

## Love Across an Ocean

Valentine's Day is the day where people express their love and affection for each other and in this story that love is certainly expressed. Through those words that spanned time and an ocean, this love story connects a young man of the 448<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, Seething to his Sweetheart. But the age-weathered pages only make the script stand out more starkly, revealing stories marked by a soldier's passion and vulnerability; alternating between fear and hope of what the future might hold — both for the world and for himself and his Sweetheart.

England  
12/10/43

My darling,  
I'm sorry I missed a few days sweet but we've been terribly busy getting settled and now that some of the dust has cleared away we're contemplating moving to a warmer hut. We live in something resembling and feeling like a barn and it's equally as difficult to heat! You'll scream when you learn I wrote Mother to send me Long Johns but they're really necessary and on our missions as you know the temperatures go down to 30 & 40 below.

I'm having a devilish time trying to get this written because we heard air raid sirens and keep running outside at the least sound. It's eerie tonight because there's a full moon and pictured with countryside deathlessly still and devoid of all light. I stood outside in the cold looking at the sky which is really beautiful tonight and felt very odd hearing a dog bark in the distance and the rustle of the branches. You can't imagine how still-still is, until you've been here and actually experienced it. We're all suffering severely from "Cabin fever" in as much as we haven't yet been off the base and nothing has been said about it as yet. The same damn schedule day after day is rough and there's hardly any relaxation at all, I'm not complaining but merely trying to show you how relatively dull things are here. At night we sit in the barn huddled around our fire and write letters or read till about 8 o'clock and then to bed. I'm reading Pepy's Diary which is really sharp and I'm educating my navigator by selecting reasonably "good" books for him which will still hold his interest. At present he's reading Tom Jones and getting a kick out of the spiciness he never knew existed in "good" literature.

I've been reduced by ignominious circumstances to do my own laundry until the Army arranges a contract and the results are pathetic. I get discouraged easily and after soaping one piece and scrubbing vigorously merely rinse the next one and let it go at that. Our personal standards thus have fallen with our environment and we share occasionally and go around in mud stained boots and trousers that put to shame the standard picture of dapper young officers exuding brassy brilliance! We must wear blouses at dinner however and some semblance of respectability is thus maintained. For the most part Richard lounges around in leather flying jacket, dirty pinks and old flying boots — looking very much like some character out of Terry and the Pirates — or at least trying hard to do so! Every time I put on my blouse I can't help thinking that I should have been married in this so that when I get back I may be eccentric enough to be married in it any how rather than in something right out of Brooks Bro window!

Business — I think they have a money cable service here and when I'm paid — still waiting for Novembers — I'll send you many clams. I hope by this time you and Mother — if she did help you — have found a good ring but "for goodness sake" darling don't skimp on one because if you do I'll really be disappointed.

Incidentally I hope the subs don't knock off any of our mail because if very many went on the same boat communication with my sweetheart would really get flubbed up. Still sweating you out and re-reading old mail! I didn't send any Christmas cards because they're hard to get and it's too impractical as I hope you and your family and Brac will understand. I hope the letter I wrote them before leaving did more good than harm but I figured on opening my offensive early.

And good news – Eight Air Force is not as lethal as would appear by losses so relax darling because I've got untold confidence that by early summer I'll be in your arms again – whole and hearty – and this time for good. A solid month's honeymoon no less and countless days thereafter with no Army attachments – Stupid I salute thee!

All Clear just now sounded so I guess Jerries through for the night! They tell some pretty stories around here that are extremely interesting but I unfortunately can't pass it on now. "Heads Up and Looked, Eyeballs Caged" Bise is keeping up a sadly sagging morale by taking frequent spills on his bicycle into the thick enveloping English mud. Bicycles are the mode of travel here but I haven't succeeded in purloining one as yet. I'm being beleaguered on all sides to go to bed – hit the sack – more exactly so I'm afraid I'll have to close honey.

I hope you're missing me as much as I do you darling because I'm just crazy in love with you as ever and it's a wonderful unheartening feeling. I'm really planning and thinking here and this time there won't be any slip-ups. Honestly Katrink when I see your sweet face again I think I'll just stand there with my heart on my sleeve and gulp once or twice before I reach your wonderful warm arms. I'll just hold you and hug you and Mrs. Cugat you for hours and it'll make up for all there lonely heartbreaking months. It won't be so long dear darling so just hold on, the way I know you will and we'll soon have our happiness. This isn't optimism like our first Yale-Dartmouth date – remember? – but it's based on fact.

There's no need for me to try to tell you how I love you because I do so completely and hopelessly that it defies words. You're my shining hour dearest and no matter what happens you always will be. Goodnight dear angel and when the going gets rough just remember that

I love you  
Dick

This is the first letter that was given to us at "Stories of the 448th" and they show the love story between Richard Brady and Katharine Coon – two young people, from different backgrounds, who met and fell in love when they were at University. However, the war forced them to be thousands of miles apart, how long they did not know. Join us as we relive their journey of love.



Richard Joseph Brady "Kid" was born on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1921 in New Haven, Connecticut to Joseph Thomas (b.1891) and Florence Edna (b.1897) Brady. He had a sister, Louise "Lois" (b.1927). Richard's father, Joseph, worked as a foreman for the rail road.

Katharine Hamilton Coon was born on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1921 in New York to Richard Esselstyn and Katharine B Coon. She had two brothers Richard B. (b.1926) and Robert L. (b.1930). Richard Coon was the director of Radio Research for Special Newspapers Inc. He was a former newspaperman and radio pioneer, lawyer as well as a civic leader. They lived in a beautiful house in Poughkeepsie, New York, and according to the 1940 census they had a live in servant, Mary Bennett.



(Katharine - Poughkeepsie Journal)

(Richard - Ron Baublitz)

Katharine graduated from Baldwin School in 1938 and received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Wellesley College near Massachusetts in 1942. Afterwards she worked with the College Entrance Examination board at Princeton – which were where all Richard's letters were sent to. At the time she was living in Alexander Street.

Joseph went to West Haven High School and then Yale University.

It would seem that Richard and Katharine may have first met at the Dartmouth Indians – Yale football game in October 1941 where Yale lost 7-0; hence his mention of the optimism they had for Yale to win on their date.

Richard enlisted in the first Yale Unit of the Army Air Corps on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1942 and was immediately placed on furlough so he could complete his Junior year. His occupation was listed as Actor and he was given the service number 11066679. On August 13<sup>th</sup> 1942 he was ordered to Kelly Field for initial training after which he moved to San Antonio, Texas, for Pre-Flight School. He was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and graduated as a Bombardier. His new service number was 0-688504.

Richard and his crew were known as Crew 17 and they were assigned to the 712<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 448<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. Their route to Seething was in B24H-10-FO, #42-52145. The complete crew consisted of:

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert K. Winn – pilot – 0724661  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James H. Harmon – co-pilot – 0811199  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. David T. Tobin – Navigator – 0690738  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Richard J. Bardy – Bombardier – 0688504  
S/Sgt Charlie D. Lugosh – Engineer – 18201733  
Sgt. Kenneth L. Dyer – 35568310  
Sgt. Billy J. Espich – 15354024  
Sgt. Robert R. Cook – 15230812  
Sgt. Jack W. Porter – 36181194



(Crew 17 - DKing)

They were one of the first tranche of crews to arrive at Station 146, Seething, in December 1943. They were met with an incomplete airfield, and the English weather was a shock to the men. The base was a sea of mud. The mud was everywhere, including the walk ways and roads. The men brought the mud into their huts, the mess hall and any building they entered. They were not billeted in barracks, like back in the USA; instead they were assigned to Nissen huts which were dotted around and not in neat rows. Each accommodation hut had a small pot bellied stove to provide heat. Unfortunately it was quite useless and never completely took the all prevailing dampness away. As a result the men had to work hard to stop it from going out once they started their fire. Morale suffered as they were cold and damp, and many men came down ill with colds and flu. What keep Richard going was the thought of going home to his sweetheart by the summer of 1944.



HOME AWAY FROM HOME AND MUD, MUD AND MORE MUD.

(Rowe)

England  
12/22/43

My darling -

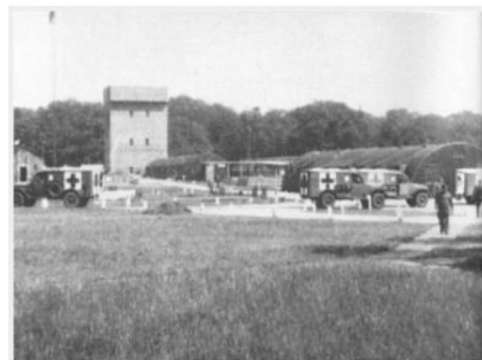
Richard is a little glum right now so please bear with him. Yesterday Tobin and I went to a base hospital to see Winn and it looks as though he'll be there a while and possibly be sent back to the states eventually. If that happens we'll be replacements and it'll take longer to get our missions in. It's hard, day after day to sit in ground school and watch all your friends take off and form over the field and you know you can't go. The only chance I have of flying while he's ill, is to be a lead bombardier and twice when I was scheduled for it, the missions were cancelled. You'll probably say "Don't be in a rush" but when you're over here you feel a lot differently. The crew morale is a sad sack and there's not a damn thing we can do about it. This is a Hell of a way to start a letter so I'll switch the topic.....

(77<sup>th</sup> base hospital - med-dept.com)



(Lt. Winn - americanairmuseum.com)

On the journey over to Seething, Lt. Robert Winn was taken ill and hospitalised. He was later transferred to the 77<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital based in Morley on January 25<sup>th</sup> 1944 according to the 712<sup>th</sup> diary. Morley Hall was requisitioned in 1943 for the hospital as the location could support the nearby bases of the 8<sup>th</sup> US Army Air Force. Today, it is the site of Wymondham College.



12/26/43

Darling -

I've got to do some heavy writing now to make up for all the time lost since I started the above I told you before I'd just got over a little illness but unluckily I had a relapse and until yesterday was in bed. Oddly enough your letters arrived telling me you had just had a bout yourself but thank goodness you got right over it. I feel okay now except for a racking cough and a stuffy head but I was really miserable for a while. Now I'm bundled up in Long Johns, heavy wool socks and muffler and look like Heathcliff storming across the moors! Dearest let me start with Christmas cause before that was nothing but fever and misery. Yesterday morning we were all surprised to find a new radio in the lounge and were really wearing it out. We spent the morning drinking brew and being as gay as possible. At noon a whole slough of British kids arrived and we all trooped into a delicious turkey dinner featuring as the surprise of the day - apple pie & cheese! We had more fun watching those kids eat and stare at oranges and candy and sweets! One little tot was so little he had to sit on a hugh pillow to reach the table and I only wish I had a picture of him to let you see the happy grin on the stuffed greasy puss! After dinner they were entertained in our makeshift theatre and I guess they really had a wonderful time for a change.



(Christmas Party at Seething - Huseason)

On December 25<sup>th</sup> 1943 Station 146 started Christmas Day off with a church service and then they welcomed the local children to Christmas dinner. Each man was asked to “adopt” a child or two for the day. The children were handed candy and gum as well as a turkey dinner with all the fixings. After several years of rations this offering was incredible and something they would never forget. The children even had tours around the B-24s. At the end, the children were taken back via the trucks.

About three o'clock we decided to take a walk in the countryside and it was wonderful! All morning it was overcast and gloomy but about the time we started out it suddenly cleared off like a Christmas present from Nature and all the neat trim fields and hedges were radiant and fresh and green. It was so peaceful along those quiet roads that it was hard to believe there was a war. There's an old Norman church down the road and as the sun began to set the clear bells began ringing. It was one of the most beautiful moments of my life and I really felt wonderful when we returned. Last night we had some sherry wine and a few scotch highballs and thus ended my second Christmas away from home. I'm positive next year I'll be home and we'll have our first Christmas together!

The Norman church that Richard could be talking about is the Norman church of St Margaret and St Remigius. It saw many a weddings between local girls and the men of the 448<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.



(St Margaret & St Remigius - EDP24.co.uk)

Your sweet letters have been such a help darling and whenever I feel glum I always reread them and your faith in me snaps me out of it. There's so many things happening here and to people you know and yet I can't tell you about them – it's not fair because correspondents do and time & time again we see in Life a whole spread on a subject we are expressly forbidden to mention. We've got a collection of flak particles and other weirder specimens but that's all I can say. I heard all about your weekend at home and if only I could have been there! They all loved you darling as I knew they would and while Mother was worried for fear such a deluge of relatives would smother you, you certainly came through with flying colors and captured a lot of hearts. I do hope my present reached you by yesterday and I'll just keep sweating until I hear. Last night I dreamed of you dearest and you were so clear and distinct and I was so happy! Maybe it's a good omen. I've won one ribbon already and if things keep on this way, I ought to come home smothered in them! Bitter was grounded in the states with trench mouth so he missed Christmas with us but we're all hoping for his safe arrival now. When I complete my missions I think I'll go home by a banana boat and just take no chances! I'd love to let myself go sweetheart and tell you how terribly I miss you and how constantly you occupy my thoughts but I can't because then it gets too much. So just remember that Richard is just living for the day he can hold you in his arms again and tell you

I love you darling

Dick

Although Richard was concerned about not being able to complete his missions as quickly as he hoped, receiving Katharine's letters about life back home and how her connection to his family was growing gave him such hope to continue to fight for her.

Despite censorship dictating what Richard was able to disclose in his letters to Katharine, he and many others managed to find ways to share information such as sending clippings of missions they were involved with from newspapers and also in the case of Richard sending money from the countries they stopped off at on the way to Seething. All this shows such a personal insight to his experience of the war.



England  
12/27/43

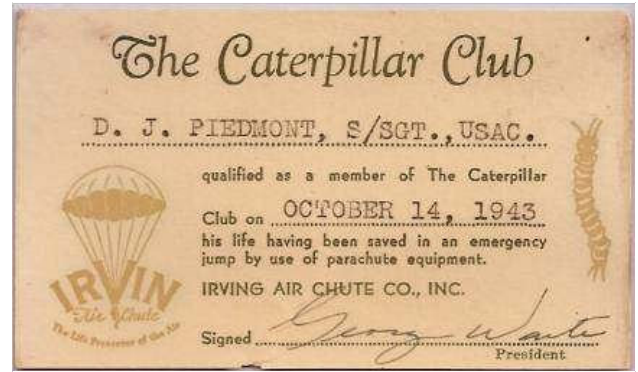
Dear Darling

Sitting here in the Club before a cheery fire, listening to the "wireless" and feeling almost cozy! If you were here cuddled up next to me with your arms warming my neck, Richard would be the happiest, soupiest character in the whole E.T.O! As is I'll compensate by talking to my darling until the day I return and break every rib in your body and practically suffocate you in the longest recorded Mrs. Cugat in history! First dearest let me assure you that all your Herington mail and 4952 is arriving safely and you're not just talking to no-one cause you're definitely morale builder #1 and you're doing a swell job! So far none has arrived to 634 but I don't think it'll be long before they do. Things are pretty much the same here though all the blah on invasion has us figuring we'll see plenty of fireworks in the near future. The radio here is really sharp as they play symphony, dinner music and jive continuously without advertising!!! It's refreshing to listen to I'll See You Again and not have it followed by a harangue on sore livers or pink toothbrush! Half the programs come from Germany or Occupied France and are especially arranged for us so we'll listen to their propaganda. They have latest recordings and more soberly - latest information. They took us all back on Christmas Day when an enemy announcer in perfect English (They all speak it fluently) said " -----*this part was cut out of the letter*-----" We all know they've got some of our boys but it was still a shock to hear that over the radio.

We believe what the German announcer said was "We welcome the 448th Bomb Group to the E.T.O. We hope you enjoy your stay here, and we look forward to meeting you." according to Alfred H Locke memories.

Stars and Stripes was really jubilant today carrying news of General Eisenhower's appointment as ETO commander plus the sinking of the Scharnhorst. I wish I knew how much the home papers divulge about raids and then maybe I could talk about them a little but right now uhuh! But darling if you ever meet a P-47 pilot just back from here you have my permission to give him a Mrs Cugat and a "Thanks chum" from Richard. Do you remember Roy Anderson at San Angelo, a tall lanky kid from St. Paul? Anyhow he is now a member of the Caterpillar Club and as he sleeps next to me I have one more Tingling story stored away to tell you some fine day.

The Caterpillar Club was formed in 1922 after Lt. Harris bailed out of an airplane over Dayton, Ohio. His parachute saved his life. It was founded by Leslie Irvin and named after the silk worm (caterpillar) that spins the silk from which the parachutes were made from. It is an association of people who have successfully used a parachute to bail out of a disabled aircraft.



2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Roy Anderson was the bombardier for Crew 18. On December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1943, the 448<sup>th</sup> undertook a mission to LaBroye, France. Their target was a V-1 rocket launching site. On the flight over, Roy's aircraft (42-52118) - piloted by Lt. Alan Teague – accidentally struck the back of an aircraft (41-28591) piloted by Captain William Blum. The left rudder, left wing, bomb bay and number two engine were seriously damaged on Blum's aircraft. The collision also sheared the number one propeller, bent the number two propeller and started a fire in the bomb bay of Roy's aircraft. The fire was quickly contained and the crew headed back to find the nearest British airfield. They reached RAF Bourn and the crew including Roy bailed out. Only Lt Teague and the co-pilot stayed on board to land the aircraft. Thus this is how Lt. Roy Anderson joined the Caterpillar Club. Capt. Blum and his crew managed to land back at Seething.

In a little while I'm tailing off to the Base Theatre (a Niessen Hut!) to see "It Happened One Night" – they're old but still entertaining. Today I read a Hell of a funny book Low Man on a Totem Pole which you ought to read if you get a chance. Those Emily Post or Dorothy Dix or what-have-you clippings you send are going to inspire Richard to write one himself and ask why the U.S.A.A.F continually prevents Richard from marrying the sweetest darling that ever lived and maybe she can guarantee that this time nothing will intervene. I'm so glad you got the watch and the "donkeys!" but honestly darling there was no intended symbolism in them. They were so completely in harmony with the climate – sleepy, drowsy, that I thought they were cute. Next time I guess I'll have to be more careful.

Stewart is near here and I give him a lot of credit – at least he's not an arm chair rah rah boy. Dearest I know it's rough on you having to wait back there trying to lose yourself in your work (I hope they ease up a bit – you're working too hard) but remember darling that we've got something that's worth waiting for and time and distance can't destroy it. You're taking a long shot by waiting for me and I love you for it cause it just shows again the stuff you're made of and the grit you're got and my darling I'm so very proud of you! It won't be too long before I'm back and then we'll have all we dreamed and planned of and will both feel we've done a good job and it'll help a lot. I may be a little difficult for the first month or so when I'm home and I'll warn you of that now but I know you'll stick by me and as soon as I see you the wildness will disappear I'm sure. That doesn't mean we all sit around here frothing at the mouth but we do drink enormously and think a little differently on values so you'll probably have to box me on the ear and get me in line again with a soupy Mrs. Cugat and I know it won't fail.

Time to go dearest but you know I'm yearning terribly for you and if only I could have a teeny smooch! I'll take a rain check on it though and telepath a long soupy goodnight kiss because

I love you darling

Dick

P/s I'd still like to see those snapshots??

This seems to be the first time that we see Richard starting to say things out of turn like the drinking a lot and thinking differently on values and also that he will probably be difficult when he comes home. He has

only been in England less than a month and the experience is starting to affect him more than he can admit but the warning signs are there.

England  
1/10/44

My darling

In regard to your last P.s on "no censoring" I only wish it meant all it implied. There's so many, many interesting things that really aren't vital info - like pillboxes and barbed wire entanglements and charcoal burning trucks left by the Germans in Africa, little things that happen on missions and while tragic are also funny, incidents on the base etc but we're forbidden to mention them. They don't actually censor our mail but every day a few letters are pulled out at random and "spot-checked" and if you've violated your officers franking privilege it's really rough they having even busted and imprisoned majors and colonels for what appear to be minor offences. So while it is nice to be able to tell you that I adore you darling and not have it read by another I still can't take a chance and blab as much as I'd like to. As to being home this summer - as long as the 25 mission rule is retained here and I get through them, I must certainly will be home by then. I can't tell you frequency of operations but some fellows have made it in three months!- and the weather's getting better all the time. So if we keep our fingers crossed and pray darling I don't see how we can miss. We don't fly the same ship all the time but Ice Cold Katy is a veteran now with flak holes, bullet holes and a crash landing to her credit! She's okay now though and will be flying again. Bise was in her when she went down and he says she's solid and that's a compliment.

Throughout the war, letters were censored to ensure no useful information would fall into enemy hands should the mail be intercepted. In particular, censors made sure servicemen made no mention of their geographic location, nor any indication of the strength or numbers of their stations. Censors would cut out words or sentences or redact portions of the letters with heavy ink.

Sometimes, censors would redact parts of letters that contained lewd or graphically sexual content. In an attempt to embed intimate or personal content into a letter that must pass the censor, servicemen would often use codes or ciphers. Richard uses Mrs Cugat for his code.

As for requests for anything - I really have all I need dearest and while I appreciate your offer, it'd be foolish to send anything. There's only one thing I could use but I doubt very much if you could get one and that's a cigarette lighter. Any little flimsy old job would do if you could find one but otherwise I'm well equipped. I do wish you'd send those snaps you had taken and I don't care what they look like cause they're you and that's one thing I really need!!

If I get back you're really going to be surprised at my stories because actually it's a long way from movies, stories and even the spoken word. Nothing makes us sicker than to see the picture of some young Galahead in flyin clothes saying "in a few seconds I'll get that dirty rat" and then puts his sight on the Hun. Beautiful dream but its not true and I for one have resolved never to buy anything advertised under the above galling headings. Actually darling you're basely and completely SCARED and I mean scared and while you sneer at them its more of a fear reaction that you are probably familiar with. I'll go further into this because it's interesting - I've found that talking in a staccato lets out the suppressed fear so for example I've said "You bastard, you bastard, you bastard" over and over very rapidly and it helped. I also noticed in a story in Yank where a Marine fired 25 rounds into one



Jap hiding in a hut at the same time screaming "You S.O.B You S.O.B etc" May fit in with some of your former experiments and please excuse the profanity.

The movies of the 40s did not depict the reality of the war. That's because the entertainment industry changed to help the war effort. The industry became more closely controlled by national governments, who believed that a supportive home front was crucial to victory. Through regulation and censorship, governments sought to keep spirits high and to depict the war in a positive light. It was basically an important means of distributing propaganda

On seeing a plane go down in flames I was completely petrified with fear for two more hours till we landed and later the rest of the crew said the same. It's no noble courageous thing at all and you're not brave knights riding to Death with a smile of determination on your lips. You're just a bunch of scared kids who fight desperately because you're scared and you have no alternative. I'll say that no man who has fought in this theatre will say it's glamorous because he'd be a liar if he did.

You've heard me speak of Cannon who paled with Bitt and I at Wendover and Sioux City and he's got a lot of guts. He was so scared on seeing a plane explode that he involuntarily urinated in his flying suit. Far cry from soap advertisements. I tell you all this darling so you'll see just what war really is and which it's so hard to believe until you've experienced it. That's why it's so good to come back to you and see your sweet smile and read the warmth and faith and love in your letters. I don't know what I'd do without them because reading them I know I can't let you down and it puts strength in my backbone and that's the truth sweetheart

I hope this doesn't disillusion you but I will never set myself up in your eyes (beautiful) as a brave hero when I'm not and will not pretend to be one. Someday we'll hash the whole thing out in a session over some Haig&Haig - they'd better have some when I get back! - and I'll tell you the whole story once and then we'll bury it forever.

To experience such horrors would change anyone and Richard is desperate to tell Katharine what he is experiencing and he believes that if he can get it off his shoulders just once, he will be able to move on and never think of that time again. But like many others this was a horror that would stay with him for his whole life.

Dinah Shove just sang "Some thing to Remember You By" and it brings back "Mr Lucky" and Radio City and how happy this character was with his beautiful darling beside him and everything was really full of roses. To think of the precious minutes I wasted when I could have been kissing you and how simple it was and how impossible it is now. You're really going to talk a beating when I get back dearest so stock up on lotions! Moreover the Army gives a thirty day leave and I figure bout 29 of those ought to be on honeymoon. Roger darling? I'd like to ask a very sentimental favour sweet and I hope you'll understand. Next time you're near St. Patrick's go into the little alter where we were and light a candle for us. It needn't mean anything to you - all you need do is light the candle and I'll do the praying. That day we were there I wished God to give me the sweet girl at my side to me as my wife and to watch over and protect us and I'm still doing it. Don't consider it a Papist plot to connect you because you know I don't care but I do wish you'd do it for me. In the meantime darling I'll keep knocking off the missions - each one brings me closer to you and incidentally sweetheart thanks loads for "being good" as it's certainly reassuring to know that someone is true as its worse here than in the states and it was pretty bad there. I'll write again shortly dearest and until then keep your chin up and Richard will be back before you know it. Remember

I love you darling  
Dick

England  
1/14/44

My darling

Been a little busy lately sweet so I slipped up writing yesterday. Latest news - Bittner arrived night for last just as we were retiring so I sat up late exchanging all the poop from Group. He had a swell time on the way over and looked good - all tanned in comparison to our whiteness. Wasn't sure about his ship Sequoia Lady at all - only concerned about us. Winn expects to be back on flying status by next week so we're all hoping because this way we won't finish our tour at the same time.

I'm beginning to fidget again for some mail from you honey and then my morale will be up 100% again. Waiting for tomorrow night to fall around when they drag out the Scotch (terrible) and Gin and get horribly plastered. There's just nothing else to do here and I can't get any decent books so I'll have to be excused. It's a hell of an experience to get tight to symphony music! It actually makes me feel wrong about drinking but I guess that's just an idiosyncrasy peculiar to me.

Letters sent from the United States to destinations abroad could take weeks to arrive due to transport difficulty, bad weather or logistical snafus. The long wait often left the men feeling anxious and lonely for home.

I've been getting quite a bit of link Trainer time and I'm beginning to feel like a hot pilot. Today I did figure eight patterns under the hood entirely by instruments and its weird! I've got to get use to not flying by the seat of my pants the way they taught us in primary. You fly by needle and ball artificial horizon as indicator and time your turns 180s in a minute being a standard rate bank. But when I turn I can feel the Link slipping (at least I think I feel it) and the instruments don't show it and I get all hot up but the instructor says I'm doing okay. When the period was up I tried to simulate a landing but on pressing the switch morlled "Flaps" found myself in a beautiful tailspin! Guess I better stick to "bomb-aiming" - the British term for bombardering. Just a Dus Passos "newsreel" now sweetheart to let you in on the nicer moments of combat - bombs away deep in the heart of Germany - long black bombs hurtling earthward, bomb-bay doors closed, anxious eyes watching black balls of flak, tenseness as we start home and then high over head, sleek fast P-38s go racing by. What a wonderful feeling to see those baby's up there looking after us!

Now to talk about you all the above being just a cover till I can tell you how very much I love you darling and how I wish I were in your arms at this very moment. Maybe you're right about those moments you have when you think I'm there beside you, 'cause I certainly wish that often enough. Last night I lay in bed and relived some of our memories - that cosy corner in Greenwich Village when you kissed me long and hard so I wouldn't look at the floor show and I was so giddily in love with you I couldn't see anything but you anyway. The long wonderful embrace at the Cactus when we met again after so long and the feeling that you were just so beautiful you couldn't be mine. And there were less buoyant moments too - the hurt expression you had when you started to tell me about that never-to-be-forgotten phone call - if only we'd gone out right then and been married. When I think of all the precious hours we wasted when I was training in O.T.U oh darling we've

got so terribly much to make up for I only hope it'll be damn soon and that you can stand the waiting

I really think you've got a tougher job than I honey 'cause you're just got to wait and sweat while its more immediate with me. That'll be the sweetest and happiest moment of my life when I place the ring on your finger and then we'll both know it was worth all the agonising waiting and tough breaks we've had. From then on if I'm still in the A.F Richard's flying for hours a month to get his pay and spending the rest of his time with the dearest most adorable darling God ever put on this earth. I wish I could just hold your sweet face in my hands now and kiss you gently but firmly for a long time and then just play with your hair and look at you and just absorb you. I'll be going over the hill if I keep this up my darling! That's about all for now but I will write again soon and until then dearest you'll know I'm thinking and dreaming of you always because

I love you darling

Dick

England  
1/25/44

My darling

I've wanted so much for the past few days to write and tell you how wonderful it was to hear from you again and how perfect those snaps are!! But I've been tied up day after day only to have weather flub things up at the last minute. It's getting on our nerves more than somewhat too and yesterday was the climax. I can't tell you exactly what happened but we'd been flying for four hours and then had to come home. I can't get my 48hr pass till it's over and I'm really sweating it out.

The winter of 1943/44 was terrible and caused many possible missions to be recalled. On January 24<sup>th</sup> 1944 the weather cleared enough to permit an attempted flying operation to Frankfurt, Germany. Twenty seven aircraft were ready for combat but they were recalled before the mission actually got underway.

It was so sweet of you darling o send those pictures and I carry them with me wherever I go and keep sneaking a look at them! It's funny the way mail comes in batches and just about when you're ready to cash in your chips for want of a letter. The first thing I thought of on seeing those "wonderful" snaps was the night long ago in San Angelo when I came down from a "mission" in the wee hours of the morning to find that big photo of you on my bed. That night it just kind of took my breath away and I couldn't stop looking at it and it's the same way with these. Darling I just look at you here and over and over keep saying how terribly I love you and how awful much I want to come back to you. I realise now more than ever how sweet you are and how much I miss you and it's rugged. I ought to let go and tell you everything I'm thinking but I can't dearest and believe me when I say it's for the better that way. Someday I'll tell you the whole story and how I feel now, but for the present and until I come back to you just believe with all your heart and soul that I love you and that nothing will ever deter me from returning to make you my wife. When I see you again for the first time and I just grab you and won't let you go for o long you'll see and understand what I omitted and we'll both thank God that he brought us safely together again. Whoo- getting all bawled up and I'm sorry honey.

Maybe I ought to tell you about the big party we had here Saturday night. Much liquor and women and song and Cannon & Bitt & I really had a swell time. We had a GI band, Red Cross women & USO actresses plus some local talent and it was all a big success. Needless to say we all got wonderfully trolled and sometime about 5-6am I finally hit the sack. First good party we've had since Sioux City and we're all hoping for more. The Colonel had a beautiful actress from London and the poor guy was besieged on all sides and now he's on the warpath getting revenge! Now all is business again. Bitt is going to get his pass at the same time so we ought to have a bang up time in the Big City. Darling this letter is a mess and I'm going to close now but I'll try to write you a decent one tonight. I'm tired and I'm irritable right now honey and I hope you'll excuse me because one thing is permanent and that'd you & I. Remember sweetheart

I love you  
Richard

In late January, Seething airfield was officially transferred to the US Army Air Forces. RAF, Squadron Leader Elder formally turned over the base to Col. Thompson. The Union Jack was lowered and the Stars and Stripes were raised to a roll of drums and the call of a bugler. The ceremonial took place outside the Station Headquarters.



(Hoseason)

England  
2/2/44

My darling

I've got so much to tell you sweetheart that I hardly know where to start. For the clipping we got a 48 hour pass to London!!! And now lately returned and shaky from imbibing too much Scotch I'll try and tell you what we saw and did. The first night we went on a terrific bat in Picadilly Circus the Times Square of London. Much merriment and liquor and that's about all I remember. Next day we dined at the Regent Palace which is pretty sharp, then went on a tour of London. I'm enclosing a list of the places we visited and I'll tell you about three of them now. First just off Fleet street near Temple Bar there's the Cheshire Cheese still operating in all its mouldy splendour and haunted by Dickens, Johnson, Pepys, Goldsmith, Dryden etc. it's a pretty place and has a million interesting little additions which I can't describe now. Later on in future letters I'll fill in the surreal picture I'll give you here. Then St. Paul's - it's beautiful and massive and a wonderful tribute to Wren's architectural powers but to me it was too severely classical and while it did impress me I was disappointed because I'd expected a different air and atmosphere. At one point in the dome you stand with your ear to the wall and an attendant, a quarter of a mile away whispers into the wall and you can hear it! From here we went to Westminster Abbey which is WONDERFUL!! I got the biggest kick out of that because it's everything you'd want it to be and the architecture is really beautiful. I'm sending some postcards in another envelope and you can see a little of its splendour there. As you know the Poet's Corner is supposed to be the nicest part and it is amazing to stand on huge slabs of marble and I know that Tennyson, Browning, Chaucer, Stevenson, Cowper, Campbell etc are buried beneath! Chaucer is in a wall tomb and I stood there and looked at the inscription and why I did it I don't know but I recited the prologue to myself "When that Aprille, with its shores

soote. The drought of March has precede to the route etc" it were as though Chaucer were an old friend and wanted him to know I was there and how much I liked him! Wired!

The best way to understand how I felt, is to read Washington Irving on the Abbey, he can describe the musty odour and the simple exquisite beauty of the place

Ben Johnson asked the King for 8 "of space in the Abbey & that's what he got - he was buried standing up and the original plaque 8' square is still there with just "O Bare Ben Johnson" inscribed. The onrare is a pun on his "pray for me" in one of his plays.

There are so many famous people buried there I can't list them all but the most famous - Chaucer, Rotherford, Darwin, Browning, Cauper etc. have very simple inscriptions while less famous have lengthy descriptions of what they did.

They can race about St. Paul but Westminster Abbey is my choice. From here we went to Parliament and then to Buckingham Palace where the King was in residence his royal standard flying from the mast and again we had our pictures taken! When they're developed I'll send you a whole set Roger darling? We finished up with the Tower of London and London Bridge and then tea and then to the theatre to see Junior Miss! - which was excellent. Then a big dinner and a few drinks at some private clubs and that was that. Someday we two will really see London but we'll allot more than 48 hours.

You're Dec30th letter was here when I returned and I thought how queer you'd have felt when you wrote that if you'd known then where I was! I guess you have that other clipping by now? I'm okay now but I did have a bad frostbite on my toes and hands as you can probably figure by this scrawl. My afflicted parts are numb and it's hard to write! Your letter was sweet darling but I can't say I go for that Rusty deal. That's your business but I can't agree with you on it. I feel like blowing off about it but I won't 'cause I've done it before and regretted it and you've been a sweetheart to take it all. So I'll just register my disapproval and let it go at that. If you're no longer "sure" don't hesitate to tell me, remember the promise you made me on that score honey 'cause I am.

That's about all for now but I'll write again tomorrow and until then you know how I love you darling and I pray to God nothing will ever interfere with that cause that's the one thing that counts with me. I'm just staking everything in that and it's helping terribly over here believe me. Those Mrs. Cugats are accepted more than somewhat dearest and I'm just counting the days till I can get back there and cash in on them! Cause always -

I love you darling

Dick

P.s Army regulations read "a thirty day leave" upon return from this theatre! Whoopee!

Although, the unpredictability and horror of the war compelled Richard to gush about his feelings, the distance and the uncertainty was becoming too much for Katharine

On February 7<sup>th</sup> 1944 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. David Tobin was transferred to the 715<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron

England  
3/5/44

Darling

I finally heard from you here sweet and now I am thoroughly confused. Your letter was so in contrast with the others that you make me feel like a low heel for the last one I write you about the not writing at all etc. I shouldn't have told you about my feet in that letter because I honestly didn't mean it to draw sympathy as it so evidently did. Maybe that's why the letter was

so much more like old times because for a welcome change you were writing to me and not to a blank wall. I still think my hunch is right and that something very wrong has come between us but maybe you haven't realized it in your own mind as yet. Anyhow darling it was wonderful really to hear from the Katrink I knew and loved and love so well. That other one scares Hell out of me and the less I see of her the better. I never thought you could be so hard and cold but its just as well I know that now. If you're serious about wanting time to think and that's the main reason for that frozen front then I promise I'll go along with you on it and be as fair and honest as I can be.

I'll never want to force you into a union you didn't want with all your heart Katrink so if that's the reason consider me stringing along whole heartedly. But it as I first (and still pretty much) thought you just want to bust up I only hope you'll be honest with me and not string me along. I haven't poured to you in a long time dearest so hold your hat 'cause this may shock you or at least your belief in me. That phrase about digging in and seeing it through to the finish really hit me square between the eyes and I'm hoping it shocked me enough to do what I need have done.

Since the crack-up I've been very nervous when flying and for a while I actually got to dread flying and everytime a wing dipped or we lurched on a landing it was absolute agony. That plus the horrors I've seen and the occasional nightmares I have plus the loss of some very very close friends all left me like a limp sack. No-one knows this but you and it's the first time I've ever openly expressed it so it may be a little insolent.

I welcome the chance to come here for training because I figured I'd have a chance to pull myself together while in school. I have improved but I was still very nervous flying and only by forcing myself to fly everyday have I been able to conserve it. I'm fairly sure I'll got it whipped now but in any case I'm determined to force myself to fly till I get over it. But when you spoke of my seeing things out, you practically made it mandatory that I overcome this and it struck me as odd that you should mention it here.

**It seems that Richard could have been sent to the Army Air Force Station 101 at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire which was home of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command Headquarters.**

Those bike rides were for the same purpose. Cannon is worst than I am and unfortunately he can't keep it to himself and he's scaring other guys. Bitt & Lumon & I plus other flak happy Joes tried to get away from the tension by riding around the countryside all day so we'd be knocked out and be able to sleep. I wasn't aware that my letters at the time seemed strange but that's the explanation. Please don't comment on it at all honey because by the time you do I should be over it. It's something I have to work out entirely by myself and with the grace of God I will. We'll be leaving here shortly to get back in the fray and I'll see all the boys again. The course here is very interesting and we're having a lot of fun practising on English towns though some joker opened up on us the other day and I saw flak bursts for the first time on this side of the channel. For a week now I've had the same dream that the crew I flew my first mission with have returned to England having escaped. They were shot down on Jan 11 and listed as M.I.A. It's odd that I keep dreaming that and I'm praying like mad that it will come true. Well darling that's about all for now and whatever happens I hope will be the best for us. I shan't squabble over what constitutes the best now but shortly I'm gunna blast you for that sustenance drivel you been writing. Bye now

Love

Dick

When you get this, start writing (if you please) to me at  
389<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group

564<sup>th</sup> Squadron

APO#634

c/o PM NYk

That'll be my permanent address shortly

In reference to Richard's dreams about the crew he flew with; on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1944, 24 aircraft undertook a mission to Brunswick, Germany. Deteriorating weather in England forced a recall message, and eleven of the planes managed to drop their bombs on targets of opportunity at Meppen and Zundberg, Germany. There was a lack of formation discipline which left eight bombers separated from the main formation. Twelve ME-109s attacked these stragglers. Lt. James Urban's aircraft [THIRTY DAY FURLOUGH] was attacked and crashed near Exloo, in the Dutch province of Drenthe. All ten of the crew died. Lt. Donald Schuman's airplane [PRODIGAL SON] was also shot down. Lt. Schuman and four other crewmen survived but the other five died. Lt. Skaggs and Captain Edwards aircraft was hit by a 20 mm shell in the wing which ruptured the hydraulic system but they managed to nurse their aircraft back to Seething.

England  
3/19/44

Dearest

Still haven't hear from you and consequently I don't know how or what to write. Perhaps you've stopped altogether I don't know but at least I'm getting a glimpse of what it'll be like if that does happen - and frankly Katrink, I miss you.

Things are progressing steadily and finally here and it won't be long now. Cannon is in a rest home and Bitt is on a rampage in London according to reports and the rest just aren't anymore.

I'm going to close now because under the circumstances I just don't have anything to say. I'll write again soon and here's hoping I hear from you shortly. Take it slow kid

Love

Dick

'Flak' Houses were the rest homes set up in England during the Second World War by the American Red Cross to provide centres of rest and recuperation for combat-weary airmen. These were usually situated in large country houses where flyers were permitted to wear civilian clothes and partake in a variety of sporting and recreational activities. All told, some 87,000 men passed through the R&R system before it disbanded in 1945. (Keith Thomas 2006)

England  
3/20/44

Dearest

This will be a quickie because we're pretty busy getting settled and ready for more clippings so I can't write much. We've got swell quarters and good food and the neatest bar this side of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street so I think I'll like it here. Tomorrow, I'm going over to see Bitt and whoever else is still around and we'll have a reunion.

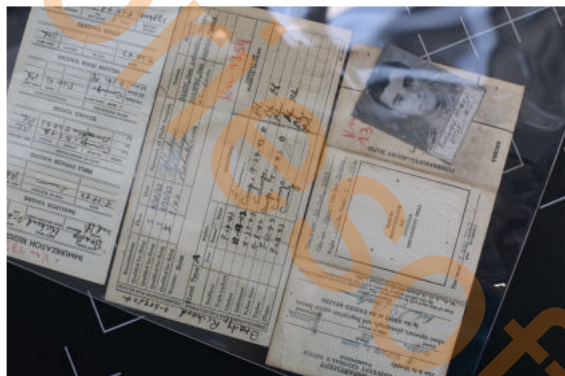
Trying to get reservations for the opening of the spring presentation of Shakespeare at Stratford and so far the prospects look good. If you're still writing note the change in address and shortly I'll try to write some descriptions of England early spring. Tell Brac I appreciate her feeling for me - it's nice to know somebody back there is for me. More later

Love

Dick

This was the last letter we have of Richard's. On April 1<sup>st</sup> 1944, the 448<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group took off for a mission to Ludwigshafen, Germany. The lead aircraft, #41-28763 came from the 389<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and Richard was part of its crew. Col. James Thompson, who was the Commanding Officer of the 448<sup>th</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Alan J Teague were the aircrafts pilots.

Strong winds forced the formation to zigzag in an effect to stay on schedule. Once over their target, Richard's camera equipment was having difficulty and this caused confusion within the formation. Part of the formation diverged away. Seeing this Col. Thompson ordered a 180-degree turn in order to rejoin these aircrafts. Failing to visually acquire the target, the 448<sup>th</sup> group headed for home.



On the way home the Group found a target of opportunity and released their bombs over the town of Pforzheim, Germany. The excessive manoeuvring, and the stronger than expected wind, consumed more fuel than planned. The group faced a daunting trip back home through enemy territory with perilously low fuel tanks.

Lt. Teague noticed the plane lacked the fuel to return to England so they fell out of formation and reached France. Lt. Teague ordered the crew including Col. Thompson, to bail out. Thinking the plane was empty, Lt. Teague prepared to crash-land the plane and then destroy the aircraft on the ground. Col. Thompson suddenly appeared on the flight deck. After a brief time he decided to bail but unfortunately, his parachute failed to open due to insufficient altitude and he died. Everyone else from the crew survived.

Lt. Teague successfully crash-landed the aircraft in an open field and hid as a German patrol arrived. The Germans searched for survivors on the aircraft. Finding no one, they left to search further a field. Lt. Teague hurried back to the aircraft in order to destroy it but was spotted by the German patrol and was promptly captured. They also captured the pathfinder equipment but failed to recognise the significance of it so left it on the aircraft under the care of two guards.

Three of the crew, Lt. Jesse Hamby, Sgt. John Dutka and Sgt. Simon Cohen managed to become under the care of the French Underground. The others including Richard were captured.

Two days after the crash the three evaders returned to the crash site and overpowered the guards. They destroyed the equipment denying the Germans access to the highly classified system.

On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1944, Richard's name appeared in the newspapers as missing in action. By June 7<sup>th</sup> 1944, it was confirmed he was a prisoner of war and Richard spent 13 months as a POW in Dulag 12. In spite of Richard being a POW, on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944 his father was presented the Air medal at Bradley Field.



On the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1945, it was announced that Richard had been liberated. When he returned home, Katherine had already married Benjamin Cole (b1919) in Poughkeepsie on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1944. Benjamin graduated from Illinois Institute of Technology in 1941 and then studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University. He was then associated with research laboratories of the Radio Corporation of American at Princeton. They had three children Jon (b.1946), Betsy and Constance. Katharine worked as a psychiatric social worker



Richard continued with his studies at Yale and graduated in 1946. He met Corynne Cameron (b.1920) who was a graduate from Anokias School for Girls and attended U.C.L.A. She also served two years in the Waves. Richard and Corynne married on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1946 in Los Angeles, California. They had 3 children Richard, Patricia and Diane.



Richard worked as a sale manager at Dynometers while Corynne was a travel representative. In 1955, Richard was a regional representative for the California Oil Co and had transferred from California to Baltimore in 1950.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1957 Corynne and Richard were driving home when Richard lost control and his car rolled. Richard was seriously injured but Corynne lost her life. She was just 36 years old.

Richard did find love again with Meredyth Van Zandt who he married in 1959 and they lived a happy life until Richard's passing on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1984 in Harwich, Branstable, Massachusetts.



*(Meredyth - family source)*

Richard found love at three important times in his life. His first love got him through the war; his second love gave him a future with children and his third love gave him support and hope.

Although Richard and Katherine's relationship ended during the war, she kept hold of those letters from him for 70 years until her death on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in Massachusetts. Perhaps she re-read the letters and rekindle their story, and gained an understanding of what he was going through, captured at a time when letter writing was still an art form. Hopefully, this story will offer some inspiration for those writing to their sweethearts today.