

*There's No Place Like America*  
The World War II Letters of Esther Mellott Nelson

Fulton County  
Historical Society, Inc.

PO Box 115  
McConnellsburg, Pennsylvania 17233

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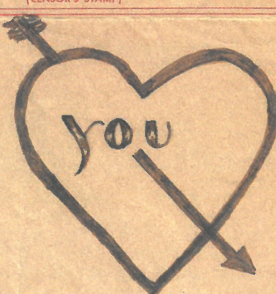
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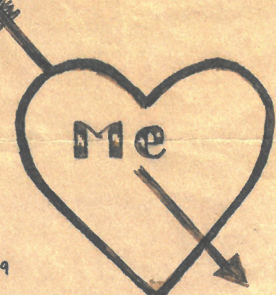
No. \_\_\_\_\_

To Lieutenant Mellotte

From \_\_\_\_\_  
(Sender's name)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Sender's address)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

 To my favorite blonde I dedicate this verse  
On the day that love is true

 She puts her heart into her work  
And takes my heart away too

from the boys in tent 19

V...-MAIL

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***There's No Place Like America***  
The World War II Letters of Esther Mellott Nelson

Edited by John H. Nelson



*Rear, Sister Marion and Brother Carl  
Front, Esther and Brother Hollis.*

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*On the cover is a "Victory Mail" or V-Mail  
sent to Esther by patients in a ward she supervised.*

## Introduction

Like most veterans, my mother rarely discussed what happened to her during World War II and what she did relate came when she was well into her senior years. In fact, the only substantive thing she ever told me was that at Ft. Eustis, when she got off her shift, she went back to her room, only to find her roommate had hung herself. There was no grief counseling; they told her to go back to work.

I imagine she saw many terrible things, but why talk about it?

Briefly, Esther Mellott Nelson was born on her parents' farm near Cito, PA on July 18, 1919. When she was young, she suffered from ear trouble, resulting in a mastoidectomy. Her time in the hospital prompted her to become a nurse. She went to Juniata College, and then graduated from the Allegany General Hospital School of Nursing. She next volunteered for the American Red Cross, and then the Army Nurse Corps. She achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant. A few years after the War, she obtained a position with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, retiring as Supervisor of the Fulton County, PA, office.

She married my father, Watson Nelson in 1951.

After her death in 2016, I found that her parents kept most of the letters she wrote back home. Almost 200. They are arranged here in chronological order. She kept a diary, from which I could glean names and places. She also left a typewritten script of her memories, which is part of this compilation. These letters were written to her parents, J. Harvey and Olive Mellott, her brother Hollis, (who served and was stationed in the Pacific Theater), her sister, Marion, and her younger brother, Carl. I have done extremely little editing, primarily to correct punctuation and misspellings.

The letters do not contain war news since the censors probably wouldn't allow it. And, as previously stated, she rarely mentions anything bad.

I have endeavored to identify the people and places that she mentioned – quite the challenge, as most of the men, and some of the women, on both her maternal and paternal sides, went by their middle name or by a nickname. Some moved from Fulton County. Compound this by the fact that Mellott is the most common surname in Fulton County, so she had both close and distant relatives. (At some point the letter "e" was dropped from the surname Mellotte.) Many of the women mentioned here were going by maiden names and some apparently were college friends or fellow nurses.

But I located most of them. That information follows the letters.

All photographs are from the Esther Mellott Nelson collection.

John H. Nelson

## World War II Memories

I remember Dec. 7, 1941. In May 1941, I had volunteered for the Army Nurse Corps and was sent to Ft. Eustis, VA. That afternoon I was on duty on a medical ward when the news (came) that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. There was silence as I gave them their medications. I thought, "I shall continue to be a nurse. What of these lads, what will be required of them?"

Several weeks later, in an evening, I walked across to the railroad tracks to wave farewell to a nurse leaving for overseas and to watch a troop train load. There was a delay and finally, it started to move. Just as it was picking up speed, a voice rang out, "I'll bring you back Hitler's head." The train moved on and disappeared into the twilight. I walked back to my barracks thinking, "If he and they can go, so can I." The next morning, I volunteered for overseas duty. On 2 June 1942, I reported to Ft. Bragg, NC where the 23rd Station Hospital was being activated. On 29 Aug. we arrived at our first location, Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, Africa.

We had three locations in the two years we were in Africa: Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, Port Layautey, Morocco, and outside Oran in Algeria. Our patients came from whatever troops were based there, passing through or staging. They included the Air Transport Command, an Anti-sub squad, Air Force, and Tank Corps. They had all kinds of illnesses and injuries including pneumonia, hepatitis, malaria, dysentery, food poisoning, FUO (fever of undetermined origin) infections, and whatever. And in N. Africa, we were (in) a penetrating chill in our unheated tent (our living quarters). Our hospital was also tents. There were stoves in them. The frost gathered on the inside of the unheated ones. Going off duty, the nurses stopped in the operating room to fill their canteens with hot water to place in their beds.



*Esther Mellott Nelson.*

Our patient load dwindled. We closed down to follow the War in France. We crossed the Mediterranean Sea and anchored in Marseille, France. The ship could not enter the port for it had not been cleared of bombed and scuttled ships. It (was) 19 Sept. 1944. We left the ship by going down over the side to a rope ladder. We wore a backpack, a canteen, a gas mask on our belt and an arm band with an American flag on our arm. descended into a LCPV (Large Commercial Passenger Vessel), passed those ships listing to their side or having their keels

pointing to the sky. And it started to rain. The LCPV dropped its gate (or whatever it's called) and we walked out on the beach and on to a railroad siding. It took 3 ½ hours to go 7 ½ miles away going on up ahead. When we left the train, we were led by flashlight to a hayloft where there were rows of cots. We lay down in our damp clothes to await the dawn. Two days later, I had a fever. It was not the return of malaria which I had in Oran but hepatitis. Because of the length of the illness and the shortage of beds, I was sent by hospital ship to an army hospital in Naples, Italy. My unit began its slow trek northeast toward our next location, Epinal France. It was a slow go for the tracks were being bombed. The staff worked in the

Evac Hospitals already set up along the way.

When I returned to my unit, they were just set up in a four-story school building (previous occupants the Germans). I immediately went on night duty on the 1st floor. Penicillin had now become available but was administered by injection every three hours. When one round was finished, another began. But all night long, the ambulances kept arriving. Silently, the medics carried the litters up the stairs, returning again and again. And again.

Night duty over, I'm assigned as head nurse on a medical ward, 4th floor, 109 beds. My patients had a variety of illnesses, but as winter progressed, more and more of them had trench feet. These were the ones whose treatment required rest, elevation and no covering. It was quite a sight to stand in the doorway and stare at all those feet, their toes pointing up to the ceiling.

Winter gave way to spring. Our caseload diminished. VE Day came. Our unit was ordered stateside and then to the Pacific. The old timers of which I was one were to remain with the army of occupation until rotated home.

There was some free time and I was given a pass to Germany. There I saw what our bombers had done. Houses were split in half, their contents and furnishings exposed for the world to see, and the cities reduced to rubble. And I particularly remember seeing in Nuremberg, an old lady sitting alone on a pile of rubble. There was utter silence around her. No trees with fluttering leaves, no dogs barking, no kittens or children playing at her feet utter aloneness, utter silence. The roads were lined with refugees, carrying, pulling, pushing their bundles and out in the harvest fields, there was no mechanical equipment, no horses, mules, just old people and children gleaned with their hand tools, we rode on by!

Back in France, I worked on the communicable disease ward. Yes our men had childhood diseases mumps measles scarlet fever. And I remember one Sergeant who had tuberculosis to say that he had a 3-year-old son he had never seen. And I wondered if he'd get well enough or noninfectious enough to hug that son. What price of war for families!

And I went out to the cemetery at Epinal to help another nurse locate a grave. There, before our eyes, stretched out rows and rows of crosses and Stars of David, each wearing a dog tag. And I thought, in death, the Jews and the Gentiles can lay together.

Finally, my rotation number came up and I was homeward bound. It was just three years and three months since I'd left. Rationing had just begun and now it was over. What we did over there was because of what you all did over here. The nurses did not work alone. The corpsman were her diligent and faithful dedicated helpers. And in Oran, there was an Italian POW who also worked by our side. And I can't forget the doctors, the chaplain and especially the Grey Ladies, the Red Cross workers who took on the pain of the Spirit.

Back home at last, mom and dad had gotten older, big sister had married, little brother had grown up. And less than 24 hours later her big brother came strolling in. He had been in the Pacific Theater even to Japan. He, too, was home at last.

What do I remember most? The trench feet, going down the rope ladder and fearing a misstep which could put me and my rescuer in the sea, the damage our bombs caused in Germany, the cemetery in Epinal, their friendship and dedication of the unit members as something that I passed over in Leopoldville, the friendship of the American and Baptist missionaries. What do I regret? That we had no inclination, no motivation nor direction to extend the hand of friendship to the Arab population. We occupied their land. They did steal from her clotheslines and blankets from her beds. Could we not have been kinder and gentler Americans?

Esther Mellott Nelson

1941

Undated  
Station Hospital  
Army Nursing Corps  
Ft. Eustis, Va.

Dear Folks,

I'm sitting in the living room waiting to see the Chief Nurse. She's gone to confession.

Boy this sure is a surprise I'll be wondering around for months wondering where I am. The chief nurse and another one met me. She had borrowed a car from one of the officers. On the way to camp, we drove around looking for a Mennonite colony where she was expecting to get some maids for the nurses' home or should I say quarters. The rooms are small, but not tiny - a desk, chair and a cupboard with a shelf and a rod. The furniture has been ordered but has not come as of yet. For supper we had sausage, hominy, beets, stewed apples, mince pie and iced tea. The mess hall for officers is not finished so we ate in the patient's dining room. Boys in gray pajamas and red corduroy robes ate on one side and us on the other. The food was all cooked.

The grounds are dusty. I shall have to buy some shoes with toes in.

I did my nails while in Harrisburg. In Washington I read and in Richmond I washed my face, brushed my coat, changed my stockings and got the jitters. I sure was glad when I got here. I'm still plenty "itchy" and wondering how I'll get by.

I met Miss McKee and Miss Koehler on the way to supper. (Incidentally, I'm back in my room). The Wilkes-Barre girls get in at 8:00 and she is going to talk to us then.

Down here they have certain coaches and waiting rooms for the blacks. There really is a difference in attitude. The people seem more friendly. It doesn't seem possible that I have been in 3 states and the D. of C. today.

My address is Station Hospital, Army Nursing Corps, Ft. Eustis, VA. We

go by Miss and no saluting. Everything is so informal. There is no ironing board.

Please send me soon my gray suit - 2 blouses, about a doz. hanger, some lifting nails, my shoe bag, sewing box, clothes brush and the cologne from that green box. Some of the kids say that I should have everything as the rooms are bare, however, send the stuff that you can get in the laundry bag, especially the hangers and my suit. Also, that little cedar chest.

Miss Koehler is the Columbia nurse. She wrote to me and sent it to Chambersburg. It was sent back here to Ft. Eustis.

I called Aunt Maye. She was home alone and had no one to send out to station. She said that they'd try to see me soon.

Please send me part of my tablet. Also, the stationary from that box in the lower drawer. That is where most of my stuff is.

Everywhere you see soldiers walking around.

One of the tubes was broken in my radio, but it plays anyway.

Sab. P.M.

I certainly haven't earned my bed today, but that is up to them.

We got up about 6:30. Went to breakfast. Had cereal, banana, doughnut, toast and scrambled eggs. After breakfast we went for a short walk. You see soldiers here and there. At 9:00 Miss Perdella took us to headquarters. That took about ½ hr. That is all that was required of us today. There was a large field mass, the first one they've had here. Miss Perdella suggested that we attend it. It was a sight to see those (illegible) - I imagine about 5000 coming on the field in formation. They marched so perfectly. There were swarms of soldiers taking pictures. An airplane flew overhead and took pictures.

We relaxed until dinner. Had fried chicken, rice, peas and carrots, ice cream. By we I mean the two Wilkes-Barre girls.

Then we thought we'd look around the fort. We "bumped" into two officers a Lieut. Col, and a Col. A Major joined us later and took us around the fort. It is immense. Down by the pier on the James River we saw an Italian vessel. One of those ruined by its crew a few weeks ago to prevent its falling into possible U. S. British use. They said about 40 (U.S. vessels) had been there in January but had been sent into use or to Britain. Only two were there now. They took us up to Yorktown and Williamsburg. It was suppertime when we got back - had cold cuts, macaroni salad, pickles, radishes, fruit cup. The water here is very bad tasting. We get iced tea with our meals.

There was a band concert there - was very good. Some of the players were members of famous bands. There are approx. 17,000 here - the fort covers 6000 acres. Some of the privates have had 7 years of college, getting salaries around \$200 a week. They stay here only 12 weeks, then changed. Have fellows from almost anywhere east of the Mississippi. Only about 18 officers and 1 nurse were in the service. The remainder are from the Reserve and the Nat. Guard, yet the industries continue to strike. Most of the nurses have been here just a short time, the hospital was opened only a month ago. It is strange to look around to see the rafters, cracks in the walls, etc. But is fine.

These officers of this p.m. say that it is pretty certain. One of them was in the trenches 9 months in the World War, over 6 wks without a change of clothing.

Don't get excited about them. They are married and much older than us - just a friendly tour.

Most of the nurses are from Pa. They say that if Pa were taken away none would be left of the staff.

Tomorrow, we get our physicals will probably not get on duty until Tuesday.

I'll drop Marian a card. Please send on to her very soon, don't wait for aunts to read as she can send it to them. I can't possibly rewrite all this.

I want the green dresser scarfs in the trunks. If you get those satin shoes in, do so.

There is capacity for over 100 nurses, they have 41.

You can get an envelope to fit this up in my room. I mean as to size. Sis send it back soon for aunts.

Will you order that larger trunk and I'll tell you later what to put in it. I'll just have to have a trunk sometime.

It is bedtime. I'll be glad when the phys. exam is over. It is going to be hot here this summer.

Must go now.

I'm o.k., having a very interesting time.

Love,  
Esther

*(In different ink)*

I want a couple wash cloths too.

→←

Thurs. night

Got Hollis's card this eve. Thanks so much. The box hasn't arrived. And I wonder if I'll be here when it does.

I mailed the policy back and \$25 for Marian.

Marian, my best wishes to you both.

I don't know how many more opportunities I have to write yet.

I don't know if there is foreign airmail service where we go but use airmail part time at least until I find out. I don't know where, but we all guess different places.

My Miami A.P.O. doesn't mean that we will or that we won't go via Miami Fri. night.

The package came this P.M. Thanks so very much. Those cards of Hollis and Carl's were very cute.

It is hot. The perspiration literally pours.

We moved to another area today - about two miles. Shortly afterwards we were sprayed for bed bugs. Such is life.

Love,  
Esther

*This appears to be her first letter.*

*Her parents were John Harvey Mellott (1882-1949) and*

*Olive Kendall Mellott (1880-1969).*

*Miss McKee, Miss Koehler and Miss Perdella are otherwise not identified.*

*Aunt Maye refers to her Aunt Harriet Maye Mellott, (1885-1950), a daughter of George and Malinda Mellott. Apparently, she lived close to Ft. Eustis.*

*Marian is her sister Marian Mellott Spancake (1914-2006).*

*Hollis is her brother Hollis Mellott (1916-2006).*

—X—

Wed. night (undated)

Dear Folks,

I didn't hear from you today. Guess you're busy and how.

We were to town today. Just got some stuff and a pair of shoes. The drilling really fixes them.

Couldn't you give Aunt Rhoda my bank book? Then she could put my checks to it. I may have to send some home as they don't always want to send it to the bank. I'm going to ask them to send \$50 a month to the bank. If it has to go to a person, I'll send it home. Put it in my checking account for a while.

Please look again for that insurance paper. It is in a brown envelope and has a return address of Veteran's Administration or something about Veterans. Look - in all the drawers and the book stand.

I'm enclosing some money. Use it for the trunk and get Dorothy a couple extra days.

Marian, could you get the negative for that snap-shot that was the best? I mean the one of me in uniform.

I want the book: "For Whom The Bell Tolls." Please send it - no rush. We're each supposed to take a book or two along.

I had some watermelon today. Cost 20 cents for a big piece.

Aunt Rhoda sent me the "Garden of Prayer" again. I sure appreciate it. I want you to send me some magazines when we get situated - Herald, Reader's Digest and Cosmopolitan. I want to wait until I get there to see how the mail goes.

I wish that you could have seen our chief nurse playing baseball tonight.

Tell Pop to hurry and sell that farm. Forget my birthday. You're too busy.

Love,  
Esther

*Rhoda refers to her aunt Rhoda Kendall, (1882-1975).*

*Dorothy is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—

Dear Mother,

Will you send that insurance paper to me by registered mail. Don't make a special trip, but by register I should get it. Some of the kids aren't getting mail at all. There is huge mess of paper to keep track of. If there is anything else in the envelope send it too, please.

I'm sending Marian that pink dress. I hope that it fits her. It can be lengthened, and I know it needs laundered. The remainder of the package is one for you and one for Marian. The tinted one for you, mother.

If I was sure, I'd be back, I wouldn't have had them made.

We had a lecture today. We take 150 lbs. with us. I don't know how we would get 6 mos. supply of everything in that. I have to get sheets, pillowcases and some Bird's Eye in case we can't buy Kotex. If they can mail cigarettes, you should be able to send me some.

We bought a watermelon yesterday. It is huge. We have it on ice for tonight. I'm on K.P. today. Waitress!

I think that is all I have to tell you.

You'd better save the \$5 for postage if you won't use it.

One of the girl's mothers died. She has gone home - cancer.

My prospects for seeing you are slightly smaller - it may be a false alarm.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Mon. A. M. undated

Breakfast is over and I'm not seasick yet.

We have a grand time getting around when we collect our helmets and life belts to carry with us where we go.

The Red Cross gave us a book,  
sewing kit, stationery, cigarettes, cards,  
when we came aboard.

Again, I don't know where or when  
this will be mailed.

Love,  
Esther

*(A section of this letter was cut off)*

It rocks ship not very much.

Kay and I are in a room for two and  
are very lucky. The rest run from 3-8. I  
just followed my nose and got here.

The food is excellent but only 2  
meals a day. We really didn't mind.

Back section part of the cut off

Marian, I got your letter and  
mother's card today. Also, a letter from  
Red and two from the girls. That is the  
second mail in a week I don't know  
when the next will be it at all. Today  
we ate at 9 and 6:15, tomorrow 7 and  
4:30. We have lots of silver and dishes  
and after drinking out of bowls and  
sitting on stools, it is wonderful. I guess  
we might as well enjoy it while we can.  
None are sick yet, but your head feels  
light and your stomach lighter.

*(next section cut off)*

Just keep writing when you don't  
hear but only once a week.

I'm glad that you got the dishes,  
and the plans are coming ok. I'll sure be  
thinking of you and the wedding bells.

It is bed time.

Love,  
Esther

*Kay refers to roommate Kathleen Marren, born 1913 in  
England. I could find no record of her after 1951, when  
she is still single and a nurse in Philadelphia.*

—x—  
1942

Dear Folks,

I borrowed this as mine is packed.  
We're having a few complications plus  
delays and more delays. I expected to  
be gone ere this. I'm here! A few more  
ups and downs!

I was to church and communion  
today. Very few went as we were  
counting the minutes. I'm sure glad  
that you brought me up to go and I do

always go, and try to urge others to go,  
too. I don't know what the future will  
hold, but I'm not worrying.

I don't know how long we'll be at  
the port, but I hope we zoom out, since  
I can't be home for July 30. Why hang  
around.

So, I'll attempt to remember  
all you've taught me and with your  
prayers, I'll be O.K.

Love,  
Esther

P.S. 115 (degrees) in the shade!

—x—

Undated  
(Likely June, 1942)  
Mon. afternoon

Dear Folks,

I would have liked to have written  
sooner, but I just couldn't.

Thanks so very much for  
everything. The cake was delicious and  
was all gone before I left for Richmond  
except one piece which I saved for one  
of the girls who was working. I've worn  
the necklace several times and the  
stationary will be very useful. I got 3  
handkerchiefs from one of the girls, a  
pair of stockings from another and one  
says that her gift is coming yet. I got  
cards from Bert, Anne, Aunt Dessie,  
Helen Johnston, Mary Kelso, the boys,  
one of the girls here and letters from  
Aunt Mary, and Aunt Rettie. It was  
certainly well remembered. Also, a card  
and letter from Martha,

In Bert's letter she told me of her  
engagement to Carl somebody she met  
in Warren. I met him last winter and  
am not overly pleased.

She plans on working another year  
before marriage. I wouldn't be surprised  
if she broke it. One of the girls' sisters  
died of rheumatic fever and her brother  
was killed in a fall the next week. She  
was working with Bert in Warren. I  
liked her very much.

You are doubtless very anxious  
to hear of my Richmond trip. I'm  
wondering if I couldn't tell you a bigger  
piece of news concerning someone near  
home.

Sat A.M. Aunt Maye got a letter

from Annabelle telling of Uncle Charley's marriage to Ethyl and their three weeks old daughter. Annabelle is staying at Grandma Fries. I thought that news almost as good as a bomb.

I left here about 2:30. Took a taxi to Aunt Maye's from the station. Got there about 5:30. Charles came in as we were finishing eating. He had been down to Langley Field for his physical exam for a flying cadet. Is very anxious to pass.

Sat. Malinda and I went down street. Saw "Moon Over Miami." In the evening had George's fiancé to dinner.

They are pretty certain that he is in Iceland.

Haven't heard from him for 6 weeks. They address his ail to the Postmaster in New York City, and he forwards it. She is very very nice and they like her a lot. Geo. can't get married for 2 years after graduation. He is district attorney for his ship and certainly is tough on the boys.

They have a beautiful 8 room house. It is very nicely finished and has a front back lawn. It is in the residential section.

Harold Fries is still in the hospital, doesn't know when he'll get out. His address is: Ward 5, Station Hospital, Ft. Jackson A. Carl (sic).

He is also a Cpl. Aunt Maye says that he looks so well in uniform.

Aunt Maye told me several things about the Fries. They would probably have accepted Ethel, but now they will never will. I think it is terrible to have such discord in a family. Now while ours is all together, it seems to be an awful shame that we have so much. All six of us are plenty stubborn. I do wish we could have electricity and have a bath. I'd certainly dislike to have a lot of people, I know it. When I hear cracks about farmers, I often say that I'm a farmer's daughter. They always say "Oh you're different. You don't come from the back woods." Sometimes I think that I really do. Why save all the ones anyway. Want to give it to some in-law that won't appreciate it? No reference

to present prospects. Right now. I think we'd all rather see mother with a hired girl every day, Daddy with an earphone and the house made little more modern. Prices are going to go up more.

Aunt Maye, Malinda and Charles' girlfriend lives there. Melinda wants to stay a couple weeks somewhere. She isn't keen on Aunt Molly's. Asked me about Martha. I didn't know what to advise.

I must wash my hair this afternoon. It is so "flyie" (sic) when clean and then in a week it is so oily.

One of the boys came in the office the other day, picked up the sewing kit and sewed on a button. I calmly watched.

The mosquitos aren't so bad now, but the "jiggers" whatever they are, make life miserable. I'd be scratched all day.

It is mail time.

Love,  
Esther

*Geo. (George) is otherwise unidentified.*

*Bert, also seen as Bertha, is her cousin Bertha Jane Kendall King (1908-2002).*

*Anne refers to her cousin Anne Johnston Lodge (1915-1997).*

*Aunt Dessie refers to her aunt Hadassah Jane Kendall (1885-1948).*

*Helen Daniels Johnston (1901-1964) was married to her cousin Harry Johnston.*

*Mary Kendall Kelso Baker (1925-2021) was a cousin.*

*Martha refers to her aunt Martha Mary Kelso, (1888-1971).*

*Aunt Mary likely refers to her cousin Mary M. Johnston (1870-1950).*

*Annabelle is likely her cousin, Martha Annabelle Mellott (1919-1962).*

*Aunt Maye is her Aunt, Harriet Maye Mellott Hagerman (1885-1950).*

*Charley may refer to Maye Mellott's son Charles. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and was a sergeant. He, sadly, was reported as Missing In Action.*

*Ethel is otherwise unknown as is her baby.*

*Harold Fries (1910-1997) was a captain in the U.S. Army. He was a son of her aunt Jessie Mellott Fries. Grandma Fries must refer to his grandmother, Ida*

Fries, (1859-1954).

Melinda refers to Melinda Hagerman Brown, Maye's daughter.

—x—

Undated  
Likely July, 1942  
Sat. P.M.

Dear Folks,

I'm writing often enough not to have to write so much at a time. I worked in the kitchen today. I liked it, but a couple old maids annoyed me greatly. I've just got to get a man when this is over.

If you haven't mailed the dresses, include those blue shorts – one piece over and excuse the hangers.

I got a letter from the Kelso's today. I'm sending it to Marian. We'll send you hers. She seems very busy with Mrs. Locke ill. Her clothes sound quite the thing. I'm sure sorry to miss it.

If Marian wants dishes and they are more than I want to pay, would my brothers help me out? I told her to select them and tell me how much. My finances are O.K. I just hope we don't get stuck in a hotel sometime. I'm making allotments to get a bond every 3 mos. They are to be mailed to you, mother. Can't you put them in Dad's box? I'm sending a semi-will sometime, too. I'm naming Hollis and you as administrators. I'll tear it up when I come back. You can put it in the box, too, can't you?

I have some other letters to write so be good, you all.

Love,  
Esther

Do you and pop have wills? I think that you should. If I didn't give you my insurance paper, will you look in my drawers for it? I like the wall paper.

*The Kelso's refer to her aunt Martha Kendall Kelso and her husband Harry Kelso.*

*Mrs. Locke is otherwise unidentified.*

—x—

Undated  
Likely July, 1942

Dear Folks,

Did you notice my new address?

Use it from now on.

This A.M. I mailed my overnight bag. I put those shoes in it just to fill space around my camera. One-half hour later I learned that I had to send my winter things home. You'd better get some moth balls around them. They are packed very tightly so you'll have to repack them. I took the lining out of my overcoat and am taking it at the present time. I may get sent back from the port.

When my check comes, give Marian \$25. I have some there now, but I have to pay for my food,

I'll write to you as often as I can until we sail altho (sic) they may not mail them afterwards. I don't know if there is air-mail service or not. I won't expect a letter oftener than once a week.

I'm enclosing Aunt Martha's letter which came this A.M.

I'm so sorry I can't be at the wedding, but I'll be expecting pictures. The required film is 616.

After lunch.

I just discovered that I get partial payment perhaps. If that is true, Marian, you'll get your wedding present before your wedding. I'm awfully sorry things are thus.

My address: Lt. Esther M. Mellotte, No. 724889, 23rd Station Hospital, APO #1260, c/o Postmaster, Miami, FL

With the postmarks you'll see when I stop mailing letters here. Remember that list of names.

Love,  
Esther

(same letter continued)

Fri.

Hi!

Just a P.S. I do think this will be the last! I sure hope so! When you're going you might as well go, and I can't go to Cito July 30. I wish everything for you, sis, and I'm so sorry I can't be there, but there is no choice!

I had a letter from Charles today. He said that he had had a telegram from home that his mother is nearly dead. He hopes to come home, but I have my doubts. He thought so much of

her, too. If he did come he wouldn't be able to find me.

Well this is about all. My thoughts are with you for July 30, and I am so anxious to know about it.

Out for a jag.

Love,  
Esther

*Charles is otherwise unidentified.*

*The wedding is that of her sister Marian to Fred Spancake.*

—X—

Sat P.M.  
Wed.  
7/22/1942  
Ft. Moultrie, SC

Dear Folks,

I don't know when this will be mailed, but I'll write. They aren't mailing any letters at the present time. So I don't know when you'll get it.

Remember my curls I don't have any. I just got about 3 inches cut off. It is so much cooler.

I've been swimming in salt water. It is more or less a bay and very calm. The waves are not at all big.

The sand is so beautiful and soft, and you can walk way out in the water before it gets too deep.

It is so warm. Warmer than before for eleven years. You perspire all over. Our stockings get wet.

There is a fairly nice breeze right now but so warm when we get up in the morning.

We seldom wear slacks and are tired of wearing uniforms.

There is no town to go to. I wanted a silk blouse as they are much easier done up, but we aren't allowed off the post.

It is a beautiful spot and a lot of palm trees. However, it isn't Florida.

We may get a new A.P.O. number but use the one I've got. Write on occasion airmail one.

The train from Bragg down was so dirty.

Now don't worry, please.

Love,  
Esther

*Bragg refers to Ft. Bragg, NC. Apparently she shuttled between several bases during initial entry into the service.*

—X—

July 30, 1942

Dear Folks,

I suppose you're all settled and the wedding over. I tried to make a mental picture of it, but it wasn't very successful. I thought about you lots and lots, and longed to be there, but as you know, I wasn't. I'm so anxious to hear of it.

Life here is the same. I'm still not seasick, and hope that I won't be. Food is still very good. I read an awful lot and we are enjoying sitting on deck. The water is very blue and sparkles in the sunshine. There are some beautiful sunsets, too.

We wear slacks except to dinner in the evening. Then we put on uniforms. I haven't had a dress on for three weeks now.

I write you a letter not by airmail. You'll probably get this one first. I wish I could stop to see Charles but that wouldn't do, would it?

We have a ship newspaper daily, so we keep somewhat in touch with all the goings on.

I hope that you are all ok and that you rest some now that your oldest daughter has done gone and got married.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Shipboard

Dear Folks,

Doubtlessly before this, you've received notice from the government concerning our arrival. It won't be long there, but we don't know how much farther we travel.

On the way over I met a Doctor from Eustis (rest of paragraph deleted by censor)

We're hoping that there is mail waiting for us, but no one knows.

I'm anxious for all the news. Hope you're all O.K. I guess it is corn and peach time. Don't work too hard on

Carl school days again! Guess Hollis doesn't like to think of it either. Has Pop sold the other farm and sis should be housekeeping now.

Love,  
Esther

*Carl is her younger brother, Carl N. Mellott  
(1928-2002).*

—✕—

Africa

Aug. 30, 1942

Dear Sis,

It was wonderful to find mail waiting for me when I arrived – 17 letters and I think we'll soon have some more. A month today! I'm so glad that everything came off as scheduled and I know you were lovely! Imagine Jeanne catching the bouquet! I am so sorry to hear that Hollis is 1A. I can say that he'll travel a lot if he is called.

I wish that I could describe it all but one of the first things we saw was a sailor wanting to know if anyone was from Philadelphia. Small world isn't it!

When we got to our destination, we were to live in a hotel until our camp is built. There is a veranda outside our room (I'm living With Kay again). I'm sitting there now. Our first meal – we had steak and French-fried potatoes in a six-course meal and a center (rest of sentence deleted by censor). So, you see we were not roughing it as we thought we might be, of course, that won't go on forever. We are very fortunate in arriving safely and are somewhere in Africa. We have no immediate duties. Are in no danger of bombings, however, so don't worry.

Tell Fred that I'm remembering all his advice. So accordingly, I went to a dance last night. There was good old American music and a nice blond!

So you see Africa is civilized.

The missionaries where we were to church this A.M. were very cordial and have invited us to their home.

Another missionary at another place took us to a native village and through their hospital. Also to his home



*Leopoldsville Nurses.*

for tea. He reminded me very much of Dr. Findley.

I'm still very glad I decided to come and think all will be O.K. I've seen some beautiful and interesting things. Laughing is our chief difficulty.

Hope your cooking is being digested O.K.

Love,  
Esther

You don't need to put airmail stamps on my mail! What is your address?

*Dr. Findley refers to Rev. Dr. Frank Findley (1869-1953).*

—✕—

Aug. 30, 1942  
Africa

Dear Folks,

I just wrote to Marian and Fred. I was so very happy to find mail after so long a time. And especially to hear of the wedding. Had a letter from Aunt Rhoda, too!

We're situated for the present in a hotel. It seems strange to be a foreigner. Their meals – 6 courses – take about 1½ hours. That just slays me anyway, they've got American ideas – French-fried potatoes and steak. There was a (three words censored) on the table, too. You see we're not roughing it. Are in no danger of bombings and are very fortunate.

You don't need to put airmail stamps on and don't write more than once a week. The 1st letter was mailed

Aug. 3.

I hope Hollis isn't called, but if he is, he'll get around. I've seen some very interesting things but are not permitted to describe it at all. Africa isn't bad anyway. We were to church this A.M. The missionary invited us to his home. At another place the missionary took us through to a native village and thru the hospital.

Do take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther

Everyone laughs at a town called Cito. They think it very queer name.

*Cito is the name given to the closest village to her family's farm.*

—X—

Sat.

Dear Folks,

I got your letter today. I was rather surprised at the enclosed letter. I wondered what he meant when he said that he hadn't had a letter from me for so long.

I'll send it to him to prove that I wrote him.

I intend to write 10 letters tonight. It isn't 0:00 (sic) yet so I reckon I'll get part done.

Yes, I think that you've gotten all the questions answered except about the dishes. Did you get them, and how much.

Our time is definitely limited – perhaps more so than we suspect.

I'm writing Pop a letter.

Watch for my new insurance policy, and for my bonds.

We are at a loss to take – 150 lbs. in all. That includes military equipment. I sent the laundry bag. Use anything you want.

Marian, the dress is not new. I got it in May. I'm sorry that you misunderstood. Do you have the address counted.

When I get married, I want a white gown and a white robe. Just you wait and see. I get letters from 2 captains, 2 brevets and a PFC. Should make one out of that. If they lose Egypt and Russia, I'll be an old maid when it is

over.

I had a letter from Capt. Medoff today. He wrote me about 2 weeks ago which I never got.

The white frog pin looks nice on that pink dress. The blue earrings look nice, too.

I've written this at intervals. Have Charles to write to yet.

Love,  
Esther

Don't open Pop's letter. The clock is new I couldn't wind it.

*Captain Medoff refers to Captain Joseph Medoff.*

—X—

Sept. 8, 1942

This is #2 in the series I started.

Two years ago yesterday I became a graduate nurse. Little did I think that I'd be in Africa now. We were to have a class reunion but I have my doubts very much if they did. We are all too scattered.

We're still not working – two are. I'm hoping my time will soon come.

I'm not bored. I was to a staff dinner last week – a lot of big shots there. Sat. night there was a party for the officers, nurses and soldiers. We were permitted to dance with the soldiers. They seem to enjoy it and sure wore us out. The officers didn't have a choice. I met one of the boys that I came to Washington that week-end. Needless to say we were both surprised.

Yesterday I had some cherry pie. It didn't taste like yours, but what can I expect. I can't remember whether I wrote you since I went to that mission tea. I've had choc. cake there and almost devoured it off the plate.

Our chaplain is tops, however, we are too far away to go to his services. We frequently see him however.

Tell Aunt Rhoda that I want to know bank balance Sept. 1. I have a stub not filled out. Don't send any magazines or packages. We might never get it. It is better to get letters frequently, than both at intervals. The weight makes a difference.

I hope you still have Dorothy to help.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Sept. 30, 1942

Dear Folks,

When it came my turn to work, of course, it was for night duty. There are two of us on 16 hours. We take turns sleeping. Right now everything is so quiet except for some dripping plumbing. There are a series of bugs scampering around.

I slept from 9-2. When I got up, I decided I wanted some hot chocolate, but the nearest thing was Ovaltine. I mixed that, powdered milk, and water. The directions weren't written in English so perhaps that is why most of it went down the sink.

Anne wrote that there is a picture of me in Lodge's window. She said it is one at a desk. Couldn't you have sent a better one? It really doesn't matter.

I wrote to the aunts last night. It was a job as I was so terribly sleepy.

I haven't gotten any newspapers yet, if they ever do come through, there will be plenty of them I had never thought of Cito as a funny name but almost everyone who hears of it laughs.

I told Aunt Rhoda that we had bought a sewing machine. What we now need is an electric iron for this current.

I hope all is well with you. The canning season should be over, mostly. But there is plenty of fall work. I haven't had a letter from you for over two weeks, but I'll probably get two in the next mail. It often happens that way.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Oct. 13 (1942)

Dear Folks,

I can't remember exactly when I last wrote you, but if it wasn't a week ago, I don't suppose you mind - this is the seventh letter. The censor probably wonders why the numbers on the top.

I just got awake. The ironing board is in our room, and someone awakened me with their gab. Before that I just

ironed five shirts and pressed three skirts. That literally is all my wardrobe. We can now wear slacks to meals, and it is swell to put something on you can wear toeless shoes with and your dirty shirts.

Yesterday I got some clothes pins, I had gotten a clothes line a week ago. Had to get \$1.15 ball of cord to get it. It seems we spend most of our time ironing. After the army I'm never wearing a white blouse again.

Hope all is well with you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Oct. 23, 1942

Dear Folks,

For a couple weeks we heard a rumor of Xmas packages - that we could send over pound. Today I sent a pound to Marian. I thought she'd have more time to wrap them. Send one bracelet and five pins all of which are sterling silver. I hope they are Egyptian made. I sent them for you, Marian, Aunt Rhoda, Aunt Mame, Martha and Mary Kelso. There is almost nothing here to send the men. Tell them I think up what they want, and they can buy themselves.

Wed., we went to another town. Got some souvenirs. The trouble is I want to keep everything and not give it away. I do hope you get what I sent.

We got mail Mon. but haven't had any since. I'm anxious to hear from Hollis. I hope you get along alright. Had letters from Esther and Aunt Mary. Esther said Raymond had bought 3 cows. I do wish you'd send me one.

Yesterday I was to tea at a home here. The lady is so very nice to us. Sends us a car for us to go to church and has some of us out every week.

She told us of her marriage here about twenty years ago. It was quite interesting. They became engaged July 19, 1919, when I was just a day old.

No mail from you has been censored.

Love,  
Esther

Her cousin, Esther Kendall Gingrich, (1895-1959, and husband Raymond Gingrich (1903-1993) are mentioned.

—X—

Nov. 8, 1942

Dear Hollis,

I suppose you're still in bed. And when I go to bed you're up.

A month today at Robinson. It means you won't be there long now. Hope that this reaches you first.

It will soon be time to dress for church. We still go to the local English church. Are sorry that we can't get to our own chaplain's services – she is very well liked and I liked him too.

You never said who from Fulton Co was with you. Your letter sounds as if you are enjoying it.

Yesterday I bought a Life magazine for 40 cents. It was Sept. 14 issue Got a "Women's Home Companion" at the PX one day.

Am anxious to know your next move. The war news sounds very encouraging. If it only keeps up long enough.

Would you like to have my camera? It is at home and you could write Mother for it.

She may get your mail later tonight or tomorrow.

Love,  
Esther

*Robinson is a reference to Fort Robinson in Arkansas where Hollis was stationed.*

—X—

Nov. 8, 1942

Dear Folks,

First, I want to answer your questions. I got the wedding pictures, including the tinted ones. I did not get the A.G.H. clipping. No I'm not surprised that you have not gotten the insurance paper. It took Kay's six months.

How much than offering did you give for me \$10 or \$15. I want to put it in my check book. Marian said that she got my things. I want to know the cost as I wanted too much for Xmas presents. I do hope you got the iron. I want it badly.

By this time you should have gotten the first money I sent. When the second comes and you have time could you get the three \$75 bonds?

I hope you sent Hollis my address. He sounds O.K. I think of you all so much and can't help but worry. The war news sounds so very much better. Home for Xmas 1943.

My hair is getting so much darker. I guess it is no sun as we wear sun helmets continuously. The girls say it is because I ran out of dye.

Love,  
Esther

I wrote Hollis that if he'd like my camera to ask you for it.

—X—

11/17/42

Dear Folks,

Again letter writing time. Worked last week so didn't write any. Just did a big wash so can look forward to an ironing.

Have you been getting my \$55 checks every month?

I hadn't gotten any Heralds as yet, and papers only once.

I used to write to Isabelle, but she didn't answer my last one. Will write sometime soon. Must write to Cousin Margaret, too.

As for Xmas will let you know May let you take your own. Do hope my package got through.

There just isn't anything to write. I'm well and content to be where I am if I were only busier. Kay is on night duty so I'm next door. Don't want to disturb her. My mosquito bites are driving me wild.

The war news sounds so good. "The Yanks are coming." Perhaps I'll see you sooner than expected.

Lenore (Mt. Union) got married recently.

What about the other farm?

Love,  
Esther

*Isabelle and Lenore are otherwise unidentified.*

*Margaret likely refers to her cousin Margaret Mellott Metcalfe (1920-2016), a daughter of her uncle James*

Clarence Mellott (1887-1945) and Bessie Sweigert Mellott, (1890-1967).

—x—

11-22-42

Dear Folks,

Got two letters – Nov 7 and Nov. 12 – this afternoon. Also eleven others and the school paper. Also a Puerto Rican paper from Julius. So I had an enjoyable time for a while.

Just wrote to aunts. Will get there sometime between their birthdays and I forgot Martha Jane's. I just can't remember them over here.

Speaking of birthdays, we're having plenty here now. Buying gifts taxes the mental ability but it helps the morale. The cakes just don't taste like home ones!

We hope not to eat at the hotel for Thanksgiving, Time will tell, however.

Both Aunt Dessie and Aunt Rhoda wrote that you seem to be alright. Doubt if anyone would tell me otherwise.

Too bad about Cousin Margaret. Must write her today, too. Don't know if we can get Xmas cards though. Will write to Marshall Comerer soon.

In the school paper I learned two very interesting things. Carl Mellotte. Soph. Vice Pres. and Carl Johnston at Penn State. How can they afford it? Got a Xmas card from Eliz. J. Thank her for me, please.

If I got nothing else but the iron, I'd be happy indeed. Wonder if they'll get through. Please take the money and before Jan. 1 so I can get it balanced. As for the blouses, I can use them. Have two silk ones very worn and the cotton ones stain easily. If not I can get rid of them, I'm sure.

Some of the other girls haven't heard of their money. So perhaps it is ok. Will send Xmas checks soon.

I bought a chair for Kay's and my room. They want to know if I plan taking it to the states with me.

Again, I didn't hear from Hollis. He'd better write me soon or (sentence ends)

Last night the nurses had a banquet – just girls. We sang songs and ended with the "Star Spangled Banner." It took the local people in the dining room some time to catch on and stand up.

Yes, people are very nice to read in many ways. There are many things I wish to tell you but can't. When the war is over, I think I'll raise chickens, too.

As for Hollis' letters, be careful what you send me. Some things shouldn't leave the states but tell him to write me.

Bertha and Rebecca are sending me Life Magazines for Xmas. Wonder how many will go through.

I'm well so don't worry about me.

Love,  
Esther

*Rebecca Jane Johnston Stadler, a cousin, (1906-1986).*

*Marshall Comerer was a son of her aunt Etta Mellott Comerer.*

*Dessie refers to her aunt Hadassah J. Kendall (1885-1948).*

*Carl Johnston was a cousin (1924-2014).*

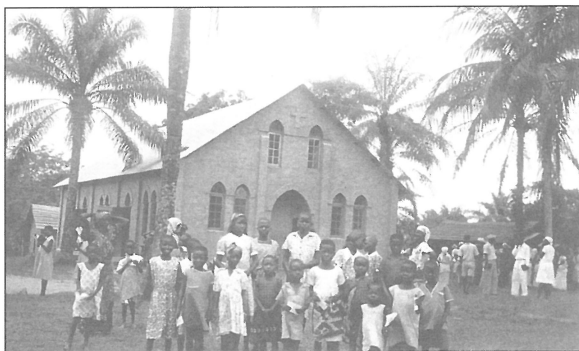
*Martha Jane refers to Martha Jane Mellott (1917-1952).*

—x—

Nov. 29, 194 (2)  
Sab. 2:30 P.M.

Dear Folks,

I guess you're in church. Hope you aren't sleeping through the service. We had a very good service at the Mission



*Leopoldsville Church Members.*

Church this A. M. One of the soldiers sang a solo and one had a violin solo.

Got your letter of Nov. 19 yesterday – also one from Pittsburgh of Nov. 21. For the first time I got the “News” airmail. It was the Nov. 19 one. This week I also got 4 others – Aug. and Sept. ones.

So Catherine Harris’ baby came. And Chas. Kendall’s not living on the farm? I saw something in the paper about their being home for the weekend.

Got a letter from Martha about the expected baby. I’m so pleased about it.

Nice about the Honor Roll. I wonder where the next name will be.

Am sending you a picture.

Got a letter from Hollis yesterday. Very short but he sounds ok. Am anxious for his new address. Hope that it is nearer home.

Have to start sending my Xmas cards. Have a hard time getting envelopes for them.

Marian and Lee seem to be getting along alright. I do wish that you could visit them. Perhaps I’ll be home soon to keep house for you while you do some traveling.

Mother, I shaved my legs yesterday. I suppose I’ll be sorry, but I had so much hair and no one wears stockings.

It is time to go to one of the missionaries’ teas. We’ll have cake, cookies, and tea. I have absolutely nothing else to do. One of the girls has his car so will drive up. It is a very quiet day.

Suppose you had some snow. Hope it isn’t such a cold winter except in Russia.

Tell Mary Johnston I received the letter and thank her for me. She writes sometimes.

Love,  
Esther

*Catherine Harris is unknown.*

*Charles Kendall, likely a cousin (1920-1998).*

*Lee is Fred Spancake’s son (1939-2021). He was adopted by Marian.*

*News refers to the local newspaper Fulton County News.*

Mon P.M.  
Dec.7 (42)

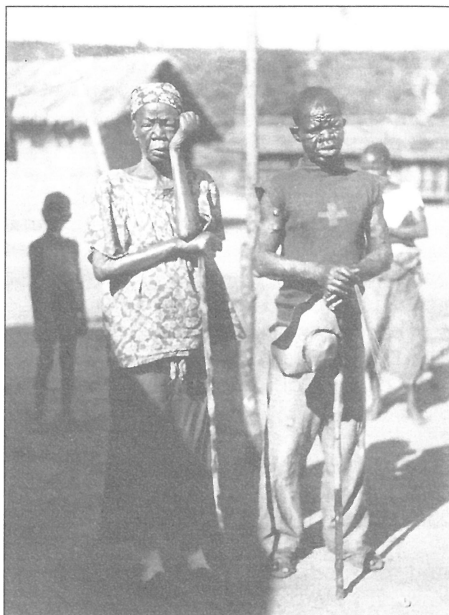
Dear Folks,

I remember I wrote you one year ago today. After I heard that Peal Harbor was bombed. Little did I think I’d be in Africa a year later.

Did you have enough sugar to bake Carl a birthday cake?

Yesterday we visited a neighboring mission. Had a lovely time. Met a nurse who knew Miss Pilegarde the chief nurse at Eustis, She was a class mate of hers. While there we visited a leper colony. The first lepers I’d ever seen. It was quite interesting. They had the non-infectious children segregated from their parents. In the morning we went to the native church. Had a local native minister. His congregation seemed to like him. Of course, I couldn’t understand him. They did some beautiful singing.

Got your letter about the clipping. Sorry that you saw it. I had hoped that you wouldn’t. Hoped you saved it as I’d like it very much. Don’t worry about me. My health is excellent and I’m certainly not working too hard. Some



*Leopoldsville Lepers.*

things just have to happen. Some day I'll tell you about it.

I'm typing on duty. The Corporal wants to close up and so do I. I've been trying to talk and type or I wouldn't have so many mistakes.

Aunt Rhoda wrote that the bank had received a draft from the NY Bank. There is supposed to be another one. \$112.00 and \$75.00.

Love,  
Esther

*Miss Pilegarde refers to 1st Lt. and Chief Nurse at Ft. Eustis, Anne K. Pilegarde (died 1995).*

—X—

Dec. 14, 1942

Dear Folks,

I wrote you last week, but apparently sent the letter to the laundry in my uniform pocket. There is not much to tell. Expect some mail tonight. Hope to hear where Hollis is. Am saving a Christmas card. If I don't send it soon, there isn't much point in sending it. Have the rest sent.

Went to do Christmas shopping this P.M. Everything is different here. Very few decorations. The artificial trees cost at least four times as much. Don't know what I'll get the girls. Think perhaps it will be photograph albums. One of them Rae, has already given me a very lovely blue blouse. We haven't gotten any packages yet, but we expect them sometime. Hope that you have received the one sent before this.

Last night three of us went to one of the missions for dinner. Had prune cake for dessert. In the afternoon we were to another house for tea. At noon we had chicken here. Got a lot of steak, apples, and oranges. So you see I'm perfectly O.K.

Am still working in the E.E.N.T. Clinic. Like it very much.

Have you had any snow? Could you send 'em a handful? Hope it isn't too cold a winter. I'll be home next Christmas. How is Carl doing? How many Christmas presents did he buy. Where are you going to spend the day? Marian wrote that they were coming up after Christmas. Do hope that Hollis

gets home but have my doubts.

Guess Carl doesn't get to Y.P.C.U. now. It is too bad but can't be helped. You and Dad get as much rest as you can. I hope you have a very nice Christmas, and don't worry about your wondering children.

We are giving some money to the Missions here. Are contributing to three of them. Have almost \$2000, mostly from nurses. They have been so nice to us in so many ways. We took a collection the Sabbath we were to one of them. You remember I wrote about being to a leper colony. Don't know how much it was but it was a fair amount.

It is dinner time so must quit.

Merry Christmas!

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Dec. 29, 1942  
11:30 P.M.

Dear Folks,

I'm kind of warm. Dashed out of the movies to the hotel and dined and then on duty. Tomorrow, I'm going on 3-11. So this time tomorrow night I'll be going off duty.

Got 10 cards and 11 letters today. No packages. There are 50 tons at one point waiting to be sorted so it will take some time. Am sure that I should have more cards. Didn't get one from Ella Kendall? Suppose she expected me to write her. Thank Mable, Mary Jane Duffey, for cards and Miss Bess and Aunt Dessie for letters. If you please! Tell Miss Bess that I really enjoyed her letter and will answer it.

Am glad that you sent Bertha a card. She doesn't write to any of us. I just can't understand it. Had a card from Lydia. She said that (illegible) is in the Army stationed in Butler.

A card from Mrs. Locke and from Aunt Mollie greatly surprised me.

From two sources, I heard of your cold. Naturally I'm not supposed to know. Am glad that you got to club meeting with Mrs. Unger.

Marian didn't say if she'd gotten my package. Fear that she might not.

Got a letter from Hollis. I'm so glad that he is a P.F.C. Apparently, he liked what he is doing. That is my third letter from him.

Hope Lee is O.K. long before this. Mrs. Locke wrote on her card: "Marian is kept pretty busy. She has a big house, and then the boy is a care, too, but she loves him so much." Don't think you have any worries over her.

Xmas Eve we were very busy. Our patient had a relapse, and they were chasing after oxygen until 11 p.m. Xmas Day. We had a turkey dinner, and went to the movies in the P.M. I knew mail was coming today, and was so excited I couldn't sleep.

Hope that you had a nice day.

Love,  
Esther

*Mary Jane Johnston Duffey, was a cousin (1889-1981).*

*Ella Kendall refers to cousin Kezia Ella Kendall (1879-1961).*

*Bess is likely family friend Bessie Hann (1883-1986).*

*Aunt Mollie refers to Mollie Mellott Gregory, (1898-1946).*

—X—

1943

Jan. 3, 1943,  
Sat P.M. 10:00

Dear Folks,

I'm now working 3 P.M. to 11 P.M. My patient is fixed for the night altho (sic) he is still awake. He's so much better. Did I tell you he had pneumonia?

It is another year. Went to a New Year's Party which wasn't too interesting. No news such as bills, etc.

Slept until 11 A.M. Had no church services this A.M.

I read the Bible through once in the last two years. Finished it Dec. 24.

Have seen some beautiful roses lately - red, white and pink ones.

Wonder how cold it is with you. How we'd like some snow!

Hope in your next letter, you have received the Xmas package I sent. When thinking back over the things I've collected, I wonder about gifts for people. Can't find anything for the men,

but then I'll have time yet.

Take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Jan. 20, 1943

Dear Folks,

Yesterday was mail day. Got a letter from Mrs. Irwin. Said that she appreciated your letter so much.

Just got our patient out of bed the first time in four weeks. Was up the day before Xmas for about 10 min. when the relapse occurred. Has been in the hospital since Nov. 27 and still has a couple weeks to go.

Got a new permanent Friday. Like it fairly well. Have had better over in the state of Penna.

Had a letter from Lillian. She is in the army at Butler.

Did you get my State Registration Card back yet? I hope so as I think that it should be.

Had a letter from Anne. She must be quite busy. Presume Mary Lane is staying here while Ken (?) is away. Also, a letter from the Kelso's. They must be quite busy. Hope Uncle Harry's health holds out.

Where was the service flag placed? Were the names of the ones in service read?

It will probably be two months before I receive the paper.

We go off special duty Sat. we think. It will be a nice change. Have enjoyed it so much. Will tell you about it someday.

So Hiley Shimer finally married Marian Morton. Where is Frank Alexander now? He ought to graduate from somewhere soon.

I'm writing on a table between the two beds. One is asleep and the other is trying to.

We had iced cream with whipped cream for dinner last night.

Lil seems to be enjoying the army. I've been in 20 months and 11 days today. Wonder how much longer. Married nurses are staying in the Army now.

Take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther

*Hiley Shimer refers to Benjamin Hiley Shimer (1918-1986); his wife was Marian Morton Shimer (1917-1978).*

*Uncle Harry is otherwise unidentified.*

*Frank Alexander refers to Dr. James Franklin Alexander, (1915-1990).*

*Mrs. Irwin is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—

Jan. 28, 1943

Dear Folks,

Didn't get a letter from you the 1st mail but am sure will in the next. Heard from Hollis and Marian.

To date have gotten 4 Life magazines, 7 Herald and 2 Reader's Digests. Got a Nov. 30 News this week, too.

Last week I got a white slip from Jean. None of those Xmas packages have come through yet, and I suspect never will. If they don't come this week, you'd better collect insurance. The girls gave me a gown, slip and blouse.

Hollis seems very fond of Jean.

I'm off special duty and just taking it easy. Yesterday we went to the zoo.

Don't expect to get those Xmas presents. I'll be greatly surprised if you ever do.

Hear we're getting \$150 a month now. However, we're going to have to pay more of our own episodes.

No more news. Take care of yourselves. Just two more months of winter. Is Blanche still helping you?

Love,  
Esther

*Jean, also seen as Jeanne, refers to family friend Jeanne Greathead Hutchinson (1916-2017).*

—X—

Feb. 4, 1943

Dear Folks,

There are several things I want to ask about but can't think of them right now.

I'm sending \$300 for the bank savings account. Can't send it in one order so am sending one to you, one to Aunt Rhoda and one to Aunt Mame.

They can get them cashed easier.

Haven't had a letter from you for over two weeks. Didn't get any mail at all this week. Kay got a Xmas package so perhaps mine may eventually come thru. A friend of ours from somewhere else in Africa sent us a box of choc. bars today. We had steaks and apple pie. The steak tastes like it has been in cold storage too long but is rather good any way. Had turkey Sabbath. We were to another town this A.M. Took some rather interesting pictures. If ok I'll send you some of those.

We're commissioned officers now. No more relative rank or a Second Lt. Are getting \$150 a month with 10% extra for foreign duty. However, we have to pay for laundry and rooms out of that. It doesn't make too much difference. We wear blue uniforms (seersucker) all the time now.

The board of the Presbyterian Hosp. in NY where most your doctors are from sent each nurse a compact, 3 tubes of lipstick and a box of candy. It was very Christmas looking even though arriving a month late.

The war news never continues to sound good. Hope that is continues so. The sooner we can come home.

Suppose Hollis has moved again. Do hope he gets home first.

Oh by the way, Valentine Greetings!

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

2/9/43

Dear Folks,

Your letters of Jan. 16, 19 arrived last night the first I'd heard from you in three weeks. There must be another somewhere as got one from Aunt Dessie dated Jan. 29, Aunt Rhoda Jan. 26. We get both regular mail and V-Mail.

No Xmas packages. Now do tell me what you sent besides what I asked for. I hope if insured you still have the stubs and go ahead and have them traced. Sooner the better.

One of the girls got pictures of the snow in Richmond. That is hard to

imagine.

Much to my surprise, I got a letter from Jeanne Cutchall to the care (?) of the family.

I do so hope that you can visit Marian. I understand the difficulties involved. Hope that they can get nearer home. Gasoline must be quite some problem.

How much do you get for eggs?

Am glad Dad is ok. How about you? Roast your ankle in the oven?

I was just counting since Sept. 1937. I've been home 11 times. Around 150 days. Not very often, is it?

Did you get my Pa. State Reg Card?

Got my alumnae due, too. Last night was counting my finances. Have about \$1100 including bonds. Can't understand it. Decided to pay my \$25 Endowed Room fund at A. G. H. Can't keep all that.

I never hear from Bert and don't intend writing her.

One of the boys who works for the government but not in the Army gave me 12 records. Many are new ones that came out since we left the states. Everyone appreciates it very much. Thru the consul he got some magazines for the hospital. One of his friends came up with him Sat and they seemed to enjoy American food. They took us out to another town. We rode around in one wheeled carts pulled by a native and pushed by another.

Saw a crocodile Sat. and 4 on Sat. Yesterday we were watching some birds. Usually, I work from 5-7 nights and days. However good food and no work doesn't keep my waistline. Sleep at least 10 hours.

I told you we got \$150 plus 10% for foreign duty. Things are expensive here. 85 cents pants, 75 cents Kotex. Pictures are terribly expensive. Still want to send you some.

Wonder where Hollis now?

Love,  
Esther

Give Hollis my camera if he will take it. Put his picture in the paper.

*Jeanne Cutchall refers to family friend, Jean Cutchall*

*Black (1926-1980).*

*A.G. H. refers to Allegany General Hospital.*

—X—

2/13/43

Dear Folks,

I'm enclosing a picture. It is not very clear but is of a chimpanzee and me. My handkerchief is on the ground in front.

I wrote you I've seen a hippo. Have seen him twice since. He is pretty far out in the river and one can't see so plain. Has an enormous mouth.

Last night the sunset was gorgeous. The clouds were lit up and all over the sky. They were pink on a background of blue. The sun on the water made it multicolor, and it was really gorgeous. The moon is so silver and shines very brightly.

Tonight, the sun was just a red ball, seems larger than at home.

While we were down by the river, three canoes went by. The first had only one occupant and he, perhaps 30 years old and nude. We were much more embarrassed than he. Usually, you see all of them dressed except an occasional child. The women's dresses are long and very brightly patterned. They have fairly low necks, back and front, wide short sleeves. (illegible) on. They have a piece fronted around the middle that they use to fix their babies on their backs. Poor kids to young to hold their heads up, wobble around. They carry a kid on their back and a load of anything from vegetables to wood on their heads and sometimes something in their hands. They nurse the kids as they go frequently in the queerest positions. The men wear ordinary clothing. If one pair is too ragged, they put another pair on top, the hem of one pair covers the holes of another.

Hope you're ok. Valentine's Day is tomorrow.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Feb. 18, 1943

Dear Dad,

Just a letter to wish you a happy

birthday. I've seen no birthday cards here. And if there were, they would not be printed in English, and we could not send it. I'm on duty. Kay, my roommate, is too. We aren't busy. I can hear her arguing religion with one of the patients. They are both Catholics, but one is more strict than the other, one-third of the nurses go to the Catholic Church, one-fourth don't go to church, and the other half go to the Protestant church. Of course, it varies each week.

This A.M. I went to town. Rode down in an ambulance and back in two-ton truck. The local store

It certainly sells many American products. One wonders how they all got here. South Africa seems to have many industries similar to ours.

We seldom see cows here. There is plenty of grass, but there are so many snakes, and other grazing problems. We see some corn which is of inferior quality, but no wheat. The natives use a wild root for flour. Eat monkey meat. I've talked to missionaries who were here 25 years ago. Then there were no American or European food-stuffs and their diet was solely native - roots, monkey and greens. One can only imagine the terrific change there has been. I think the natives have done good to have progressed so far. Because of their color they are mistrusted and considered very dumb by the local whites,

You certainly miss Hollis. I know the longer we're away the more we love Cito, Pennsylvania.

I must close. It is time for the patients to go to sleep. Again I wish you a Happy Birthday, and many, many more, and to be there next year.

Love,  
Esther

—x—



*Leopoldsville Natives.*

3-3-43

Dear Folks,

Didn't get a letter from you this week, but the three from last week made up for it.

I'm down by the river sitting on a stone wall. Three of us came down to write letters and hopefully to see the hippo and were tired of the barracks. It looks kind of dull now. Caravan (?) cats with just blankets, no pillows or sheets, but we don't mind.

Aunt Rhoda sent me a picture of just their house with the snow and one of Hollis. That is big enough. I sure wanted one. Also got a letter from Jeanne. That is the second one. She's getting quite charming. Hollis' letter from Butler sounded a bit doubtful of a furlough. Wonder if he'll end up in my neck of the woods.

There has been so many bugs the last two nights. They look like fog. The screens were just covered, and some found their way in, of course.

My income tax will be from \$80 - \$100 at the least. Sounds encouraging, doesn't it.

Hope that you have yours done ere this. Aunt Mame wrote that you are to visit Marian. Hope it will work out as planned. Got 5 "Heralds," 4 "News," 5 "Lifes" and 1 "Reader's Digest." Yesterday. Some of the girls got packages. Kay is trying to revive my hopes, but I've given up.

Got letter from Charles and Jule.

They are now in the same (illegible). It does complicate things a bit.

Got paid Monday. Decided I'd take American money. Got \$100 bill and am trying not to have to break it for local money. The first one I've ever owned. It was quite a thrill.

No, I'm not sunburned. The sun burns but doesn't tan so I keep out of it. We wear helmets almost exclusively when outside in the daytime. I'll send you a picture with me when on. We have very few flies thank goodness.

Am glad you don't have to eat horse meat as I saw in Life. I've invited the gang to the farm for fresh horse stew after the war. However, they want cottage cheese and butter-milk. I didn't promise that.

Am off duty now for a couple weeks. I'm writing a birthday to Aunt Ruth.

Love,  
Esther

*Mame refers to her aunt Mary "Mame" Kendall, (1878-1955).*

*Charles, in this letter is otherwise unidentified.*

*Jule, also seen as Julius, is also unidentified.*

—x—

Mar 10, 1943

Dear Folks,

Your letter of Feb. 18 arrived yesterday A.M. You said something about congratulations on raise in rank. Before we were called 2nd Lts. and corresponding rank. Now I'm still a Second Lt. but I have equal pay with the male officers. There is only one 1st Lt. in our outfit. We're usually called Miss \_\_\_ but occasionally Lt. You don't have to write to 2nd Lt. They never do the men.

Hope you're over the cold. Do remember to take care.

All mail gets twisted at times. Comes thru late or vice versa. I know that you write.

How much gasoline do you get per week now? What's the price of eggs, wheat, etc. Most should bring a good price now and hasn't lard gone up?

I was quite surprised to read in the

News that Ray's Bakery has closed.

Last night six doctors and nurses went out to one of the local Englishman's house for dinner. Rather it was a buffet supper and very excellent food – things you don't get in an Army mess. Ham, tongue, sausage biscuits, lima beans, carrots, green beans, lettuce, tomatoes, lobster salad with hard boiled eggs, water cress, bread, butter, apple pie with cheese, ice cream, tarts, lemonade, coffee. We were stuffed to the gills. Oh yes, pickles and beets, onions, cucumbers. It was a treat after so seldom getting any fresh vegetables. She's going to entertain 12 at a time until she has us all. I've written to you before of the English woman who was so nice to us when we lived at the Hotel. We invite them out to camps for dinner occasionally. Saw some interesting tropical diseases.

We're down by the river. The hippo just stuck his head up and grunted. We seldom see more than his head.

Yesterday the Maj. in our outfit took three of us out to one of the native hospitals and of course the maternity ward. The women who had delivered during the night had already gone for a walk that morning. Kids, visitors, husbands were wondering all around. They'd bring in some food and you'd see the women wondering outside in the yard cooking some of it. None looked especially clean. The majority wore their hair in very very tiny plats arrayed in various designs. Must have taken hours to do. They seem happy-go-lucky. There was a private ward too, where the educated ones were. They seemed cleaner. Many had facial markings. Tribal customs and many had their teeth filed in points.

It is nice to be able to tell more now. At first we just couldn't tell anything about the people, etc.

There are many canned goods for sale here. Don't understand how they get here but they do.

Last week we had no outgoing mail service. So you won't have heard for two weeks.

Don't worry about me. I told you a long time ago we were in a no danger here and you can tell by looking at the maps. I get plenty of sleep, good food and walk several miles a day for exercise. We got a huge bunch of bananas yesterday. I could send you some.

It is going to be another hot day.

Wish we could swim, but the river isn't clear, and we must guard against tropical disease especially dysentery.

Am going to World Day of Prayer tomorrow.

Love,  
Esther

*Ray's Bakery was owned by Murray Ray, and located on East Market St., McConnellsburg.*

—X—

March 23, 1943

Dear Folks,

Your letters of Feb. 26 and Mar. 6 arrived today. Am so sorry to hear about Carl. Do hope that he is ok. Ere this. Do have him take care. Wonder if you got to Marian's, Hope so. Please don't try to raise chickens this year. And have Blanche and Dorothy a lot. I'm getting \$165. And I'd much rather you take things easy and let me help. I'm so afraid someone will over do.

Had a letter from Marian, Cousin Ella, Jeanne Cutchall, Elizabeth Johnston, two of the girls, and Jule. Cousin Ella sent a handkerchief. I'll write her very soon. Rather expect to go on 11-7 next week. Hope so. Have not worked at all this month. I'm so tired of loafing and tired of a lot of other things.

Last Friday we went to the Mission Station where the leper colony is. Went with one of the missionaries here. Had a very nice trip. They certainly are a very busy people and so very nice, too. They are wonderful hostesses, too. We got back about 8 p.m. she took us - four nurses and two doctors. The highlight of the meal was guana ice cream short cake. It is a tropical fruit and delicious. We accept so many invitations which we can't repay. I've given almost \$25 to the Mission here also church collection. They've done so

much for us.

Sat. night we had a party. Had a good time at it. Am to have a swim Thursday. Fills up another day.

Got a January "News" today. Nothing much in it.

It rained today so has been cool.

I wish that you could see some of the gorgeous sunsets. The sky is beautiful, and the clouds so many different tints that change momentarily. The reflections on the water are colorful too.

I've counted 10 packages (illegible). Makes me so mad. The ones that weren't mailed on time came through. Some of the girls got at least a dozen. More are supposed to come now so don't send me any.

That was the first bond, wasn't it? Am getting one a month now.

One of our favorite topics of conservation is what we're going to eat our first meal in America, and what color our first civilian outfit will be. We all want high heeled shoes.

*(same letter, next paragraph dated 3/28/48 1 A.M.)*

Went to the movies last night so didn't finish. They have so many show subjects and the news isn't in English so it is rather boresome. I'd just as soon stay at home. If it isn't in English, America is one word we hear quite frequently so it makes us proud again.

Didn't get up until 9 A.M., did some washing and mending. Will write letters until noon. It doesn't seem fair that we should loaf all the time and you not at all. Do get as much help as you can.

I know Carl must be ok by now. Do his tonsils ever bother him?

Love,  
Esther

*Blanche is otherwise unidentified.*

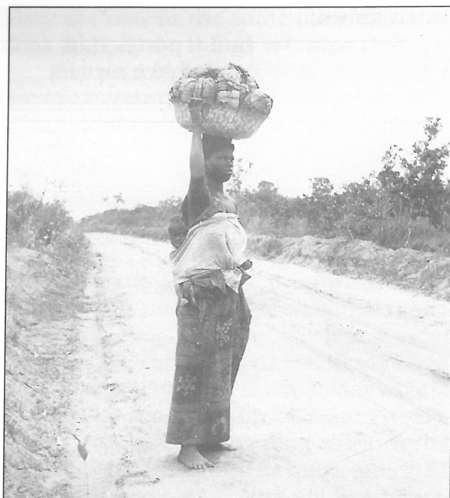
*Elizabeth Johnston here is likely Elizabeth Bradley Johnston Cooper, a cousin and a daughter of James M. Johnston, (1914-2004).*

—X—

March 29, 1943

Dear Folks,

Your letters of March 12 and 13 arrived today. I'm so glad that the



*Leopoldsville Native going to Market.*

packages came through. I'll send another one. Don't show them too much, please, as I've got to sort things as gifts when I get home, but I do want you to enjoy them. How did you like the gruesome vase? The lamp is the wiry one, Carl, the elephants are ivory, and I want you to take one. The crocodile is ebony. I have a couple things I don't want to trust too much. Figuring out what to give away is going to be a problem. That ivory lamp is expensive.

Tomorrow we're going across the river to visit a mission. Will probably get some ivory there.

Hope Carl is ok before this. Weather should be getting warmer. Paid my income tax - 89\$.

Besides the yellow card, was there another receipt for \$25 for the A. G. H. Endowed Room Fund? Please look.

Got a letter from Bea Marpass, the first time I'd heard from her in years. She's in NY, a college dietician. Had an Easter card from Josephine Yamnick - twelve letters all together. Wonder if the Spancakes visit came off. Heard from Hollis. Hope he's located ere this.

Had a nice right time at the picnic Friday. Played baseball, wadded (waded?), and got a sunburn. We rode in an open truck. As we went through

a village the natives waved and yelled "Americans." I go on day duty there. Had expected 11-7 and would have preferred it. Will write again this week. We are having some delicious bananas. Guess you get very few of them now. Be good!

Love,  
Esther

*Bea Marpass and Josephine Yamnick are otherwise unidentified and may have been nurses with her at Allegheny General Hospital.*

—X—

4-1-43

Dear Folks,

Just wrote a long letter to Marian describing a trip. She is to send it to you. Don't want to repeat.

I mailed you, Marian, and Aunt Mame a plant leaf called the "Tree of Life." Place in the soil and it will grow. Perhaps because of the change in temperature you should start it indoors although it should be warm enough outside by the middle of April.

I'm on 7-3 duty now. This is my first day. Guess I won't be too popular as I told them the place was very dirty and started them cleaning.

Am sending another package. In it are two purses one for you and one for Marian. There were made here. Are light now but will turn darker. I kept one just in case these don't reach you.

Go ahead and show the stuff I send. You can put it on the mantle, etc. I don't know what I want to give who.

They are more expensive than you would think. I want something for Aunts Martha, etc., but I hate to part with it, when the time comes.

You'll be busier than ever now what with spring work coming on. Don't plant too big a garden. Does Dad have anyone to help him?

Scrubbed the floor in my room yesterday. First scrubbing I've done for a long time. Had a lot of cob webs but no fleas, thank goodness.

We had ham, (illegible) potatoes, (canned), gravy, peas, apple pie and cheese, for dinner today. Are getting some South African apples now. Are

the hand (?) mine was sent on.

Usually, a bird flies in the hospital. And get up in the high ceiling and can't get out. Doesn't fly low enough for the doors. Yesterday one flew in the office. I told one of the boys to catch it. It finally tired enough to get caught.

Fleas are our worse enemy now. They are all over the hospital area. You have to pick them off your legs before entering the barracks but there are still some in the cots. We also have a rat. He is rather bold. Runs around the rafters even after the lights are on.

Had only three letters this week - Mary Kelso, Marian and Aunt Rhoda. That is the worse since being here. Marian wrote of your visit. Am so glad you got there.

She enjoyed it so much and having a ride all the way sure helped a lot. Now I am anxious for your side of the story. What did Aunt Mame get into while you were gone?

There just isn't anything to write.

Love,  
Esther

*Grace is unidentified.*

—X—

April 16, 1943

Dear Folks,

I'm writing this in the rain. Because we have no glass, it comes right thru the screens. I can feel sprinkle on my feet. When you have no furniture, I guess it doesn't matter.

Today was my first day off duty. Slept late as you can well imagine. This afternoon I did my laundry. While it dried I took a sunbath on the steps. There are too many sand fleas to go out on the grass. Everyone has a picking before they go back to the barracks, but, nevertheless, they still find their way in the blankets.

The rat seems to have gone. Probably scared to death. A couple of officers came over with a shovel and broom. They didn't kill it but chased it.

If you don't hear from me, it is because mail is getting more irregular all the time. This goes out in two days. But the next may or may not be in a

week. Take care of yourselves and don't worry about me.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Sabbath  
4/18/43

Dear Folks,

It is 10:45, no bed time today. Kay is still playing bridge so I may as well wait for her. We're so tired of this place, with all our stuff already out and we just sit around and wait for our turn to go. There sure isn't anything exciting here.

No one sent me a church pledge to sign. I'll get about \$2000 this year. That is a lot of tithe. Is that how it is spelled?

Next Sabbath is Easter. Guess I'll brush my cap and shine my shoes.

Two years ago today I started for Marian's. Am certainly glad that I went there.

The rat and the fleas still make life interesting. My ankles sure are rosy with scratches and around my middle, too. They seem to like our blankets.

I'm thinking of sending another package. I'm going to stop collecting stuff.

Guess I'll go to bed now. Do take care of yourself.

Love,  
Esther

*(Same letter continued)*

Mon. A.M.

I just fixed another package. In it are two luncheon (?) cloths, 6 ivory elephants, 1 ivory necklace, 1 ivory turtle, 1 alligator bag. I wanted to get you a tablecloth, but they cost about \$40. Didn't think you'd want one that expensive. There is supposed to be lovely linens at other points. I do want to get you and Marian a piece. They cost around \$13.00. I'm just like John Seville. Easy come, easy go. I may give Marian one of those. They charge Americans more now. The necklace was bought at night, but I bargained him down until he sold it, so I had to take it. They are worse than Jews.

I expect to be away too long to

try to pick out individual gifts for Aunts Martha and Mary. I have sent everything now except some bracelets, 3 elephants and 1 bag.

Tuesday

In last night's mail a letter from Aunt Mame's came saying that it had taken over a month for a letter to reach her. I do hope that you didn't have a month's wait between letters. Then she said one came in 10 days. Hope that you get a couple then.

So Hollis is in Calif. Without getting home. I'm so sorry. Didn't get a letter from home either. One from Beulah Johnson. We expect mail again this week so there is still hope.

A Nov. package just came for one of the girls. Could it be possible I might get one, too someday? I refuse to let myself hope.

Love,  
Esther

*John Seville is likely John C. Seville (1904-1989), a family friend.*

*Beulah Johnston was a cousin (1901-1976).*

4/20/43

Dear Mother,

I wanted to get something small to send to you for Mother's Day. It could have gone airmail, but there weren't any nice pins, and I couldn't find anything else. I wanted to send a cable, but the ones are by the numbers. You pick out a phrase that corresponds to a number and the numbers are sent. None were very suitable. So I shall make this a Mother's Day letter. Do hope that the mail system straightens out and that you get it on time.

My greatest wish is that I'll see you long before next Mother's Day and I know you wish the same. We can only pray that our wish will be answered. I could have been much more help to you when I was home, I realize now. You worked so hard for so long and now that we're older, you find us scattered. I'm so thankful that Carl's home. It must mean more than words can tell the three of you at home together.

I always think of you before I go to sleep at night. It is about milking there. Do you have Dorothy much? Do please. It will make me worry. Don't try to raise enough eggs and stuff to feed the whole army. You keep that up, you know. We won't come home this winter and visiting will be less, so please don't do too much. The only electricity had gotten through. I suppose that there is no help now. When the war is over, you've just got to have things more easy and move that farm. Then you can have time for Civic Club, etc.

So, mother Dear, I'll be thinking about you. I'm more than thankful that you were my mother and for all the things you've done for me.

Don't worry about me. I'm safe and well, but I'll be happier in Cito.

Love and kisses  
Esther

—X—

4/

Dear Folks,

Just came in from volleyball. My arm sure does ache. This is the second day we played. We've been taking sunbaths for a couple days. I'm tan much better than usual, but I've never been tan in my life, so it is too much to hope for now, but I have nothing to do. I've got some ironing to do but the desire to do it is waning. Went to the store yesterday, the first time this month always buying something when I had nothing else to do. This inactivity is getting me down.

We still have one rat and our house. I hear it overhead at night and wonder if it might fall off.

A group of us Protestants went to the Catholic Chapel for Good Friday. We took our testaments along and listened before their services, so everything was quiet. The Protestants had no service. We sure won't worry about Easter outfits this year.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Easter  
4/25/43

V-Mail

5-16-43

Dear folks,

We got some mail last night. Your letter of late March after your Kresgeville trip was the one.

This A.M. I went to Chapel. Had some work to do, then church. Has been a busy day but with interesting prospects.

Had a very nice church service. The native choir sang, and our favorite minister preached. The church was crowded. Of course, the same clothing does here. It will be getting cooler now. Last night had another big rain.

We're going to take flowers to the cemetery this afternoon.

Nine months today since our feet touched US soil. Seems a long time.

Hope you're taking care of yourselves, and not working too hard. Of course, I know you are.

I'll write as soon as I can again.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

5/3/43

Dear Folks,

Here goes my first V-Mail letter. Will write more carefully so that you can read it when it is photographed. Can't write long letter anymore. If not V-Mail they come by (illegible) they come by, so will send some boat ones, too.

Our travels are not quite over. Have had a very interesting trip. Have seen some nurses that I know that used this. Had some cocoa-cola, candy bars, chewing gum. No home ration cards now, too. Seems funny to see coats again. Give aunts this, my new address. Don't have much stationery. Be sure to write me and use the V-Mail. APO 759, New York City. Hope all is well with you. I'm well much more content now.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Dear Folks,

Just came back from a ham and ice cream dinner. With fresh lemonade. It was quite delicious.

We now have a floor in our tent. Things still get dirty but not so badly.

My watch stopped yesterday. Will probably have to send to Marian to get fixed. I have a cheap one that I can use.

Haven't had mail for over a week. Don't know when will get some. Lost Hollis' address so can't write him. Wonder about Martha and the baby. Hope all is well. School is almost over I want you to give Carl \$5.00 out of my new check. I'll simply recognize him when I see him. Almost a year ago.

One of the boys promised me some warm water so must go. It is duty time. Am rather busy. No bridge (two words illegible). Am ok.

—X—  
V-Mail

5/21/43  
North Africa

Dear Pop,

I hope that it isn't past Father's Day when you receive this. I wanted to write for a week but haven't gotten it done. Seems to me that I'm always walking and ironing. Right now I'm waiting for the captain in charge of the food supply so I can make up the menu for the special diets. Stopped working on the wards today to supervise the diets. Think that it is going to be a headache.

Wish I could come help you all. I don't see how you can get through this summer. I know that you will be over-working. Do try to get help even if it is expensive. There is no sense and you're doing so much. You don't have to feed the whole army yourself. You have always given us kids a good living and I'm sure that Carl will have the same.

I'm so sorry that Hollis did not get home before sailing but wasn't particularly surprised. Things usually happen that way.

I wrote you a long airmail letter yesterday. This is so short and scarce.

Mother, you asked if I still wanted an iron. I still do. The various currents are running the ones that the girls have. What I really need is some V-Mail stationary. It is rather difficult to obtain here.

Got two letters yesterday and one the day before. Also five Life magazines, three News, two Reader's Digest, seven Heralds, and one nurse magazine. About 20 letters in the last three days. One was from Hollis. He seems OK.

I hope you have a nice Father's Day, but I know it will be a busy one, and I want to be home next year.

I just sent \$230 to the bank this week. Want to borrow some?

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

5-31-43  
North Africa

Dear Carl and Folks,

I've been meaning to write you for a few days but kept putting it off. Something was always distracting me. It is quite different since working every day.

I know that you work every day and much harder than I do many times. I'm sorry that you are kept so busy but know it can't be helped. Know that you must miss Hollis an awful lot.

It is bed time. Just came back from the movies and dinner. In town. Must go to bed as I get up earlier since working in the kitchen. You know how I love to get up in the mornings! Am glad that you have a bike.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

7/22/43

Dear Folks,

Tonight the ward boy asked me my father's last name Said that the guard wanted to know. I asked him if the guard's last name was Mellott and he said yes. So I came in. It was Kenneth Mellott of Saluvia, Lee Mellott's brother-in-law. He'd seen my name in the Democrat and one of the other guards

had told them that Miss Mellott was on night duty so he'd change places with one of them. He's guarding a psycho case.

I was really glad to talk to someone from Fulton Co. again. He's Joe Mellott's cousin. We know lots of people in common.

Hope all is well with you.

Love,  
Esther

*Unfortunately, I am unable to identify the Mellotts that are mentioned; there are many possibilities for each.*

*Saluvia is a village in Fulton County.*

—X—  
V-Mail

8-11-43

Dear Folks,

I'm several days late. Spent too much time washing and ironing, it seems. Was off yesterday. Went to the city again. Was a long tiresome day. Wanted to do Xmas shopping but was too expensive. Got the News last night of Jeannie's picture. It was lovely.

Got the iron and the other packages. Thanks so much. Think I ate too many peanuts for this A. M.

Mail is lighter now.

We got a letter from Miss Balestra, one of our ex-chiefs today. Had a lovely trip home.

Jean and Jack (illegible) (whose maid of honor I was) are expecting a baby very soon.

Do take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther

*Miss Balestra was Josephine Balestra, a nurse, from Leavenworth, Kansas.*

*Jean and Jack here are unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

8/14/43

Dear Folks,

Rae and I are waiting for a couple of men to show up to take us to the beach. It sure is warm but imagine just about the same as you. Then, too, you can't take off Sat. afternoon to go to the beach. It was so nice.

Thanks so much for the packages. All the girls said "Another package."

We're not really so busy right now.

Nothing stays the same in the army.

The fleas are bad especially on the exposed parts outside a bathing suit. I am proud of my suntan.

Carl, soon school year. You'll sure be missed at home.

Love,  
Esther

*Rae, also seen as Ray, was a roommate, and refers to Rachel Badger Christopher (1918-1999).*

—X—  
V-Mail

8-28-43



*Esther, left, with Rachel Badger.*

Dear Folks,

Letter writing gets harder all the time. Can't tell what I want to.

There is a breeze this afternoon. Makes it seem cooler than it would be.

Suppose you're canning peaches, tomatoes, corn and beets. How much are eggs and milk now? How long since you've had any bananas? Those S. Americans must miss their market.

Haven't heard from Hollis for two weeks. V-Mail takes a month.

It is so quiet here today. Not many patients now. Just made some fudge and ice cream.

Hope all is well with Carl in school.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

11/29/43

Dear Folks,

It is bed time. Kay has a cold, so I spent the evening with her. She's in the hospital. Was in town from this P. M. to get paid then did some washing.

Hear that Jean had a nine-pound baby girl. One of the other girls wrote you. Nov. 17 letter came yesterday.

Had a great Thanksgiving Dinner. It was cooked so well. I spent a long time on the decorations. Wonder what you did. None of your letters mentioned any plans. Anyway there are still lots of things to be thankful for. Perhaps next year much more.

Love,  
Esther

*The "Jean" mentioned in this letter is unknown.*

—X—

Dec. 10, 1943

Dear Folks,

Your Nov. 16 letter (airmail) came today and I shall endeavor to answer all of it.

The Congo Cooking Book was published for British War Relief by some of the English women, foremost Mrs. Willet, the one at whose home we so often went to. There was much delay so they weren't finished when we left so we paid for them and they were to be sent. Other mothers wrote of receiving them.

As far as the bonds, at first I bought one every three months - \$6.25 coming from each pay - that means - one for (July, Aug., Sept.) - one (Oct., Nov., Dec.) and one (Jan. Feb. Mar.) then one a month there after. I sure don't spend much over here, so I can afford to buy bonds for the boys.

Hollis sure doesn't say much in his letters about what he is doing. Never mentions his work, living conditions or officers. I wrote him a long letter, but got no definite reply, so I don't mention those things now.

Whatever diary you got is ok. I keep one for reference. On experiences too.



*Esther in North Africa, fall 1943.*

Wish I had the gift of gab to write an interesting one. Lots of days I miss now.

Am glad Carl likes school. Does he practice his trumpet much? Do hope so. Does he have a girl-friend or just love them all?

Lil sent me a box – comb, candy, pencils, pencil sharpener, glass, bath powder, etc. Still haven't opened your box. Am really proud of myself.

Do hope nothing serious is wrong with George. How much help do they have now?

Had a letter from Elsie Cornell today. She said that she'd heard so much about me that I sometimes wondered if the Cove wasn't lacking in something because of my absence. I almost choked (sic) on that. Guess I have a lot to live up too. Get so disgusted sometimes. Can't see any opportunity for advancement – so many older. I'm still a conscientious charge nurse – the quiet uncomplaining kind

that settles her own problems and they are glad to have around but the the (sic) that things go better skilled will go so far in the end. Someone was sick today. I worked 2 extra hours. Was tonight to refuse but didn't. As for coming home – looks really slim – slimmer all the time. I tried to transfer to another unit, but they won't let me. Eighteen months is long enough with the same gang.

As for Jack – he's a Second Lieut. – 27 years old from Mich. Dated him exclusively for two months 3-4 times a week. We had loads of fun. He was transferred to a different organization here instead of going to Italy and hasn't been in a good humor since. We started fighting – stubborn Irishman, so I decided to have my way or – so I broke a date and haven't seen him since. He's Catholic so it is very good. I sure missed him at first. Now don't, and I'll never go out with him again.

I'm going to bed now.

Next evening. I got suddenly sleepy so decided to turn in. Was just sitting up in bed anyway.

The Arabian rings were silver and of an Arabic design. Were quite small but quite suitable for what I wanted. Here there just isn't anything to buy that is leastways worth the money.

Carl certainly isn't getting much vacation. Guess it all works out in the end.

We only do eight hour duty, but there are always a million and one other things to do. I haven't read a book in months.

Hear Jean has a nine-pound baby girl. Haven't heard from her.

The Thanksgiving offering sounded quite good, Had a long letter from Aunt Rhoda.

I'm ok don't worry about me. Sometimes I 'm sort of sorry you trained me to be good. I'd sure like to pull some things I've seen others do without thought to others.

Love,  
Esther

*Jack, an apparent boyfriend, is unidentified.*



V-Mail

Dec. 17, 1943

Dear Folks,

One week until Xmas eve. I hope you aren't spending it worrying too much. If you hear from Hollis that would be the best you could expect for a Xmas gift. Mail will be slow coming thru from him and if it has further to come, too.

As for me, we continue busy and in this weather will continue so, but that is what we're here for. I have enough clothes and keep warm enough and my health is fine. I get plenty of sleep and our food is good.

Tomorrow is Sat. That means inspection and I don't like that.

Kay and my third roommate, Ann, are on night duty. So we have quiet days.

Merry Xmas and Happy New Year.

Love,  
Esther

*Ann is unidentified, but may be a reference to Mary Ann, mentioned elsewhere.*

—X—

Dec. 27, 1943

Dear folks,

I hope this letter is as long as I expect it to be and you can send it to Marian after the aunts read it.

Thursday afternoon I was off and had an appointment in town to get my hair and nails done, the first time in a long time. Didn't get out in time to make the bus home, so we went to the club for a sandwich and some ice cream. We met some boys we knew. There was a 23rd party so we told them we needed transportation out of town. We weren't permitted to take the guests to the party, but we couldn't get another bus until 10:30, so they brought us to the party. We came strolling in quite late with the boys. They were polite and left them stay. They are getting used to my being a brat. So we were late to bed Thurs. night. The party was in our Recreation building which has a fireplace. The place was beautifully decorated. We could get plenty of trees and the red

cross has some red and green crepe paper, so they made some really wonderful wreaths. The pine cones were painted red and white and they made chains out of paper. I think every tent had a tree. We had a big one in front of the Hospital, too. Some of the patients are good artists so there were plenty of decorations.

On Friday it hailed and rained but cleared off in the evening. I got off duty around 7:30 and went caroling from 10-11. The Catholics had midnight mass and the Protestants a midnight candlelight service. Just as the candles were to be lighted, it started to rain. We had our services in the chapel and the Catholics in the circus tent that is used for movies. So were late to bed again. Christmas was on Sat. and all week I'd been telling the chief of medicine that I didn't think there should be an inspection, but I feared to hope until the boys came back from supper Xmas Eve and said there wouldn't be any. I thought Christmas A.M. would be easy but the doctors made rounds for three hours. I got tired and asked to leave as I wanted to fix the trays. They were lovely. The Red Cross had made sleighs and we put candy and nuts in them. They had grapefruit, turkey, sweet potatoes, dressing, gravy, peas, creamed onions, carrot snips, pickles, olives, cranberry sauce, rolls, butter, fruit cake, cookies and jello fruit salad, I'm glad that I had only 13 trays to fix, some had a lot more. I got off at 1:00 and we had dinner at 1:15. Of course, we had the same thing. I just made for the bed afterwards. Got up at 5:45 and went to a Christmas party. Didn't enjoy it. Guess I was missing that freckle-faced Irishman.

The boys had some mistletoe and they had it hanging several places around the ward, so we had to watch our step. After steering clear, we gave in and for some of them their first American kiss in 17 months.

Yesterday I received three packages from Marian, 4 pairs of stockings and some cologne, a box from Anne - candy,

gum, raisins, powder puff, Kleenex, etc. And a box of candy. It may have been from the Triangle Class but Helena and I looked and looked and that was the only thing I couldn't figure out. Please find out for sure. McConnellsburg was quite plain. Marian's package was stamped October 14 so I suppose eventually I'll get the others you sent. Something to look forward to.

On Xmas Eve I opened your package. It was really swell. My slips are getting shabby, we do wear stockings now, I am using the stationery. I've broken two combs in the past week and well, the candy is gone. I thought you would have trouble getting it and should keep it for yourselves. Haven't opened the unnamed box as of yet.

I did get some pants in town. Think I have almost everything I need now. Am getting used to the rain and cold and don't mind it anymore. We can send laundry out once a week now, but there are still the little things plus the skirts. We have to do our own ironing, and the iron you sent is quite popular.

Am sure I have Nov. mail missing. People I expected cards from, I didn't get. Anyway, it is much better than last year.

A year ago, I was on Detached Service in Elizabethtown and had my first plane ride.

We continue busy. Keeping records for 50 patients keeps me busy but accompanying the doctors while they make rounds is the most tiresome.

Had a letter today from Capt. Joe Medoff, my Eustis boss. He is still there but very few are that I know.

My prospects for returning to the States are nil so far as I know. Think we all need a change from each other. All in all, it is a pretty good gang.

Perhaps Marian is now home. Do hope so and that you do hear frequently from Hollis.

Thanks for everything, and don't worry about me. I've had enough to eat and wear, but I sure could take a month off to visit you. Kay says it will

take you two weeks to read this.

Love,  
Esther

*Helena Knicely (1917-1992) was a roommate and a trained anesthetist.*

—X—

1944

V-Mail

1/5/44

Dear Folks,

The popcorn came today, also the clothes hanger with the pins. I'll write Aunt Rhoda thanking her for the hanger and then Carl for the popcorn. I hope the mice don't find it until I can get a can. Also got some Christmas cards. Aunt Dessie, Aunt Maye, Lee and a letter from Cousin Margaret. Had a letter from Julius. She's (sic) in Trinidad. Seems to enjoy the change. She's (sic) been in P. R. eighteen months.

I brought some peanuts on duty. The boys were delighted.

Bill Harris said he'd had a letter from Dr. Findley - he used to fish together - too bad he can't write to his own congregation.

I'm making some cocoa. It breaks the monotony. I'm getting caught up on my letter writing and reading. Aren't so busy now. My night duty is almost half up. Doesn't make much difference.

I'd sure like to see Annabelle.

Hope mother got my letter thanking her for the pictures.

Love,  
Esther

*Bill Harris refers to William Harris, (1906-1953), a family friend.*

*P.R. apparently refers to Puerto Rico.*

—X—

V-Mail

1/24/44

Dear Folks,

Nothing new since I wrote you last.

Had a Jan. 11 letter from you. The last one I had from Marian was written Christmas Day.

Did Hollis ever find the class ring? If not, I might get him one from over here like Kay gave me for Christmas. It is silver with my initials.

Was in town one day last week and we went to the shoe shops and tried on "high heels," just for fun. Don't think I could stand it to buy a pair as I won't want any French shoes when I hit the U.S. If I only knew when just don't expect me soon. Life gets mixed up at times.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

1-26-44

Dear Folks,

The news is so encouraging. Perhaps it will be over here real soon, and we can concentrate on the Japs.

Had post card from Bill's Place today, signed Bill (illegible). Suppose had seen my home in the paper. Was a picture of Bills Place.

Marian's last letter sounds as if she is quite busy.

Have you heard from Hollis? He'll probably write to you first so let me know. Do hope mail gets there soon.

Hope you're cutting all the corners you can on the work.

Life here continues the same.

Love,  
Esther

*Bill's Place was a tourist stop on Sidling Hill, Fulton County.*

—X—  
V-Mail

1/26/44

Dear Folks,

I've had about 3 letters in 10 days. They just aren't coming. Everyone is rather disgusted, but eventually will get them.

Our Col. got his promotion from Lieut. Col. to a full Col. Guess he waited long enough for it.

Am going to a party tonight with some boys we met on our way from the Congo. They had seen no white women in the meantime. Are a nice gang.

Aren't so busy now. Have some nice boys as patients.

Kay's birthday is Saturday.

Persuaded the baker to make a cake for her. Can't find anything to buy her. Guess you're all ok. And if you weren't

you wouldn't say.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Feb. 2, 1944

Dear Folks,

Your Jan. 10 airmail letter came today, about two weeks after the Jan. 11 V-Mail and there had been none since. Aunt Rhoda's V-Mail Jan. 19 came. It spoke of the Fulton House burning and Dr. Findley's reading Bill Harris' letter in the pulpit. Well he might write to me sometimes. He never has but don't mention it. Aunt Rhoda's airmail Jan. 13, came today, also cards from Jean, Lydia, Aunt Mollie. Marian's airmail of Jan. 13 came too - the only letter since her Christmas letter. There should be some V-Mail floating somewhere.

Imagine Carl's shaving. Doesn't seem possible, yes, he is a Jr. in school. Do hope he has gotten a razor. I had no idea they are scarce.

Had a Christmas card from Marshall Comerer. In it he said he was going to O. C. S.

Marian seems to think you're doing ok and that Carl is doing so well. I am so sorry he couldn't have more care-free school days, but there is a war on, so I'm told.

I did write to the S. S. class about the candy.

No, Capt. Zeller isn't here - Italy probably. Not too thrilled over ours (chaplain). I just saw him (Zeller) once.

Sorry Aunt Rettie's mail is so confused. What are their plans. Think I'd rather remain an "old maid" to take the aunt's place. Aunt Rhoda's letter talks of Uncle Alvey's operation. Am really glad that is over and hope that he is ok.

Kay rather expects to get home soon, as for me, if you ever need me, let me know. One of our girls got home on account of her father's having cancer. She went on the same boat as Jack. A letter came from him today. I haven't heard from Jack. Perhaps I will. In fact I know that I will, but he'll not rush.

He'll get restless and will get married soon. Who knows?

Did I tell you John is in Trinidad. Is going to Jungle Warfare (sic) School. Seems to like the change very much. Guess he's rather bored.

Know things do get that way.

I don't know how long I'll be here, or where I'll go from here, or what, but life is confusing at times. I suppose I'll get very restless after a while at home (when I get there). Miss people and places and stuff. It is impossible to figure things out.

Jean seems very happy with the baby. She's beautiful so she says. Jean is very pretty herself. Had a long letter from Lillian. Laughed over it. Recalled many of our experiences at A. G. H. Yes, send them a check for the alumnae dues, please.

Must go make a phone call. Helena, Rae, and I hope to stay in town tomorrow night, if we can get a room.

Do take care.

Love,  
Esther

Sent \$150 to you.

Return this to me, Mother.

*John is otherwise unidentified.*

*O.C.S. refer to Officer Candidates School and S. S. means Sunday School.*

*The Fulton House was a hotel in McConnellsburg that sustained serious damage in a fire in 1944.*

—X—  
V-Mail

2/8/44

Dear Folks,

Guess I have time for this before retiring. When I first came over here, I enjoyed writing long letters but now I don't even like writing a V- Mail. This is my fifth today.

The days are nice and warm, but my washcloth was frozen when I got up this A.M.

The picture I sent was taken in a brown and white pinstripe seersucker. I know it looks white. But it really isn't. Are more practical. We are supposed to wear brown shoes.

I don't want a Valentine's package. You've plenty to do, and I mean it.

We're having an abundance of pork chops lately. I'm still hungry for ham.

Guess I'll have an orange and go to bed.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Feb. 10 '44

Dear Folks,

This is the second letter I've written in 10 days and the other one was to you.

We're very happy in our new home. Our friends can come to visit us here. And it is nice to have a home to wander around in again. We are used to the dining room and feel quite at home in an easy chair, and by 10:00 o'clock, all wonder out to the kitchen to make coffee. If we're hungry, we can eat K rations as that is about all that there is to find. I want to popcorn some night, Still have some that you sent me.

I'm no longer on a surgical ward, but same head nurse on a ward similar to the one in Oran. There is a major as the doctor and a different Cpl. And Sgt., but everything is going OK. Malaria, jaundice, trench feet (illegible) etc. We are busy. I have 85 patients.

Mail is very slow coming. Have had none the last 10 days and I got none two days before that. No Xmas packages are coming in either.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

2/11/44

Dear Folks,

Received eleven letters today.

During the last week your V-Mail of Jan. 26 and 29 and Feb. 4 have arrived. But no V-Mail from Jan. 11-26. That's two weeks period from now on. Will you please remember your letters. Your V-Mail came in a week. The letter today extended from the 20th to the 4th of Feb.

Went over to another hospital today and saw one of the girls I knew at Eustis. We cleaned up for another inspection. It is usual. They went past

our hospital. Tomorrow is the usual Saturday one. I'm almost afraid to V-Mail the boys.

Yes I'm in Africa still. Will stop to see Richard Trach next time in town.

Love,  
Esther

*Richard Trach (1921-2000), was a family friend and served in the U. S. Signal Corps in North Africa in World War II.*

—X—

Sabbath, p.m.  
Mar. 5, 1944

Dear Folks.

It's a beautiful afternoon. The sun is shining, and it doesn't seem possible that it can be so cold and rainy by tomorrow if it so desires. They rolled the sides of the tent up so the ward is more cheerful than just lighted by light bulbs.

We had communion this A.M. – in fact it is monthly – two weeks ago they had a violin solo – played by a Jew, was a Catholic song and in a Protestant service. I don't think many caught on, but it certainly struck me funny.

Haven't heard from Bill Harris recently so I don't know if he is still around. Have been saving papers just in case.

Helena is on a 3-day pass. So out on the villa. Guess my turn will come when I get off night duty. I'm off tomorrow night so think I'll go out and stay just over night. The atmosphere is so different.

I'm on duty. We aren't nearly so busy now. Seems so different not to walk on duty and rest and rush. The boys that work with me are swell boys, good workers and quite mischievous.

I must stop this now to take temperatures, make out some requisitions, etc.

Mon. eve.

I'm sitting on the red divan at the villa – can hear the waves neat against the shore and I'm warm and comfortable.

Have seen Lieut. Sheffner several times. Most of the people I know, he doesn't and vice-versa, but we have a

lot in common He expects to get home during the summer.

Had a letter from Lois Gordon. I quote, "You certainly have a wonderful mother. I'm sure that she never goes to bed at night without tucking each of her children, under an angel wing in care of the heavenly Father." She also said that Glenn liked you so much. I thought it was such a nice thing to say and quite true. She also sent a picture of the boys. They are quite nice looking.

Do hope that you have help this summer – also Dad too.

Don't worry about me I'm quite alright.

Love,  
Esther

*Lt. Sheffner is otherwise unidentified.*

*Lois Kendall Gordon was a cousin (1909-1977). Glenn is likely her son, (1933-1971).*

—X—  
V-Mail

15 Apr. '44

Dear Folks,

Carl, thank you for the lovely Easter greetings. It arrived today and is so pretty. One came from Lee this week, too.

Glad that Marian got home. Do know that you enjoyed and profited by her visit.

Am still on night duty and quite busy. Have had some interesting cases in.

Just made some cocoa. Will make some toast around 5:00 A.M. then I go off duty and straight to bed. Is quite cool at night, and quite warm from midday to evening. It is 3:00 A.M., and I'm getting sleepy. Certainly is a miserable feeling.

I'm glad that you received the candy.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

May 4, 1944

Dear Folks,

I have been faring exceptionally well on letters this week. Since Friday about 25 so am expecting quite a blank soon. The girls went to town, but I

was in no mood to get dressed. It was quite warm, and I'd have had to sew or press before I could have gone. Leaned against someone's cigarette and burned a hole in my dress. I felt a burn on my back and moved. I'd been leaning against a table. It was at the wedding reception. Is quite small, the hole. Our summer suits wrinkle so easy - has to be pressed each time they are worn.

The physical therapist got married Tues. The girls decorated the chapel tent and the Red Cross tent, and the baker made a beautiful wedding cake. It was a simple wedding but quite nice. She wore a beige dress.

Kay wrote from Phila. Her real name is Kathleen Marren. She seems quite happy to be home. Finds the States somewhat different after almost two years.

I've said nothing to Hollis about Jeanne and he's said nothing to me. They probably had no understanding but I'm pretty sure that he might have like to when he came back.

How was Mrs. Seider's birthday party? Is Mr. back to work yet?

Kay was to write you. Do hope that she did. We were together a long time. She sure used to scold me if I ever broke a regulation. She used to stay awake until I got home if I were out, and I used to stay late to annoy her. Thought it was my own business. Her boyfriend asked me for a date which didn't help things. Am sure I've gotten along ok without a watch dog since.

The kids have been making small gardens. I just laugh and say I had enough when I was a kid.

The bugs are out in full force and all colors. I'm sitting in the doorway of the tent. It is still light, but they bite too much.

Thanks for the picture of Ruth Elder. Didn't know the girl that got married. You aren't hinting at me are you?

As for Bill Harris - I can't write what I know, too much Africa. Remember I'm not your little girl. I'm an Army officer, too, so don't worry about

anything there. See many like him daily.

My two prize night emergencies died. They weren't on my ward but as night supervisor I'd been called over. Both negroes. They had every care day and night specials and oxygen. The harder you work, the harder to see them go.

Too bad about Chas. Hagerman. It doesn't seem possible. Will write to Aunt Maye.

Had a letter from Helen Mellott. Didn't recognize her by that married name. She signed it by Mrs. (illegible)

For my birthday - I want a pair of shoe trees, and some airmail stationery. I like this (illegible) some of my Christmas paper that you sent me. I can get envelopes over here.

I sent Lee the candy because I know that he would appreciate it and Marian has been good to send me stuff so it must bother him too. Is he expecting to be drafted?

I'm sending two checks that I want you to keep for me and one to be cashed. Reckon you can endorse it.

There are about six of us on our tent steps in various colored pajamas. Our tents have canvas around so are fairly private. The bugs will drive us under nets soon. I said I'd never complain of being too hot after last night.

We're still quite busy.

Am glad you didn't take out the rugs.

Love,  
Esther

*Helen Mellott and Ruth Elder are otherwise unidentified.*

—X—

May 19, 1944

Dear Folks,

Don't know if Kay wrote you or not. She had hoped to see Marian when up that way but according to her latest letter, she wasn't going to get up that way. Don't know where she'll be stationed. Will be at Meade for a while. Ray goes there soon. Do you ever wish it were me?

Guess you've put away your winter

clothing. I put my snuggies, long underwear, etc. away and got out my beige suit, and white shirts. Must try it on. Kay is sending me a new dress.

Your Apr. 21st letter came late. Can't imagine where it wondered to. Am very glad that you didn't send me an Easter gift. Please, I'm quite alright and don't need any such. I did write you what I want for my birthday. Yes, I do get the News, regularly.

Got a letter from (illegible) Helman yesterday. Now what started that - you? Guess it won't hurt me any.

Don't know what to think of Aunt Rettie. She may continue the same for some time. Changing very little either way.

We now have our own post office with its own A. P. O. Doesn't mean a thing. Still N. Africa.

No, Jeannie didn't say anything about Hollis, and I didn't answer her letter.

Was off all day yesterday. Went out to the villa - spent the A.M. in bed, cooked my own breakfast - spent the afternoon on the beach. Got off at 3 p.m. on Wed. until 11 p.m. yesterday. I'm so tired today. A combination of swimming and the sun. On Wed. afternoon Bill Harris came over. He knows something about his wife and daughter and was just "fishing" for information. He has lost a lot of weight. I have less sympathy for him than I had had. I occasionally go out with one of his officers. He feeds me well. Bill doesn't know it and I don't intend that he should unless he sees me sometime.

I didn't intend that Hollis should tell you about the silver bars. I had hoped to be transferred. They don't approve here so I am just left waiting. If I don't soon go I'll stay here six months and then go home. Think I need a change. None of us have the pep we used to have. I'm busy but I can always handle it and certainly have gained their respect. Please don't worry about me.

What is Carl expecting to do after high school? I hope to be home before

then, and think that I will be,

Take it easy, please.

Your loving daughter,  
Esther

*Meade refers to Fort Meade, MD.*

—X—  
V-Mail

5/21/44

Dear Folks,

Was rather surprised at the News receiving the pictures. It probably is a honey. We were so surprised at being snapped and were rather puzzled. Had no idea what they would do with them.

I am (in) charge of quarters tonight. Just answer the telephone. It isn't too busy.

Am still working in the same spot - busy as ever.

Had a letter from Hollis. He seems the same.

As for my birthday, I could also use 2 pairs of brown socks. Am wearing men's right now, but it is ok. Fold them down to the right length. They are a little long in the feet. Nothing interesting here now.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

4 June '44

Dear Folks,

Sabbath A.M. and things are pretty slow. Soon be time to collect the boys for church. Some need a little urging. Yesterday A.M. I mailed 3 letters to you - one V-Mail, a June 3 V-Mail free and an airmail. It was dated with June 2 or 3. I'd like to know the difference in time that they arrive.

The countryside grows more beautiful every day. The vineyards are growing and are quite green now. Don't see many wild roses. We have some geraniums growing in our area. Could you send me some zinnia and aster seeds. I might get enough energy to plant them. There are a lot of tiny bugs that are so annoying. Soon be getting up time for you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

V-Mail

June 26, 44

Dear Folks,

Thanks so much for the birthday card. It got here early but I'll save it until my birthday. I may not be in Cito for my next one but I do expect to be in the U.S.A. And Dad signed it too. It was a sweet card.

My first night and it is only half over. Getting adapted. Makes the first few nights the worse. Rather enjoy it at the end.

Richard Trach should be home now. Am sure he'd see the Spancakes. Haven't heard from Ray, but she should be on leave now.

Had a letter from Aunt Rhoda today. Am glad Aunt Rettie could get out for a drive.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

June 29, 1944  
2:30 A.M.

Dear Folks,

Just took my Corporal's book away and told him he could have it back after he'd written to his mother. (illegible) still arguing. Note to Aunt Rettie. Does she really improve. Is it getting to be financial burden?

You've certainly been writing frequently. Don't you miss the post card days? I get so tired of addressing those V-Mails. You miss having to censor them inside and out.

Yesterday I woke up at noon, saw three letters by my bed, looked to see who they were from. I wake up about every hour but couldn't stay awake long enough to read them.

Julius sent me some film printing papers. I have some negatives I want developed, but must have the papers.

Went to town this afternoon. Was having uniform fixed. The hem was uneven so have to go back. We went up to the club for some ice cream. I don't go to midnight supper, so the boys bring me some tomatoes and I make a toasted sandwich.

On Sat. we passed a cornfield. It

was the sickest, skinniest corn I'd ever seen. Wish I could come home for 30 days and see some wheat and corn fields and you folks.

I like the doctor I work for so much. He is Jewish, but he never shirks his work. We have some good boys, too. The nurses change a lot. I promised myself when I came back this time, if I had to work over-time, the first day checking record they'd do the writing and me the dictating.

Have had two post cards from Mary J. Truax Killinger recently. They are still in California.

Does Carl drive the car any? Do hope he plans to get license this fall. You must be so terribly busy.

Must see if my children are sleeping.

Love,  
Esther

Mary Jane Truax Killinger (1918-2012), was a family friend.

—X—  
V-Mail

July 1, '44

Dear Folks,

Doesn't seem possible that is July already. Have started most of my reports tonight as June and had to change them.

Didn't have any pneumonia coughing tonight but had an interesting psycho for variety. Just checked on him and he is snoring under the effects of some drugs I gave him.

Can you buy elastic anymore? If so could you put some in an envelope? If not don't send me what you need for yourself.

Had a letter from Rachel. Is with her sister in Utah.

Have been sleeping fine in the day time. Makes the nights easier. Tonight my time is half up. Had a birthday card from Lee today.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

July 3, 1944

Dear folks,

Mail service is pretty good now.

Your June 22 letter came on July 1. Newspapers come in about once a month now.

Wonder when Marian is coming this summer. Do hope that she can stay a couple of weeks. Don't try to can too much.

Not so busy tonight. The boy on duty with me is making coffee. We had chicken and ice cream for supper tonight.

I'm so tired of writing letters so I'll make this short.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

July 3, 1944

Dear folks,

Just finished a note, but I want to add that I'm mailing a package. My mosquito boots which you might save as relics. A pair of white shoes I can use later, some shirts and slacks, my evening gown and a strap, books etc., too much stuff.

Do I still have any dresses if so I don't want them and please wear my coats if you can. After uniforms, I want new clothes - high heeled shoes! Burn any hats you find.

Had quite an interesting letter from Marshall Comerer. Do hope that they hear from Charles.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Jul. 7, 1944

Dear Folks,

Your airmail of June 17th and the V-Mail of June 26 arrive the same day.

I'm very glad you're rid of the Church Hill farm - But I would prefer your being paid for it instead of giving it away. That is going to be an interesting estate. IOU's plus unless there is a lot of improvement. Is Uncle Clarence out of the mess yet?

Neither do I mention Jeanne to Hollis. I never answered her last letter. Why isn't her husband in the army? So many of the boys' girlfriends got married.

I wrote Beulah Rotz last night. One



*Esther, far right, with Nurses.*

time I wrote Aunt Rhoda a letter for the class but she never mentioned it.

As for the picture in the "News" window I'd like very much to have it. It has been in the window long enough. Met a Fox from Chambersburg tonight. He is convalescing from pneumonia. One of my patients brought him over. My patient was a former Supply Inspector.

Have around 106 patients tonight. Got some mean ones. Still I'm not too busy. Four of the nurses got together a few stolen eggs and we had coffee and sandwiches. The medical and surgical doctors on tonight really wondered were their nurses were. Two were out contemplating stealing lettuce, but the moon was too bright.

No, we haven't had cherries. Helena wrote that they did.

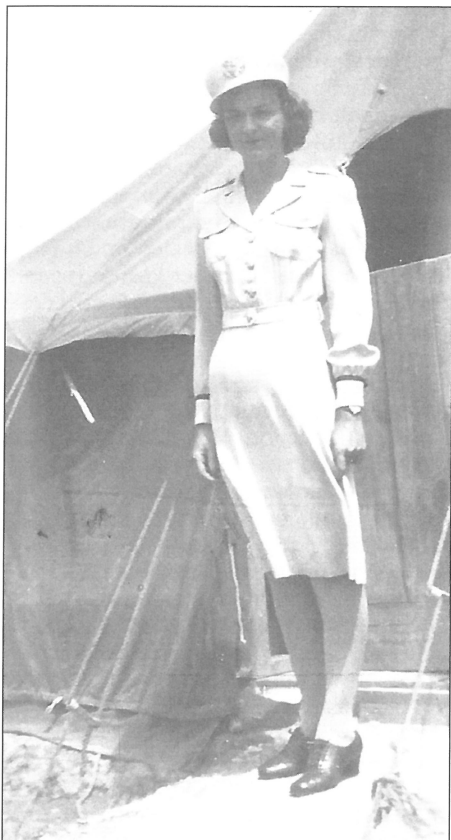
One more night of night duty, I get a day off, so we'll go to the villa. Sybil is coming off night duty, too. Next week promises to be a busy week. When I was sick the census came down the few days I was back before going to

the villa, it's shot up and was high until I went on night duty. There were two nurses on night duty. I don't get excited, and I'm used to this type of patient, so it doesn't bother me any to have the two wards.

I know very few nurses outside our own unit. If I knew Beatrice's cousin's unit number, I'd know if she were also here.

The news sounds wonderful. Hope we get relocated before winter. Hate to think of a winter in these tents again.

I've got some material so plan on making bedspreads and curtains for our boxes. We have a center table and there are boxes with shelves in them for our stuff. Darcy is a terrible housekeeper. This A.M. when Sybil and I went off duty, we put all the stuff on



*Sybil Mosebey.*

the bed and had the POW's scrub the floor. It's very dusty.

Want to write Helena. Have written almost 50 letters since coming on night duty. Lot of them I just write went on nights.

Have had four birthday cards – from you, Marian and Fred, Kay, and Lee.

Yes, I really wanted the mirror, just a 5 and 10 cent one about 9 inches by 12 inches, but I can make out. Mine is broken.

Took time out to stop a few coughs and give some quinine. Hate to wake the boys but they need it the first night to knock the bug.

The moon is sure beautiful. Need a flashlight only in the tents never to go from tent to tent.

Know you're taking it as easy as you can. Don't can too much.

Love and kisses,  
Esther

*Beulah Rotz was a family friend (1905-2001).*

*Fox is unidentified.*

*Esther mentions being sick: she was ill several times in the service, once with malaria and the other with hepatitis.*

*Sybil refers to roommate Sybil Mosby Oliver (1918-1997).*

✕  
V-Mail

July 10, 1944

Dear folks,

Went back on day duty today. Was very good to be back. Got some new nurses to replace those that had gone home so have more help.

Had a nice time at the Villa. Went swimming.

Tonight, have to go to a lecture. Am required to go to one of these so might as well go and get it over with.

Haven't heard from Hollis. Wonder what he is doing.

The weather continues the same. No rain now for a long time.

Hope all is well with you.

Love,  
Esther

✕

V-Mail July 13th, 1944

Dear Mom and Pop and Carl,

Spent my time off duty making a bedspread. Mary Ann and Sybil are making them, too. We have to take turns using the machine, so goes a little slow.

Got a new bathing suit. Had it made in town. Is kind of pretty.

It's still quite warm and dusty. I said, I'd never complain of being too hot when it's been so cold last winter.

Had a letter from Mary Hess today. Said she still plans to be married in August. I wonder how long Jack will be with them. She must be quite busy, too.

Time to go off duty. Have some laundry to do.

Love,  
Esther

*Mary Hess is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

July 20, '44

Dear Folks,

It isn't so hot tonight, and don't think it is as warm as it is at home.

We're not so busy now. Had off the afternoon of July 18 and all day the 19th. We were going sightseeing, but it was cancelled so we went too bed as our arms were sore from typhoid shots. Yesterday we went swimming. No you think I spend a lot of time in the water.

Had a letter from Laura and Bunny Tuesday the hospital is having a party to celebrate it's two years of overseas duty. The Col. is to make a speech. Guess the old gang will be off that afternoon will write an airmail.

Love,  
Esther

*Laura (1918-2014) and J. Russell (Bunny) Rotz (1914-1973) were family friends.*

—X—  
V-Mail

July 22nd, 1944

Dear Folks,

Wonder what all you may be doing this afternoon. Hope you aren't canning.

News all over sounds good and it would seem that the enemy is

beginning to realize it at last.

Have some washing, ironing and mending to do. Guess I'll sleep then until supper time.

Your letter telling me the shoes are on the way came. Yes, I know Aunt Rhoda is good to help. I'm surprised she got the shoes in Phila. without ration card.

Hollis' mail probably has much longer to come now.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

July 23, 1944

Dear Folks,

I'm finally starting this airmail letter.

First, Carl thank you very much for the nice stationery. And seeds. It is impractical to plant them now but will do so when it is.

Tues. was my birthday. The baker who baked my cake last year was away so I wasn't expecting a cake. But the Sgt. who is ward master of my ward asked one of the other cooks to make one. He did. I knew the cook quite well. When the cake arrived the chief nurse looked sort of puzzled and I just grinned and told her I knew more than one Sgt. Tues. P.M. three of us were to go sightseeing, but the Red Cross canceled the tour so Sybil and I went to bed at 3:00 P.M. We'd had typhoid vaccine and been vaccinated so felt sort of sore. We were in town. Stayed at the new Nurses Villa. It is a beautiful place with a garden. In the A.M. we came downstairs to a dining room, tablecloth, china and silver and our choice of several breakfasts. Also the army "Daily" was beside each place. The first time I'd been in a dining room since leaving the Congo. We felt like Queens. We went to the beach. Some of our friends were there on rest orders so we went swimming with them. Thursday we were going to have an all-girl party, but it got postponed to last night. I thought that finished the birthday "doings," but today when I went to the mess hall, there was a party for four

of us who had birthdays this week. We had flowers and place cards, and a huge cake. Now I hope it is all over

Hope (eligible eligible) is better now. Are his affairs straightened out yet?

Hope Fred gets the job. Must be so nice Marian could drop in oftener.

One of Kay's girlfriends sent me a new bathing suit and cap. It is quite the thing. Would be wearing it now if I'd known David was going to have to work tonight. We were going to town.

Doesn't seem possible that Martha Kendall and Virginia Cutchall are married. Hope I can beat Carl to it. I have met some I could live with but none I'd want to name Junior after.

Now for what I have on my mind.

Marian wrote that Dad was very tired of the hard work. I'm sorry he is tired, but it is good news if he gets disgusted enough to quit. I can understand how you feel. You want the farm there in good condition for Hollis when he comes back. There is no use in kidding, the war will last another two years, and we won't be released immediately. More often than anything else we want a mother and Dad to come home to - a pair that are still well and strong enough to enjoy life. I can't imagine anything worse than not having a home to come to. Some of the gang have lost their parents recently, and to them going home isn't the same. I hate to go to bed at night thinking of how much harder your day is than mine. When I do get home I'd like to think that I could throw all my cares to the wind, instead of watching you work so hard. I won't be back in the U.S.A. before spring, and we'll probably get three weeks. I'd rather come home and find 2 inches of dust than to think you worked twice as hard just before I came.

Having my friends home seems like so much extra work, too. You probably think that you're helping Hollis and me by producing food. You wouldn't be idle, I know. My married girlfriends without families and husbands overseas are spending their time playing bridge and

buying clothes. Why should you slave on? You have two children on foreign duty, and don't be too sure a third won't be old enough before it is over.

No place will ever seem quite like home except the farm, but the word work is always associated with it, too, and it would make us all happy to know you weren't milking, etcetera in the cold. When Aunt Rettie finally stopped it was too late. Your health is still good so why not take it easy now. You've got enough to educate Carl. Hollis can get the farm, Marian has a husband, and I guess I'll be a second Aunt Mame and Rhoda.

Dad can still see that the thistles don't spread to the fence rows and overgrow. Won't you please think about it. I'd feel so much better if you had no hands to cook for, no cows to milk, no buckets to wash, a smaller house, no stock to feed. Do Martha and Preston still want the farm?

If Hollis doesn't get married, you can move back. Help would be much more plentiful.

Hope I didn't say too much or too little. I am no longer a child, remember? Do try to find someone to take over.

Love,

Your daughter

Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

7-31-44

Dear Folks,

It's just as hot here as it was cold last winter, but I would rather be hot than cold. Usually, a breeze starts up around 3:00 P.M.

Yesterday went picnicking with the dietitian. Had a swell time. Took the fried chicken and would have had for supper along and had some watermelon. If there were a cornfield I'd have stood the risk of stealing some myself.

Things around the hospital are dead. I have two wards and still not busy.

I wrote Hollis that if he we're too busy to write you'd keep me posted. It is probably quite quite busy.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

8-2-44

Dear folks,

Got a V Mail this evening from you. Now I want to pay for the stuff I ask for. Did the bank get an \$80 check last month? It was on my pay voucher. Also a \$50 bond.

Had a letter from Hollis today. I'm glad the battle is over. We'll never know.

Also had a letter from Isabelle. She's getting to be quite a farmerette isn't she?

Is still hot, but we aren't very busy. Got off for five days on Friday.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 6, 1944

Dear Folks,

I'm sitting near the beach. Is much cooler than trying to stay in a tent. Just came back from church. Had communion services. That chaplain has certainly a good one and the favorite of all who hear him.

Had a letter from Aunt Martha today. I would like to see Jemima and Margie. Also, a letter from Mary Ann Hess. Wonder when she's getting married.

Life here continues quite slow. In all, had our eye on Europe, but we're still in Africa.

Ray Badger is at Valley Forge General Hospital. Doesn't particularly like it.

There was certainly a variety of bathing suits running around.

Love,  
Esther

*Jemima is likely family friend Jemima Hann (1897-1978).*

*Margie and Mary Ann Hess are otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 9, 1944

Dear Folks,

Am back at the hospital. Was on duty today. Certainly not busy. Would have had plenty of time to dry dishes

and peel peaches. Am glad Aunt Mame helped you. Now don't plan to milk too many cows this winter, and I do wish you would give up the farm. Don't worry about writing long letters. I'll write often, but it seems so hard to fill a page. Don't you miss using postcards?

I laughed to myself when you wrote of the two-piece style. I haven't seen any American clothes for too long.

What is wrong with Uncle Clarence? When I finally get home, no dinner parties, please. Certainly I wrote you that I received the birthday box. I can remember thinking of it. I was out a good bit last week and not home. If so I'm very sorry I put it to use. Thank you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 12, 1944

Dear Folks,

Suppose summer is passing quite rapidly for you. Each day I keep thinking it is a day closer two peace.

Life is treating me easy these days. Certainly don't overwork. Yesterday moved from a tent to a building. I mean my ward. Really is nice. Have a telephone and running water which is certainly nice.

This is Saturday night. I'm going to the club. Rather hate to dance but this gray tent isn't cool either. Don't forget to look for that tenant.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 15, 1944

Dear Folks,

The airmail letter hasn't come yet. Mail is very poor recently, but it will come. Aug 10 V-Mail came in a week so that came in good time. Yes, give away all my clothes, except my evening wrap, red gown and the other two. I'd like to look at my clothes, too, and wear them. There will come a day. Better keep my winter coat unless you or Marian want it.

Spent the day shortening some

skirts, cleaning the tent, etc.

Went to choir practice tonight. They needed some more vocals.

We start physical training again next week. Don't like my new doctor as well as the last.

Must curl my hair. Tomorrow is Sat. inspection.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 16, 1944

Dear Folks,

Was a nice evening and this is my 7th letter. Wrote a long one to Marian. Had a letter from you and one from Aunt Rhoda today. Said that Marian is moving to Huntingdon. Hope it isn't in the northern part of the county so they can get home often.

Had a letter from you today, but it is over in the tent. Had a letter from Aunt Rhoda. She said I wasn't to worry about you working too hard, but that doesn't help you any. Please try to get a tenant. She told of Frank's moving.

Is Carl ready for school? You're going to let him get driver's license, are you?

I was so glad for the New Testament. My Bible is getting shabby but I like it. Was to church in town. Sabbath resembled a makeshift revival meeting but did me good.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Aug. 24, 1944

Dear Folks,

The local French people are quite happy over the fall of Paris to the allies. I wasn't in town yesterday, but I heard others speak of it. There must have been great rejoicing there.

Received the mirror, etc, today. It really was quite nice, much more so than I expected and came through in one piece. I especially appreciated the elastic and will find use for it. She also included some bobby pins, shoe strings, a quarterly, (long time since I've seen one), some flowered napkins. Now, I'll be ready for Sybil's and Mary Ann's

birthdays. Thank you so much. The bonds are certainly coming there fast now. I've lost track of them.

Wore my new shoes for the first time last night. Had on my beige dress that just came back from the cleaners so felt quite dressed up. The shoes are nice. Sybil was going to order a pair. Got many compliments on them.

Surprise to hear of Preston and Martha's buying the store. Had hoped they would rent our farm. What is Uncle Alvey going to do? Live there, too? I'm glad for Geo. to be doing it.

Who is Olivia's boyfriend? Doesn't seem possible that there are any eligible men left thereabouts.

I sent a check to the Christian Union Herald. I don't want you having one more letter to write. You've done plenty for me and I am not as busy as you, and I've got plenty of money.

I could never eat a meal like you had at Uncle Henderson's. I just wouldn't be up to it. I don't get hungry much. Food is pretty good. Tonight, had spaghetti, meatballs, peas, cheese, peaches, cake, lemonade.

I'm surprised that neither Howard nor Charles are in the army.

Hadn't heard from Lillian for some time. She's probably in France and quite busy with patients from France. Tue. night went to a birthday party at a French home. Was a converted Jewish missionary. Had quite a nice time. The thing I enjoyed most was lettuce. Real crisp. He has a long beard. Had good soup, fish and chicken also melon. They had a piano and I played some hymns.

Marie McKee's husband is near here. I hope to see him as a chaplain. She was the Chambersburg nurse that went to Eustis.

I'm going to the movies. Hope all goes well with you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 28, 1944

Dear Folks,

Wrote you a long airmail letter a couple nights ago. Think I hit most

topics in it.

Just came back from town. Played the organ of service there. It was quite warm and I was a bit nervous to say the least. They use a French church.

Did I write you that Helena was in Italy. That was an error. She is still in Algiers.

Did I tell you that I sing in the choir. We practice in the evenings, and by Sabbath A.M. it is pretty good.

Two years ago this was our last night on shipboard. So much has happened since.

How is school, Carl? know you must miss him.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Aug. 29, 1944

Dear Folks,

Had a letter from Marian today. She certainly sounds busy. Do hope that they like their new location and didn't have to leave too much garden behind.

Is quite warm. Is a depressive heat. Soon it will be raining again. How we'd love an honest to goodness thunderstorm.

Once the bonds and the \$80 check started coming it will probably come through fine now.

Have seen pictures of some of the new artificial legs that have been designed. They are certainly an improvement and allow the wearer much freedom of movement. Have all the points in, too.

Hope Aunt Rettie improves with cooler weather.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Sept. 1, 1944

Dear Folks,

I'm off tonight so Sybil, Mary Ann and I am staying in town at the villa.

The town is so much cooler than the hospital, so we are grateful for being away. I slept a couple hours.

Had a letter from Hollis. He must

be busy. Guess he knows what fighting is like now.

The trial is over, the one I was a witness at. I got finished at noon, the rest weren't called until afternoon, so I was very happy to get it over with. A light sentence.

Must take a bath and get ready for supper. I'm hungry. So have to eat at noon.

Love,  
Esther

*Esther does not elaborate on a trial in any of her letters.*

—X—  
V-Mail

Sept. 7, 1944

Dear Folks,

Four years ago, I became a free woman. A graduate nurse to be exact. Almost 3 1/2 of them spent in the army and then had no idea of ever being an army nurse.

The wedding was yesterday. Their ceremony was in the officer's recreation room in front of the fireplace we all appreciated last year. The reception was at the nurse's villa in town. I went in and helped decorate and made sandwiches. We were all glad when it was over. They had a week off. Some units have a couple married couples. This is our first.

I won't be needing the winter pajamas as one of the girls gave me some

Hope you're all a hope the electricity comes through OK. Got a nice letter from Anne recently.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Sept. 9, 1944

Dear Folks,

I started this sitting on Helena's bed while she was at a meeting, but it didn't last long. It's certainly good to see her again and Chris is certainly a good-looking girl. Think she is quite popular, too.

Received your letter of Hollis getting the Bronze Star. Makes me very happy.

Will you give Anne that tan purse that I sent home. It is like one I gave

you and Marian. She wants one and one never knows when I'll ever want it. I'm sure that is what she wanted.

Our days continue the same. Movies and dancing for recreation. Not at all busy these days.

Hope you had a nice Labor Day. All is quiet here.

I guess Carl is extra busy. Don't forget to study.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Sept. 18 (44)

Dear Folks,

Had a letter from Hollis. He seems to not be quite so busy. I'm glad that he is getting mail. I tried to write twice a week.

I'm not working but anxious too. We've been drilling, going on hikes, attending lectures. Am acquiring a lot of knowledge. Guess it won't hurt in any. Thank goodness, that is over.

We're having wonderful food right now. We even had an apple. Can't think of any greater treat. After eating out of a box it is wonderful to sit at a table with a cloth and silverware. Guess we'll be eating out of boxes again soon, but to be out of Africa is worth weeks of it.

Take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Sept. 20, 1944

Dear Folks,

Greetings from Southern France. Am perfectly safe and sound so don't worry about me. Has really been interesting. Our trip was quite enjoyable, especially the apples.

Am writing in a garden. Can pick up burnt shells all around. Some Germans probably sat here and wrote letters, too, Unsuspecting. It has been some day. We're so glad to be out of Africa. Is much more beautiful. The gardens and lawns, and maple. Their leaves are beginning to turn and it reminds me of home. Or at least American countryside.

We're not working yet and don't know when we will be. All things take time. Hope all was well with you and don't worry about me.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Sept. 26 '44

Dear Folks,

Not much has happened since I last wrote, at least not much that I can write about. We've gotten our clothes and blankets and are more comfortable.

Went to town once. Everyone is buying French perfumes. There are many evidences of war around. It is nice to see a beautiful green countryside around again. Hope it doesn't rain like it did in Africa.

I wonder if you've gotten the electric line. Do hope you have plenty of lights and fixings put in for convenience. Hope Carl gets the milker to work OK. We've had no mail as yet. Take care of yourselves. I'm doing the same.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 7, 1944

Dear Folks,

I'll try to write you often now as I'm feeling much better. You're probably worrying, but don't. Due to better medical conditions, I came to a General Hospital in Italy today. The 23rd is an oven. The nurses are still living in the haylofts, and they have some traveling yet, so I'm here until I'm able to work again. Just be thankful that they do put us where we can rest until we're completely well.

Write me at the Detachment of Patients, 300th General Hospital, APO number 378, c/o PM New York NY.

Just my name and that.

I'm getting good care. Have had no mail for three weeks. The old mail I'll get when I get to the 23rd.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

V-Mail

Oct. 9, 1944

Dear Folks,

Wonder if it is cold at home yet. Hope you've got the electricity in and aren't planning too much work this winter. But of course, you are.

Thank goodness, I'm near the window and can see out. It isn't nearly as cold as France. I'll probably freeze on my way back. The girls packed my suitcase. They didn't put in my pretty new blue robe. Makes me unhappy as I sure don't expect to be sick anymore. I do feel better. I am not vomiting anymore.

I'm getting anxious to come home. Hope I can in the spring. We'll be having a busy winter. I'm quite sure.

Don't worry about me, please.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 12, 1944

Dear Folks,

My hips are so tired of this bed. Otherwise I'm feeling fine and looking much better too. Have been reading and writing letters all day. This is my seventh.

There is really nothing to write about. Don't get mail so I can't comment on that.

An Italian girl does my pajamas for me. Have five pairs with me.

My fingernails are so long. And going to keep them that way until I go back to work.

I'm writing a letter to the following address and from there to the 23rd 2628 Hospital Station APO #698 NYC.

Carl, are you behaving?

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 14, 1944

Dear Folks,

Saturday afternoon. Wish I was home with you scrubbing the back porch. Suppose it is time to rake leaves. Don't suppose you've made any plans for leaving the farm. When I do get home, we'll have three weeks off and

then I wonder where – could be Texas or California. Do hope that it could be Indiantown Gap.

I'm feeling fine. Just washed my hair, put on some red nail polish. They are long now, and I had nothing else to do. My bottom is awful tired. I feel good so guess that is all that matters.

Wonder where Hollis is and how Marian likes Alexandria. Don't expect any mail for 10 more days.

Do take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 16, 1944

Dear Folks,

Most of the girls are writing letters now. Think we're getting rather tired of reading. Found some girls to play bridge with so time goes a bit faster in the afternoon.

Still no mail. Is coming in very poorly to the people that are stationed here. Don't write anymore letters here as I wouldn't be here to get them. I'm sure I am getting along swell. It just takes time.

There was a premature baby born to one of the nurses this morning. I'm afraid I've forgotten all I know about baby care period of course this one is quite small.

Hope life is treating you alright!

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 18, 1944

Dear Folks,

I'm bored to tears. Can't think of enough to fill a V-Mail. Wish I had a penny postcard. But sometimes you wish that I were near enough to use them again.

I'm feeling fine and looking better every day. Please don't write anymore letters to Italy. I'm sure I won't be here that long.

Has been a lovely day. Never seems to get too cold. Of course I'm in a building.

It is supertime so I hear by the

nurses outside.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 19, 1944

Dear Mother,

I forgot about Thanksgiving. I mean Thanks Offering. It is early Nov. isn't it? If so, will you put in \$15 for me, please. If I'm too late, I hope you already put some in. I'm going to send the church checks soon, as I have more time now then I'll have when I return to France. I certainly have plenty of tithe money.

I had a test this morning. Hope it turns out well. It has to be normal, before I can get up. Made my bed with clean sheets so I'm set for the day.

Thank you for all the trouble.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 21, 1944

Dear Folks,

Saturday night. Wish I were going to a dinner instead of sitting here on this bed. My time will come though.

Today was one of the girl's birthdays. We looked through our things and wrapped up some stuff as gifts. She was quite pleased. No cake, however.

The days pass about the same. I'm still in bed most of the time. Feel stronger, so I'll be OK soon. They'll just keep me resting for a while. Still no mail.

I would like a drink of cider.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 22, 1944  
Italy

Dear Folks,

It is almost supper time and I'm fairly hungry. Had an apple this afternoon so that helped. Have had several apples recently.

Oh, I am permitted out of bed now. It is a wonderful feeling. Soon, I hope I may be back. Yesterday, I sneaked off. I went to church - first time in five

weeks. The singing always sounded so nice when I was up here but didn't think it sounded so good when I was at church.

Hope all was well with you. Am anxious for mail.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 27, 1944  
Italy

Dear Folks,

Time to write you again have nothing new to write. Wrote an airmail two days ago and sent the church checks.

Feel fine. My tests are still not normal so I've got some more waiting to do. I'm tired of it but might as well stick it out with a grin. Went to a movie yesterday afternoon. Was a funny one that all seemed to enjoy.

Had a letter from Helena yesterday. Soon one should come from you.

Tomorrow I'm going to wash my hair. Probably go to the movies again. Be good!

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Oct. 28, 1944  
Italy

Dear folks,

Your first letter came this evening. Needless to say it was quite welcome. I'm so glad that everything is OK at home. Aunt Rhoda wrote two letters. Said that Aunt Mame was helping you can peas. I too wonder where Hollis is. We can only hope and pray.

Two weeks from tonight I hope to be out of the hospital. If things go as scheduled, I should be.

Saw an interesting movie this afternoon. Before that some of the convalescent patients came around the ward with a piano. Sang and danced.

No Mail from France yet. That is not surprising. They are busy and mail is irregular.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

V-Mail

Oct 31, 44

Dear Folks,

2 letters came tonight - V-Mail and airmail. Made good time. Also had a letter from one of the 23rd officers. Don't think any letters I'd written them had gotten there because someone would have told him. He'd heard through headquarters. Says that it is damp and chilly, but conditions are more comfortable than in Africa.

Also heard from Marian. Time she has a baby. She's old enough.

Went to church this evening. Have duty services.

I, too, wish you could bring me a tray, but I'd rather be well and at the table.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Nov. 4 '44

Dear Folks,

Had a pleasant surprise yesterday. 2 of the 23rd nurses came through this way on their way home. They came up to the hospital to see me. I was so surprised and pleased. Heard all the news. If I get out of the hospital tomorrow, as I hope to, I'll stay at the same hotel with them until they get orders to return to the states, and I get a plane to France. It will be so nice to have someone I know to stay with.

If my orders come through, I will get out of the hospital tomorrow. If not should be Sabbath. Hope I can get to France in a week.

The girls are busy working at another hospital. They are cleaning up the buildings for the hospital. Should be open soon.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Nov. 5, 1944  
Italy

Dear Folks,

Two more hours to stay in the hospital. Oh, I feel so good to be getting out. This is Sabbath. Went to communion, had a chicken dinner

with apple pie and cheese. Was very good. Now I have a greasy mouth. It is a beautiful day and will be lovely to get out. Rose and Martha are still here so I'll have company.

Hope they didn't forward any mail. I'll have a lot to read when I get back.

Hope you're all OK.

No more news.

Love,  
Esther

*Martha in this letter is not otherwise identified.*

*Rose refers to roommate Rose G. Knowlton Whitling (1917-1992).*

—X—  
V-Mail

Nov. 8, 1944

Dear Folks,

I got out of the hospital. Am now living at the hotel. Share a room with a telephone beside my bed. I've always wanted to turn over in bed and answer a telephone. Is a nice lazy feeling.

The 10 girls that are going home are here, too. We've done some sightseeing which I can write you more about later.

I'm fine now. Is almost dinner time now. Have to take a bath. I'm going to a dance this evening. Think I'll be strong enough to work when I return. See that Roosevelt was the victor.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Nov. 11, 1944

Dear Folks,

Had a nice time in Naples. Wrote you a letter about the middle of last week. Got out of the hospital at 2:00 P.M. last Sabbath. Mon. I went to Pompei. Doesn't seem possible that by digging under earth, you can find a city. The war stopped the excavations and much of the stuff was removed to a museum for protection from bombings and some things had to be hid from the Germans. The paintings on the walls were visible and not badly scarred. Wonder how they could last so long. Saw large Roman amphitheaters. They were mainly rows and rows of stone



*Esther with Rose Knowlton.*

mosaic and in good condition.

The next day got a permanent. Seems pretty nice. Washed it today. Is curled awfully tight. In the afternoon went up street window shopping. Had some ice cream at the Red Cross club. In the evening there was a dinner dance at the hotel to which our boys came, and the next day I didn't do much. The two that were going home had to go to the censors, etc. So I went to bed with a book. I didn't want to take it to hard right away. That evening we went to a big Allied Officers Club. Saw so many different peoples and uniforms. I stared and stared. I had had a call in the evening to be ready to leave the next day. So I left. Now I'm on the way back. It's pretty rough. Was seasick the first night. Nothing to do but sleep. I'll be so glad to be back to work again. Next

Saturday is Sybil's birthday. I'm glad I'll be there by then.

Rose is going to write you a note sometime.

I'm afraid your birthday card won't reach you by your birthday. It should have been mailed in Italy, but I didn't expect to be away from a post office so long. Is taking me longer than my trip over. Do hope you received the small package I sent from Italy. I'm so sorry the card didn't get mailed. I'm so tired of this wondering. will be good to settle down again.

Hope all is well with you.

Love,  
Esther

✕  
V-Mail

20 Nov. 44

Dear Mother,

Your birthday - don't imagine you'll be doing much celebrating.

I got back on Friday. Was on night duty Saturday night. Wanted it over before Christmas and before the ward I'll probably work on is opened. I've been so busy. Just stopped a minute now, and it is 5:40. Have 13 more shots to give and a lot of medicine.

It is good to be back again. Spent only a few hours in Marseille. Had 78 letters, papers, magazines and a Xmas package from the aunts. I didn't open it.

Will be a busy winter by all prospects.

Hope you didn't have too busy a day.

Love,  
Esther  
✕  
V-Mail

23 Nov. '44

Dear Folks,

Another Thanksgiving! Got up for dinner. It was a delicious Turkey dinner. Had apple pie and cheese for dessert.

I feel fine. And much better than I expected to be. Not so busy tonight but have been very busy. The work is so much more interesting than in Oran. I'm on a surgical ward. Have a lot of injuries. They are such good kids. One

is from Waynesboro name Hebb. I just wrote to his mother. Wish I could stay here but I'll probably go to my usual work.

We are now living in our present home for the winter a lovely house when it is furnished. Your Nov. 7th, 12th letters came today. Marian says you are thin, but you can't be stopped from working. We'll write airmail soon.

Love,  
Esther

—\*—

26 Nov. 3 A.M.

Dear Family,

Just finished addressing 24 Xmas cards. Wrote my own name. Four on each as they were V-Mail and had to be censored inside and out.

Thought I'd make this a long letter and it could go the rounds. Have all yours, Marian and the aunts' letters since September the 9th in front of me. The first one had Hollis' citation in. I'm quite proud of him. Wonder where he is now. Also the list in the box. I can't remember what I sent now but it sounds complete. Kay crocheted the scarf. Aunt Rhoda got the U.P. with the clipping about Hollis. I'm anxious to see the paper. I read all those. 78 letters so far one afternoon so I've got them all in front of me commenting one by one according to dates. Have been back a week and what a week!

Do hope the electricity is working. It will save time and energy. I work so much faster when I could take in the office at a glance then when I have to use a candle so you'll notice, too. Didn't think that old radio could be fixed.

I'm so glad Marian got home twice so close together. Do hope Lee is OK and stays so for the winter. He'll probably outgrow that very soon.

The Dodge must be getting rather cranky now. It is a '37 model. Hope it doesn't stall on Carl when he takes his exam. You say Marian told me it didn't work as good.

Was interested in Bill Harris' return. He certainly was polite and respectful to me. Called me Lt. Guess

he had been in some good sprees over here, too. Also gambling.

Does Jim Christian return to England? What rank is he? Wasn't his return of surprise?

Had a letter from Elsie Cornell. Guess it was because of my illness. She said that the wedding was scheduled for Nov. 15th. I will write them after I hear if it finally came off. Somehow, I won't believe it until it does. Marian, oceans of Love!

Also a letter from Jean Greathead. She seems quite sorry not to be overseas. Don't think it would hurt her, especially if she went with a Genl. Hosp.

Martha sent some pictures of Annabelle. She looks like quite a little lady. Guess I have been gone a long time. Wonder how Mary Rotz is doing. When I joined, they did not have a basic training course. Here you have to take it when you return. That will certainly irk me.

Wonder if Hollis' unit is back for a rest. Forward areas don't have cocoa-cola even occasionally so he must be out of combat.

How is Betty Seville? Is she slow, and does she keep clean? Do hope so and get her a lot. What is the use in struggling through yourself. Perhaps you'd like to be busy, but so did Aunt Rettie.

Christmas packages are beginning to come through. The aunts' is the first one still unopened.

When I left the U.S.A. nothing but sugar and gasoline were rationed. I often wonder if I ask for stuff that you can't get. If so, I can do without. When I pack, I sure see too much to pack. Mosquito boots were only for the tropics. Here only our girls have them so we couldn't wear them off the area. They aren't comfortable but quite a relic to me.

So Fred entertained the congregation. Marian said over that she had like to marry a minister then she'd feel she was doing something worthwhile. Don't worry, Fred, that was

long ago. I just thought you'd like to know that you'd fulfilled an old wish. Be that Mom sat in the front row and beamed! If and when I get home don't line up any speeches for me. It has been a long time since I had any YPCU experience.

Carl, your new clothes sound OK. Fred how about taking some pictures of the family for me. I haven't had any of you and Marian since your wedding.

As you can tell, I've commented on a good many letters. And finally through the last one, were at least twenty. Have some in Italy. I'm sure as several people of the 23rd wrote that I didn't get one from Marian and one from mother sent on. Mail is slower here. Mother, Rose was to write you where I am. If she does you'll know to tell folks that I might know in France.

Just a week since I got here. I was worried that I couldn't take it but have been. Something occurs almost every day to lessen sleeping time, but I feel quite fine. I had been ill about two weeks in Africa – just uncomfortable. Continued nausea and pain. Then felt good on the ship. Guess that cold night in the hayloft did the trick. I think I had malaria, too, but probably didn't. There is so much jaundice. All chronic cases are sent home. I've recovered.

Think I told you that we moved this week. The house is so lovely, if only the commodes worked. I'd rather have an outside one then ours! Germans lived in the house once. Also lived in the building we now house our hospital in. Is raining today. Hope it turns to snow. Our house is pretty warm and the office where I'm writing this is warm, too. Only trouble you can't make toast and cocoa on a radiator.

I'd like very much to come home. Present system seems a 30-day furlough. I want to stay longer. Nurses that I know who went home are quite anxious to return. Guess it is a different temp. War news sounds good, but it isn't over yet. I'm tired of being away, and I'd love to come home, but there are twelve of us who have been over

two years and we are busy. A lot of nice kids are needing nursing. However, I'm told that the medical service expects me back. My boys, 2 Sgts, a Cpl. and a Pvt. are scattered on 4 different wards, and our doctor is working in dispensary. He can change and plans to and when he does, I'll be his head nurse. If not for some time. I hope to stay here. He left me manage pretty much as I choose. I'm tired of being a head nurse and hunting the answers to problems. I'd rather like saying ask Miss \_\_\_\_ for a change. He is duty officer tomorrow night so I'll find out. May ask for night duty after Christmas.

So I don't know how soon I'll be home. Certainly by May. If I keep well OK. I'd like to see you Folks and enjoy some American ways of life again. It's nice to live in a house. My room mates are all my friends. Mary Ann and Sybil you know. Betty is from Pittsburgh. Came from Italy with me as a replacement for one of the girls who went home. Paula worked in an evacuation hospital, too. Was at either Casino or Anzio. The last one is Milly Vogel. She's the character.

Soon be time to give the boys penicillin. You've heard of the new drug. Is given by needle and they hate it. I don't like to give it either, at night. I hate to wake people and the flashlight isn't very bright always. Someone is always wakening and needing a cast turn should the nights go fast.

Often don't have the time to write more than one letter. Don't get home until 8, leave 6-6:15. Got up Thurs. for Thanksgiving Dinner. Tomorrow I must wash clothes before I go to bed. Unpacked yesterday and didn't get to bed until 11:00. Sounds like your hours, mother. I have to remember my Christianity when I go buy the P.O.W. patients. Wish I could speak German.

Mother, please give to aunts to read and send to Marian. I'd hate to repeat. Take care of yourselves please.

Love,  
Esther

*Elsie Cornell refers to Elsie Cornell Kendall (1919-1998).*

"Jack" is unidentified.

Mary Rotz is Mary Rotz Thomas (1875-1961). She was active in missionary work.

Betty Seville is otherwise unidentified.

Mary Ann was also a roommate, but her last name is unknown.

Millie Vogal is otherwise unidentified; however Esther's diary mentions an Elizabeth Vogal.

Nurse Betty is otherwise unidentified.

YPCU refers to the Young People's Christian Union.

—X—  
V-Mail

27 Nov. '44

Dear folks,

Two A.M. and all is well, surprisingly so. The boys are sleeping better than usual. I can hear the guard coughing. Perhaps I should send him some cough medicine and will do so.

Had letters today from Hollis and Marian and just answered them.

Slept all day. I'm very glad that you made Marian a senior life member. I'd hoped you'd use it for anyone in the family that wasn't.

Oh, Yes, I voted. Was in Naples election evening.

Thank Ethel for the card and who is the soldier - Don or John? Suppose.

No snow much to our sorrow.

Wish I could ice skate and had some skates. Think we'll have opportunity. You should send me a sled! have seen a lot of ruined buildings. American people have so much to be thankful for. Christmas mail is coming.

Love,  
Esther

Ethel is otherwise unidentified.

—X—  
V-Mail

30 Nov. '44

Dear Folks,

Another hour and it will be Dec. and I was so sure a year ago that I would be home. Time does fly. Not as busy now. Have time to catch the breath. One more night of night duty.

We are going to move to another house. Am quite sorry except this one has furniture - probably too much for the no. of cots that must go in. We have regular mattresses for our cots, so they

are quite comfortable.

I'll give you Lillian's address in case you want to send her a Xmas card - 154 General Hospital APO # 226 c/o PH New York NY

Have seen snow only of a distance. Isn't too cold.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

4 Dec. '44

Dear Folks,

Night duty is over. Have been having an easy time, but it will be over tomorrow when I go to my own ward. The boys I had at Oran are all lost to other wards much to my sorrow. Won't be the same.

We moved again. I'm really in a mansion this time. A beautiful living room and other rooms galore, china, stoves, refrigerator etc. etc. Too good for us. And our muddy shoes.

I'm so glad the lights are in. Ours were off for two nights so I had a kerosene lantern. We have a stove, too. Use coal and wood in it. So I'll be much drier and warmer this winter.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

21 Dec. '44

Dear folks,

I'm certainly neglecting you these days for which I'm very sorry. The days go so quickly and then another week is half up and I owe you a letter.

My patients are very enthusiastically decorating the ward for which I'm very grateful. It keeps them busy and I have enough to do without worrying about that, too. Got another nurse on my ward Saturday for which I'm very thankful. You could hear Spanish, French, German, Italian, and English by walking from one end of the ward to the other. I'm learning more French as time goes by.

Neither yours or Marian's Xmas package has come. Got a fruitcake from Marian and two apples today. I'd asked her for it. Had a box of candy from Marian Hess. Some packages are

reported lost.

Sybil is almost asleep if I'd stop talking. Mary Ann is on night duty. Paula, our fourth roommate, will be finished night duty tonight. Had a letter from the mother of the Waynesboro boy.

Will try to write again soon.

Love,  
Esther

*Paula, a roommate, is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

28 Dec. '44

Dear Folks,

Mother, the box of powder came today. Thank you so much. It was a beautiful box and smelled so pretty and just when I was needing too. A box came from a girlfriend from Eustis and one from Marian. Marian's was so nice-smelly stuff-soap, perfume and polish, and now I have plenty of thread, too. So I thank you very much.

Sybil and I have the day off tomorrow. With two of our friends, we are going to cook supper here at the house.

I have so many letters to write. When we get a couple hours off during the day, it is a great temptation to sleep.

Hope you aren't worrying about me. I figure I'm just as safe as you are. Yesterday I burned a hole in the rug from coals rolling out of the stove. And that is about all that has happened.

Take care of yourselves.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

30 Dec. '44

Dear folks,

Your last letter was written Dec. 10 and today a Dec. 17 came from Marian. Know that you wrote in the meantime, so mail is certainly messed up.

The weather is colder. See ice all along the roadside and on the water's edges. Lasts all day. No snow, but a thin frost on the roofs. Is very pretty especially by moonlight and we have had some pretty moonlight nights, too.

Had a nice day off yesterday. Slept

all morning, went for a walk in the country and then in the eve four of us cooked our own supper, And I washed the dishes. First dishwashing I've done for a long time. There is certainly plenty of food around these days. (illegible) in February will be quite hungry. Marian's fruit cake was quite good.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

1945

1/10/45

Dear Folks,

I had the day off and have been thoroughly enjoying it. Is 2 p.m. and I'm still in my pajamas. Our stove works well enough to make toast and coffee, and I had some candy around.

We still have a light snow occasionally. The streets are slippery. I fell down only once and that was because I was throwing a snowball at some of the officers instead of watching where I was going.

Had a letter from Lenore today. She said that Lewistown was quite icy over Christmas.

Do you still help to milk now that the machine is in use? I do hope not.

We don't seem quite as busy as we were. I like the other two nurses I work with very much and the Sgt is very capable, and the Maj. hasn't lost his temper yet, much to my surprise so things are going well.

This is my 7th letter today so am practically caught up.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

undated  
Likely Jan, 45

Dear Folks,

Is continuing to snow, and the pine trees we can see around are pretty. It isn't dry but it is snow. Is pretty cold, too.

Had a V-Mail from you and one from Aunt Rhoda. It was the one you'd written at the S. S. party. Hope you

had a nice Christmas. Wonder how you made out with the visitors.

Life here goes on the same in the house. A lot of patients but don't seem so busy. Fri. night we cooked our own supper, Sat. night went to a dance, and tonight are going to play cards. Makes the biggest difference having someone to do most of your laundry. We even get our suits pressed for us. So life isn't very hard. I feel good now. I'm taking vitamin capsules regularly, and I'd like to see you all.

Love,  
Esther

*S. S. refers to Sunday School.*

—X—  
V-Mail

13 Jan. '45

Dear Folks,

The Christmas cards came yesterday. Got two of them, and I was so pleased at Dad's note on the back. That is the second time you've ever written me. Yes, I too think that it is time I come home but I have no choice in the matter. Was just given five Hash marks. Are worn on the left sleeve designating each six months overseas. Time does fly, and there are so many of us who would like to come home.

Tell Mabel and Isabelle I got their cards – also one from John Johnston, Lee, a girl from Hancock who didn't give her name, Thelma Shore and a second one from Hollis. It was mailed three weeks before and came three weeks after the first one.

Is still cold, and work continues the same. I am well and contented to last awhile (illegible).

Love,  
Esther

*Mabel likely refers to a cousin, Mabel I. Henry Kendall, (1904-1982).*

*John Johnston likely refers to a cousin (1913-1976).*

*Thelma Shore was a family friend (1920-1987).*

—X—  
V-Mail

15 Jan. 45

Dear Folks,

I'm sitting by the stove, listening to the radio. The wood is wet so doesn't burn so well. Sybil is asleep, and the

other girls have gone out.

Your Dec 28 letter is the most recent one. I'm so glad that the poinsettia came through so well, and that it is so beautiful. I'm looking forward to Carl's picture.

Also had a letter from Aunt Rhoda – the only mail I've had in a week. No one getting any these days. Got a Nov. newspaper today. Was more interesting than some.

Is still cold and snowy. We are so fortunate this winter. My ward is warm and my roommates are pretty good fire builders, better than I am. I told them that at home we had corn cobs, kerosene and kindling.

Must write to Hollis and Marian.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

23 Jan. 45

Dear Hollis,

Received from you 2 V-Mails yesterday. Jan. 5-10 Must seem a little more regular now. Had a letter from Marian and one from Aunt Mame today.

Yes, I got that picture last fall. I think I wrote Aunt Rhoda that it took me a couple weeks to find it.

It wasn't the 23rd Station that you wrote about. Nothing like that has happened around me. I should have been here when the unit first came up. Is safe and sound.

Did Rose write to you? When I write her I will and her too. She is in New York.

Had a letter from Helena and what she said that she had sent you a card from Rome. She thought that you might not remember her.

I'm glad that you have the tractor.

It continues to snow daily. Went for a walk Friday saw some skiing.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

25 Jan. '45

Dear Folks,

The wood is of better quality today so it is fairly warm in the room, and

I'm sitting on the chair with my feet on the stove. I'm getting sleepy as I was up late last night. Was on duty here. Meant that I had to lock the door at 11:20. 6:15 seems to come so early as you well know. Is rather slippery. I sat down a couple times on my way home from work. Didn't hurt anything but my pride.

We are busy right now. All my beds are full and 85 faces are a lot to remember. There is so much paperwork, too.

Well, today, I went down to the Col.'s office to tell him I'd like to go home. Told him you'd like to see me. He said that he didn't blame me. None of us are being relieved right now so don't get your hopes up. So now 2 1/2 years.

Hope Carl has his driver's license.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Feb. 1, 1945

Dear Folks,

It's almost bedtime, and I really don't have anything to write about, but guess you're expecting a letter again. Had a little mending and some reading this evening. My roommates are all out. Mary Ann is sick, has bronchitis. Sybil is on night duty and Paula has the day off. Is nice to be home alone occasionally.

Mail is still very scarce. Newspapers are coming more rapidly. Have had two Jan. 1st mails from you, and one from Marian.

News is excellent. Do hope it is soon over but will probably take much time yet. Pacific news is excellent, too. Wonder where Hollis is now.

Aren't you glad that there are no Saturday lamp chimneys to wash? Are you keeping your ears open for a hired girl next summer? Please do.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

3 Feb. '45

Dear Folks,

Don't you think you have a beautiful daughter? Those aren't black

stockings, but had my trousers tucked in my shoes. Had been for a walk in the country. Took some later when it was snowing.

Your Jan. 2nd V-Mail came today – so is quite irregular.

Hope you aren't worrying too much about me. I haven't been in any danger as bad as crossing the ocean was. Haven't even been scared.

Had a letter from Aunt Rhoda today. They must certainly be busy with the Red Cross work.

Tomorrow I have a third nurse on my ward so things will be easier. However, we haven't been so busy recently. Three French maids work on the ward. They are quite good. Are such thorough cleaners. Our office floor practically shines. Every A.M. when I'm charging temperatures, she wants to scrub. Ours are the best maids in the hospital. I'm so glad that they aren't young enough to be boy crazy, like some of them.

Tonight is Sat. night so I polished my nails. And writing this while they are drying.

Had a letter from Diane Hellman today. Said Jim Christian was married again. What does he mean by that?

Two more weeks you'll have a wedding anniversary. We never did have that party. Perhaps the first one after the war.

Ten more days until I go on night duty, Valentine's Day. Wrote Aunt Dessie and cousin Margaret for their birthdays. Didn't know Margaret was staying with Mrs. Martin.

I have to sew on my service stripes five for every six months overseas – so must get busy.

Love,  
Esther

*James Christian was a family friend, (1921-1977).*

*Mrs. Martin is otherwise unidentified*

*Diane Helman is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

4 Feb. 1945

Dear Folks,

Just time for a short note before

the night nurses come. The night nurse happens to be Sybil.

Today was Sabbath. Had the usual first Sat. of the month communion. Has been using the same printed prayer for a year. I'm getting tired.

The snow continues to melt.

Wrote an airmail post night. Since it may take it so long to get there, I'm writing this to let you know I'm OK.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Feb. 7, 1945

Dear Folks,

The airmail letter with Carl's picture came today. He must be so tall. I showed it to my friends, and they laughed when I said - my baby brother. I was so happy to receive it. Took the letter so long to arrive. I have been watching for it since yesterday when your Jan. 16th '45 mail arrived. I'll write a long airmail later next week when I'm on night duty.

Yesterday the stockings from Aunt Martha arrived. There are quite pretty ones. Also had a package from Kay Marren - pajamas, cologne and bath powder. It had been mailed October 16th.

Can't help but wonder if Hollis isn't again in combat. There is so much activity there now. We'll never know what these boys go through. Had a busy day today.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

13 Feb. 45

Dear Folks,

My first night of night duty is 2/3 gone. Sybil has a bad cold so is in the hospital, and I came on tonight instead of Wednesday night. Right now, the Cpl. is feeding me toast.

Your Jan. 16 letter came a couple days ago and Jan. 12 today.

I'm not too busy. Have 130 patients - none too sick. A couple had operations today and had to have morphine. So many colds. I'm always

trying to figure out where the coughs are coming from.

Had Jan. 14th letter from Hollis. He seems the same. Think he is anxious to get home. Hope we're both back there together this summer.

Must go give some penicillin, the new wonder drug.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

15 Feb. 45

Dear Folks,

Is 1:15 and everyone seems quiet. Have to waken them for some medicine occasionally which they don't appreciate very much.

Was a beautiful day out today. I should have gotten up early and gone for a walk, but instead slept late - until time to come to work. Tomorrow it will probably rain. Marian sounds happy in Alexandria. Said Fred had spoken at World Week of Prayer.

Tonight I'm wearing a silver bar. My promotion finally went through. Everyone's congratulating me. Two others came also.

Love,  
Esther

*The promotion was to First Lieutenant.*

—X—

16 Feb. '45

Dear Folks,

Your V-Mail of Jan 26 came today. We're farther from the base so that is why it takes longer than in Oran.

Are you bailing hay to sell? Don't you make enough money without thinking up new jobs plus some more cooking?

Hope Mr. and Mrs. Seiders are better. Tell them I asked for them.

What do you mean - if Carl gets thru alright (High School). You'd better get through if the cows go un milked.

Someone wanted an ice cream freezer when the snow was on the ground. No ice cream since I left Italy, for the others Africa. There is no place to even get a cup of coffee here. Are not permitted in French restaurants so our

three meals per day are all. Can buy 1-2 bars of candy per week.

Had no idea that the plant from the Congo would sprout buds. I'm so glad that I sent it. Now, no leaves or seeds may be sent. I have no plans for bringing any soldier home with me. I'm sorry to disappoint Uncle Harry, and a few more curious souls, but I'm probably being an old maid. Expect to have to stay in the army five more years. Nurses are going to be among the last out. And the Penna boy likes to walk in the snow, too. He got more snow in his face than I did much to his surprise. Is a very good friend - Registrar of the Hospital - a 1st Lt. and the story ends there.

For my birthday I'd like a three-layer chocolate cake with chocolate icing and a stuffed chicken, some fried cabbage. Do you think you could get that over here? I don't expect to be home to collect it. I'll probably be here abouts with no choice in the matter or I assure you I'd come home. I'd like to get to Germany long enough to spit. I'd like some cookies, wafers the kind you make ice cream sandwiches out of (or some that won't break en route), nuts, some tuna fish, or anything to have a party or picnic, sandwich spread, airmail stationary. Can't think of anything else.

In my left hand I'm holding a glass of black coffee. Makes the night more durable.

Just read Dec. 2nd Herald. Some missionary wrote of traveling on the Congo River. Revived many memories.

Now do continue to look for a girl this summer. Carl won't have time to fall in love with her.

Love,  
Esther

*Mr. and Mrs. Seiders are otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

18 Feb. '45

Dear Folks,

Is now 4:30. Tonight has gone fast, and I didn't get nearly so sleepy. Your February 3rd letter came today. Airmail

is now coming more quickly than V-Mail. You have certainly been good to write, especially lately. I know you're busy more so than me. Don't you wish you could use postcards occasionally? Do hope you get the car fixed and Carl gets his driver's license OK.

Please pay my alumni dues and do use the blue dresses. Won't want to ever wear them again.

This is Sabbath AM. The only church services are at 10:00 A.M. so I won't be going. I just sleep thru it. Are held in the Mess Hall and is always too warm. Want to write to Marian now.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Feb. 20, 1945

Dear Folks,

Tonight, is my first night of the second week of night duty. The last week always seems to go faster somehow.

Sybil had a letter from her mother yesterday. They had received a telegram from the War Dept. that her 19 year old brother is missing over Germany, since Jan. 14th. Sybil's last letter from him was written Jan. 10th. He said in it that the war was getting to be a bore. She didn't think he'd been on any missions then. Was a tail gunner on a flying fortress. She is out of the hospital and goes for five days rest tomorrow. She takes it so well.

Want to write to Aunt Mary tonight. Wrote cousin Ella K. last night.

Got up at noon today when the water was hot to wash my hair. Was quite an effort. Then went back to sleep.

Had a Xmas package from Lillian yesterday. Apparently, she had had her mother buy it - perfume and stationery.

But I have an awful lot of pink at home. Will house clean my drawer someday.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

21/2/45

Dear Folks,

At 3:00 A.M., I wakened the boys

and give them a shot in the arm, and then all is quiet until 4:00, had to wake up a few more to take 9 pills. Guess they sleep with me on their mind, because they aren't so bad to waken this time.

Carl, thank you so much for the Valentine. Was such a nice one, too.

Just wrote to Mary Jane Truax, and will now write to Lenore, who I knew at Juniata.

I'd also like an address box among my birthday presents if you please.

And have you found that hired girl yet?

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

23 Feb.'45

Dear Folks,

You're Feb. 6 V-Mail came today. No, I don't know Neva, but he had said once he'd a letter from her. Don't know any of his friends by name. Wonder where he is.

Had a Valentine from Marian today. Included her picture. Was so happy for it. Looks like Fred feeds her OK. You've certainly got husky girls.

Is almost 5:30. Tonight seems to have gone fast. Wrote to Isabelle and must write Aunt Rettie a birthday letter soon.

Sybil is away at rest camp. Returns tomorrow and I go on Wednesday. Does us good to see new faces. There is always fussing in your own group.

I'm feeling well. I do hope you may be, too.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

2-26-45

Dear Folks,

Three more hours of my last night. Has been quite a busy night. Everyone seems to be acting up. Especially for my benefit. Right now an asthmatic is wheezing away.

Haven't heard from you for a couple days. The V-Mail must be held up somewhere along the line.

Nothing new here except I'm tired of writing letters. Go to work, sleep and go back to work again. No (illegible) then we were a couple weeks ago.

Had fried chicken tonight for supper. Was very good – we had large pieces. Get so much hamburger and meatloaf these days. Have some every noon, and at midnight for the night crew.

Hope all is well with you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Mar. 2, 1945

Dear Folks,

This is my third day at rest camp and it has been lovely. Today is such a bright sunny day. I haven't been out yet but am going soon. Yesterday we went to another town. Saw a lot of 15th century stuff, including the oldest hospital in the world. Saw these old tapestries that it had been well then so long ago – the colors are still bright. Most had a Catholic theme so didn't seem so religious to me. Saw some robes that were made for the priest, one of gold and had real pearl trimmings.

I'm going into the army store. Need a men's shirt and some neckties. Will take some pictures to send you. Hope you're well and don't plant too much stuff.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

3/6/45

Maricourt, France

Dear folks,

We arrived here yesterday afternoon. Certainly hated to leave the 23rd. It has changed completely in the past week. So many new faces that I have no desire to go back to visit. They will not be near us long. All my best friends have left, makes me mad, all the work I did and now someone else goes home with out good reputation.

Guess it will be nice here, they seem nice to us anyway. Have an ice cream parlor but I'm just boarding, I

hope, until I can come home to you.

Mail is packages.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

7 Mar. '45

Dear Folks,

When I came back Sat. your Feb. 22nd letter was here and then Mon. Feb. 10th and 14th.

You never did say what Uncle Clarence's trouble is. Hope he continues to improve.

I'm so glad that Carl has his license now, don't worry about him. He'll be OK.

Don't be bragging about my promotion. What gets me is that if I hadn't asked for evacuation work, I'd have gotten it almost a year ago. And I do hope Parson Findlay finds time to write to his boys, even if he doesn't write to his girls. He expects us to attend church when we return and he is still our pastor, and I do hope no one put it in the paper. I didn't think about that when I wrote.

Sybil is in the hospital again - sinuses. Has such bad headaches and lost so much weight. No word of her brother. Garden time again soon.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

12 Mar. '45

Dear Folks,

Your Feb. 2nd V-Mail came several days after the Feb. 25th one and on the same day as the airmail of Feb. 24.

You seemed to tell as much in your airmail letter. I'm so glad that the Miller is doing so well. Yes I think that you should get your chicks already started, but don't let the prospects of my coming home alter anything. If there were an emergency, I could possibly get home for 30 days. I don't want to return to the states for only 30 days. I'd rather wait a little longer and hope that I can get home for longer time. I don't mind returning after 6 mos. or going the other but there is no place like America.

I thought Florence Christman was home. If not is in Italy. She had had a couple operations. Not long until Carl's out of H. S.

Love,  
Esther

*Florence Christman, apparently a nurse friend, is otherwise unidentified.*

*The "Miller" is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

22 Mar. '45

Dear Folks,

Still no mail from home for over a week and 1/2. Guess several will come.

Really been working. Seems like always something else to do. Got home tonight and thought of all the things I had forgotten to do.

Food is pretty good. Get a lot of cake and now ice cream almost every week. Had apples once. The food Marian sent me certainly disappeared fast, but I wanted it to share with my friends.

Sleeping time. No more news.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

30 Mar. '45

Dear Folks,

Returned from Paris this A.M. had a wonderful time. I saw all those beautiful hats and clothes and then looked at my drab uniform. Was there 48 hours.

Had 8 letters when I returned today. Among them yours of the 17th.

Of course, it rained while I was in Paris. There is so much to see and something to do every minute. I enjoyed walking through large stores. Just looked like Horner's, and a 5 and 10, too.

I'll write you a long letter soon.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

undated

Likely Apr. '45

Dear Folks,

I should have written you last night but it was Sybil's first day out of the

hospital and she and I played bridge with a couple of the officers, and I was tired and I went to bed. This afternoon another nurse and I went riding with the chaplain. We went to another town near here. I bought a pair of earrings, the first ones I have bought since overseas. He can be nice but doesn't know how to reach the men. I especially enjoyed the ride because it is the first time other than going to Rest Camp that I have been riding in any vehicles since Nov. You either walk or sit at home.

No mail for several days.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

undated  
Likely 3/45

Dear Folks,

Just set the alarm. Knew that I won't want to hear it tomorrow.

No mail from you for a week. Had a letter from Lenore today.

Had a couple very sick patients. Have really been busy.

May go to Paris next week. Could have gone tonight but needed more time.

I'm sleepy. I'll write again soon.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

Apr. 2 '45

Dear Folks,

Think I wrote you a V Mail since my return from Paris. It was really a nice time, except so tired all the time – you travel all night long. Got there to the hotel about noon. In afternoon went to a fashion show. Saw all these beautiful clothes, and there I sat. Hadn't had my shoes off for almost 6 hours and had on the coat I wore to work every day this winter. But it was nice to see something besides the uniforms. Here the local French have no new clothes. Hats are all shapes.

In the evening went to a stage show. The next A.M. went shopping. Bought a wool overcoat at the army store. Had only the trench coat and it

was getting warm. And with the wool lining was so baggy. It really feels wonderful to have a decent coat on. I certainly felt dressed up when I went to the dance Saturday night. And was my date surprised at the change.

To get back to Paris, we then started looking in shop windows. Prices are exorbitant – girdles \$50, nightgown, \$70 to \$100. Of course they are pretty. A table scarf, \$80, handkerchief \$10. So, I did very little shopping. There was a lot of costume jewelry, but I can't wear it, and anyone could as well to get it in the states. After dinner took a tour of Paris and evening to the opera. Was the first opera I'd ever seen, and very beautiful. Was an Egyptian scene and I enjoyed it comparing it to what I knew of Africa.

The next morning went shopping again. This time we found some beautiful department stores. Just like the difference. Cam's and Home's. Then left at noon.

Paris is pretty – only it rained so much when I was there, and everything looks American. They have an excellent subway system. You can't guess what it was like to walk city streets again – to see beautiful clothes, well dressed people, and have some entertainment, besides sitting and gossiping, which is all we have to do except work or

going for a walk. I can't describe it, with such a change from the village. And all new faces. Daily one girl from our hospital goes at a time, but we meet others along the way. Mary Ann came the day after I did. Everyone enjoys the trip so much. Not the trip but the stay. I saw nothing between here and Paris. You need to sleep on the way and is dark on return, Too tired to do otherwise.

Florence Christman was transferred to a Genl. Hosp. not such strenuous work. Is no Italy.

Had a nice letter from Aunt Molly recently. I'm so glad that Uncle Clarence is better. Should drop a card to him. I'm so behind in my letters. Haven't written to the aunts recently.

Let them read this, please, and I will write.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

4-4-45

Dear Folks,

Don't think that I told you about Easter. Had a nice day. Sunshine. The church services - Communion was at 10:00 A.M., was rather drawn out until as many communed, so I left early. Was glad I did as I had new patients waiting for me. More came right in. Our chaplain has a printed communion program that he has used for a year but is getting rather boring now.

Saw some lovely flower shops in Paris even roses. We've had so many jonquils. Tonight went for a walk. Is light out quite later. Saw some blue (illegible) The first I'd seen since those we used to have in the old front yard.

We are out by the edge of town. So many were making gardens and I thought how busy you Folks must be. Don't try too much.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

11 Apr. '45

Dear Folks,

It's been a nice day. Everyone spends a lot of their off-duty time taking walks. So many blossoms and spring flowers. Many pansies. Went by a Chateau that was built in the 10th c. is now just a few walls standing. The grounds are huge and enclosed in a Great Wall. Is really the town park. Four small deer are the only animals.

We are having a wedding tomorrow. One of the doctors is marrying a nurse he met at Ft. Bragg and hadn't seen until January. In the meantime, he had dated one of our nurses nightly almost two years and didn't tell her he was getting married. Some strange situations go on over here.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

V-Mail

14/4/'45

Dear Folks,

Well the wedding came off yesterday. Was really beautiful. She wore a white satin and net gown and veil and two little French girls were flower girls. Was the prettiest wedding as the others wore uniforms.

You asked me about holiday gifts. I need a hair net to wear nights. A hair brush and some bobby pins. I like prophylactic brushes with stiff bristles (send me a pretty blue one with comb to match and I'll pay for it).

You probably couldn't get one in town so don't look too hard.

Dinner time.

Love,  
Esther

*The wedding couple is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

16/4/45

Dear Folks,

Received 2 V-Mails from you on Saturday. Mail service is improving.

We are certainly working less these last few days. Is worse than being rushed too much. Is certainly beautiful hereabouts now. So many beautiful flowers. Violets and blossoms, and the grass is so green. Yesterday we went for a walk in the woods. See old ruins.

Our Col. has gone home on 45-day furlough. You should see the smiling faces. Wonder what will happen next? Perhaps I will be home by Christmas. Duty never knows.

I saw the 22nd. Don't mention in our papers. Have heard from Hollis twice recently.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

23 Apr. '45

Dear Folks,

Received two V-Mails on Saturday of Apr. 6 and 11. You sound busy as usual.

Tomorrow night is night duty again. Seems to come up so often and is so nice out to go on duty, however,

last evening was quite cool.

Friday afternoon four of us went on a picnic in a woods near here. So quiet out there. Didn't see anyone all afternoon. Ate the last of the food Marian sent except the pickles.

News continues quite good, but there are plenty mountains to cross before they get the last Germans.

Have some sewing to do.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

28/4/45

Dear Folks,

The package came today. Thank you so much. Paula's birthday is in May so I shall attempt to have her cake and make icing with (illegible). I'll let you know how it turns out. And we'll have a picnic when I come off night duty with the cheese and crackers, and nuts.

Please don't send me anymore candy. I can get enough here to keep me satisfied so I'd rather have the cheese and crackers. But don't worry the candy will be eaten.

Your Apr 16 V-Mail came today. Had an airmail from Mary Kelso, Mailed only 9 days ago. Don't work too hard. Let the corners go. More news does sound good. Gives me hope. No, please.

Love  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

3/May '45

Dear Folks,

Well, Berlin has fallen and the Italian armies surrendered. The French people had on such a celebration that we all thought the war (over here) must be over. Didn't get my patients to bed until after midnight.

Received your airmail letter yesterday. Also Aunt Mary and Aunt Rhoda's.

Somehow I don't think they will ever hear from Chas Hagerman. Walter Kendall's days as a POW should soon be over. Guess they are anxious to know.

And Rhoda said in her letter that

she is quite pleased with the cameo (illegible), so the money doesn't matter much. They have been good to me so I'll send them something.

Love,  
Esther

*Walter Kendall, a Second Lieutenant with the U.S. Air Force, was captured by German forces after his plane was shot down on or about March 8, 1944. He was held as a Prisoner of War until hostilities ceased in May 1945.*

—X—  
V-Mail

5-5-45

Dear Folks,

Did I tell you we had some snow. Apr. had been such a lovely month. But May had a rather cold beginning. Today didn't snow but did rain.

The war news continues quite fine with more troops surrendering all the time. Nothing else much interesting going on. Am almost finished with night duty.

Am going to send some more pictures soon. I hope you haven't put them in anything. I'll fix them up someday.

Mary Kelso's 20th birthday.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

6 May '45

Dear Folks,

Five more hours of my last night and then I have a day off before going to the Riviera on leave. Sybil and I are the first to go and are the envy of the whole 23rd. This ruins my chances of going to England, ever, but I might never go there anyway. I didn't expect to go until June, but I'm going first. In some ways I'm sorry but who knows what summer will bring.

Aunt Mame's package came today, very nice!

Got a sick German on my hands tonight.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

V-Mail

May 11, 1945

Dear Folks,

Nothing new to report. Night duty is half over when tonight is finished. And no regrets, I'm sure. Not working hard at all.

Did I tell you that I had a card from Mrs. Unger? Thank her for me please.

Had a recent letter from Helena. She is quite busy in Italy. Is hoping to be the next nurse returned from that unit.

I've given up hopes of getting your Mother's Day gift finished. Do you like the aunts' pins? I'm quite happy over getting this finished.

Love,  
Esther

*Mrs. Unger is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

11 May '45

Dear Folks,

We got here to Cannes yesterday. Seemed a long trip but we're fortunate enough to get a sleeper from Dijon for Marseille, was a week. Room for two and had running water. Saw some sad sights. French mothers meeting their returning soldier prisoner sons. After all the terrible sufferings so many endured didn't seem real that they are at last home. Some families meet the trains every day just hoping for the return of some loved ones.

It is beautiful here. The Mediterranean is as beautiful as ever. Hope we are busy when we return to Epinal. time goes so much more quickly.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

13 May '45  
Cannes

Dear folks,

Sybil and I are still here. We're rather sunburned by now. Aren't wearing straw hats and long gloves – as in your younger days. Are you going to permit me to wear shirts and slacks when I come home. Now that V-E days

is here I have more hopes of coming this fall, who knows. All the towns here had parades. Sybil and I celebrated by having a picnic with two of our friends.

Today was Mother's Day. I didn't get to church as I would have had a two hr. wait before and after church for the bus, but I thought often of you. I do hope that some day soon we'll be gone, the four of us, and until then

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

16 May '45  
Cannes

Dear Folks,

One more day. I'm sorry to go back to work. Looks like a long hot summer, and I'm tired of Epinal.

Last night Sybil and I stayed overnight at another hospital near here. They are set up in a former sanitarium and is beautiful and modern. Puts our old schoolhouse to shame, but we sure did a lot of work last winter.

Had radishes a couple times. And lettuce, too, but no ice cream.

I'll write when I return.

Sybil's little brother was killed – the one that was missing.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

20 May '45  
Epinal, France

Dear Folks,

Received the letters today about Uncle Clarence. I wrote them when I was on night duty. Imagine the letter came afterwards. Hope not. I'm glad that Marian and Fred came to the funeral.

Sybil and I returned last evening. Had a Pullman again from Marseille to Dijon so wasn't a bad trip. Otherwise, you sit up in a crowded French Coach. We shared our compartment and she and I slept together, woke each other up rather frequently.

I'll write a long letter this evening. Paula's birthday is tomorrow. Imagine Mary Rotz goes on to India or China. I'll

Don't know anything about the future. Don't send me anymore packages but keep the letters coming. I do think I'll be home by fall, but I'm afraid to hope too hard.

Love,  
Esther

*Jr. Shimer refers to Sgt. Paul Shimer, Jr., the 'Millionth Yank' to embark from Southampton, England docks during WWII. Shimer, though, was killed on April 14, 1945 by the blast of a shell as he led his men against a German force on a hill. Born in 1918, he was a son of Paul and Katherine Shimer of McConnellsburg.*

—X—  
V-Mail

28/5/45  
Epinal

Dear Folks,

The sun is shining so brightly right now. Looks like a warmer week than we had last week.

We aren't doing much but making time and doing a little fixing, etc. Sat. night had a party.

So hard to write letters these days.

Flowers are beautiful and in many nice fields.

Will write again soon.

As for the cameo, that is the first gift except candy that I've sent the aunts.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

6-6-45

Maricourt, France

Dear Folks,

Worked yesterday afternoon and this A.M.. Not at all busy but is perplexing to get a new routine. The other nurses that work here are off.

Eugenia and I plan to go to Epinal and stay overnight. I'm not sure yet that she can get off.

One of the 23rd Majors is seriously ill. Called me last night and as I had had jaundice and wanted some blood from one who had had. I was the wrong type.

No news on when we get home or how long we stay here.

Love,  
Esther



*Esther with Eugenia Slobjian.*

*Eugenia Slobojian, a roommate, was born in 1919. It is not known when she died. She married a Captain Franklin Moore.*

*The Major refers to a Major Gillespie, see next letter.*

—X—

Sabbath afternoon  
10 June '45

Dear Folks,

I've written you two brief V-Mail letters this week so I know I should write a long letter. This past two weeks have been the most difficult since I've been overseas.

First, we had a banquet for our officers – the doctors that we had worked with for three years. Everyone was so sad because they were being transferred to various hospitals, and we all began to wonder who would be next. That was Tues. almost two weeks ago. Just before leaving the mess hall, the chief nurse asked me to stay for a meeting. She told us that if we did not volunteer for the Pacific after a home in the states (30 days preferably) we

would be transferred. Had until 8:00 A.M. the next morning to decide. I had already asked for reassignment in the U.S.A., so I didn't change it. Thurs A.M. we were told now we lift Sat. and where we were to go. You never saw such a sad group. We had had so many trials and tribulations, so many memories that we're sacred, we knew that each other's friends and families, and now being transferred. There were 10 nurses that had come from the Congo. The others were all transferred to Oran. So we tend to feel it the most. Our beloved hospital, the one farther south in Africa, that was also the only hospital to change stations by air transportation when we had flown from Leopoldville to Casablanca who joined us in Oran are still with the unit as they had had less than 2 years foreign duty. and were willing to go out again. The doctors had no choice faced with foreign duty again. That 30 days isn't time to get reacquainted with their families. Of course, it is a very big problem, deciding what unit is to go and where and who to go with it, but the 23rd going home and leaving me in France was a terrible blow, especially as some of the people now in it we're getting a leave and they hadn't been overseas more than six months.

Coming here, they have been very nice to us. But we have no enthusiasm to make new friends or to do new work. We have no idea how soon or if we can get home. I'm pretty sure that I won't go from here to the Pacific. This place is so much larger and I just go and come and no one bothers me.

We heard during last week that a Maj. who had come overseas with us, who had been so nice to us when Gertie died, was severely ill. On Fri. we were called back to the funeral. It still doesn't seem real to me that he was in that coffin. That poor wife waiting all these years and then he's not returning. And it rained and rained that day. He was from Presbyterian in NY and so are several of the other doctors. When those wives hear it, they'll all start

worrying about their own husbands. It is so much harder to see death from acute infections, jaundice as he had, then someone killed in combat. Two of his friends are going home on 30-day leave and then to the Pacific. How those wives will hate to see them go again. We were just heartbroken. So we saw the old gang again. Everyone got back for the funeral. And the old 23rd and the new 23rd don't compare. Didn't seem like home and we were glad to leave.

Here there are movies and ice cream and cocoa-cola, but I want to come home. I'm sure it'll be by late fall. I may get surprised and come sooner. It is this waiting that is so annoying. If they just say you go home a certain month, but one never knows.

Was to church this AM. The chaplain is an improvement over the one I've been listening to for 2 years.

And it is a week until Father's Day. I started to write a letter, but these past two weeks were too much. I just hope and pray that Uncle Sam lets us come home and see you soon. I'm so glad that you're getting to Alexandria.

Received Carl's letter. He said he couldn't have the car to get a girl.

The Penna. Lieut. is going home. We talked and talked about what there would be in the garden at home now. A French patient's family brought some strawberries, so I had two. Tasted so good.

You'd better send this letter to Marian and to the aunts. I can't repeat all this. I've tried to tell you my feelings. Hope I got it across. Don't worry I'll be home before your birthday, mother.

Had a letter from Lucy Lightowler. I've sent her some money for the orphanage. She said that she was to speak at Presbyterian in Hopewell. This is the end of this tablet.

Love,  
Esther

*Lucy Lightowler was a Presbyterian missionary.*

*Gertie refers to Nurse Gertrude Irwin, of Ligonier, PA (1918-1942). She died from bacillary dysentery.*

*Esther refers to the Presbyterian Hospital in New York.*

—X—

V-Mail

12 June '45

Dear Folks,

Life here goes on the same.

Paula had the cast taken off her arm today. I still believe is swollen. I worked this A.M. This P.M. washed her hair, put it up, ironed, and put clean papers in my drawers. Tonight went to a movie.

We just aren't busy and time on duty goes so slowly. Seems such a waste.

One of the girls that I knew at Eustis is here visiting a friend. She's been overseas 30 months and no prospects of returning home.

No mail since Saturday. Will be very slow now.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

18 June '45

Dear Folks,

Usual quiet day. I'm certainly not earning the money that I am being paid. Yesterday was the first warm day we had had. Took my first sun bath since leaving Cannes. The weather here is similar to Maine. Quite different from the heat of Africa. There is no place to go swimming. The river isn't clear enough.

Went to church on Sabbath. The chaplain is very tall and has white hair. He can certainly preach a better sermon than our former ones. Can talk without paper too. I hope the unit gets a new chaplain in the states, because there wasn't much spiritual guidance from this one period

I still don't know about going home. Not soon, I fear.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

20 June 45

Dear folks,

The Hospital has many buildings spread out like in our Meadow. In some of the space, the farmers are planting peas, onions, lettuce, etc. but some space isn't used and there are so many

poppies – also some yellowish weed flowers, a few dandelions and some violets. There are a couple farmhouses within sight and many cows. There are also a lot of trees. Here is much more forest than we see at home. Is quite a pretty area, only our shoes are dusty when we go to work. This week is so different from last week – is hot – and (illegible) so cool.

Still no mail. The fighting in Okinawa seems almost finished.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

23 June '45

Dear Folks,

Time for another letter. Received your June 11th V-Mail on Fri. and today a June 13th V-Mail from Aunt Rhoda. The old mail that went to the 23rd hasn't caught up with us yet so we're glad to get some.

Busy day. I'm working harder. Am in contagious ward. At least I won't get the measles again.

What is Cam's telephone no.? I don't expect to get home until late fall. Too late for roasting ears. No one knows. Just wish I knew what month.

I work from 7-3. Went for some ice cream and I then came home and slept from 3:30-7. Is quite warm. The radio is playing hymns.

Sybil's brother was killed. She just got her promotion.

Love,  
Esther

*Cam is otherwise unidentified,*

*Sybil Mosby's brother's name is unknown.*

—X—  
V-Mail

26 June '45

A letter from Marian yesterday and the birthday card from Carl today. Came in a week. Took that long to get a letter from the coast of France. Mail service is supposed to improve.

Did I ever tell you that I sent a box when packing to come here. Almost wish it would get lost as I don't need any of it. Guess I'll have a big housecleaning when I get home.

Sybil is reading. Is after 11:00 so I might as well go to bed right away.

Wonder if you're canning cherries and soon time to cut wheat. Sailed from Charleston 25 mos. ago today.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

7/2/45

Dear Folks,

Is certainly cool here for July. We are wearing socks and sweaters, too bad. Has rained a lot. Beautiful rainbow tonight.

Your birthday card came today. Also Ethel's. Thank you so very much.

Paula leaves tomorrow. The elbow may require an operation and she is going home. May take some time to get her there. She has been overseas a couple less months than I have.

Mary Ann is being transferred to another hospital to stay with the army of occupation. She is still in England. Wonder what will happen to Sybil and I. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could bake my birthday cake.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

Jul. 6 '45

Dear Folks,

When I wrote you last, I told you that Mary Ann was leaving. She left yesterday AM - is to be stationed in Versailles. And in the evening six of the girls that I came overseas with left the 23rd with a month to go, were transferred. Here waiting to go home - so eight of us are together again. I was so happy to see them for a we had been together three years. I don't think I'll be home before late Oct. and maybe not then. The girls are all happy to be together again. This group here isn't too friendly. Will write an airmail soon.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

12/7/45

Dear Folks,

Your 29 June V-Mail and 4 July

airmail came today. I'm glad the box came thru ok although, although (sic) I wouldn't have missed much but it (illegible). Am going to send another fairly soon as I don't want to much stuff in case I can fly. I'd rather come via ship as I've waited this long. Surely one more week will not matter.

Plan to go to Reims tomorrow as I have some mail for Paula and is a good chance to see the city. A car is going on official business. Two others will go with me.

Busy on duty. Serious meningitis

Oh, I do want to go home before winter. Won't we have a lot to talk about. I want some pot pie and baked potatoes.

Love,  
Esther

—X—  
V-Mail

14 July '45

Dear Folks,

A very warm day, quite different from last week. Quite changeable.

We continue fairly busy, not so bad as a couple days ago

Thurs. was to Reims. is about a 400-mile round trip. Left at 8:00 A.M. Stopped 20 min. along the way and got there at 12:30. picked up Paula at the hospital and then went to town. Did a little shopping. Went to the famous cathedral and also to the schoolhouse where the German surrender was signed. Took some pictures. On the way home, the gas line was plugged and instead of arriving home by midnight got in at 4:15. Went to work the next day. Saw some pretty farm country but no farm buildings as we are used to.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

July 15, 1945

Dear Aunts,

It certainly is a hot day. Last week was so cool and other rooms have only one small window that can be opened. Was built by the French for psychiatric patients so that is probably why. Think they will have to take the (several words illegible). Are not quite so rushed

right now, but still plenty busy. New diphtheria cases and so many throat infections.

July half over I can't help but wonder how many more months. Now Nov. or Dec. seems to be the preference.

Could you get me some more 127 film at the drug store? Paula gave me her ne camera before she left, and I do want to take pictures of some of our travels. Was to Reims Thurs. and to the building the German surrender was signed in.

Love,  
Esther  
—x—

July 18, '45

Dear Mother, Dad and Carl,

Just came back from the movies. Was certainly warm, but a fairly good show.

If you glanced at the top you'll see that today was my birthday. Worked until 3:00 P.M. The girls came over and we all went to dinner together. Had ham and fresh cabbage, boiled. Had a letter from Paula today wishing me a "Happy Birthday." That is all. The package didn't come, of course, the kids gave me some perfume, stockings and a pair of tiny wooden shoes, and a spoon from Hitler's hideaway. It's very cute. Polished my nails for the first time since leaving the 23rd. I'll send you a request for a pair of shoes and I want you to buy me a pair of 7B oxfords. And just keep them at home for when I come. No special hurry as no one is hurrying me home, And I'll get the request soon so you won't need a ration stamp.

Had a letter from Aunt Rhoda. Too bad about Anna Kendall, Not being able to knit. Must make the time go so much more slowly. Haven't had a letter from you in a week.

Aunt Rhoda wrote that you've canned many peas. Now I've had them at least five times per week since overseas so don't feed me any unless I ask for them. Green beans and peas, peas and green beans, peas with carrots, peas without carrots.

Very warm now. They had to ration

ice cream and still ran out. Had pretzels for sale at the PX this week. Quite a surprise.

Sybil and I are off tomorrow, we all sleep and iron.

Love,  
Esther

Well 26 years ago you got a few days off!

—x—

July 23rd, 1945

Dear Folks,

Just received 7 letters. Three were early June ones that hadn't caught up with the new address yet. Yours of July 13th received. New. I am not coming home soon so do not plan or hope for it. I think surely by Nov. but no one knows. There is no use fussing but it just doesn't seem fair to me when I know that some that have less time in are getting home or at least not working, although I don't mind that. We've gotten some new nurses which will give us more opportunity to get away and I'm taking all I can get. If plans work out, I shall spend the weekend in Germany. Details later as I'm afraid to hope too much. You probably think that I'm getting plenty of time off, but only if I can. I can promise you that I shall not do anything that will delay my homecoming.

Thurs. is our 3rd anniversary. As there are more of the original gang here than elsewhere, they tried to have a get together, but we will cancel it as too difficult and then I don't want to miss this German opportunity. Eugenia is going too.

I think so much of you This hot weather and harvesting, wondering if the men have any help and pretty sure that you don't so it would be so much better if only I could spend a week helping you then running around Europe.

As for the things I sent in the box, those slacks were issued to me and as I don't expect to wear them over here, if I ever go to the tropics, I'll need them or on duty in trains or a hospital ship. The dresses we wear on duty are of the

same material and stripes. Someday I may give you a few. Or made maternity dress style which is a joke among the nurses.

I wrote you a brief note Sat. night as I wanted you to send Chas's. When I come back to France from Italy had two letters from him which I just never did answer. Don't worry, he'll never be your son-in-law. Chas. Just can't imagine that I would possibly be overseas still. The wall shirts we wear on night duty with slacks and the long underwear, Dad can have if it fits him.

Yes, Hollis has told me about Neva. There sure isn't anyone at home for him. Do hope that he gets a rating soon. I have hope for so long that he might. I hope that he may go home soon.

The six girls that were transferred here are staying until we can all get home. Probably come when the whole 21st girls come. I'm happier than I was a month ago. Sat. Night put on a beige dress that it hadn't had on since Epinal and the belt was two inches too big so guess I was unhappy.

Most of our patients are paratroopers who are waiting for transportation to next assignment.

Sybil is an ardent Texan. Pa. And Texas are always quibbling and so frequently when we're out we meet Texans and Pennsylvanians. Sat. night I was dancing with the Texan and she a Pa. boy and we just laughed about not being able to get away from it. There are more Pa. boys in the infantry than from any other state and next to NY the highest no. of nurses so we can be quite proud.

Yesterday A.M. was communion. Last evening went to evening services and played the organ. I don't like to as I don't do any practicing and sounds terrible. There is an orchestra concert here every Sabbath. Is an American Sgt. and German POWs. It is really beautiful music.

Had a letter from Julius. His girlfriend from Puerto Rico is visiting him in August. Think that they may

make a pair! Hope so anyway.

Sybil's older brother - a Lieut. in the Air Corp - a pilot - is in the Pacific now. She has a sister who is a twin of the brother that died. The living brother has a son.

Love,  
Esther

*Sybil's brother was Robert Mosby (1916-1986).*

*Neva is likely Neva McQuade Cutchall (1924-2005).*

✕  
V-Mail

26-7-45

Dear Folks,

Today three years ago I left Charleston. Starting my 4th and last year overseas.

We go on our pass tonight so if you don't get a letter for a week, you'll know why. I'll send you a card from time to time. Should be an interesting trip. I'm afraid to hope too much.

Your package still hasn't arrived. A beautiful manicure set came from Mrs. Mosby for Sybil to give me.

Love,  
Esther  
✕  
V-Mail

6 Aug. '45

Dear Folks,

The birthday box arrived and instead of going to supper, I ate cheese and crackers. And I am now chewing nuts. Carl, thank you for the diary. I hope I can use it in the U.S.A. The brush is quite nice and I like black bristles. I hope my hair we'll stop breaking like it should.

Had a letter from Paula, written in Cherbourg. she should be home now. Hope so as she has had such a long wait.

Have gotten my clothes washed since the trip, but not ironed. Eugenia is in the hospital with a bad cold and earache. I have gotten over being tired so am all right now.

Still busy for many hospitals are closing and sending us the patients before they move. Are mostly troops waiting for transportation somewhere.

Now write an airmail. On my day off I'm going to Ernie Pyles' movie.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

8 Aug. 45

Dear Folks,

It sure is quiet around here this week. Eugenia is sick, and three of the others are away at night duty. I sure do miss Sybil. When she returns, she goes on night duty so I'll be alone again. These people that live around here sure aren't very friendly. Perhaps it is my fault.

The water is off and my face is dirty and I wanted to do some washing. My ironing I did before supper.

The letter of Charles' that you forwarded arrived a couple days ago.

You probably think that wow I'm waiting to come home that I'm having a pretty good time, but I would gladly exchange this to get home. Each day I'm away, we all change more. I probably won't recognize anyone when I walk up Main Street, and I'm sure that I won't recognize Carl. And I don't like it here too much, that it is a pleasure to get away from here as much as possible. There are thousands of nurses over here who aren't doing any nursing, so why should I do all this work. The kids that haven't been over as long as us or in units that are just waiting transportation, and as we don't have to go to CB2, we are not slated for early shipment. If only they transfer us out to get home in a unit that is going to CB2. We could be replaced in the states. Paula was to write to you and tell you to do something. If she does, do it. I'm curious to see what would happen. The nurses are getting a dirty deal. WAC gets home and also the Red Cross. There are kids here that have more foreign duty than I do.

So please don't think I'm wondering around having a glorious time, because I'm not and I haven't seen any country equal to America. You'll probably be surprised at a few things I may say when I get home. The officer who was to give me the shoe black is sick so I can't get it yet. I don't want you to use any of

yours. Sarah who was our chief nurse in Oran and Epinal said I should tell you that she was trying to be Mamma. Is in charge of a house in Nancy where we can go on our day off if we wish.

We have many patients. Our biggest problem now is our Polish tuberculosis case. It's so hard to keep them in bed. We have some Dutch and slaves, two. Have a separate German building with 45 German nurses. Saturday A.M. when I was on inspecting officer, I went through the hosp. and quarters. Has only the necessities

In case you're wondering how we got to Germany, a Capt. who is one of the administrative officers was going to see your friend and invited Eugenia and I along. We went by Jeep. Spent our nights in hospitals and hotels. It was an experience I'll never forget.

I think Helena may be getting home very very soon. She's in Naples living in a hotel now.

Must write to Mary Kelso. She sent me a birthday cable.

One of the scarlet fever patients said to me today "if I'd had this when I was a boy, I wouldn't appreciate the nurses as I do now." I said "but I had a nice mother and I appreciated her."

Love,  
Esther

*Sarah refers to Virginia-born Sarah Hale. (1911-1988).*

*She married Lt. Col. William Cromwell, Jr. and moved to Texas.*

*CB2, is, I believe a military term for a pharmacy.*

—X—  
V-Mail

10 Aug. '45

Dear Folks,

Is cold, windy and raining. Hope just briefly, however. I'm not ready for cold weather.

If you haven't bought the shoes, please do not. When I come home I want a soft boiled egg and even if it is beef season, could I please have serve the piece of ham. The big thing I want most is some cinnamon buns.

Pacific news is improving. Who knows but that it may be over much

sooner than we expect.

Helena writes that she is probably on her way. In fact should be in the U.S.A. now. Sarah is going tomorrow. I am still afraid to hope much. It's already almost mid-August.

Had a letter from Hollis yesterday. Hope he may be home sooner then he expects.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

14 Aug. '45

Dear Folks,

I heard on the 12 noon news that there is an important announcement this afternoon. I do hope that it is the finish of the war, for the most important reason that Hollis and many millions of others will see no more combat. It's certainly wonderful that he has come through so safely and we have much to be thankful for.

And I hope it means that I'll get home sooner. We are still busy, but less nurses should be needed in the Pacific and give us a chance to get home. I've tried hundreds of times to imagine it, but I just can't.

I go on night duty next week. Sybil is now on.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

15 Aug. '45

Dear Folks,

Have a package ready to mail. There is a jacket in it that Carl or Dad or you can go ahead and wear and there's woolen shirts that I sent in the may package fix for Carl if you wish and he can wear them. I don't hope to need them. I have two here and I value my winter clothes too much to send them all home.

Look in the toes of my field shoes as there is a bracelet in one of them and I can't remember what is in the other.

I'm much more hopeful for returning sooner. So hope you haven't bought the shoes, if so it is OK. Had a letter from Helen Johnston in which

she praised the family up and down.

I just can't imagine being any but an army nurse. Like to have a "hired girl?" Doesn't seem possible. Truly America is a wonderful country and we have so much to be thankful for.

Saw a USO play last night - the first play that I had seen.

Walked in to (illegible) this afternoon. Came home and Sybil cut my hair. The sides grow but the back just won't. I keep having to trim the back off. Then washed it and my clothes.

I wonder where Mary Rotz is. Probably get home before I do the things are going.

Must write Marian. Her V-Mail of the third arrived yesterday. She written it Friday evening at home. Airmail now comes more quickly.

Night duty in a week. Are still and we're hoping it lets up. New fever case today.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

16 Aug.

Dear Folks,

Sybil and I have been sewing. making a short jacket out of one of suit coats. Have a good beginning. both get off duty around 3:00 P.M. supper one of the girls cut Sybil's hair. Wish mine grew as fast as hers do. The sides are getting longer but the back won't.

Quite hot yesterday. Today not so bad. The ice cream parlor started rationing the cokes and ice cream. men can now go without ties. They're justly very happy. Had the first real thunder shower last night.

No mail for several days.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

23rd Aug.

Dear Folks,

My first night of night duty. I'm certainly not hard at work - ten of

and six nurses and one Polish woman. None are sick.

The Pole is half paralyzed so she is causing the most difficulty. Surprisingly, she is sleeping so everything is extremely quiet.

I wrote you that I received Chas. letter.

Sybil and I frequently argue over the merits of PA and Texas. Our last argument was over who would fry the best chicken, Mrs. Mellotte or Mrs. Mosby. We each decided that we go home to our own mothers.

Eugenia (photo) asked me what we did when they get too big to fry. I said that we roasted them. She wanted to know what we did when too old for that. I just said, "oh sell them on the city market." She is Russian. Was born in America but spent five years in Russia when very young.

Love,  
Esther

*Sybil's mother was Cora Stanfield Mosby (1892-1976).*

—X—  
V-Mail

Aug 24. ('45)

Dear Aunts

The package with the mirror came today. It is a lovely mirror much more than I expected, and me and my tent mates are quite proud of it. The elastic I hope you didn't ration yourself, and thank you so much for the washcloths, bobby pins and napkins. I'll save the napkins for Sybil and Mary Ann's birthdays. and the quarterly! I'd forgotten there were such things. I do appreciate it a lot.

I'm surprised to hear of Martha and Preston's move. Who is living where they did? Also a letter from Jeanne Greathead.

Hope Aunt Rettie improves. Had a letter from Beatrice and one from her brother in Italy. We are on the go a lot. Not busy. Or bathing, basking, etc. Seeing a lot of training films. Had a big inspection.

Thanks again.

Love,  
Esther

*Beatrice is otherwise unidentified.*

—X—  
V-Mail

25-8-45

Dear Folks,

Your Aug. 17 airmail letter came today. Just took one week some Mail service is certainly improving. Yesterday had a V-Mail, also a V-Mail From Mary Kelso written in McConnellsburg. She said that Margie is afraid of Carl but is the only girl that is. Yes, I realize that he will be the no. 1 change.

Rumors are improving daily, but I'm not hoping too hard. If we don't get started, I'll go to Paris after night duty if I can get a pass.

I have only 13 patients tonight. Compare with 150 that I had in Espinal and Oran, is a bit dull. I read a book all evening.

Had a letter from Charles today. Is now in California.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

30 Aug; '45

Dear Folks,

Got mail today but none from you. Perhaps then I can look forward to it tomorrow. Did hear from Bertha, Marian and Mary Kelso and Aunt Rhoda. So I guess I know pretty well what is going on. Canning and more canning. Guess I hit just between the vegetables and the meat. I really did hope I could be home when the busy season is on. I'm really not used to sitting around and doing nothing although there is usually plenty to do. If only we can come home before frost and there still be some flowers.

This is my 8th night of night duty so I'm half done. Everyone is always glad to be finished, altho (sic) it isn't too bad. Just the long nights. I slept from 8-5 today. Tomorrow I have to do a little washing.

Had a letter from Paula today. She will be a patient in a hosp. in Mass. Hope they get her arm fixed. Says that she thinks her father has aged so much. Hasn't been well. Now I wonder just what you Folks have been keeping

from me? We have reason to be more hopeful, but it isn't time for you to stop writing for a while. Jean's mother wrote that so many were coming but not the gals with six stripes on the arms. We sure

earned that last one. I've been reading my diary over. Interesting in spots!

We had steak and the usual peas for midnight supper. I never take any anymore. Seldom get corn or beets - just beans and peas and peas and beans!

They are going to recount the points. Guess I'll have 93 at this inventory.

What did you mean when you said that Carl might get to school sooner than expected? You aren't thinking of leaving the farm before Hollis gets home, are you? And where and how the scholarship?

Now I do hope you're letting him have the car occasionally. He is old enough to work, he's old enough to play. Let him acquire a little social poise. Work continues light. Have 3 wards, but no sick patients. I'm quite glad. I've worked enough. Sometimes I don't think I'll ever get home.

I haven't written aunts so must do so.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Sept. 2, 1945

Dear Folks,

Just got transferred to the 127th Genl. Hosp. Will be coming home fairly soon. Just don't write to me anymore. As soon as I know anything I will write you. We will be at least a month yet.

I'm staying at the 21st for some time yet.

Just feel numb. Only one of my friends is coming, too

Love,  
Esther

—X—

V-Mail

9/4/'45

Dear Folks,

Your Mar. 27 airmail came today.

I'm very glad that Marian took the dress. Do hope that she can use it. I'm very happy that you're plannin' get Carl a wristwatch. We are all th so happy that you have him to help you. Do let me help you pay for it. I've been wondering what to buy him. I'm certainly more of a liability than an asset to you these days. I've got to think about a birthday request.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

Sept

Dear Folks,

Am still in Nancy. Leave tonight for Marseille. Hear that we sail sometime between the 12th and 18th. So I shall see you by late October. I'm so glad it will still be warm period. I still can't believe that I'm actually on my way home.

Hope you've got tomatoes still. I remember I'll help you drink coffee like it hot and black. I hope we can meet in NY, but maybe Newport News. I'll let you know as soon as I can. We'll probably telegraph or airmail and telephone where to meet me.

Is a pretty day today. Hope tomorrow is likewise and I hope I tore down the hayloft I slept in last Sept.

Love,  
Esther

—X—

V-Mail

11 Sept

Dear Folks,

Well, got to Marseilles Sabbath evening. Took us 48 hours. We sat much of the time on side tracks. Was too uncomfortable as they had only nurses on the train and put them in hosp. train. Had a letter and we kept the side doors open so we had plenty of air.

It is Tues. and not much seems to have been done on our processing. At least they are stopping sending pointers home but I think there are couple organizations before us. I do expect to see you before Oct. 1.

We don't do anything here - just

worry about getting our clean clothes dirty. Be seeing you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

15/9/'45

Dear Folks,

I'm still here. Don't know yet when we leave. Have had my teeth checked, baggage checked, etc. But until I'm through Gibraltar, I won't believe it. Of course we don't know where we land either.

Life here is getting very monotonous. Saw show last night and played bridge yesterday afternoon. I'd rather be in Cito.

I'm not expecting to get out of the army right away. I'm signed up until after the declaration is declared. However, I do think that with my points now accounting 95 I can get out almost anytime. I requested it so I hope to get out in the spring and spend the summer with you.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

Sept. 16 '45

Dear Folks,

Don't know anything to write about or anything I can tell. Think I told you that Helena and I had spent an afternoon in town. It was very good to see and talk with her.

Will you let me furnish some of the electrical equipment? I don't know what can be bought now but please buy something and let me pay for it.

Mail was so poor, I'm tired of writing letters. And practically quitting.

Some of the girls are going over to vote. I teach them about it. There is no doubt in my mind as to who will be elected.

I won't be writing so often now.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—  
V-Mail

17-9-45

Dear Mom and Pop,

I'm beginning to believe I'm never

coming home. The morning papers said no more ships are due in until Saturday and then there are so many units to go that I expect to (be) here 10 more days time just goes so slowly. All I did today was wash 4 pieces of clothing. Guess I'll go swimming tomorrow.

Some of the gang are due here Oct. 1st or soon afterwards. I should be gone by then.

No mail room and not until I see you so I sure do hope you're all well and stay that way.

Love,  
Esther  
—X—

However, in a month, Esther returned home, in October, 1945. She was officially discharged February 9, 1946.

She always remarked she was proud to serve her country.

## **Fulton County Historical Society, Inc.**

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The following books have been printed as a membership benefit since 1979:

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- Volume 15: 1860 United States Census for Fulton County
- Volume 16: Into the Valleys Came Presbyterians
- Volume 17: War and Peace - Fulton County in 1945
- Volume 18: 1870 United States Census for Fulton County
- Volume 19: Last of the Gay Nineties in Fulton County - 1899
- Volume 20: General John Forbes and the Forbes Road in Fulton County
- Volume 21: Wells Township: History of Original Settlers and Their Lands
- Volume 22: Civil War Damage Claims from Fulton County
- Volume 23: History of Tonoloway Baptist Church by Holman
- Volume 24: Folk Tales of Fulton County
- Volume 25, Part 1: The Cowan's Gap CCC Camp of Fulton County, PA
- Volume 25, Part 2: Sideling Hill CCC, CPS, POW Camps of Fulton Co.
- Volume 26: 1880 United States Census for Fulton County
- Volume 27: Fulton County's Company H, 158th Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry
- Volume 28: Marriages and Deaths, 1865-1884 from Fulton County Newspapers
- Volume 29: Dublin Mills, Its People, Families, Farms, Homes and Institutions
- Volume 30: Quilts and Coverlets of Fulton County, Pa.
- Volume 31: 19th Century Lutheran Church Records of Fulton County, Pennsylvania
- Volume 32: Postcards of Fulton County, Pa.
- Volume 33: **Civil War Draft Resistance in Fulton County**
- Volume 34: **19th Century Chest and Chair Makers of Fulton County, Pa.**
- Volume 35: **Family Records from Fulton County, Pennsylvania**
- Volume 36: **Memoirs of David Hunter Patterson, 1844 - 1938**
- Volume 37: **Yanigans, Fulton County Baseball 1894 - 1917**
- Volume 38: **Barn Quilts of Fulton County, Pa.**
- Volume 39: **Poetry Not Yet Written, A History of African Americans in Fulton County, Pa.**
- Volume 40: **Fulton County, PA in the War of 1812**
- Volume 41: **Launched Into Eternity, Murder Within and Without Fulton County, PA**
- Volume 42: **When Buckwheat Was King, Grist Mills of Fulton County, Pa.**

Membership in the Fulton County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the history of Fulton County. Many members live outside the Fulton County area.

See the website for current annual membership rates, life membership information, and other information and benefits for members.