters are for all of you. Sure would like to get more mail. Read tonights letters while waiting in line for dinner, after marching ½ mile to mess hall. Dinner was good - apple, orange salad; bread pudding; beef and gravy; cornbread dressing; stringbeans; coffee; french bread (heel). Sure swell food.

Well, Ruth's yelping about lights out, so I'll say goodnight.

Love,

Betty

[January 24, 1943]

Saturday

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen,

Got the boots on today. Sittin' in the mess hall, waitin' to get clearance to fly. Weather's too low. Well, I had over an hour yesterday and the others didn't so I probably won't fly anyway.

Since first paragraph we have marched to the other end of the field and flying has started. Dorothy and I are sitting on a fence near the field, watching the kids fly.

They're going to have a little newspaper here soon and have asked for volunteers to be on it. I'd like to have signed up for editorial or reportial, but instead inked in my name under "Copyreader". They may have too many and switch us around; I haven't any time for it really, but would like to do something.

Mom, you know what Mr. Scotti said? Well, he's wrong. We don't have to fly or do calisthenics if we aren't feeling well. There's no rule about it - it's an individual set-up with each girl. She can do what she likes about the matter.

A whole week's gone - gee whiz it seems longer than that. You needn't worry about my liking this more than home. I've been humming "No Place Like Home", all day, subconsciously. It'd be swell if I could just see you all once in a while. I love it here, too, and am having a grand time. Wish I'd get more mail though. Got a letter from Fred saying he wishes he had gotten married - so I'm glad I didn't meet him. It might've halted this, and this is too much fun.

You people at home have all the worries and trouble. Here we don't even hear about the war. Milk is rationed so we only get a pint a day, but heck, we don't notice that much. We're all too busy to think much about anything. Calisthenics yesterday was really a workout! Was so tired, I got to bed at ten to ten, instead of waiting till 10 pm as usual. We're supposed to use the 24-hr. clock here, so you'd better learn it so you can understand me. Anything over 12 noon, you add 12 to. Up to midnight.

We get mail (I hope) at lunch and dinner now. Have mail orderlies, which change each week. Corporals change each week too, so starting Monday I'll be relieved of my duties.

Last night at the motel, we got the negro helper there to bring some milkshakes over. We didn't get back from the field till nearly eight so we couldn't go get them ourselves. He had to go up the highway and bring back 13 . 15¢ each and I got two chocolates in case Ruth would want one (she didn't) so I didn't even tip him. He'll probably picket cabin 7 now and put pebbles in our bed.

4 hours later - We had to go over to the auxillary field by bus. One girl flies over and the rest go by bus, fly there, and another girl brings the ship back. I brought a Tandum Cub back, with the instructor. Had a heck of a time with it. Bounced twice on my landing. Doggone it, if I can't fly Cub, I can't fly anything.

Gee, it's hot. Another girl soloed, less than five hours too. So I guess it's O.K. Anyhow, I was first. But I've sure done lousy since.

We get to stay out till 12:30 tonight. The bus will pick us up at the motel at 8, and we can probably see a show. Billy Rose's stage show is here. I'd like to see that but it probably costs too much.

Got a letter from BJ, Fred, and Helen today. Helen's was too short. Got a big kick out of BJ's description of the little chicken that died. Sat in class and laughed out loud when I read it. Sure wish we could get together, but I guess we'll just have to wait.

Some of the accents here are sure funny. One instructor says jerje for judge. An' you oughta hear a Texan sing a French song! My instructor always says "Turn thataway." "Cookie" gave out with a song on the bus last night that came as such a surprise everybody howled. It's awful. Goes to tune of "Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" -

"My sweetheart has tuberculosis
My sweetheart has only one lung
She spits on her pocket each evening
She chews it next morning for gum."

Isn't that icky?

I'm going to iron my things Sunday. The motel provides the iron and board.

I'm supposed to be doing math now. Sittin' on the table in back of the room and the instructor is conductin' class, so I'd better listen.

Love,
Betty

[January 26, 1943]
Monday night

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

The thunder and lightning here is terrific tonight. I've never seen such lightning. It's purple and covers the whole sky. At home it never did it much but tonight it comes every few minutes! Tonite of all nites I have to make a tour of the cabins (or ½ of them) to see that everyone is checked in. Ruth is in charge of quarters so I offered to be assistant. This lightning gets me. Gosh, it keeps up all night!

We had Sunday off. Saturday nite Cookie and I went to town and got a \$1.00 turkey dinner at the "Ship Ahoy," a very nice restaurant on Main Street. It was a good dinner but the cranberry sauce wasn't strained. I like yours better. By the way, I'm sitting here eating Ruth's store-boughten cookies. They taste awful, but better than nothing.

Oh, criminy, an awful peal of thunder just went off. Gee, it scares me!

I guess I got all the mail you sent. Sure hope everything turns out right for Les. You better take it easy, Mom, and don't worry about everybody. I know you worry about all us kids - Pop does too. But we'll all get along O.K. so relax and try to have some fun for yourselves. I think I'll have enough money till pay day which is the 15th. They're starting a Cadet Fund so that'll be some more out. But it's for hospitalization, recreation, etc. so it'll be worth it. We all chipped in to have the dog with the mange sent to a hospital.

I hate to keep asking you to send things, but I'll try to make it up to you. Even though it's a real storm tonite, and we may get flooded out or in or something, it might be nice some Sunday, so will you send my shorts (the blue ones), and a couple of my velvet hangers? They have some old wire ones here. The only good ones are my suitcase ones. Say, did I ever thank you enough for the cases? They're sure swell. Ruth got a wardrobe case too, but it's not nearly so nice as mine.

We had spaghetti and meat balls, stringbeans, red-beans, milk, roll and butter, and a beet salad for dinner and it's still coming up. I skipped the stewed prunes for desert. Beets and prunes must be full of vitamins cuz they sure serve them enough. For breakfast every day we have a cereal (I usually get "Pep" or Corn Flakes or something like that), coffee, and grapefruit (which I ignore) or ½ orange or ½ apple, and some bakery stuff. Everyday it's the same - but good! Some kids gripe about it and would give their eyeteeth for bacon and eggs. Sunday morning we buy our own breakfast so I got eggs. Cookie, Ruth and I had dinner Sunday at a place down the highway. Most of the girls were there. It's like a mt. cabin inside, and though the service was slow, the food was very good. The conversations got into books - so I just listened to the music. Ruth reads a lot and Cookie used to teach (she's only 24), so they're way ahead of me there. Sure nice to meet kids from all over. I like Cookie and Dorothy Davis best, and Tony and Freddie too. They're all from California, where the best people live.

Gee, I tried fixing up my income tax returns Sunday. Looks like I owe the government a tidy sum of money. Something like \$135.00, which is just about what we'll get here after all deductions. By the time I pay \$20.00 rent, \$1.00 day food, and try to pay up a couple of my Xmas bills - oh gosh, I promised myself I wouldn't worry.

I have a theory test tomorrow and should study but I'm so sleepy and it's almost 10.

G'nite,

Betty

Got letters from BJ, Fred, Charlie, and Mr. and Mrs. Danielson today.

[January 28, 1943]
Wednesday 14:00 O'clock

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen,

Received Pop's letter today. Paul sure sounds cute. I wrote to Les last night. Don't have a chance to write all of you, all the time.

Gee, from your letter, Mom, all our old friends are married and have babies. Was certainly surprised to hear about Shirley Hoppe and Bernice Larkin. Gosh, I still think of them as little kids. Makes me feel old!

Virginia Crinklaw got cookies from home (California) today, so she passed them around. They were all broken up in little pieces. She and Cookie and I went to the show yesterday afternoon cuz the weather was so bad we didn't fly. Gee, but it was cold! The sun came out today so we're getting thawed out. Ruth is rather discouraged. She hasn't flown for a long time and then it was on bigger ships. This morning her instructor took her up and got lost. Ruth found the field for her. She was so disgusted. Besides that, she's always freezing cold, and her husband has written only a few times from 29 Palms and then only sad letters. So if anything else happens, she'll give up and go home.

Remind me to tell you about the ships that went out of here this morning. It's censorable stuff. The Airliner is still crushing the over-turned gas truck near the Administration building. One engine nacelle is bent nearly off.

Got 100% in my theory test yesterday. Sure hope I can keep it up. This radio code is beginning to get me. With only 12 letters to know, I was doing all right. But we got some more to learn today and I'm pretty slow.

The opening of Ellington Field's recreation room is tomorrow night and we're all invited. The E. Field bus will pick us upright after dinner so there's no time to go change clothes. We have to go in slacks, which makes a lot of the kids mad of course. Doesn't make any difference to me cuz I probably won't get to dance anyway. They'll have square dancing and other kinds of dancing and informal recreation. I signed up to go but won't go if some kids I know don't. I don't want to hang around by myself. It's over by 9:30 tho, so it won't be so bad.

Gosh, these BT's make a racket! I'm sitting out in the sun, frowning because of the brightness on this paper. Just finished lunch and am waiting to go up. We have the Aeronca again today which means I'll be cramped again. For lunch we had shrimp creole, carrots, corn, bread, rice pudding, milk, and cole slaw. Seems to be the most popular food

around here - fish and rice. There's a Rice Hotel, a Rice Institute, and we have Rice practically every day in some form or other.

I got the photos yesterday. Didn't think they were so bad - considering the subjects. Put one on my desk. It's so cluttered up with pictures now, there's no room to write.

A bunch of us went into Cookie's room last night to hear about the President and Churchill's meeting. Cookie loaned me a pair of long underwear cuz she thought I'd freeze, but I didn't wear them - they're too confining! My blue slacks haven't much wear left in them, they're going to go right thru the back pretty soon. And I broke the zipper on my jeans, so I just have my C.A.P. slacks to wear, and they're too tight for calisthenics - so something must be done. I should've kept those old jeans I gave to BJ. Oh, well, I'll see if I can find something in town when I get paid.

Gettin' a headache from looking into the sun, so I'll quit now.

Love,

Betty

P.S. - Mom, will you call Marge Oldeburg and tell her I don't have her address so can't write to her, but tell her to come on down, bring plenty of socks, shoes, shirts, slacks, a coat, and not much dressy stuff.

Wish Merle would write. I haven't had time to write to her - only a card. Probably a lot of people are mad cuz I haven't written, but I just haven't the time!

Betty

[January 30, 1943]

Saturday

Dear Folks -

I think it's Saturday. We've lost track of time here - everybody's so busy and tired. Sorry I didn't write the past two days, but gosh, there just didn't seem to be an extra minute. Got your big letter yesterday. That's swell about Grandpa buying you a ticket. You could stop by here one day if you go soon. If you ever have reason to phone me, the airport number for our bunch is Wydown 9-1246. The motel phone is on the card I sent.

Gee, Pop, I got a letter from Lynn Mayfield and he says when he flew down to N.M. the other day, he learned that Frank Hogan was killed there several weeks ago. Sure was a shock to hear it. Lynn and Frank had been together in Santa Ana and both were in my CPT class.

That fortune teller sounded good in spots. Mrs. Carley told me I'd hear of a flyer killed. Well, that was Frank. He was pretty slow in learning CPT so I guess it finally caught up with him.

Thanks for the snuggies, ect. I haven't received the pkg. yet, but will probably get it today. I didn't get the pen from the PX, so got an Eversharp in town. I'll ask about what you said though.

Mom - Marge Oldenburg's name is not Ovenburg. It's Oldenburg! I wrote her a card last night but I doubt if she'll get down in February if she hasn't heard from them yet. They say the class is full.

I'm writing this in an awful hurry. Just finished breakfast and will have to march to the other end of the airport to class in a few minutes. I read your letter while marching to dinner last night. Kinda got the platoon out of step but I was too interested in the letter to bother.

Had only about ½ hr. flying Wednesday, none Thursday, and ½ hr. Friday, so I'm not making much time. Weren't enough planes for me to fly solo, so some kids are getting way ahead of me in hours. I bump my head on the top of these small ships anyway, on account of sitting on a 'chute. I'll probably be better in a PT if I can pass the check on cubs. They tell me just to look at the instrument board in a PT will make a guy dizzy.

A big bomber came in yesterday and we got to stick our heads up into it and look around. What a big thing! Gosh, I don't see how one guy could fly it! We're not supposed to tell you about incidents like this so don't leave my letter laying around where spies will get at them. That's the kind of rules and regulations we got here. They change rules so fast we can't keep up with them.

Sure foggy this morn. Well, we gotta march!

Love,
Betty

[February 1, 1943]
Sunday

Dear Folks -

Am on the flight line, just down from 1 hr 27 min dual, a tough period where I did everything wrong!

The enclosed pictures are just for the family to look at then put them in my drawer, will you? I have the rest of the negatives here, being developed, so will send them later.

Had a nice time yesterday after I got my bad headache, which lasted all day. Evening was fresh and cool so Ruth and I went and ate and I visited a couple of girls. We didn't have to be in till 11pm so stayed out till then. Kinda relaxing to just poke around.

- Later -

We went over to talk to Mr. Banks, my instructor, and he says he wants to get rid of us next week and put us into PT's. At the rate I'm going, I'll be home before I get into PT's. Gee, whiz, I couldn't spin that darn plane. Went up in a Taylorcraft wheel side by side just now. Didn't spin it but couldn't even stall it so just practiced 8's and S's across road. Came in and saw these 4 bombers (the kind I told you about the other day) sitting there waiting to take off. So I landed and beat it across a bushy field so they could take off. Well, they didn't. And here I was, scooting across the field, the prop cutting bushes

all over the place, instead of being on the taxi strip made of concrete. Hope I don't get called on it.

The 4 ships sure looked pretty coming in and taxiing along together.

Guess the bus will be taking us back soon. It's 6:25 and the sun's hiding behind the haze.

Love,
Betty

[February 3, 1943]
Wednesday

Dear Family -

Got the pkg. OK and Mrs. Rose's letter you sent, etc. Beginning Saturday we get ½ Sat. and ½ Sun. off which is swell. Excuse while I get in out of the rain.

I still hear from Fred almost every day. He didn't have much fun at home - all his old friends were gone or married. He's talking now about volunteering for overseas.

The weather's bad again. Warm enough but it started to rain. I was supposed to have a "spot check" this morning so if the weather clears before noon, I will have it. We've got the sky I want to fly reserved, so I hope I get the check this morning. If I wait till tomorrow I may get some plane I don't do so well in.

Gee, when you wrote about roast lamb and all the trimmings, my mouth watered. Sure sounds good. Our meals are good, but they get monotonous. Especially breakfast. I've eaten so many beets, I'll begin sprouting with them pretty soon.

This course is probably going to last a little longer than they thought in the first place cuz they're adding to it. Sure hate to be away from you all so long, but I've gotta help this war some way and this is sure fun. Got a letter from Marrion yesterday. She's still going with Jimmy, huh?

Glad to hear Walt finally met Helen. I hope she wasn't floating around in a housecoat and hair net when he came. He's a nice fellow, little old though.

Have to study for theory and code tests now. Thanks for the airmail stamps. I sure needed them. I try to write to everybody, and just never get around to it. Had a sore throat for two days, but it's better now. Hope Aunt Bessie, etc. are not mad cuz I haven't written. I'll get around to it sometime.

Love,
Betty

[February 4, 1943]
Wednesday Night

Dear Pop -

Your letter was sure nice - after I got the pages all straightened around. It sure was a jigsaw at first. Paul sounds so cute - wish I could see him!

You remember that picture in Life where it showed the bomb being released from a plane and how it doesn't drop straight down? Well, I learned how to figure when to let the bomb drop in order to hit a target way ahead of the plane. It all depends on the

altitude and speed of the plane (not counting wind, air resistance, etc. That makes it too complicated). It's interesting . Gotta know some formulas like $d = at^2/2$ and how to change mph into ft/sec. Suprising how far ahead of the target you have to drop the bomb. Not that I'll be dropping any, but that's what we've learned in physics (class).

The weather's been too bad to fly now for three days, though I did get 49 minutes solo in on Monday. It was too hazy then, though, and you couldn't see planes very far away, so they grounded the light ships, without radios.

I was supposed to have a "spot check" and the weather's been agin it. It's just to see how the kids are getting along.

We had a meeting last night and discussed the problem of insurance. I was going to take out a policy but decided not to. The Army takes care of all plane accidents (except death, then they don't pay anything), and the contractors cover anything that happens in the bus going and coming to the field. So the only thing left is sickness and hospitalization, and that's to be covered by our group Cadet Fund. We'll each put in \$3.00 and be covered up to \$150.00 in case of emergency appendectomy or something like that. So we'll be covered by insurance all right but won't get anything above expenses. We don't expect to need any insurance though.

The Army Field where the PX is located is Ellington Field. We only saw it at night when we went to their dance, but it's like any of our Calif. posts. Saw that they had a cute little church and a show and lots of barracks and this new recreation hall. Something like the Treasure Island Bldgs. inside. I mean, so big and squarish and bare. Recreation room has a stage, and bleachers around the sides. We can see the field from the air, it's so close to Municipal but we aren't supposed to fly over it. Incidentally, this Municipal is the Howard Hughes Airport. Rice Institute is a University. Probably study how to grow rice. We sure get it enough on the menu, and there are rice fields all around here. You can spot them from the air by the curving irrigation ditches thru them.

Gee, that's swell Mom can go see her father now. Couldn't you manage somehow to go along? Sure wish I cold buy you a ticket. It'd be like a second honeymoon for you two - and you both sure deserve it.

My throat is sore, so I've put Vicks on it and wrapped a thingamajig around it - the only thing I had to put around it, tho it certainly doesn't belong there.

I owe Helen a letter, but these are really for all of you.

Must get some sleep now. It may be clear tomorrow and I wanta be rested up for my check flight if I get it.

Love,
Betty

[February 8, 1943]
Sunday night

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen - (Paul too)

The negatives and the snaps enclosed go with the rest I sent before. Ruth is my roommate. Of course the clothes take the glamour away from anybody - but she's really very nice looking.

Gosh, I guess you're mad cuz I haven't written lately. The days go by so fast I forget when I wrote you. I lose track of time here. We're at the field most of the time so

we don't think in terms of days. Just think of flying time or ground school - and meals. I was at the airport all afternoon so had to buy dinner myself when I got back. Had a hamburger and milkshake. We get such good meals at the field (roast beef, potatoes, beans today) that we don't hafta buy much outside. I got some oranges so I can have one each morning before I go to "work."

Haven't got the cookies yet - but oboy, I bet they're swell. I like something to munch on when I get "home." You can use my ration book - Ruth says her husband gets her ration - only leave me no. 17 so I can get a pair of shoes. I rented a radio tonight (25¢ a day) cuz Ruth isn't here and I'm all alone, and the first thing I heard on it was about the shoe rationing. What next? We seem to get enough food at the field. They're rationed too - in coffee and milk especially - but our menus are practically the same as Ellington Field's.

It's almost 9:30 p.m. and I'm listening to "Take It or Leave It." Feels like home again to hear a radio. Gee, it's been so long since I've heard one.

The \$4.00 is for my Xmas Fund. I hope you've been keeping it up for me. Keep track of what you pay into it, willya? So I can pay you back. This \$4.00 is just on account. Let me know if you get it, huh?

I did my washing today. My CAP slacks will probably be too tight now. They busted out in the seams last week when I was doing calisthenics. I stitched them up - but now, I dunno if I can get in them.

Thanks for sending my bathing suit. I haven't got it yet, of course, but I won't need it yet. Hope you don't forget the cap. We have swimming at the YWCA in town Monday nights. I may go sometime.

Ruth just came in. She'd been to a show in town. I was at the show last night with some kids. Saw "New Voyager." It was keen. Went Thursday too (I think it was Thurs.) and saw "Crystal Ball." Ray Milland is sure a honey.

I had my spot check finally yesterday. Didn't do so well but I got by. My cold had gone to my ears so I couldn't hear much and my head felt blank. I shouldn't have flown but I wanted to get it over with. The other day I flew in the rain. What a kick! The airport was covered over so I couldn't see it and the beacon was flashing, calling all light ships in. But I wasn't going to mess around with any heavy rainclouds and take a chance on someone coming of one as I went in. So I landed at a little airport nearby. Another ship landed there too. There was an instructor and student in that one, so when the weather cleared enuf for us to take off, I followed him back to the Municipal. Sure fun flying in the storm! Gee, the field was muddy. Of course, the runways on Municipal are concrete but where we walk - gosh, my shoes and slacks are full of mud.

Remember the Airliner that ran into a truck here? Well, they've stripped the wings and tail off for repair and have covered the name up with heavy coverings so the company won't be embarrassed at having everyone see it's their ship. Ruth brought the Sunday funnies so I've gotta see how Jungle Jim is getin' along.

Love,

Betty

[February 10, 1943]
Tuesday

Dear Family -

I got the package yesterday and it sure was a treat! The cookies and candy are delish. I couldn't get films here so when I get time to take pictures, they'll come in handy. Can't buy gum here either, except at the PX and they take orders only about once a week and then we can only get four packs each.

My cold is better now. Two nights ago I kept Ruth awake half the night with my barking.

I have a Progress check tomorrow and if I pass that I go on to PT's as soon as they get some PT's to fly. If I flunk, I get 3 hrs. instruction and elimination ride. So tomorrow is important. Was supposed to have it today but the wind was too strong. Most of the kids I've talked to in our class haven't passed so if they don't improve in there hours they're out. (All this is classified information).

We're all going to the rodeo tonight - yippee! Remember Johnny Jones. (BJ's friend at Yosemite?) Well, I got a letter from his pardner saying Johnny was about to get married. Sure surprised to here that!

Sorry I haven't written every day. We have final exams this week in a few subjects. Didn't get back to the motel until 10:45 last night cuz we had a big discussion meeting last night with everybody there. Ironed out some questions that have been bothering people - learned all about the new curriculum and it sure sounds great.

Boy, this wind is awful. I've got sand in my eyes and hair and an inch thick on my face.

What're you getting Paul for Valentines? The 50¢ enclosed is for him. Buy him something cute, huh?

We're supposed to march down to dinner in a few minutes so this letter won't be long. Will let you know if I pass the check tomorrow. Until then I can't think of anything else.

Love,
Betty

[February 14, 1943]
Saturday Night

Dear Pop -

I put in a call to Oakland about an hour ago - they said there'd be a delay of about an hour or two. I hope they get it soon cuz it's almost 10:30 now. I reversed charges cuz I thought it'd be too much trouble dropping nickels in the slot, but I'll send the money. I just wanted to talk to all of you - after all, I've been here a month already.

I have the weekend off, along with about 15 others, on account of being a good girl and passing my Army check flight - by the skin of my teeth, I'd say.

Gee, you've all been swell about writing and I feel badly for not having written so much. We had a few final exams this week and everyone was having check rides, so there was plenty of excitement. Five of our group washed out yesterday and today. Maybe

more. But five I know of. Dorothy Davis, one of the girls I met on the train and who was awfully nice, is out and is going home to Pasedena Monday. If there was anyone that we all wanted to see make good, it was Dotty. She's so darned nice to everyone! It's sure expensive to be washed out so soon - I mean, the expense of the trip and getting settled and all. I doubt if she broke even. Well, we all gambled on it so we all expect it to happen.

I hung around all morning (Ruth was at the airport) and cleaned out my drawers and washed my other drawers, and started to write letters. Then some girls were going into town so I got a ride with them. Two are in the new class coming in. We stopped and had lunch (fried chicken and choc. shake - both lousy) then went into town. I left them and went to a show "A Nite to Remember" - Loretta Young - then bummed around, hoping I'd run into someone I know. Finally gave up and had dinner by myself. Then bumped into 3 girls on their way to dinner so they insisted I come along. We went to the "Ship Ahoy" and had a full course dinner (calf liver - 85¢). I was sure full. They all live at Oleander Courts which is the other way, so I looked around for someone to go home with and met these girls I had come in with. So got a ride home - which was swell cuz it's a long walk from the bus. They wanted me to go to dinner but I thought two dinners was enuf, even if I did skip breakfast (I was too lazy to get dressed). These new girls are from N.J. - one's a doctor (a Jew I think), the other a lab technician. The doc has a swell Plymouth and invited Ruth and me to go to Galveston tomorrow. I've been wanting to go there, so to get a ride in a car is a lucky break.

My Valentine pkg came - thanks! The cookies are cracked but still eatable. Everybody enjoyed the others. Ruth couldn't stop eating them.

Later -

Just got back from talking to youse guys. Still shaking. Gosh, it felt good to talk to y'all! Wish I could've talked to Paul and Les too. Cost \$6.75 (omigosh) plus 20% tax. Talked 9 minutes, she said. I told her to let me know when 3 minutes was up. Felt like I was yelling - in the motel office. Guess everybody there heard me. Enclosing 8.00 (it was worth it!) - D'ya mind payin' the 10¢?

Love,
Betty

[February 15, 1943]
Sunday night

Dear Mom -

Already have finished Fred's candy and started on the cookies. That's a new kind, isn't it?

We start a new schedule tomorrow. Don't have to get up till 6:45 and don't get back to the motel till at least 8:30. The other day a big CAA ship took off the field and one motor sputtered. Everybody jumped up to see the crash but it managed to get around the field and land. Couldn't have done it without all of us helping it around though.

The kids here taking their Army Checks are passing a rabbit's foot around for luck. Don't know if it's worked yet. One girl had it with her when she went out of town

for the weekend and the other girls nearly went crazy. One girl had to take her check without it - passed OK though.

A couple of WAFS were in our field the other day and caused a lot excitement. They've finished their training and are already ferrying so the gals had hundreds of questions to ask. They won't talk much tho. Their uniforms are snappy grey-green trousers and jacket. We may get "pink pants" and our GI jackets for uniforms.

The gals from "New Joisey" sure talk funny. Everybody here seems to have a different lingo. The Texans all say "Can I hep you, honey?" Waitresses, salesgirls, everybody seems to call you "honey" here.

I ironed a few things tonight. Split the seam in my grey dress today. Have all my washing done - got that done yesterday. Can't tell when I'll have another day off.

There's a big fire about ½mile from here tonight - a big lot, This past week there's been at least one big fire every day, it seems. Must be the season for it. Thanks again for the pkg - everything was swell! If you ever send another pkg will you send my rose gabordine dress? No hurry.

Love,
Betty

[February 18, 1943]
Feb. 17

Dear Family -

No mail tonight. Just two letters this morn. I guess everybody's given up cuz I didn't answer enough. It's raining now so there are no calisthenics, which doesn't make me mad.

Flew a PT (open cockpit) this morning. It was cloudy but warm and we went way up above some great big thick clouds - it was beautiful.

The ship handles keen - but there are so many new things, besides being a 175 HP engine, I just can't get over it. My new instructor did a few snap rolls, they're thrilling all

right. You go along at 100 mph and suddenly turn over and up again - sideways. You know what I mean? Gee, it was fun. I can hardly wait to go up again tomorrow.

My new red pants are keen - they're longer than the others. Thanks for sending them. I'm on the last layer of cookies - but I feel like a criminal, using your sugar and stuff and having you send cookies. They sure do go over good though.

We started classes in Navigation and engines today - still have theory and code.

Did I tell you we all got free tickets to the symphony Monday night? I don't remember when I wrote you last. The new class is in. I've gotten lots more sunburn, and windburn, and still am terribly busy. We have leisure at such odd times, there's always somebody around, so don't get much chance to write. Sure love to get mail though.

Guess Roses are home by now. When are you going on you trip Mom? Can you stop by here en route?

Love,
Betty

[Enclosed with letter on separate page]
Thursday night

Got your letter, Paul's and Mom's today!

Dear Pop -

Have just washed hair and clothes - can't get my white socks back to normal - they now have pink feet!

Passed my Army Progress Flight - Yippee! Big fire here yesterday - not here, but at the airport. Two houses across the street burned flat to ground. Will write letter tomorrow. It's 10:30 and I'm weary -!

Love,
Betty

Enclosed is our first edition - valuable, huh?

[February 16, 1943]
February 16

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

Have a few minutes before class so I'll see how far I can get with this. We just finished lunch and took a cold pill (which is just custom - not cuz I have a cold, cuz I haven't) and I'm hungry. I didn't fly at all this morning. There was a mixup about wheather to fly PT's or not. We didn't. The weather was too bad for XCountry. I love XC work. We had so much fun going yesterday morning. Mr. Banks and I went to a little airport about 50 miles from here. He had never been there before either. It was my first XC and the weather got worse and worse. We landed in sunshine at that airport but when we started back, big clouds started forming so we turned back to this other field. Well, gee whiz, by the time we got back here it was one o'clock and I sure hadda go bad! We had been gone since 10 a.m. What a relief to get back.

The cookies sure are swell. "Cookie" and Ellen came in our room the other night and talked awhile. I told them to eat as much as they wanted and they just couldn't stop. Ellen said, "I'm sure glad you have a mother." Well, gosh, so am I.

I got the candy from BJ yesterday. It's a great big red heart - 2lbs. It's so pretty I hate to open it.

Two more girls washed out today. The new class is here but I haven't seen Marge Oldenburg yet. Ruth has, though, so she's here.

We got to go to the Symphony last night. It was really nice but I was so sleepy. We had to rush so, to get there, that we were all exhausted by the time we got there.

I sure wish Helen could get me a chronometer. My watch doesn't run well and we need accurate watches on XC.

They've installed a microphone system here. Whenever you do anything wrong they call over the mike that the Pilot of # so and so owes 25¢ for turning off the runway the wrong side, or running over a wheel block or something like that. We have to pay 25¢ for all errors, even or especially in filling out flying time forms. They use the mike to call people to the dispatcher's office too. It's like the airlines have for broadcasting arrivals and departures.

Some kids got to fly PT's this morning. Sure wish I could've. There weren't enough to go around I guess, and the instructors were being checked on them too.

Broke the zipper on my CAP slacks yesterday. It always was broken but now it's ripped. Sure need another pair of slacks, but never get to town to buy any. I paid my rent (\$20.00) for another month, and now am practically broke, without even having paid my income tax - Worry, Worry!

Love,
Betty

[February 19, 1943]
Thursday night

Dear Family -

Sittin' here eatin' cookies and drinkin' pineapple juice - had to go up to the manager's office for a can opener. We just visited the girl next door who was washed out today. She's taking it pretty well, but I bet she feels awful inside. I know I would. Gee, it's so much fun flying a PT. I sent BJ a pic of the ship (out of a mag) so you can see what it's like. I've been flying from the back, with the instructor up front, but we solo from the front. Oh, gosh. I can't picture myself solo-ing a big plane like that! Sure hope I can, though.

I went into the closet to hang up my coat and a big spider with 8 legs was sittin' on the cross-bar. I couldn't get up nerve enough to kill him, so Ruth smacked him with a newspaper and ground him into the linoleum. Ugh!

Got your Monday letters. Paul sounds so darn cute. I sure love to hear about all the little things he does.

Ooh, I feel creepy - just thinkin' about that spider.

I thought I wrote you about my scar. It wasn't much - is all gone now. I got out of a plane and the mechanics went to move it and swung the wing around and smacked me in the face. Didn't hurt much. It's OK now - didn't take any care at all - just a scratch.

By the way, everybody seems to think we're training for the WAFS, but around here, they don't know for sure just what we'll be in. We're supposed to be able to pass a commercial test - that's all we know. Will probably be based at different spots for ferrying.

Saturday and Sunday are inspection days - some Washington notables are supposed to come down and look us over and see if we're worth the effort. The whole program has been an experiment and it's just beginning to get organized. I'm glad I got in when I did, and got in on the formative part of it all, even tho it's been confusing and hectic most of the time. That's what makes it fun. Nobody knows what they're doin'.

By the way, let me know if you got the \$8 I sent you. You can sell my ice skates for as much as possible and put the dough (minus 10% commission) on my Xmas fund. How much do I owe you on that already? Hope you're keeping it up for me. Sure wish I didn't have my income tax to worry about then I could pay all my bills. Ground school's gettin' tougher everyday. Haven't any time for study. Don't want to fail anything now, not after gettin' a taste of the PT's. They're sure wonderful. Feel like they're my own wings and I'm a real bird - see? I'm goin' nuts!

Sure love to hear about all the familiar places around home. A guy never appreciates the routine of home till he gets away. BJ often writes how she likes to go home and sit by the fire and eat and talk. She seems to be gettin' along ok now, huh? Is she really gettin' fat? That's the mostest I miss right now - havin' her to talk out everything with - even if we did argue a lot. Miss you all too - but I gotta admit I'm havin' fun. Just wish it wasn't so far from home.

Love,
Betty

Yep, Fred still says he luvs me.

[February 22, 1943]
Sunday night

Dear Family -

I've had the thrill of my life today - hanging upside down 4000 ft. above Texas. I was supposed to follow through on recovery from inverted flight, but I was so scared I hung on to anything I could hold. The instructor warned me to tighten my safety belt, so I made it so tight my eyes bulged - but gosh, it's sure an awful feeling to feel like you're falling out - though it's safe as anything cuz I couldn't possibly fall out even if I let go of my hands (but just try and make me do it). It was so funny, my feet even left the floor and hung in mid-air. What a queer feeling. All the dirt from the plane hit my face like rocks. We must've been upside down for about 30 seconds but felt more like 10 minutes.

Got into town with Virginia Crinklaw last night to see "Random Harvest." Gee, it was keen. We walked home from the bus line by the light of the full Texan Moon. It sure was beautiful. Both of us were wishin' - well, you know.

Would sure have liked to taken a walk with BJ tonight. It's such a clear, starry night. It rained hard Friday and rained again part of yesterday, so the mud around the airport is really something. It's a thick, clay-like mud. Everything I have here is either faded, torn, or dirty. Next time you send a package, will you tuck in everything I have that's wearable? If you haven't sold my ice skates, you could have the blades removed and I could use the shoes here. But if you've sold them - O.K. It's all right.

Washed my hair this morn, after getting up at quarter to 9. Ruth had to leave for the field at 7:30 and I didn't have to go till 12:45 so I loafed around and wrote to BJ. I don't write much any more cuz ground school's catching up on me. I got 100% in code test Saturday but I'm afraid I didn't do so well in Propellar test cuz I didn't study at all. There are so many interruptions at the field, and we're so tired when we get home and talk for a while.

Cookie had a bunch of girls over to her room Thursday night for a session of hangar flying. It was relaxing and fun. Ruth was feeling bad so didn't go. She flunked her Army Check today but will get another crack at it. We didn't have dinner at the field tonight. So I had to go over to Prince's Drive-In for some scrambled eggs, toast, and coffee. I sure would appreciate a home cooked meal. From my home! This food here is OK but everything is suthern fried and suthern seasoned, which is usually plenty hot. Well, it's 11:30 - way past my bedtime. G'nite.

Love,
Betty

Tuesday Mar. 2 [1943]

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

A thunderstorm ruined this morning's flying so we're all just sitting around the ready room. We couldn't fly yesterday on account of haze, until nearly lunch time, then I was taken up for a spot check with our flight commander. He's a swell guy but I got too tense so I didn't do so well. Just had time for spins and stalls and a simulated forced landing.

Boy, it's really raining now. It didn't look like it would do this yesterday. This is sure funny country. Sunday two girls and I went horseback riding for an hour (\$1.50). Got some pretty good horses so had fun. It sure felt good to be on a horse again. B.J. would've enjoyed it. We rode through a wooded path and while it couldn't compare with anyplace we've ridden, still there were trees, such as they were - all dried up and mossy. It's that hanging moss that's supposedly pretty but which I think looks crummy. In the afternoon Ruth and I walked and walked and walked. Went to the zoo, to dinner, and to the show and walked back to the motel. Must've hiked at least 10 miles. So between that and the riding, I sure was tired. Cookie had a bunch of kids in her room so we went over there and talked a while. They're a swell bunch of kids. Ruth packed her suitcases, cuz she failed her second Army check. She had to go up before the Board yesterday and they told her to wait around a couple of days until they checked on her glasses. She's had a tough time of it, and is lonesome for her husband, so she won't feel too badly if she's washed out. She expects it. When and if she goes, I'll have to get another room mate. She's been so good to me, I probably won't be satisfied with anyone else. Just hope they don't issue me a 4th classer. I'd like to be with someone in my own class.

They've got a horseshoe court, badminton, and volleyball here now, to provide for our recreation. And now we're organizing a bowling night. Gee, we never have time for that but we sure need the relaxation. While we're on the flight line, we have time, but we're usually so keyed up about being ready to fly and not knowing exactly when we're to go up, it's kinda hard to relax and have fun.

I washed my hair last night. It sure gets dirty around here. Especially in inverted flight when all the dirt flies up and gets in your mouth and hair and skin. 'Course, we wear helmets and goggles so it isn't as bad as it could be.

Gee, I haven't been to town for about 10 days or more. And then when I went the stores weren't open. Haven't anything to spend and nothing to buy, so guess it doesn't matter.

Thanks, all of youse, for the swell letters. We get mail only once a day now, before noon, so the more mail, the happier I am.

Think the instructors are coming in for a conference now, so will close and go adjust my hairnet. Must be neat at all times!

Love,
Betty

Saturday Afternoon
[Same envelope]

Dear Folks -

Am at the field, just finished an hour dual. I forget when I wrote you last, but I know it's been too long. We've been having tests and I've been studying and trying to talk with Ruth. She's lonesome for her husband in Calif. Today she got her second Army Check and flunked it too. So if they refuse to give her another chance, she'll be leaving. Which means I'll have to find a room mate.

I was doing inverted flight again today. I heard in a roundabout way that my instructor thought I was scared the first time so wouldn't do it again. Well, I was, but I made up my mind not to be scared - and I wasn't. I was shaking from cold, honest! It was awfully cold. There are heavy winter flying suits we can use but they're so bulky. He put me upside down and I had to roll it over. Kept my feet on the rudders this time and did O.K. Did a couple of snap rolls too. The slow roll, or inverted flight recovery (½ roll). I dove out at 160 mph which was a little too fast. Lost 1000 ft. We're supposed to lose not more than 200. Well, for the first time it wasn't bad. We're not supposed to do snap rolls, but they're fun.

I got both packages - thanks a lot. The slacks have plenty of room in the seat but that's good for calisthenics. I fixed the zipper in my CAP slacks, but now it takes about five minutes to get in and out of same. Not so good for emergencies. We're not allowed to wear jeans anymore, so I don't have to rush with the zipper in that. Gee, if Ruth goes, I'll be in need of a good watch. Mine stops so much. I've been using a good one of hers. You needn't send the blue dress or the green one yet anyway. But I would like the long stockings and the bras in my drawer. Also any cleansing cream I may have. That big can, etc. if it's not too heavy. I'll be owing you plenty for postage as is.

BJ can wear my yellow skirt if she wants. Send all my blouses and shirts and undies. Don't buy any new ones tho. (C.A.P shirt too)

We're being fixed up on the ration book situation. Just have to fill out a form and give them our book, or show it, and they'll do the rest.

No, I haven't written to the SF bunch - only 2 cards. But gee whiz, I haven't had time to even keep up with you. Got a letter from Mom and Pop yesterday and one from Mom today.

It'll be s (scuse pliz - I was interrupted (I know it's misspelled) to go flying solo) I was gonna say it'll sure be swell to see you, Mom, en route to Ohio.

Love,
Betty

Mar. 5, 1943
[Same envelope]

The check is for when you paid for the dentist, Mom.
[Written at top of page]

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen -

The bad weather has moved on to the northeast now that we're in ground school. I went up for a few minutes this morning but it was too bumpy to do much of anything. It was so pretty flying over the clouds. Had a stiff wind. I flew over a cloud that had a whole rainbow on it and the shadow of the ship went right through the center.

The wind's whistling through the screens in this little classroom, and I've been daydreaming all through navigation. We got paid yesterday 151.48. Our board bill is \$22.40 for the past month. Then I have to pay rent; and pay \$33.00 on my income tax. That's just about 1/4 of the whole tax. Gee, by the time I pay BJ all I owe her, I'll be broke again. But I'm beginning to break even, so if I can just hold out a few months longer I'll be doing OK.

You oughta see the mud around here after the rain! They've put boardwalks in spots but not enuf spots.

I bought a \$3.95 wristwatch the last time I was in town. It's about the size of BJ's and is good for flying. I want to have my gold one cleaned so that'll take a long time and in the meantime I need a good one. I wore my good new slacks today. Have to take them in a little at the waist. They're a bit short but I'm going to leave them that way so they won't get so dirty.

Haven't had a letter from any of you since you got to Quincy, so hope nothing happened to keep you from writing. No mail yesterday; a letter from Pop today.

It was announced tonite that we must be more careful in our behavior, not having any men visitors in our rooms, and not going to night clubs unescorted.

9:45 pm.

Just got back from Prince's where a bunch of us had milkshakes - the first thick chocolate shakes I've had since I hit this dry state.

Ruth is leaving Sunday for Calif. They told her she could write to Cochran and find out all about her eyes, whether she was OK or not. It's all complicated, would take a lot of time and then maybe she wouldn't get anywhere, so she's headin' for home and leaving me roommateless. I'd like to get in with someone I know but right now there aren't any singles - gosh. I hope it won't be me! I have to find somebody quick before they put a new girl in with me.

We have to fly tomorrow morn and Sunday afternoon. I'm plenty sleepy, so g'nite!

Love,
Betty

Monday night
[No date on envelope]

Dear Mom, Pop and Helen -

I suppose by now you've read about Marge Oldenburg and her instructor being killed Sunday. I would've written you yesterday but we were told to keep quiet until it was released. They tried to keep it out of the papers but there were streamer headlines on one paper and a front page story on the other. Will you send the clippings from our papers? I'd like to see how they messed up the story. I had been talking with Marge just before she went up. As usual, she was feeling swell. She had just talked to her husband before noon, on the phone. About 6 pm the siren wailed. We've never had any accidents before so had never heard it, but we thought something was up. The way everybody rushed around looking for doctors and stuff, Virginia and I pieced the clues together and got the story. My former instructor, Banks, was up with his student, Dorothea, who has been pal-ing around with Marge since she's been here. They saw her spin in, a few miles from our airport. So they flew back to report it and got the ambulance and all the officials over right away. Virginia and I were among the first to hear they were killed. Luckily, it was Sunday, so only ½ the kids were there in the afternoon. Mrs. Deaton came over to the courts last night and let everyone know what had happened, so there would be no talking about it. We were told not to write home about it. They haven't discovered why it happened - altho we all have our own ideas - I saw the plane wreckage being hauled back to our airport today. It was pretty well damaged. I know it's a shock, but please don't let it worry you. It's too bad that our first publicity should be this sort, but we all knew what we were getting into, and there is absolutely no reason for any more accidents of that kind. So please don't worry! If you can, Mom, will you - or no, I guess you better not. I was gonna say to go to the funeral, but it would only upset you. We're all chipping in to buy floral pieces. It's going to be something specially nice.

Ruth left yesterday morning for California. I went down to the station with her at 8 o'clock and had breakfast, but the train wasn't going to leave till 10 so I came back cuz I had to leave for the airport at noon. I have the room to myself till I find a new room mate. I can't afford to pay 40.00 to live alone. Cookie and Elin are right next door, thru the closet, so I'm really not alone. I've got lots of room to spread my stuff around but I'll have someone in here soon, so there's no use moving things. I may have to move to a another court, but I like it here. We've got the nicest of everything here.

I got your letter with the snaps of Paul. Gee, they're cute. I had forgotten how big he was. I like the one in his overalls where he's looking up at the tree. His little seat sticks out so cute. The backgrounds make me homesick. Helen's new coat is pretty.

Gee, Mom, I'm glad you enjoyed your plane ride, I bet Charlie sure loved showing off for you. He loves to take people up for their first ride. We'll have to get him to take Pop and Leo up next.

Please don't send any more cookies, tho they're swell and I love 'em, food is too hard for civilians to get, and we get plenty of good eats here.

I got kidded plenty about my "fan mail" cuz I got eight letters today. I never seem to have time to write, except when I'm in the "ready room" and then there are so many people around, it's hard to find space to write. If you take any more pictures - and do take some of all of you, huh? - will you send them down? I've got all that film you sent

but I can't take many pictures and I hate to ask anyone to take pictures of me. I have taken only one in this roll - and that's on the beach at Galveston.

The blue slacks are worn thru at the seat so I'm gonna try to patch them with the other pair of blues. When and If I get around to it. No, don't send the blue skirt or the yellow. But I might use the black if it fits right and isn't too long. You can send that. The shoe situation is the problem. I've gotta have them fixed and haven't any decent ones to wear.

Must write to BJ now, and wash out some clothes. Please forget the crash - we're all supposed to here, and for the most part, things are going on as usual. I felt low all morn. , remembering things Marge had said, etc., but there's nothing we can do about it now.

Love,
Betty

[Written at top of page]

P.S. Ten minutes later - It seems I have a new room mate. She has been living across the court and she just came in and said her room mate is getting married so she'll probably move in with me Saturday. She's a nice girl so we oughta get along!

[March 9, 1943]
Tuesday night.

Dear Mom, Pop and Helen;

I'm glad I got to hear Bob Hope before the nigger came after the radio. I rented it Saturday night and he let me keep it till tonite. So I heard Burns and Allen, part of Fibber McGee, and almost all of Bob Hope before he came for it.

Well, they finally let us fly the BT's. Yesterday we had cockpit procedure and then our new instructor, Mr. Atwood, took a few of us up. The BT 15 is 420 h.p. There are some BT 13's which are 450 hp but I haven't got those. While we were on the line yesterday (this is C.I. incidentally) a Lockheed AT came in, landed, and evidently the pilot pushed the gear release instead of flaps and the landing gear gave way and the ship just slid along on its belly with a shriek of tinny clatter. Nobody was hurt, but it took quite a while to remove the plane from the runway. Bent the props and gear. Didn't turn over, just coasted along its bottom. They tell me the same thing happened last week too. They just use them for training. It didn't take long to fix it up cuz it was flying again today.

I've gotten so I know a Flying Fortress now and also a P-51. The P 51's are sleek looking and appear deadly. Fast too. We see quite a few different ships come in but we're not allowed to tell you about them.

Oh, about my BT stuff. Well, I got Atwood for instructor and he's keen. He's young, quick-thinking, went to Kelly Field, and has had training in BT's which a lot of the instructors hadn't had before. So I got one of the best. He's awfully cute but only about 5' 4". Well, yesterday was the first time I'd even been up in the air for so many days, then to spring that big ship on me - holy cow, I sure was confused! Didn't do much except try to get used to the feel. It's got a big wooden control stick. And I try to keep the

turn and bank indicator in the center. That's one instrument we didn't have in PT's. Also have the radio to contend with. Atwood handled that yesterday and today though. He spun it for me yesterday. Today I did it. It recovered so easily, it surprised me. From now on there isn't going to be any low work except 8's. Most of our flying will be at plenty of altitude. Today he slow rolled and it was so smooth.

Inverted flight in this ship isn't so thrilling cuz we have the hatch over us. I still think the PT's are more fun. Gosh, in simulated forced landing on these you have to lower 20° flaps, change prop pitch from high to low, change gas tanks, and open the hatch. 'Course, all this time you're supposed to find a field and watch for other planes. Oh me - sure seems like a lot to do. I don't know if your interested in all this prop pitch, etc. stuff, but I don't understand it enough anyway to explain it.

How's Greg now? Hope he's recovered O.K.

Well, it's 10:30 and I have to get up at 6 so I better say goodnite. Gee, I'd love to see Paul - doggone I bet he's cute. Oh, I never got those drawings from Shirley. Did you send them?

Love,
Betty

March 10, 1943

Dear Mom -

Just wrote to Aunt Bessie. It's 8:30 pm and we got back from the field about ½ hour ago. They played taps at retreat tonight, with the flag at half mast. We all stood at attention, saluting - as usual - facing the setting sun (very pretty with lots of huge clouds) and the instructors were all lined up facing us. The flag between us. It was awfully nice and a tribute to Mr. Morgan and Marge, Nothing at all was said, but everyone knew what it was for.

We had loganberry cobbler for lunch today - the best dessert we've had yet. Rice pudding tonite but that's a common occurrence. When you come down, you can probably eat with us (cafeteria style) if you like.

I washed my hair last night and Cookie came in and talked a while. It was 10 o'clock when I crawled into bed and started to write a letter. But I fell asleep. It sure felt good to have the whole bed to myself. Slept straight thru till 7 a.m. when the negro phones me. He phones us all then. The phone sure startles me, but Ruth took her alarm clock home. I'll have to get a room mate soon cuz the new class will probably arrive next week. I'll probably move to Moter Inn, just up the road, this weekend, or if I can persuade the girl, she'll move in here. I like this place better and she likes hers better. Both our room mates washed out, that's why we're singles.

If you haven't sent my clothes yet (but I guess you have) you better not send the blouses till I let you know. We've signed up for some kind of uniform, and I think it's a work uniform. Whether we'll have to wear them or not, I don't know. But I s'pose we will. They're getting more and more like Army all the time.

Gee, I love to hear about Paul - what he does, and what he says. Sure would love to see him. Would love to see all of you for that matter. How's Les getting along? He writes me a card every so often. I'll have to write him a nice long letter soon.

I've got the heater on - left it on all nite sometimes on account of the cold, but it's warmer tonight. So long, folks, for now.

Love,
Betty

March 11 10 pm
[Same envelope]

Dear Mom. Pop and Helen -

It's now March 12, 2pm. That's as far as I got last night. I was really tired out from playing ball most of the day. I didn't fly cuz at first the weather was bad and then when it cleared up they decided I had too many hours already. So I played ball and played cards with my ex and my current instructor and a girl. My sides hurt today from playing so hard (ball, I mean - not cards).

I got the two packages o.k. Thanks a lot. I'm wearing the bright blouses now because we may have to wear uniform work clothes soon. I got your letter today - in which you mentioned Marge. I'm sorry it upset you so. Things like that will happen, of course, but our safety record is clean except for that one. You needn't worry about me - and I hope you won't!

Gee, I'm glad, Mom, that you're finally buying yourself some clothes. It's about time you got something for yourself.

I was lying outside on the fence today, watching the clouds go by. The sky is bluer than I've ever seen it down here. It rained last night for a little while.

I haven't patched my blue britches yet, but mended them with red thread. The needle happened to be threaded with red. It doesn't show, so as soon as I get around to it, I'll patch them right - as if I know how!

I'm in the ready room now, waiting for my instructor. He should fly with me today cuz lots of the kids have caught up their hours now, so I'm not so far ahead.

Still haven't done anything about moving yet. Mrs. Deaton said to sit tight till she finds out what they're going to do about the new class coming in. So I'm content to stay put for awhile anyway. I've got so much junk in my room now, it'll take me a week to move.

Our major talked to us today and emphasized how we must obey rules, even tho we're still civil service (only theoretically!). We have some forms to fill out for supplemental shoe rationing so we may get some walking shoes. Mine are all run down at the heels now.

Guess I'll go hunt for my instructor and see what he wants me to do.

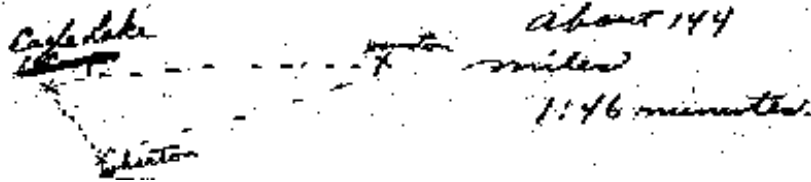
Please don't worry!

Love,
Betty

[March 14, 1943]
Saturday night.


Dear Mom, Pop and Helen -

Well, after 3 days of sitting on the ground, I got up again today. Went cross country with my instructor and had lots of fun.



Sunday 6:50 a.m.

I'm waiting for the bus to take us to the field this morning. It should be here now. Our schedule is changed again, so we leave at 6:50 and still get home about 8. Ground school six days a week. Won't that be something?! We're going to start Link training too. Some of the girls had some yesterday but I was flying most of the time I was there. My instructor, Mr. Ines, and I went to Eagle Lake, from there to Wharton, and on home. He didn't give me much time to prepare check points and I couldn't hear him very well over the gasport, so it was mostly thru luck that I hit the points nearly on time. It's a lot of fun going cross country. We didn't land at Eagle Lake. Just circled it and Ines took over and played around a little with snap rolls. At Wharton we met another ship from our field so we all left together - in formation - like this: Ines flew most of the time we were in

formation. Oughta see  when the other guy peeled off - gee it was swell to watch. We were only a few feet apart and he swung over, his ship's belly toward us and swooped down to the right. We looped and rolled and had a grand time, but it's all against the rules and my instructor would lose his job if the powers that be had seen us.

Went to the show Friday night. Saw "In Which We Serve" with Noel Coward. Made me think of Paul Fields. How is he gettin' along? The comedy was so cute. That little teeny mouse and the big cat - Tom and Jerry. Did you see it? The one where the two cats fight over the mouse. I laughed like heck when the cat was gonna use the axe on the mouse. And then almost hit the other cat. And when the little mouse was dragged backwards on the fish line. The expression on his face was so cute!

I'm at the field now. Our schedules are all changed so we don't see the same kids we used to all the time. Cookie is still in my platoon but Emma and Ann are in the afternoon flight and Dora and Margaret - they were the most fun. Well, I guess we'll get used to the different kids, but we all hated to change, having been together for two months now.

My instructor is too busy with his other two students now so Cookie and I are trying to work a calculator and are getting gray over it. In a little while we're going to be initiated into the Link Trainer. The kids say it's sure confusing.

Love,
Betty

Oh, I meant to tell you why I stopped writing last night. It was 8:30 and I hadn't eaten yet. Most of the kids had just got back from the field and went off in groups.

Luckily for me, Cookie was feeling low, having gotten lost on her XC, and she felt too discouraged to talk to anybody. So, I hung around and finally she went to dinner with me over at Prince's. We met Betty Eames there and we all sat and talked till after 10. Our curfew last night was 11 p.m. They drank beer and I had a milkshake, trout sandwich, and chocolate sundae. A bunch of kids in the 4th class were there and invited us to their room for a card game. So, we sat on the floor and played black jack till almost 11. Good thing we had to go then cuz I lost 30¢ in that time. We played for pennies and I got reckless and bet 4¢ and a time.

I have a great big wash to do at "home". I should be moving this weekend cuz my rent is due and I can't keep the room by myself and the girl I'm figuring on moving in with is expecting her husband today and doesn't know how long he'll be here. So I have to wait to see what goes.

Have to go to Link now. Will probably spin in. Don't worry, Mom, it doesn't leave the ground.

Love,
Betty

[March 16, 1943]
Tuesday

Dear Mom, Pop and Helen -

The weatherman says rain so it's beginning to clear up. It was such a balmy night last night, I thought it'd be clear this morning - but it wasn't.

After I wrote to you Sunday morning, I went over and got acquainted with the Link Trainer. Got 40 minutes in it. It's sure interesting but you've really got to concentrate. It's invaluable training. The upper class gets priority on the trainers, so I probably won't get any more till Sunday. We're starting another new schedule now. Breakfast 7:30. Lunch 2:00. Dinner 7:00. Big space in between, huh? We're going to have two hrs. of ground school (instead of 3) including Saturdays.

Yesterday I had fun on my first solo XC. It was to El Campo, about 70 miles west. The weather looked pretty bad, after I got up, and I thought it was gonna rain. In an open cockpit, I would've had to boil water or do slow rolls, neither of which was convenient. I had been over the first 55 miles, only not exactly the same course, so that part was familiar enough. I thought the weather would close in but I kept going cuz I could've turned around any time. When I got almost there, I saw a ship in front of me - it was my instructor with a dual student. Then, landing, I saw 6 other PT's there - also on XC. So we all took off one right after another, but didn't fly formation this time. The weather was too rough, and besides, it's against rules.

This morning our instructor introduced us to the BT's. I don't think I should tell you about them, but they are big, and a heck of a lot of instruments. Over twice as much horsepower as the PT. The kids say the PT's are much more fun, they're not so much work. Half the instructors have to be checked out on the BT's before they can teach us. My time's about up on the PT - have only 53 more minutes, so they tell me - but I haven't practiced maneuvers for a week.

Gee, I was so lonesome Sunday afternoon. Got home from the field about 2:30, walked for a while, went to see "My Sister Eileen," and walked back and had dinner - all alone. But that evening four girls came over, so I had company, but didn't get any letters written, as I should have. A bride (one of the girls in our court) brought her husband home, so we made a noisy reception for her and threw rice. That was at 11pm. Bet the other inmates were mad! Her room mate came and stayed all night with me (her girl friend, not husband!). I have to get a room mate right away cuz my rent is \$40.00 alone, so if I wanta eat next month, I'll have to remedy that! Got your letter with Shirley Anne's signature in it. Gee, she's getting good!

Love,
Betty

[March 19, 1943]
Thursday night.

Dear Family -

I'm sittin' in bed, so sleepy, but I should've written you today, so will now. This may be my last night alone. Gretchen Gorman may move in with me tomorrow, or over the weekend. This is the best court of all three, except it isn't near a bus line so is hard to get to town, and we don't have outside phone calls from our rooms. Our phones just connect with the office. Cookie has her radio on, but I can't hear it except to know Gildersleeve is on. It's already 9:25 pm our time.

I got the letter about Marge and the clippings today. I don't know if I should tell her friends about the funeral - most of them probably want to forget the whole thing, so there's no point in bringing it up again. (Did you mean the flowers read 139 instead of 319?)

I rode with a visiting Captain (Air Corps) today. He wanted a few "gunea pigs" to fly with, cuz he's inspecting the school. Two girls from BT's and two from PT's rode with him. I was first. Our flight commander asked if I would like to. I said no, but I did anyway. I haven't practiced maneuvers in about 9 or t10 days so I was scared as heck that I'd do everything wrong. He was a nice guy though and even tho he looked tough, he wasn't, so I felt at ease. He told me what to do, before we took off. It was quite windy, but I did stalls, steep turns, lazy 8's, and chandelles. Then he told me to do a slow roll. Well, in these ships (open cockpits) he can talk to me over the gasport, but I can't talk back. So I throttled back on the engine and yelled "I've never done slow rolls." I tried 3 times but he couldn't hear me. He asked me If I'd had acrobatics. I shook my head. He said, "Haven't you had slow rolls on inverted flight?" Well, I'd recovered from inverted so I nodded. He couldn't understand why I wouldn't do a slow roll and I didn't seem to be getting anywhere, shaking my head and waving my hands, so I held the stick between my knees, and not having any paper, I grabbed the Form 1A (log book and mechanics book) and scribbled a note on the back. It's about 8x10 so it was big enuf. Well, the wind darned near blew it out of my hands when I held it over my head but he saw it and I'd written "I've recovered from inverted but have never put it in." So he luffed and said "OK, I'll turn it over and you get it out." So we did it that way. My spin wasn't good -

nor my landing. But he said OK when we got down. Only criticism was, I didn't look around enuf. There was lots more wrong, but he didn't bother to discuss it!

Gosh, it's hot. Even with an overcast sky and a strong wind, I flew without a jacket and on the ground I just sweat! I did terrible in an engines test today. I just don't understand that stuff. You know, Pop, how dumb I was about our car. Well, these things are far worse.

Yesterday I visited the control tower and got a big kick out of the way they control the traffic. They've gotta be on the watch all the time. Now that I'm through with PT's (darn it), I should start on BT-15's pretty soon. Soon as the whole class gets their time up, I guess. Most of them have their required time now. By next week we ought to be in BT's. Confidentially – they're 450 horsepower. Have a canopy over the pilots. One guy in front (student) and instructor in back. We'll use radio back and forth and to the tower. In BT's we'll be able to talk back and forth to the instructors. We couldn't in PT's.

I may send some slacks back if I get the new ones you're sending soon. I don't know if we'll have to wear the work suits they're getting for us. They're like our zoot suits, only lighter. Gee, Mom, thanks for the slacks. I still owe you for those others, but I'll pay you next payday, OK?

Mom, have you decided when you are going to Ohio? Do you know yet?

I bought a pretty long sleeved brown and white striped blouse (silk) (or rayon?) and a wool long sleeved wine colored shirt for the field on cold days. Sure wish someone would do my ironing. I don't mind the washing but the ironing gets me. The kids say the laundry service here isn't so good.

I washed my hair the other night. It's sure long and thick now. I ought to have it cut but it'll be so funny and straight then.

Gosh, I just noticed practically every paragraph in this letter begins with I. If I don't watch out you'll all think I'm gettin' too interested in "I" – but there isn't much to write about. Well, there is too – in fact, there's too much to write about. I think of dozens of things to say, but it takes so long to write them. If I only had a typewriter or a dictaphone – or better still, if I could only sit around by the fire with all you guys, then it'd be much easier to relate to all the field gossip and all the little unimportant things that happen. I have to get my CAP slacks cleaned. They got dirty playing softball, and then, not having paper with me, I wrote all my flying info on this afternoon's flight on the front of my slacks. On the front of my slacks – in big pencil writing – it says: "Link 14:20 34" 191 CRANFORD" J.R Confusing, huh? Must close now and get some sleep.

Love,

Betty

Sunday night.
[Same envelope]

Dear Family –

No more news about Sweetwater yet. We think our class won't go for another 3-4 weeks. The fourth class is leaving tomorrow – weather permitting. I didn't care much for Houston but compared to what I hear of "Vulture Gulch" (Sweetwater), this is pretty good. Too bad you couldn't come here, Mom, While we're still in Houston. At least there are some nice shops and dept. stores and good eating places. Virginia and I ate at Gaido's

tonite – chicken dinner \$1.50 – and a swell shrimp cocktail. Really swell. The weather was keen today, I had planned to sleep late on acct. of getting in at 12:40 pm (we went to see “Yankee Doodle Dandy” last nite), but I woke up at 7 so got up, had breakfast at “Sivils” drive-in, and met a friend and so went with her while she ate, then I walked up to Rice Institute. It smells good up there. Rice Institute is right across the street from Herman Park and the Episcopal Church where I went this morning (Honest!). The almond trees smelled like Calif. and the grass was so green. I felt so peaceful and good. The church service wasn’t so nice as in Alameda but the church is pretty. Has about 10 steps leading up to the alter. I didn’t stay for communion cuz I was too hot. It was one of those moist hot days. Came back and got into my swimsuit and lay out in the yard with the other kids and tried to get back my tan that peeled off during the week. Between the peeling itching and these darn gnats that chew a guy up around here, I sure do itch.

A girl in my class, Anne McClellan, is getting a leave of absence on acct. of health, and may go home to S.F. She may phone you sometime so if she calls you’ll know who it is. She’s the most beautiful blonde in school. Had the instructors going crazy! She’s smart too and awfully nice.

Do you want my new ration book? I’ve no use for it. Don’t even know what it’s all about. I’ll send it if you want it.

If we move to Sweetwater we have to supply our own towels, stand at attention when confronting an officer, scrub our floors, make our beds, etc., etc. But they say the food’s good and we even get ice cream and cake there. So maybe that’ll make up for the rest of it.

Thanks, Pop, for the letter. Les writes postcards so everyone can read them and you leave the envelope open so all who want can peek, huh? (I don’t get the pianist joke – not quite). Are you as tan as I am? This Texas tan is a muddy brown – not golden an like in Calif. Please tell me everything Paul does – I love to hear about all his new tricks and try to imagine him doing them. Sure miss seeing him grow up. Guess I’ll have to get one of my own.

A chandelle used to be an army maneuver for gaining altitude and changing direction but now it’s just used for coordination. You dive the plane to about 120 mph straight ahead. Smoothly turn into the wind, holding back pressure on stick, come out on horizon at 180° change in direction. Need lots of back pressure. Make ‘em steep and they’ll really pull your stomach in.

Love,
Betty

[Same envelope]

Navigation Test

From Aircraft carrier U.S.S. Corregidor at 32° 24’ N, 69° 48’ W, C (Course) 170°, Speed 30 K, with wind 20 mph 270°, plane takes off at 15:30 to investigate suspicious oil slick sighted at 29° 36’ N, 65° 50’ W. Plane’s A/S is 160 mph fuel capacity 100 gals. Uses 24 gals. per hour. When plane has returned on board, carrier takes new course to meet destroyer, McConnell, at 32° 8’ N, 68° W. Variation of area is 12° W.

Find: Plane's TC (True Course) and MH (Magnetic Heading) to oil slick, TC and MH back to intercept ship. Time and location of interception. Time and distance to McConnell. MC (Magnetic Course) to McConnell. Fuel remaining in plane after trip.

How's this for a problem? I finally got it worked out, with the aid of several kids. I like navigation best of all. Engines leaves me dazed (in one test I got lowest in the class, aren't you shamed of me? I am. Got 60%).

We were supposed to hand this in but I think (I hope) I've copied all the data.

Helen, can you work it? Must first make a Mercator Chart and locate points. Then on another paper draw the wind triangles. Involves moving base problem which is interesting even tho I don't exactly see why and how of it all.

Love,

Betty

[Written on back of "Navigation Test"]

Might as well use this space too. I didn't get to fly yesterday so I'm first up tomorrow morning. The day before I spent a lot of time practicing landings but couldn't perfect them. It makes me so mad. (Y'know, I think I've lost me sense of hoomer since I got here. Don't seem to take things so lightly as I usta). Anyhow – here's how the landing works. You're cruising along in high pitch (propeller pitch meaning low rpm), and you come into pattern to land. First you come over the field at 1500' to see which runway they're using. Then get down to 750' (altimeter set at 50' [cuz that's our altitude] on the ground). That's our pattern altitude. When you glide you push prop pitch forward to low pitch (high rpm – don't ask why – that's what we learn in engine class which I don't savvy). Entering traffic keep airspeed at 100 mph, lower 20° flaps (10 turns of crank), phone tower when you turn on base leg for landing instructions, open hatch, set stabilizer (did that way back on glide) nose high for landing – then go ahead and land. Try to hit the first 1/3 of runway. Sounds pretty simple here but up in the air everything seems to have to be done at once and trying to keep up at 750' instead of wobbling up to 800' and down to 650' is what gets me. Then on touch and go landings you take off remembering to adjust stabilizer so you don't stall (I didn't know this the first time. Scared Mr. Atwood!), climb to 350', make climbing left turn, climbing right turn, pull up flaps, change prop pitch, increase throttle and away we go. Uh-oh, I forgot to close the hatch and Mr. Atwood has flown right out of the back seat! End of 1st lesson.

[March 22, 1943]

Monday.

[Written at top of page]

Pop – BJ has a pic of a PT. Didn't she show it to you? I sent her one quite a while ago. 'Scuse scribbling – if I ever get a chance to write a real letter, it'll sure surprise ya, huh?

Dear Folks –

Gosh, it's been days since I've written, huh? All morning I've been reading an engines book, trying to learn carburetion. It's even becoming interesting – so I stopped. Am now waiting for lunch line up. I don't think I wrote you about my ride with the captain, or did I? I wrote to Les, I guess, so you can read his letter. It was a funny ride. They needed someone to ride with this Capt. who was inspecting the school. I thought 4 girls rode with him, but I found out later only two did. Don't know why I was "it". But I enjoyed it even if I was scared at first. After all, he was a Captain and I was sure he'd be darned critical. But he was nice.

Got your letter with the telegram today. Isn't that funny! Gretchen moved in with me Saturday. She's about 33, married, is Swiss-Norwegian, lots of fun, and from Chicago. We get along OK – so far. She has two Morse code sending sets so Cookie rigged one up in her room and we have the other in our room, so we can talk in code back and forth between the rooms. 'Course, it'd be lots more understandable to just open the door and yell, but this way we get code practice and it's fun.

It's a beautiful sunny day, and after we had all expected to start BT's today, we're just sitting around. I hear the instructors are still being checked out on them so we have to wait.

We've got G.I caps now – look like baseball caps – khaki color. Finally heard from Ruth. She's in Glendale, and her Fred is in Ferry Command. My Fred still writes most every day – still in love (he says).

Looks as though I'll keep my "scar". I thought it'd go away , but about an inch of it still shows – not bad tho. Next to my mouth.

Oh, I don't think I told you I got your pkg. The one with the blue slacks. They're little tite but OK. I let the cuffs down. I got that other pkg. Too – the one with the bras, etc. Thanks! I'll see about having a picutre taken – sometime.

Love,

Betty

[Same envelope]

[Written at top of page]

Our new rules and regulations.

1. CHANNELS: All communication to Army or Cicilian Headquarters will be addressed to the Commanding Officer through the Chief Establishment Officer.
2. REPORTING TO HIGHER AUTHORITY: Students desiring to report voluntarily to higher authority for official or ordinary business will do so through CHIEF Establishment Office. Nothing in this regulation shall preclude a Trainee from going direct to the Post Adjutant under such circumstances that they believe no other relief is adequate.
3. COURTESY: Officers and instructors will be treated with the highest degree of courtesy at all times. Attitude and conduct suitable for any student of any Army Flying Training Detachment is expected of Women Pilot Trainees.

4. PHOTOGRAPHS AND DISCLOSURE OF MILITARY INFORMATION:

The following subjects are considered military information:

- a. Number and condition of training places.
- b. Number of students in training and number of graduating.
- c. Number of students eliminated from the school or from any class.
- d. Name of any school to which students are sent and time of arrival or departure of military personnel.
- e. Information contained in official letters, directives and orders to and from this Headquarters.
- f. Identity of visiting military personnel, including type of airplanes arriving at or leaving this station.

All information concerning military activities will be released by the Public Relations Officer.

5. PHOTOGRAPHS: No photographs will be made of the landing field, airplanes, buildings, and installations without the written approval of the Post Intelligence Officer. All photographs taken will be in accordance with published regulations regarding same.

6. PERIODICALS GIVING INFORMATION TO: Trainees will not give out information or write stories or articles for publication without having previously secured, through channels, written permission of the Commanding Officer.

7. CORRESPONDENCE: No official correspondences will be sent direct to higher Government agencies. All Official communications will be sent through military channels, i.e., Commanding Officer of the Post.

8. NECESSARY VIOLATIONS OF ORDERS: When circumstances over which Trainee has no control make it necessary to violate orders in order to do the obviously right thing, the facts will be reported as soon as possible to the Chief Establishment Officer.

[Written on the side of paper in Betty's handwriting] – Including this. But there are 8 pages so this little bit won't matter.

[March 25, 1943]
Wednesday

[Written at top of page]

Pop – Sure I'm an upperclassman now. Was a month ago cuz a class came in then. Another new class is due today. Don't know what they're gonna do with them all. B.

Dear Family:

Gee, I was sorry to hear about Greg. I got a card from Les the same time as your letters. I hope he's all better now.

I just finished a navigation exam. Got OK on that. Then had meteorology exam and as soon as I handed my paper in, I realized I had made two errors. Hope I didn't get many more wrong.

Our new "baseball" caps make us all look like tough chain gang members. I'd rather wear a net. The wind is about 35 mph today – and just try to keep a cap on in that breeze. We still are not flying and our whole class is griping because the 4th class will be getting ahead of us if we don't hurry and get started on BT's. Ours are BT-15's, I think, Pop. Probably the same as BT-17's. I think they should have put this school any place except here. We never have good weather. It's either windy, too wet, too overcast, or too hot. As yet, we haven't had many hot days.

During calisthenics we've been doing the "Marching Manuel." It's fun. There are about 50 girls (4 squads) and we go "Forward march, count cadence twice, to the rear march, count delayed cadence twice, march the squadron to the rear march by columns and get them back again, halt the squadron, right face, hand salute." We do all that, giving our own commands, then do it silently, everybody concentrating and moving together. We do it pretty well, but when he sticks four flank movements in it besides all the rest, well, it's confoosin' to say the least, but nonetheless amoozin'.

I had just about finished Gretchen's cookies, so was sure happy to get this swell box from home today. They weren't broken, even though you had them upside down when you addressed them, Mom. They came just in time to eat some before our tests. Of course we share things around here. Hope you don't mind my passing them around. We had this morning off again so we got to study. First time I've done much studying. Sure glad I did. The tests weren't too easy.

Last night the kids that wanted to, got to go to the Roller Derby free. Our Chief Establishment Officer (Miss Hays) knows the management. Remember the fights they used to have on Oakland? Gosh, they sure had some good ones last night. When a guy socks one fellow and knocks two out, he's doin' OK. This big guy knocked two fellows down, got a big iron bar and konked one on the back of the head, kicked him and banded heck out of him. I suppose a lot of it was out on, but it was a swell show. This # 16 of the Dallas team was a brute. He would stand around while one fellow was skating the ¼ mile dash, and on the last lap he'd throw his helmet onto the track and trip the skater. He did that twice before he was ganged up on. Every time somebody would try to fight him, he'd hold up his hands and as he had both wrists in casts, nobody would hit him. Remember Tommy Atkinson (Buddy's kid brother)? He was on the Houston team. He skated on Oakland when we used to go. My platoon has disappeared. Guess I better go.

Love,
Betty

[March 28, 1943]
Sunday Morning

Dear Family –

I no sooner sit down to write to you than I get a phone call. Then I started again and the nigger came in to scrub the floor. Now it smells like disinfectant.

Gee, it's such a nice day. Yesterday was hot. We've just been having ground school this past week so have only gone ½ days. Yesterday afternoon I lay out in the patio in my bathing suit. I didn't realize I hadn't been exposed to sunshine for so long. Now it hurts to sit. I have to sit on the back of my spine so my legs won't touch the chair. My back doesn't hurt but gee the top of my legs do. Oughta see how red!

Wish I were home today. It's a keen day for a picnic. Felt so lonesome the past few days - mainly because we haven't been flying and it gives me too much time to think. But we're supposed to start on BT's tomorrow. They told us that last week too. This past week has given me a chance to get a little more acquainted with the kids though. Before I was always kind of slow about talking to any of them. But I went to a party at one of the girls' rooms Friday nite and got along swell. It was just a bunch of girls but we all sang and the others talked - I listened - and we had fun. They served drinks. We all had to bring our own glasses and as long as I have never had any of the kids over, I took my precious cookies over as my offering. They sure went fast! The kids love 'em. "Cookie" says to tell you, Mom, she likes you very much. When you came down, you'll meet all the kids. If I'm still here. I mean, it's been so long since I've flown now, if they should spring an Army check on me, I'm sure I'd wash out. Our class has sure been getting the bad breaks.

That letter from N. Z. - Betty Lee, the girl I write to - has a 6 months old baby girl. Her husband's gone to war.

Cookie and Crinklaw and I are going bowling in about ½ hr. I haven't bowled since last time I went with B.J., but they're starting a League among the classes, and I thought I might as well get in on it. Cookie had a call from home (Azusa, Calif.) and was at breakfast with me when it came thru, so is now in the office trying to get connected. So if they don't hurry, we won't get bowling. They take so long to get calls thru. I was tempted to call home several times this week, but my depleted bankroll (\$4.77) stopped me. Just re-read you letter. Good thing I didn't call this morn. All of you won't be home today - huh? On acct. of Quincy trip.

I sent a package home. Just a couple of little things for Helen and BJ. Tell Helen to keep 'em polished or they'll tarnish. All they need is silver polish. I hope she'll wear them. I thought they were cute.

Hope Greg is better now. I'm sure glad Shirley likes school. She'll probably be awfully smart, too.

Gretchen's husband came Friday so they've moved back to Motor Inn and I'm alone again. He may stay 10 days, then Gretchen will come back here. He's going to leave his station wagon here, which'll be keen if Gretchen will be cooperative. Practically everything is community property down here anyway.

Gee, can't you get BJ to come down with you, Mom? I sure miss talking to her. Things aren't half as much fun when I don't get to talk 'em over with her. That's the main thing wrong with my being here. Y'know, there was sumthin' between us just doesn't happen to everyone and I'm afraid that it'll change if we don't share things like we usta. Oh, nuts - I'm just makin' myself feel bad. Sure hope Grandpa doesn't change his mind about sending the money.

You say my 3 mos. is about up. Yeah, but now it's a 5 ½ months course and we've been wasting a couple of weeks lately so maybe it'll be longer. Don't think I haven't been thinking about this too. But I'm really not sorry I came. I enjoy it swell and it does make me feel I may be useful for a change. Gotta go now.

Lots of Love,
Betty

[April 1, 1943]
Saturday

Dear Barbara Jean –

I haven't written any letters the past couple of days. It's been so hot! I guess Mom told you we may be moved to Sweetwater. The kids are calling it "Vulture Gulch". It's in a hot dusty part of Texas. The fourth class is flying up Monday. Our class doesn't know if or when it goes. We probably won't fly up cuz there aren't enough BT's. I had an awful time trying to land that darn plane yesterday. After some stalls and spins we flew over to Dado and practiced landings. Mine overshot, undershot and bounced. They were awful! I have 3 hrs. 45 min in BT's now. Just had 40 min. more in the Link.

Today all the PT instructors were released cuz they won't need them anymore. There's about 15 new fellows from Kelly Field and a lot of old PT instructors, including Bud. It seems like a dirty deal. They didn't give them any notice, just told them they were released. I brought my camera today (intuition I guess) and took a few snaps. I only had 6 left; and had a whole roll in my drawer but forgot to bring it. I got a snap of Bud. If it comes out I'll show it to you. I was supposed to get permission (written) to take pics and then give them to the office to have them developed and censored. Well, the Lt. gave me verbal permission cuz he was goin' to town. And I'm not going to turn them in.

Y'know, we're not supposed to have social engagements with field personnel. Well, "Doc" (the girl I went to Galveston with) quit or washed out a couple of weeks ago. Thurs. (Apr. Fool's Day) at breakfast it was announced that she had married a Lt. who was very popular here. Everyone thot it was a joke till they called the Rice Hotel and discovered it was true. Either they had been meeting on the sly or else it was awful sudden (which I think it was cuz he had been to borrow a ring and no plans had been made at all). Maybe they don't call a wedding a social engagement.

It's going on 5 pm and I have to wait till Atwood comes down and takes Cookie up before I get to fly. 'Scuse my not writing oftener, huh? (My ground school work is not so hot.)

Love,
Betty

[Same envelope]
March 31

Dear Folks –

Might as well use up this letterhead. We had a meeting tonite and the current rumors are confirmed. This is not for public release – it's on the Q.T. as yet. BUT –

Major Farmer said this school is to be combined with the one at Sweetwater, Texas. (I think that's where Evelyn Esser must be. It just started last month). The fourth class will go Monday – and if everything works out OK, they will all fly their PT's up there. I guess it must be 350 miles Northwest of here. That class has all the breaks! It's sandy and hot up there, but there are some mts. which will be a change. Major Farmer hasn't told us when our class will go but he's going to let us know in a few days. We're not positive we're going but it's almost sure. I'll have to leave the luxury of a big double bed all to myself and a private room for a barracks and Army cot and 6 to a section, so they tell us. Oh well, the change won't hurt us I guess. We all wish we could fly the BT's up but I don't think there are enough and anyway none of us is ready to solo yet. I'll let you know when I find out for sure. The new address will be the 318th at Avenger Field in Sweetwater. It's already an established Army Post, the 318th. Discipline heavier there, have to scrub own floor and make own bed, get up about 5. Regular Army life. In fact it'll be just what I expected to find when I first came here. Remember, this is all secret till we know for sure!

So, Mom, I don't know what to tell you to do about stopping to see me, Here you could stay with me, but up there in the barracks – I don't know. Probably there are motels around though. By June if I pass all checks I ought to be graduating. Maybe we could time it so I get my 8 day furlough when you come thru. Say, won't Edith be mad if you get a free trip to Ohio?

I'll have to send some things home I guess. They wear work uniforms up there. Too bad I had you send all this stuff. They're planning on taking our luggage up in our busses – if we go. No privacy up there – and it'll be more expensive for board and room too. About \$2.15 per day someone said. We shall see!

I flew today above the most beautiful big towering clouds. It was more fun. I got along a little better and wasn't so confused. We had our pics taken today by states – in groups. For Public Relations.

Your flying trip sounded wonderful. Lots prettier than flying here. Elin and Cookie practicing on toy piccalos next door so hard for me to concentrate.

Love,
Betty

[April 7, 1943]
Wednesday

[Written at top of page]

P.S. – Fred wrote (S.F.). Also Fred (Ariz.) who offered to send me his radio. Would it be OK to accept it? Ain't like a diamond bracelet or somethin' like that.

B.

Dear Pop:

Just got down from my first long solo in the BT. (I soloed 7 min. Monday – just one landing). This time I practiced chandelles, lazy 8's, stalls and landings. Went up for a while with my instructor first then got another ship and went solo for 49 minutes. I was supposed to have a check ride with Mr. Hatcher, our flight commander, this morning, but he thought the ceiling was too low. (We, Atwood and I – went up to 6000' for spins but

that was thru the overcast, and up over it). He's beginning to check all of us in BT's already. We average about 5 hrs. and we didn't expect checks till 15 hrs. but I guess we'll get Army checks then.

I got Mom's cookies and candy yesterday. They're keen! I made the mistake of opening the pkg. at the field cuz I was so hungry and it was about 1:30, just before lunch. The layer cookies went fast – so I wrapped it up soon as I could. The whole gang says thanks to my family.

Why doesn't Helen come down here on her vacation? And bring Paul! If you only could get gas, the whole bunch of you could come down huh? You might enjoy the 800 or is it 400 mile(?) jaunt from El Paso to Houston across the rolling plains (without any roll).

Gee, these navigation problems are really getting complicated! Now it's alternate airport problems, and in drawing my triangles, etc. I used a different scale for distance than I did for velocity. It's OK to do that if you've got a brain! – But holy smoke it sure mixed me up.

We have 2 mascots now – (dogs). They wait for us at mess and march sown with us (sometimes breaking up our ranks) and hang around the flight line and even fall in for retreat with us.

Cookie made up a song – it has four verses so I'll just tell you the chorus – to the tune of “Tra la la Boom de Ay” (?)

We are the lost platoon
We could fly to the moon
We do inverted loops
Without our parachutes
We peel off in a dive
Some say that's suicide
Slap happy tho we seem
Class 3 is on the beam} It's just the right cadence for marching.

Last night one of the girls in our court had a birthday so had a party (ice cream and cake, no less!). She announced her engagement too. Where she ever found time - I'll never know.

Gee, it'd be keen of some of these millionaire friends of you family would invite some of us to a home-cooked meal! Too bad the rationing's on, but we'd gladly give 'em our ration coupons – just for a chance to sit around a nice home and have a good dinner. (By The Way, Shall I Send Mine Home?)

Write me another letter all about Paul, and his tricks, huh? I was gonna call BJ Monday nite but couldn't get her. Tried for 5 hrs but the circuit was busy. These snaps are of some of my class. Will ya put 'em in my drawer?

Love,
Betty

[April 10, 1943]
Friday 1:45

[Written on top of page]

Will you put the films in my album? Thanks.

Dear Family:

It's hot and I'm tired, and am still waiting for my check flight with Hatcher, so I'm really not in the mood for writing letters. This morning we played softball with the 2nd class and won 16 – 2. Swell game. (The base umpire was for us and the Plate umpire was for the other team.) So we're supposed to be treated to cokes. We had to treat yesterday so it's even now. The officers want to play the best girls' team but I don't think I'll be on it, though my name's on the temporary list.

Last night the stores were open so we had late curfew. I didn't fly yesterday afternoon so got off a little early and got a ride to town. I was gonna get a pair of shoes but the stores were too crowded so I went to a show. Saw "Hello Frisco Hello" on your recommendation, Pop. I liked it. Had a sandwich and milkshake in a drugstore, where the waitresses sure were hot up about something and gave the worst service. The salesgirls here aren't very polite anyway.

There is more talk of our moving to Sweetwater but nothing definite. The girls are beginning to wear seersucker slacks to the field now, it's so warm.

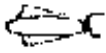
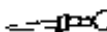
One girl here has the measles Ann Baumgartner. She has to stay at the court. She's been around all the kids so no tellin' who'll come down with 'em next.

This morning our bus broke down so half the kids got out to help the driver discover what was wrong, using all the theories we've been learning in engines class. The other bus finally had to come get us.

I'm gonna stop for a while now and snooze. This heat's getting me!

9:45pm

Gee, what a hot day. After I stopped I fooled around and finally got a link appt. Spent ½ hr. in there and then went for my check ride with Hatcher. Gave him a heck of a landing – landed on 3 pts. but too hard and it sure bounced. Got it down on first bounce anyway. Don't know why, but he passed me anyhow. Just did spins and stalls and a lazy 8 for him.

Y'oughta see the lighting bugs here. They go on and off – making a green light and look so pretty. They're only so big . We have some funny looking bugs kickin' around the bathroom. Look like crocodiles, sort of, only this small.  That's what it looks like only each section moves separately, and it's got legs.

Gretchen's husband will probably go home Monday so I'll have my room mate back again.

Starting Sunday I'm C.Q. for Alamotel. I've appointed an assistant to help out. Demerit system starts Monday so I better be good.

Love,

Betty

[April 14, 1943]

Tuesday

[Written at top of page]

P.S. – I guess I told you I passed my spot check, huh? Soon will start on instrument flying (duel only).

Dear Family –

The measles have come to the 319th – two girls have them and a few were quarantined (all in our class), but the quarantines are let loose now. They can fly and play ball but can't so to ground school. What a life! So don't be too surprised if in the near future I should write and say I've got the measles.

Yesterday 10 girls were chosen to play the officers in softball. I played center field. Those guys sure could play! I got up to bat just once and made the 1st run (becuz of errors on the officers' team). Our score was 11 – 2. We lost, of course. They're going to choose an all-star team from all the girls and have them play the men later. I won't be on that team cuz there are several good players here. I stood out in center field, hoping nobody would hit the ball cuz I was sure I'd miss it. I got hold of it once or twice but couldn't throw it far enuf to do any good. It was a kick. We were on the 3rd inning and us girls hadn't made a run yet. Well, I hit an easy one and the guy missed it so I made it to first, walked to second, ran on a hit to third. On third base was the Lt. who gave me my Army check in cubs. He's sort of a sober guy. All the guys were in shorts, or in training pants (I think they call them). This Lt. had no shirt on. Anyhow, I ran to third, with the ball being thrown right after me. I yelled "Get outa the way" and shoved the Lt. off the base. He missed the ball and I went home on an overthrow. I sure hope he isn't mad cuz I'll be getting another Army check soon.

I'm sorry there was such a mixup on the phone deal. I tried to call you Sunday morn. and Sun. nite but there is such a delay on calls, I couldn't have gotten you till about 3 or 4 am Monday, which didn't seem like such a good idea. Maybe I'll try again Sat. or Sun. Don't stay home and wait for the call tho.

I was sure sorry to hear about Lucille's mother. That's too bad. Where is Lucille living now? Is her husband away? You'd think she would've told Helen about her marriage, huh?

Gee, did I do a dumb thing yesterday. I was flying with Atwood and came in for a landing, making my pattern and approach for a landing into the south. Atwood kept asking me if I saw which way they were landing and I nodded. Well, turning into my base leg, I finally came to and realized that the ships were taking off into the north. Here I was making a traffic pattern like at Quincy, intending to land head-on towards everybody else. Dumb, huh? I'll never pass that way!

Sunday as I was coming in, 20 BT's peeled off right behind me so I had to circle the field till they all landed. Sure was pretty. Got in at 7 pm and the air was so smooth. More later.

Love,
Betty

[April 19, 1943]
Saturday morn.
10 am

Dear Pop, Mom, Helen, Les, etc, etc:

The engines instructor hasn't shown up yet so I'll see how far I can get on this – uh-oh here he is!

12 noon.

Didn't get much written huh? We're studying battery and magnets ignition systems and have a test Tuesday. I don't know one from which but I'll try and study tonite cuz I think I'll try to call youse guys and there'll be a long wait. Hope you'll all be home. Just had a "civilian physical". After all that we went through at Mather, I don't see why we had to have it but I guess civil service requires it. Anyhow it was just blood pressure and eye test. Both eyes OK and my blood pressure was 106/? which sounds all rite and pulse 72. Guess I'm alive. I wouldn't know. Last night I got some sleep for a change. Being C.Q. has its disadvantages. The kids have to come to my room to sign in and after 21 kids come in and out all evening the floor sure is a mess, specially since we a terrific thunderstorm last nite (it's too hot now – crazy weather!). Usually the girls stay and talk. The other nite it was 12 or almost 12 before I got to bed. We have to fly tomorrow but no ground school. I fly in the morning so have the afternoon to do my ironing. All my blouses have to be ironed. I let them pile up so I haven't anything to wear.

We have to practice our "marching manuel" every day now – trying to perfect our drilling for the 1st class graduation next Saturday at Ellington Field. Newsreels are going to be taken. We have to wear long sleeved white blouses and tan slacks (my C.A.P slacks will have to do even if they are too tight and have to be pinned instead of zipped.) Ellington is gong to lead us overseas caps so we don't have to wear these "prisoners caps". In drilling we line up by size now, so I'll be on one end.

Thanks, Les, for the postcards. Even if they are old, they're still pictures of my home area. I was gonna write to you – even got the envelope all addressed, but somehow didn't get to finish it.

Hey, Mom, don't go tellin' people I fly 450 mph planes! They'll think I'm lyin' to you. It was horsepower – and anyhow I don't care what Mrs. Koenig thinks. Men are better flyers than women – at least, that's what I believe. But we can still fly other ships besides trainers, I betcha!

Gee, Pop, I sure enjoy your letters. The kids all sound so cute. Wish I could see them. Got Helen's letter today. That's swell about Scotty coming home. I hope he gets to see you and Paul. I'd like him to come here too. That sure would make these gals sit up and take notice!

Little later.

Sorry about interruption. Was told suddenly I was to go up for Army check with Lt. Adler – I'm still suffering from shock! I'm supposed to go with him when he comes down with Gretchen. It started to rain a few minutes ago real hard and I thought I'd be saved. But the rain is passing so I guess I'll have to go up. I don't feel at all confident about this ride. I haven't had any low work in the BT and he'll expect it. Didn't fly at all Thursday and only 17 min. solo yesterday so I'm out of practice. If I don't pass – and I doubt very much if I will – I may be coming home! The ships shown in Apr. 19 Life as instrument trainers are the BT's.

Love,
Betty

[April 20, 1943]
Tuesday morning

Dear Family:

If I ever get around to answering everybody's letters - ! First, the \$2.00 check is for \$1.00 in war stamps for Greg and same for Paul for Easter. I sent Shirley Anne a little doll. Hope it gets there in one piece.

Gee, Helen, your wardrobe must be pretty slick now. The dresses sound so pretty! Mine consists of worn slacks, zoot suit, crumby shoes, and old blouses. I want to try to get a pair of shoes Thursday night. My special shoe coupon for work shoes is no good after the 23rd. But every time I go near a shoe store and see the crowds, I cringe, and go away. Last Thursday I tried some men's shoes at Oshman's but they didn't fit right. Some of the kids have men's shoes and they look good.

The \$10.00 check is for the phone call (let me know how much it was, will you?). It may be more or less. If more I'll send it later. If less, you can keep it for postage, etc. Gosh, knows I owe you enough for postage. I still owe you, Mom, for those slacks. I haven't forgotten. Don't want to be too broke just in case I don't pass my next Army check ride and have to go home. I haven't enough for fare anyway so I'll have to pass. I feel a little better now, though.

Helen, tell me about your sailor. What's he look like and how's his poisonality? Where's Paul Fields now?

According to Mom's or BJ's fortune (i.e. Curley says – you'll see me very soon), I haven't a chance to pass, huh? Well, I guess I've gotta prove fortune tellers aren't good. Son of a gun, now that I look back, she told me all about this and about Fred moving, etc.

Last night Gretchen got "moving fever", like Mr. Danielson usta get. So we changed our room around so there's more room near the door. I'm going bowling tonight. Sunday we went to Christie's for dinner. It's a fish place so we all got big platters of assorted sea food. French fried crab, oysters, shrimp, and trout. Even ate the crab claws and shell and all. Oysters turned my stomach just thinking about them but they tasted good.

I sure enjoyed your last letter, Pop. Bet your vegetable garden is sure nice! And spring in California sounds beautiful. There are some pretty spots here, and morning

glory sort of flowers (pinkish); but the prettiest flowers were the bright red and purple azalea(?) bushes which were blossoming a few weeks ago.

I don't know exactly how many hours I have now, Pop, but including what I left home with, it's about 140 hours.

We're having a test in engines today so I've really gotta study now. I'm to fly solo soon as I can get a ship. Did I tell you about my losing the emergency exit of the plane Sunday? It was so funny! I guess I put that in BJ's letter. I was told to shut the exit (in the canopy) cuz it had come loose (which never happens). So I pulled red handle instead of pushing same and so part of canopy was gone with wind.

Love,
Betty

[April 24, 1943]
Friday 10 a.m.

Dear Family:

The enclosed article is about all we know of the graduation. We're going over to Ellington today to practice for tomorrow's performance. We've been drilling so much, those brown C.A.P. shoes of mine sure wore through fast. So last night we got to go to town and I got a pair of brown oxfords for \$4.95 at Krupp and Tufley's. Used my special Army ration so still have #17 for another pair. I got waited on fast so went to the show and saw "Hi Ya Chum" with Ritz Bros. Most of the kids went to see "Air Force" but I didn't have time. Gretchen took her station wagon so we got a ride home. Cookie passed her Army check yesterday so wanted to buy beer for everybody. I drank one glass (of beer) but don't like it.

Yesterday I got back from lunch to find I'd had a change of instructors. I now have a great big fat guy – Rumsey – who had been checking out instructors so is really good I guess. I haven't been up with up him yet. I went up solo while he went XC with Lois Brooks, to College Station. I just climbed up thru the cloud canyons, but had to get up to 6000' to clear the clouds. Flew around the biggest white cloud – it was so pretty. Awfully rough down below. The ship was acting up so I came down. Don't like to take chances with these big ships. I don't know when I'll get my next Army check. I've had my five hours but only have a total of 17 and they're just checking those with 20 hrs. now. I don't see why they had to pull a check on me when I only had 12 hrs., tho Gretchen passed hers then. It was my landing that cinched it against me. I came in too low and although I made it and was going to make an O.K. landing (I thought) Lt. Adler said I stalled it 5 ft. off the ground. I don't like to make excuses but I don't see how I could've stalled it 5' off the runway cuz he gave it throttle before it stalled.

I had Fred's little radio fixed. (Did I tell you he sent it to me?) Cost \$2.35. Sure good to have a radio again. It's been so long since I've heard any good programs except when I rented a radio and that was too expensive.

What're all you doin' for Easter? We're scheduled to fly. We haven't had any days off for about a month – not counting half days. Some of the kids are cracking under the strain. I felt that way for three days (one of them being my check day). But I feel O.K. now.

Bet you look pretty, Mom, with your new permanent and new clothes. I'll be proud to show you off when you come down. You've got lots of friends here already (on acct. of your cookies and your pictures on my desk).

What's the matter with Aunt Bessie? Has she been sick? You said she lost 11 pounds. Sure glad Fred is working. Hope he can keep the job.

Freddie's sitting here with me in this empty classroom. She's knitting a sweater. Almost finished. She can't make sleeves cuz she's run out of yarn so it's just like a vest – (blue). No flying this morning on acct. of fog – none this afternoon on account of our rehearsal. Gotta go now.

Love,
Betty

[April 30, 1943]
Thursday 8:40 pm

Dear Family:

I guess you think I'm awful for not writing to you for so long. There are several reasons – mostly cuz I've been busy worrying. I finally got my Army check tucked away and have passed my engines final exam and took my navigation final today. That darned check ride had me so flustered I couldn't do anything till it was over. We took a plane up that had just been 100-hr.-checked so the Lt. was test hopping it along with checking me. I thought I did OK but he yelled at me for a lot of little things. Not yelled, of course, but it seemed so at the time. He said, "Well, Deuser, you're passable but not so hot!" Of course that made me feel none too good but after I'd heard that he said the same thing to all the kids yesterday, well, I guess he just wants to be tough. So anyway, today I got to go cross country. Went with Mr. Rumsey to College Station, about 90 miles. Nice trip but Texas is so flat. All set out like a checkerboard sort of, with different color greens and reddish earth and every so often a river or stream. Cruising at 2 or 3,000 feet, it looks as though the earth is really curved cuz you can see just so far and then it all fades away.

Heard over the radio about that Navy ship crashing near Mills College. Was it near Edith's?

Hey, did I thank you for the swell cookies and candy? Everybody in the court enjoyed them, 'specially the fudge. Our Alamotel dog, Lena, had 7 puppies the other day. She's just a little funny looking terrier. I haven't seen the puppies yet.

Latest rumor – and this one seems authentic – is that our class moves to Sweetwater within a week. Only thing I don't like about it is the five room mates.

The other day I got a ride in an AT-17, like the one in the snap I sent. I acted as observer for two instructors who were taking turns under the hood for instrument training. It's a five-place ship so I sat in back – (a cabin job) and was observer, just to watch for other ships cuz the one under the hood couldn't look out on his side. It was beautiful up there. The clouds were all suspended at the same level, all patchy – and the green and red earth and the bayous were so pretty in contrast to the white.

Hope your round trip can include Sweetwater, Mom. It probably won't be as nice as Houston, but Houston's not so hot either.

I have a stack of letters to answer but haven't written for a week. Mrs. Brown (formerly Casperson) a friend of Aunt Anne's was supposed to come out to see me tonite but daughter had a headache so I may meet her Saturday.

Love,
Betty

[May 5, 1943]
Tuesday 9 a.m.

[Written at top of page]

As you can see, I've run out of stationary. Will get more Thursday.

Dear Mom, Pop, Helen, Les, and offspring:

With five letters and a postcard to answer to you all, I'd better get started here. One of Pop's letters was dated Mar. 18 and postmarked Apr. 19. Took a long time gettin' to the corner postbox, didn't ya, Pop?

10 a.m.

I'm sweating already and the sun is till filtering through the fog. Last night one of the AT's hit a bird. Now there's a hole in the wing. Bird not around. We're flying instruments now. But no night work yet. For instruments I sit in the rear cockpit and the instructor does most of the flying until we get up to about 2000' and then I pull the black hood over the cockpit and try to keep the needle and ball centered and the airspeed constant. Gosh, what a job. I get so I'm sure the instruments are flying and I'm sitting on one hip in a turn, but actually if the instruments are centered, the ship's where it should be. Gosh, there's so much to write about on account of not writing for so many days but I'll have to make it short cuz I have to read 50 pages of meteorology (awfully boring). We have the final on Wed. and Thurs.

Went dual XC to College Station, solo XC to Beaumont. Beaumont looks easy to find on the map – only 72 miles – but when I got over those marshes and oil derricks and zillions of roads and canals that weren't shown on the map, I didn't know where I was till I got there. Was just a little off course but didn't know it. I hit the airport by luck. There's a C.A.P. base there so I talked to those guys for a while. It's fun going in to strange airports. Had slot machines there too. I was supposed to be checked in by one of our instructors but he had gone to Lake Charles too, besides to Beaumont, so I beat him there and checked him in instead.

My wisdom tooth is trying hard to come thru but is sure having a tough time. My gum is so sore. Cookie had more tetnus shots for her injury – did I tell you about that? She and Frances Grimes tried to catch the same ball I hit to them, at the same time. Frances lost 2 front teeth by trying to bite Cookies ear off. 11 stitches in the ear. Anyhow the shots affected Cookie. 102° temp. last nite and 101° this morning so she stayed home today. Frances is practically starved from not being able to eat cuz it hurts to eat anything. Her gums are awfully tender. One tooth came right out (it was a false one) but the other shattered and the dentist had to drill all the pieces out. Gretchen was sort of the nurse in command last night for Cookie. Frances is flying but sure feels self-conscious

about her looks. The dentist said he couldn't put any teeth in for about 6 weeks, till the gums heal.

We got paid today \$151.10 and promptly had to write our board checks \$37.00 to pay thru 2 meals on Saturday cuz that's when we're leaving for Sweetwater, as far as we know. Mom, you and BJ could get your tickets for there if you want. Unless you'd like to come thru Houston and visit Mrs. Brown first. She's awfully nice. Not as old as I expected. (Aunt Anne's friend, I'm talkin' about). She drove me around the pretty parts of the city and then we had dinner at her house. I wish I had sent my ration book to you. I just wasted all that first month's coupons. You can use them better than I. I'll send my sugar and coffee book soon as I use #17 for shoes – probably get them Thursday. Too bad you're gonna have company on the trip, Ma. Don't let it tie you down. This is your first long trip in a long time so leave your worries at home and really enjoy yourself.

I tried to pack some things last night but it was too hot so I gave up. I did put my hot pajamas in a box to send home. Also a long stocking that needs mending. I probably won't need it back so I should've sent another so you so you'd have a pair.

Send me both your train schedules, will you, so I know where you'll be when.

I don't think you've been getting all my letters. I told BJ I'd seen "Random Harvest" long ago and told her all about it. Yesterday I got a letter from her and she says be sure to see it!

Hey, Pop, what's this about crocodiles at Edith's? I never heard anything about them till you said they hissed at you. Or is it a joke?

That phone call will probably amount to more than \$8.00 but we'll settle later when you find out. But the slacks are paid for then, huh?

My instructor soloed the BT yesterday. First time he's soloed since he's been here!

After Saturday (we think! Not official yet. I'll let you know) – my address will be:

318th AAFFTD

Avenger Field

Sweetwater, Texas

We'll be flying up, I hope. Some of the kids are taking their cars if they can arrange for gas. I think there are about 5 or 6 cars going.

Our year book will be out in about 10 days. I'll send it home when I finish with it. Costs \$2.50 or I would've ordered more than one.

Bee seein' youse –

Love,

Betty

[May 11, 1943]

Monday 4 pm

[Written at top of page] – Put the snaps in my book, will you please?

Dear Mom, Pop, and family:

Quite a treat, being away from the field on Monday. We went out at noon and had lunch but the weather was too rough so we came back. I've got most of my things packed, ready to shove off, but no definite date has been set, though we think it's

Wednesday about noon – maybe not till Saturday. A girl here cut my hair so I now have a short bob. She used to be a beauty operator so it was a good job. She washed out last week. Two more were eliminated since then. Just because I passed my Army check doesn't mean I'm a cinch to get through. It just means I'm up to standard on BT maneuvers. There are more to come. Right now we're learning instrument flying. We were supposed to start night flying tonight but this storm came up. It's clearing now though. We probably won't start nite work till we get to Sweetwater now, I guess.

Cookie broke out in hives from her tetnus shots but she's OK now. Frances still hasn't gotten her teeth in but she's taking it swell, and the kids are having fun about it.

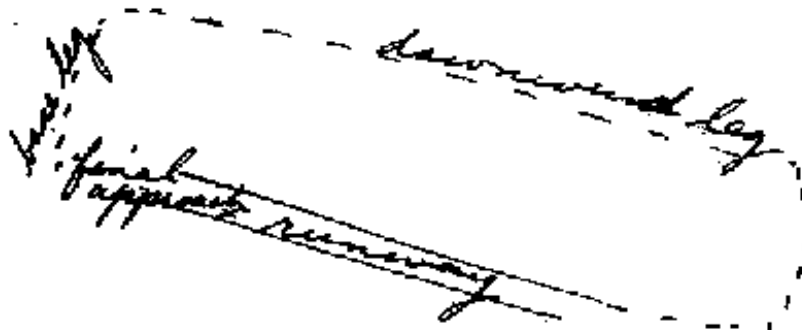
Gee, Mom, you'll be leaving in a few days, won't you. Bet you're excited! Hope you have a swell time. It won't be long before I'll see you too.

This instrument flying is sure a nerve-wracking business. Under the hood it doesn't even seem as though you're flying. It's just like being in a dark room, and trying to keep the needle and ball centered and the airspeed constant. What a job in rough air! Mr. Rumsey put me into a spin the other day and told me to get out of it. I did it OK and even got it in and out of a stall on instruments but yesterday when he put me into a spin I wound it up into a tight spiral. When you can't see the nose of the ship or the horizon or anything, it makes you lose ½ your senses. Can't fly by feel hardly at all – just by instruments.

Saturday night I signed in at one minute to 11 (11 pm curfew). The c.q. hadn't signed in yet so the next day I was just kiddin' and told her I had signed in and gone out again. Didn't come back till 2 a.m. I told her. She asked me who I was out with and I said, oh, one of the instructors. Inside of ½ hour my whole class knew about it – sure got myself in a mess – took a lot of convincin' to make them believe it was a joke. The c.q. knew I was kiddin' but she just spread the rumor as a joke. I got even by starting a rumor that her room mate has the measles. She has got a rash on her legs.

Friday we got all afternoon off to go shopping and get our things packed. We have to supply our own towels at Sweetwater so I got some, and pajamas, a white blouse, white shoes, and a lot of little things I need. I hope you got your slip OK, Mom.

Saturday I flew solo to finish up my transition. Just shot landings at Municipal, with several other kids. There were so many in the traffic pattern we were practically flying formation. I circled and circled and every other time I came around I could land. Boy, the control tower operator was sure having a bad time! He has to call each ship in for landing – or that is, he has to answer each call. We call in when we enter our base leg, to get permission for touch-and-go landing (land and take right off again).



Helen, that's keen about you having saved so much. I'm practically flat as usual but as far as I know, I've finally paid off my Xmas bills – 'bout time!

I got a card from Fred this morning. He's moved to Ft. Sumner, New Mexico. The card was from El Paso – I dunno how come he got there. But he says he should be able to get a cross country hop to Houston. He's too late now.

Friday when I went into town, I met Mrs. Brown at her jewelry store and she took me to lunch at a hotel where they have Smorgasbord. It was swell food. She paid the bill, altho I protested. She's a swell person, wants me to come to dinner again before I leave. I could go tonite but I've packed everything but my C.A. P. shirt, one white blouse and my slacks and jeans (finally fixed the zipper. Took me ½ hr. yesterday to do it. Every time I'd get the pull-up on, I'd pull it off the other end. Finally sewed down both ends so the tab can't come off. Also I can't zip it clear to the top.)

One of the girls who washed out had her Board meeting this morning. It took only one minute. Major Farmer asked if she had any complaints and she said "Yes, the food's lousy." Swell way to leave, huh? She's kind of a pain anyway. Some of the kids have been getting their groups of sixes together for rooming at Sweetwater. I dunno who I'll be with yet.

Your victory garden sure sounds keen. Bet the vegetables taste twice as good as store-boughten ones. Bet Pop and BJ discuss farm products now instead of who's kickin' who's shins under the table -.

Love,
Betty

[May 13, 1943]
May 12 I think
10:40 a.m.

Dear Pop, Mom, and etc.

Sitting here in my room is cooler than outside. I didn't get up till 8:30. Gretchen's still in bed. We don't have to go to the field until noon. Last night we started our night flying. What a thrill! For a while I stood on top of the hanger and watched the lights from there. There was no wind, a moon and a sky full of stars. I flew from 10:45 till 11:10. Should have had a full hour but for some reason we didn't. I'll go thru the whole procedure so you can see what it's like. Get in the ship and you can't see anything except the instruments in front of you. Can't see the rudder tab, stabilizer, or flaps which are at your left side, marked in degrees. You've got to count 10 turns of flaps for takeoff and landing instead of looking down and seeing 20° (One turn = 2°). First, after getting engine started, you call the tower. "Houston Tower from Army 204 go ahead. " Tower: "Army 204 from Houston Tower go ahead." Me: "Houston tower from Army 204 pilot Deuser instructor Ramsey left tank 40 gals. right tank 40 gals. operating on left tank. Taxi clearance for lower zone 2." Tower: "Lower zone 2 cleared to runway 21" (Southeast) Me: "Lower zone 2 Roger." And then I taxi out and take off in the dark. The runway is bordered by lights though. Here's how the zones are: They're divided into four zones – border lines being the North-South and East-West Runways.

So – we climb to 750’ and get into our zone then climb to 1500’ (that being lower zone. Upper is 2500’) then raise flaps and change to high pitch and call tower: “Houston tower from Lower zone 2 in zone. ” Tower: “Lower zone 2 Roger.” Or something like that. Then we proceed to make left turn circles until we’re called in for landing. We have to stay in our own zone and at exactly 1500’. No. 2 zone happens to be crowded with Ellington Field flyers too and also a range station so those coming in on the beam go directly over it. Makes it exciting. Gee, it was so pretty up there – and warm. I was just in my shirt sleeves and had the canopy open all the time. When we go in for landing practice we call the tower and request entrance into traffic pattern if he hasn’t already called us in. Then on base leg we call the tower and he says “cleared to land.” About 100 ft. off the ground we switch on landing lights and immediately after landing, switch them off. Floodlights are turned on the end of the runway too. It’s deceptive, landing at night. Most everyone levels off too high. One guy (not from our field) in an AT-6 last night landed with his landing gear up. Embarrassing no end. The AT’s have retractable landing gear. I flew as observer in an AT-17 (2 engine) yesterday and when they come in, they press a lever to lower the gear and the guy on the right looks out the window and says “I’ve got a wheel” and the girl on the left looks out and says “I’ve got a wheel.” They say on the AT-6’s though, that you can’t see the landing gear from the cockpit. I think we fly again tonight. Sure hope so. I like it.

Yesterday afternoon I went up for an instrument flight under the hood again. I’d much rather be out where I can see everything but this hood time is good practice because at night you fly mostly by instruments on account of not being able to judge the altitude of the plane so well. Under the hood I did stalls, spins and spirals and all sorts of timed turns to different headings (that’s the toughest thing cuz you’ve gotta think so fast and know how many seconds to turn and in which direction). A spiral is bad cuz if you get in a tight turn, the airspeed builds up and the harder you pull back on the stick, the faster it gets. The way to recover from one is to center the needle then adjust the airspeed. See, the needle stops the turn. It’s simple enough if you can see what you’re doing but under the hood you don’t realize you’re in a spiral – not by the feel of it anyway. Just gotta rely on your instruments.

Well, gee whiz, I’ve chattered enough about this stuff. It probably doesn’t make much sense.

Having gotten all my stuff packed for moving, nobody knows when we’re going. Your guess is as good as mine. I guess you guys have started writing to SwH□0 already cuz I’m not getting much mail here. I ought to send some of my shoes home – I’ve got too many I think. Probably throw my saddle shoes out. They’re worn through the bottom and the shoemaker wants 3.50 for resoling and heels cuz he says it needs some stitching done too. I don’t figure it’s worth it.

Have to get ready to leave now.

Lots of Love,
Betty

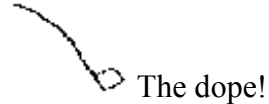
Avenger Field Letters

June 1943 – July 1943

Wednesday night

[Written at top of page]

Elin bought a long pipe in town today and is smoking it!



The dope!

Dear Barbara Jean:

I've learned to play part of "Old Black Joe" and "Home Sweet Home" on Lois Brooks' harmonica. Sure wish I could play good. It's fun. We're having a thunderstorm tonight - still no flying. I got in 1:15 of link today otherwise spent the rest of the day playing ping pong and fooling around. I won several games and lost about 3. Won a game and lost a game of pinochle. No gambling allowed here so we can't play poker. There are no walks between the barracks so we have to take our shoes off when we come into our bays. Tomorrow it'll be awful after this rain. Gee whiz we'll never get out of here if we can't fly. Y'know I told you they put a few kids back into the fourth class cuz they had 37 hrs. or less. Well, Francis Grimes stayed in Houston to get her teeth put in before coming up here next weekend. When we found out they were putting the kids back, the girls thought Frances would be put back too cuz they thought she had only 30 hrs. I found out she had 37:55 so told Cookie to phone her, which she did and Frances came up today so she can still be in our class. If she'd waited till next week she'd still be in the fourth class. Her dentures will follow, she says. We had "open post" [sic] this afternoon cuz of no flying - that means we would go to town. I had a link appointment at 4:45 - 6 pm so had to stay here. Elin and Grace Birge and I were going to take a walk over the hills but it was too cold. Gee, it's 10pm already. I'm still sitting here in my zootsuit. I visited Freddie for awhile, then came back and practiced on the harmonica. I should be in bed. Lights out at 10 usually but tonite we have ½ hr. extra on acct. of open post.

On the trip up here we saw a dead horse – it was just a colt and was all bones.

Thursday 8:30 a.m.

As I was sayin', there were lots of colts – specially black ones. Cute as heck. Tony rode up with us. She's from Calif. But originally from Colorado. Her grandpa had a cattle ranch there.

The kids that went to town yesterday said there's a good cowboy movie – I think it was "American Empire" with Preston Foster and Richard Dix.

Our thunderstorm is still with us. So we're still grounded. But it's like a vacation. After breakfast most of the kids hung around the rec hall. Right now I'm in my bay. Martha Lundy is reading. Joyce Sherwood is playing her "flute", Florence Knight her harmonica, and Lois Brooks is sittin' on the table with her banjo. They're trying to get up a hillbilly band. Rene Nielson can play her accordion. Sure wish I could play somethin'. I was pickin' off "When You're A Long Long Way From Home" on the piano yesterday and Mary Belle Ahlstrom began helping me. Maybe before I get out of here I'll be able to do something. Everybody agrees I can't sing!

Last night taps were blown at 10. Florence had put paper in the toe of my slipper so I couldn't get my foot in. So when she went in to take her shower, I put her iron at the foot of her bed under the covers. So when I took my shower, the kids "short-sheeted" me. 'Member, I told how they'd done that to Beverly Brandt when she got married. So after lights were out, we started playing catch with Florence's pillow. I stuffed two shoes inside the case and threw that. Well, she took them out and threw them back and one hit me right in the left eye. What a sack – or shoe- I thought I'd have a black eye, but it isn't.

We're supposed to get travel pay for coming up here. It amounts to about \$12.00, I think. But it takes about two months to get it. We're going to pay Gretchen 5.00 each for coming up in her car. She'll be making a profit cuz she had 5 passengers besides herself and she also gets her own travel pay. Then, taking our food and room rent (only 75 each for that one nite), etc., We won't have much left. We went to the show in Temple – Lynn, Tony, and I to a Western cuz I wanted to see it. It was Hoot Gibson and Ken Maynard (they're both fat now) in "Wild Horse Stampede". The best thing about it was the title. The picture wasn't good. Then they had a serial and a rabbit funny and lots of coming attractions. They have several cowboy pics coming. That town was full of soldiers – I guess I told you all about that.

I had a link appointment that ended at six last night. Well, three of us went to eat and the mess hall was closed. The canteen only had sandwiches so I had a ham sandwich and a choc [sic] shake (real thick) – 30¢. This morning we had eggs, toast, cornflakes and milk and bananas, toast and coffee. You get to serve yourself from a cafeteria style arrangement. And we have to take our trays over when we're through and scrape them and pile 'em up. But that's all we gotta do. Oh, yes, we have to keep our barracks clean. Scrub the floor and empty the wastebasket and dust the venetian blinds, etc. They finally put doors on our cupboards so they look much neater now. Until you open them. Then they're like Fibber McGee's closet. Mine is, anyway. If I ever get around to repacking my stuff, I'll send one of my suitcases home with junk I won't need. I tore my old blue polka dot blouse (like yr. red one) so threw that away. And as soon as this plain blue one I'm wearing now (like my pink one) gets dirty enough, I'll throw it away or use it for a dust rag cuz it's holy and the pocket's ripped part way off. I sewed it a couple of times but it always rips again.

These barracks will really be nice when they finish building them. We still have sidewalks and roofs over the walks, to be built.

Love,
Betty.

Saturday 10 a.m.

Dear Barbara Jean:

Will you put all those pics and negatives in my album, please? Aren't Betty Lee's baby cute? I mean isn't she.

The bad weather continues. Still no flying. I guess I told you I finally got one hour in, didn't I? Gee, I sure love this country. This is more like Texas. You don't notice it till you get up in the air though and can see for miles in all directions and most of it is wild. The kids that went to town last week said there was a cattle auction and these guys were

coming into town with cattle in their trailers. And the sheriff is looking for two cattle thieves, while over in Abilene the sheriff arrested two other men for cattle stealin'. Wonder if they chased them on horseback shootin' their ol' six guns. There sure are a lot of cowboy programs on the radio. Elin prefers symphonic stuff but we usually have the cowboys on. There's gonna be a rodeo in Abilene June 2-3-4-5 on the school grounds. Can you be here then? Sure hope I can go. The radio is also advertising for horsemen to join the mounted beach patrol of the Abilene coast guard. The little I saw of Abilene (we just drove around the outskirts on our way here) it sure doesn't look like it did in that Glenn Ford pic "Texas". There are great big buildings there. Sweetwater is between Abilene and Big Springs so while you and Mom are here you can probably go there during the day. Why don't you stop off and see Fred on the way? He'd sure be glad to see you.

He said you get mad at him when he tries to help you and asked me to tell you to let him help you if he wants. Please! Cuz he likes to help. And he doesn't consider it work when it's for you. No use losin' your temper over grindin' valves, when he can help you. Did you ever hear of the OJ Ranch owned by Mr. and Mrs. Grazer in Lampasas, Texas? We passed their ranch on the way. There were some great big bulls in the pasture. The cattle all the way here were so clean and fat. We saw lots of goats too. They looked like the kind that you use their wool for coats and things – is it caracul [sic]? Y'know, I think Grandma said once she'd like to raise that kind. Oh nuts, I can't think of what they call 'em. I tried to remember the names of the ranches but I can't now. The ones that looked most like horse ranches as we imagined were near Houston – there was the Cooper Ranch there. And the Pine Nut I think it was. The rest were more dust-ridden and old-time appearing, with lots of land around. The OJ was pretty, with great big red barns.

I have your picture (yr. grad pic) on top of my locker (only one pic allowed) and I heard the girls talkin' when I was in the bathroom. They couldn't decide if it was me and Elin said "It's her sister" and they thought it could've been me – sure a strong resemblance. Funny, I don't see it.

Our H barracks is next to the I barracks row, back to back, so when the kids in I want to come over, they don't bother going around to the front door. They climb out their back window and in our back window. More convenient that way.

Gee, I'm sorry Puff's gone. I hope he comes back. I got your Sweetwater letters, then yesterday I got the one you wrote on the 13th, which was sent to Houston, then missent to Freeport (wherever that is) and then sent here.

Angora! That's the kind of goats I was talkin' about on the other page. I kept thinkin' it had somethin' to do with sweaters but cashmere didn't sound rite [sic]. Elin finally told me.

Are you staying at Grandma's every nite now? I can't tell ½ the time where y'are.

I want to go to town tonight. They say Roy Rogers in "Lite of Western Stars" was on last nite. Hope it's still playin'.

Gee, I bet you know half the people in Cantra Costa Co. by now. You better not do too much plowin' if it's not good for you. You don't wanta have to sit around with aches when you get older.

Last nite I saw "Remember the Night", Remember we saw it a long time ago? When they played "Indian Home" the tears started comin', and when Barbara Stanwyck went home and found out how much her ma hated her, and she cried, I did too. And

'member when she goes to Fred MacMurry's home for Xmas and it's such a swell comfortable place and those two ol' ladies like Aunt Bessie are so nice, gee it made me feel so homesick. Then when Sterling Holloway sang "End of a Perfect Day" - that cinched it. Sure hope nobody saw me. I hope you remember the pic cuz otherwise Y' won't no [sic] what I'm talkin' 'bout. Sure wish we could have a place like you were tellin' me about and all the things we usta talk about. I've had my fun with airplanes, now I'm ready to settle down - soon as we win this stinkin' war!

That ranch is still hazy. Well, we'll get it someday even if we have to help each other up the path on crutches!

Love,
Betty

[June 21, 1943]
Sunday Night.

Dear Pop, Helen, Grandma, Paul:

So you wanta hear more about the storms, etc., do you? Well, we had the biggest one yet, this past week. Came up all of a sudden and just about split the sky with thunder. Wrecked a bunch of cub stuff around here.

The funniest thing made me so homesick the other nite. I got your letter which said Paul had 14 teeth. Gee, when I left he had only two, didn't he? Anyhow, I got to thinking how much I've missed in all that time and I felt so blue. Just wait, though. Two weeks and I'll be on my way home! I hope! If I get reservations. I won't know for four days yet- the station man had to telegraph somewhere for them. When Cookie went home, the train had to stop for something and was to be delayed so long, she finally took a bus from wherever it was she was stopped. Hope we don't get into any trouble like that. But it being 4th of July weekend sure makes it tough.

We went swimming in an outdoor pool one nite last week. Sure felt good. Then on the way home the full moon came up all orange and big - was it pretty! And even with moonlight here, there was lighting flashing way up north.

Two BT's just buzzed the barracks, flying real close formation and just getting over the telephone wires. Lots of planes buzz the courts here, probably just to see the girls run out. Cuz we always do - just to see who it is.

Did I tell you I finished the AT6 and am now on AT17's? Last week I finished my AT6 nite flying. Just had two hours in that - one dual, one solo- and it was such bright moonlight it was easy as flying in the daytime. And we didn't have much traffic either so it was swell. At least we didn't have traffic in the zones, but coming into the pattern was as bad as 14th and Bdway with the busses.

AC47 (DC3) came in the other day, made a bad landing, so turned around and took off downwind (which is sure asking for it) and came in again for a landing. It was the son of one of the owners of the airport - just came in from Calif - and it was a bad weather day so there were no other planes flying. They say he's sure a good flyer. The poor landing made him mad.

We're not going to get to fly the AT11's. They haven't come in yet. But one was here and I sat in it. Sure a keen plane. Glass nose for bombardier and in back of the

pilot's cockpit there's the bomb bay doors on each side of a catwalk. Sure an interesting ship.

We had a movie the other nite on the post. A girl was running it. It was "My Favorite Blonde" – an old Bob Hope pic. Sure a good thing I'd seen it before cuz after each reel they turn on the lites to change reels and the girl got the 3rd reel after the second, then after everybody yelling she changed it and got the 3rd reel in upside down! Sure a crazy show.

We were supposed to have formal inspection yesterday morning (we haven't had any since we came here) but our cupboards had just been painted inside on Friday so everybody had their junk all around. And besides, half our kids had flown Friday nite and wanted to sleep. So everybody but Barracks H (class 3) had inspection. The Major wouldn't have liked my laundry hanging all around!

Love,
Betty

[Announcement, Front]
[June 28, 1943]

The 318th
Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment
announces
the Graduation of Class 43-W-3
Saturday, July 3, 1943
Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas

[Announcement, Back]

Hi folks! –

This is only the beginning – but what a workout! Will be home soon if I can squeeze onto some train, or maybe start walkin'! Reservations are awfully scarce, but I'm tryin' my darndest to get some. You'd think after all this, we'd get priorities, huh?

Love, Betty.

[Announcement, Front]
[June 28, 1943]

The 318th
Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment
announces
the Graduation of Class 43-W-3
Saturday, July 3, 1943
Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas

You are all cordially invited to attend. No gifts. Please reserve bathtub for me.

Betty

[Announcement Back]

I couldn't get enough announcements to send to all I should've – so if there are any complaints, blame it on the war.

[July 1943]
10: 55 a.m.

Hi Family –

Been in LA about 25 min. already- watching P38's take off. The whole place is camouflaged. I'm sitting under a net with bushes on it. They pulled the shades closed before we even got out of the mts. Followed the grapevine over. It sure seemed like a short trip. I tried to write on board but ma pen isn't a flyer – it spurted ink all over. Gee, taking off I had my heart in my throat- felt nervous till we got way up. When they let us open the curtains we were above a sea of fog. All I could see was a couple of mts. poking through. Sure was thick fog. Cleared up when we got in the valley though. Fog rolled over the hills so it looked like the ocean but wasn't. I sat in a single seat on the right – the doubles are on the left. The stewardess asked if we wanted breakfast but I didn't. Then just before we landed she passed out some gum. Just fastened our safety belts for takeoff and landings.

The ship I was on stopped for 10 minutes here then went on to San Diego. I have to wait till 11:30 for American Airlines. Hope I don't get cancelled. I didn't even see the captain or the 1st officer of that ship. They did a smooth job of flying tho – just got bumpy before we landed. It's awful landing without even seeing anything. It's a great temptation to peek out the window but the stewardess sits in back and watches. An Am. Airlines just took off for Dallas and pts east but I guess it's not mine. It's a different trip number and time. They stop at several places along the way so I suppose we'll have the curtains pulled most of the time. Heck, it's just like riding a train then. Traveling by automobile is much more fun.

Well, thanks for the party and everything. Sure wish I could've stayed home longer – I'm hungry as the dickens now so guess I'll go scare up some food. We'll probably get lunch en route.

The mts. we crossed down here are just as rugged as anything New Mexico has to offer. They start loading the ship at 11:30 – takeoff at 11:40. Will write more later.

Lots of Love,
Betty.

[July 15, 1943]
Wednesday 9:30 pm

Dear Family:

This is only the sixth letter I've written tonight – started 3 hours ago. So don't grumble if it's short, huh? You can read BJ's letter for details of today. I wrote letters to

BJ, Mr. Spear, Kink, Neil, and Fred, and sent cards to Charlie and Grandpa Butterfield. Still have lots of “thank-you” notes to write.

Wish I’d known I was going to make such good connections coming over, cuz then I could’ve stayed one more day anyway. I’m glad I had one day to rest up though. Slept till 9:30 and even then didn’t want to get up – it was too warm. They don’t even put blankets on the beds here. Just a sheet and spread. Then I have the fan going all night too. Last night I was in a double room- twin beds down on third floor, and the electric fan was one of those you stand on a desk. Sure was a noisy thing. My room mate (a girl I met on the plane) left for Georgia this morning so they gave me a single room up here on the 6th floor. It’s much better. This room has a big fan up over the light – like they have at grocery stores, y’know. I’m staying here till I find out where the other kids are staying. I phoned all over today, but never got to talk to anyone in the WAFS. All I would find out was that Florene Miller is the head of the WAFS and she and some of the girls are living at the Stoneleigh – no more vacancies there. Miller wasn’t in when I phoned so I guess the best thing to do is to go out to the field tomorrow. This city is crowded. We looked all over last night but practically every hotel was full. We had about given up and were picturing ourselves sleeping on a cot in the YWCA hall, when we came across this place.

Gee, I sure miss everybody now. Hope I meet some of my Sweetwater friends tomorrow so I won’t be lonesome. I enjoyed going around today. If I only had money and wasn’t in the Army, I could’ve bought so many pretty things. Am going to bed now. It’s almost 10:30.

Love,
Betty

July 15 [1943]

Dear Mom, Pop, Helen:

First of all, will you please send my overseas cap (C.A. P.)? It’s in one of my drawers. I’ll probably have to buy one cuz you can’t get it here fast enough. But it’s worth a try. I got the rest of the uniform today – 2 pr. slacks, 2 pr. sox, 2 shirts = \$28.95. Holy smoke, I’ll be owing the Army money before this is over. My hotel bill will be over \$10.00 and then I gotta find a room. I thought I’d wait till tomorrow to see if any of the others would like to room with me. I’ve seen two of the girls so far. Went out to the field today. The 5th Ferrying Gp. is a whole Army post – hundreds of men and nurses (and WAACS will be her soon)- just like any Army camp. I dunno about my mail – if you sent any there – there are so many people out there, they won’t know who I am. Better put WAFS after my name until I send you another address. Gee, I wish I had brought our car down. I could’ve been looking for a room but without a car I can’t get around. The field is quite far from town, which means riding the bus to work. The girls seem to like it here though they’ve only had one trip so far. The ones who’ve been here a month. They’re drilling and going to ground school.

We eat lunch at the mess hall but have to pay for it. Cost 45 ¢ for my lunch today but Cappy Ricks paid for it. I’ll have to pay her back. After buying these uniforms, they say that isn’t our official uniform. It’ll be changed again.

The officers - so doggoned many of them! - seem to be awfully nice. Good lookin' too.

You needn't send anything 'cept maybe my jeans till I let you know. I want to get settled first.

Listening to Cliff Nazarro on radio. He's goofy!

Love,
Betty.

How's Paul's chicken pox?

[Postcard]
July 17, 1943

Saturday
Via Air Mail

Hi family –

Remember Les's arm in Nat'l. Guard? Well, mines that way now. 2 shots in right, one in left. Lois Hollingsworth and I are going to room together for a while. Haven't done anything but sign in on the post. Took all day. Many have some news in my next letter.

Lots of Love,
Betty

[July 18, 1943]
Saturday Night.

Dear Pop, Mom, Helen, Paul and anybody else in the family:

What a day! Started at 5:45 this morning and it wasn't till about 7:30 that I could really relax. And how can you relax with an arm that's sore as heck with a great big bump on it? We were all 10 of us taken around the post to sign in and it took all day. At the dispensary we got shot. Alphabetically I come first so I stood and took my medicine. Couldn't look when they jabbed the needles in. First in the right arm – for tetanus and another for typhoid. They say the 3rd tetanus is the worst. These burned for about ½ hr. and now tonight it hurts to move too much. Kind of a strain to comb my hair –even. Oh, yeah, then in the left arm for small pox. That didn't hurt. I was shaking the minute we stepped inside the dispensary. We have to have 13 shots in all. I think there's one for yellow fever and some more tetanus and some others. We don't have to go back for another week tho. Oh, the reason we got up at 5:45: Lois Hollingsworth stayed with me at the hotel last nite and we checked out early so as to move my things over to this room we're planning on renting. The lady said she didn't care what rent we paid. Finally decided on \$35.00 (which is moderate here) and said if it's too much just say so. It's in a 5 room house about 10 min. from the field. Have to transfer once on the bus. The man and wife (name's Farmer) work for Lockheed.

And now the payoff! – We spent all day filling out questionnaires and getting signed in by 12 different offices (got paid for the 1st ½ of July too) and joining the Officers Club – 5.00 initiation and 3.00 month.

That's not compulsory (the officers club I mean) but you just do it! There's no question about it. Well – after doing that (and also having bought a \$5.00 book of meal tickets of which I've used most) six of us were called into the WAFS office and confidentially told us we'd have to sign off the post again. Mom, remember I told you Cochran mentioned something about having 25 girls assigned to special duties? Well, maybe this is it. Seems Cincinnati phoned and asked for us (also 6 from each other base) to meet Cochran in Washington Monday nite. That's all we know – honest! We've been dreaming up things it might be and I'm afraid we'll be disappointed but it's fun thinking about it. Anyhow – it's secret! So keep it under your hat and don't send any more mail to Dallas till you hear from me. We should know more about it by tomorrow. Expect to go by airline at government expense. Maybe I'll be back here again – maybe not. I dunno. The way the Army runs, the whole thing may be changed tomorrow. I shouldn't be telling you all this till I know definite but I don't want you to be writing to Dallas if I won't be there – or here I mean. Gee, maybe Lois Brooks will be there too. Hope so.

Had a big club steak tonight, trying to use up my meal tickets while I'm still here. I don't know what they'll do about our club membership. Sure a lot of nice lookin' fellows here. Mostly Lts. – flyers.

Wish I had my smaller suitcase to pack with me. It'd be lots easier to haul around. Too late now tho. Gee, If I ever learn to pack! Left lots of necessary things home and brought stuff I won't need – clothes, for instance. Did I leave my blue shorts at home? Will let you know developments – keep this in the family! Arm's gettin' tired.

Love,

Betty

[Postcard]

July 19 [1943] 5:05 pm –

Somewhere over Tennessee –

Dear BJ – Sorry I haven't written, Mom has the latest news in her letters. Will tell you all about it soon as I can get a chance to write. The next two weeks may be busy but don't worry – I'll make up for the letters. You wouldn't like this trip – it's too bumpy- bad weather. Am on American Airlines. Say hello to Charlie for me.

Love,

Betty

July 21 [1943]

[Written at the top of letter.]

P.S. Having fun in Washington. Sure fun to see all the kids again. All but 13 of our class came. Rest were too short or had some other physical setback.

Dear Folks:

I sent you a night letter tonite so you should know my new address by now. And if you know anything about anti-aircraft schools you can figure what we're gettin' into. It's supposed to be secret because if we fail, we would go back to our Air Transport Command bases. And Cochran thinks it would be embarrassing if ATC knew we had failed in flying these advanced ships. So, I'll tell you, on condition that it goes no further (for a while anyway). If you tell Kink, she tells Wilda, and Wilda mentions it to Lewise, then the ATC would know. See? How they could help but know we'll be towing targets – when they see our forwarding address! Anyhow, that's it. It sounded much better when Cochran told us, but it boils right down to that. And what Neil is working on - Well, we might be on the other end of it. That part is very hush – hush, please!

After the wonderful food and officers club facilities at Dallas, this new camp is really awful, so we hear. Barracks, swamps, mud, dust, mosquitoes - but we have yet to make our own conclusions. The whole thing is an experiment to see just what jobs women can handle, so the men can go to combat duty. So far – our physical and test at Bolling Field - we have passed OK. Tomorrow we head for the swamps. Cochran had us all over to that huge Pentagon Bldg. today and guess what – General Arnold – yep, four star general – spoke to us in his conference room, a beautiful big room with red leather chairs and glass topped table and lots of windows, two big paintings and some trophy stands. It was a great thrill to have him there! The asst. secty. of war and a hallful of officers waited outside till we got thru with our short session. Golly, Washington's a wonderful place – not all buildings, but lots of water, parks, the Potomac River, scads of historical bldgs., big wide streets and the Capitol. Tonight Brooks and I and 2 others went down to the Lincoln Memorial and stood in awe in front of that big statue of Lincoln (remember “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington”? Also saw the Washington Monument and the OPA bldg. and all sorts of things. We are awfully sleepy now and have to rest up for our trip down there to N.C. tomorrow. We had expected to fly down in a B34 but that cancelled out so we'll probably have to go by train or bus and it's a long hard trip. No Airline runs into that section of the swamps. We'll be near the Atlantic – haven't seen it yet - and can go swimming , have shores on the base, and a dance every Saturday night. But outside of that, Cochran says it's pretty bad. We'll be there long enough to prove our worth then be sent out to other bases maybe. We are no longer WAFS (short-lived period) and have no name yet but may be called WASPS. That's cute, huh? Will tell you more later.

Love,
Betty.

Camp Davis Letters
July 1943 – September 1943

July 22 [1943]

Dear Folks –

When writing to me just address it – Betty Deuser, woman Pilot,
Army Air Base
Camp Davis, N.C.

The address I sent you in the night letter was wrong. We got off today after many delays and flew down in a C47 (Army DC3) of the ATC [the C47 was Hap Arnold's own] – it was camouflaged and we had to whole ship (21 of us). The two young fellows who flew it had never been down to this camp before so landed at Wilmington, N.C. to ask where it was. We had passed it already. This camp is 30 miles northeast of Wilmington. It's near the ocean, surrounded by swamp lands and is the nearest thing to a war base I've seen. If I didn't know better, I'd think we were somewhere in Africa near the front line. The Capt. says the whole base was excited about our coming here. There was a whole gang of fellows out on the line to get a look at us. They've been swell to us so far, even to getting soap and a towel (60¢) for each of us and putting shades on our barracks windows. The barracks rooms are about twice the size of our SwH□0 bathrooms. We're provided with mosquito nets too but nobody knows how to use them. The flying end of it sounds keen (tho we first have to be checked out in cubs) but the living conditions aren't so hot. Of course we haven't seen the whole place yet but it's so isolated! 30 miles from town – golly ned! We have to get shot again Saturday so probably won't start flying till Monday. May get some XC's after a while and this target towing and copiloting B34's and other jobs (excuse me - missions is the word). There are 2 showers and 4 johns for the 25 of us (3 more coming tomorrow). The shower has no door. So your little dotter [sic] is fast losing all modesty. We have no wastebasket in our room (I'm rooming with Brooks) but have army cots, table, closet with no door, and a thingamajig with 3 shelves, sort of a bureau.

July 23 – Had to go to bed after 3rd page. Had thunderstorm last night so it cooled off some.

The flying sounds exciting, with a lot of big ships and some interesting missions. They say we'll be kept plenty busy. On weekends, after a while we can get XC trips either as pilot or passenger and stay overnight somewhere like Washington, New York, Florida, or maybe Boston. All depends.

I've been all day writing this page – starting since before breakfast. It's sure been an interestingly – tell you all about it in another letter. Have to get more shots now, soon as we get through this red tape of getting passes. Brooks got y'r letter at Romulus. Says hello.

Love,
Betty

[July 26, 1943]
Sunday

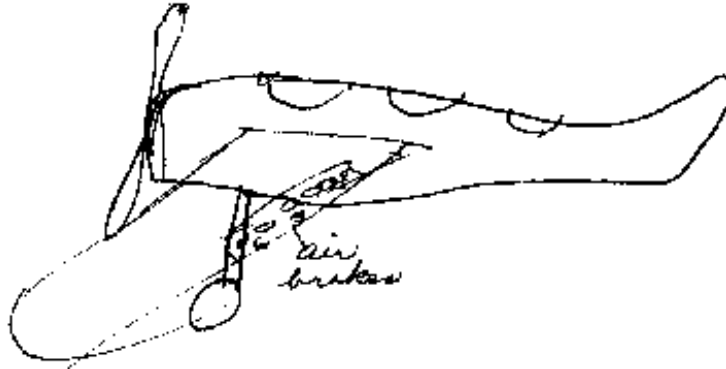
Dear Mom, Pop, Helen and All:

You'll have to make these few letters circulate because I haven't time to write everybody. At least, not yet. We have so many "tech orders" to read – to get familiar with the different ships. It's awfully warm here. Yesterday a GI truck took us to Wilmington to shop. Wilmington isn't much of a town. It has historic value tho. There's a river right at the end of the main street. They seem to go in for cotton and tobacco growing around here. The houses are mostly big red brick style - kinda clean looking. Then there are the Negro shanties. We bought some drapes for our room. They're long – blue with white AT6's on them and a series of red and white air corps wings. Very pretty. Brooks has a lot of her pictures around. After shopping – we had a whole truck load of junk (the girls are really moving in – ironing board, rugs, mirrors) – we went out to the beach. There's a little town out there. A keen beach resort – rows of homes and a boardwalk and lots of people sprawled out on the white sand. The Atlantic is very blue and warm, as I found out today. A Capt. and 2 Lts. took Kay and Isabel Fenton and me to Sears Landing (that's a beach spot nearer the camp) and we swam in the Atlantic. I didn't swim, just stood there and got knocked down by those waves. Bet I swallowed 10 qts., of salt water. They say you should dive under the big ones but I tried to jump over them. Twice I thought I would drown. The waves pushed me under and I came out about 30 ft. further up the beach. But the water was sure warm. Last night a bunch of us went to the officers club to a dance. Our party consisted of about 24. I danced with a very tall captain and a short major. The Capt. was a little stiff – physically and mentally. I left early, before anyone else. Everybody's so thrilled about having girls on the base, we could have dates practically whenever we wanted. These fellows today just came over and asked if anyone wanted to go swimming so I borrowed Jean Pearson's suit and went along. My stuff hasn't come up from Dallas yet, I wired Anna Frankman to send it. Don't know if she did or not. I haven't gotten any of my mail from there yet either. The food here is terrible- especially after the swell cafeteria at Dallas. Here they put a plateful in front of you and you eat it or go without.

It cost us 30¢ a meal – cash. No matter what we eat. We've been asked to furnish our own sheets and pillowcases too. Besides paying for our barracks. We haven't even signed into the post yet cuz we haven't any written orders to be here. So we haven't been paid. We're still civilians so that's why we have to buy everything ourselves. If we were in the Army we wouldn't have to.

"Mosquito Hollow" is just across the airfield, in among the trees. It's part of the anti-aircraft school but a different section. They say the mosquitoes fly formation – two come in and pull the covers off and two more do the stinging. They're fast, too. Can't swat 'em. There's a British unit here too. A group of Britishers who have been under combat fire. They're making a tour of the U.S. , exchanging ideas on anti-aircraft with our men. We have some Bofors guns here and they go out to Sears Landing and practice everyday. Machine guns and other types too. They're lined up all along the beach. Then this lane flies by, towing a "sleeve" target with about 3000 ft. of cable behind the ship. The guns train on the plane but by the time they shoot, the plane has passed (we hope!) and they hit the sleeve. That's one our prospective missions. We haven't done anything

yet except read tech orders and look over the ships. The “Buccaneer” – A34 - is a big one which we hope to fly. They’ve promised us we could but the boys here now say it takes a long time. And we’ve had the same training they have, approximately. It’s a heavy looking ship, a Navy dive bomber, with 1650 hp. It’s all camouflaged and has an awfully wide landing gear – doesn’t look like this picture. That’s just to show the 3 cockpits. Middle one is the bomb bay. Rear one tail gunner I guess.



Mom, you can send my other suitcase if you want, with my slacks and anything else you think I need. We wear khaki trousers shirts now and Cochran has promised us uniforms. But off duty – at least now - we wear what we want. Last nite I wore my black dress to the dance. There’s a lot of junk in my top drawer I could probably use. Might as well have everything with me. Can’t tell where we’ll be moved next. Most anyplace would be better than this. The middle sized suitcases would come in handy anyway. Hope I get some mail soon.

Lots of Love,
Betty

July 28, 1943

Dear Fambly [sic]:

Lois’s Mom sent you a caricature of her so will you send it on to me so I can see it? Have you sent my suitcase yet? I haven’t got my other stuff from Dallas yet. I’d like my slippers and the green silk scarf which I think is in my bottom drawer.

Fred was very happy about the engagement so I guess it was all right I announced it.

Our orders haven’t came thru yet (orders for being here) but when they do we’ll collect two weeks per diem (\$6.00 per day) so they tell us. Also we don’t fly any more until they come. We were checked out in cubs Monday anyway. Felt so funny flying a small ship again. I wrote to BJ, telling all about our setup, so you can read that letter for details. These next ships we’re to fly sure look heavy. They’re old planes – I don’t think the Army uses them anymore.

I sent Grandpa a birthday card from Washington the day before his birthday so he probably didn’t get it in time.

Mom, every time you mention Reba Kirby you use a different last name. It’s Kirby – not Crawford. I got a short letter from Vernon Alves – remember him? He’s in

Texas, in the infantry. Saw my pic in Life [July 19, 1943 issue] so wrote to Sweetwater. Cochran is fixing up our own ready room here, buying furniture (at least she's supplying the money) so we can have our own room and not crowd the officers out of their "owl's club". They've got a "sqawk [sic] box" in there – sort of a loudspeaker so the operations office can call for pilots when needed. The pilots are on the alert for so many hours in case they're needed. They work (or fly) ten hours a day sometimes. The idea around here seems to be to get as much flying time as possible because base is rated according to how much flying time is recorded.

Martha Lundy sent me the enclosed pics. That's Florence Knight in one. I couldn't figure what I was wearing, but finally decided it was my red blouse and jeans.

Lots of Love,

Betty

August 3, 1943

Dear Mom, Pop, Helen and All:

Guess you're wondering what became of me cuz I haven't written. Well, for ten days we've been sittin' and waitin'. This waitin' is sure tough. Our orders didn't come thru. Yesterday Cochran flew down. Today we start to fly. She gets things under way better than anyone. Today, tho, the kids are just flying in the rear cockpit. I may go up this afternoon. Don't know yet. Tomorrow we'll probably fly from the front. We're going to fly the A24 instead of the O-47. It's the Navy SBD4 Dive Bomber. There's a pic of it in one of those Flying Magazines, shows it on the deck of a ship. It's a catapult plane. Looks like a fast ship.

I met some fellow from Oakland last week. He called last nite and we made a date to go to dinner and dance in Wilmington tonight. He's going to borrow a friend's car. It's noon now and I just was informed that we're to have a meeting at 8 pm so I can't go with the Lt. Don't know how to get in touch with him either. So when he calls at 6pm, he's gonna be mad when I tell him I can't go. He seems like a nice guy. No competition for Fred, but just someone to relieve the monotony of this place. The fellows around here have been keeping the phone busy, asking for dates, but this Lt. is the first one I'd consider going out with. Except that Sunday I went swimming with those other guys. This Sunday a group of us girls went to the beach. My suit consisted of a borrowed T-shirt and a borrowed pair of shorts. Looked silly but I got wet anyway. We rode out there in a staff car and back in two jeeps (hittin' 55 mph at one point), sent specially for us.

Secty of War flew in this morn. Big review etc. Have to go now.

Love,

Betty

August 6, 1943

Dear Mom and Pop:

It's almost time for another anniversary for youse guys– 29, huh? Makes me mad when I can't even buy you anything. Hope the enclosed piece of paper will suffice

(ahem! That's quite a big word for me!) Anyhow, congratulations and here's a kiss for you both.

Was sure shocked to hear about Mr. Barthing. Wrote a short note to Mrs. B, not knowing what to say so of course, probably saying the wrong things.

Got a letter from BJ from Salt Lake. They were having a tough time of it when she wrote. Hope things turned out better after that.

I haven't been checked out in anything yet. My instructor just got checked out two days ago in the A24. He had been on XC. So then when it was my turn to fly with him, the girl ahead of me ground looped and blew a tire so my flight was cancelled. Everyone else is flying them tho and say they fly like an AT6. One day I co-piloted an AT11 with some Lt. I don't know the hp. of that but it's about 1250 [twin engine]. He took off and landed and I flew all the rest. First time I've flown in one of them. It's like an AT17 only better.

Yesterday on acct. of my flight being cancelled, I didn't have anything to do so I got a cub and Lois and I went up in that. Took 13 min. to taxi from the parking place to the end of the south runway. And I taxied fast too.

In ground school I'm able to take 10 words per min. in code now. We have an interesting class in aerial photography too. You'd like that, Pop. The kids have been flying missions in cubs while being transitioned in the other ships. Makes it more fun that way. As long as we keep busy, we don't mind the surroundings so much.

Lots of Love and happiness to you both.

Betty

August 9 [1943]
8:30 pm

Dear Folks:

Just got in from flying and Pop's letter is here. Also four from Fred. He went to Albuquerque and bought me a ring. I haven't got in yet though. The mail sure is awful here.

Oh, Mom, I saw the caricature of Lois. Her ma sent her one. It's a good likeness but she doesn't care much for it cuz it makes her look old. I had it pinned up on the wall but she took it down after about a week. Said she couldn't stand to look at it. After my ride where I wrote you those messy pages, I went up with Lt. Bob Loweree. I sat in the back seat of an O-47 and he did some fancy flying – I'll tell you about it sometime. He let me fly some too.

Yep, Florence Knight, Joyce Sherwood and Elin Harte are here too. Martha has just graduated from SwH□0 – Saturday. And Louise is in Long Beach.

I wrote to Mrs. B when I got your letter – guess I told you. I got a letter from Jane mailed July 28. Before Mr. B died I guess.

Oh, I got the cap and belt. Thanks. Will send the insignia back soon as I decide how. You asked how long we'd be here – well, we don't know. The experiment is supposed to be for 90 days.

Love,

Betty

Aug 9 [1943] 1:30pm

Dear Mom and Pop:

I am a sandbag today, at 10,000 ft. over Camp Davis in an A17. (not an AT17). The pilot had a choice of putting a 200 lb bag of sand in the gunners seat or taking me. I wanted to skip ground school and go for a ride so here I am. I was so mad this morn., still waiting to be checked out in an A24. There's always something wrong with them. Brooks and several others were scheduled to go about 120 miles in a couple of big ships and fly some other planes back. Lucky guys. I could've gone to Nashville in a B-34 but I wouldn't get back before 6 and I'm scheduled to fly at 5:30. We're supposed to have a navigation exam today. Don't know how I can do it up here. We're above the clouds, though it isn't very cloudy. The ground is clearly visible. This is a tracking mission – flying back – forth over a small area for 3 hrs. My pilot is one of the Lts. I went swimming with that Sunday – Andy Reynolds. He flew the same mission this morn. It's really quite tiring. In back here, I have a stick and rudders, throttle and mixture control. No other instruments. But he's doing the flying. This is a gunners cockpit. I'm sitting inside a wide iron circle, sort of a swivel for the gunner to swing around easily. The gun has been removed or else I could practice shooting.

Excuse the paper – it's all I have with me. Brought a magazine to read but it's too interesting just watching the scenery. The ocean is under our left wing. Went swimming yesterday and got a real sunburn. Hurts to wear a parachute. 16 of us girls went to the south end of the beach and had the whole ocean to ourselves. Was fun laying there, letting the waves roll over us, looking for shells.

Say, Mom, you said Pop wrote to me Monday, I got your letter but not his. Last nite Mable, Marcia and I went to see "Pilot #5" at the show, then came back to the barracks and sat on the floor and ate watermelon. Brooks joined us. She didn't go to the beach or to the show cuz she hadn't been feeling well so went to the doc. He filled her with magnesium sulfate or some such thing, so she couldn't venture very far.

Got another letter from BJ in Salt Lake and she was still having a bad time of it. They should've gone camping. Wish I could've gone with her. Sometimes I get so lonesome, tho Brooks is a good roommate and we get along swell. She's OK. Guess I've run out of paper. Wait'll I look.

We got a radio call telling us to descend to 8,000 ft, so now we're down there. At least its cooler up here than on the ground. Getting tired sittin' tho; only 2 ½ hours to go.

Sunday the British unit was out at the beach (anti-aircraft bunch), putting on a show for the "This is the Army" broadcast. I didn't hear it, did you? What was it like?

We're now at 8,000 ft., heading 230°, cruising at 130 mph.

2:40 pm

Well this is a good way to catch up on sleep. Had a little nap and read a short article in my magazine. Still tracking back and forth. Getting a little cool up here. My navigation test comes up in 15 min. Wonder if the rest of the kids got back from their XC yet. If not, maybe they'll call off the class. Saturday the kids went to Wilmington to shop. I had to

stay here cuz I was scheduled to fly, but the radio wouldn't work so I just sat around. We do a lot of that!

3:30 pm – This is really a dreary job. I'm enjoying it now but after 2 or 3 times I bet it gets mighty monotonous. We've been flying for 2 hrs. and have covered an area of about 5 or 4 miles in length. I can see the Marine base (I think that's it) over by the lake. Jacksonville is just north of us here.

My clothes are till in Dallas I guess. Anna is probably waiting for the government to send them. If I wait much longer I won't be able to use them cuz we'll be getting regular uniforms. Cochran has dished up some very pretty blue uniforms (she says) and they've been approved so we just have to wait till they're made. Probably take at least a month. More expense! Better quit now. This is my last piece of paper.

Love to All,
Betty

August 15 [1943]

Dear Mom and Pop:

The thunderstorm has cooled this place off, thank gosh. Gee, the past few days it's been so hot, our shirts just get soaking wet, all over the back. Today some of us went swimming. I borrowed another bathing suit. A storm came up while we were swimming so we swam in the rain, then got in our GI truck and came back. It was keen. Brooks was feeling low yesterday so we went to town and she bought a phonograph-radio and two albums of records – Mendelsohns symphony and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. She loves music.

Thanks so much for the purse, it's what I've wanted for months. The card was very pretty too. Also got my suitcase. I meant for you to send the good suitcase but I guess you didn't want it to get scratched, huh? I received Grandma's package too and BJ's card and a box of candy from Les. Sure was keen to get things from home, It's a nice peaceful birthday even if it is away out here in the swamps. Wish I could have a home cooked birthday dinner though. There's another rumor that we may move to another camp in N.C. Just a rumor so far.

I put Paul's birthday card up on the wall – it's so cute. Also have my underwear hanging on a string on the wall. That's my laundry. Sure glad you sent my towels. I can't seem to get these clean.

Did I tell you I got my engagement ring from Fred? It's sure pretty. I'm afraid I'll scratch it.

In town yesterday I bought some can fruit juice. Used all my ration tickets. Last week one of the girls got some for me and used up all those tickets good up till then. We have an ice box here so it keeps pretty good. We don't get enough fruits and vegetables here otherwise. I got some vegetable juice too. Tastes good.

This is for BJ

Yesterday I checked out in an L-5. It's like a cub only more horsepower (185 H.P.) and it's bigger. Easy to fly too. The other day when I soloed the A24 I was sent up on a tracking mission, supposedly at 10,000 feet but I went up to 8500 feet and figured

that was high enough. I feel more at ease in them now, after a few hours in them. Guess I'll go to dinner now. It's served from 4 to 5 on Sunday.

Love,
Betty.

In photography class we all took pictures with this camera. Have to center the ball on the

X of two things crossing the lens.



I got this plane flying over (I think it's an L5) and got it in dead center.

[August 21, 1943]
Friday 2:15 pm

[Written at top page]

P.S. Got a letter from Edna-

Dear Barbara Jean:

I started a letter to you last night but Brooks wanted me to cut her hair. So I did. She has awfully cinky curly hair and it's hard to manage, so I curled the front and back and pulled the side up. Makes her look younger.

My suitcases and suit box arrived today. Cost 3.40 from Dallas. Got a check yesterday for 101.14 for the last part of July. Some of the kids – the Romulus and Long Beach groups, got paid \$224. Soon as I get a chance to cash it, I'll send you some.

Gee, that's keen about your horse. Doggone it, when am I ever gonna get one? I would've done better by staying home. I'm not getting very much flying time in and then it's mostly in light ships- the bigger crates break down and they haven't enough anyway. Criminy we thought we were through training, but the men just don't believe we can do anything till they check us out. Thy have an AT17 here and we have to be checked out. Well, most of us have about 50 hrs in it and the guys here have never flown it. So last nite Brooks went up with Capt. Jones (he flew it about a year ago) and legally he checked her out, but it's just a farce. We should be checking the instructors out. And that's not bragging.

Just finished an hour link period. Have another one from 8-9 tonight. I'll be through with that soon. It's the same lessons we had at Sweetwater but there's a rule that we have to have so many hours of link every week.

Should've seen the P-39 that zoomed over this noon. Did a slow roll up about 800 ft. or less and then a chandelle – Boy, can that thing climb!

Send me a pic of Smoky soon as you can, huh? Have you ridden her yet? Does Husky like her? Gee, I wish I could see her. I'm tired of this Army life- wanna go home and do all the things we always planned . You're getting what you wanted – gosh, that's keen! Mom told me in her last letter about your getting the mare.

I can see why Mom didn't send my good suitcase. Gee, they banged my wardrobe case up awful. Poked a dent in it and scratched it some. That Apple Blossom cologne that Wilda (I think) gave me broke and stunk up the whole suitcase. Just about ruined my

peach nitegown. I got Mom's pkg. with the nitegown from Aunt Bessie. Will you tell her in case I forget? It's a little big around but it can be fixed. Y'know, it's been more than a month since I packed my suitcase, leaving Dallas. So my coat and jacket , etc. have permanent wrinkles in them.

Have to go fly more formation in the L-5, this afternoon. All the big ships are either grounded or in use. Last night I went up in the control tower and watched the planes from there. That was before sunset. Then some new service pilot wanted me to give him a cockpit check on the A-24. He's going to be checked out in it today. We were brought here to relieve the men but it's sure taking them a long time to realize it! Some of the kids have lots of time in the bigger ships – the AT-11, the O- 47 (they won't let us fly them anymore – they're too old), and even the B-34 - and a lot of it comes from being sociable with those in command. If that's what it takes to get anywhere around here, they can count me out. 'Course, I don't try to be obnoxious with the guys. It takes a lot of string-pulling to get XC trips on weekends too. We (Brooks, Courtney, and I) want to fly to N.Y., but I don't think we'll ever get the chance. Brownie, our squadron commander (she graduated in WI) gets most of the trips and flying time. Oh well, maybe I'm safer on the ground. Yesterday on a cub mission the air was so rough it shot me up from 900 ft. to 1200 ft back down to 800. Gee, I was gettin' nervous. Crazy Brooks had a cub mission too. Cubs are supposed to be soloed from the back seat. Well, she climbed in front without thinking, then remembered it later, so while in the air she climbs back over the seat to get in back. Boy, I was nervous enuf with the rough ride I was gettin', to try anything like that. Have you heard anymore from Ruth? Oh golly, BJ, I sure wish we could have our horses together – go ridin' at nite and everything! Bet I never do get mine now! Tell me all about Smoky! – Lots of Love,

Betty.

August 22 [1943]
Sunday

Dear Mom, Pop and Helen -

Just got back from the show- saw Don Ameche in "Heaven Can Wait". I'm sleepy as heck but it's been a week since I wrote you and if I don't do it now, there's no tellin when I'll get another chance. A bunch of A24's came in for us so now there are plenty of ships to fly so we'll be busy. I flew this afternoon, and took an artillery Lt. up for his first ride. He had been in an airliner once, but this flying's different. He admitted he got a little green. I dove thru some clouds and did a few lazy 8's but otherwise took it easy with him seein' as how it was his first real ride. I hadn't flown an A24 for about 10 days so was a little rusty. The fastest we hit today was 180 knots in a dive. Which is pretty fast, converted to mph. I got BJ's horse picture today. It sure is pretty. I have it sittin' on a beam at the foot of my bed where I can see it when I go to sleep.

Last night we were just sittin' around listening to some records ("The Mikado") when someone came in and wanted two girls to go out with some Majors. Freddie was going – she had met them before- and they were pretty important 3rd Air Support officers who had come down to inspect our situation. They were satisfactorily impressed. Anyhow, it was 10pm then, but Joyce I decided we'd go. They just wanted to go down to

the officers club. There were 3 majors and a Lt. all of them clowns so we had a lot of fun-just listening to them.

Brooks wrote you a letter today, Mom. Now if she'll only remember to mail it.

Someone tells us we are officially no longer WAFS, but now are WASPs (cute, huh?) Women's Army Service Pilot. It seems to be general opinion that we'll be in the Army real soon.

Love,
Betty.

Aug. 18 [1943]

[Written at top of page]

Thanks for the paper and stamps. Sure need them.

Dear Helen:

It's lunch time and I just got back from the mess and guess what recording I'm listening to on Brook's phonograph – "Tocatta and Fugue in D minor." Classical, huh? Funny thing about it is that I like it. She has several symphonic pieces and I'm getting so I can appreciate them. Still prefer Xavire Cugat though. I'd have you send some of my records if I thought we'd be here long enough but here's more talk of moving some of us, so I don't know. Now listening to Capriccio Italian by Tsaichavsky. My favorite of this bunch.

We were supposed to have a hurricane this noon. It was predicted but never showed up. They stacked down all the planes and even flew some of the smaller ones to another field so they wouldn't blow away.

The watchband Neil gave me is ten shades darker now, from sweat and weather, I guess. It's very pretty this color though.

Had another Tetanus shot yesterday. Didn't hurt too much but I'm sure glad I don't have to have another for six months.

A friend of Brook's sent her a box of fudge and her little Shakespeare books. By the time the box arrived the fudge had melted and had practically covered the books. So we're eating the fudge with a couple of spoons I swiped from the mess hall.

Love,
Betty

August 27 [1943]

Dear Folks:

Brook's banjo just arrived so she's sittin' on my bed, plucking away. Ground school this afternoon sure was interesting. WE went to the "ramp"- in camp here – to investigate the guns and equipment which track us and simulate shooting. The system of height finding, azimuth, range and direction finders is sure interesting. The 90 mm gun

can be run my remote control. Sure looks funny seein' the gun move around with nobody sitting at it.

Last night Marcia and I went to mess and Brooks didn't go cuz of her cold. She just wanted to rest. So she asked me to bring her a "snack". I got a whole dinner and as we had apple pie, I was gonna bring her a piece. The guy insisted I take the whole Pie! Said they'd just throw it out. So we had the whole thing, and as a result, had lots of 'company'. Kids kept dropping in to listen to Brook's records and eat apple pie. I ironed some last nite – some clothes I mean. We have a big iron for the barracks – It's so heavy – a regular laundry iron. About almost a foot long. Sure get tired ironing with that.

Later

Decided to go see "Arabian Nights" at the show. Gee, the colors were pretty. I had a cold this morning but I guess I sweated it out. It's been so awfully hot – we're due for a thunderstorm I guess.

Did you know there's a Jap bomber named after me? They name their bombers after girls and "Betty" is a great big one. It would be!

In Link today I had more fun. Flew into Oakland, over to Stockton and to Sacramento and let down over the field. They were going to give me a N.Y. map but I insisted on flying home. So the whole trip took 1 hr 10 min. Sure was fun.

The mosquito season has begun. Sure are pesky!

Lots of Love,
Betty

Decided to answer questions asked in various letters I haven't answered yet.

1. Yep, we still have flying calisthenics. Need 'em to keep in good shape. Have to march to breakfast too.
2. Tracking is just flying around and having the guns follow you. Gives te guys practice in sighting planes. They told us to zoom down over them and maneuver around do they'll have to work fast to keep up in their sights. That's fun!
3. Yep, I guess it'd be a good idea to send out engagement cards though everyone knows about it. Guess I oughta send one to Fred's folks. Maybe Pop could print some cute ones – sumpin' clever. Fred's name is Fred Budde (I think it is Frederick but I'm not sure and anyway he doesn't like it.) You can send them to all the "regulars" and have some extras for me. You can make a list id you want.
4. I got the suitcase, the nightgown, the purse – thanks a lot.

After ground school today, we went to the soda grill and I got a double chocolate sundae – big soda glass full of ice cream and choc. Sauce. Then bought 2 choc. eclairs. First goo I've had in months!

Got a card from Mrs. Peel and a letter from Edna. 'Bout time they sat up and took notice!

5. Yep, I've finished getting shots – for a while. Also had my finger pricked for blood typing and am type “zero”. That's most common.

Maybe I can see Neil in Florida. I wrote to him in N.Y. and then that same day got your letter saying he'd gone back home. Maybe Janet will forward it – huh?

6. The silverware – I'd sure love a real nice set but this war has just spoiled everything anyhow. Maybe you'd better use yr. [sic] set Edith gave you. If you really don't need it tho – well, OK.

Love,

Betty

Aug. 29, [1943]

Dear Folks-

Feel ashamed for not writing but gosh, there's just not time for anything. Hope you're all getting along well. Out here in the swamps we have plenty trouble with mosquitoes. Today most of the kids put up their mosquito nets over the beds. The season seems to have started for the blood thirsty things!

Love,

Betty

September 1 [1943]

Dear Folks:

That date scares me – it makes the time seem to have vanished behind me. This sure has been an eventful year!

Saturday Marcia and I went to town. Brooks had wanted some records so we went to the music store. Well, we came out with eight albums, and 2 separate records. Those 2 were mine, besides two albums of Xavier Cugat congas. We really had a jam session that night. Sunday we didn't get up till nearly noon. A Lt. whom I took up the past Sunday for a ride, called me and asked if I'd go to the officers club with him. Well, I wasn't dressed and was feeling hot and lazy so refused (and he's so good looking!). Soon as I hung up, I wished I had gone. Instead Marcia, Brooks and I went to the show. I forget what we saw – gee, my memory's sure slippin'.

Brooks got a telegram today saying Cal Atwood was killed (he was my BT instructor – a swell guy!) Brooks' room mate, Anna, had married Cal right after graduation, She was at Dallas (the girl I was supposed to meet at the airport). The girls at Dallas have had ferrying trips to California since I left. Flew some PQ 8's out. We have some here – little toy-like ships used in radio control. One of the Dallas girls flew an A 24 in last evening, so we got all the latest news from her. 24 new girls came in yesterday – kids we had known at Sweetwater. I don't know how we'll manage with so many girls now. Our six weeks training period is supposedly finished, but we're supposed to have six weeks more experimental work “on the job.”

Love,

Betty

September 2, [1943]

Dear Folks:

Excooz [sic] blot pleeze[sic] - it's just cologne that spilled in my suitcase. I didn't think I should waste the paper just on account of that. Smells pretty anyway.

One of the new men pilots got lost the other day. Poor guy- he was supposed to be on a mission about 20 miles from here. He called in from Florence, South Carolina – 100 miles away. He had gone above the overcast, and being new here- had just wandered off too far. Was he embarrassed!

I got that income tax info but I don't think I'll bother with it. Looks too complicated. I got a card from Neil too. I may get to see him sometime. There has been talk of our moving again - and well, one never knows, does one?

How's about some more moron jokes? Sometimes we need a laff [sic] around here. I bought two books in town Saturday. One by Benchley and the other an "Omnibus of American Humor". Saw "This is the Army" last night. Just after we got home we had a blackout. Practice I guess – I hope!

Yes, I got Carl's letter. The dateline had been censored so I don't know where he is.

You remember Joyce Sherwood, Mom? One of my room mates at SwH2O. Well, her engine quit on her the other evening and she attempted to make a landing on the runway but skidded and when she hit , the landing gear buckled. The ship caught on fire but she and her instructor jumped out. The fire didn't amount to much. She feels OK but the Doc says X-rays show fractured skull in back. She doesn't even feel it!

Love,

Betty

[Same envelope]

Sunday 1:45

Dear Pop;

Got a date to take a fellow flying in a few minutes. He's the same Lt. I took up a couple of weeks ago. Back for more punishment. He doesn't know where I live so I expect him to be late anyway,

Yesterday Marcia and Capt. Davis and a major and I went to Wilmington then to the beach at Wrightsville. By that time it was about six o'clock so we didn't do much swimming. I'm afraid of the breakers anyway so I didn't go in very far. I haven't learned to ride 'em in yet. Then we had dinner on the porch of the hotel. It's a great big grey shingle place. Was so peaceful and cool there on the porch, watching the ocean. I don't know how I got into that date – Marcia got me to go. The major was bald, (that's b a l d – not "o") and about your age. He was very nice – he came here to take over the command of the place but the Army changed its mind and today he went back to Cape Cod.

This past week I've gotten in a lot of flying. Was promised a trip to Washington but never got it. Some of the kids went to New York today. Lucky bums!

Gee, it's noisy here in the barracks today – Shale and Hanrahan have moved all their junk out into the hall and are scrubbing their room. They're the noisiest kids here. Fenton's folks are comin' to see her today. Remember her, Mom?

Love,
Betty

[September 8, 1943]
Saturday Night.

Dear Folks:

Marcia is reading a magazine out loud so this letter will probably be disconnected. Bertha is sitting here rubbing Brook's neck. Brooks woke up Friday morning with a stiff neck and couldn't move it. It hurt plenty. She's grounded till it gets better. It's much better now so I guess she'll be able to fly Monday.

I just flew on a 2 ½ hr XC this morning in an AT17 with Marcia. I was kinda all set to go to Topeka for the weekend but the trip fell through. Heck, I guess I'll resign myself to staying here. Our XC this morning was to Raleigh and Myrtle Beach. We each flew part. Towards Myrtle Beach it go awfully rough. Tomorrow Lt. Barr wants to go for another ride so I guess I'll take him up and then go on another XC. We have about seven XC's to make for training. Tomorrow will be my fourth to Fayetteville and Rocky Mount.

I went to the show with Lt. Maitland the other night and he keeps calling up every night. I went to the show with him again, refused twice, so now maybe he won't bother anymore. He's too old.

Last night we went to the PX and brought about a dozen cokes back to the barracks. I guess I drank about four in a row. Just sat and played music and went to bed early. We took my cot into Bertha's room to get away from the noisy bunch down the hall. Shale and Hanrahan are leaving. They both were to be dismissed but Shale got her resignation in first. Jean Pearson also resigned. Her husband doesn't want her to tow targets. Some of the girls are gonna be put in radio control exclusively. Not me. Need engineering or radio background.

Love,
Betty

September 8, [1943]

Dear Folks:

It's raining so we got a little time off. Looks like it might clear though. I'm so hot and tired. Even when it rains we sweat around here. I flew a lot yesterday but this morning I took an A24 up for a mission but the engine was pretty rough so I brought it

back in. The clouds were low too and I was supposed to go to 10,000 ft. Yesterday I went to 10,000 and flew out over the ocean 20 miles (8 minutes) and back and inland 20 miles and so to and fro. It was fun. Just for 2 hours so my seat got tired but it's better than these other missions that have such a short span that you're always turning.

This morning I checked out in a PQ8. I dunno whether you can find much about that in magazines. It's like a Culver Cadet with a nose wheel. More fun to fly! And so easy. It just flips around like a toy.

It's a radio control ship – the setup is very hush-hush so I can't tell you about it. Besides, I don't know much about it myself.

Haven't had a letter from you for quite a spell. Wassamatter? Got a letter from Brooks' folks today. They sent best wishes to you.

I've got to go to the post office now to send BJ some money. Still owe her for that loan to get to Dallas.

Brooks had a date last nite. What a kick! We've been trying to get her to go out for so long. But she doesn't like to dress up. Her date last night was named Brooks!

How about sending some pictures. I want to see my family! Joyce is going home on leave. She can't fly on acct of her injury. (For a while anyway).

Love,

Betty

September 20 [1943]

[Written at top of page]

You can pass this on to Ma and Pa so I don't have to repeat page 1 again – will ya?

Dear Barbara Jean:

Just got back from lunch and hope Dora doesn't mind if I use her typewriter. I'll ask her later. This is a rainy day and tho it might clear up, in the meantime maybe I can get this started. I began two letters to you last night but got too sleepy. Read a cute story in the Satevepost this morning. You'd like it. It's called "Chiltepiquin" and is in the July 10 issue. It's about a little red horse. I was just laying there dreaming of home and stuff, and wondering what you were doing. Mom said you had an earache. Just got a letter from her this morning. Yesterday morn I got up at 9:30, having gotten to sleep about 2 a.m. Kids around here were making so much noise I couldn't get to sleep. Shirley Ingalls came up and asked if I wanted to go on a picnic, and it being a crisp sunny morning, and me dreaming about home again, I said sure. My date was a tall skinny guy from Mississippi. Funny as heck. He had been drinking and was wisecracking all the time. There were five girls and six fellows – and the boys brought the food. We went down to Sears Landing, and they being in the AA, had a key to one of the supply bldgs where we went to peel potatoes and get things ready to eat. Scotty (my date) barbecued the chickens out over a pit in the sand. They painted the chicks with hot barbecue sauce and cooked then so they had a black curst – that's supposed to be crust! They sure were good. Scotty kept asking me if I wanted to neck... well, as long as he was so obvious about it all, he was easy to handle and we just laughed it off. He kept drinking but finally slept it off. Shirley and I decided we didn't want to stay there all evening if the guys were going to keep on

drinking so we said we had made other plans for the evening. So after much argument our men brought us two home. On the way home, Scotty started making cracks and Shirley socked him, and then when he started maneuvers on me, I poked him in the stomach [sic] – hard- with my elbow and hit him on top of the head. Well, we had a regular fight, and Bill, driving, was having hysterics from laughing. We all laughed so much, and poor Scotty kept joking and said next time he wanted a little delicate 4’ 5” date. Shirley is as tall as I am. She’s got long black hair and is very pretty. Good kid too. So Scotty wasn’t mad anyway, and we all had a lot of fun out of it. Brooks had gone to eat and Freddie said they had been talking about going tot he show, so I took a chance on meeting them at “ Best Foot Forward” and did. Left before the other kids did tho, cuz I go there sooner. Shirley and I were going down to the grill to eat but she had to go out so she lent me her car and Kay Menges and I drove down to the grill and had chocolate soda, sandwich, and choc. Eclairs. Then I bot [sic] a bag of caramels too. Such goo! You know, even while those soldiers are drinking and cutting up, they never seem to forget that they are soldiers. Like when we were having such a time in the car, we had just passed through the gates here at 5:30 and retreat sounded. They stopped the car, got out and stood at attention, while the flag was lowered. They all must do that, driving or walking, must stand at attention, and if you can’t see the flag, then must face wherever the bugle sounds.

Saturday I finally made drapes for our clothes closet. It’s just plain white cloth, but I put a huge hem in them and they gather at the top, so at least it’ll keep he dust off our stuff. I’m flight leader of Flight A this week, so am supposed to see that everybody gets up on time for calisthenics at 6:30 and goes to ground school, etc. This morning Elsie woke me up so could call “Five minutes” to our group, and “Fall in”. Hope I can wake myself up after this. The nights are colder now and with those two heavy covers over me, it’s so warm, I kinda hate to get up.

Ruth Rueckert’s cousin is in N.C. and he wrote to me, upon her suggestion, and wants me to meet him in Wilmington, next weekend. I don’t want to, but he’s about to be sent overseas, and I know how lonesome these Army guys can get, so I made a date with him for next Saturday about 4. Well I’ll probably have to fly and he’ll be left sitting high and dry (?) in the Cape Fear Hotel lobby.

Hope your mental attitude has cheered up some. Sometimes we get so downcast here, looking ahead and seeing no future like we’d planned. But gosh, if you don’t have some faith in the future, there’s not much hope. Doggone, I still want to raise horses and have a family and I’m sure not going to give up thinking about it anyway. That’s about all that keeps us going sometimes. Brooks gets down in the dumps too and there’s not much you can do to cheer her up. She wants to go home and go on with teaching and her music and stuff. She’s sure nuts about music – good stuff.

The weather still looks bad but we have to stick around the barracks in case we’re called for ground school or flying. Well, there’s no place else to go anyway.

Can’t think of much more to rattle on about, tho could if you were here. Lots of times I just sit and think and have lots of interesting conversations with you all by myself. Silly, huh?

Love,
Betty.

[September 13, 1943]
Friday

Dear Barbara Jean:

Last week I flew over 21 hours. This week I got 2 hrs. - put in yesterday taking a trip up to Raleigh to pick up some Colonel's raincoat. Important mission, huh? It was so hazy I couldn't see the airport until I was within four miles of it.

Last night the 4:30 siren blew. Brooks and I were here in the barracks. Twenty minutes later another siren blew. It just goes thru me when a siren goes off cuz we know something's happened. A girl (one of the 4th class) cracked up after landing. Killed. She had an antiaircraft Lt. with her. I think he's alive but had his face torn. The girl (Betty Wood - married a SwH20 instructor last month) had her head almost cut off. I didn't see anything- not even the ship afterwards. I don't remember the girl very well. It's funny how it doesn't seem to affect most of us anymore. People get hardened to it I guess. It made me sick to think of it and I felt all upset, but the other kids discussed it and I felt childish, being so affected. I had made a date to go to the show with Lt. Maitland so went ahead and had a good time. Saw John Garfield in "The Fallen Sparrow". Gee, it was really good. The dialogue was so brisk and in places I was scared - all that spooky stuff. This Lt. is too old and has no teeth in front and has a moustache but he's a nice guy and isn't fresh, which helps. I went for a drive with him Monday. The Major I was out with Tuesday would like to get fresh, if I would - but I don't let him. He and I and Kay and Charlie (Lt. Hageman) went to the Officers Club and danced. They're both good dancers. They're the two Fenton and I went with last week to the Marine Base.

The weather was bad all week and we didn't fly until yesterday. Today it's cloudy again but I think it'll clear. On acct. of having time off from work, some of us went to town Wed. morn. I always spend too much money when I go down there. Spend over \$20 and all I got was a lot of junk - a couple of towels for Merle's birthday, a pretty blue coat sweater, some records, candy, lipstick ("Taber" Singapore - smells keen). We changed our room around so we could put our records in our dressing table instead of on the floor. Now the records are on the shelves, the phonograph is on the top, and we put a big mirror over the dresser. My bed is under the window now, right next to the heater. We'll have to rearrange everything again if they ever turn the heat on.

We got some equipment issued to us - leather jacket, summer flying cap, winter helmet, flight cap with beak, sun glasses, zoot suit (nice looking one), and an A-4 bag (big suitcase with zippers and pockets. It's huge- maybe you've seen flyers carrying them).

We have to go back to the flight line now - the weather's clearing.

Love,
Betty

September 15, [1943]

Dear Barbara Jean:

I'm so sleepy - and it's only 9 p.m. Had a 4hr. XC today - to Greensboro → Florence → Charleston (South Carolina) → Camp Davis. Francis Grimes and I each took an A24 and each had a radioman passenger. My man had never been up before so he really enjoyed it. We landed at Florence to refuel. It was 1p.m. so we stayed for lunch. It's an Army airport. The operations officer got a staff car for us and a Negro chauffeur to drive us over to the officer's mess - a nice cafeteria, about 4 miles around the field. Was fun. It's a big place, but too hot - and lots of Negroes there. Taking off from there, my map almost blew away and by the time I got it back and folded, and set again, I had gotten way off course. So wandered away off course, far to the right of where I should've been. Got there tho. Flew formation for a few minutes, but that takes too much concentration. I can't watch the other plane and my check points at the same time. Just before reaching home, I did a steep chandelle just to give my passenger a thrill, after riding straight and level for so long.

Gosh, I guess there's not much to write about. Got a letter from Mom and one from Helen today. Hear you're going around with Ruth now. That's swell. What's her baby like? Golly, I wish we could have some ol' gab fests again! These kids are keen but you can't talk the same with them - you know.

Kay Menges is here, talking a blue steak, so I've gotta quit. I sent a check to you yesterday.

Love,
Betty

[September 1943]
Tuesday Night.

Dear Pop:

You can see I had good intentions last night but my Lt. date showed up and I had to spend a boring evening playing rummy with him while Brooks and Emma listened to his recordings. That's the only reason I let him come over - cuz of his records.

The most exciting thing in 2 months happened to me Saturday - I saw a mountain! Really only a hill I guess but I sure got a kick out of seeing something besides swamps. I got to go to Greenville, S.C. in a B-34 on the way over I stood up and looked out the gunners turret and navigated and later sat up in copilots seat. Sat there all the way home while Marcia flew (Capt. Holen took off and landed tho). On the way home the Capt. stopped one engine, feathered the prop, and the ship flew very nicely with one engine. He put it on again for landing tho. Greenville is a nice town. The Capt.'s brother is a bombardier at the B25 school there and took us to town. Lots of pretty homes and trees but most of these southern towns are so sort of sleepy - not so much activity. We started for home at 5:30 and got here just as the sun was going down at 7pm. It's 273 mi. so you can figure a good 185 mph ground speed. Today in peeling off to come down from my 10,000 ft. mission, I had the A24 up to 191 knots which is about 220 mph, descending at 5000 ft per min. Of course I didn't keep that up for more than a few seconds cuz that speed builds up too fast and its a job to hold it back.

Brooks is co-piloting on an AT11 mission tonight, or rather tomorrow, from 1:15 till 3:15 a.m.! So instead of getting so sleep, she's playing some new violin recordings she just got. It's 10 p.m. so I guess I ought to turn off the light and maybe she could sleep. I went to the show tonite - "Wintertime", Sonja Henie Some very pretty skating numbers, and some good special lighting effects in a number with Woody Herman's ork.

Will finish this tomorrow so Brooks can go to sleep. G'nite.

Wed. Morn. 7:30

On the flight line - too busy to write now -

Love,
Betty.

[September 16, 1943]
Thursday

Dear Folks:

We have a few minutes layover between ground school (interesting discussion on carburetion) and lunch (never very interesting). I have one more XC to make and had planned to do it this afternoon but I doubt if the visibility is good enough. It's sunshiny but the haze is bad. And when you're flying it's worser [sic]! Yesterday I went to Greensboro and Florence (landed to refuel plane and self) then to Charleston (S.C.) and back here. It's a nice trip. Took about 3:45 flying time but I left here at 10:30 and got back at 4:00. Spent an hour at Florence. Today the trip is to Savannah, Ga. thence to Columbia and back. I'll land at Savannah for fuel. Wish I could get a weekend trip somewhere. Lois and I have been talking about flying to Reno if they'd only let us. Which they won't.

I flew in an AT11 for 3 hrs. the other nite. Full moon was beautiful. It was a searchlight mission at 10,000 ft. Like they used to have at home - you know when we'd run out to see all those lights catch a ship? Same thing. Only this time I was upstairs.

Joyce is OK. Went home on month's leave. The girl who was killed was Mable Rawlinson (they called her "HutSut"). You met her - I remember she was one of those talking with you in the rec hall. She's one who called me "Doozee" as most of these gals do. You can look her up in my Log Book. She was a sweet kid - from a large family - unspoiled and good natured. Everybody liked her, especially Brooks (she was one of Brooks' roommates at SwH20 - blonde and kinda thin). Bertha Link was her roommate here. They were sure broken up about it. It was so sudden and tragic. Now, look - don't you guys go worrying about me. I haven't had a speck of trouble yet and don't expect to. There have been little things go wrong with most of 'em - but nothing serious. So don't worry, will ya. I miss you guys too and will be glad when I can get home again. In the meantime, I'm enjoying my work and get along with everyone OK. Look - ma, how many times have I told you - you don't spell dining room with 2 n's!

We spent a quiet weekend here. My friend the old Lt. called 3 times to get me to go out. I wouldn't answer 1, once I wasn't here, and the 3rd time I let Hanrahan take the call. She talked to him for about 20 minutes and got him so confused he didn't know what was cookin'.

We went to the show t'other nite - "Destroyer", with Ed. G. Robinson and Glenn Ford. Pretty good pic. Just ate 3 choc cookies and feel sick. Guess I'll go to lunch.

Love,
Betty

[September 1943]
Monday Morn.

Dear Folks:

Just got Pop's letter, an seein' as how our ground school (radio) is over and I don't fly till 1, I have an hour almost, before lunch. So will try to get this letter-a-week out. This morning an A24 came over the field very low, with only one wheel down. They work on a hydraulic system so if that goes haywire, the gear won't come down. There's a hand pump too, but I guess that wouldn't work. So 'Tany' (Mildred Taner) took it up high and just circled around, trying to use up her gas so when she landed with no wheels (she pulled the one up) it would have less chance of starting fire. Well, I hear, (nothing confirmed yet) the fuel pressure went out on her, so she brought it in for a belly landing. Made a honey of a landing in the dirt next to the runway and it just ground looped to the right. I haven't seen her yet, but they say she's OK and the ship just suffered a bent prop - and scratched belly, of course. Well, I'm glad to know it won't always catch on fire.

Sure enjoyed your letter. Paul must be awfully cute! Don't let Mrs. Koenig bother you. I guess Bud is an h.p. and that's keen. It takes guts to fly those ships and you've gotta be good. Just so he doesn't get cocky. But I still bet I could make Mrs. Koenig's hair curl with a few maneuvers I can do. I haven't slow-rolled the A24 - Yet! - but mainly because it's just asking for trouble. I'd do it if I had to but I'd just as soon be cautious and alive, as be considered an h.p. posthumously (gosh, did I say that?)

Gee, it was cold this morning. Winter has come I guess. I had two blankets over me last nite. This morn we did exercises at 6:45 but still that didn't warm me up - cuz that north wind was plenty cold. I bet our 10,000 ft. missions will really freeze us out now. We got some leather jackets this morning - I don't think we can keep them, but until we get our pretty uniforms, we need something in the mornings.

Marcia just came in and is chattering away again so it's impossible to write a letter. She talks faster than anyone I know - maybe excepting Edna. She's a good kid though. She tells me I missed a code class - left too early. Oh well.

Love,
Betty.

[September 21, 1943]
Saturday Night.

Dear Mom, Pop and Helen:

Just got Pop's letter and haven't answered Helen's yet either, so even though I'm drooping, I'm trying to catch up on letters tonite. Brooks and I are staying home. I had a chance for a date, but I didn't know who it was on the phone and I was afraid it mite[sic] be someone I didn't like so I just refused altogether.

Paul sounds so darned cute. Send me some of those pictures you just took, will you?

The ocean flying was a thrill but I was in sight of the shore all the times so it wasn't bad. I don't think I'd like it if I wouldn't see land. You can't judge distance so well over water. One kid I took up for a ride one Sunday, went up with a fellow in the D-47 the other day, and had a dogfight with another O-47. Well, my former passenger had to clean up the ship when they got down. He really got sick!

Helen - Fred's home is Sioux City - [that's near Sioux Falls. **NOTATION FROM 1991**] Brooks got a big kick out of the moron jokes. The whole barracks liked the "two on a curbstone" joke. Marcia is sitting here reading them all out loud. They're not so funny after hearing them all before. Wish she'd read them to herself. I told her to, but crimony, even being rude to her doesn't work.

Had a swell trip to Savannah today. Brooks and I flew down and on the way back we played around and had a dogfight. Had lots of fun.

The kids are playing my Conga records loud as heck. How can I sleep!

Love,

Betty.

[September 21, 1943]

Monday at two

Dear Fambly [sic]:

Just finished a letter to BJ and told her to let you read it too so there's no sense telling you all about the barbecued chicken I had, or the picnic or all that, huh? Anyhow it was a lot of fun and I left before things got rough.

I like days like this, when no one comes in to bother us. Usually Marcia does, likes to come in and talk, and she never knows when to leave. She asked me to come down to her room but I told her I wanted to write letters. We keep insulting her but still she pesters us. Poor kid is lonely too I guess and I feel like a heel when I'm not nice to her. She's really OK and lots of fun only there are some times when a person likes to be alone. Brooks likes to be alone too, so when I feel her getting into that mood, I either leave or just don't say anything. So we get along pretty good. Have so far anyway. Her folks address is Box 477 Reno.

We haven't been able to figure out how much money we're making or what deductions are coming out or anything - until finally we got a breakdown of salary. They just hand us a check and we never know what the dope is. So now they tell us our base salary (as civilians - which we probably won't be for more than another month, darn it!) is 250 and overtime (huh?) is 36.24. Take away withholding tax of 49.60 and retirement of 12.50 and that leaves 224.14 which is what our last month's check was. When we're put into the Army that'll be much less. Brooks figures we don't earn it anyway, and I suppose we don't really - except if you figure the inconvenience and the risks in that. What gets

her down, is that the men who are in the Army and have families to support, don't make enuf [sic] and here we have no dependents and make all that money. Well, she saves here, and so far I haven't been able to save any. Now that I've got all my bills paid up, maybe I can start. Oh, heck, we'll have to pay plenty for the WASP uniforms too - and that'll probably be soon.

Lately I've been thinking so much of home - and wishing life could be normal again. It's OK here as long as we're all together but now some of the kids are going to leave (they don't know when) to go in for this radio control stuff. I didn't know whether to volunteer for it or not. Figured I could fly bigger ships here. But now Brooks and I want to go into it and I'm afraid it's too late. The list of fifteen girls has already been sent to Washington. So unless they revise the list, I guess I stay here for awhile. The radio control seems to have a better future - of course we wouldn't be able to fly the bigger ships as they've been talking about getting here, but later, as the thing is advanced, they'll probably get into bigger stuff. In the meantime, while they're studying the radio the kids can probably fly anything that happens to be around, big or little crates. Wish I had signed for it before. They'll probably have to go to ground school for five weeks to learn all about radios, seeing as how they decided that you don't need an engineering background for it. I'd like to learn something new. I always did like to study and it keeps the mind active, and I wouldn't have too much time to think about other things. We've been pretty active lately tho, so the morale is not so bad. Gee, I feel sorry for Gus having to go. You remember Brooks' brother-in-law, Mom, who had the little farm out where we saw the deer? Well, he's been put in 1-A and him with three kids! That's sure tough. He worked his farm, so that'll leave his farm with no one to take care of it.

I got all cleaned up today, clean shirt and trousers, and then went out in the rain, and splashed mud all around the cuffs. It takes a week to get cleaning, and I haven't even sent my other pants yet. I rolled my pants up a little but it isn't the proper way to walk around the camp. We had some movies this morning, on account of not being able to fly. They were pretty good - all Army stuff though.

Hope Mom has a good time down in L.A. The train travel is terrible, I hear tell, so hope she didn't have too much trouble. Let's have more letters about the kids, huh? I love to hear about them - all the funny little thing they do. Bertha has a little niece she loves to talk about, and with all my little nieces and nephews, I run up a lot of competition there.

Tell Les I'll write to him soon- and give my love to Grandma and Aunt Bessie and Fred and Les's little family - Mabel and all. I don't get around to writing much and figure you let them read my letter anyway.

Love,
Betty.

Camp Stewart Letters
October 1943 – December 1943

[October 5, 1943]
Monday.

Dear Barbara Jean:

This move was very sudden - I'm here with only a little of my stuff. Most everything is still back at Davis. I don't know how it'll get here. Probably have to be shipped.

This is a pretty nice place - trees and flowers - so different from Davis. But we're surrounded by swamps and are about 42 miles from Savannah. Brooks, Bertha and I came down in the AT11 yesterday about noon. I sat in the nose, in front of the engines. It's a glass nose and has a swell view. Had to get out for takeoff and landing tho. Brownie and Lt. Clifton flew it, so they could take it back last nite. Most of the other kids arrived by car and plane today. Still a couple coming by train. There are fifteen of us altogether. It's a new deal, learning about radio control flying. I was just getting along fairly well with the heavy stuff - now to come back to lighter planes - heck, I'd rather fly the big ships. But it was a voluntary basis and I volunteered in a weak moment and talked Bertha and Brooks into it. I think it'll be interesting tho and after about six weeks we should be shipped off again - March Field uses the PQ8's so that 's my goal. How close I'll come to it is another thing. Probably get sent back to Davis!

The fellows are very nice - so far. The pilots, at least. The mechanics don't seem as friendly as the ones at Davis.

The rooms here are bare! Two cots in each room. Two rooms lead into one bigger room. No doors between. No chairs or tables. In fact nothing. Brooks and I got the best room - two windows. It's a corner room and looks out on a sweeping lawn (only it's not lawn - it's weeds) and lots of trees - pecans and persimmons and tall droopy ones. Played badminton and football - catch last nite with fellas. Gotta go now.

Love,
Betty

[October 5, 1943]
Monday Nite.

Dear folks:

New address again! Came up kind of sudden. It's the radio control deal. Thought I'd try it. Something new and different anyway. Brooks and I are still rooming together, thought the room is much more bare here. The setting is nicer though. Liberty Field is all compact - everything is cluttered together so it makes it easier to get around. Lots of pretty trees around here - also hogs and cows running around. Seems the property was bought by the govt. and the farmers got out and left some of their livestock running loose.

The fellows here are plenty nice to us. Yesterday Brooks, Bertha, Hollingsworth, and Patti Canada and I were the only ones who had arrived so the fellows invited us over to sit on their porch. We played badminton and I played catch with some guys and a football. Tonight 2 of the fellows took Bertha, Hollingsworth and me in a jeep out thru

some rugged country where we learned to shoot 45's (pistols). Some fun! Annie Oakley here rang the bell a couple of times. That gun sure has a kick to it.

Brooks has gone to the show at Camp Stewart with the other kids. That's about 4 miles from here. There are 15 of us here now (or will be tomorrow) and 4 of the gals have cars, so we oughta be able to get into Savannah some weekend.

Hollingsworth and Canada are going to California for an exhibition of this radio control stuff - I think it comes off about Oct. 10 at Muroc Lake - Southern Cal. Probably won't be anything about it in the papers. Maybe so.

I like this place so far. One of the Lts. took Bertha, Brooks and me up in a C-78 today so we could see the firing ranges, etc. Will write as often as possible.

Loads of Love,

Betty

October 6 [1943]

Dear Barbara Jean:

Just finished a game of softball and am in ground school now, learning about radio control ships. The whole thing is confidential so I can't tell you how it works. There aren't even any books on it. All the information is stored in men's minds.

Gee, I've been eating so much candy. They have such good sugar candy - called pralines and I bought a whole bag of them.

I've enclosed my horse collection. They've kinda turned yellow, having been tacked onto the wall for so many weeks. I'm not putting any pictures up here cuz we won't be here so long (I don't think), except that big horse picture, when it gets here. Most of my stuff is still at Camp Davis. I didn't even have anything to wear into Savannah yesterday. Just my dirty pants and shirt. We all went in cuz there was nothing doing here. We went into the De Soto Hotel Tavern - a swanky place - for cocktails. I took a sip of Brooks' "old fashioned" but it tasted terrible. From there we went to the Seven Seas - nothing fancy- and had the swellest filet mignon steak, wrapped in bacon, with french fried potatoes. Gee, it was good.

-Later-

Took time out to go to dinner - lots of starch but good food. The pork chops for lunch were keen. Here they serve family style - put everything on the table and you serve yourself. At Davis they just gave us a plate full of stuff - usually too much.

Tonight it's windy and looks like rain. We chased some pigs down to the edge of the woods, gathered some green walnuts (there's a walnut tree and a pecan tree just outside our window) and some pine cones for our fire. Variety of trees around here. Some pretty sprawling ones with grey moss hanging from the limbs. Sycamore and live oak.

An A-20 just buzzed this place - just clipped the trees - golly he was low - and too close for comfort.

Our address still is Tow Target - but we've yet to start towing. We won't in this new deal. The kids back at Davis might. I kinda wish I was back there flying the big ships. Here we'll just fly the PQ's and the C-78 (At17) though something bigger may result in the future.

That \$5.92 you owe me you can keep. I'll probably be owing you some again. Anyhow, you deserve it for keeping my accounts straight.

You should see the cute puppy (squadron mascot) - only 1 month old - called Gremlin. It's just a tine ball of brown fur. It's Pomeranian, I think. You'd get a kick out of the way her fought at Skeet (Elin Harte's dog - about 2 mos. old). Just stood up to her and pawed at her and she's only about 1/5 her size. Could walk rite under her stomach, he's so small. Emma's and Brooks' flute playing is sure distracting!

Love,
Betty

October 7[1943]

Dear Folks:

I'm lying under a pecan tree just outside out BOQ and the wind and sun sure feel good. It's lunch time and we just ate - had the lightest biscuits I've ever tasted. They were like filled with air. The cook here sure is wonderful! We have keen family style meals - and too much to eat. Last night the men pilots invited us to a wienie roast. They chopped down a tree for the camp-fire and some of us drove over to Camp Stewart to get the wienies. Of course - at that time of nite, every place was closed and Lt. Henderson went thru a whole stack of red tape - trying to get the wienies. But after an hour we had to give up. It was too hard to buck the Army. We settled for two hot loaves of bread, which were so good, we ate it plain with no butter even. Back at camp here we thought everybody would be so disappointed, cuz we had phoned ahead that we had failed our mission. But instead, here they had gone and got 24 steaks. So they fried them in butter, with pepper and salt and I'm tellin' you. I never tasted such a tender steak in my life. Made sandwiches - and golly, were they good!

We are going to start flying today. We're attending ground school again to learn about the radio control. One of the girls just flew in from Davis with our Form 5's, which we needed before we can fly at all. That contains a record of our flying time. She made us all jealous by telling us that they've got B 26's there now and the girls plan to be checked out on them. It'll take a long time tho, because the men there can't even fly them.

Did you have a nice trip to LA, Mom? I didn't write to you there cuz I couldn't keep in mind just when you'd be there and then I figured you'd be home soon anyway.

A softball game yesterday sure got my muscles aching. I didn't notice it until today. We're supposed to have one hour of calisthenics every day so we do it in the form of sports.

Have to go to the flight line now. You know, I have a hunch I'll be out west not long from now. No basis for my hunch, but I hope it's true.

Love,
Betty

[October 19, 1943]
Monday Night.

Dear Folks:

Just got back from "Girl Crazy" at Camp Stewart. Mickey Rooney sure is a screwball.

Didn't fly much today on acct. of I had to stay here and keep hot applications on this sore on my face. It's a form of boil - only it doesn't want to come to a head. The doc says we better cut it open (from the inside, to save having a scar) but I told him I'd try to bring it to a 'popping' point tonite. It's getting sore now. (Doc says it's from too much starch and sugar - all we get to eat is starch!) It's big and puffed up, about an inch from the left side of my mouth. I'm holding a hot cloth on it now, and that's why I'm scribbling so, cuz I can't hold the paper steady. Got Helen's letter today. I might write to Danny (of course I'll be nice - What ya think!) but I really wanted his address in case I got to go up there. But that's out now.

When are you going to send those snapshots Pop spoke of in one letter? I sure like to get pictures.

The radio control operations is secret, but seeing as how they publicize the torpedo angle, it's OK to say a little about it I guess. There's a unit in the PQ which works by radio signals. We're practicing flying the PQ with this unit now, and will go on to flying the PQ from the C-78, using the same method. To begin with, the PQ has a safety pilot in it; in case the "beeper" gets the ship doing maneuvers that aren't cricket. Then the safety pilot takes over and flies the PQ. But that's just for practice. When we get good enuf at landing the PQ without busting it up, then we can do PQ missions - flying the PQ from the C-78 up over the anti aircraft artillery range, where they try to shoot it down. It's better practice for the AA to use real planes instead of just target sleeves.

Paul sure sounds cute now. How's Greg coming along with his talking? Must be fun listening to the two of them jabbering away. The AA is firing tonite so it'll be tough trying to sleep, tho I'm really tired.

Love,
Betty

October 21 [1943]

Dear Folks -

'Scuse the elegant stationary, will ya? I'm up in a Vega Ventura on a towing mission at 1800 ft. and this is all the paper I happened to have in my pocket. I was sitting in the copilot seat for a while but this particular ship doesn't have dual controls so it's not much fun sitting up there while Lt. Gailey flies it. So I gave the aerial engineer's seat back to him and came back here to the rear of the ship to watch the tow reel man in operation. But he's just reading a "Reader's Digest ". The men on the ground did hit one target so he had to put out another. The procedure takes about 10 minutes. He reels in the cable and fastens a doohickey on the end of it and lets it out again (1800 ft. behind us) then hooks the long white wire mesh flag on and that slides down the cable to the end, where it stops. We can see the tracers sail past behind us, but there's a fairly safe distance between us and the bullets. Yesterday we were down on "C" range (over which we're flying now) and watched the PQ remote control mission. The C-78 is the mother ship and

the "beeper" flies the PQ from there. The 90 mm's almost got the PQ but didn't come close enough.

I'm sitting by an open window, perched on a target rolled up on the floor. The window is a little bigger than a porthole (same shape). Don't know how it got eliminated, but it makes it a little breezy here. The aerial engineer on this ship does more work than the pilot. On takeoff and landing, he works all the engine controls and the pilot just flies the ship.

Had my boil lanced and it's almost healed now. Didn't hurt too much. It wasn't very sore but annoyed me. Then my wisdom tooth on the other side of my mouth starts shoving thru again - so that's throbbing now.

We were looking at the map today and noticed how close El Paso is to Ft. Sumner.

If we get transferred from here - one of the bases we may get sent to is at El Paso. So if I can't get March Field, El Paso won't be so bad. But I'll insist on having you all at the wedding - date and place still indefinite!

Gee, I'm getting hungry. I've been in the air all during lunch hour so I guess I'll have to cook my own. Last nite we had some swell chili and some peach cobbler. Usually the meals are too starchy. The doc says I shouldn't eat starches or sugar. Gave me some tincture of green soap to use on my face. Also says no cokes. My eating problem sure is getting bad!

6 pm

Had two hours in the AT-7 as copilot this afternoon. Sure was fun. Lt. Mills cut one engine on me (at 10,000 ft.) but there's nothing to it - flies almost as well with one engine.

Got a letter from Fred today. He's home on furlough and finally told his folks we're engaged. Said they were surprised! Probably Mrs. Peel told them long ago.

Love,
Betty

[October 26, 1943]
Monday night.

Dear Family -

Went to the show tonight - sure was a swell pic - "Princess O'Rourke". I laughed like heck at Robert Cummings! Nine of us went - which didn't leave many to go to the church services which were inaugurated tonite - to be held here every Monday night. Guess the chaplain thinks the Air Force needs looking after.

Today the radio control mission (at 8,000 ft) had a sad ending. The PQ8 got shot and the radio went out of control (nobody in the PQ - it's a target) so the C78 couldn't make it come down. It went scooting off towards Savannah all by itself and the C78 chased it. There was nothing it could do to control it - the thing was set so it would fly straight or turn and it stayed up for 4 hrs. before the gas ran out and it crashed near Chatham Field just outside of Savannah. That has happened before - when the PQ's get away - and even in one case a farmer saw one crash and a searching party was formed to hunt for the pilot who was never found, of course because there wasn't any!

I got the biggest kick out of Pop's letter, telling about Paul. I read it over every once in a while and can just about hear Paul saying "I pick raisins out". Golly, but I'd love to see all the kids - and the grownups too for that matter!

Pop, if you've been wondering where this career is going to end up, what do you think we're wondering? Seems as though we train for one thing and get it down OK, then train for something else. The new classes from Sweetwater are being sent to B-17 and B-26 schools! Are we jealous?! The kids at Davis just got thru getting a lot of publicity - news reels, etc. for their tow target work. The enclosed is the extent of our publicity - in the Savannah paper yesterday! We're 42 miles from Savannah by road - 15 minutes by air. Yep, I got the Liberty - Thanks! It's a good story and veree [sic] true!

Lots of Love,

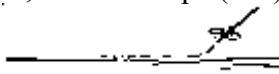
Betty

[October 29, 1943]

Friday.

Dear Folks:

Had to wait until today to write to you because my hand was shaking so yesterday, I couldn't write. I checked out in the A-25 (Curtiss Helldiver) yesterday afternoon in the gustiest day we've had here. I was supposed to stay up 2 hours but after 1:20 they called me in and closed the field for anything less than A 20's and twin engine. It was much too windy. Boy, that's a lot of ship! They decided to let the girls check out in them Wednesday and got 9 girls through, then yesterday finished all but Freddie. Well, it's about 1700 - 1800 h.p. and golly, there's so much ship around you! On my first takeoff I was just overcome and sort of paralyzed. I got the gear up OK but then hung on and let it pull me along. Then came to and throttled back and decreased the rpm. You're supposed to get about 40 inches manifold pressure and 2800 rpm for takeoff and as soon as you're off the ground, get the gear up, throttle back and decrease the rpm in order not to burn up the engine. Well, by the time I got settled and had it running smoothly, here I was miles away from the field! I closed the canopy and doggone it, someone had put the seat high for taxiing (in order to see) and I had left it up, so here I was with my head bent up against the top, uncomfortable as heck, cruising along at 200 mph! It took me 1/2 hr. to get up nerve enuf [sic] to go back to the field and land. Lawdy, was it rough about 1000 ft. The flaps supposedly came down slowly so I put the handle down and before I realized it, had full flaps (60°). Normally, I'd use about 30°. So, it came down practically

straight  and I bounced! Was I regusted [sic]! On my next takeoff I shoved throttle forward and it stuck! Here I was running down the runway at only 27 inches manifold and it wouldn't take off. So I pulled back on throttle and it stopped at the end of the runway with the help of brakes. If I had waited a little longer on cutting the throttle, I might've run off into the trees. Well, anyway, it worked OK next time. Just had one spot where it stuck and needed to be hit hard. Well, by then I was getting pretty well done in. After another 1/2 hr. flying around in that wind, I came back and this time the landing wasn't too bad. But holy smoke, that's a lot of airplane - ! I felt weak when I got down. Next time it won't be so bad (I hope!) if we get a break in the weather. Sure got a thrill watching that 12' prop (3 blade electric) pulling me thru the air. Last night I flew as

copilot in the C-78 for a Capt. who hadn't been night flying for a year. It was a starry clear night but hazy as heck down low. He made a perfect landing, even though a bat smashed on his side of the windshield just as he was setting down.

The publicity about the tow target girls broke last week and the N.Y. and eastern papers had quite a spread on the whole thing. The 15 girls here were mentioned as being "engaged in another undisclosed experiment."

Got another letter from Grandpa B. yesterday. Wants me to come see him. Wish I could.

Golly the pictures were cute. Paul looks so much taller. Bertha gets a big kick out of little kids. I read her part of Pop's letter and she laughed like heck at Paul saying "I'm thinking."

Looks as though I'll be stationed at El Paso when I get thru here. Ought to be about 5 or 6 weeks from now. That's close enough so maybe you could come see me or I could get home once or twice.

Mom, you can send my heavy pajamas if you want - it's awfully cold at night and early in the morning now. If you could find some safe way of sending my tennis racket, I could use that too.

Love,
Betty

[Same envelope]
Sunday Nite

Dear Folks:

Just got back from Savannah a little while ago. The city was really booked up for the weekend. Most of the girls went out to the swanky Oglethorpe Hotel, several miles out of town. Emma Coulter, Brooks and I tried to find a room in town. We hadn't found any by dinner time so went to the De Soto hotel for a keen steak dinner. Spent a long time eating and decided we'd stay up all night or else sleep in the hotel lobby (it's a huge place - very pretty). It was 10 pm but we went to the show anyway - tho we only saw the end of "Action in the North Atlantic." From there we went bowling till they closed that up at quarter to 12. I had borrowed Emma's pretty blue dress cuz my clothes hadn't come form Camp Davis yet (they're here now). Had my black shoes and nylons on. Well, the girl in the next alley was bowling in her bare feet so I figured I could do it in my stocking feet - so I did. We were using the small bowling balls. Had only time for one game. I won. By that time we were pretty well tired, so hunted up the YWCA. They locked the doors at midnight so we just did make it. The lady insisted she had no room - only one cot in the hall. We offered to take turns sleeping on that but she wouldn't let us. Finally she let Brooks take one bed in a room with another girl, whose room mate was out of town. Emma took the cot and I got a bed in a room with two other girls (very nice girls) cuz one girl (the 3rd one) was leaving for home then. So we managed to get a good nites rest anyway.

Monday Morn.

Sunday morning we went to church! First to a 10 am Catholic mass (none of us being Catholic). We had no hats so the guy at the door let us go upstairs at the back of the church to the choir loft, where we could see the whole proceedings. The choir was a group of small girls, led by a nun. The organist was a little old hunchback. That church sure is an ornate bldg. It's huge - and so decorative. The mass reminded me of the Xmas pageant - these little boys walk in - dressed in white robes with red short capes and sashes. Twelve of them, and three little boys in black. They led the priest in. He wore white with a long green cape. Every time one of the little boys clapped his hands or rang a bell, all the other tiny fellas either sat down or stood up. Everything was very solemn - and during the one of those long chants, Brooks knocked over a stool with a loud clatter - so we all got to giggling. After that mass, we wandered over to another church where some chimes were playing. It happened to be St. Johns Episcopal and some woman greeted us and ushered us in. Said it'd be OK to go in without hats as long as we weren't Episcopalian. We went in anyway. Brooks enjoyed the singing. After another steak dinner at the De Soto, we went to see "Cat People" (Emma's Choice) and then on back here via crowded bus. Costs 55¢ to get as far as Camp Stewart. We called Liberty Field from there and had a jeep sent over.

Fred said next time I wrote you to send his regards. He's still at Ft. Sumner. I heard from Jane and she says Mildred's engagement had been cancelled by mutual consent. That's too bad, but I can see how it would happen. Not even seeing a guy, or getting a chance to talk, you naturally feel differently.

I sent BJ a little horse - hope it gets there OK - without any broken legs. Last nite I unpacked most of my stuff that just arrived from Camp Davis via Railway Express - costs me money every time we move. Put our blue drapes up where our doorway is (have no door) leading into the "parlor." Looks homier now. We nail them up. It doesn't hurt them anyway and that's a lot easier than trying to arrange curtain rods.

Fog this morn is keeping us grounded. I've gotten only 1 hr. flying since arriving here.

Love,
Betty

October 31[1943]

Dear Pop and Mom and Helen:

Trying to get rid of all this old paper - no waste. Besides, the envelope was bigger for shoving all this junk into. They're all mementos, so will you put them on my shelf or in a drawer, please? Fred just sent those snaps of part of his family. John sure looks like Fred, huh? I think he has two more brothers. He was home on furlough for a short time but is back at Ft. Sumner by now. That picture of me and BJ on the porch - will you have another one made for me and put in my album? Thanks. I was comparing those pics of Paul - the one I had at SwH2O and the latest ones. Quite a difference. Gee, I hope all the kids remember me till I get home. Brooks is dying to get home. She, Emma, Lois Hollingsworth, Kay Menges and I are scheduled to be sent to El Paso when we finish here, some time around the first of December - they figure.

Yesterday some of us went to Savannah in the afternoon, did some shopping, went to dinner and then Brooks, Mrs. Maddox (WASP chaperon) and I went to Marion Anderson's concert. Pretty good but I got awful sleepy. Emma Coulter had bought the tickets but at the last minute she and Bertha got to go to Emma's home (Greensburg, Pa.) over the weekend so we got the tickets. Came back to camp in a G.I. car - what a bumpy ride - so sleepy crawling into bed about 1 a.m. Got up pretty early (8:45!) to go fly this morning. Did some radio control and my first chance at "beeping!" Fun. Pop's birthday gift is on the way. Hope he likes it - I thought it was pretty. Couldn't find anything original. No time to look, for one thing! (Did you get Helen's gift?)

Got a big kick out of Paul's little tricks and sayings. Keep telling me all about 'em, huh?

Walked over to the PX and got 4 pints of chocolate and vanilla ice cream and had that and cookies tonite. (me and some other kids)! Shouldn't eat sweets but I got hungry. We had swell chicken for lunch - gee it was good. That's one subject that's always good for at least 1/2 hrs discussion around the barracks - Food. How our mothers fixed pork chops, turkey, goulash - each one claiming their's cooked best. They're all wrong tho cuz mine does!

Love,
Betty

[November 9, 1943]
Monday

Dear Mom, Pop, and Helen:

It finally broke down and rained and it feels good. The leaves are blowing off the trees and it's begun to feel like holiday season.

I'm mailing Paul's birthday gift today. The package is stuffed with anything I could find to keep it from breaking. Didn't have anything to wrap it with so had to borrow and scrape around. Hence the funny looking package. Paul can't read the book of course, and won't appreciate it, but it's just to keep the other box from breaking. The pinecones are from the trees down the path from our barracks. I've had them sitting on my desk for weeks, waiting for a chance to send them to you. Thought Pop mite[sic] like them. 'Course, they can't compare to the Lake Tahoe cones.

We caught the queerest looking spider - looks like a crab with a hard shell. Put him in a water glass and turned it upside down so we could watch him. Gave him two live flies to play with and it sure was interesting. He pretended to be dead and the flies walked over him and he'd put his claws out, ready to nab them if he got the chance. When we got back later, he had spun a web and caught one, and was eating a dead fly that we had put in there. Wanted to put a pan of water in there so he could drink, but I don't know if that's how they get water. Must be thru the flies cuz I've never seen a spider lapping up H₂O, have you?

Fred says "hi." He's pretty busy now. They have about 30 German prisoners of war there now.

Remember Cookie, Mom? Well, she's a test pilot at Stinson Factory now. Very happy in her work, even though it is just in L-5's.

Yes, Pop, the PQ's on a mission are supposed to be shot. Just as a tow sleeve is supposed to be shot. The last two that were hit, didn't fall. If they're not hit, they're brought back and used again. Well, these two that were hit - one I told you about. It was hit by shrapnel or something and they tried to bring it but the elevator control must've been damaged and they got it back to the field but it cracked up. The other one got out of control, having been hit, and spun in near the field, starting a fire that's lasted for about 10 days. We've had fires all thru the swamps around here, making the visibility awful. This rain ought to fix that.

Copiloted in an AT-7 the other day and it was fun. Listened to music on the radio, flew over Savannah and rode up and down the clouds, flew formation with a B-24 (don't tell anyone)! That's a 4 engine job and huge. There's an open door near the back and two fellows stood there waving. You'd think they'd be scared, standing on the edge on space like that!

Gee, Pop, you shouldn't work so hard. You weigh less than I do. I weigh about 155 now. Sometimes we think we could do more at home than what we're doing here. Brooks feels very strongly that way. But the major seems to think we're helping in ways that we can't see. Well - maybe.

A B-17 came in the other night but was too big to taxi down one of our taxi strips. Had to go 'way 'round to get over to the hanger. P 39's come here often - usually kids getting lost from Waycross - 50 miles from here.

How's everybody in San Francisco? I never hear from them. I know it's hard for them to write. Say hello for me next time you go over.

Brooks sends regards.

Love,
Betty

November 12 [1943]

Dear Folks:

My hands are just beginning to get warm. It's a frosty morning - cold as heck. Brooks is snoozing in a chair next to me. Two kids are playing checkers, some are writing or reading the newspaper. Most everybody is flying, but I'm waiting to be checked out in the AT-7. I've really checked out already but it wasn't official - I was just flying with a Lt. and he let take off and land a couple of times and also fly it in the air - which is the extent of a check out.

What are you doing for Thanksgiving? Sure is a lot of work cooking for the whole gang now. We're going to have some sort of dinner here, I think. Emma's folks are coming down, so maybe we'll all go get in on their affair. Or else go to whatever fiesta they've planned for here on the field.

Saw a good picture last night - "Northern Pursuit" with Errol Flynn. The best part of it was the German officer, Helmut Dantine. He's sure good - looking. The story was sort of queer in parts, and they could've done very nicely without the ending, but it was OK.

Our radio control ships weren't working this morning so that means we'll be here that much longer. Darn it, we're all anxious to get to our new bases and start earning our

pay. We're trying to get a few days leave before reporting to our bases, so maybe I'll get home for a few hours or so. Hope so anyway.

Y' know, it's been a toss-up whether we're to go into the Air Force or the WACS. So when we heard that the bill was going before Congress, we decided we'd send telegrams to our representatives and let them know how we feel about it, thinking they'd just be voting without much thought. Well, it kicked back. No sooner had Cochran heard of it, she called from Washington (that very next morning) and bawled out the C.O. So he bawled us out. He said we had no right to do it. Heck, we thought as civilians we could wire our congressman if we wanted. And as long as Cochran is fighting for us to get into the Air Force, we thought we'd be helping her out. So we had to call all the four ferry bases and tell them to disregard the telegrams (asking them to send wires too). We thought it was so funny! Couldn't help laughing about it, though the Major had made it seem so serious, saying it was "subversive action." He even went so far as to say some of us might be relieved of flying duty on account of it. Just let them try it! If that ever got to the newspapers, somebody could sure make a stink about "free speech" etc. Well, anyway, better not let this go any further - might get someone in trouble.

The AA just shot down another PQ. Good shots. If they don't shoot 'em down, the beeper has to land it nullo (nobody in it) and that's a ticklish job.

Love,
Betty

November 15 [1943]
9:15 am

Dear Pop:

Brooks is flying the AT-11 and I'm sitting here as copilot. Big help I am - all I do is use the "wobble pump" in starting and flip up the gear on takeoff (just a little toggle switch). Also use the radio, calling the tower for clearance, etc. We were going to go on a "round robin" (XC where we don't land anywhere, just navigate to 2 points and back), approx. 365 miles, but the weather is "instrument" at most places this morning, so we're just flying locally. Right now we're crossing Ogeechee River just a few miles SW of Savannah. It's a clear morning - we can see the dozens of inlets running from the ocean - the sun so bright on them, I can't look directly at the water.

I was warm last night for the first time in a week. Wore my GI wool sweater over my nite-gown, and a pair of socks (with my big toe sticking out). This past week there's been frost all over the ground and on the planes in the morning. Over the weekend some girls from the ferry base at Dallas flew in with some PQ's. I knew a couple. They say they're busy as heck now - no sooner get back from one trip then they're out on another - West Coast, East, all over. One girl was killed in a PT 26 from there (4th class girl).

I'm surprised my pen hasn't dropped big blobs of ink all over. It leaked when I tried to write on the plane to LA. Guess this air is different.

We just flew over the Oglethorpe Hotel, on the edge of an inlet, about 10 miles East of Savannah. It's sort of like the Del Monte, with bright green swimming pool and golf course. From this seat I can look down thru the bombardier's section and thru the glass nose ship, watching the ground move by slowly (cruising at 164 mph at 2100 feet - seems slow in this ship). The engines are almost at our sides, very little ahead of our

seats. The instrument panel is in front of the pilot, and across the middle. So the copilot gets the best view.

Right after leaving the mess hall this morning, we passed the back of the kitchen, and there was this big deer, lying there, with blood from his neck. Guess that's next week's food. Sure a beautiful creature. Hated to see it dead.

Love,
Betty

November 18 [1943]

[Written at the top of the page]

P.S. No, the "beeps" aren't supposed to be shot down - or were you kidding? The "beeps" are the sounds made by the radio contact. Each contact makes a "beep". The "beeper" is the person who works the controls (pushes the buttons). Another PQ was shot last week but they got it back to the field and it landed just as the prop stopped from lack of fuel.

Dear Mom and Pop:

The last of the Dallas stationary - aren't you glad? Ooh - my thumb hurts. I was trying to get warm this morning and stood with my hands behind my back up against the stove. The blister on my knuckle still burns, and that was hours ago.

I've been sitting around all morning waiting to fly but my PQ isn't ready. But I can't fly anything else - A25 or anything - cuz I'm on alert for this radio control. So Brooks and Coulter are flying the A25 all morning just cuz they don't happen to be scheduled for this other. Oh me, I'm so tired from sitting. Yesterday I had a swell ride in the A25. It was a cold, cloudy day, but smooth. So I bracketed the Savannah beam a couple of times and flew down to the ocean and shot a couple of landings (not at the ocean).

The major just told us not to make any reservations for travel yet. They still don't know when we're leaving or if we get any leave between bases. Have to wait till the last minute.

You can give my big doll away if you want. I sort of thought I'd keep it for my kids but I guess it's silly.

Did you receive Paul's birthday gift? I gave it to a soldier to mail for me and gave him \$1.00 to pay for it. Haven't seen him since. That was all the change I had at the time. Hope I get a check before I leave here cuz I'll be needing it for travel.

I'd like to take a cross country trip this weekend. I've stayed here every weekend except the one I spent in Savannah and I'd like to get away. I haven't got enough time in the A25 to take it XC (need 18-20 hrs. I have 8 1/2) so if I go I'll have to ask for the A24, which is an old klunk. Would like to go see Neil or Grandpa, but I think that's pretty far for just the few hours I'd have. (Leave Sat. noon and back by Sun. evening). The flies here are driving me crazy. So till later -

Love,
Betty

November 21 [1943]

Dear Folks:

You can expect a package from here - sent last nite (or tomorrow morning, I guess) by the store. Hope it reaches you OK. Sent one to S.F. and one to W.C. but those are Xmas gifts. Yours isn't. Brooks and I flew down yesterday in an A24 (did you see them bombing the island in "Guadalcanal Diary"?) Got a letter from Neil Friday saying he'd moved to Camp Murphy so as it's only about 384 miles from Liberty, I managed to get down. We had a good trip, me flying, Brooks in rear (reverse going home). Just followed the coast down. Had to come down to 2000' the last part to keep below the clouds. A Navy "Wildcat" zoomed up alongside of us, wingtips nearly touching, and the pilot waved at us. He was cute. Gee, the Everglades sure are awful looking swamps! We stuck close to the Coast cuz the swamps come almost to the Coast. They're the most ominous looking, muddy fields I've ever seen. If you cracked up there, you'd never get out. When we reached the Morrison Field, the tower gave me permission to come in behind a B17. The control man seemed so surprised when I answered and he asked me what type of ship I was flying. I found out why later. They had me on the arrival board as "Beuser B25." So I guess they were astonished to think of a girl flying a B25. That's a huge field - the tower told me to taxi straight ahead and a jeep would lead me to the parking area. So I followed the red and yellow checkered jeep past loads and loads of B24's, B17's, etc. and after about a mile, I parked next to the B24 on the ramp. There were 2 enlisted men and a Lt. to greet us and take our chutes and baggage (just a small bag, no dresses or anything) and lead us to operations. We got a pass, sent an RON to Liberty, and the sgt. assured us that our plane would be serviced and preflighted this morning. Some service, huh? Came into town on a bus, just a few miles, and got a room here (best hotel in West Palm Beach), and called Neil. He was in school till 7 and it was 5 then (took us 2 hrs 25 min. to fly down) so I called again later. Brook and I did some Xmas shopping till Neil arrived about 10 and came up and talked till 12. We're going to meet him this morn and go see the Palm Beach across the Lake. It's beautiful here - and warm. People wearing summer clothes - and nearly everyone in uniforms. Weather looks bad rite now so may have to spend another nite here.

Hope Pop's back is better.

Love,
Betty

November 26 [1943]

Dear Folks:

Well, did you have a nice Thanksgiving? The squadron dinner was nice - everything was so pretty - tables decorated, music(accordion), and enough turkey, cranberry sauce, cake, potatoes, and gravy. After dinner we cooked up a tennis match between Grimes and Leatherbee, and the crazy nuts played 3 sets of tennis about 1/2 hour after eating. Grimes won all 3. She used to be a tennis champion. We all thought that the "social gathering" at 7:30 was for everybody and the food would be served. So we all waited till that time to go eat, and found out that dinner had been served at 6 and we couldn't get anything to eat. The dance was mostly for enlisted men so the girls didn't go. All of us so hungry by then, we took Mary Lee's car and went hunting for food. The cafes

outside camp were closed (except for some we didn't want to go into), the PX's were closed, so we couldn't get anything to eat. Well, we managed to scrape up some cake, crackers, and candy in the barracks but that didn't satisfy. Bertha, Elin, and I finally invaded the mess hall kitchen and made a batch of sandwiches and got 3 qts. milk. The enlisted men were there, all getting tight, and wanting us to stay and dance. But we beat a hasty retreat back to the barracks. Aunt Annie sent me a pkg. which I got yesterday. It had a pkg. of gum, a pkg. of life savers, a Xmas card, a Thanksgiving card, fruit cake (passed that around), 2 bars of candy, and a little book "the Art of Living Joyfully" (religious). I was sure surprised to get it. Wrote her a thank you note right away. My pajamas and warm underwear got here yesterday too and I at least slept warmly. It gets really chilly at night now. This morning the field is closed on account of smoke so until the wind comes up and lifts it, there won't be any flying. All that slows up our progress here too. We still don't know when we're leaving, but I imagine it'll be soon - before Xmas anyway.

Lost another PQ on a mission. That's four in a row. One landed OK but didn't have any brake control and cracked up off the runway. The last one was shot and out of control - landed on a tree just north of the field. One new one came back, the radio control still perfect but the wings well ventilated. Found a couple of pieces of the shrapnel in the ship. We've been flying 3-ship formation in the A-25's lately. It's fun but calls for much concentration.

Love,
Betty

Nov. 30 [1943]

[Written at top of page]
Eggs are 75¢ a dozen in Palm Beach!

Dear Folks:

This weather is sure keeping us from getting out of here. After sitting for a few days I'm afraid I'll get stale on this beeping business. Lt. Henderson passed me on one check ride, and I might have to "nullo" soon (that will be flying the PQ with no safety pilot to depend on to get it out of tight spots). Sure hope I can get home soon. I'm pretty sure I will get a leave either before or during Xmas but how to get home is the big problem. When I do get there, I'll have to spend a lot of time in the dentist chair. My rear wisdom tooth came thru with a big cavity on the side. Right in front I have another hole - just noticed it last nite. Thought it was a piece of food and I kept pushing it and it never came out. It's a hole.

Yesterday I finally found two stores that carried large cans of pineapple juice - the first I've seen for months! Found out that I need #4 book, so couldn't buy anything but cheese with #3. Darn it. Got some nice big apples (10¢ a piece), some tangerines (swell!) and some bananas (no taste at all - threw them out).

Did you receive your jellies from Palm Beach yet? They probably don't taste so good but I thought you might like to try them.

Last night some of us went to the show to see Roy Rogers. I thought it'd be a wild western with Roy singing a little. Well, it turned out to be more musical than gun-fighting so wasn't what I expected. We got there before the show started, so when six of us walked in, the fellows started whistling and shouting and acting as tho we were some kind of showgirls. My gosh, it's embarrassing. That's happened before. We try to wait till the lights are out, but once in a while have gotten there too early.

Gee, I can hardly picture Paul in jeans. He still seems so little to me. I'm so anxious to see all the kids and you again. I sent a few things home for you to wrap for Xmas. Also sent Shirley's birthday gift home (her home). They were mailed yesterday. Her gift is most likely too large but you said she'd been growing so fast, I got a long size.

Oh me, I've got a headache. The weather is still too foggy and smoky (from swamp fires) so we aren't flying this morning. Supposed to stick around the flight line anyway. Bud sure sounds like a swell kid. I'm sorry I won't be able to see him. Does he know where he'll be stationed? Say hello to him for me.

Love,
Betty

Dec. 1 [1943]

Dear Folks:

Well, I nulloed today - and cracked up the PQ. Was so thrilled at being chosen as first to nullo. They figured that they'd nullo the best first so there'd be less chance of wrecking many PQ's. Well, the mechanics and my C78 pilot (Sgt. Hawkes) had bets laid on it. Most of them betting that I'd bring it back OK. Well, I had butterflies in my stomach when the pilot got out of the PQ at the end of the runway, so I could beep it nullo. They put Bertha's little nigger doll in the pilot's seat. (I still think it was a jinx) Made a very good pattern and everyone was impressed by the good approach I made. Well, I got it one foot off the runway and cut the throttle. The nosewheel struck first, before I could get it nose high. The nosewheel is delicate, it gave way and the ends of the prop struck the runway. It swerved off the runway and upon hitting the dirt, nosed up and broke the prop (I've got that as a souvenir). I sure felt sick about it. I was in the C78 with Hawkes and had to circle once before landing. Felt like crying. The engine mount is cracked and has to be replaced. But the mechanics were pretty cheerful about it. They all seemed to think that with such a perfect approach, it was just an error at one second of landing that did it. Well, that's not the way I figured it. I cracked it up and that's that. It can be fixed easily tho. Anyway, Lt. Henderson was going to have me nullo another one right away. I took it up with Hollingsworth in it but it didn't work as well, so I didn't nullo again. May have to tomorrow. Gee, I hope I do better tomorrow. I'd feel terrible if I cracked up another one. Well, this is a milestone, so you'll just have to excuse this chattering.

Love,
Betty

P.S. - Haven't mailed that package yet.

December 4 [1943]

Dear Folks:

Everyone's gone tonight except Brooks and me. We could've gone with Emma and Elin to get steaks but I wanted to write letters and do some wash. I haven't been sending my stuff to the laundry this past week cuz I've been expecting to be through here. But I guess I'll send it next week. Our Lt. Henderson who had charge of our training was transferred to Camp Davis. Got his orders to leave and will be gone by Monday. We were all just finishing up but now that'll slow us down. The Major wants everyone to be perfect when going to our new bases.

Got a long letter from Edna today. She's so thrilled about Fred and me. She's a nut - but fun.

Paul's sure getting funny, huh? Shutting the radio and light off on Pop.

Pop, you're wrong about married life being boring for me after this. I don't think it will. We've been plenty bored lots of times. No, I'm not keeping a diary. Didn't like to take a chance of anybody around here reading what I thought about them.

Started listening to Inner Sanctum tonite but got too scared - beating bloody heads against the bedpost. Ugh - that was too much for me.

Fred sends regards.

Love,
Betty

[Western Union - 7:23 am]
December 7 1943

MRS A J DEUCHER=

NULLOED SUCCESSFULLY SO HAVE GRADUATED BUT NO DATE HAS BEEN SEET FOR LEAVING HOWEVER THINK IT WILL BE SOON PRAYING FOR CHRISTMAS AT HOME LOVE =
BETTY.

December 8 [1943]

[Written on front/top page]

P.S. – Yes, mom, I think Fred would like your package! I haven't gotten him anything yet. Hope to do some shopping tomorrow.

Dear Folks:

Did I tell you about Emma getting a little Pomeranian named "Babs"? She just got it flown down from Pittsburg last Friday. Well, Saturday night it jumped off the bed and hurt its foot but after a little while it was OK. Monday nite it did the same thing when no one was in the room. Her cries and yipes brought everyone running. She cried pitifully half the evening, not letting anyone touch her foot. So yesterday Xrays showed her leg broken in two places. She manages to hobble around despite the extra long brace the vet put on over the splint. She's a cute little thing. They say it'll take about two weeks to heal. Emma has taken her to the vet this morning. The weather's not good for flying. Soon as 7

more girls nullo, we'll be able to get our orders to leave. I had another chance at it and did OK. That first landing was perfect except for hitting the nosewheel too hard and as they're weak anyway, it buckled. Two others cracked up, but there have been seven successful ones now. The major insists on all of us doing it before we go. Brooks is scheduled for hers today and if she does OK, the El Paso bunch will be through. I hope you didn't send any packages cuz there's still a chance I may be home. Yesterday I bought officers' pink pants and green shirt. Should've done it long ago but kept expecting our WASP uniform. Cost me \$24.00 and even then I'm afraid the crotch is too small.

Our BOQ is sure getting dressed up! Long white drapes with red ruffle across the top - The red cross furnished a lamp and 3 chairs and a dayroom is being added to the bldg. I don't know how long the curtains can stay white with those coal stoves. An officers club is being erected across the road, under the trees. Everything goes up so fast once they get started on it.

Tomorrow those of us who are through are going to Savannah for the day. I've been flying the C78 for those who are still beeping. But none of the girls have been very eager about flying the A25's lately. Everyone's so tired. We're supposed to get one day off a week but some of us have been working every day. Even if we don't fly, just staying here, on alert, is nerve-wracking.

I sent you a telegram Monday in answer to your wire I got Sunday nite. Had been to the show "North Star" (wonderful!) so didn't get it till late. Then had to have a soldier go to Camp Stewart to send one. Hope you got it in time.

Love,
Betty

December 8 [1943]

Dear Helen -

So you've been stepping out with Bud, huh? And here I didn't even have a chance to see him, darn it! Where does he go from Santa Monica? Must be fun, now that San Francisco is lighted up again. Tell me all what you did and where you went, will you? Golly, but I'd love to be a free civilian again! Got a letter from DCD and he asked about you.

I'm afraid my Xmas gifts to everyone are going to be a bit shabby. Hey, did Mom ever get those two boxes I sent - both with gifts in them? If not, I'd better start tracing. Golly, I'd hate to lose all that stuff. Also haven't heard if Shirley got her birthday present OK. I'm so afraid everything will be smashed in the mail. Hope Paul's toy doesn't get hurt. It sure is a beaut!

The Army's been after me to buy War Bonds. As soon as I get transferred to my permanent base, I'll apply for the local pay plan. But my moneys been going so fast anyway. I did get a bank account started and that's something!

Saw a swell picture Sunday. "North Star." It just about wrung me out! It's so intense and the acting's great! I think the pictures they show here are some of the latest, but I don't know what's going on outside, so am not sure.

The shoes I have on now are all shot! I'm walking on the ground in some spots. I still have my no. 18 shoe stamp but don't even know if it's any good. I could get a

certificate from Headquarters here but I sure hate to go look for shoes around here. Am hoping to get back to civilization for a few days so will catch up on myself then.

It's time for chow so guess I'll run along. If you don't get there within the first twenty minutes, you don't get the best and hottest.

Love,
Betty

December 11 [1943]

Dear Family:

It's a cloudy day but will probably clear in time for inspection, darn it. I'm gonna wear my new "pinks."

Before I forget, will you send me Jane Anderson's address. I've got a Xmas card here but don't remember where she lives. I sent all my cards out yesterday. Was fun. I guess I sent about 25. Last night I squeezed a bunch of oranges so Brooks and I each had a big glass of juice.

We're supposed to have barracks inspection this morning too. The major was upset about how dirty our rooms were, especially with three dogs living here too. He bawled everyone out and said if something weren't done about the bones, etc. on the floors, they'd have to get rid of the dogs. Emma's dog always dirties right in front of my clothes closet. Makes me so mad, and then she always goes to it and says "good dog - good dog" just cuz it's on paper. Half the time she misses the paper and then Emma scolds her. Poor dog doesn't know what it's all about.

Last night I got a phone call from some fellow on the post. Made me so mad. I was in the midst of washing my clothes and he calls and played one of those "guess who" games. Wouldn't tell me who it was but I think I know. If there's anything sillier!

How's your back, Pop? Hope you're feeling better.

I've been working on the PQ's, helping to install "overpower units" on the servo. There aren't many mechanics and it helps the guys out, besides keeping me busy. None of us have been doing much flying these past two weeks. We've all nulloed successfully except two girls so we've been sitting on pins and needles, waiting for the Major to get out orders to leave. He is vague about us getting 10 days leave. At first they thought it'd be easy, but now it seems there's a lot of red tape to plow thru. May take ages. Anyway, I'd rather not have you send my packages here till I know definitely. Even if I don't get them till after Xmas. I got a package from Merle yesterday.

There's a raffle going on today - \$1.50 a chance. 1st prize \$100 and 500 mile XC. Second prize \$50 and 500 mile XC. I didn't take a chance. Not feeling very lucky. Would be a nice prize to win tho.

Love,
Betty

December 12 [1943]

Dear Family:

The end of a perfect - or almost - day. It's been a peaceful Sunday, with just four of us here most the time. Wake up too late for breakfast but Franny brought some coffee and milk for her roommate and gave me half. The sun shone in on my bed and I lay here and read the funnies (Elin brought them). Ruth (our new establishment officer, soon as Mrs. Maddox leaves) was here too and we just talked about children and books and stuff. It's good to get away from airplane talk. Put on our new uniforms for lunch and felt so good. Brooks looks so much better in her greens than in her sloppy tans. Anyway, we had a swell chicken dinner with all that goes with it. Even had tablecloths on the table which has never happened before. Slept and read this afternoon, feeling good just being lazy and quiet for a change. Tonite went to see "Happy Land" with Don Ameche. Gee, it's good. We all cried. Wish you'd see it. And they had community sing - Xmas carols. Made me feel so good inside. Got the ole Xmas spirit I guess.

Yesterday I missed dinner because I flew the PQ mission late. None of the girls have flown the C78 on a mission here yet. Shirley was going to fly it while Lt. Potts beeped but she had planned to go to Charleston at 4 pm so he asked me to fly for him. Was interesting. Cold at 9000 ft. tho. When it was almost time to come down, the generators fuses on the C 78 burned out and that takes the PQ control off so the PQ went flying along straight and I chased it for about 10 miles while we changed fuses. The fuses should've been 40's but we only had 50's so I had to keep turning the generator switches off so the fuses wouldn't blow again. Turned them on long enuf to turn the PQ and then off again and on again for each beep. Got it back at Sunset and Potts made a nice landing. Lynn had nulloed that PQ earlier in the afternoon - an awful landing but it was all in one piece, so now Chapman is the only girl left to nullo. She is the one who just got engaged to Lt. Vanderpool Thursday. I rode safety pilot for her yesterday and really had plenty of scares in half an hour. She was so erratic and overcontrolled so much. But she has done better before. Hope she nullos OK tomorrow.

Remember to see "Happy Land." It was in a "Readers Digest" a couple of months ago. The little boy "Rusty" is the cutest kid! You'll love him.

Loads of Love,

Betty

December 15 [1943]

Dear Folks:

Today is the official last day of our school - got nice diplomas for graduation - presented to us in the bleak west wing of Headquarters, all of us huddled around the stove in the corner. It's been raining for two days. My shoes and socks have holes in them and so my feet are constantly wet. I bought some bed socks yesterday and slept better with them on.

Did you receive the pkg. I sent with Les and Shirley's pkgs.? Also the pkg. sent by express with Paul's gift? And did Shirley get her Birthday present? I haven't heard about any of those and have insurance slips on some. Also have a slip for Grandma's gift

sent from Fla. If she still hasn't received it, please let me know right away so I can start searching for them.

The five girls going to Otis Field are leaving today. Their orders came through and they get ten days delay en route, plus travel time. The rest of us are still waiting. Don't know how long it will be or if we get the extra ten days or not. Brooks and I may ride as far as New Orleans with Emma in her car. All depends on how much time we get. Golly, I can hardly wait! Am praying that we do get ten days plus travel time. Just have to be patient I guess - but I sure can't.

I'm sending two packages today, one to Mom, and one to Husky for Xmas. They're both tied together. The little red box in that other pkg. I sent is for Mom. There's nothing personal and I'm so disappointed in what shopping I've done. Haven't gotten anything nice enough for any of you.

Am enclosing Aunt Annie's letter. Thought you might be interested. She sent me ten dollars for my trousseau! What a surprise! - Can't find the letter. Must have thrown it away.

That storm sure sounds awful - yours I mean - Hope you're all OK.

Love,
Betty

December 19 [1943]

[Written at top of page]

Please all have a Merry Xmas and pretend I'm there. I'll be thinking about you all. Thanks, Helen, for the moron letter. Was funny!

Dear Folks:

Well, I'm afraid this will be a big disappointment to you, as well as to me. I wish now that I had never let you think I'd be home for Xmas. But there was every chance that I would. The Army doesn't care about individuals and can't be bothered with things like Xmas and families and things that we're supposedly fighting for. There's no reason for our staying here, but the Army just takes it's time. Five of the girls - the ones that didn't even ask for leaves - got 10 days. Another girl - the only one who wasn't successfully graduated - got a leave so she can get married. Those of us who put in for leaves weeks ago, the way we were supposed to, are stuck here. It makes a person lose faith in everything. That isn't playing fair, if you ask me. What me so mad, if the Major knew we'd be here for Xmas, he should have told us, instead of letting us go on hoping. We could have had a tree and you could have sent my pkgs, and we could have managed pretty well. The way it is now, I guess we'll just have to skip it and pray for a better Christmas next year. Please don't feel too badly about it. Have a good time - as for my pkgs. - I guess you'll just have to keep them till I find out what's going on. I have some things here for Helen and BJ and Greg. I didn't get a chance to get Pop anything - so will you, Mom, take the enclosed money and either give it to Pop or buy him something. I wanted to do it myself - but can't.

Went to church this morning. Left early so we could get back in time for lunch. The church is over in Flemington, a stop in the road just outside camp.

Four of us went into Savannah yesterday afternoon after inspection. Browsed around a bookshop for quite a while then went out to a place called Johnny Harris's for chicken. Had 9 chickens between us. Keen! I only had 1 1/2. Caused quite a stir in our uniforms. Lots of Coast Guard, Air Force, and Anti Aircraft men come up to talk to us. None of them fresh - just interested, and very nice. The Major had told us all in the morning not to wear our leather jackets off the base, but we have nothing else to wear - so wore the jackets. Went to a little show - with a crumby cowboy picture, a rocketeer story, and a spy serial. Didn't even stay for the whole thing. Met some of our field officers at 11 and rode home in G.I. truck. Really enjoyed getting away. It was fun.

Helen - DCD if Mr. Damilson, my ex-boss. I've already thrown his letter away.

Love,

Betty

December 24 [1943]

[Written at top of page]

Thought you'd be interested in Ed Landell's letter.

Dearest Family:

Bet you're all getting in the Xmas spirit about now. Our barracks is fixed up now and we're not feeling so badly. In our main front room is the biggest tree with blue and silver balls, and icicles(?) and red crepe paper strung across it. A direct light from the ceiling and one under the sheet behind the tree makes it very pretty. Ruth made a lot of Lux flakes and we mashed that over the pine needles and it looks like real snow. There are lots of packages under it. The girls have been getting a few sent to them. I got a white satin and lace nightgown from Fred (I dared him to!) - which I opened of course. Then his folks sent me a pkg. I don't know what's in it yet. We each bought each other a little gift - I'm giving everyone a pack of gum. They're always borrowing from me anyway. I wrapped each one in a piece of green paper and tied it with red string and tied them to our tree (the smaller one in my front room). I've also tied all my pretty Xmas cards onto the tree and spread my sheets (dirty ones) around underneath so it looks like home (a little bit).

Today I flew a Sgt. over to Macon so he could exchange a transmitter for an AT7 - exchange transmitters I mean. It's the first time I've had a passenger in the A25. First time I've gone XC in it too. It was sure a cold day! I haven't flown the A25 for two weeks, almost, feeling weary and not in the mood. I haven't refused any flights but haven't made myself available too much. I was in bed for about two days with a bad cold. I wouldn't have stayed in bed but Ruth insisted, and she stuffed me with fruits and juices, and now I feel swell. Went to the show last night - don't miss "Last Angel" - it's wonderful. The little girl, Margaret O'Brian, has so much personality. It's one of the best I've seen.

Oh, about the Macon trip - well, it was OK, but the weather was so cold and windy - like ice. It's about 130 miles, I don't know exactly - didn't plan the trip as I should've. Didn't have time. Well, I cruised 190 - which isn't pushing it - so it didn't take long. The time is 1 hour earlier there so I started here at 10:40 and cut the engine there at 10:30. Pretty good time, huh? That's engine time, counting taxing and warming up. We stayed there for lunch at the cafeteria. Had hot cream chicken soup, corn, cornbread and butter, and a pint of milk. 32 ¢. We're going to have turkey and trimmings tomorrow - if the cooks don't get too drunk to cook. Tonight Lt. Ruse just went over to the guardhouse to throw the guards into the guardhouse. Drunk.

In the newsreels last night we saw a little sequence taken at Camp Stewart. One nite we saw a huge display of searchlights strewn across the sky. Well, they were taking movies - shows night training with the soldiers crawling under barbed wire. One night we saw a film on the WASPS - just some of the younger kids training at Sweetwater.

My Xmas packages sound keen - wonder if I can have Xmas in January. Well, I'd better not plan on it. There's something fishy about it - our orders taking so long to come through - it's disgusting! This war could be won so much easier if it were done with less red tape. Hope this railroad strike doesn't come off. I wonder what it's all about - I mean, everybody wanting more money, cuz it costs more to live, and these guys in the Army giving up their freedom and taking so much less pay for it. I'd much rather have my freedom and make lots less money. You guys at home may get tired of the routine and the tough going and the worries and I don't blame you. In lots of ways we have it so much easier than you. But you've got the one thing which we all want more than anything. You've got the family - and gosh, that's everything! You don't realize it till you've gone away for a while. And oh boy, will I be glad to have mine back again!

I bought Brooks a pocket knife cuz I use hers a lot, and I used it to carve on my propeller. It's got quite a few knicks in the knife, - don't know whether it's from my carving or not. Even if hers is old, it's still good enough to peel pears. Brooks got an 11 lb. box of pears from her sister in Oregon. They didn't last long but sure were good. We've had tangerines quite a bit here. They're sure swell.

Got your card today. I hope You do enjoy you Xmas. Gee, there's no sense in spoiling everybody's time just cuz we all can't be together. There are lots of families like us this year - lots of them with greater sadnesses too.

We have a new phone here, so I'm going to try to call you tomorrow. Its probably won't do much good, there'll be so many trying to call. Hope I can get you tho, and talk to you all - don't care how much it costs. It'll be worth it no matter what the price. I'll phone collect and send you the money. It's easier that way. I'm not going to plan on getting thru to you cuz my plans haven't been working out lately. Anyway, I'm sure anxious to speak to all of you, so I'm gonna keep trying.

Lots of Love,
Betty

December 28 [1943]

Dear Folks:

Raining today so we're just fooling around in the barracks till it clears up. Yesterday was the first nice day we've had for a while. In the morning Lois H. checked me out in the AT11 (I checked out at Davis but we're supposed to have a checkout ride at this field too). Then I checked her out in the AT 7. The Major had been holding the 7 for himself, cuz he was going somewhere but someone heard him say he wasn't going till the afternoon so Lt. Clark let us take it for an hour. Well, we'd no sooner got in the blue, when the tower called us in. We were about to land when they told us to pull up and go around - there was a pig on the runway. We hadn't seen it before that, but there was this big black and brown spotted pig strolling across the end of the runway, just about where we would've landed. Well, anyway, when we finally got in, the Major had been jumping on everybody cuz during that brief 25 minutes that we had had the plane, he had decided he wanted it. Boy, was he mad! Well, it wasn't my fault cuz operations had given me the ship. Then one of the mechanics told Lois H. that she had almost clipped one of the mechanics with her right prop. He was still taking a chock from under the wheel when she got the OK from the left side and started to roll. He was scared but it didn't hit him. Close call, tho. That AT7 business sure burned the Major up. As it was, he cancelled his trips anyway and the ship sat there all afternoon. He does that often. After lunch Brooks was going to take a Sgt. to Atlanta in an A25. But she had a stomach ache so asked me to go. I inveigled Lt. Clark into letting me take the AT11 instead. I'm more comfortable in that. Took a Sgt. pilot as copilot. He's not checked out in it. Well, we got off about 1245 and has a swell trip over there (not knowing 1/2 the time exactly where we were). It's a great big airport with every kind of plane on it - from cubs to P38's, from AT6's to DC3's and B24's (4 engines). It was a lot of fun. Didn't have time to go into Atlanta. Saw the penitentiary from the air and flew over town. I'd like to RON there sometime. The airport where I landed was at College Park, just outside Atlanta. Had a nice trip back too, but discovered when I got back that all the girls had been grounded. The reason was that the Major was mad again. Here's the story: The March Field bunch got their orders to leave. Lynn Nichols tried to get a plane to Atlanta to get home faster. Well, she called several people about it even tho she was not signed off the post and wasn't ready to leave. So the Major called operations and was going to charter the AT11 for her (she's got a pretty face and gets what she wants mostly but is a pain in the neck to the girls). I had just taken off in the 11 and the Major gave orders to call me back. Well, I had already received permission to go off the tower frequency and was on the Alma beam. So I didn't get the message. The Major pimped on Operations for it and w/o Raybourne (who is a stinker anyway) took it out on the girls, and grounded them all! There were several pilots needed for odd jobs and missions but Raybourne's stubbornness wouldn't let the girls do them so put an extra strain on the men. So I unwittingly started a big mess (not even knowing about it). It was really Lynn's fault. I was just following orders. I didn't even know she wanted to go to Atlanta. So yesterday was quite a day, but I had fun. The rides in the morning were so smooth. There was still ground fog in some spots and one river was just filled with smoke and just looked like a river of smoke or fog winding through the trees.

Last night Emma drove Lynn in to Savannah to catch her train so I went along for the ride. Had a big turkey dinner at the De Soto, after having eaten a big stew dinner here at the field. I'm still stuffed.

I'm glad my gold watch is fixed. This one I'm wearing doesn't run much anymore and keeps falling apart. Brooks gave me a chain and St. Christopher medal to wear around my neck. I gave her a book "South Wind" and a small leather picture frame. We had a nice Xmas but not like home. Sure was a thrill to talk with you. I'd love to call again but I guess it costs money. I'll pay for it soon's you get your bill. Have no idea how much it'll be. The Buddes sent me a printed rayon-satin nightgown. And Fred sent me a beautiful satin and lace nightgown. Ahem! What goes on?!

Yep, Pop, the gals you mentioned in the Flying Mag. are all W-4's. They're the publicity hounds. The W3's lay the groundwork and the W4's collect the benefits - not speaking of publicity alone.

I've gotta go now - really! Anyway, I'm outdoing myself on a four page letter. Will let you know any news about our leaving. There are just us 5 El Paso-bound gals here now. The March Field group had to report direct - without delay. So I expect that to be the same with us. They're getting stingy about leaves. If I don't get one soon - I'll quit! Maybe.

Love,
Betty

December 26 [1943]

Dear Helen:

Everyone is still asleep this morning. 10:15 already. Rain is pouring outside, so it's still rather dark. I couldn't sleep. Have had only patches of sleep all night cuz of telephone calls. I put in my call early yesterday but they couldn't get to it by midnight, when they're all automatically cancelled. So I had to stay up till midnight to place it again. Then about 5 a.m. Lynn's call came thru. I jumped up to answer that. Not long afterward it rang again. That was just to see if I were here I guess. The operator was just about to put mine through so I hung on. She called New York and asked for Oakland. Well, the circuits were busy so she would call me back. Wasn't in bed for very long when she called again and I heard Pop answer (sounded like Les but I knew it couldn't be). I'm afraid I didn't say much of any interest but I sure got a thrill talking to all of you. Heard Paul whimper. Gee, I wanted so badly to hear him talk but at that time of morning I was lucky to get any of you up. Hope he went right back to sleep. He must've had an exciting day. Maybe he'll write and tell me about it. Think so?

Your letters sure have been interesting. I take it you and Bud had a pretty good time while he was there. I'm glad. He probably appreciated it after being in the Army so long, away from everybody.

I don't think I can get you a supplementary shoe stamp cuz they usually put "work shoes - low heeled brown" or something like that on it. But I can try. I still have my no. 18 stamp. Is that still good?

Our Christmas yesterday wasn't so bad as we had expected. We were all terribly homesick for weeks before and especially when it got too late to get home. But we had fun with silly little packages in the morning, then had turkey dinner at 1 pm, and from then until bedtime, the place was crowded with officers and their wives. We had open

house so they could see our tree. They mixed eggnogs (I liked the foam and nutmeg,
that's all) for everybody do all had a good time.

Love,

Betty

Biggs Field Letters

May 16, 1944 and June 29, 1944

May 16, 1944

Dear Mom:

Just got your letter, telling of Jennie's death, having mailed one to Grandpa an hour before, saying I hope she got better. That's too bad. But try not to let it spoil your whole trip, Mom. You don't get one very often. I told grandpa about our trip to Carlsbad. It sure was an experience. These formations are 30,000,000 yrs. old - or some such figure - and it's like walking thru an underground castle. It's always 56° there. Were so tired - walked for 3 hours, had lunch 750 ft. under the ground. Then they turned all the lights off for one minute. I have never seen anything so black! A record played "Rock of Ages," and everybody was very quiet. Sure impressive! Then yesterday Lois H. and I and a bunch of fellows flew down to Palacios (below Houston). Had to bring seven Helldivers back here. Swell ship - swell trip! Left there at 7:10 this morn. Took only 3 1/2 hrs. to go 665 miles. At that rate I could make it from here to home in little over 1/2 day! Wish I could sometime but they won't allow us to go that far. Well, Mom, cheer up and enjoy yourself!

Love,
Betty

Thursday [June 29, 1944]

Dear Mom:

Hope you get this before you leave. I've been awful about writing, even skipped Fred for 3 days, which is inexcusable. I suppose Pop wrote you that I got home Saturday afternoon and left Sunday morn. I got a ride from here to Sacramento. Had to fly a mission Friday nite til 11:30 then ate breakfast, got 1 hr. sleep and left for Calif. about 3 a.m. Stopped at Phoenix and Palm Springs and got to Sacramento by 10:30. Took me til 3:30 to get home from there by bus. Sure enjoyed being home again - only sorry you weren't there too. BJ, Pop, Paul and I drove up to Sacto. in the pickup early Sunday cuz I was supposed to meet the guys there at one. But they were late and we had to wait for 2 hrs. while one guy straightened things out with the M.P.'s. Had a forced landing at Palmdale, and by the time we got to Palm Springs and landed, it was late and we needed to world on the ship, so stayed there all nite. I slept in the WASP barracks there. It was such a warm nite with a moon and the sky full of stars. Monday we didn't get off til 11:30, stopped at Tuscan for gas and got back here by 5:20. The Major was sore cuz we were late, but it couldn't be helped. That was quite a weekend!

It's been so hot here - but last night the rain poured in to my room and cooled things off a bit.

I was so thrilled when Paul recognized me. He was sleeping and Pop woke him up and said "Who's home?" He opened his eyes and looked up at me and said "Betty". We 3 walked down to see Les. Shirley looked awful. She had a cold and a headache and sort of broken out around the eyes. We kind of thought she might be getting the measles, but maybe not.

Brooks has to leave for Florida Friday nite. I'm scheduled to go August 2. But can't tell what'll happen before then. Maybe they'll stop the training and I won't have to go.

Sure keen, you winning all that money. Hope it keeps up. The family sure misses you and will be glad to have you back.

Love,
Betty

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