

The Pilot Log

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With grateful acknowledgement to:

Jonathan Edmiston for digital copies of photos, overseas letters and Pilot Log Book, and for the Oral History of William Orient with transcripts.

Carroll (Cal) Stewart for his detailed history of the 93rd Bombardment group in *Ted's Travelling Circus: 93rd Bombardment Group (H), USAAF, 1942-45*, published by Sun/World Communications Inc., Lincoln, NE, 1996.

INTRODUCTION

The following manuscript documents the combat missions of William L. Orient during World War II in support of his family's request for his posthumous award of a Distinguished Flying Cross medal.

Each dated entry reflects the notations Bill made in his "Pilot Log Book," which he started when his pilot training began in April 1943. Though Bill ultimately joined the 93rd Bombardment Group as a radio operator, he meticulously kept a record of all his flights. He flew in 34 combat missions, accruing more than 200 combat hours.

Bill's notes are corroborated in the operational history of the 93rd Bombardment Group chronicled in *Ted's Travelling Circus: 93rd Bombardment Group (H), USAAF, 1942-1945* by Carroll (Cal) Stewart, published by Sun/World Communications, Inc., Lincoln, NE, 1996. *[Entries here are included, permissions pending.]*

Bill's planes were badly damaged on three occasions resulting in emergency landings in England or on the continent. Those stories were described in Bill's handwritten journal, entitled "Lest We Forget," probably written in the 1960s, and further detailed in an Oral History recorded by Bill's grandson Jon Edmiston in 2001. Excerpts from these sources are included in the manuscript as evidence of Bill's dedicated service to his crew and the mission under extreme circumstances.

Finally, I have included a few of the letters written by Bill to his future wife Phyllis, my mother. These letters came to light shortly after my mother's death in 2022. The selected letters, from a collection of 201 letters, were typically written immediately or very soon after a mission. While Bill could not divulge any specifics about his location or assignment, his emotional duress was often apparent and nonetheless overpowered by his burgeoning love for my mother, whom he had met in Tucson just six weeks before his deployment to England. He sweated his three brothers and brother-in-law who were also overseas, delighted in tales from home about his new nephew and niece Lil Joe and Karen Lee, was bereaved at the loss of his cousin Andy in Italy, and found heart to sprinkle his letters with humor about growing a mustache and his recalcitrant "wheel" (bicycle).

The letters document Bill's grueling decision to remain in the air after most of his crew had gone home, hoping to help protect his brother Joe who was still fighting in the infantry in France.

The Pilot Log is not only an Orient family legacy, but also a documentary of our nation's heart and soul.

PILOT LOG BOOK

William L. Orient
Squadron E (43-J)
AAFFTD, Santa Maria, Cal.

In Emergency—Please Notify
Mrs. Catherine S. Orient
McLaughlin Rd.
Bridgeville, Penna.
Phone: Bridgeville 969J
Bridgeville, Penna



93rd Bombardment Group (H)
United States Army Air Force, World War II
328th Bomb Squadron

The 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy) was the pioneer B-24 Liberator unit in the U.S. Eighth Army Air Force. The B-24 Liberator was the first aircraft born of World War II. It could carry bombs faster and farther than its sister bomber—the B-17 Flying Fortress—though it had to fly at a lower elevation, making it more susceptible to German flak. The B-24 was dubbed the World War II workhorse and also the “Flying Coffin.” The 93rd flew 396 missions, the most of any World War II USAAF heavy bomber group.

Four squadrons made up the group—328th, 329th, 330th and 409th—commanded by Colonel Edward J. (Ted) Timberlake, who would soon be promoted to Brigadier General, the youngest U.S. general officer since the Civil War. The 93rd became known as Ted’s Travelling Circus because of its various deployments to England, North Africa and Italy to meet emergency situations. And possibly also because of their planes’ vivid yellow tails. After September 1942, the 93rd fought from England against staggering *Luftwaffe* fighter and anti-aircraft defenses.

Crew 4436 formed at Davis-Monthan Army Air Field in Tucson June 7, 1944



William McCabe	pilot
Frank Cepl	co-pilot
Jerry C. Farnum (G.C.)	navigator
Philip Phillips	bombardier
Paul Harwood	engineer
William L. Orient	radio operator
Lawrence G. Miller	waist gunner (AR)
Kenneth Holt	waist gunner (AG)
Lawrence D. Coffman	nose gunner
Henry J. Bratyanski	tail gunner

COMBAT FLIGHTS

August 1, 1944

Aircraft: Reddy "D" Teddy

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

From: Hardwick

Duration: 7:00 hours

Bombed airfield in Paris

Flak Rough

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 1: Take-off was twice delayed by weather. Finally, the Circus got off at 1145 hours to be positioned last in 20th Wing's battle order. The primary was Le Bourget Aerodrome, outside Paris, and the adjacent GAF fuel stores. . . . Weather was nasty. Two sections, totaling 20 Libs led by Therman Brown, unpacked on the GAF base at nearby Melun with good results. Flak was moderate but accurate with 18 ships writhing from battle damage. The 328th Squadron bargained for Chartres Aerodrome with poor results. Bombs from one 328th plane fell on the town. The Germans had found the range and sent up clouds of flak."

Three planes from the 328th and 330th squadrons on the same mission were badly damaged by the flak and went down. "The status of the Circus missing . . . was becoming increasingly murky. The front was fluid. Here today, empty bunks tomorrow, killed, wounded, taken prisoner, evading or escaping. Combatants were turning up at Hardwick hours, weeks and months later."

August 2, 1944

Aircraft: Reddy "D" Teddy

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:15 hours

Bombed R.R. Bridge-Larouche

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 2: A key rail bridge at Montereau, outside Paris, was attacked visually from 18,000 feet by 28 Circus B-24s, 14 enduring damage from devastating flak batteries ringing the French capital. Results: fair. In withdrawing over Paris (a mistake). 14 took flak damage."

Somerset in England
August 2, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

If I were approaching your
drowning I'd throw my hat in
first - I'm sorry, darling. I didn't
write for the last two days - but
there is a good excuse - last night
I didn't have a record to write and
didn't have my pen with me -
it had gone astray - but now I
have it firmly in hand - if you
were to turn in to my mental
~~telepathy~~ telepathy, you would
know I haven't forgotten you for
a second - you would also hear
me repeat every second on the
second - I love you, darling, I love
you darling. I love you darling -

Can't say what I'm doing
now - but this has been a very
busy month - both days of it -
to find time to write is impossible,
to find time to sleep is most
difficult - but someday (cross
your fingers) and breathe another

prayer) I'll tell you all about it
and shall oft relate it as I
bring my grandchildren on
my knee.

Received two letters from
you today - the clouds lifted,
the sun shone and birds sang -
Bill's heart swelled, thudded, and
little hope is retained that his
heart that will ever return to
normal - Darling, I do love you -
more than I can ever say - but
I do feel it, do you? What a grand
and wonderful feeling - simply out
of this world and beyond comprehen-
sion. Must be love -

Good night, Darling, more
and pleasant dreams - everything
good -

All my love,
Bill

To Sunnybrook, Sauterne, the
new glider with red wood and blue
cushions, my love, and many
moonlight dream days & nights

August 3, 1944

Aircraft: Reddy "D" Teddy

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:00 hours

Bombed synthetic oil plant—Renes

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 3: All was quiet until a 1330 briefing for the synthetic ammonia and petrol plants at Harnes, France. Eight in the 330th Squadron lead section selected the marshalling yards at Ghent, Belgium, as a target of opportunity; results fair. Most of the bombs from the 24-ship second section fell 2,400 yards northeast of the synthetic works (primary); the third section erred by impacting 3,000 yards to the southeast. Clouds made bombardier chores difficult. No flak, no fighters, no damage, everybody safe."

August 4, 1944

Aircraft: Ma's Worry

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

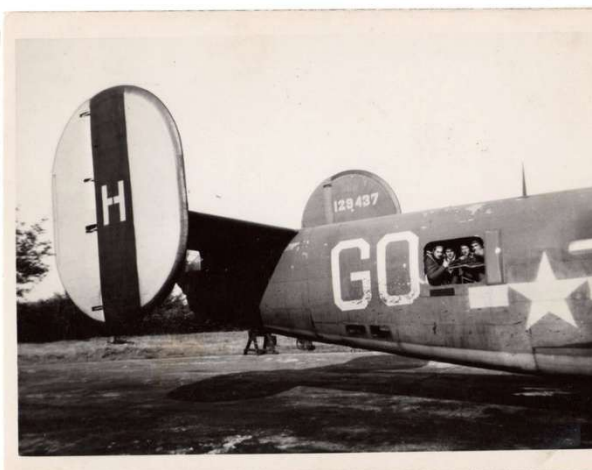
From: Hardwick

Flight time: 7:00 hours

Bombed Heinkel Aircraft Works, Rostock, Ger.

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 4: Two forces went out after 26 crews were briefed at 0630 for the Heinkel bomber assembly plant at Rostock. . . . Despite the overcast, results of 142 x 250 HEs on the target were excellent. The 20th Wing destroyed assembly shops, canteen and hangars left undamaged from prior raids. Repair shops, boiler house and main storage buildings were decommissioned, also rail facilities. Many parked aircraft were destroyed or damaged."



Somewhere in England
August 4, 1947

My darling Phyllis,
The End.

The end of another long day is rapidly coming to an end - a very pleasant end - have showered and shaved and about to lay down my head and dream those pleasant dreams of yours - it is a shame to ever get up and spoil them.

Yesterday was another of those wonderful red letter days - four letters from your darling - oh love and joy - happy day - didn't get a chance to see either one any today - we got in too late and the mail room was closed.

Darling - I love you - love
you with all my heart - and its
a pretty big heart - that is when
you are concerned. What shouldn't
you be back in Tucson right now -
but I guess there's not ^{any one} ~~every~~ ^{any one} ~~everything~~
myself miserable over the hopeles-
ness of the vast distance between
us - But Darling, when comes
the day -

Our newly organized
transportation syndicate is

making rapid expansion - we
now have three wheels in our
midst - we bought another
yesterday - now you ought to
see our outfit get around on
our wheels - but only to show and
to the line and that the extent
of our activity - some day I'll get
to town but I'm not holding my
breath -

Please thank Mom for
the grand little note she enclosed
in one of your letters - when I
get two seconds I'll thank her
personally - give her my love
and best regards to Pop.

Good night for now
Darling, see you in my dreams,
everything good and

With my love.
Bill

PS - A month and a day in
the ETO - a month and a day
too damn long -

August 5, 1944

Aircraft: 147-S

Make/Model: B-24H

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

From: Hardwick

Landed: Woodridge

Flight time: 6:20 hours

Bombed industrial area in Brunswick

Flak hits – Emergency landing – Rough

62 hits – hydraulics out

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 5: Briefing at 0530. Another lovely morn in Britain as huge outbound formations of Libs and Fords filled the sky with roaring thunder. Thirty Circus ships achieved excellent results with incendiaries on the aircraft works of Fallersleben, which had been converted to manufacturing and assembling buzz-bomb wings and fuselages. . . . Flak at the target, 20 miles north of Brunswick, crippled two ships. . . . All Circus ships returned safely except for two ditching in the North Sea and one landing away from Hardwick. . . . Everyone safe."

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

On this occasion "we put a plane into Woodridge. This was an emergency landing field that had a five-mile uninterrupted runway. So, if you'd been there without hydraulics, you had a chance of not dragging your airplane to pieces. You know, you could put the tail to the ground if you wanted, if you had to. That's what finally happened to our ship, the N." *[Note: "N" was the letter designation for the plane assigned to their bombing group. "N," called "N Nan" or "Naughty Nan" was their assigned plane though they didn't always fly it.]*

"This was that low level dropping raid over the Rhine, over Holland. And they were in at a low level, and they just got the heck shot out of them. So they put this one in at Woodridge, and they were coming to the end of the runway pretty soon. They all jumped in the back and dragged the tail down. So they just about ground the bottom out of that airplane before it stopped."

"And [the plane] was back into production in a couple of weeks. . . . [A]irplanes were just perfectly maintained in every direction. You know, crews working at night with spotlights they set up, changing engines on their scaffolds. You know, 100% support from everything and everybody."

Somewhere in England

August 6, 1944

My darling (Kyllie)

Today was a grand
lazy, luminous day - enough
time to make up on a few short
nights and a some more days.
I slept until time for 11^{o'clock} Mass
and spent the afternoon quite
pleasantly.

I gave my new wheel
a good preflighting as a matter
of fact a major overhauling. New
pedals, cables and shifter it set
up - took to adjusting my brake
they were fairly decent before
started - would it remind me
of my old Ford - remember my
telling about it - I have to start
it with the steering wheel really
stripped the gear - as a bicycle
mechanic I'd make a good
carpenter - but shucks it out of
my line - my mechanical apti-
tude is best applied with a heavy
hammer, cold chisel, stillson
wrench and a sledge hammer
I consider the solution to any
perplexing mechanical difficulty.

Phyllis, yesterday you
really did look - looked although
my game was cracked or at least
a few feathers plucked. But you
emerged as complete masters
of the situation and came out
in fairly decent shape - at least
on hand to mention it. But
you know the Kib - with
my darling, rooting for me - and
meaning her charm trouble -
don't let anyone tell you otherwise
it is charmed.

Darling, it's my heart's
turn to talk to you - thump.
thump - I love you - thump - your
sweet - thump - p - p - p - oh - I
adore you - thump - your wonder-
ful - thump - your very darling -
thump - sweetheart - thump -
honey - thump - I love you - and
my heart continues that tune
24 hours a day - day in and day
out - forever and a day -

Good night, darling, pleas-
ant dreams and everything good -

Loads of love,

Biff

P.S. Each day brings L-DAY closer -



August 7, 1944

Aircraft: 586-L

Make/Model: B-24H

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 4:00 hours

Paris – weather closed carrying 2000 LBGR's

Returned with bombs.

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 7: Assigned was a Seine River bridge at Peronne. Weather was wretched after penetration of the enemy coast. The Circus pressed on course to the IP only to find 10/10ths undercast. No bombs were dropped, but crews were credited with a mission due to stiff ack-ack opposition."

Somewhere in England
August 7, 1944

My darling Phyllis:

At long last my chain of thoughts can concentrate at length on everything sweet - naturally my thoughts turn and visit themselves on your darling. How have you been - and how is everything in good old Tucson? Needless to say I wish to be with you physically as I am now spiritually -

Darling, I love you - love you with all my heart - love you so much that every second I spend apart from you is a second completely empty and void -

Let me tell you about the latest reports from home - Joe and Paul (my new brother-in-law and near prospective father-in-law) are both in action - I heard

Joe was shortly after my arrival here but haven't heard from him. A bit uneasy but I know he's OK - just feel it - what a time it will be at the first family reunion and thereafter and there's nobody who can quite throw a party like this Aunt + Grand can - as I hope and pray you will someday find out.

Good night, my love;
sleep tight, my love,
pleasant dreams and everything
good -

All my love,
Bill

August 8, 1944

Aircraft: Willie's Worry B-24 J

Pilot: William McCabe ("Mac")

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:00 hours

Airfield in Paris

Flak heavy and deadly accurate

Mac hurt, Bill & Phil Doc's

Worst experience in my life.

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 8: . . . "Take-off at 0900 in dense fog for Villacoublay Aerodrome, five miles southeast of the *Arc de Triomphe*. Twenty-four Circus Libs led the Second Division. Plans went awry."

Under heavy flak and numerous hits, the lead was abandoned three times in a "game of musical chairs," which was particularly confusing to their escorting Little Friends. Twenty-one Circus ships pressed toward the GAF base at Clastres and created a rash of fresh craters all over the place. . . . Lieutenant William H. McCabe nursed a hand wound from flak that required hospitalization. Nineteen Hardwick planes were holed."

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

"When Mac was shot, his hand went up in the air. He was squirting blood already. And he was in the pilot's seat. And I just reached over, picked this big lanky guy up, lifted him over the control panel, and laid them on the floor. [Note: *In a B-24 flight deck, there was pilot, co-pilot, engineer and radio operator. The radio operator was somewhat footloose because there was radio silence during missions.*] In the meantime, Cepl called for Phillips to come up, so we get a tourniquet on—first aid."

"We were coming back from this mission, and we weren't shot up that badly, but that was the mission where Mac got shot. So, as we approach the group, Cepl said, 'You call in and ask for a fly-through lane.' We would ordinarily land in the group, peel off, peel off, and circle and land it. We'd ask for a fly-through landing: 'We have a wounded pilot on board, and we're out of gas.' So they say, 'N Nan come straight in.' So we landed, then we got part way down the runway, we were losing speed. We veered off the runway to a grass area so the group could land without any interruption from us."

"We wanted to get back to the medics as quickly as we could and, on the way in, they said shoot flares. That was red flares, 'we have a wounded man on board,' and I started shooting the cocktails back. They said, 'Orient, don't make like a machine gun.' Then when we landed, they called, 'Shoot a couple of red flares so the medics find you right away, so they know exactly where you are.' So, they came in and pulled Mac out. And when they were bringing him out, we saw he was bleeding on the tail end, too. But he wasn't squirting blood. We had nothing to do with his tail end. We just caught the squirting blood."

"And on that same mission, the ground crew pulled a hunk of flak that was in my radio receiver. Had I been sitting where I would normally be sitting, I would have got that in the head. And if it would have punctured, a metal radio receiver, it wouldn't have done me much good either."

Somewhere in England

August 9, 1944

My darling Phyllis -

Today has been another of those nice quiet peaceful days unfortunately they don't come often enough and the price one has to pay for it hardly makes it worth while.

Yesterday we caught more than our share of hell - if hell is half as bad as that - I'll do all in my power to steer clear of that.

After two years inactivity at the game - I took badminton racket in hand and severely trounced Miller in a few games. Indeed gratifying to note that I lost none of my former ability, precision or finesse. As home we used to play at the game consistently and we had developed quite a science of the game. Naturally I proved to be the complete master and unchallenged Champ. Joe, Uncle Jimmy and I really

used to make a hard game of it.

Last night Paul and I took to our wheels and rode over to the Officers Quarters to see our boys. Remained to and leaving we broke into our private stock of joy juice and partook of rather generous quantities - you know - strictly medicinal purposes. Phil, Jerry, and Ceph had just broken open a new bottle of Seagrams Fine and it wasn't long until Phil and I attempted to drown our sorrows - the end of the bottle found our sorrows a little saturated - and we had troubles - had troubles earlier in the day.

We left after dark to peddle back - quite an experience trying to ride a bike down these dark winding lanes and walls. Clipped hedges on either side of the lane and ran from one ditch to another when we got to the walls. More fun and I was in a particularly

27
hilarious jovial mood - just
just pleasantly plastered - but
now I know not to trust a
single - but of course I haven't
had it very long - but it didn't
bring me home like my
Cherry used to. I really had
that car trained - used to
pour myself into it after
an evening of ~~the~~ night life
or a session with the boys -
take the brake off and my
Cherry always took me right
home in good shape - sounds
fantastic but then again, so
was my Cherry - now had many
sentimental attachments - the
moral of the story is this - had
best refrain from embarking
until my Cherry is again at my
command and disposal - but
that's no fun.

He got paid few dollars
today for our trip across - \$52.11 -
not bad - that was after pay. too.
I'm in the wrong business -
should stick to ferrying planes.

It came at an opportune moment too - I was scrapping the bottom of the sack - first I say mind had since leaving the States.

Darling, yesterday I had a most pleasant surprise - a big pile of mail - 8 letters from you. Oh and if you only knew how much they did for me - lifted me from the depths of disillusionment and worry into the happy thrall of this. Your sweet, dear, and I do love you - love you ever so much.

You will recall that in one of my late letters my anxiety about my brother Joe. Yesterday that too was lifted - had a grand letter from him. ~~the~~ A sweet letter from Sister Hildegard, too from my old friends, the Michaels from Minnesota, one from my brother Paul, and another from brother Jim - looks like he too will be taking up arms for his Uncle - took his

3/ physical charms about two
weeks ago. I hope its all over
before his called for active duty.

More news of John -
he's attending some kind of a
school for a short course after
which he gets an 18 day delay
enroute home. He gets more
lucky breaks than you could
shake a stick at - this time
it looks like church bells
again for the Orient - he's
planning to be married on
his furlough - wish one of
the family at least waits to
be married until I get home -
missed Joe's and Bees wedding
and now John's - I'm gonna
have oddless and oddless of
celebrating to catch up on. And
I'm just the one to do it, too.

Darling, did I tell you
how much I love you - have
been thinking of it for some
time and I lay and smoked
a few cigarettes - but before
I can go into detail I'm going

August 11, 1944

Aircraft: 471-N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 3:00 hours

Scheduled flight to Paris

No. 3 engine out – aborted mid-Channel

New pilot—Lt. Cook (PGH. PA.)

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“August 11: There were two Circus missions to Coulommiers Aerodrome; the effort was designed to ‘pot-hole’ the field and further impede GAF mischief-makers. . . . Number 2—Thirty Circus ships were dispatched under Captain Wayne Beumeler, four aborted, 26 reached the target, several didn’t unload. The lead’s navigational gear went haywire. Flak was intense and accurate.”

August 12, 1944

Aircraft: 327Q

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 7:00 hours

Bombed air field near Laon, France.

Good results

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“August 12: Briefing at 0330 hours. Target: Laon/Coudrey Aerodrome. . . . This was a near-perfect mission—good visibility, good formation, excellent bombing, no losses although several ships inhaled flak.”

Somewhere in England
August 12, 1944

My Darling Phyllis,

Was up bright and
early this morning - and we
were really on the ball all
day - a long and rough haul.

Later in the afternoon
I had a chance to catch up on
some well deserved rest - slept on
through until evening chow and
then sleepily made my way
to chow - should have slept -
long. putrid food - mostly
because I was still fretting
about being disturbed from my
sleep and pleasant dreams -
and I elucidate on the dream -
starring the one, the only, my
Darling Phyllis.

I've been in a little
sphere all of my own since
mail call - it's a beautiful
world, Darling - why, because
we're in it together - oh, how
pleased I am in my long sugar
reports - rather an odd assort-
ment of dates - the 5th, 7th, 18th, 22nd,
and 23rd - more or less filled
the gaps and brings me pretty
well up to date.

Darling, I've gotta go to
bed. But I don't want to - but I
have to if I want to be bright
and eager come the morning
so I reluctantly tear myself
away - Good night, sweetheart.
pleasant dreams and everything
good - All my love,
Bill

August 13, 1944

Aircraft: 327Q

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:00 hours

Road junctions, bridges, three bomb runs, Rouen, France

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 13: The brains trust at Eighth Air Force headquarters concocted a dilly—a hurry-up job—at the behest of Army field commanders. The route and targets were identified only 30 minutes before the first wheel chocks were pulled at 1040. Twenty-four took off. Each plane had been loaded earlier with 52 x 100s, and each six-plane flight (there were four flights) was assigned three different tactical targets, mostly highway and rail chokepoints and bridges in a corridor northeast of Bernay in the Rouen area. . . . Part of each flight's load was dropped on the primaries; leftovers directed against other transport goals. Circus results graded poor-to-excellent."

August 15, 1944

Aircraft: What a Back 328 H

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 4:20 hours

Dry run on jet-propelled airfield – Wilhelmshaven, Germany

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"August 15: The Eighth and Ninth Air Forces pooled heavy bomber resources with the RAF for the first time. The RAF was making its initial large-scale daylight thrust. The joint effort had been planned for sometime. Formations of Forts, Libs, Lancasters, Halifaxes and Allied fighters promenaded all day over Hardwick—an incredible show of force never before and never again duplicated. Enemy airfields were bracketed with tons of explosives and incendiaries. The Circus target was the Wittmundhafen/Andorf Aerodrome near Wilhelmshaven. . . . The Circus lower-left squadron made two passes at the target, but suppressed release through clouds rather than endanger French civilians. Lieutenant Charles E. Clague, lead bombardier, was commended for exercising sound judgment. Flak was meager and inaccurate. Everyone OK."

Somewhere in England
August 17, 1944

8 I received rather sad news
from home yesterday - an old
buddy of mine - a neighbor -
Lawrence McCool - knew him for
dear old - his family received

news of his death in action
in Italy - his the second McCool
brother to meet a tragic, untimely
death in this war. He hitting
pretty close to home.

8 Darling, I love you - love
you with all my heart - most
anticipate for the time when my
fanciest dream shall materialize -
to hold you in my arms again -
never to let you go again -
Good night, Darling - pleasant
dreams and everything good -
All my love,
Bill

August 28-September 9, 1944

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

Much of the Circus had been pulled off conventional bombing August 28-September 9 to freight essentials to the gung-ho U.S. Third Army. . . . George Patton's insatiable tanks were running out of 80-octane gas. Several Circus and other select Lib squadrons hauled thousands of 55-gallon drums of fuel, manually loaded through waist-windows. When transfer pumps came on line at Orleans/Bricy Aerodrome, 70 miles south of Paris, 80-octane was hauled n bomb-bay tanks and 110-gallon paper drop-tanks designed for fighters. . . . During late summer, as Allied troops grappled with the tenacious enemy in France and the Low Countries, several conventional Circus bombing missions were planned, but never came off due to weather. Strategic and tactical full-scale bomb hauls were resumed although at slackened pace.

September 2, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick, Beaulieu, Orlean to Hardwick

Flight Duration: 6:30 hours

Ferrying supplies to Orlean, Fr.

September 5, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick, Beaulieu, Orlean to Hardwick

Flight Duration: 5:20 hours

Ferrying supplies to Orlean, Fr.

Somewhere in England
Sept. 5, 1944

My darling Phyllis.

Hello, Darling, I'm sorry for the
long delay - I hope you weren't worried.
but I thought of you often but I was in
an impossible position in so far as
writing was concerned. Found whole days
and no letter from my Darling - to
my Darling - but on my return I found
four very sweet letters from you - so it
~~was~~ more than worth being away.

Was away for four days
on - but home again.
It sure felt swell to get back to my little
rock again. My clothes off for a change
and imagine - a shave after about
five days - whatta beard, whatta beard.
had to cut it first with a pair of
shears and then back around it
with a razor - even trimmed my
mustache - necessity of course - it
was getting in my soup and I was
chewing on the long ends. Finished

off with a nice warm shower and
then a shampoo - with real shampoo,
too - the hair isn't so hard, after all.

Darling, did I remember to
tell you I adore you? I do, Phyllis.
I do with all my heart. I love you -
love you to the nth degree - every
second away from you grows longer
and more desolate - I just gotta
get back to Tucson quick.

I see where you are still a
piece bit perplexed as to whether or
not you should continue work or
go to the U. Wish I could make a
suggestion but I would hate to say
anything either way. But, Darling, if
I were there, I could and would
make a wonderful suggestion, and
it doesn't concern work or school -
a misty dream, Darling. do you ^{think} your
dreams and plans will ever material-
ize? And when -

See, it's been so long since
I've written - mind if I say I

love you again - could say it over
and over again a million times and
still just be beginning - never an
end -

Please extend my regards to
Mom and Pop and give them my
love.

My sack looks awfully
irritating - haven't seen one for awhile -
have to write my Mom yet tonight
or shall begin to think I'm M.I.A.
or something - can't permit that.
You know -

So Good Night. my Love,
pleasant dreams and lots of everything
good -

All my love,
Bill

PS "Miss you always and all ways"

September 8, 1944

Aircraft: 586L

Make/Model: B-24 H

From: Hardwick, Beaulieu, Orlean to Hardwick

Flight Duration: 4:55 hours

Ferrying supplies to Orlean, Fr.

September 9, 1944

Aircraft: 505E

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 3:10 hours

Local Hi. Alt. Formation

September 10, 1944

Aircraft: Ma's Worry 437 H

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 8:00 hours

Bombed jet component factory, Gunsburg, Germany

Lt. Bernard's crew

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“September 10: The Circus was billed to take on the Heilbronn oil refinery and the nearby Gunsberg factory that turned out wings for jet fighters. Although briefed for pathfinder bombing, visual prospects against the Heilbronn marshalling yards, along the Neckar River, beckoned 35 Circus attackers, dropping 10 x 500-pound incendiary clusters with excellent results. Flak was slight but very accurate.”

Somewhere in England,
Sept. 10, 1944

My darling Phyllis.

This will of necessity be short and sweet. I'm so damn tired it hurts that what comes from getting up before breakfast - especially when breakfast is a midnight snack - back in the saddle again - its hard after lying around for awhile - short jaunts - Abby jinks brought in our shaving water - it was his turn tonight - I hooped it down to the CQ Room for it two nights ago - Abby and I shave every other day

whether we need to or not.

All down now - a little orange around the corner but it isn't sufficient going anywhere in particular.

I received your letter of the 29th - the one written at the Bureau meeting - please extend my thanks to Joan for her contribution and relay my love.

The impossible and unpredictable has happened - and I've seen it - today I had a letter from Don. My first - and as yet he hasn't received

any of mine - I mean my first - I've
been a bad boy in that respect - but
I hear all the news about him and I
presume he heard a little about me.
I was surprised to hear of the number
of missions his been on - his up on
me - but I'm sure some good were
worth a couple of threes - not bragging -
complaining. Nothing else matters as
long as it hurries the great day.

Darling - I love you - yours
the sweetestest, loveablest.

Beautiful tent Darling in all the
land. Bright superlatives but still not
superlative enough -

But Darling I just have to go
to bed - don't wanna - but I gotta - just
too, too, tired. Good night. Sweetheart.
pleasant dreams and lots of everything
good -

All my love,
Dad

September 11, 1944

Aircraft: 456J

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 3:45

Headed for Magdenburg, Ger.

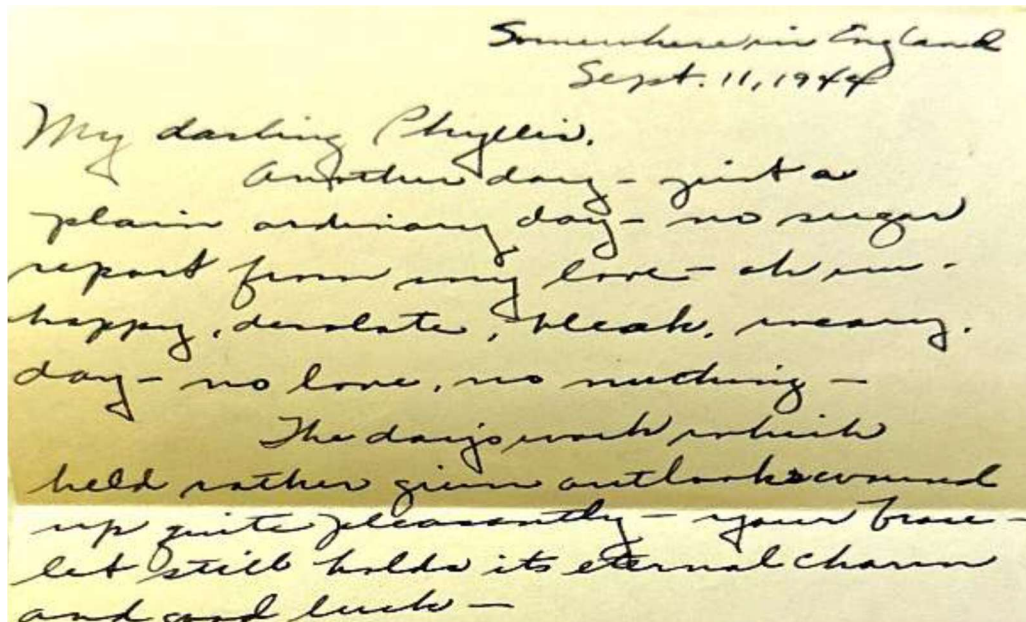
Aborted at German border

(No credit)

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"September 11: The target was the Reich's key and oft-visited Magdenburg oil refinery where Germanic genius and slave laborers continued to demonstrate amazing recuperative power.

Thirty-seven were off at 0830 hours." From Pop Hamilton's diary: "A depressive mood engulfs Hardwick tonight. Three very fine Circus crews are missing. Adding to our agony, today's results were unobserved."



September 13, 1944

Aircraft: 606A

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 4:10 hours

Headed for ULM-ordnance plant

Abandoned OPS-high ceiling – continuous

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"September 13: Ulm. Briefing at 0315. Weather impossible. Mission aborted."

Somewhere in England,
Sept. 13, 1944

My darling Phyllis.

Another day, another dollar -
rest these days speed up - can hardly
wait until I again come dashing up
E. Fourth St.

Two letters from my sweetheart
today - good deal - certainly glad to hear
that you've decided to go to college - it's
a great opportunity and I'm glad you're
able to take advantage of it. Interested
in hearing your schedule. - I'll know
you'll enjoy it.

Spent a wonderful afternoon -
really recharged my sails - all
afternoon. Was certainly tired
and - only had about 2 hours sleep
last night - hard war.

Your sweet Phyllis, and I love
you with all my heart. Don't wanna
leave you - but I gotta - Good night.
my love, pleasant dreams and lots
of everything good -

All my love,
Bill

Somewhere in England.
Sept. 17, 1944.

My darling Phyllis,

Yesterday Abby and I through
various means and contrivances obtained
a pass - coupled with more types and
combinations of transportation than you
could shake a stick at arrived at our
destination - visited our old pal, Max, at
the hospital - you know accidents will
happen - but his fine and dandy and
will be home before long. Sure wish I
could join him - the hospital men

Somewhere in England
Sept. 24, 1944

My darling Phyllis,
D.D. - ... to the home

I had two letters awaiting
me from my Mom. They said

news - I'm an uncle again.
Little Karen Lee put in her early
appearance on the 11th - Mother and
baby doing fine but I'm sure you've
heard of it by now.

Mother told me of your
visit present to my Latus (Glossom).
That certainly was sweet of you -
I'm most anxious for you to
know the follow-up that before,

September 25, 1944

Aircraft: 994K

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 5:50 hours

Bombed marshalling yards at Germany (Koblenz)

Two runaway props on take-off

From Ted's Travelling Circus:

"September 25: The Circus attempted to pound the marshalling yards in Koblenz, again through solid clouds. Results unobserved."

Someewhere in England
Sept. 25, 1944

My dearest Phyllis,
Another day made gloriously
happy and memorable - four
wonderful letters - four beautiful
sugar reports - no matter how hard
as rough a day maybe nothing
else matters when I come back and
find a letter from you and when
I find four - nothing else matters.

September 26, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight Duration: 4:45 hours

Railroad yards at Hamm, Germany

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"September 26: Hamm, noted for metal and textile industries, lay astride principal road and rail routes to northern Germany. The 20th Wing sent 128 bombers that encountered a crazy pattern of B-24s, B-17s, and fighter escorts over Hamm—the Reich's busiest rail center. . . . Five 20th Wing squadrons found the yards. Critics of heavy bombing should note trains carrying sinews of war to the defenders didn't clear Hamm that day. The 446th (Bungay) lost two ships to flak; the Circus none. Allied bombers and heavy field artillery pieces ultimately would completely pulverize Hamm."

Somewhere in England
Sept. 27, 1944

8 Darling, I haven't given you a
mustache report as yet - rather of
late - a new crowd moved in
the barracks today and everything
is in the throes of confusion and
it's most difficult writing - had to
get back to the mustaches - quite a
ruff of misplaced hair - just
about runs from ear to ear and
makes quite a ramp strain.
Afraid to shave it off now - it's been
bringing us pretty good luck and
we can't afford a change of it as
yet.

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

"All during my time overseas, I wore my bush mustache, which cushioned your lips and mouth with your oxygen mask. There was no protection against your mouth and, you know, breathing and moisture and everything."

September 28, 1944

Aircraft: 971N
Make/Model: B-24 H
Pilot: James H. Cook
From: Hardwick
Flight time: 6:50 hours
Heinkel Factory – Kassel Germany
Heavy flak

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

The Wehrmacht ordnance depot and Henschel Works, an engine, tank and anti-aircraft factory at Kassel were targets of the Circus squadrons on September 22, 27-29. On September 22, "the Circus unloaded on instruments from 23,000 feet with unobserved results." Back on September 27, two Circus sections "bombed on pathfinder, each plane releasing 12 x 500 demolition bombs through nearly 10/10ths undercast. Flak was medium and accurate." While the Circus escaped unscathed in that battle, the 445th squadron was decimated, which was considered "the worst single Eighth Air Force group victimization of the war." It was Kassel again on September 28 and 29th. On the 29th, smoke from the day before factored in the lack of visibility. In an official recap, a Circus intelligence officer reluctantly wrote: "Bombing results were nothing to brag about."

Somewhere in England
Sept. 28, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

I'm sorry darling. This
will have to be real quick -
short, sweet, and to the point.

Darling, I love you - love
you with all my heart. Your
smile, lovable, adorable - and
what I wouldn't give right now
just to hold you in my arms
for a moment - but then I'd
have to hold you forever - just
couldn't leave you again for
about a million years.

I gotta dash over to the
dispensary for a moment - want to
get a few more drops to clear up
a bit of a head cold I'm about
to pick up.

Busy days these are - can't
afford to let a little cold get me
down - not yet at least.

October 2, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:00 hours

Hamm, Germany

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"October 2: There were two briefings—the first, at 0400, was scrubbed after briefing; the second, at 0800. Target: Hamm marshalling yards. . . . Making a second run on Hamm, [Lead pilot Lieutenant O.P.] Hoffman's electrical system took a chunk of flak over nearby Munster, causing its bombs to release prematurely. On the flawed signal, the other bombardiers released. Most tonnage landed in a field northeast of Handorf Aerodrome. Fifteen Circus ships suffered minor flak damage and three were seriously banged up, requiring stop-overs at RAF Woodridge. Nobody hurt."

*Somewhere in England
Oct. 3, 1944*

My darling Cheryl,

*I was to tell you about - but
didn't write anything about it - but
when comes the time to tell you
about it I'll have much more
important things to tell you - I'll
tell you all about my love for you*

*Love you with all my heart and
soul - your sweet and a Darling.*

October 7, 1944

Aircraft: 594D

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

To: Antwerp

Flight time: 5:00 hours

Bombed Magdenburg - forced landing at Antwerp, Bel. –
stayed 3 days

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“October 7: Bomber Command called for Circus attacks on the Magdenburg refinery and the Clausthal/Zellerfeld munitions factory in central Germany. In both instances, bombing was visual with poor to fair results. . . . Troubled by flak hits, Lieutenant James H. Cook, pilot of 594-D, put in at liberated Antwerp during a barrage of V-1s and V-2s.”

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

“The last mission we flew with Cook, they gave us this brand new airplane. They gave us the safest spot what they considered in the formation. We got hit pretty hard at Magdeburg that we were bombing.”

“I flew six missions to Magdeburg. Magdeburg was the German's quick developed and built synthetic oil plant in gasoline. We knocked out Ploesti early in the war. The 93rd was a big action in that. And then this synthetic oil bit was, as I say, six missions. They kept construction crews there. They were rebuilding as we were bombing them. It was that vital to that war machine.”

“But this, on this last mission of Cook's, as I say, the best position in this squadron and brand new O, and we got hit so badly, we ran out of air speed and altitude at Antwerp. We were trying to get into Brussels, which had been liberated. So, we landed on a Luftwaffe field in Antwerp. And we kept on going through a couple of cow pastures, and a Belgian civilian recognized what it was—an American airplane and the situation as it was. He approached with his big, covered van and he said the Germans are in the area.”

“We knew because, as we were going in, there were two, ME-109s . . . They were shooting up a big Limey transport. Undefended, they teamed up on him instead of us because we were pretty well defended.”

“But nevertheless, we landed without further ado there, and this Belgian civilian picked us up and took us to a liberated area in town. This happened to be the Century Hotel. And this was, even today, would be as fine a hotel as you've ever seen. Nice arrangements. Everything but food. Naught to drink, no food. For dinner, one night we tried to eat there. We got pancakes with strawberry jelly. Now that wasn't much if we were hungry from these other things.”

“So, after a couple of days, a Polish RAF outfit took over this airfield where we landed. We went out there for breakfast this morning trying to get some meat or something. And we were offered boiled cabbage and rum. So that's why these Polish fighters were so rough and so, I mean, good,

good pilots, but determined But nevertheless, I turned my nose up with the cabbage. So I took a sip of the rum. And I was a pretty good drinker in that day, but I couldn't touch it. I had a cigarette lighter then and I took the cigarette lighter and poured the rum into it. I had the hottest cigarette lighter in the squad. So that speaks well for those Polish flyers.”

“When we landed the B-24 in Antwerp, . . . we hit there with escape kits that we carried in our pouches—French Francs, escapes kits, you know, razors and everything you had to walk out. We tied shoes onto our parachutes because it was a fact that if you had to bail out, you'd lose your flying boots with the impact of the parachute opening So, we had our shoes tied to our parachutes. But we landed, and so with the French francs and the British pounds we had and the few Yankee dollars, 45s and holsters, and B-24 full of stuff, we did a lot of bartering.”

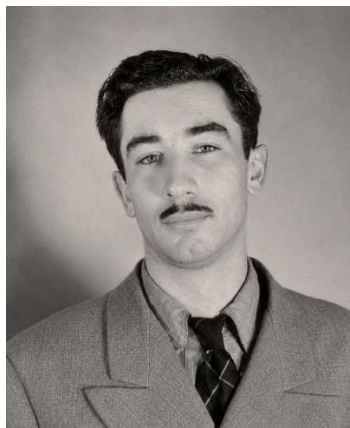


Photo in civilian clothes carried
in case of bail-out.

Oct. 11, 1944

Aircraft: CATC plane

Make/Model: B-24 H

From: Brussels

To: Hardwick

Flight time: 2:00 hours

Returned to base from Brussels

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

“When we left Antwerp, a GI truck and some MPs came to pick us up from Brussels. And in the meantime, we had loaded these big parachute bags with fine liquors—French cognac, which was very popular, the good cognac. Everything that is good. We bought that, we didn't liberate. We bought that with our liberated money. And we put these two big parachute bags on this GI truck. The GI truck took it down to Brussels, and they packed this up to an ATC plane that was air transport. And we backed the truck up to there. We moved our bags right onto the airplane, and they flew us back to the base and backed us up to our ready room, as we called it.”

“We unloaded our parachute bags right into the ready room, undercover. We didn't want somebody else to liberate them. And we decided then we would have Friday afternoon parties. We would, this bunch in the barracks, these two crews would, and a few of their good friends and other crews would get together for the Friday afternoon party. And on the second party, here comes these couple Big Johns again. They come into the barracks. We, of course, have to hop to, and all the salutes and everything, at ease, at ease. I said, ‘Gentlemen, we were partaking of some of our fine liquors. May we offer you a drink?’ ‘Oh, sure.’ So they had a drink or two, and then we were getting ready to leave, and I said, ‘Would you take a bottle of your choice with you?’ So they did. And we never had any interference on any of our activities thereafter.

Somewhere in England.
Oct. 11, 1944

My darling Phyllis.

My darling I hope the slight lapse in
correspondence hasn't worried you - because
I've been having a most wonderful time.
Touring a bit of Belgium - spent four
days in Antwerp and Brussels.

days in Antwerp and Brussels.
He really lived a rich and comfortable life in Antwerp and can't disclose the circumstances that brought it about - but I'll write him my "memoirs" in

Antwerp - and more accorded high, right
and royal treatment. We were quartered
in the largest and most beautiful hotel
in Antwerp - individual well appointed
rooms with private bath - and accorded
attention befitting visiting royalty. The
furnishings and appointments were
comparable to any of those one might
find in any of our hotels in our large
cities. All of the clerical and business
men of Antwerp, obliging and polite.
I am a pleasant change for a D.D.

picture

A wonderful deal, Darling, what a grand
time we had here.

Antwerp and Brussels are really
beautiful towns - very modern and
comparable to any of our own large cities.
The people are wonderful - treated us
grand and we did create quite a stir
and were the object of much speculation
among the populace.

A slight frame - we just sampled
a glass of cognac - I just finished drinking
out the last drop - very good, Darling.
here, have a sip - did you like it - it is
rather potent and rather quite a mallo -
that is in sufficient quantities.

I have a few souvenirs from
my adventures - you must remind me
some day I'll really go into detail - but
Belgium and the Belgian people really
created a wonderful impression in my
mind - these people are very neat,
very clean, and the girls most attractive -
my "scrutinizing" left eye again - but
I'm saving all my love for you - just
catching on my "putting".

But the nicest thing about being
away is the fact that mail accumulates
a bit - four sweet sugar reports from
my Darling - oh, your sweet, Phyllis and
I love you with all my heart. Saw
lots of beauties in Belgium, but Darling.

your the sweetest, loveliest (100) 1,000,000,000,000,000,000
and most darling adorable girl in all
themselves. Just can't be happy and content
until you're back in my arms.

If you speaking of regimental life
would ordinarily send me off on quite
a real experience - but now suffice to
say when I get out of this man's army
I'm going to pick up the traces - but
good - will expect all schedules and
rules for human behavior - and will
have fun - just addled and addled of fun -

Darling, you asked about my
mission in one of your letters - but Darling,
I'd rather not mention it even if I could -
but Darling when I get home everybody
will know about it - you first - but until
then let's just hope, dream and pray.

It's just about that time again.
Darling - and my own G.I. sack will feel
good - Goodnight Darling. Pleasant dream
and lots of everything good -

All my love.

Big

P.S. Tell this and present to writer - will
send a check for a million kisses -
oh Darling - I do love you and miss you
every second - lots of love, hugs, and kisses
X

October 16-17, 1944

Aircraft: 472C

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:30 hours

Bombed Cologne – PFF

Cepl – First pilot

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“October 16: Stand-down. Cold, miserable rain. . . . October 17: 20th Wing dispatched 11 squadrons that formed in 22 six-ship sections. Target: Gereon marshalling yards at Cologne. The fleet sailed into Germany along a corridor two miles wide, 2,000 feet in depth and one mile in length. The scout report was accurate, fighter support excellent. The Circus force of 39 ships was accompanied by three guests from 448th Group. . . . The Circus and 448th overshot the IP but, without difficulty, recrafted good bomb runs. Only one Lib took flak damage.”

Somerset, in England
Oct. 18, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

Today was rather a pleasant day - but I did ruin my morning and afternoon visits - sorry I didn't write yesterday - but it was one of the days me in glad is under my belt.

I didn't write last night, darling, but I was feeling a little unwell and off color. Another rough day to start with and then I had your letter telling of how listed as M.I.A. - I had a letter from my mother - my cousin - Andy Smith was killed in action - and Miller had a letter from home with the sad news that Loren Burns - an old mine jumper in Tucson - remember him? - was killed in action. Three near and dear friends in one day - what can

one think, do, or say? -

Now I quit to present pray
I will make out O.K. With the
situation as it is - his chances
are very good. I'll remember him
in my prayers always - and I
know will be on hand for the great
reunion in Jesus -
- - - scheduled

Somewhere in England
Oct. 22, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

Just returned after a most
delightful three day jaunt - and what
a treat in store for me on my
return - six wonderful letters
from my darling - oh love - joy
and exaltation - shudder. Pains
mad at nobody. Glad to hear
that my mail had been coming
through at last - it will all be
done in due time.

October 25, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: James H. Cook

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:50 hours

Airfield at Neumunster

Cook's last mission

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"October 25: Hazardous conditions continued to hamper flying including this day's run to Neumunster, a rail and manufacturing center 20 miles southeast of Kiel. . . . 23 Circus planes. . . . All wasn't upbeat. A B-17 group came on a collision course, forcing a major adjustment for the Liberators, the Mosquito scout report was late, weather was awful. However, the bomb-runs were excellent Scope photos showed good results. No GAF fighters. One Circus ship nursed flak damage."

Somewhere in England
Oct. 29, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

Not knowing what the
morning may bring - being
prepared always helps - but
preparation in a little each
time - I wish I could leave you
but I gotta -

Good night - Sweetest -
pleasant dreams and loads of
everything good -

All my love,
Bibi

October 30, 1944

Aircraft: 2481

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:20 hours

Hamburg – 27,000 ft. altitude, contours main hydraulics out

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“October 30: Target: Hamburg. . . . Nine Libs got lost in the muck and didn't bomb. Flak at the target was intense and accurate. Seven Circus craft sustained damage with one permanently kayoed.” One pilot reported: “This is first of three Hamburg missions. We were told there were 500 guns. I will certify they were all there. We turned at the IP and started the bomb-run. I looked ahead, mashed the button and said to my co-pilot, ‘We weren't briefed for thunderstorms.’ Hanf (co-pilot) said, ‘Well, Skip, that's no thunderstorm, that's flak.’ Flak was coming up so heavy it had formed a black cloud. All I could think was, my God, in 10 minutes we'll be dead. I held formation”

Somewhere in England.
Oct. 31, 1944

My darling Phyllis.

But this yesterday was
just the opposite - rained then a
lot - but then it's all over a days
work. Such work but when you
stop to think it brings in a day
closed to my love - that's all
that matters.

November 4, 1944

Aircraft: 994K

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:30 hours

Misburg (Hanover) – 40 degrees – flak rough

Oxygen troubles

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“November 4: Crews were again briefed for the same objectives. . . . Force B target, the Gerwerkschaft Deutsche oil refinery at Misburg. Three 329th Squadron H2X ships led 10 Wing squadrons, three of which from the Circus were in trail. All bombed the Misburg works through 8/10ths cover. Results fair; flak was fierce and accurate. Captain Byard Baker put his damaged Circus ship down at Brussels from where he radioed, ‘Everybody okay.’ The fate of Lieutenant Eldon C. Frobish’s crew was another story.” [It was later learned that Frobish’s plane exploded but some crew members were able to bail out. Three were killed on the ground, one captured and five others drowned in Jada Bay north of Wilhelmshaven.]

November 5, 1944

Aircraft: 535O

Make/Model: B-24H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 7:00 hours

Karlsruhe – carried 2000 lbers. Flak

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“November 5: 20th Wing was again programmed for twin attacks—this time against German heavy gun emplacements in the Metz sector. The 448th Group . . . headed Force A with 329th Squadron H2X ships in the lead and deputy lead. A navigational error caused two squadrons from Force B to wedge between two Force A groups . . . prior to reaching the IP. The screw-up obliged all groups to turn for the secondary, the Karlsruhe marshalling yards, where bombs cascaded on H2X signals in the face of intense but inaccurate ack-ack.”

Somewhere in England
Nov. 5, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

All set up to commence with
my love - just finished a chicken
bone dinner. A chicken that could
live as long as that one should have
been retired to an old hen's home on
pension instead of ending up in
a Menu Hall. But I was quite late
getting into chair - went to 5:00 Mass.
was rather depressed this
morning. But before I go into that
bit I tell about yesterday - but
even before I do that I must tell
you I love you with all my
heart.

Yesterday was as rough as
an old cob - long, hard, miserable
cold day. But our late return, I
was amply compensated for this day -
Two nice long sweet sugar reports -
with everything my heart wanted
to hear - everything sweet and

lonely. And I also had a nice
big beautiful package from your
Darling. It was the most beautiful
package - my first lingerie and
ready-made to save it for Christmas
but the more I looked at it and
fondled it, the more my resolution
melted. Worked myself up into a
high frenzy of excitement and just
had to open it. What a beautiful
package. Darling, everything was
just perfect - wonderful - bubbling
over with joy and appreciation.
Had to sample the candy. Took a
quick shave, despite the fact that
it wasn't necessary. To try out the
shaving cream and face powder -
good, wonderful - shaving now
known a grand treat. It was very
kind of you to think of everything
Darling. Thanks a million & your
indentured and humble servant
for life.

Today was another rough

3
rang hard day - two in a row -
rest & sleep all day and recuperate.

Darling, I'm so sorry my
mail has been coming through
so irregularly. I can truthfully say
its no fault of mine - have been
most faithful in writing - the
only thing that can delay my
daily "justins" at least are most
often extraordinary circumstances - when
its physically or mentally impossible.
At times outgoing mail is delayed
by censorship - in which case I
always use air-mail, weather
is often a delaying factor. But
they just use to make flying the
mail through - I'd deliver it
directly to your mail box - better yet
I'd tell you all about it - but if I
ever get even close to Tucson -
Uncle Sam loves a good soldier -
don't know what you'd lose or
gain. But me - paradise regained -
Pardon me, for just a
minute - the fire was dying

down - so I chopped a cord of wood
and now the stove is merrily
popping along. But it won't burn
for long and when it goes out it's
going to be cold - and I don't want
to be around when it does - the old
sack is a nice warm place.
Good night for now. Sweetest!
Love later. pleasant dreams. and
lots of everything good -
All my love,
(Bigo)

PS - Two days closer to the DAY -

November 8, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24H

Pilot: Frank Ceph

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:45 hours

Rheine - railroad marshalling yards - anoxia again

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"November 8: Another snafu. Target was the Rheine marshalling yards in the Westphalia city of 40,000. Centerpiece was a junction of heavily used east-west and north-south rail lines. Three Circus squadrons were trailed by the 448th Group, thus forming a wing. The 93rd leader was briefed to proceed at 14,000 feet. After attaining that altitude in good order, the force was directed to descend to 11,000 feet, only to be ordered to 17,000. The sky was a crazy web of persistent contrails. . . . During the bomb-run, the 93rd's lead H2X became inoperative. The deputy took over. Only the 93rd's second squadron salvaged good results from an otherwise untidy undertaking."

November 12-30, 1944

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

November 12-30: "Sometimes the weather was so treacherous any attempt to fly was crazy as during the winters of 1942-43 and 1943-44. . . . Caution was cast to the wind on several occasions as the U.S. First and Ninth armies generated new drives."

Somewhere, in England
Nov. 18, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

A letter from my mom
today - made the whole day
worthwhile - a letter from you
is just like a tonic - ready and
ready to go again.

Nov. 21, 1944

Aircraft: 1194 (329)

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:00 hours

Oil refineries Hamburg, flak heavy

Inter: Dyna, burned - 3 holes

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"November 21: The Hamburg oil refineries—Deutsche Petroleum Woks, November's deepest penetration. . . . The Circus bombed on H2x through 6/10ths clouds. Hardwickers stole the 20th Wing show: lower left squadron—excellent bombing; high right—good; lead—fair."

"November 22: Stand-down"

"November 23: Thanksgiving Day. Briefing at 0900 for four Gee ships, cancelled before take-off. Lots of turkey."

Somewhere in England
Nov. 23, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

Being good democrats we
observed Thanksgiving today. And
a good deal it is - say is because
it's late afternoon and before supper.
Slept in rather late this morning -
got up just in time to make 7.30
Mass. Attended Mass and Holy
Communion - had lots to be thankful
for - of course the main reason
was because earlier in the year -
a May evening it was - I met my
Love. Before next Thanksgiving
I have another dream and ambition -
if God and Phyllis will - (Phyllis,
did you know - I love you very
much - gave the object of my
affection and the girl of my dream
in my dream and thought again
never left my arm and I shall
never let you go. See - your sweet
dreamer had a wonderful
dinner today - turkey deluxe

with all the trimmings pick
prospects of turkey for supper.

I've had a very guilty
conscience for the last two days -
didn't - rather couldn't write -
and after receiving eight and
letters from you the other day.
Just imagine - eight grand letters
from my love - it's not such a
bad record after all.

I came in the other day
found a very rough and long day -
as rough as they make them.
Took a nap after supper and
didn't stir a muscle until late
next morning - that was real
sleep - but I slept too hard and
too fast - no beautiful dreams
of my Love.

Last night I was rather
unexpectantly called out - and
didn't get in until very late -
one of those things that contin-
ually raise their ugly heads to

disturb my routine ritual
with my Darling.

How most relieved and
delighted to hear the good news
of Lou - I knew his come
through - another prayer answered.

Had two letters from
Mother yesterday - everything is
fine and dandy at home - little
Karen Lee and Lil Joe are
certainly cute & Joe is at the
new age - just getting into every-
thing and out of it.

It's just about supper
time, Darling and I'm going to have
to dash - hope you have had a
wonderful holiday - lots of
everything good -

All my love,

Bill

P.S. Please give Mom and Pop
my love and best regards -
Another day gone - almost
another month -

November 25, 1944

Aircraft: 994K

Make/Model: B-24 J

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:30 hours

Marshalling yards at Bingen, Germany

Minus 42 degrees

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“November 25: Bingen-Bingerbrück marshalling yards, 17 miles southwest of Mainz, was targeted by three 20th Wing Groups. Bingen, an important funnel for German reinforcements and material bound for the front, lay in the path of pressing Americans. (This was the 93rd's 300th mission. Formal celebration would be held in abeyance until mid-December.) . . . At the IP, the groups uncovered and attacked through 8/10ths cover. The 446th Group achieved very good results; 93rd, fair. One 448th . . . plane put down at Brussels.”

November 29, 1944

Aircraft: 248I

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:15 hours

Railroad viaduct, Bielefeld no. 1 transportation target

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“November 29: Bielefeld. The Circus dispatched 20 aircraft for Gee bombing, the third Bielefeld stab in recent days. The 93rd led the Wing in a 360-degree turn in order to position behind another wing, as briefed, causing a seven-minute tardiness at Control Point 1. . . . The viaduct was not an easy target under ideal conditions. Gee navigators, usually reliable appraisers, were confident of credible results through wintry soup. The 448th lost another ship.”

November 30, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:15 hours

Marshalling yards Neunkirchen

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“November 30: Neunkirchen marshalling yards, a tactical target designed to hamstring Germans facing American foot-sloggers. Briefing at 0445 for eight 20th Wing squadrons, 10 aircraft each, five 329th Gee ships showing the way to the town west of Mannheim. Flak was light. A midair

explosion suggested friendly bombs did in a 446th Lib. Another from 446th went down with an engine on fire."

Meanwhile . . . "General Patton's Third Army crossed the French border and invaded Germany's Saarland. The 10th "Tiger" Armored Division was closing on Merzig, and the 95th "Victory" Infantry struck hills overlooking Saarlautern, a prime armaments manufacturing center. . . .

Somerset, in England,
Nov. 30, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

Today was one of the three days - up earlier than good for a day - two days in a row - that's really going to town - two big ones down home and to jaw flaring.

I didn't have sugar apart today - dog gone it - but I had a nice sweet one yesterday - but I couldn't even be reconciled to any separation even if I got a letter every five minutes - prefer sitting in a closed quarters.

But I remembered to tell you I adore you - I do very much - love you with all my heart and soul.

December 1944

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"The bloody Battle of the Bulge was on. The enemy relied on the elements that had grounded Allied air strength. Gut-wrenching for every Hardwicker was inability to take to the air."

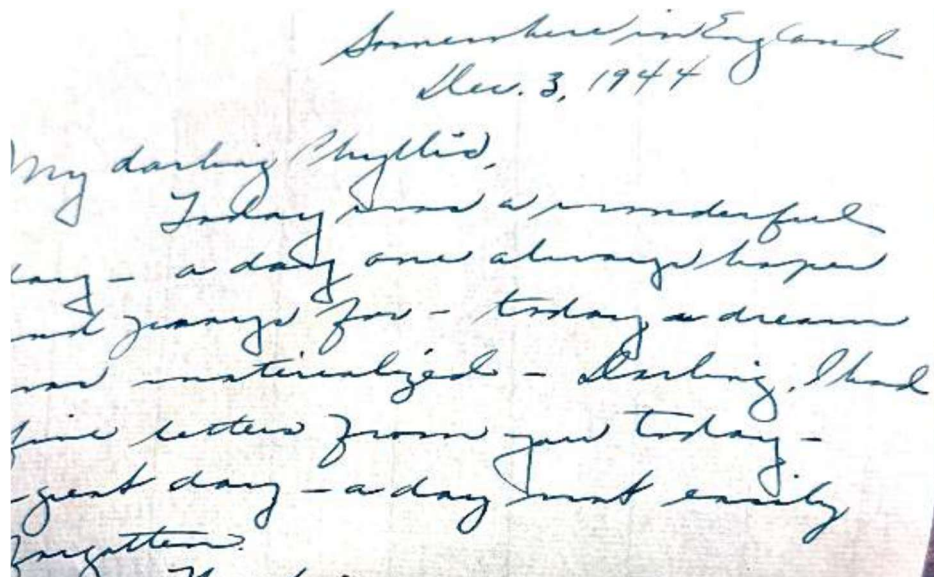
"There were 14 agonizing days of stand-downs for the Circus and 17 danger-fraught operational days."

December 2, 1944

Aircraft: 437H
Make/Model: B-24 H
Pilot: Frank Cepl
From: Hardwick
Flight time: 6:00 hours
Bulls-eye night mission

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"December 2: Four Gee ships, skippered by Captain Amos Dolliver and Lieutenant Lee Spencer, both of 409th Squadron, Captain William F. Nester of 329th and Lieutenant Thomas Stringer of 330th, lead four squadrons of 446th Group . . . on a return to the Bingen/Bingerbrück rail yards and oil storage. Results from the deluge of 500-pounders couldn't be observed."



Somewhere in England
Dec. 3, 1944

My darling Phyllis,
Today was a wonderful
day - a day one always hopes
and prays for - today a dream
was materialized - Darling, I had
fine letters from you today -
- great day - a day I won't easily
forget.

December 4, 1944

Aircraft: 248I
Make/Model: B-24 H
From: Hardwick
Flight time: 7:40 hours
Dry run on Bebra - bombed Koblenz
Superchargers out - very low on gasoline (2500)
fuel cell broken

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"December 4: While Libs and Forts numbering 1,100 were striking rail yards and industrial targets at Kassel, Mainz, Gissen, Soest and Bebra, 24 Circus ships went full bore against the Koblenz marshalling yards . . ."

Somewhere in England
Dec. 6, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

I again take pen in hand
after too long absence - but
Darling, really, I was an innocent
victim of circumstances - being
a learner from dayisting early
hours until very late. But this
afternoon I successfully eluded
all trouble and possible work
and settled to down to some
writing - my fourth letter and
I got 26 Christmas cards all
ready to go. Just a holy terror
once I got on the ball - but I
don't get an eager streak like that
often enough.

Tomorrow they again
turn us loose - where I shall
venture on this delightful
reprise is still rather doubtful
think I could make it to Tucson
in the time allotted. No, well
then where I go or what I do shall

Somewhere in England,
Dec. 17, 1944

My darling Phyllis,

Back here to fight the
old war again - don't know
when but sure I prepare -
the old war is the best
thing I can think of right
now. Good night, darling.
Sweet dreams, and lots
of everything good -

All my love,
Frank

December 24, 1944

Aircraft: 095R

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:45 hours

Briefed for Arrwiler - bombed target of opportunity with 96th C.B.

Maxi effort - tactical support - good results

From Ted's Travelling Circus:

"December 24: . . . A maximum Eighth Air Force effort called for 2,034 Forts and Libs plus escorts to strike numerous Rhineland targets. The Circus mission, calculated to disrupt enemy supplies and reserves being feverishly moved to the front, was the important rail junction at Ahrweiler. . . . Anti-aircraft fire was uncanny."

December 25, 1944

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:00 hours

Haffschlag – tactical support

Vis target - flak meager but accurate - elevator shot out

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"December 25: The Allied counter-offensive began. The 20th Wing Christmas field order called for a maximum effort against chokepoints at Waxwilder and Murlenbach, both in the Hallschlag area. . . . The Circus dispatched 55, no abortions; all bombing visual with excellent results despite very accurate flak. . . . Nineteen Circus ships took flak damage one landing safely in Belgium, three at RAF Woodbridge."

*Too far away.
Dec. 27, 1944*
My darling (Phyllis),
A little late, Darling, with
my after Christmas letter - but
that we celebrated the occasion
a little late - such as it was.
But nevertheless it calls for a
response -
The day before Christmas
was spent making the usual
social calls and leaving our
little tokens of esteem and
holiday greetings - and we left
there where they would do the
most good. Strange, way to be
preparing for an important hol-
iday and great feast day - but
there it is a strange world and it
functioned these days.
We had Midnight Mass
things - and that is the real
Christmas. I went over early in

the evening and did lots of
praying - remembered you, of
course Darling, and all your intentions.
Almost continent and a huge
ocean separated us - but I was
very close to you in spirit.

After I had returned
to a cold lifeless barracks - no
fire, nothing to eat - confronted
with only one alternative - a
hasty retreat to the sack. But
then Garty made his appearance.
Here, he wasn't attired in the
accepted costume and we didn't
hear the rattle of prancing hoofs
on the roof - but I saw he - and
he brought us a huge steaming,
freshly roasted turkey. A beautiful
sample of young turkey brood -
and delicious beyond comparison.
Needless me say, we did the
bird great justice.

3) And then to bed - well-
happy, to dreams of my Love
with faith renewed and con-
firmed that it wasn't such a
bad world as that and Sanity
exists in reality ~~and~~ as well as
myths.
But our sleep was much
disturbed at an early hour - a
few more came to make us
assure that Peace and peace
to men of good will prevails
before the next Christmas.

December 29, 1944

Aircraft: 5350

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Ceph

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 5:05 hours

Schleiden - tactical support

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"December 29: There was an ominous lull in the Ardennes as the Allies prepared to extend their counter-offensive. . . . The upfront craft leading three Circus squadrons took a flak hit moments before reaching the release point. Taking over, the deputy lead lacked time needed to maneuver for the primary and signaled the 32 in trail to enjoin secondary targets of opportunity—chokepoints behind enemy lines in the Heinbach/Schleiden area. Fifteen ships took flak damage one landed safely on the Continent, one at RAF Woodbridge. Weather was such the 93rd was the only 20th Wing outfit doing battle.

Somewhere in England
Jan. 1, 1945

Happy New Year, Darling,

Here we are, at the threshold
of a brand New Year - I hope and
pray it sees all of your fondest
dreams and plans materialized -
may some of your dreams be
similar to mine.

This afternoon I was
thinking of the old year - you
know, you just can't give it a
quick old brush-off - lots did
happen in '44. I sat down and
tabulated what I thought were
the ten greatest blessings showered
upon me during the past year -
just picked ten although there
were millions - just picked
out the highlights - events and

2/ I am sure that have given
me the most enjoyment and
will probably have the great-
est bearing on my future.
Even if I were to choose a
million or had a billion
choices they would be the same
as my first ten - they are
in order of importance and
importance - 1) I met my darling
2) I met my darling 3) I met my
darling 4) I met my darling 5) I
met my darling 6) I met my
darling 7) I met my darling
8) I met my darling 9) I met
my darling and 10) I met my
darling -

All back of the New
year is to get me back to my
darling - and just as quick and
soon as possible.

0 Good Night Darling,
pleasant dream and lots of
everything good -
All my love,
Bill

January 6, 1945

Aircraft: 971N

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From Hardwick

To: Attlebridge

Flight time: 7:00 hours

Marshalling yards at Koblenz – secondary PFF

Weather closed – diverted- vis very poor – tough landing

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“January 6: Upwards of 800 Libs and Forts worked over rail yards at Koblenz, Cologne and Ludwigshaven . . . Hardwick weather was next to impossible, still 33 were off on a Gee mission to the familiar Koblenz yards . . . There was evidence two Circus squadrons performed exceptionally well, one nearly so. Landings were diverted to Attlebridge. Base weather had improved not one iota.”

Jan. 7. 1945 - England.
My darling Phyllis,
This day - wonderful day - grand
day - sit beautiful wonderful letters from
you today - Darling, now I can not read
at anybody - just hope it keeps glowing
through - even got some more Christmas
mail today.
Today was a nice day in all other
words . . . until 11:00'clock AM.

through
mail today.
Today was a nice day in all other
words, too - slept in until 11:00'clock AM -
but I really did it justice - long rough day
yesterday - all day of it - another day closer
to what all that really matters. The day
is about in bed - but . . .

Latest ⁰⁰mustache report - bigger
& better mustaches will be made
two more - but I'm afraid it's just about
the end of the line - its duty will soon
be finished - I hope. I hope.
long letter from . . .

January 8, 1945

Aircraft: 594A

Make/Model: B-24 H

Pilot: Frank Cepl

From: Hardwick

To: Woodridge

Flight time: :50 hours

Headed for tactical target – aborted to Woodridge – EM landing

Caught in strong thermal – double spin – pulled out at 1500' – left rudder snapped off

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“January 8: The Eighth dispatched 700 bombers into snowy skies. Chokepoints at Oudler, Belgium, were instrument-hammered by 32 Circus ships. . . . The field order called for bombing through 10/10ths undercast from 25,000 feet with mercury -60 F. Weather was no less treacherous for the return.”

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

“Cepl took over as pilot after Cook left. That was our third pilot. And, on our twenty-eighth mission, we were briefed to take off, call the tower when you cleared the field. It was so foggy they couldn't see you.”

“We were briefed to fly down to the Bay of Biscay to form. That was in southern France. Climb to altitude and form down there, and then fly back into Germany where we're going because we could bomb with H2X and G bombs. I'd rather bomb with instruments than visually. If you could see them, they could see you, too.”

“But nevertheless, we got caught in wind drafts and thermals that threw this B-24 around like a leaf in a windstorm, all over the sky, upside down, round about. And, I said goodbye to my mother, and she heard me.”

“And, all of a sudden, we were thrown out of it. So, ‘Phil,’ Cepl yelled, ‘Phil [*bombardier*], drop the bombs.’ I kicked the bomb bay doors open. [*Note: During a bombing run, the radio operator's main job was to assist the bombardier. “I watched what was going on until we hit action. Well, then when we hit the IP, which was the initial point to start your bomb run, my job was to kick open the bomb bay doors and hold them open. Because if the bomb bay doors crept a little bit, the bombs wouldn't go. So my position on the bomb run was to keep my foot on the lever that kept the bomb bays forced open or held open. And that was when I would take my flak vest that we were issued and I'd put it on the floor and I'd sit on it. I figured, well, at least this might save the family jewels for something, for some liquor date.”*]

“Nothing happened right away. So there was an emergency release on the pilot's side of his seat. An emergency release. So I jettisoned the bombs. I dropped the bombs and hit all four throttles because he [Cepl] pulled everything back in that vacuum. Hit the throttles and dropped flaps. We got out of that one. And, in my little prayer, I said, what a hell of a way to go. After all these trainings and all these missions, to wind up in the Limey's manure pile. So that's when we got thrown out. Somebody heard that one, too. And then, Cepl yelled, ‘need help.’”

“The pilot was strictly vertigo, out of it completely from all of that. So I beat on him once, a good one on the shoulder, and nothing happened. So I had hit him a hard one. There wasn't immediate reaction, so I had one coming up from the floor. I was gonna get him out of the seat. But before that hit, he reacted. And we put it back into Woodridge again. *[Later report: rear fuselage twisted to a 45-degree angle and upper right vertical stabilizer knocked up.]* And one thing about Woodridge—when you landed there, the Limeys would offer you a drink of rum. I went through the line and got a drink of the rum and turned around and got to the end of the line again. Got another sock of rum. That was a two-rum landing.”

“So they sent a plane down for us, and Cepl says, ‘I will never get in another of those fucking contraptions as long as I live.’ And he didn't. So, they sent the plane back, and they sent a truck down for us and hauled us back to the base. And, when Cepl was leaving, I broke out the last fifth of rot gut bourbon that I took over there. Now, for after a year of drinking bitters and maybe a little bit of port and Scotch watered down, we just couldn't hack that bourbon. So in the process of this party, I peddled to my private bootlegger and brought in four fifths of Scotch. And before the party was done, we did it all, we emptied everything.”

“And, the next day, when Cepl left, he was laying flat on his back on the back of this GI truck. No hat. All you could see is parsley. No GI haircut. And they hauled him out and they took him back by boat before it was all over with. He got his discharge.”

“And later, in one of my trips to LA, I found his name in the telephone book. Got in touch with Mrs. Cepl. I explained who I was and where I was . . . and she said, I've heard a lot about you. Frank will be there within fifteen minutes. So I went out and stood on the sidewalk, . . . so this great big white Cadillac sedan pulls up on a 45-degree angle to the curb. Cepl jumps out. . . . There was a happy, happy reunion. And, this sparsely black-haired GI had a big flowing white mop of hair, well-tended, a little bit wavy.”

Somersetshire England
Jan. 7, 1945

My darling Phyllis,

Before I go any further -
I must make up explanations and
apologies for anything that might
appear below - I'm in pretty
rough shape right now. This
hasn't so good cold - I have been
taking some pretty potent pills
and I'm as lousy and dopey
as can be - and that's more
than usual - so it must be
pretty bad. Excuse me while
I yawn - it's not the company.
Darling - it's just me.

Yesterday morning was
quite an experience - things like
that make people go around
stroking one's lips and pulling
one's hair - that is, if he's
looking at me now - and if
he doesn't - he just isn't any -
more. Suppose to say, we
all O.K. and feeling - not much
more for the near and dear.
But that mind shop and I began

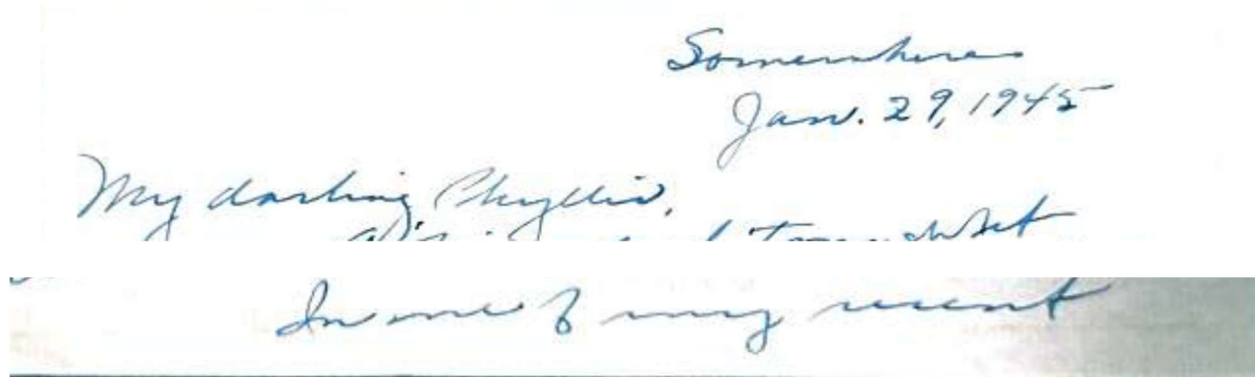
January 18-28, 1945

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"January 18-28: Weather enforced an operational hiatus at Hardwick despite a succession of briefings, scrubblings and recalls. The period was by far the coldest siege of three winters for the Circus, possibly the worst in a hundred years for the Brits."

From Bill Orient's Oral History:

"When we went in, when you hit 25 missions, you would be relieved. We got close to 25, they raised it to 30. . . . So, we got to 30, they raised it to 35. . . . This mission, I'm telling you about—where Cepl told them where to stick their B-24s—was our twenty-eighth. So, most of the crew went home then at that time. . . . I elected to stay with the group, and I was assigned as a squadron radio operator."



Somewhere
Jan. 29, 1945
My darling Phyllis,
I love you
In love & my heart

letter, I mentioned the fact that
Cunight had some important
news - was it not - it didn't
materialize, Darling. Our crew
was up for release - but you know
how things do work in this man's
army. Well, to make a long story
short - plans were revised & some-
one had a change of heart - but
the fact remains, will have to go
on for awhile - but it's just a few
more, Darling and I'll be through
before you know it. With you behind
me I don't mind being out of
one or delaying for long - but it's
rather hard going back to it after
being off for awhile and living
with the confidence that I'd
come all over that the shouting.
But I'm glad I waited for confirmed
action before I completely threw
in the sponge - hard war, isn't
it, Darling?

Somewhere
Feb. 1, 1945

My darling Phyllis,

I have not waited in
vain - my constant vigil at
the mail stand has at last
bore fruit - a letter today - a
grand letter - yours of the 27th.
along with your letter - the
news thereof - the mind's rest-
sided - and the sun again
shone - another way to say
I'm overjoyed, happy, contented,
and I ain't read at nobody -

Food for thought, darling -
my joy at receiving one of
your letters was boundless and
unparalleled - I wonder how I'll
feel when I again see you and
take you into my arms - but
gee, darling, that's too good even
to think about.

I guess now I'm ready

to call the holiday to a scrupling halt and go earn my bread and butter - not overly eager - but damn - what had to be done - had to be done - have had the opportunity to throw in the towel - but after careful consideration and contemplation I'm either going whole hog or nothing. It will stand, and I'll better stand all of the way around - that is - insofar as my near future is concerned - it's the fastest ticket home - so that's the way it will be, Hon.

Anxiously awaiting news of your decision and plans concerning the next semester at school - or plans otherwise. Trusting you to make the wisest and best decision - wish I were in a position to make

clear my dream and plan -
but darling, that must come to
wait - I pray not for long -
but we must have faith and
courage for the future. I do
love you. Phyl, how much -
I hope someday to show you -
its ~~beauty~~ above and beyond
all descriptive dimensions.

Enough of the future - a
potential fighting man needs
his sleep - Good Night, Darling.
Good morning and lots of
everything good and the best of
the best -

All my love,
Bill

February 6, 1945

Aircraft: 456M

Make/Model: B-24 H

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 6:40 hours

Marshalling yards at Magdenburg – German jets

Flew nose turret with Lt. Smith's crew

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

February 6: Thirty-two were off to the Magdenburg marshalling yards Twenty-nine Circus ships assailed the yards through 10/10ths cover. Flak was moderate.”

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

“The Circus flew but four missions during the first half of February 1945, later racking up strong thrusts on eight consecutive days. . . . Of 412 Circus dispatches during February, five crews became MIA, three attributed to Magdenburg flak. Magdenburg was hammered on five successive occasions. Six Circus crews were down on continental bases under Allied control, virtually everyone okay. Having kept clear of Circus formations for weeks the Luftwaffe singled out the 93rd on February 9.”

“The Eighth's losses to enemy fighters diminished while flak defenses grew more deadly. . . . The flak guns, usually 88s, could reach 17,000-23,000 quite accurately. The most effective batteries were radar-operated ‘gun-laying sets’ in two complementary configurations: Great Wurzburgs providing far-reaching range identification and tracking; small Wurzburgs furnishing controllers the range, bearing and elevation. The batteries were synchronized to establish exact altitudes of the on-rushing formations. Flak shells were fused to explode on impact or timed to detonate and fragment at a pre-determined altitude. For months, the Germans had fired patterns that ‘boxed’ formations on what the enemy perceived to be bomb-runs. The boxes could be a square mile of lethality.”

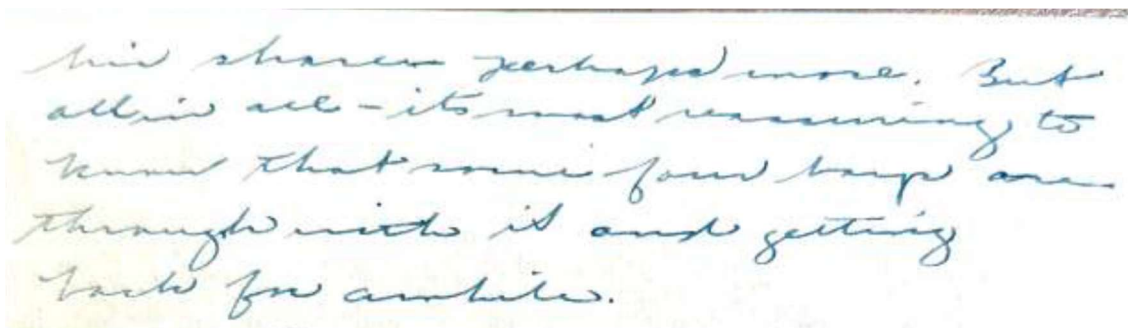
Somewhere

Oct. 11, 1945

My darling Phyllis,

See, chuckle, darling, just
don't know where to start - but
lets begin in chronological order.

Friday was the day - an
auspicious occasion - and it
was treated accordingly. A big
farewell party - two of our boys
went home - Miller and Capt.
The second and third of our
original little crew - oh and
Phyl, did us home as party - a
party to end all parties. Liquor
flowed in unlimited quantities
it has been a long time since
so jovial a party assembled
and made merry. I do think
it was a fitting farewell party.
Capt, especially, will be long in
forgetting it - I mean if he remem-
ber anything not to forget. Need-
less to say, your boy Bill, did



his share perhaps more. But
all in all - its most reassuring to
know that some four boys are
through with it and getting
back for awhile.

March 2, 1945

Aircraft: 594A

Make/Model: B-24 H

From Hardwick:

Flight time: 7:00 hours

Magdenburg

R/O with Severson's crew

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

"March 2: At the Krupp Works and synthetic oil plant at Magdenburg, all Wing sections uncovered for H2X runs. Photo evidence disclosed a poor performance by the 93rd's contingent of 22."

March 3, 1945

Aircraft: 147S

Make/Model: B-24 H

From: Hardwick

Flight time: 7:10 hours

Magdenburg

Severson's crew - excellent results - 6 flak holes

From *Ted's Travelling Circus*:

March 3: . . . Again the target was the Magdenburg synthetic plant. Two Circus squadrons led 20th Wing's two forces. The target was attacked with excellent results. . . . Six German jets stormed in from 11 o'clock high, four Circus B-24s suffering battle damage."

Somerset in England
Mar. 3, 1942

My darling Shyllis.

But I make apologies before
I start - all tuckered out - and
with a capital "T." The last two
days have been long - long, cold,
and rainy - two days I'll never
have to go through again - and I
won't mind that a bit - but that
is war.

You know me much better
as I do - and darling, there's
really nothing to worry about as
far as I'm concerned - my
safety at least - I've been
through the best Jerry has to offer
and there I am - still going strong.
Bad news always has a way of
far out - passing anything good -
so as I look at it - there's no need
to fret until there is a reason to
fret and when the reason does
come it's too late - so why worry
and fret. Besides only the good
die young and here I am approach-
ing middle already - twenty-four
is a little while. Honestly.

"I just can't figure where the
years have gone - just think
all but about the last 18 1/2 months
wasted - and I've been away
from your mind of that time.
Must it be from living fast - living
dearly - catching up on the past,
living the present and looking
for the future.

Good night. my darling.
pleasant dreams and lots of
everything good -

All my love,

Bill

PS - If only wished and desired
overcame circumstances and
situations - I'd be in your
big chair in your living room
listening to good soft music
with you in my mind - no
longer a worry or care in the
world - as long as I'd never
have to leave you for a
moment -

Somewhere in England
March 19, 1948

My darling Phyllis,

I am still awaiting your reaction
to my decision to stick around here
for a little while. But it won't be

for too long darling - just get the sweat
brother out and - and I sort of hate to
leave the Squadron - the swell fellows
I know - sort of hate to go out in
another outfit again - and darling,
when I do get back from here I'll be
able to stick around for a while -
would that be a lot better?
I'd like to take this

Somewhere in England
March 29, 1948

My darling Phyllis,

Paul Hammond left for home -
I've hated to see him go - I'll
certainly miss that Ted - we
went through a hell of a lot
together and well as having

end of June and I'll all.
That leaves me the
end of the motivation left
to carry on for the group. I'll
do my best for them - uphold
the old traditions and carry
the banner high.



From Bill Orient's Journal *Lest We Forget*:

"On my last mission I flew nose gunner with Holt and his crew - #3 plane to lead the group to Magdenburg - flew at altitude around it - then turned and dived to 10,000' drop - railroad ties were coming up to our height - didn't bomb this target again. I quit combat flying at 34 missions - so I could stay with the group."

“I flew home with the group, a 30-day (R & R) Rest and Recuperation leave. Phyllis came to Pittsburgh for a visit. . . . On return to Sioux Falls, I was sent to Pyote, Texas for operational training in B-29s. The A bombs were then dropped on Japan . . . VJ. Then sent to Fort Bliss, Texas for discharge. On discharge and travel pay to Pittsburgh, I jumped a bus to Tucson, overnight. Arrived in Tucson—still the 13th [September] not precipitous—but had a hard time waiting until the 14th. Then with bended knee asked Phyllis to marry me. Her only question was ‘when.’ I said, as soon as she and All Saints Church would marry us.”

Bill and Phyllis were married on September 24, 1945 at All Saints Church in Tucson, Father Gramer officiating. They made their home in Tucson and had five daughters. Bill worked as a general contractor for 40 years. The marriage lasted 66 years until Bill’s passing on his 90th birthday, April 29, 2011.



POSTSCRIPT

Somewhere in England
March 18, 1945

My darling Phyllis,

Last night I had the
worst experience of my
young life - really suffered
a major catastrophe -
hurt me through and
through - if my nerves
weren't in the best of shape
I'd probably suffer a nervous
breakdown over it. I didn't
mean to frighten you or
cause you any undue
concern - but I just can't
reconcile myself
in my present plight -
please shield my head.

darling and tell me I'll
get over it and my shock
and grief will soon pass
~~at~~ away - you can't even
write straight. Best I start
from the beginning and tell
you all, darling, so you can
perhaps share my burden
of grief. Last evening, I
hurried over to the Altar
to share before dashing over
to the chapel for the Stations
and Confession. I tried to
trim my mustache in
^{great} ~~big~~ a hurry and clipped
the whole left side off so
I had to shave it all off.
So you see, darling, it's only
an obituary in honor of
my poor mustache - may
it rest in peace. I know
what you're thinking - it's
about time - but please
darling don't say it until

I have recovered somewhat
from shock.