

A CHINA JOURNEY

LETTERS FROM CHINA

MARY FRANCES BUCKHOUT McVAY

1939 – 1943



Helen Huntington Smith and Mary Frances Buckhout - Ingtau - 1941

Introduction

This is a complete, unabridged copy of the letters of Mary Frances Buckhout, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College who became a missionary for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to teach in China from 1939 to 1943. She entered China as a young, naïve outsider who was warmly welcomed into the established community of missionaries, most of whose families had been there for generations. Her heartfelt, often graphic, letters to her family and friends tell the story of a young woman's physical, emotional, and intellectual journey as she experiences a world beyond her small hometown of South Hadley, Massachusetts. Through her eyes, the love of the missionaries with whom she worked and the plight and resilience of the people of China during the Sino-Japanese War and World War II—their love of life, of family, and of friends—comes alive. Her letters home describe the close-knit missionary community, her deep desire to emulate them, and her admiration of and concern for the Chinese youth she taught. This is not only her story, it is theirs.

This is also the story of H. [Harley] Vilroy “Bill” McVay, who left the family farm in Hudson, South Dakota and the promise of a college scholarship to join the United States Navy. The toll of hard times during The Great Depression, the instability of his future, and his concern to help support his aging parents drew him to into the armed services where he was assured not only an income, but food, clothing, shelter, and the certainty of life-long medical care.

Bill left home on April 19, 1933, just short of his 19th birthday, and enlisted on April 22. Five years later, while attached to the *USS Sagres*, he was assigned to the American Consulate in Foochow, China, as a radioman for their communications facility. There he met and married Mary Buckhout in 1941.

This story is told in their own words through letters, diaries, U.S. Navy personal logs, and oral histories taken in later years. Also included are letters and oral histories from friends and family. Many of their letters were passed from one person to another, each one adding comments to the letter as it moved along.

Oral histories were gathered beginning in 1999. Footnotes are included for historical reference and clarity. The historical setting is taken from various sources and due credit is given. The original letters and diaries will be preserved in the special collections of Yale University Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut, as part of the China Records Project. Initiated by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in 1968, the aim of the project is “to insure the preservation of the personal records of former

missionaries to China and to provide a central repository where these papers would be available to historians.”

Prologue

“Last year at this time I would have thought anyone simply crazy who would have told me I’d be in China this year—1940,” wrote Mary in an early letter. She loved to travel, but her travels had been confined to New England and to the family home, State College, Pennsylvania. Not until she graduated from Mount Holyoke College and realized she had no future plans did the prospect of travel to China become a real interest.

“That was something out of the blue,” she admitted in an interview¹ sixty years later. “I had graduated from college and I was not employed and I had not taken any teaching courses because I just decided I wouldn’t teach, and out of the blue this letter came from the head of the American Board for Commissioners of Foreign Missions in Boston. I had been recommended to go as a teacher for one of their schools out in China, a girls’ school, Wen Shan, in Foochow², and would I be interested.

“Well, I thought, it can’t hurt. They must know something about my college education. I never took any teaching courses so I said I would go, be a three year stint. I’d been happy to travel. I think that’s what got me interested: because I could travel, and they would pay my way, you know. And of course, the salary was nothing. I mean just pitiful, enough to get me by when I got there.”

There were, however, other considerations. In 1938 the war between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan had been raging on and off for 44 years. Two major outbreaks were separated by intermittent fighting until 1937, when Japanese forces began a systematic conquest of the country. In November of that year they took the seaport of Shanghai, not far from Foochow, Mary’s final destination. Despite pleas from the Chinese government, the United States retained its policy of non-intervention while Western Europe became more and more preoccupied with a German dictator threatening their tenuous post World War I peace.

“I wasn’t scared. I think my father and mother were upset because Japan, at that time, was pushing down the coast and really working its way into China. They wanted the coastal area so they could do something more. At the time there wasn’t much feeling that the Americans would be involved, but there were many people who knew the Orient, knew the Chinese and knew the Japanese, who were really skeptical and who thought eventually we would be involved.

¹ All quoted recollections, unless otherwise noted, are from an oral history taken by Melissa Martin, May 9, 1999, Granby, Massachusetts.

² Now known as Fuzhou.

“Anyway, they were still sending missionaries over there. There were some that were going back on the same ship that I was to take. Going back with their families, their little kids, and so forth. They had been home on a furlough and they were going back to continue their work teaching; some of them were doctors or nurses. Anyway, they accepted me. And I got ready to go and left here the latter part of August of 1939.”

Though Mary had no overt opposition from her family, her sister, Harriet, admitted, “We thought she was crazy. I thought I would never see her again.”

On June 25, 1939, Mary began her journey to China. On September 3, 1939, Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declared war on Germany. Canada joined the Allies on September 10, marking the beginning of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Chapter 1

Moving Out

Tues. A.M.
June 25, '39

Mom,

Well, the G.A.B's¹ have given me notice that I've to leave here this weekend. I've written Doris.² She wrote me a dandy note saying they'd come for me if possible, so I set this Sunday (next) for them to come down - all of them - have dinner here and bring me home afterwards. It would be much easier for me since I've accumulated a few more piles of clothing, but if they can't come I'll come along on the train.

Tell Helen³ the choir is just swell to want to give a party - it's O.K. by me and Chesterfield would be the nuts. I do want to see Meg before she leaves for Maine.

Peg is fine - doing a lot more - but she still tires quite easily. Irueia⁴ can do the lifting for her when I leave. They insist that I go now since there is so much I have to do. I'll have to - maybe - have diphtheria shots from Dr. Lang. Katherine is giving me my last typhoid and my vaccination this week. Don't be surprised if I hobble home!

Peg just took Jay⁵ over to have his hair cut. She got him a toy drum and is making a harness for him. Jay has marvelous rhythm. Betsy⁶ is getting so she sings now - picks up a lot of tunes that Jay knows.

I expect to get my official appointment either today or tomorrow. The committee is probably convening at this very moment. By the way - thanks for sending down my clothes. I got threw [*sic*] very promptly.

Peg and I are going in town today - so there's much to do.

See you Sunday -

Lots of love, *Mary*

Dover, N. H.
July 26, 1939

Dear Mrs. Buckhout,

Thank you and your family for the lovely weekend in your home. I enjoyed it so much. I am so lucky to have this "pre-view" of Mary, and I know how much she is going to mean to all of us who work together in and around Foochow.

Yesterday I had a wonderful letter from the young Chinese minister in our Dionglloh⁷ Church. It was written partly for the church. I have always thot [*sic*] of him as a brother.

¹ *The G.A.B.'s* - George Atherton Buckhout, Mary's brother, and his wife, Peg (nee Margaret Sauer), with whom Mary stayed before leaving for China. They lived and worked in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

² *Doris* - Doris Smith Buckhout, the wife of Mary's oldest brother, William. They lived in Hadley, Massachusetts.

³ *Helen* - Helen Buckhout, Mary's youngest sister, who was living in South Hadley and attending Mt. Holyoke College at the time.

⁴ Apparently a housekeeper.

⁵ *Jay* - George Atherton Buckhout, Jr., son of George and Peg.

⁶ *Betsy* - youngest daughter of George and Peg Buckhout.

⁷ *Dionglloh* - other names: Ch'ang-lo, Ch'ang-lo, Ch'ang-lo-hsien, Ch'ang-lo-hsien, and Wuhang.

He has written me several times telling about my husband, and telling me to use this time to “tie China & America tighter together.” He has also written to the children that whenever they are lonesome for Dad, they must think of the many youngsters in Foochow. His letter yesterday plus one from my husband will keep me going for some time.

If you have any questions either before or after Mary has gone, please let me try to answer them. You are all part of the Foochow family now, and we all depend on each other whether here or in China.

Lovingly,
*Gertrude Rinden*¹

[Postcard postmarked 1939]

Aug. 16

Dear Mom:

Have just left State College after a very nice time. Saw Uncle Bill B [Buckhout] & Bob & Martha [Buckhout] Sunday. Aunt H [Helen Govier] going to Chautauqua, N. Y. today. Saw all in State College. Took me to Tyrone for train – now on route to Pitt where I’ll probably mail this. Everything o.k. – not particularly eventful as yet. Really not on my own until I leave Pitt!

We are about to go around Horseshoe Arena; am going out to see it.

Love – *Niorn*²

The Santa Fe Scout
Chicago
California en route

Dear Mom & Papa:

If you can read this you’re pretty good!

We’ve just left Kansas City (Mo.) having seen something of the city. Had a 2½ hour stop there this A.M. Had a grand time with Hat³ in Pittsburgh. She’s fine – very anxious to get home. My train was 3 hours late to Chicago so I had just time to claim my baggage, clean up a bit and get on the L.A. train. Didn’t even have time to call anyone in Chicago.

I did not send in my policy to the Boston office with the transfer slip. Could you do that for me? The policy is on my writing table with the transfer slip. The premium book had better not be sent to Boston because Helen’s is in it too. I didn’t even finish filling out the transfer! If you would be my secretary and do that – indicating payments to be made quarterly. It’s payed [*sic*] through August. I don’t think I get a salary until October but I guess the Boston office will take care of it. Send it to:

Mr. Earle E. Smith
Amer. Board of Commissioners
14 Brown St., Boston

It is almost impossible to write on the train. I’ll send more detail from Frisco --

Lots of love, *Mary*

¹ Gertrude Jenness Rinden, Christian missionary and author of *The Magic Suit, Around the World with the Bible, Kenji: For Your Reading About Japan*, and *Watch Goat Boy: What Shall We Read About China?*

² The Norse goddess of dreams. Mary was fond of literary references and often used them in jest. The handwriting on the postcard is definitely hers.

³ *Hat* – Harriet Buckhout Ward, Mary’s younger sister, then married to David Ward, Jr., and living in Pittsburgh.

Hotel Willard
San Francisco

Dear Mom:

Here I am the last step before I get on the boat.

I had a marvelous trip out on the Santa Fe line, on The Scout. When I got on at Chicago – a dandy girl had the Pullman opposite me – traveling alone – so we immediately got acquainted and had a grand time – 2 days & 3 nights – to Los Angeles. The first morning “out” we had a 2½ hour stop at Kansas City, Mo. Had I dreamed I would be stopping there, I would have planned to look up Margot. But I had no idea of her home or business address, so that was that. However – Betsy (the girl opposite) and I went into town and saw what we could see – including Woolworth’s!¹ That was the longest stop we had along the way. We took pictures of the Soldier’s Memorial there then back to the train, across Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona & California. The coloring and landscape in every state was decidedly different. Betty and I stayed up ‘til 12:30 Saturday night to see Amarillo, Texas. Of course there wasn’t much to see, but it was the only stop in Texas. The stations in the so. west states are very picturesque – Station & Hotel combined – with the main street of the town leading right down to it. The architecture is Spanish – stucco with red tiled roofs – all very colorful. At Gallup N.M. the next day we saw our first Indians. There were droves of them at the station, selling all kinds of souvenirs – these shoes – (Helen might need a pair!) came from there. N. Mexico is comparatively flat, except there are, all around, mesas which look like immense flat topped tables built up layer upon layer of red, green, yellow slabs of rock – they look as though they had been chiseled out – and are very beautiful. Arizona has somewhat the same kind of landscape, but fewer of the mesas, and more like desert country. Perhaps a ranch and a few out buildings, then miles before there is another ranch. Cattle and sheep grazing – but what on earth they find to eat is beyond me! About half way across the state one starts climbing and the country is much like New England and the White Mts – only larger. It was beautiful. At Williams, those who were going to the Grand Canyon had to transfer – but I had to go on & leave the Canyon behind. Then we started down the mountains (which are the Rockies) to Needles Calif, where the temperature was 104 at 10 p.m.!! Everywhere the train stopped we all piled out and saw as much as we could and took pictures etc.

Dorothy met me in Los Angeles at 7 A.M. Monday morning, and drove me to their lovely house! It’s the only New England style house on the street. All the other are Mexican or Spanish stucco with tiled roofs. The first thing I noticed was the bright light. It gradually dawned on me that the white houses and buildings caused it. All buildings in L.A. are low, long and rambling. Downtown there are a few high ones but nothing over 13 stories – (an earthquake precaution). It’s a huge city, but lovely wide streets and very beautiful. So far removed from dirty N.Y. & Pittsburgh it isn’t even funny.

Monday afternoon I went out to see Aunt Mary² in Hollywood. It was but a short bus ride from the Franklins: she was expecting me, and after a little difficulty, I found her. She’s

¹ The F. W. Woolworth Company (often referred to as Woolworth's) was a retail company that was one of the original American five-and-dime stores.

² *Aunt Mary* – relationship is uncertain, but Mary recalls that “Roy” was known to her as “Cousin Roy” who was very handsome. He was the son of Villeroy Harkness, brother to Mary Harkness Buckhout. Mary Frances

fine – and looks exactly the same, except she is a bit slimmer than she used to be. I couldn't see Roy – he is in a mental hospital in L.A., apparently alright – but not quite. He does some work among the other patients there, and quite enjoys it. He just has spells – like lapses of memory – Aunt Mary didn't say much – but he probably will always have to be in the hospital.

She insisted on taking me around Hollywood and Beverly Hills to see the many movie stars' houses. It was lovely – but Hollywood is so different from the impressions one gets of it in the east. This high pressure publicity has built it up into something grand & glorious – but it's just like any other city with its lovely residential sections! Except – now and then – and quite often one sees the movie people in real life. The only one I saw was Eugene Pallet¹ in the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel where we looked around. He looks exactly as he does on the screen. The ordinary people try to compete with the movie stars in glamour and make messes of themselves. One great difference between the west and the east is the attitude of the people. Out here everyone knows everybody else whether or not they have met. I mean they are very democratic – no matter whether one is the cream or the skim of society. The east sure is snooty in this respect. One doesn't realize it until one has been out here. It seems that the people from the east are pouring out here. Living is so dirt cheap. I was amazed! Even train dining rates are cheaper than ordinary diner rates in Holyoke!! Why, here 5 cents worth of fruit (3 melons) and vegetables would feed our family for a day or two!! Ice cream = 19 cents a quart – excellent, too. Milk is 10 cents a qt & cream = 25 cents a pint!! I can't get over it. One can get a full course dinner – entrees and all for 50¢!!

So much for food.

Dorothy & Mrs. F. took me out to a lovely park in the Hills around Hollywood for a breakfast out of doors – a city park – the likes of which isn't seen in the east. Tuesday night Dot took me to the Hollywood Bowl which is perfectly magnificent. No pictures do it justice! The L.A. orchestra played and the Rasch Ballet danced. It was beautiful. I'll send on the program separately.

L.A. climate is cool – never humid! Always sun-shiny, never rain!! It's amazing. Here in San Francisco, it's sort of “dumpy” compared to L.A. and people here are wearing fur coats. Guess it never gets hot here. My room has the heat on!!

L.A. nights are very cool and one always needs a coat – even tho' it is 500 miles south of San Francisco.

Well – I called the Proboscis tonight after dinner and they want me to come out there tomorrow & stay over night. I'm glad, since this isn't such a hot place – at least it's clean. So after I take care of my luggage & passport, I'm going over to Berkeley.

Guess I'll call a halt – and take a bath!

The west is a grand place, but I still prefer New England with its variations!! It may be some time before you'll hear from me again, probably from Honolulu!

Lots of love, *Mary*

recalls that cousin Roy's mother, Mary, took him to California for treatment for what they called *shell shock*, commonly known as *combat stress reaction*, that was a result of his action in World War I.

¹ *Eugene Pallet* – best known for his portrayal of Friar Tuck in the Oscar-winning 1938 version of *Robin Hood*, with Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Claude Rains, and Basil Rathbone,

[Postcard]
8/25/39

Dear Papa,

Our sailing is delayed, tho' I am aboard. Long shore men are still cutting up out there! I got in touch with the Proboscis and they insisted that I stay with them. They are swell; gave me a whirl of a time. The girls are just grand (Fanny & Clara). Berkeley is beautiful – saw the fair & a lot of San. Fr. Uncle Ramsey sent me off with gardenias etc.

Love, *Mary*

Mary sailed aboard the SS President Coolidge, under Captain William O. Kollmeister. Prior to World War II, it was operated by the American President Lines as a luxury liner providing trans-Pacific passage and commercial service, primarily aimed at holiday makers seeking sun in the Pacific and Far East. During her time as a luxury liner, she broke several speed records on her frequent trips to Japan from San Francisco. Passengers had a luxurious experience on the ship with spacious staterooms and lounges, private telephones, two saltwater swimming pools, a barber shop, beauty salon, gymnasium and soda fountain.

American Presidential Lines
On board

Aug 29, 1939

Dear Family:

Such a trip as I am having! I think the last letter I wrote was from San Francisco. What a let-down that was after Los Angeles.

Well – I went over to Berkeley to stay a night & day with the Proboscis. Such people! They practically turned themselves inside out, but I judge they do that for everyone who visits there. Aunt Clara¹ is a darling. She's calm & cool, but quite imposing in the most delightful way. They live very easily, that is, they can do about as they want to when they want to. Uncle Ramsey is just grand, too – quite enjoys a company of females. Clara is at home, doing librarian work in a medical libe [*sic*] in San Francisco. She had taught, of course, for 3 years in New Orleans, then decided that she wanted to study medicine. After a summer course this year she gave up that idea – then got this job. She is most intelligent and very charming. They all have a western breeziness about them that is delightful. Fanny is married – very happily – and is very proud to show off her husband. He is Pembroke Gochnaur, 10 years her senior, and a very promising attorney, from what I hear. He is grand. They have a beautiful house – not elaborate, but smacking of aristocracy.

You'd love Berkeley, Mama, or Los Angeles—it's never cold and never hot—just about the same all year around. San Fran. is quite windy, being out in the bay.

¹ *Aunt Clara* – relationship uncertain; possibly Clara Webb, who was married to Villeroy Harkness at one time.

Thursday night they took me to the fair.¹ Even Aunt Clara went—she has some lameness—but she is plucky—and very young appearing despite her graying hair. Of course, one night at the fair is nothing, compared to what there is to see. But the coloring and light play on the fountains in the courts of the nations was perfectly beautiful. Everyone who has seen both fairs, say that the color at San Fran. is much more beautiful than at New York! Naturally, I can't judge, but from what I have read of the N.Y. fair it is much more stupendous and imposing and cleaner!

This is our 4th day out. Tomorrow A.M. we dock at Honolulu! This boat is faster than most, only 4½ days & 5 nights to Hawaii rather than 7. We passed one steamer yesterday, the *Matsonia*, which had started from S.F. 2 hours ahead of us.

I forgot to say that Friday noon Fanny & Aunt Clara took me to the boat. Uncle R. had sent me gardenias. We arrived only to find out that the boat wasn't sailing until 5 p.m.! That was later changed to 7 p.m. So Aunt Clara took me over a great deal of S.F.. We went thro' (more or less) 3 of the best hotels – they all smack of old S.F. in the days of its glory. They are magnificent even now – way up on a hill (with a 45 degree grade, I swear) overlooking the whole city and the bay.

When I returned to the boat I looked up the Beards² and met many other people thro' them. My cabin mate is a Southern Baptist girl – about my age – going to Japan for 5 years.

Everyone makes friends quite easily on the boat – even though we are confined to our own class. We haven't a great deal of deck space for walking – but shuffle board and deck golf & tennis keep us busy.

I sit at a table with Dr. & Mrs. Wilbur (M.D.) who are going back to No. China. They are comparatively young – have 2 youngsters, boy & girl. They are just dandy – and have a wonderful sense of humor. Miss Phelps is our other table member. She is out for her last term in No. China. As you may assume, she is elderly, but that doesn't make her any less spry. She is a typical old maid – very abrupt – a true Yankee – but is very entertaining and interesting. She is/was a cousin to Miss Sofie Eastman and is of the Gaylords.³

I'm sure getting ahead of myself everywhere in this letter. I can't say how many steamer letters I got – at least 15, I guess – and 3 telegrams, the Ryans, Mary & El, & Lucy Irwin. It kind of set me up, too, since the Proboscoc couldn't see me off due to the delay in sailing. When we set sail, everyone threw out colored streamers which the deck stewards had given us, and believe me, it was a beautiful sight. There were quite a number of people at the dock when we sailed.

Well – tomorrow it's Honolulu – I just see the Beards and find out what I should see there.

Much love to all, *Mary*

¹ The Treasure Island World's Fair, billed as "The World's Fair of the Pacific" to rival the New York World's Fair of that same year.

² Willard Livingstone Beard and Ellen Lucy Kinney Beard, who had been missionaries in China 1894 – 1941. [From *Century Farm to Foochow: The Beard Family Letters*; Jana L. Jackson; Yale University Library]

³ *The Gaylords* – a prominent family in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

SS. President Coolidge
Sept. 3, 1939

Dear Family,

We passed the 180° meridian Thursday night, so that we lost out on Friday of this last week. At Honolulu, Floryn, my cabin-mate, & I had a grand time. We went shopping all over town. We were so loaded up that we had to take a trip back to the boat before we did any sight-seeing! When we got on land we both felt as tho' the earth were rocking just like the boat!

As soon as we docked, people came aboard to greet friends, etc. I noticed a very distinguished looking gentleman with the Beards, but I didn't go over to be introduced. He had brought leis for them – which they draped about their necks. Unfortunately, no one knew us, so Floryn & I missed out on the leis. We refused to buy any, since they wouldn't have the same significance. That evening as the boat sailed, we were both given some – so we felt better.

Well – to get on with the former story – when the Beards and I were exchanging our experiences of the day (after we had sailed) I learned that the distinguished gentleman was Mr. Atherton!!¹ They had been royally entertained by them all day at his beautiful house up in the hills! He raises orchids by the hundreds! When the Beards got back on the boat, there were several orchids waiting for them. Mrs. B. very kindly gave a couple to be used on our table in the dining room. Here it is Sunday & they are still fresh as they were Wednesday.

How close I was, & yet how far from meeting our distinguished relative! By the way, he is a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Honolulu, too. Mrs. B. felt very sad to think we hadn't met. Had I only gone over to their table in the morning when I had the impulse, things might have been very different!

However, Floryne & I took in the Dole Pineapple Cannery where we simply turned a faucet & out came all the iced pineapple juice you wanted.

We went out to Waikiki, but I didn't go in swimming. I left my suit on the boat thinking I'd rent one – but they hadn't any large enough! We snooped around the Royal Hawaiian Hotel (where Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy had come that a.m.), and took some pictures, then made for the boat. Bergen came in 1 hr later than we did that day, on the *Matsonia* which docked in the next pier!

I'm going to mail this letter on the boat, so that it won't have to go thro' the Japan post office for censoring!! Therefore, it may be several weeks before you get it. In that way, too, I can use U.S. Postage.

This afternoon (Sunday) we are meeting Roger Babson² – who I am finding out, is quite an economist of some importance, as well as one of the head men of the American Board. The Honolulu Chamber of Commerce gave him a luncheon the other day – my oh my.

We'll probably spend 3 weeks in Shanghai waiting for the rest of the American Board people who are going to Foochow: there are several coming in on various boats during this

¹ Possibly Frank C. Atherton, whose connection to the family is unknown except for the name. Born in Honolulu on July 1, 1877, he was the son of industrialist Joseph B. Atherton and Juliette M. Atherton, daughter of pioneer American missionaries to Hawaii. [Atherton Family Foundation]

² Founder of Babson College, entrepreneur and business theorist, Roger Ward Babson had “a profound religious experience and was converted at the age of 15.” From 1936 to 1938, he served as National Church Moderator for the General Council on the Congregational-Christian Churches. [www.babson.edu]

month. Just how we are to get to Foochow is still a question but we expect to be able to eventually. Undoubtedly, we will cable the Boston office as soon as we land and they will, in turn, let you know.

There are a number of families returning to China Mission fields on this boat. Most of the children are under 5 yrs of age – and most of them are very well behaved. There is a young Chinese Dr. & wife & little girl about 2½ yrs old on the boat. They are from Shanghai – very sensible & lovely people. The little girl – Eunee – is darling. I must get a picture of her to send along to you. None of my pictures have been developed yet – and won't be until I get to Shanghai. Hope I haven't forgotten all about them by that time.

Dotty [Faublin] took several pictures the day we went out in the reservation for breakfast. She sent me some proofs of some of them which I got at the boat. She said she'd send you people some, so I won't attempt to send on these proofs.

Well – our meeting with Mr. Babson is about to take place – so I must close –

Deck sports are in order, i.e. the tournaments are on. My partner & I won the shuffleboard!!

Lots of love

Mary F. B -----

(My initials in case anyone wants to trace me!!)



[From a partial postcard, no date]

This is some kind of fortification in Osaka which is set high up on a hill overlooking the city – we went up there. On the way up (we had to walk) we turned the wrong direction and immediately found myself looking down the barrel of a gun!! It seems I had started into the munitions supply! There is a waist-deep moat surrounding this....

Sept 12, 1939
Shanghai
S.S. Pres. Coolidge

Dear Family!

Arrived safe & sound. Will write particulars later. Much excitement and fun. Really hate to leave the boat!

Staying in Shanghai about 3 weeks then on to Foochow. Captain says smoothest trip he ever had. Personally, I'd love to continue on the boat as far as it would go. Nothing like sailing the 7 seas –

Much love – *Mary*

Beverly House
30 Rue Boissezon
Shanghai
Sept 14, 1939

Dear Mama:

Well, I'm finally settled in Shanghai for about 2 weeks, I guess. There seems to be no definite schedule to go on for getting to Foochow – but there are boats going there. I've written so scatterdly along the way that I don't know exactly what I've written & what not. If I repeat myself, I hope you'll all bear up.

The whole trip from San Francisco to Shanghai was the smoothest our captain had ever known. He took us up on the bridge before we got to Japan and told many interesting anecdotes about various trips, but I can't begin to repeat them. He is a U.S.N.R¹, of German origin, in fact he has yet quite an accent. The crew aboard the Coolidge seemed to me quite inadequate as to efficiency etc. I may be wrong, but they seemed to me like W.P.A.² “at sea.” Others who have traveled frequently were quite distressed with the lack of service. They had been used to foreign crews. Maybe the Maritime service of U.S.A. is in as bad a state of laxity as I have often heard! So much for the crew etc.

After leaving Honolulu, they finally got around to opening our (special class) swimming pool, which was simply the top of one of the hatches where freight was being carried. We were late 1 to 3 hours leaving every port but we always managed to land at port on time.

The Coolidge, I'm ashamed to say, carried plenty of scrap iron, lead for bullets, etc, which were unloaded at Yokohama and Kobe. The captain simply passed it off as a matter of “business” when one of our goodly number questioned him about it.

All along the way, there were porpoise, sharks, whales, and flying fish. But, of course, I got out on deck after everything had been seen except the flying fish and 1 school of porpoise.

There was no great change in atmosphere of living & people, of course, until we struck Japan. At Yokohama we had about 10 hours ashore – would have had, I mean, except for the string of red tape every passenger aboard had to go thro' before the boat could even dock. They are very particular – even if passengers don't go ashore! So after nearly 3 hours, a group of us, namely a retired banker (!), a British official at Shanghai, and a girl from N. Carolina (who is on her way to Hong Kong), and I went ashore, drove to Tokyo and had lunch at the Imperial Hotel there. That is the hotel in Tokyo from all I heard and saw. It was built by an architect from the U.S. to resist earthquake. It was one of the few buildings to withstand the earthquake of '23. We didn't have time for anything except lunch – which was leisurely & exceptional – but when we returned to the boat sailing had been delayed 2 hours! What we couldn't have done with that time had we known earlier! The thing that struck me was the inactivity and poverty that lines the street from Yokohama to Tokyo. We saw a very small part and the worst part of Japan – but they are mighty poor. Gasoline is a premium and

¹ United States Navy Reserve

² The Works Progress Administration (after 1939 Work Projects Administration; WPA) was created in April 1935 by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to employ workers who had become unemployed as a result of the Great Depression. It employed millions of people and affected most every locality, especially rural and western mountain populations.

can be used only for lorry service & military use, with 1 gal/wk allowed private cars! Then, too, it's of the poorest kind, very crude.

Traffic has no rhyme or reason. All cars have the right hand drive & traffic is to the left. The first one there is the first one through. Believe me; my hair curled a couple of times. Exception: the military have the right of way and the streets are full of army trucks going & coming. We saw one armored car along the way. Yokohama is not at all attractive – it's simply a seaport and except for ships coming and going it's not very busy either.

Kobe, where we stopped the next day, Saturday, is a much more attractive town with hills surrounding it. There, too, business is practically at a standstill. We (the same party) drove over to Osaka, the manufacturing center of Japan. All along the way there were empty shops, half constructed buildings and general slump. There had been frightful drought everywhere in Japan this summer. We passed many stream beds absolutely dry. In fact, our sailing was again delayed, because of the fact that we couldn't get our supply of water on the ship until a certain time of day.

Finally we didn't leave Kobe until Sunday morning at 10!

After our drive out to Osaka (enclosed card) and back I had dinner ashore with one of the ship's officers (keep that under your hat!!) then walked up the Japanese street of Kobe, Motomachi Street ¹ (at least it sounds like that). A narrow street with shops open right on the street, rickshaws running up & down, crowds walking, children playing in gutters – & believe me, the gutters there are something – positively sickening! It was all very interesting and very different. Very few people we had talked with spoke English or even understood it, that is not so in Shanghai. Everyone here tries to speak it, even the lowliest.

While on this street, a military funeral parade passed through. There was much blowing of whistles and shouting and down the street came a motorcycle escort, followed by several busses carrying what seemed to be wounded soldiers. One bus load of soldiers had their arms in slings, another had their heads bandaged, another had masks that we decided there must be some other significance. We learned later that each soldier in the busses was carrying a box containing (supposedly) the ashes of a dead soldier. The bandages signified sympathy. Everyone on the street stepped to the side and bowed as the cars went thro! It is undoubtedly customary, but a lot of propaganda too. There were other such demonstrations all over the city that same night.

Shanghai is very active in comparison to Japan. The city is full to overflowing. Many Jewish refugees have come in and are living as many as 34 in a single room! We are staying in a Missionary house – very reasonable and quite comfortable, out in the French concession. ² Shanghai might be New York except that there are rickshaws and traffic is on the left! There are very swanky sections and the filthiest of slums! Yesterday we (Mr. & Mrs. Beard & I) walked through one of the very Chinese streets for some time. It was very hot, smelly, and almost sickening at times, but I wouldn't have missed it for anything! Beggars are prevalent – many with scabby skin diseases and sore eyes! It's pitiful. I just can't fathom how some of them exist in such filth.

¹ *Motomachi Street*: The central shopping street, Motomachi, runs between the Sannomiya and Kobe railway stations. The central business district is near the harbor.

² The *French Concession* is an area of Shanghai that was, in the past, designated as a home for French traders and businesspeople in Shanghai. Today, the area's central Huaihai Rd is a busy shopping street, but the tree-lined avenues and their many Tudor mansions still retain an air of the "Paris of the East".

I hope you'll keep this letter simple so I'll have something for comparison after I've been here a while. It seems to me very discouraging and boring. I'm afraid I can't appreciate this country yet. But what real fine Chinese people I've met are perfectly beautiful people.

Of course my first day ashore was pretty blue! In fact there were moments when I thought I couldn't stand it. I'd made many friends on the boat and they were all going on to Hong Kong or Manila or around the world. I loved the life on board and the people sure were swell! We'll probably be here when the Coolidge is returning to U.S. This letter will probably go on her, at least I'm taking it down to the boat in person for safety. Then too, there is the ship's officer – a great big fellow from Texas who was very sweet (and still is) who might like to see me!! Several passengers who were going around the world can't continue because of the war in Europe, so it's possible they may be coming back.

Anyway, I'm living in hopes that our boat for Foochow doesn't leave until after the Coolidge has returned here!!!

The Beards have been wonderful to me – very understanding – perhaps a bit shocked – but I'm still myself – I hope –

Much love to you all, *Mary* –

Beverly House
30 Rue Boissezon
Shanghai
Sept 21, 1939

My dear Mr. Manley,

This is primarily to let you know that I'm still “in the running,” and give a few impressions of what I've seen of China, namely Shanghai.

After 17 glorious days on the water we arrived here September 12th. We were very fortunate in getting the accommodations we have. Shanghai is frightfully crowded. People from the destroyed areas of the city have come into the Settlement¹ and the French Concession (the only sections not under Japanese control). Living quarters are a scarcity. Much building is going on – apartment houses etc – but prices are so high compared to what they were a year or two ago that these places will probably stay empty. Many, many schools have come into the city from surrounding towns and are carrying on anywhere they can under almost impossible conditions – crowded quarters and very little equipment. But still they keep going! The integrity of these people is simply amazing! Nothing seems to daunt them – they keep on with both work and study regardless of conditions. Several schools in the city have thrown open their doors to other schools, shifting sessions and crowding themselves so that more can come in. A year ago there were over 200,000 refugees within the French Conc. & the Settlement. Many camps had as many as 10,000 to care for, feed, clothe and hospitalize. I have just come from visiting the Salvation Army refugee camp very near where we are staying. I went rather reluctantly, expecting the worst. But there again, the optimism, the integrity of the people is simply amazing! Their living conditions are far from good, yet they're not the worst. The camp formerly housed 10,000; now there are about 3,000. The children all came running out when we came in – all smiling, talking Chinese,

¹ The Shanghai International *Settlement* was established in 1854 to reorganize the existing concessions. Wholly foreign-controlled, the council was staffed by individuals of all nationalities, including British, Americans, New Zealanders, Australians, Danes and Japanese.

once in a while one would call "Hello" and bring up a baby brother or sister for us to see. They all seemed happy and contented; they were very curious about our cameras, but they liked having their pictures taken. Even the older folks seemed happy. I expected to find the worst of depressed spirits, but there was nothing of the kind. Many of the older folks were blind, and a boy or girl would be leading them about.

They live in the flimsiest kind of bamboo and straw homes (or quarters) which are plastered over with ordinary mud dried on them. What they do when it rains I don't know! They have a common kitchen where their food is cooked and doled out to them. They also have a common watering place where all the water is boiled and where everyone comes with his tea kettle or pot. There are quarters set aside for school rooms, and a place for a chapel. They also have their hospital quarters, which were full when we were there.

The people look as though they got enough to eat and their clothing isn't too bad, but it's all so far from good! My blessings mount up to the thousands when I realize what these people do without. But they are eager to carry on under any conditions. That's what astounds me! Probably many of them came from very good homes. Many looked as though they had. To be thrust into such a state and still keep their chins up is certainly a lesson an American could well profit by! Another thing that amazed me was their orderly conduct. There was no begging, they didn't ask for a thing – but they were eager to show us everything. Whether any of them get employment, I don't know. With so much building going on here, no doubt they do get something to do.

In another camp, I have been told, the people are all self supporting. Industries have been started within the camp, like weaving of rugs, knitting, etc, and many are rickshaw drivers. Everyone in the camp, anyway, has a job!

Shanghai is a tremendous city. Down town one would about believe it ~~was~~ were New York (some slip for an English teacher). The exchange is so high (15 to 1) that living here, when reckoned in gold, is very cheap! For instance, my room & board costs \$5.00 a day in Shanghai money – that is about 35¢ American! But food and everything have gone up so that it is very hard for the coolies to so much as exist. Medical supplies have gone up as much as 500%! That's what is so pitiful – especially where they are so needed at this time.

I visited a hospital this morning, which is run by a Chinese doctor having been educated in the U.S.A. They had a brand new place in what is now Japanese occupied territory – new furniture and equipment. When the Japs came in they had to move out of their fine modern establishment and are now in a private house near here. They managed to get out all their equipment but they haven't half the space or furniture they need. Here again, these people show their ingenuity – they've made use of every corner of that house and carry on as usual. From what I'm told conditions here in Shanghai are much better than in most parts of China.

Before I finish this letter, do let me thank you for your grand steamer letter. It gave me courage as I pulled away from the shores of the good old U.S.A. I intend to follow your suggestion and write at least once a week, but whether you'll get them as often as that is a big question. The mail is very uncertain since boats between Foochow and Shanghai are even more uncertain! We are just killing time here in Shanghai, waiting for a boat to Foochow. One went down last week, but we don't know whether she got there or not. Some of our Foochow people were on it. We are scheduled to go on her the next trip, but there's no telling when that will be, maybe next week, maybe not! Meantime, I'm trying to see and learn what I can of Shanghai.

I hope everything is going nicely for you in South Hadley! Please give my best regards to Jean and a big hug to little David.

Most Sincerely,

Mary F. Buckhout

Beverly House
Shanghai
Sept 23, 1939

Dear Mama:

We've just rec'd definite word that our steamer to Foochow goes tomorrow A.M. at 7! So I've been packing again, since I won't be able to get at all my baggage, this being a very small boat.

I'm glad to be going again, but it leaves me a bit sad to think that the Pres. Coolidge docks here on Monday. It would have meant I could have seen my good friend Bob again! There's still a chance that our sailing will be delayed, but I can't bank on that, though I do hope so!

We go down the coast to Sautuao, about 75 miles north of Foochow. The boat can't go into Foochow so we leave it there and go overland by chair! It sounds very exciting. Several Foochow people have just come in, having made the trip that way and say it is very beautiful. One thing for which I am thankful is that there are hills all around there! Shanghai is very flat and uninteresting from that point of view.

Last weekend we had 4 days of continual rain – after the typhoon¹ off the coast – then it cleared last Wednesday and it has been lovely ever since. When it's damp here it's frightfully so. My room here is very dark, having but one window, so it hasn't been too pleasant. I must have taken some cold, for I've been having a bit of intestinal grippe (I think). Last night, after coming back from a dinner party, I felt just as sore all over so I dosed up with aspirin and stayed in bed this A.M. Went light on lunch this noon, and I feel better for it. I hope it all clears up before this next trip.

I've been quite feted here! The Beards have so many friends, when invitations have come for dinner or tea, I've always been included. It's been so pleasant. People are so cordial and wonderful.

While I think of it, let me say (and pass the word on) that it will be hopeless to try to send me any package mail, at least until things clear up over here! Even Christmas packages are out! Letters and pictures are mighty welcome. Mail is very uncertain, after it leaves Shanghai, since boats are so irregular. Ordinarily mail is 48 hrs between Shanghai & Foochow; now it takes a better part of a week if it gets there at all. I know Peg, Levi, Dot – “your group” – would try to send something, but just tell them not to do so; it will more likely be lost or confiscated! We can't even take things like dried fruits, sugar or coffee down [to Foochow] with us. We had no trouble bringing things into Shanghai, however.

Everyone says that travel here is worse now than it was 25 or 30 years ago! It's like going back to the dark ages. But it will all have to clear up someday.

¹ Typhoon Five of the 1939 season crossed the East China Sea and made landfall on eastern China near Shanghai on July 12, where 80-mph (130-km/h) winds. The passage of the typhoon killed at least six people in Shanghai.

This is all I'll try to write now. As soon as I get to Ingtau I'll get some news off to you. Several people from there have written with enthusiastic letters welcoming me etc. I do hope I can live up to all they expect of me. Just now it's a bit frightening!

Much love to you all, *Mary*

P.S. Does the war in Europe effect [*sic*] prices & living at home?

Tell the gang to write! I'm still trying to answer steamer letters!

Mary

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS
INCORPORATED 1812
14 BEACON STREET BOSTON, MASS.

September 13, 1939

Miss Mary L. Beard, Shelton, Connecticut
Mr. Stanley D. Beard, Pearl River, N.Y.
Mr. Oliver G. Beard, 135 Beechwood Ave., Bridgeport, Conn.
Miss Emma J. Kinney, Center St., Putnam, Conn.
Mrs. H. C. Newberg, 2306 No. Bond St., Saginaw, Mich.
Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Buckhout, South Hadley, Mass.
Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Buckhout, 247 60th St., Brooklyn, N.Y.
Dr. and Mrs. G. A. Buckhout, 2911 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport, Conn.

Dear Friends:

This morning the American Board received a cablegram from Shanghai, China, sent on the afternoon of September 13 (their time!), with the following good news:

"BUCK BEARD HSUEH ARRIVED SHANGHAI".

This of course means that Dr. and Mrs. Willard L. Beard, who are returning for a period of service in Foochow, and Miss Mary F. Buckhout, the new teacher for the Pierce Memorial (Wen Shan) School, and Mr. Donald Hsueh, reached Shanghai on their way to Foochow. It is possible that they may send us another cable after their arrival there, and of course we would send that news to you promptly, too.

I am sending a copy of this letter to each of those listed above. If there are others who might like to know about his cable, please pass the news on to them.

Sincerely yours,

Herbert E. B. Case

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS
INCORPORATED 1812
14 BEACON STREET BOSTON, MASS.

September 28, 1939.

Miss Mary L. Beard
Mr. Stanley D. Beard

Oliver G. Beard
Miss Emma J. Kinney
Mrs. H. C. Newberg
Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Buckhout
Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Buckhout
Dr. G. A. Buckhout

Dear Friends:

Some time ago I sent you notice that a cable received from Shanghai announced the arrival there of Rev. and Mrs. Willard L. Beard and Miss Mary F. Buckhout. The American Board has now received another message from Foochow sent from there at 5:28 on the afternoon of September 28. The brief message is as follows: "BUCK BEARDS ARRIVED." I need not add anything to the message which explains itself.

I am sending a copy of this letter to all those listed above and will ask you to share it with others who may be interested.

Sincerely yours,
Herbert E. B. Case

In 1999, Melissa Martin came to Mary's home in Granby, Massachusetts, to record her recollections of China. The following is the first of many excerpts.

"When we got to Shanghai, we had to wait for two or three days because the Japanese were there. We couldn't go into Foochow; their ships were in the harbor. I don't really know how much they were in through the city, but they were there. They weren't too influential at that time because Americans were still there, of course, and a lot of people from Russia had come over to Shanghai as refugees, the white Russians¹ in particular.

"So we were there a couple of weeks. There was an American Board Mission in Shanghai, missionaries and teachers and doctors. There was also an American school for the children of missionaries in other parts of China. They would come down to Shanghai to get their high school education. We stayed for a couple of weeks trying to find a ship that would go down the coast as far as they could.

"We got to Foochow by a dirty little Chinese freight. You have to bargain like sixty to get anything done, and as soon as any ship is going somewhere down the coast there are always a lot of 'relatives' of the crew who are going also.

"We landed about 50 miles north of Foochow at the mouth of the river, so we had to go overland by chair, coolies carrying chairs. A coolie in front and a coolie in back and a seat on poles. It wasn't too bad. You kind of swing back and forth as they trot along and they

¹ White Russians supported Czar Nicolas II during the Russian Revolution, in contrast to the Red Russians, those who followed the communist regime. Many escaped into China after the Bolshevik revolution.

make wonderful time, but they decided they'd have to have a third carrier for me because I was so big. All the baggage was carried by the coolies, baggage carriers, so you had to bargain to get all these people lined up to carry your stuff besides carrying yourself. I walked a good part of the way because I got sick of sitting in that chair.

“It was about three days’ travel. We slept in a village wherever we could find a spot. And there were places to accommodate ‘tourists.’ There were people constantly going cross country. I think it was only one night on the way, but usually there would be a mission station where there would be and that’s where we would stay for the night.”

Foochow
Sept 30, 1939

Dear Mom -- & the whole family!

I had just started a letter giving particulars as to the trip down but my judgment got the better of me, so detail, I’m afraid, will be somewhat lacking from now on (!) An over exercised [*sic*] caution is the best policy!!

We left S’hai Sunday arriving here on Wednesday night at midnight – what a trip! Travel here has stepped back some 30 years so I’ve been introduced to all means used in the good old days. We came as far as we could by boat then took chairs for an overland trip of about 50 miles to the river, then a dinky motor launch up to Foochow! It certainly was different, an experience I will never forget, and really fun. The first day I had 2 coolies on my chair; they complained, saying the next day they’d have to have another man on – which isn’t at all surprising considering the circumstances. So the next day I had 3 carrying me. I did some walking but very little. It rained a soaking, tho’ not hard, rain all the way, and was slippery under foot, but my coolies seemed to get on nicely despite the load. The second day we traveled from 6 AM to 7 PM to get the boat, then up the river, arriving about 12. That was some pull. The last of the chair trip was very dark and slippery, but still I stayed up! Of course there is no twilight here so far south. As soon as the sun goes down, darkness settles down too, so by 6:30 it’s dark now.

The compound here is beautiful, in fact this section of China is all very beautiful with hills and mountains all around. Everything is much more colorful than N.E. – the green is so much greener. Foochow is lovely – such a relief and pleasant surprise after S’hai. The compound is one hill overlooking the city. The Wen Shan compound is on another hill overlooking the city. The school is just grand, and it breaks my heart (as well as others) to think we can’t be using it now. But Helen Smith, who came down from Ingtai Thursday, says it’s very lovely up there, and in a way, more can be done with the girls since they are away from their homes all the time.

You probably have read of recent activities in these parts – it seems that coconut dropping¹ has been the favorite sport, but the harvest is much smaller as well as the nuts themselves. Therefore one team is benefited but the opposing team loses.

I have to write my impressions for the Foochow Messenger – a month or quarterly report issued. My journalistic ability will soon be exposed! I’ll write later about my classes & duties from Ingtai – Much love, *Mary*

¹ Coconut dropping: bombing. Harvest: casualties. Nuts: bombs

Oral History - Granby, Massachusetts, 1999

“Our school, Wen Shan, had been evacuated to a little town, Ingtai, about 50 miles up the river when invasion was threatened earlier. That spring of '39 the government wanted all schools in the coast to move inland. There was a mission station up in Ingtai with one lady missionary there and a minister, and they had accommodations there – the building and everything – so Wen Shan was evacuated and that’s where I went when I came to teach.

“I knew it would be quite primitive, and I was surprised to find that it wasn’t as primitive as I thought it would be. The foreigners who were there, most of them had been there for several years and they were well acquainted with the situation and were very good at getting you settled.

“For instance, I was to brush my teeth with water that was sitting on the commode, and I thought, ‘Why that water, why not just out of the tap?’ Well, the water that came out of the tap you don’t know where it was coming from so they had to boil all their water and keep their boiled water for tooth brushing and for drinking. Things like that kind of shocked me. I thought water was just water anywhere. There was running water where the mission stations had been there for years. They got their running water and toilets, but otherwise it was quite primitive.

“And then I had red hair. Anyone with red hair was ‘possessed of the devil!’ When I went into Ingtai, the girls all came a mile or so down the trail to meet us. When I got up to the mission house and we were having supper, all these little kids were peering in the windows, and they’d see me and they’d *run* because I had red hair. I was a devil or possessed of the devil with red hair. It was a bad omen. Well, they got used to it.”

Wenshan Girls’ School
Amer. Board Mission
Ingtai, China
Oct 2, 1939

Dear Mama,

Here I am at last at my destination, having left South Hadley 7 weeks ago! As I have said and will keep on saying it has been a perfectly marvelous trip, and as I get used to China I like it more and more. Helen Smith is putting me right to work tomorrow. I’m very thankful for that, too.

The trip from Foochow to Ingtai really was a hum-dinger! After being royally taken care of at Foochow, we left from the Bingham’s house Sunday morning (yesterday) at 5 A.M. Took rickshaws as far as we could, then walked 2 or 3 miles to the river to get the launch which left at 7 A.M. Helen & I piled in bag & baggage and set off up the river for about 7 or 8 miles, anyway as far as the boat went (guess it was more like 15 miles). Then Helen had to bargain for nearly half an hour to get a boat (sampan) to take us & our trunks & bags further up and finally to Ingtai. We got started on that part of the trip about 11 A.M. and were poled up the river, over rapids, etc, until 4 P.M. I don’t know how far it was but it was mighty slow

& no wind to help us. From the village where the boat pulled in for the night (Daikow, I guess) Helen & I walked 7 miles up to Ingtai, arriving about 7 P.M. Before we got to the school a messenger was sent out to have us wait down the hill for the girls and the boys of Foochow College¹ had planned a reception for me! So we waited 1½ hours. They were having Sunday evening services, which were later than usual, but finally we saw torches and lanterns among the trees coming down the hill – it was beautiful. They met us at the bridge in forming a double line with the faculty at the head to greet me first. Then the girls sang in English, a welcoming song then We'll Cheer for Miss B.— also in English – while Helen escorted me down through the lines. At the other end the Foochow boys were waiting & their faculty whom I met, then they also welcomed me in like manner. It certainly was lovely & encouraging after our long trip. Then they set off firecrackers in my honor & escorted me to my new home! It was just grand – all the students seemed to be having a good time – all craning their necks to get a look at me etc. I'd never had such a reception!

I'm living with Miss Lucy Lanktree who has been here in Ingtai for 18 yrs. She also had come out for the first time with the Beards. Helen's home is here – being brought up here etc. The residences out here are great large brick buildings with lovely porches – à la S.A.H. porches. The rooms are large & very high – for coolness' sake. My room is dandy – right above the river with a porch overlooking the river. I can hear the continual flow of the water – it's just grand. We really are in the mountains, with them all about us. The house and school, which are all one building, are up on a hill overlooking the town.

The school is very crowded, but it's wonderful how they carry on! Everything is neat & orderly. My trunks are just now coming in, so I'll have plenty to do to get settled!

I have to write that article for Arthur Rinden! What's more – I have to give piano lessons – that nearly finishes me – besides playing for singing, I suppose, at least the hymns. Believe me I'm getting a working out!

The Beards are coming to Ingtai in a day or two – it's not definite yet about where they will be – up here or in Foochow. I'm hoping they'll stay up here!

You perhaps have gotten reports of bombings etc here at Ingtai and Foochow as well as other places around here. This past week nothing has happened, probably because of the more or less cloudy weather. In Foochow there were a few casualties and some damage, but nothing I guess to be terribly excited about. Up here little damage was done. We don't know what to expect, but the recent activities seemed to be comparatively non-descript. But, as I said before, this is the nutting season, and the nuts this year seem to be smaller.

Don't get excited about anything you hear! The Boston office is in continual touch with the State department which knows the facts. Besides – the Consulate at Foochow is in continual communication with Washington so unless you hear from Boston, we're o.k.

Personally, I feel very safe.

My pen's dry & my ink is packed away, so I'll finish this up now.

Lots of love, *Mary*

P.S. Magazines, esp. the Reader's Digest, seem to be getting through o.k. When I said send pictures, I meant snap shots of the family, etc. I seem to be lacking in those. How's Rena? I'll try to write her soon.

¹ Foochow College was the boys' school run in conjunction with, but separately from, Wen Shan Girls' School in Foochow. Both schools were evacuated inland to Ingtai when the Japanese moved down the coast from Shanghai to Foochow.

Wen Shan School for Girls
Amer. Board Mission
Ingtai, China
Oct 7, 1939

The 25¢ stamps are now 10¢ - this made over stamp is really valuable from a collector's point of view. The other stamps are from sales checks.

Dear Peg & George,

My first week at Wen Shan is nearly over! It just doesn't seem possible. Though everything seemed so very different and the country strange, I'm really getting quite used to it all!

Ingtai is a beautiful place up in the mountains. I can almost visualize them as the mountains in New England, especially around good old Greenwich (Mass) and Hardwicke. The river runs just below the school, and the hills rise all around us. I truly feel as tho' I were camping – or at least that this is just temporary. Helen Smith seems to think we'll be back in our own “diggings” next fall. We are so crowded here that it makes the school work a bit difficult, especially when it comes to music classes – we disturb the whole school.

The building itself is quite an imposing affair of brick – built much on the same style as any campus dormitory at home – with porches – like S. A. H.¹ The only difference being the school and teachers residence are all one building. We have one end of the house and the school has the larger end!

Foochow College is down the road toward the village. They also are very crowded, but they are building temporary class rooms & dorms. The local Ingtai school is here, and another mission school (under Amer. B.) which name I don't know yet!!

After the bombing, which occurred before I arrived, the primary school moved a couple of miles out of town – you see we are quite a literary center!

Besides Helen Smith & Mr. Smith there is an Amer. at Foochow – Miss [Susan] Armstrong – rather along in years. I'm living with Miss Lucy Lanktree, who is swell – teaches at the other mission school here (in her 40's) and a Miss [Alice] Tapley who is quite full of life tho' near her 40's. She teaches anywhere she is needed! We hope the Beards are to be here with us, but that isn't certain yet. This is our American colony here! Foochow is a day's journey down the river! A road had been started with most of the bridges in – practically ready for busses. Now it has been torn up to impede any possible invasion etc. It just seems a shame! Ordinarily the trip could be made in 1½ hours. Now we depend entirely on boats – a sampan to shoot the rapids, and motor launch at the other end – then walk 2 or 3 miles into the city of Foochow. More fun!

When I came down from Shanghai I think I used every means of travel that was formerly used here in China. Our boat – coast steamer – left us at Sautuao – about 40 mi from Foochow. We made the rest of the trip overland by chair (I had 3 men carrying me) and walking, to the river. Then we had a 3 hour trip up the river by motor (wood-burning!) launch to Foochow! Rain all the way! 2 days for the trip from Sautuao! But it was really

¹ Student Alumnae Hall, or Mary E. Woolley Hall, at Mount Holyoke College.

fun to have all these experiences and seeing real China. As far as transportation is concerned, this war has set the country back about 30 years!

There are many more foreigners in Foochow, other than Americans, quite a number of British and a few Germans, either in mission work or consulate work. The American colony at one time was quite large – 50 or so – now they are cut down more than ½, most of them having moved on with the schools.

The Wen Shan buildings, especially the new one in Foochow, are just grand! It's a shame we are not using them, but we feel sure we will be soon! I like Ingtai, but it's quite out-of-the-world. Foochow would be closer to world events at least. Our news here is at least 2 days old when we get it. We are kept posted thro' a radio man at the Consulate in Foochow. By the way, are you still getting the N.Y. Tribune on Sundays? If you want to do something real special I'd love to have parts of it sent out, say each month or so – the drama section and book review section, possibly the rotogravure¹ too! If this mounts up to \$ don't bother. Papers and magazines seem to be coming through alright!

Peg – I haven't any picture of you or Nancy! What on earth was I thinking of anyway? I'd love one of youse guys. Betsy & Jay sit up on my bureau, along with one snapshot of Geo. I really think their mother should be accounted for.

Haven't told you about my classes – well, I have 6 music classes – 1 hour each and 6 English classes which meet 2/wk. I'm teaching composition, English grammar, Silas Marner & short stories! Believe me I didn't realize I knew so little about English grammar!

The girls really are dandy – they really are very much like the American high school girls. They even begin to look like my own people, now! We've been swimming every day in the river! It's grand. The nights are cool, but the days sunny and warm. What I do miss is the twilight, we don't have any. Then, too, we depend upon kerosene lamps! Thanks for your swell steamer letters. Wish I could have seen the N.Y. Fair! Had a telegram from Mary & El! This letter will get too expensive if I keep on! Did you get a radiogram from Shanghai? Love to you all, *Mary*

Wen Shan Girls' School
Ingtai – Fukien – Cha.
Oct. 10, 1939

Dear family:

What's happening in the So. Hadley end of this earth? Probably by the time you get this I will have a whole stack of mail come through all at once. It'll be mighty welcome!

I've finished my first week teaching school. It's really lots of fun. Already I feel that these girls are no different from American School girls – even in looks – they're awfully cute! Most of them are good students, too. They seem more mature in some ways, and yet socially they are quite retiring. But put them on the stage and they are perfectly wonderful.

Today is the “double 10” – the founding of the republic – so we've had a holiday since Saturday noon, but we teachers have worked just the same. Tonite the girls put on a

¹ The rotogravure press, upon which the notable reproductions of gems from the Altman collection were printed in Sunday's edition of THE NEW YORK TIMES, introduced an improvement of the slow and expensive process of photogravure to a rotary press by means of which reproductions are printed at high speed and at such moderate cost as meets the mechanical limitations of a modern newspaper. [NY Times, *The Times's Rotogravure Presses*, from the Editor and Publisher, April 15, 1914]

program for the new teachers and students! In three days they worked up – costumes & properties – a one act play and a three act play – both patriotic, besides four specialty numbers, songs and dances etc. It just amazes me the way they go into things. They memorize in no time and are born actors & actresses!

Last Saturday night the Foochow boys put on a feast for Dr. & Mrs. Beard. We were all invited. The program they put on was amazing. The boys did everything – one patriotic one act play – a tragedy – and one original farce. It was a perfect scream. I couldn't understand a word but I didn't have to – we were practically rolling in the aisle! Helen would translate for me but it wasn't necessary!

Dr. & Mrs. Beard are staying in Foochow until next spring – June – when Mr. Smith will be going home. Then the Beards will come up here. We'll be glad to have them added to our community which consists of Mr. Smith & Helen, Miss Lucy Lanktree and Alice Tapley, with whom I have very comfortable living quarters, and Miss Susan Armstrong. Alice is a trained dietitian and does the housekeeping & planning of meals for us here. The food is just grand despite the shortage of sugar & flour and some staples. We can buy native things but they are not as highly refined as foreign – but it is usable. Fruit is very plentiful, for which we are very thankful. We have buffalo cow's milk. It's very white, but good. The butter, too, is very white. I'll be fatter than ever!

Last Sunday night I fell down our stone steps by the side of our house taking half the wall with me. I skinned both knees and one shin very badly. What hurt me most was ruining a brand new pair of stockings! I noticed today one ankle is swollen – not a sprain, but just a bad bruise. Guess I'll get over it.

My classes consist of: 6 classes in music – junior & senior high; 1 English grammar, 3 (Sr.) classes in Composition (!), 2 Sr. Literature classes – one reading Silas Marner & the other is reading short stories. I'm really enjoying it. The boys choir is superior to our girls, simply because they can read, so I've got to start from the beginning with my girls. So far I can make them sing up to time and start on time! I think that is an accomplishment.

If Ab hasn't anything to do with the old Radio Guides, would it cost too much to mail them each month out to me? I'd love to have these. Programs seem to be getting thru! That can be his Christmas present to me! Love, *Mary*

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien, China
Oct. 18, 1939

Dear Mama:

My first mail came through last Sunday – was I thrilled! But have none from the family! Good old Bob of the “Coolidge” came across with a letter! My, it's set me up for a few days. There's one fault with mail – it's wonderful to receive, but it's just a teaser for more. Well, guess I'll live thro' it.

I wonder how Hat & Dave are getting on, and Rena & Nate. I expect some more mail will be coming in to answer all these questions in time. I expect I'm another aunt by this time, too.

Teaching is really fun. Some days are worse than others but I do enjoy it. It's amazing what I don't know about English grammar. Have 1 class in that. Of course, not being able to explain to them in Chinese, I have to simplify the English besides simplifying the grammar to get it across! But it's fun. I can't remember how much I've written about

this work, but I'm teaching piano! Have 4 pupils! They are all beginners, 3 of them have had some training. I can keep them busy and that's about all. The great problem is time and rhythm! The girl who taught them before was a pupil of Miss Richardson! – Frances (Boch) Bingham. My work will hardly compare with hers, but we'll struggle on somehow. The only piano in the school is in their assembly hall – lessons, practice, and everything goes on there, with girls trying to study etc, just like the old hall at S. H. H. S.¹! I can't practice piano or singing. I bang out things on the organ in Miss Lanktree's living room. We have many difficulties and problems, but it's still interesting work and invigorating!

I still feel as though I were camping up here! Its beautiful country, reminds me so much of Greenwich except that the hills are mountains out here, and have no timber on them. They are particularly beautiful at sunset when they catch the different colors from the sun and the clouds hang over the peaks.

Most of the time I don't feel very far from home! Time goes so fast I'll be back before I know it, I'm afraid. There is something about this country that gets under one's skin.

We are still swimming almost every day. Only once have I slept under more than a sheet! We have gotten seeds to plant as soon as we can find space enough for a garden. Fast growing vegetables like lettuce & radishes we can plant now. Our trouble here is that there are so many trees in the compound and it's so hilly we can't find a sunny enough place! Wen Shan is putting up a new building (temporary) for classrooms and library, otherwise we might have used that for our garden! As it is we are sacrificing practically the only playground the girls have for this building.

Lunch bell. Must go.

Back again; had lunch and gave a piano lesson. These girls are bright. They pick things right up. They'll be ahead of me in no time at all.

The Y.W.C.A., which is composed of our senior girls, is having its first meeting tonight. We're having a picnic supper down on the rocks by the river – Chinese food etc. I'm getting so I like Chinese food, especially their noodle dishes, but I wouldn't want it for a steady diet.

Have I told you about fruit here? We have lots of it. Pressimins (don't know how to spell it), bananas—small ones but very good, guavas, which are grand steamed, pumaloes which are something like a grapefruit but larger and easier to eat—the sections come out beautifully. Our cook makes a beautiful looking & tasting marmalade of the skin. Later on we have some form of orange, and plums in the spring! We don't exactly suffer. At least I'm not losing weight! This is a very sketchy letter! Hope you can wade thro' it!

Next week I give my students quizzes! For once in my life I'm on the other end of the quiz, but it's no easier! I'm getting the choir to sing The Lord Is In His Holy Temple for an opening response – we have it in Chinese – they really sing it quite well! Must close & make out some exams. Much love to all, *Mary*

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
Oct 26, 1939

Dear Mama:

¹ South Hadley High School

It's about time I got another letter off! This will be for Thanksgiving greetings, possibly Christmas too! We are not sure yet whether we celebrate the President's Thanksgiving here or the traditional thanksgiving!¹ Maybe both! The annual meeting comes the week of the 23rd in Foochow and that would be the appropriate time for us to celebrate. I don't know yet whether I'm going down for that or not. Of course school keeps and if all of us (teachers) go traipsing off there won't be much school.

There are a couple of things I'd like to get off my chest.

First: Would you call or see Amy Barney and tell her I am not yet receiving my copies of the Reader's Digest. Lucy's comes through O. K. Probably my subscription being a new one, they would be slow in getting it out. It would be best for Amy to check on it since she (I think) sent in the subscription.

Second: I was a fool not to take up Mr. Gueil's offer of carbon paper! If he has any lying around down at the mill tell him to send some my way. That's one thing it's almost impossible to get! Just now anyway.

Tonight I had charge of study hall, as I shall have every Thursday nite from now on – 8:30. I never saw anything like the way these kids study. I guess they memorize about everything. They have marvelous memories. There is a continual hum like a hive of bees – it gets louder, then quiets down. If I happen to look up, they stop immediately & look up, gaping at me – it's too funny. They just can't study silently. Even during the day the girls will go off in 2's or 3's in a corner somewhere and start spouting in a monotone. It's just killing!

The light in the study hall is frightful, so I can't do much there myself. We have 2 large pressure lamps², but it's a ghastly light and so poor for reading. It's no wonder the Chinese have such poor eyes.

I think some of them can see in the dark. Our house coolie – an awfully neat nice girl – goes around here at night with no light of any kind, carrying water etc to our bathrooms, turning down our beds. She does half her work in the dark. Her name is Pea Jo – at least that's the way it is pronounced.

Yep, we – Lucy, Alice & I – all have private baths. Of course no running water, but all we want, and hot water too. And our beds are turned down very neatly each night. My, but I'm ruined already!

Helen got a package the other day that has been on its way from America since last June! But she got it. It was summer clothes that she wanted in August! Well, she's all set for next year. Packages do get through after many weeks it seems. I'll take back what I said about not sending package mail. A small package, marked "gift" will get though, I guess. What I'd love, if anyone has the urge to send something, is some kind of milk chocolate – candy bars or something. They'd have to come in a metal container so mice or rats (other than 2 legged ones) won't get at it. Small cans of cheese or sandwich spreads would do nicely. I don't need any of these, they're merely suggestions. Anything American looks good to these folks out here. Dr. Dyer brought back a box of candy bars with her and sent

¹ In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt broke with Abraham Lincoln's tradition of celebrating Thanksgiving on the last Thursday in November and he declared the fourth Thursday as Thanksgiving. In 1940 and 1941, years in which November had four Thursdays, he declared the third one as Thanksgiving and established the next-to-last Thursday of November as the holiday.

² *Pressure lamps* – a kerosene lamp also known as a Tilley lamp by the British and a Coleman lamp by Americans. The kerosene must be pressurized to work properly, hence, the name.

some to Ingtai. We look at them one day, smell them the next, and have a crumb the following day!

I'm enclosing this letter for Hat. Not knowing where she is and postage being so frightful! Guess I won't get around with many Christmas cards after all! Of course 50¢ Chinese is less than 5¢ American, but it counts up.

Give my best to anyone you see. I'll be writing Felix soon. My choir is very faithful, but a bit on the rough side still. Tell Meg [Burgevin]¹ that during the course of 3 years I'll get a letter off eventually. I carry everything but the bath tub in her briefcase!

Much love to all, *Mary*

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

Nov. 2, 1939

Dear Mom, Pop and all the family that's there or anywhere!

A most amazing thing has happened! I might as well pour out all my woes at the beginning. I've been having a perfectly swell case of malaria! Last Friday while giving one of my classes an exam, I started to feel chilly and achy all over. I hadn't any cold and I didn't see any reason for getting grip, but I went to bed and shook! That night I had intervals of shaking, heat and then sweating! Helen and I were giving the senior girls a Halloween party Sat. night. I thought certainly I'd sleep it off and by evening I'd be O.K. Well, Saturday p.m. the fever returned, more violent than before. That night & Sunday I thought I'd go out of my head, the heat was so terrific – my eyes just seared in their sockets. Nothing would relieve it but a cold compress. I couldn't sleep or relax in any way. Sunday p.m. I had a temp of 104°. They were sure it was malaria, but the girls at school had been having it and the nurse was treating it as such so they started feeding me quinine² and I've been eating it ever since. Sunday & Monday I was flat on my back, something I've never known before and believe me, I don't care to be again. Yesterday I got up for the first time, just to sit on my porch, but I couldn't stay up very long. Today I've been up and down, but I'm much better and much thinner they tell me! I sweat so that it's not surprising. I'm as weak as a kitten. I expected to be back at school by today, but no go. If I'm back by Monday it'll be soon enough. Several of the teachers have had it but apparently not as severely as I. Yet some of the girls they said were much worse. I can't imagine anything worse than what I had.

Everybody has been grand, waiting on me hand and foot, so I ought to improve fast. Even writing this makes me perspire a bit I'm so weak.

Lucy has been having a terrific cold and not feeling good for much. Helen has been grand as usual, running in to massage my back or arrange my bed, bring tea and dozens of other things. If anyone was to be sick one would expect her to be. She's as thin as Helen and a bit taller!

I've got to continue with quinine for 10 days more the doctor says! It makes my ears thunder so that I can't hear. Well, if it kills the malariates [*sic*] I'm willing to stand it. I

¹ Meg Burgevin was choir director at the South Hadley Center Church for many years, as well as Mary's voice teacher.

² *Quinine*: a bitter-tasting natural white crystalline alkaloid extracted from the bark of the South American cinchona tree. It has fever-reducing, pain killing, anti-inflammatory, and antimalarial qualities.

haven't yet got my appetite back so but it isn't worrying me. That'll come soon enough! So much for my troubles! Don't worry – I'm o.k.

The new building at the other end of the school is coming along quite fast. We can probably use it by January. That's fast for work here even tho' it is but a temporary building. Our new wall is also under way; soon we'll have quite a large piece of ground added to the compound.

If anything exciting has happened here this week, I've missed it! The social news this week is a bit lacking, I'm afraid. Susan, who had been recuperating at Helen's for a week or more, went back to her classes and her house, so that makes one less invalid.

Foochow College boys have acquired a few more quarters where they can hold classes etc, so they aren't as crowded, and their schedule is a bit more regular. Alice teaches there. She wouldn't know from one day to the next what class she was to teach or how long it was to be. She's much relieved!

November 1 was a glorious day here. But today it is gray and none too hopeful.

I did have some excitement too! My first American mail! A grand letter from Anna Young. She read in the Christian Herald that I had been appointed, and Dr. Gray stopped at her home in Claremont Calif. where she & her sister are now living. It seems Miss Stevens had sent a copy of my Com. Service to Dr. Wild, too. Claremont is that place near Pomona College where so many retired faculty and missionaries go to build – if they like – a home etc. Missionaries on furlough stay there too. She hopes I'll stop there to see her on my first furlough. Miss Hyde, Miss Foss, Miss Farnsworth and several other Mt. Holyoke people have stopped there this past summer she sounds as tho' she were enjoying life!

Well. Helen has come in. There's nothing more in the way of news and anyway it's the end of the paper!

Lots of love to all, *Mary*

Wish I knew how Rena was/is making out! Tell Nate to check up on that "radioing" I suggested!

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

Nov. 9, 1939

Dear Mom & Pop and all the family:

It doesn't seem possible that there's only a month & a half left to this year. My but the time does fly! Here it is November and we are still living with doors and windows wide open and are wearing cotton dresses. Now & then we have a day when we need a sweater, it's rainy or cloudy. Otherwise it's quite warm.

My malaria has completely left me, tho' I'm still taking quinine. The Dr. thinks it's best – to be sure all the germs are killed! I'm going to finish up this supply I have, then call it quits. I'm really o.k. feeling quite like myself. For a week I could eat much of anything and lost a few pounds. But my appetite has returned in full so anything I lost I guess I regained.

The Christians sent up some tomatoes from their garden in Foochow after their visit here! My, they were good. I guess we'll have tomatoes from now on. Oranges, too, are coming into the markets here. This is orange country, so before the winter is over we will be getting nice large ones. So far they have been quite small, but juicy and sweet.

Miss Sun, our principal, returned from an educational conference the other day and brought me a kitten from Foochow. I was amazed. I had simply said, once, that a kitten would be nice to have around. She had brought one up earlier in the fall, for the school kitchen. The kitten she brought me is awfully cute – ‘coon striped with white legs and white band around her neck. I haven’t been able to take care of her at all until recently. She’s frightened to death most of the time and sleeps, or rather hides, in the bottom drawer of Miss Sun’s desk. I have her with me now in my room. She’s perfectly content in the bottom drawer of my desk sleeping peacefully. She’s getting used to me and the room and even plays a bit now. She was so frightened and all alone. I decided to call her “Topsy” – she acts as if she “jes’ growed.

I have a brand-new bookcase in my room. I'm quite the envy of everyone! There was a very shallow closet. Even more shallow than that one in the back room! I suggested taking the door off lining it with thin wood and putting shelves in! It is quite high, and Lucy thought too narrow, so he had the casing taken off too, and a new casing carried outside the closet wall. Adding about 4 inches to the width and making it appear much wider. Then to shorten the height, I drew a picture for the carpenter and said to put some kind of finishing at the top. That would lower the height, though still keep the space for a shelf. So it's something like this sort of a colonial seal lapping at the top and it's very attractive. Why not do that with the closet in the back room? It would make a dandy bookcase! I have my books, snapshots and knickknacks on the shelves, and my colored dishes, it's really awfully cute, I'm quite pleased!

Arthur Rinden¹ arrived in Ingtai yesterday, rather unexpectedly. He's studying with the Smiths. He's going to help us in decorating, or at least making the church, but the more attractive. He's a grand fellow full of life and fun. It'll be nice having him here for a while. I'm going over to Helen's for dinner tonight. Arthur plans to go home next summer! So does Mr. Smith, and Eunice, Helen's sister way upcountry with the Foochow primary school. Helen wants to go also! It's going to be a depleted company, I'm afraid. They all need to change. So they ought to go. Well, so much for now.

Lots of love, Mary.

PS I'll probably be in Foochow or part of annual meeting and Thanksgiving.

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien
China.
November 10, 1939.

My dear Mr. Manley:

Did I say something some time in the past about reporting every week? It hardly looks as though I'd even get a monthly letter written. But here goes anyway.

As far as the country of China is concerned, you people at home probably know more about it than we do. Foochow is kept fairly well posted with their radios and through the consulate, but we poor country cousins here in Ingtai live in hopes! We do get news, but it's at least two weeks old, sometimes more. We abound in rumors of all kinds. We'd feel better, if we could know what was not going on. However, we all feel that things are looking up, for

¹ Dr. and Mrs. Arthur O. Rinden of New Haven, CT, were Congregational missionaries in Nanking, China, where Dr. Rinden was Secretary of Visual Education for all Protestant Churches in China serving under the National Christian Council of China. Dr. Rinden began his China career in 1926 as Supervisor of rural churches in Fukien Province. Mrs. Rinden and the children returned to America at the outbreak of war but Dr. Rinden remained on for several years. [*The Friend*, Volume CXVII, Number 2, 1 February 1947 Edition 01, via Mission Houses Museum.]

reasons you must know. In fact, we at Wen Shan are rather counting on getting back to Foochow within a year.

Well, I certainly have been thoroughly initiated into Chinese ways of travel, if nothing else. Since I've been in China, I haven't so much as seeing a railroad! After leaving Shanghai (was I glad to leave!) We came down the coast as far as we could, in a steamer that we expected to fold up under us any minute! But we got here, in one piece too. We came across country in chairs. I had a regular mountain chair, no sedan chair for me! It certainly was an interesting experience. We had traveled two days over and through the mountains down to the Min River the first day I had two men on my chair, but I was too much for them, so the next day they put on a third man. My chair wasn't built for three men, so I rode all the way with my knees up under my chin until I thought I'd never be able to straighten them out again.

I had three or four days in Foochow before the last lap of the journey up the river to Ingtai. Such a welcome, as I had awaiting me. All the Wen Shan girls were out with torches and lanterns, and most of the Foochow College boys too. They sang songs of greeting-good old American cheer songs at that, and escorted me to the school! It certainly was a cheering sight after a long slow all day journey from Foochow.

Students here have a wonderful spirit. They just don't know the word discouragement. They are also eager to learn. There was no hard and fought rule about coming back to school, but despite the inconvenience of the journey in the crowded conditions here, most of them came back. There was some question about one class returning because of government regulations. All the class wanted to come back, so the school accepted them, though legally they should not be here! I do wish that some of our American students could see these boys and girls. Nothing daunts them. There's just no stopping them once they get going. It's no wonder that China has made such swift progress in past years if this is a sample (and I believe it is) of their willingness and eagerness to get ahead and make improvements.

The little church here in Ingtai cannot accommodate all the students and townspeople at one service, so the Ingtai local school has its service in the morning. Foochow and Wen Shan have theirs Sunday evenings. Wen Shan and Foochow have combined to be responsible for decorating the church etc. Arthur Rinden is up here this week, giving suggestions and helping in the redecoration and rearrangement of the church. It is very bare at present with whitewashed walls. We are trying to make it more attractive and less cold by addition of a drape behind the altar and a few other touches, which haven't been completely worked out as yet the students form the main part of the Church committee, and they are exceedingly interested in making improvements.

I expect to go to Foochow for the last of the annual meeting and Thanksgiving. Despite the president's new proclamation, we shall celebrate Thanksgiving on the old date(!) which will be November 30, the last day of the annual meeting.

Foochow and Ingtai are all that everyone has ever claimed them to be. It's perfectly beautiful country. All the compounds in both places are set up on hills overlooking the city. Foochow is especially lovely, situated on the river and surrounded by grand mountains here in Ingtai. We are a bit too much in the mountains to be able to look off very far. At sunset, the mountains all around us are all colors one could possibly imagine, from deep purple to the light rosy hues. I can't begin to describe them they are so beautiful. The river runs past the foot of the Wen Shan compound. Every day we see sampans being pulled up the river over the rapids, just below the school.

Tomorrow Alan Smith and I are taking senior high girls down the river to an old monastery. It's an all-day trip, starting at dawn! So I better crawl in now and get ready for the fray!

You'll probably get this about Christmas time, at least I hope you get it by that time. I send my best greetings to my church for a Merry Christmas and a prosperous and Happy New Year.

To you and Gene and David, I send Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year

Sincerely yours,
Mary F. Buckhout

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China.
November 15, 1939.

Dear family:

It seems so queer, writing Christmas letters so soon. I really haven't gotten the Christmas spirit yet. Anyway, here's a Merry Christmas to you all and the happiest of New Years So far!! It would be fun being with you all, but this is certainly a new experience for me. And I am really looking forward to it. We do not get any Christmas vacation, though we do have the date free. That winter vacation comes in February when the Chinese celebrate their New Year.

I shall be in Foochow for Thanksgiving, and I think all the others here at Ingtai will be there then too, annual meeting comes that week. It seems that all of us are going down at different times. It will be fun seeing everybody there and meeting some people I haven't seen as yet.

Aren't these cutouts pretty? They are done by Chinese women in Foochow—by hand of course. There are some of Chinese scenes which are just as cute as they can be. I have quite a number and will be using them later on. These triangles are bookmarks—hand-painted; I thought they might come in handy. The boats pictured on these bookmarks are the kind of boat we traveled to Foochow in! Thought Ab would like one or two and Helen and Mom. I'm sending a few to Peg and George and Doris and Bill and Rena and Nate. This, I'm afraid, is the extent of my Christmas this year. I'm glad I stuck in what 10 cent Store things I did, but I wish now that I'd bought out the store! Well, the next time I'll know exactly what to get.

You should see the poinsettias here! They are perfectly beautiful. They aren't plants, they are trees, and that's no exaggeration. One blossom actually measures 18 inches across, and there are probably even larger ones. They're perfectly magnificent. And the oleanders! Why they are above the second story windows! They have bloomed some this fall, but will really blossom out in the spring. They are also trees! To think how you struggle, mom, to keep your oleanders going! And for a country that is so infested with everything, I don't see how the chrysanthemums are so lovely. Everybody here has pots and pots of them. The foliage is as lovely as the blossoms, to!

After the first of the year, you'll probably be getting a check, Papa! I'll write Boston and have them send a check on to you—now don't spend it all in the same place!

Last night Foochow College and Wen Shan put on a program for the benefit of the soldiers, particularly to provide them with winter clothing. It was put on in a temple here in Ing tai. The temple, for all the world, looks exactly like the Elizabethan theater with the pit, and balconies around the sides, and the high stage extending into the pit. It makes a grand showplace! The Foochow boys asked me to sing, so I did a couple of Bohemian folk songs¹, The Guest, and To The Garden Auntie Went. They got a great kick out of them! Alice Tapley played for me on a tiny portable organ. A Chinese program here lasts at least four hours! And it never starts on time. Besides musical numbers, acrobatic students, etc., there are always two plays! We didn't stay through, but what we saw was interesting. Mr. Smith thinks I should begin on the language nights anyway, studying the Foochow dialect since that is what is used here, and what I need to get me around. As soon as I can find a teacher I'll start.

In Foochow, one of the Methodist missionaries has quite a good Victrola of an excellent collection of opera recordings complete, etc. He has a musical evening now and then. Do I wish I was down there, where I could take them in! Does Miss Goldthwaite still have her evenings of music and ice cream? Helen is going to have her aunt bring out a radio. We've all agreed to bear part of the expense, but that won't be here until early spring probably! Then we'll have some connection with the outside world. Now and then we get news from Foochow on what's happening.

Helen and I, in our spare moments, get talking about her new residence at Wen Shan. "The Mount Holyoke House." She is M. H. C., as is Miss Bingham and several others connected with the mission. Now the job is to get some appropriation from our alma mater! It may sound like a pipe dream, but they're actually counting on it!

Well, it's getting late. If I don't get this off soon, you won't get it until next year!

Again, Merry Christmas and much love to you all Mom, Papa, Helen and Ab -- anyone who happens to be home.

Love,

Mary

Wen Shan Girls School, Foochow, China.

November 16, 1939.

Greetings to all the people of the Fellowship!

Christmas greetings and New Year greetings. It may be well past the new year when you get this, but the greetings I send you from way out here in China are just as sincere, late or not! Though I'm thousands of miles away, I feel closer than ever to all you people in South Hadley. Your friendship and all that you have done for me mean much more to me now than it ever did before!

I wonder what you are doing this Christmas? Here at Wen Shan we'll probably be having much the same type of program. We've already started on Christmas carols and are laying plans for a pageant. It is customary for the girls to go out caroling Christmas morning about 2 AM! So I'm really looking forward to the season here. Probably you'll have snow. We won't have any all winter!

¹ Mary's uncle, Charles Atherton, traveled with the Czechoslovakian Army across Russia as a secretary for the Y.M.C.A. He collected, transcribed, and published a volume of their songs, and when he returned to South Hadley he taught Mary and her sisters many of them.

Speaking of weather, here it is the middle of November and we are still living with our doors and windows open. On bright sunny days, it is very warm. The length of daylight is about the same as in South Hadley, except in the summer. Then there is no twilight! That is what I missed the most on first arriving in China! Well, if anything was the same the world over, it would be pretty monotonous! The people in China may have different customs (which are delightful) and a different language, but is people they are like any other people of the world. These students of Wen Shan and Foochow College are just the same as American students. So far I haven't had any trouble with discipline, but now and then they try to get away with something in the classroom! And they like to copy the work of the good students! Remember your high school days? Maybe you were all model students, though! There are very bright students, and very dumb ones too. A student has to be a good sport among his classmates or he doesn't get along with them at all, so you see, they are not so different after all!

You should see the way these students put on an entertainment! It's never less than four hours long! And it usually includes a three act play and a one-act play! Besides, they'll have 10 to 15 items or students on the program. But the amazing part of it is – they work the whole thing in 3 days – plays included! How they do it is beyond me, except that they are born actors and actresses. I can't understand a word, but I thoroughly enjoy it because they portray their parts so well. Most of the plays they put on at present are propaganda plays, but they go over big and draw a large audience. They hold their performances in a temple here in Ingtai. The temple looks very much like an Elizabethan theater with the stage extending into the pit and two galleries above the pit. Their settings are very simple. The boys and girls never combine for a play. The boys take the girls parts – and they make good looking girls too. And the girls make very handsome men. I wish you could see them; it's simply amazing. In a short time, one of the Y.M.C.A. schools down the river is coming to Ingtai to put on real Chinese drama! It will not be as good as professional drama, but it will be interesting. I'm looking forward to it.

So much for drama! I only wish we could get the secret for drawing large crowds! If I do I'll let you know.

The Church of Ingtai cannot accommodate all the students of the three schools in the townspeople at one service, so Wen Shan and Foochow College hold their services on Sunday evening. We have a mixed choir—Wen Shan girls and Foochow boys. I'm hoping to do “O Holy Night,” for one Christmas anthem.

We have really had quite a social season here this fall. Several people from the mission and Foochow have been up to visit us, so we've had teas and dinner parties which have been quite gay.

I'm going down to Foochow for Thanksgiving, in fact, all of us Americans are. At Christmas, we have just a day off. Our winter vacation comes in February during the Chinese New Year. At that time, we are supposed to get a month! Helen Smith, and I will probably go farther up the river to visit her sister and her school. That will be about a three day trip!

Traveling here in China is a bit of a problem. When we go down to Foochow we leave at dawn and travel down the river on a sampan for about 15 miles. There we meet the launch which takes us to within 5 miles of Foochow. Then we walk the rest of the way or spend some money and are carried in a chair to the village, then get a rickshaw to take us into the city, arriving about 8 PM. Going up the river is fun! After you leave the launch, you take a sampan and plan to spend 5 or 6 hours on it, going 15 miles. If there is an upriver breeze it

helps some, but you are polled most of the way and then pulled, by 5 or 6 coolies, over the rapids. It's a long drawn out process. About 4:30 PM you are right at Daikao, 7 miles from Ingtai, then get off the boat and walk home! A car could do it in two hours! Two years ago, the road between Ingtai and Foochow was practically finished; now there's been all torn up to prevent, or at least hinder any possible invasion!

When this war is over, China is going to zoom ahead so fast, you won't be able to see her for dust.

Well -- greetings again to you all!

Amy, Norman, Joe, Donald, Dot, Barbara, Virginia, Harlan, Cassy, Dotty A, "Bleak," Gordie, Phil, Hellie-Wellie, Jean, and Jeanne, Bob, Donald F, Jack, Claire -- if I have left out anyone, forgive me. I include everyone, anyway. If anyone is interested in stamps. He can have these and let me know. I'll send different ones next time.

By the way, for some unknown reason, the Reader's Digest has not yet come! Other people are getting theirs. Could that be checked up? Thanks a lot! Let me know how things are going with you at home!

Sincerely, and a bit homesick-ishly,

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

Nov. 23, 1939

Dear family:

It's Thanksgiving in your part of the world! Boy, I'd like to be there -- for a short time! Next week we celebrate in Foochow! Helen went down to Foochow this week, so she has gotten in on some of the celebration the American Consulate has at Thanksgiving. They promise to save some of the fun for us next week -- so it looks as though we'd have a good time too.

I'm going to sing for one of the meetings -- the last one of the annual meeting, I guess. All of us have lists a mile long of things we want to get while in Foochow. I'm going to spend my extra time, and money (!) in the lacquer shops. The foreigners have a cooperative in Foochow to which most of the mission people belong. It does quite a business and dividends are pretty good. Guess I'll join later. They have nearly everything from candy on up. I'm investing in some of their candy. By the way, there is no duty on candy at present -- a gentle hint -- Hershey's preferably!

At the vocational school at one of the missions (Methodist) in Foochow, furniture, boxes etc are made to order. I'm going to have a camphor box made for my woolen things. The wood is perfectly beautiful and the workmanship is very good. Lucy has one with a sliding tray. It's a grand looking affair and absolutely moth proof. In fact, I think I'll have a couple made! Wish I could send about 6 home!

Does Ab think it's possible to send out the Radio Guides each month or so? That is, when you are through with them. I'd love to have them. Not that I need it, but I would enjoy it. We may not have a radio, but I like to know what I'm missing! Did I tell you, four of us have gone together and subscribed for Life for next year. Lucy has all of last year's here. I'm

finding lots of things in there. I often find pictures to use in class work. The other day I wanted a picture of a knight to illustrate Lochinvar – and there it was in Life – a whisky ad!

Miss Sun, the principal, was down for three days with malaria. It just seems to be the accepted thing around here. There are some 40 types and Ingtai has 18 of them! I got quite slender during my week in bed – but I guess I’ve gained it all back now! Funny I can’t keep a good thing (or habit) when I get one!

Last Saturday Alice Tapley & I had the best time “shopping” in the city of Ingtai! We spent about two hours just looking at the stuff they carry in the littler shops here. It’s perfectly fascinating. I got batteries for a flashlight, some erasers and a wooden bucket (I’ve wanted one since I came) and a cute little child’s bamboo hat. I think I’ll make a collection of costumes; they are awfully interesting. I also want to get hold of the different working songs, laboring songs, etc, of the Chinese. I have a couple – one the Yangtze River Boatman’s Song – is very much like the Russian Volga Boatman. Those songs sung by correctly costumed people would make a good program, I think. If I begin to do all I want to while I’m here, it’ll be amazing! Chinese instruments are interesting. There’s one pipe that sounds like a bagpipe – but there’s no bag! They have stringed instruments that look very primitive. Sometime I hope to know more about these things. The trouble is, I can’t talk with people; I always have to depend on someone else to talk for me and get me around. I know a few words but very few – making sentences is a different matter!

The English grammar I’m teaching pretty nearly has me up a tree. It’s mighty peculiar that it’s so difficult to explain the language I’ve spoken & written – all my life – but it is! There are so many things that have no rules or no reason for being used as they are. I’ve been teaching gerunds. I really don’t think I knew what they were before! Life is anything but boring when I have grammar on my hands. We are all too busy to be bored anyway!

It’s funny, too, how I feel that this “residence” in Ingtai is only temporary. I love it here – it’s quiet and the river and mountains are so lovely. But there would be a chance of keeping up with the world in Foochow. At least I could hear some good music once in a while. That is what I miss most. I don’t feel as though I am being deprived of anything but I do get a longing now and then for a bit of symphony! In Foochow I’d miss the river and swimming. Another branch of this river goes right thro’ Foochow, but there wouldn’t be any swimming and the school is quite a distance from it. Here we are practically on the bank of it. We’re nearer to the river than the Bagg farm¹ is to the Connecticut!

So much for my complaining and wishes!

The weather is cooler at times and yet, yesterday it was hot. Today it rained all day and is damp and chilly. Sweaters and the like feel pretty good. The blue flannel bathrobe feels good tonite as I sit writing at my desk. I think I’ll have a quilted silk robe made. Helen says they are very warm. I guess they line the things with layers and layers of silk. They are light and soft and warm!

I hope this letter isn’t too late for the annual Church Meeting. It would be such fun to be there (with Felix officiating). Anyway I’m sending my greetings through the family – if you’ll convey them – rather than sending them to Mr. Manley.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.”²

¹ 8 Alvord Street, South Hadley, Massachusetts

² Matthew 22:37, 39 – King James Version

Neighborliness is what this world must strive for if it ever expects to have peace. The younger generation of this country is growing up with a dreadful hate for their enemy. Time after time, among my own students, that hate crops out in their compositions and in their conversations with me. Who is to blame? I'm sure I don't know, but the world has grown too close together for such things. I have met splendid individuals among the Chinese who do not have that attitude toward Japan and there are a great many other people who do not condemn the country, but the militarists only. To get young folks to see the folly of hatred is a tremendous problem. In the light of what has taken place in China, perhaps they are justified. Goodness knows, hatred exists in countries other than China, but as long as it exists the chances for world fellowship are lessened. However, that is no reason to give up, rather it is a challenge for each and every one to determine that prejudice and hatred are taboo.

My oh my – you can quote me if you want to. I didn't mean to preach, but being in a country and seeing the destruction is certainly different from just reading about it.

Well, it's getting late and I've other things to do before I turn in. How did the Yale – Dartmouth game come out this year?? Pop still on the dam¹ job?

Still hoping to hear from you soon.

Much love,

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

Dec. 3, 1939

Dear family:

Here I am still in Foochow, having a grand time. Alice, Susan and I came down last Monday, the 28th, such a time as we had getting here! Alice and I got up at 3:00 A.M. to be ready when the boat came, supposedly going at 4 a.m. But it wasn't light so they couldn't go at that time! We were to have gone on a private boat but about 5 a.m. Susan sent down word that the boat was not private and the people who had previously hired it didn't want us to go on it! Most of the boats in the village were gone, having taken soldiers down the river during the night. There was no chaise for us left. We'd have to go on the ferry (public). Well, Alice and I waited from 5 – 7 AM on the river bank with all our luggage, saw the moon set and the sun come up! The public ferry came by, Susan on it, the boat packed full so they wouldn't stop for us! Susan was so disgusted she talked until the boatman let her off and she came traipsing back to us.

We gave up hope of getting to Foochow that day, we have to go early in the morning or we don't make the launch down this end! Lucy, too, was disgusted. These boat people are so darned temperamental! She traipsed down to the village and found a boat for us, so in the midst of a second breakfast – about 8 o'clock – she called to us and had a boat – private one if you please – waiting for us down by the rocks! Susan, Alice, and I dashed down and piled in. The boatman said he could get us to the launch on time. There was a stiff up-river breeze which slowed us up some, and as we came within sight of the launch – about twelve o'clock – the darned thing pulled out!

¹ Her father, Albert Buckhout, was an engineer who worked on the Winsor Dam for the Quabbin Reservoir. Double-entendre is intended, since their beloved town of Greenwich would be wiped from the map when the dam was completed.

Here we were, stranded again. We finally bargained and got another boat to take us the rest of the way, so from 1 to 7:30 we were out on the cold river, good wind blowing, being rowed down to Foochow! We finally arrived nearly frozen. There were no chairs to be had, though we did get a couple of load carriers for our baggage. We walked about 3 miles toward the city before we could find rickshaws, finally arriving at the compound here about 10 p.m. cold and hungry! Now that was a trip! We had visions of spending the night on the sampan. Each of us had a steamer rug, but that wasn't enough! Alice & I stayed with Dr. Dyer and Hazel Atwood, a nurse at the hospital here. They had a fire in the fireplace and a supper waiting for us! Bed never felt so good as it did that night!

Tuesday & Wednesday we shopped and got in a game of tennis. Helen had come down the week before and had more or less planned things. When I got in the lacquer shop I nearly went crazy! The dishes, furniture, everything is perfectly beautiful. I got a few things. Had the tailor make me another skirt – a dark green wool – on the pattern of my skirt to my navy suit! Also bought a piece of black heavy silk for a dress, sometime later on.

Somewhere along the way I picked up a swell cold which settled in my throat! Wednesday night I sang for the communion service. My throat was so tight then I could hardly do anything. Thursday I felt rotten and it kept getting worse. We had Missions (Am. Board) Meeting all day and the Thanksgiving dinner that night so I stuck it out. Dr. Dyer wouldn't let me go back to Ingtai on Friday with the rest of the "gang" so that's why I'm still around here! I'm going up Tuesday A.M. with Brewster Bingham (Frances B's husband). I can't travel alone because I can't talk with people! It's such a helpless feeling having to depend on someone to get me around!

Thursday night 27 of us sat down to roast goose and all the fixings – even to squash pie. We had a gay time. Mr. Christian was toast-master and he sure brought out some rare stories! He reminds me very much of Uncle Bill Buckhout – both in looks and talk – he even has a poor eye.

Friday I spend all day in bed and was much better for it. Yesterday I went out and shopped with Lyda Houston! She has just come back from furlough. Brought a grand new Zenith radio on which she gets marvelous reception! It was a treat to hear it. Everyone here has radios, but not very new ones so reception is rather poor. We have to use the short-wave but get London, Berlin, and San Francisco, Manila & Hong Kong are the more common stations tuned in.

I didn't realize we were so "countrified" in Ingtai until we got down here where they have telephones, electric lights, and radios! I heard some good music on Bishop's new electric orthophonic!¹ It's a marvelous instrument. Helen and Arthur & I dropped in Thursday afternoon so he played a few new records he'd just gotten in Shanghai! I have ordered a camphor box to be made, etc – He is head of the Christian Herald orphanage here – they make (by hand) any kind of furniture that anyone wants – it's perfectly beautiful.

It's been grand being "civilized" for a few days and seeing everyone again. Helen & I will probably come down in February during our vacation. After that time we hope we'll have our own radio at Ingtai.

¹ The Victor Orthophonic Victrola was the first consumer phonograph designed specifically to play "electrically" recorded disks. The combination was recognized instantly as a major step forward in sound reproduction. [Andre Millard. *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound*. Cambridge University Press.]

Such news from Europe! Poor Finland!¹ What is the world coming to!

By the way, did you get a radiogram dated November 28th or 29th? Didn't want to frighten you. It goes from Foochow to Manila to Boston. Now, can't you make some connection with Boston through Holyoke? You could mail a message to Boston and have it sent to me – that is, send it to the amateur operator who sent you the message from me, if you got it!! This is all free ya'know!! I'd get the news a day after it arrives in Foochow!!

Well, so much for all that goes on here at present. Back to Ingtai and kerosene lamps!

Much love to all,
Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
Dec. 12, 1939

Dear Mama:

I feel as though I should still be saying Merry Christmas and Happy New Year since it hasn't arrived as yet but will be well past when you receive this. While in Foochow I had a dandy letter from Helen. She said that you and she had written two weeks previous to her Bridgeport letter, but I haven't received those letters yet! That's the way mail comes. We'll sometimes get a batch of mail from America within 6 weeks of mailing there, then next day we'll get mail that's 2 months or 3 months old! Anyway it's good to hear from you whenever it comes.

How are you, anyway? Are you still running a hotel?² I assumed from Helen's letter that Hat and David are in New Bedford this winter. Is David teaching?

By the way, how's the new furnace working out? Yesterday we finally got our stove up in the dining room! We've had some quite cold mornings, but if the sun is out it's very warm in the middle of the day. An upriver wind, though, can be darned cold. Really, this seems a lot like New England, especially here in Ingtai. Foochow is much more damp and raw. Even some of the trees have turned beautiful colors – mostly shades of red. Helen says it must be in my honor! What thicket there is is mostly pine, and scraggly at that. The camphor trees do not color up. There is a kind of maple which has turned and makes the hillsides quite brilliant. The trouble is, there aren't many trees anyway, as compared to home.

Next summer there are quite a number of our mission going on furlough – eight, anyway, I guess. Of course there are some coming back, too. I will probably send a few things home – that is to be mailed in America by some of these folks so I'll be sure that they reach their destinations!

Last week Wen Shan gave a program for the benefit of soldiers. I think I said in Helen's letter that Helen S. & I had to perform. Well, we blacked up³ and dressed in our long bathrobes, bandanas and huge aprons. The crowd howled when they saw us! We sang "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" and followed up with "Shortn'in' Bread" in our best Negro fashion. By the third verse Helen & I looked at each other and just burst out laughing.

¹ On 30 November 1939 the Red Army crossed the Soviet-Finnish border with 465,000 men and 1,000 aircraft. Helsinki was bombed and 61 Finns were killed in an air raid that steeled the Finns for resistance, not capitulation. [history.com]

² Figuratively speaking, since many came for extended visits.

³ Blackface and portrayal of African Americans in this regard was common for comedy in that era; no disrespect was meant.

We simply couldn't go on, so we threw up our hands and tried Negro lingo until we got control enough to finish the song. Guess the crowd didn't know the difference; they simply roared. We even tried a bit of clog-dancing! We had more fun than the audience! While we were blacking up, some of the girls were scared to death – probably thought we were evil spirits! There is still some superstition even among our girls!

We are in the midst of rather frantic preparations for the Christmas programs! There certainly isn't much time for dissipation!

I'm enclosing a list of recipes I'd like to have – not that I'm doing any cooking! Would you mind sending them out sometime?

Lessons to plan for, so must stop.

Lots of love to you all,

Mary

Take care of yourself. How's the dam coming? Pop still there??

M.

Wenshan Girl's School, Foochow, Fukien, China

Dec. 21, '39

Dear Mama,

There are plenty of typewriters around this place so I might just as well learn to use one of them. It's a matter of finding enough time to spend on picking out a few well chosen words. Lucy's is quite a new one – and a very nice one, too. She doesn't type any more than I do, so neither of us can be blamed for ruining the thing!

This week has had its bad days. We have been getting our Christmas program in shape – or trying to. Believe me, even mission folks are not so agreeable when it comes to things of this sort. We all have our own ideas and it's just as difficult getting them to see those ideas as it is to get home folks to do so. The big trouble here is that we are so crowded that we cannot take care of everyone at the same time. With three schools to consider instead of one school it's a job to include all and still please all. Consequently, our Christmas pageant will be given twice on Christmas Day!! Sunday there are some thirty Foochow boys who will join the church. Sunday afternoon we will have communion service and the regular service in the evening. So the weekend is pretty full – what with school parties on Saturday [*sic*]. But – glory be! – we have Tuesday for recuperating.

New Year's we have the day, and our winter vacation starts January 27th. I think we have three weeks then – possibly more. I'm never quite sure what goes on at faculty meetings where Chinese is spoken exclusively. They could fire me right to my face and be none the wiser. Helen is a good interpreter so I do eventually find out what is going on. But the length of our vacation is still a bit of a mystery to me.

The teachers have been a bit gay this week, having small feasts. They know how much I like one of their dishes called "mien" so they ask me to eat with them when they are going to have it. It's a grand dish made with noodles, greens, onions, and pork. It certainly is delicious! I'll introduce you all to it when I come home.

Cold weather has really set in. We have the stove up in the dining room. When we'll get our fire place is not so easy to know. The man who was going to build it has gone home to dig his sweet potatoes and hasn't come back yet. We hope to get it before hot weather arrives! Maybe we are too optimistic. It takes forever to get things done anyway. The Chinese are slow but they are thorough, even when it comes to tearing up roads!

Last Saturday was a perfectly beautiful day. Helen, Miss Sun and I hiked to the top of a mountain – Flag Mountain – where we got a grand view of Ingtai and the surrounding hills and the river. It wasn't any higher than Mt. Tom, but the last of the climb was true pioneering – we blazed our own trail through a tangle of underbrush, crawling on all fours most of the way. But the view from the top was certainly worth it. On the way home we found a number of red berries – one kind being like good old New England bitter sweet.

I hope you have all read Ambassador Grew's speech of October upon his return to Japan.¹ It's worth your time.

What's going on over the radio these days? Still the same headliners? I'd give most anything to hear a little. You people don't realize how lucky you are! I'm not trying to preach, neither am I discontent. Living in another country makes one realize the many blessings we Americas have and don't appreciate!!!!

It's late and I need a bath!

Lots of love to you all, *Mary*

Dear family!

Please excuse carbon copies, but it helps a lot to make two or three at a time! November & December have come [*sic*] and "went" so fast I didn't even begin to think of birthdays. Bobby's, Nancy's, Jay's, and Bill's. Better luck next year!

Love – Mary

Wenshan School, Foochow, Fukien, China

Dec. 30, 1939

Dear Mama and family!

As I write the date for this letter, it just doesn't seem possible that 1939 is ended! What a year! It was so full of a variety of things that time passed all too quickly. But when I think of what I was doing last year at this time, with the thought of China never having even entered my head – it seems that was all very long ago! Time doesn't drag out here one single bit. It doesn't seem like December at all! The atmosphere is so different from New England. This month has been much like sharp October days at home – cold nights and mornings, but the sun is very warm when it finally breaks through the fog. As Gertrude said, we all go outside to warm up!

Christmas was very exciting and busy! It was almost impossible to squeeze in our own station Christmas celebration. I guess I told you all three schools collaborated in the program, Sunday & Monday. Sunday morning 40 young people joined the church. It was really a wonderful sight and most impressive. Just one girl in the whole lot. There was no sermon, just the baptisms, pledging and a lovely candle lighting service. The choir sang "O Holy Night" and did it surprisingly well. Sunday afternoon there was the communion service for those boys and girl who joined the church in the morning. "Yours truly" played for the

¹ A native of Boston, MA, **Joseph Clark Grew** was appointed Ambassador to Japan in 1932 by President Herbert Hoover. He and his wife integrated themselves well into Japanese society and continued to be well-liked in that country even after Japanese relations with the US deteriorated. On January 27, 1941, Grew secretly cabled the United States with the information, gathered from a Peruvian diplomat, that Japan was considering a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. He continued to serve as U.S. Ambassador until December 7, 1941, when the United States and Japan severed diplomatic relations after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

service – imagine! Really – I can almost read a hymn at sight now!! The organ is just a reed organ and pretty much to pieces but I manage. Sunday, however, we had a piano! Sunday night – Christmas Eve – Helen had all of us “foreigners” around her fireplace for buffet supper and Christmas tree. We had a grand time. Santa was certainly good! This paper Alice Tapley game me. Helen game me a lovely gold lacquer box I had admired in Foochow! I got a lovely hanky from Susan, and a cute 1940 calendar. Lucy gave me a hanky case, the Bingham a set of soapstone chess men – very nice. Now I must learn to play the game! My senior girls gave me enough material for a Chinese coat which I am having made up – padded with silk. (Helen says there’s nothing warmer!) The B’s also stuck in a colored pencil which I use for correcting papers, etc. We all gathered around the organ for carols after a delicious supper, including ripe olives!! Helen, Alice, & I really are not such a bad trio, either!

Monday – busy again. (Goodness, I went two days without combing out my curl, I was so busy – and bathe – why I couldn’t even think of it.) The Monday program was lovely! I wish you could have seen our “Mary.” She was a lovely sweet Chinese Christian girl – just beautiful. Susan had costumes for Mary and Joseph which she had gotten in Palestine! They are lovely. Helen worked like a dog getting the program together! We had three tableaux: I. The wise men seeing the star, II. The Shepherds hearing the news, III. The Manger scene and Adoration. It certainly was effective. Each school was responsible for one scene. Foochow had the Wise Men scene. Wenshan, the Manger Scene, and Dung Ing the Shepherd Scene. They even had little boys covered with fur coats for sheep – awfully cute – and a real fire in a flower pot for their campfire! My job was to seat some 200 students for singing! and still leave room in the church for the other students and townspeople. It all worked out beautifully!

I forgot to say – Sunday night the girls came out (Mon at 5 AM) to sing carols for us! The whole choir, in their cottas,¹ with torches and lanterns gathered under our windows and sang beautifully! It’s the first time I’ve been on that end of the caroling. They sang some in Chinese and several in English. I’d been trying to get them to sing a Bohemian carol but gave it up as a bad job. Well, if they didn’t sing it that night – and perfectly! I was so amazed!! About 1:30 that night boys from one of the other schools serenaded us with carols and fire-crackers (a good old Chinese custom!).

Monday afternoon I had my 4 senior girls up on my porch for tea etc. We played pick-up-sticks. You have no idea how clever they are in getting those sticks out! They enjoyed it a lot. Tuesday was a holiday – I slept all morning! During the afternoon Helen’s class had a picnic down by the river and asked me to join them.

Alice and I entertained the choir (boys & girls) at tea this afternoon. We played games, American style, but it was almost impossible to get them to do anything together! The girls stay in their little huddle and the boys in theirs! Finally, after two hours of doing things, they were quite able to look at each other without giggling or blushing! It’s different from the blustering American youth! Considering the fact that it is only within the last few years that Chinese women have been seen outside their homes, I suppose I ought not be surprised, but rather surprised that I can get them to sing together. Anyway, the party broke

¹ *Cotta* – a synonym for *surplice*, a loose-fitting cotton garment worn over outer clothing. In the Roman Catholic Church and in some Anglican and Lutheran churches, a short surplice reaching to just above the waist, worn by clergy, acolytes, and choristers.

up with the girls cheering the boys and visa versa and each group singing a school song. So we considered the party a success.

We've just received news of how Finland has been spending her Christmas in dug-outs! What is to come of this world? I suppose the next step is that she will be under Russian control! It's damnable! Hitler and Stalin ought to stick their heads in a bucket of water and keep them there – Göring, too!

While in Shanghai last September I met the Ned Munsons¹ – formerly of Foochow, but now doing Y.M.C.A. work in Shanghai. Mr. M. was one of the grandest men I'd ever met – a wonderful personality. We got word today that he had died very suddenly on his way inland. Mrs. M. had gone to Hong Kong with him and had stayed their while he went into the interior! A great loss to China! He was one of the pillars of the Y.M.C.A. refugee work here. The Beards and I had dinner with them in their home in Shanghai. Their children are in America.

Must close. Papers to correct. Reading to do.

Love, *Mary!*

¹ Edward Hartman Munson, D.D. Yale Divinity School, was YMCA secretary in China from 1910 to 1939, and in Foochow and Shanghai 1937 to 1938. His papers in the Yale Divinity Archives include correspondence and reports from YMCA representatives in China, including regarding situations in Shanghai and Nanking during Sino-Japanese war.

Chapter 2

1940

Despite the war raging in Europe, the year 1940 began with an air of optimism for Americans. The dire lack of the Great Depression began to ease as the demand for arms and supplies in Europe created jobs and incomes rose, giving a boost to the economy. America's farms in its major crop-producing heartland began to recover from the Dust Bowl of the 1930s as the rains returned in 1939, and a general sense of hope for the future pervaded the country. The lively sound of jazz and the big band era filled the radio waves. Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Artie Shaw, Rosemary Clooney, Bing Crosby and others bolstered the era with their music and movies like *Gone with the Wind*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Pinocchio* gave the people a break from the war.

In Europe, however, the war escalated. While insisting on a policy of isolationism, the United States had been aiding Britain and France against Axis aggression. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to a third term and, while he insisted that the United States would not send its army to fight, he continued to prepare Americans for a conflict he believed was inevitable.

In China, the year opened with a massive Japanese counterattack in Shanxi Province to free the Japanese 36th Division. In Finland, the Russian offensive was halted only to be followed later by heavy Russian air attacks. In Belgium, plans for *Fall Gelb*, a major offensive in the Ardennes to surround Allied units, were found aboard a downed German plane. Later on, captured German documents revealed plans for the invasion of Scandinavia, France, and the Low Countries. Food rationing began in the United Kingdom, and the *Entente*, as the Allies were then known, continued to feel the pinch of German aggression despite their superior forces.

The German U-boat (from the German *Unterseeboot*, or “under sea boat”), first used in World War I and forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles, became a major component of warfare in the Atlantic, specifically targeting the mid-Atlantic to restrict the flow of supplies from America. They stalked the seas in “wolfpacks” to counter the development of radar and sonar. “The only thing that really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril,” British Prime Minister Winston Churchill commented after the war.

For missionaries in China, communications were slow and sporadic. A “pal” in Foochow supplied information as best he could, but it was transmitted in printed form via foot-courier or by word of mouth. Some communications came from family in the States via public radio stations, but it pertained to family news only, and even that was heavily censored. As for Mary, her concern for world affairs was expressed in many letters, but her main concern was to report progress in the school. Her enthusiasm for teaching, her

desire to convey the similarities between the young people of China and the youth of America, and her admiration for the Chinese people continued to be her main theme.

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien
China

January 1, 1940

My dear Mr. Manley:

I have just sent a package of letters to the Christian Endeavor. These letters were written by my Senior I class, and they're very anxious to hear from them. Though they are senior high school girls, they are the age of sophomore girls at home, and for that reason I sent them to the high school group. I do hope some of the girls will (and boys too) want to answer them. As many of them said they would like snapshots of those who answer, and my girls will send their pictures in their next letters. Well, I'm hoping for the best, but just at present it is quite difficult to get pictures developed. Nevertheless, I know the girls here would be thrilled to have pictures of American students.

On the whole, most of these girls are good students! They are continually asking what girls at home do, especially at school and in the church. It would mean so much more to them to hear directly from some at home. It takes on the average of two months for American Mail to get through to us! At that rate, my girls can't expect any answers until April or May.

We had such a grand Christmas out here! Christmas Sunday, 40 students joined the church here in Ingtai! It was most impressive. The choir sang "O Holy Night" (the French carol) and did it beautifully, if I do say so! Monday's program was the pageant – three tableaux, I. The Wise Men, II. The Shepherds, and III. The Manger scene and Adoration. It was carried out realistically, even to a real fire for the shepherds to gather around! Ingtai had never seen anything like it before! Many people came to see it and were duly impressed. All three schools participated in the program, including carols, all that we could squeeze in! To many people here, a program like that is just another "show" such as they have in their temples, but Monday, both congregations (night & morning) were much impressed with it.

Christmas eve, the Wenshan girls serenaded us under our windows with carols, both in English and Chinese – it certainly was grand. It's the first time I've been on the receiving end of Carols! It was really 5:30 Christmas morning when they came – cold and foggy. They wore their cottas and carried lighted torches and lanterns, in true caroling spirit. It was a beautiful sight watching them winding down over the hill. It was much the same, and yet very different from New England Christmas. The weather was probably the big difference, being much like October weather at home!

New Year's Day has been warm all day, really hot in the sun. The schools have been holding an athletic meet – racing, basket ball and volley ball being featured. I didn't stay for results! Even in this country place there is so much going on and so many ways to turn that quite often we can't stay to see a thing through!

It's been so warm that we "fernners" had our New Year's Day dinner out on the rocks by the river. I've been warned about the season ahead, cold and rainy, so every chance we get now we go out and literally bake in the sun. It's so damp when it's rainy!

1939 certainly was full of surprises and wonderful things. Last year at this time I would have thought anyone simply crazy who would have told me I'd be in China this year – 1940. And I certainly haven't regretted a moment of my being here. What I do regret is that I can't do all the things I'd like to do – one is to get closer to the girls. We've had picnics and hikes – in fact we do every chance we get – but the time there is so short! One difficulty is in not knowing the language, I think. Though they all can speak and understand quite a lot of English, they still feel a bit embarrassed and find it quite difficult to express themselves. Helen Smith speaks both Mandarin and the Fukien dialect and gets along beautifully with them. She's just exactly the right kind of person in her position. China could stand many more such people, any mission field could!

Mission work looks pretty dark at times, especially when you see half starved, half naked people shuffling along the dingy dark streets of the city. But it's certainly worth while. There's quite a distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian; even the poorest Christian seems to have the desire to make the best of what he has – his clothes may be poor but they're clean and patched. Their faces are bright and smiling. The others have such a fatalistic attitude – it's not "I don't care" but "I can't do any better."

Well, there are many problems – sometimes it seems quite overwhelming – but this work certainly is worth while. Would that some of our American politicians could live in a mission station for a few months – what a different U.S. we'd have! The U.S. is o.k., but how much better it could be, and how it could improve the whole world!

Paper and ink giving out – best to stop – My best to Mrs. Manley –
Sincerely, *Mary F. Buckhout*

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien, China
Jan 9, 1940

Dear Ab:

I'm afraid these are belated birthday greetings! But they are my best wishes for a happy birthday, anyway. Time since Thanksgiving has gone so much more fast that things are on top of me before I realize it!

We can hardly believe that since November 26th we have had perfect weather – no rain – all bright sun shine – a few cold days. Since Christmas it has been quite warm. I'm being told repeatedly that this weather won't last. We'll be having a month or more of rain soon! How is it at home? Any snow? I probably won't know until my Life comes or the Time magazine!

News comes to us a little more "on time" now, a pal in Foochow keeps us posted on the world in general. Nothing looks very hopeful. It seems to me things are just smoldering for a big bang up sometime soon. It must 'strike home' to have a naval battle not so far down the coast!¹ Nothing much happens here. Foochow has alarms and warnings constantly, but so far nothing more, thank goodness!

We're coming to the end of the first term's work here at school. Vacation begins the 27th and lasts through the 18th of February. Like as not it will rain about that time. Traveling then is simply frightful. The ground is of a red clay material that is darned slippery, sticky and messy. It doesn't take much of a rain to make walking practically impossible. Since that

¹ During the second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945) several naval battles were fought along the coast of China and inland. Without more specifics it is difficult to say which this was.

is the only reliable means of transportation we have in the sticks, the best place to stay is at home! Whether or not we go to Foochow still remains to be seen. One of the 'male faction' of the colony has planned a dress up party – which means a good time and undoubtedly some grand music for which I'm starving! He has a marvelous up-to-the-minute electric machine which is attached (as he wishes) to the radio amplifier – and – some new records he got recently in Shanghai. That makes up the Foochow interest at the moment.

Helen wants to have a house party here anyway before going to Foochow! Looks like a riotous time for the Ingtai station! She's a dabster!¹ If she goes home next summer I'll be lost! If and when she goes to the U.S.A. she'll certainly make a call at South Hadley sometime during her furlough, so show the gal a good time. She's simply dandy!

There's a typhoid case in town. Lucy has been spending the last few nights with the girl since there is no nurse available, or even a housewife who can spare the time. It's quite serious – one of the students at the Ingtai school. We're hoping for the best.

This country could use more doctors and nurses. So many of the Chinese doctors have had to enlist that it's made them pretty scarce around here. There never were enough anyway. Agriculturalists and some good engineers would sure help out, too!

Well, a full day ahead tomorrow, as is every day.

Much love to you all, and many happy returns of the day to you.

Love, *Mary* –

P.S. Had nice Christmas card-letter from Aunt Helen [Govier].

M.

78 S. Allen Ave.
Pasadena, Cal.
Mrs. Albert T. Buckhout
South Hadley, Mass.
Jan. 11, 1940

Dear Mrs. Bockhout [*sic*]:

I received your letter along with eight others and will be glad to take them to your daughter. No package has arrived. Yes the China people do seem like a big family. Here in this region we have quite a large number of ex China people and we have many happy get-togethers.

My boat did not come into Los Angeles this trip so I am going to San Francisco tonight to get aboard in the morning. The ship does not go to Shanghai this trip so will have to find another way to get over to Shanghai from Japan. I will be glad when this trip is over. My family will stay here in Pasadena for the present. The two boys are old enough to look out for themselves (20 and 21) but the two girls (15 and 17) need their mother for a couple years longer. We have not yet decided how long we will be separated but until the summer of 1941 at least.

It will be a pleasure to meet your daughter and so add one more sister to my family. Some years ago one of our WOMED secretaries in Boston commissioned me to take as my

¹ *Dabster* – a skilled person

avocation the pleasurable task of making the single ladies on the field think that some one besides God and their mother loved them.

Cordially yours,
RW McClure

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien
China
Jan 14, 1940

Dear Mom and family:

It certainly feels queer to be writing 1940. The 30's are past! And one half of the first month is gone! This week and next finishes up the first term at school. It doesn't seem as though I've been here all that time!

Helen and I have talked and talked about what we are going to do during vacation. We planned earlier to go to Ganhow where her sister is, then found that Eunice is coming down to Foochow. Our next plan was to go there, but it's such a trip! No one looks forward to it with any relish. So Helen's latest, as I told Ab, is to have the gang come up here for a house party, which would be loads of fun. We hope they can all come. We can have picnics, hikes, etc, go rafting on the river and enjoy life in general! Here's hoping! I would like to go down to Foochow, if only for some music!

Today I was ranting because the choir didn't show up at church until 2 minutes before the service was to begin. Nothing ever starts on time here, anyway – it's Chinese custom – so I wasn't worried. The minister carefully told me the order of service etc. (thro' an interpreter – Susan) and finally the choir straggled in. Service started, processional, call to worship and response, etc – then immediately after the Bible reading, he launched forth in a long drawn-out sermon – no offertory, no anthem – just the last hymn & recessional! No matter how carefully we have planned, the service is never twice alike! Well, variety is the spice of life. Compensation: we are at least one anthem ahead on next term's music! We're working on "Send Out Thy Light" and Brahms "O Lord of Love Compassionate." I'm going to start them on the Halleluia Chorus when we get the music from school in Foochow. I doubt that we'll have it ready for Easter. School starts the 19th of February and Easter comes the 24th of March, giving us only a month, which isn't very much time.

I've started Chinese lessons (Foochow dialect) with the office secretary, an hour each morning, just conversational Chinese. Hope to be able to get around myself, to buy etc and talk with the villagers. I understand a number of expressions and words, but can't remember them to speak them myself.

Yesterday I had a Christmas card and note from Julia Dickinson! I was so surprised and pleased. She had seen the announcement of my appointment in the Mt. Holyoke quarterly.

I'm going to write Boston this week and have them deposit some money for me at home so I can draw on it there for things like Alumnae dues etc. I'll have a check sent to papa for the 10 smackers I borrowed in the summer and money for my alumnae dues (2.00) and my diploma (7.00). You probably won't hear from this money until April or May.

My insurance policy has been taken care of, had a notice of it last month. I'm going to add to that next year!!

Helen's father hasn't been very well for the past 6 weeks – cold and sinus trouble. We were worried about him, but he's much better and gaining some. He's been up for sometime, but gets tired easily. He's most interesting. He has, I couldn't say, how many youngsters he's putting thro' school – "his orphans" – for that's what they are. Kids who have been taken off the street and put in the primary school. He keeps people busy making warm clothes for them. The kids themselves learn to knit sweaters and mittens out of bits of yarn. He's very fond of the little tikes!

By the way, there were some very good pictures of the church taken Christmas Sunday – of the service – showing choir and part of the congregation. When mine come I'll send them on home. The church really looks as though it were in much better shape than it really is. Wait until we have it all redecorated!

The young missionaries who are coming out to take Mr. Smith's place here are also named Smith (both are Edwards, too). We have their picture and they are grand, energetic looking people. They come next summer.

Did I tell you my Reader's Digests are coming through and I enjoy these immensely.

The rainy season hasn't started yet. We think every day that rain will come, it's threatening now; when it does come it will be wet. The river is so low now that boats have great difficulty in navigating. The gardens are quite dry; we really need it. The plum trees have started to blossom. We still pick roses, though some of the bushes are resting now. Mrs. Christian, in Foochow, has perfectly beautiful roses – lovely white ones, tea roses, red ones – all kinds and a great many, too. She also has beautiful chrysanthemums.

Well, there are papers waiting to be corrected and lessons to be prepared so I'll run along. Hope you are keeping yourself in good condition and enjoying life a bit!

How's Pop this winter? Hope, too, the furnace has proved to be a success and economical. Are prices any higher? Coal, for instance – do European conditions make higher living costs?

Give my love to everyone – and write soon & often!

Much Love,
Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien
China
Feb. 1, 1940

Dear Mama:

Your Nov 17th letter came Jan 27th. And a notice of a package in Foochow! Have no idea who it might be from, but it's there and I can hardly wait to find out all about it. Helen's sister Eunice was to bring it up to me, but she came earlier than we expected so she didn't get our note. Helen has 2 or 3 packages waiting for her – so – they are coming through, slow but sure. I'm lifting my ban on packages – send anything you want to!!

The Radio Guides came thro' in 5 weeks! Gee, was I glad to have them. It's almost as good as hearing the programs! There's been so much added to them! The short-wave information etc will come in handy when we get our radio.

Vacation is in full swing. So far I haven't accomplished much in the way of work, or preparation for next term! Helen's planned house party didn't exactly materialize because people couldn't seem to get together. Eunice came and Merlin Bishop – swell guy – so we

had 3 days of “tearing around” Ing tai! We hiked and we had a dinner party. Sunday I spent the whole day at Helen’s – dinner and supper. Merlin left Wednesday to go back to Foochow. Eunice, Helen and I will probably go down on Monday next. Merlin is having a formal, if you please – at his house. I’m scared to even try to get into my evening dress. This Ing tai air agrees with me all too well. Fortunately it’s stretchy material. I’ll be in Foochow nearly 2 weeks; school opens the 20th so all my work must be finished in the next 3 days. I’ve been trying to find Glee Club and choir music etc. Most of my music has to be copied; there aren’t enough copies of anything and music is one of the “untouchables” just now.

Alice had such good luck with her pig. We’ve had scrapple¹ which was delicious, and elegant sausage. The smoking of the hams and bacons takes three weeks, so it’ll be some time before we can have those. We never ate such dandy roast pork! It just melted in our mouths.

Here it is, February 1st, and the temp today is all of 60°, I’m sure. While the sun was out I didn’t even need a sweater on! We still haven’t had our rain, which, I’m constantly reminded, will be almost unbearable when it does come. We had a picnic dinner out on the rocks by the river the other day. Today we took the table and food outdoors it was so fine. Each night it threatens to rain. We just make the best of this grand weather as long as we can. But the river is so low boats have great difficulty in going up or down.

Everybody is having a deuce of a time getting rice. There is plenty of it, but simply hoarded to force up the price. We send our coolies out to get it in the country and just before they reach town soldiers or the government decides to relieve them of their loads. It’s just like pulling teeth to get it in. Tomorrow Helen and I will go out to meet our load carriers bringing it in and escort them in to the school to insure our getting the rice. I knew I was cut
....

[The rest of this letter has been lost.]

Wen Shan School
Feb. 7, 1940

Dear Mama:

Would you believe it! Your air mail letter arrived here in Foochow yesterday, being mailed from So. Hadley on Dec 7th! So, don’t waste any more money on air mail letters... regular mail gets here sooner! Your letters are coming quite regularly now and it’s sure grand to get all the news from home.

Helen, her sister Eunice & their father & I came down from Ing tai to Foochow Monday, left about 6:30 A. M. arriving here at 6:30 P. M. – very good time! Helen & I are “camping out” at Wen Shan – very comfortably situated. Helen has a very nice suite – living room and bed room. We have breakfasts here in her living room (when we feel like it) and so far we have enough invitations out to lunch and dinner so we don’t have to bother about other meals! Helen has her Zenith Radio here – which is very good! Quite good music, but nothing like the programs at home. Get Manila, Hong Kong, Berlin & London quite easily. Sometimes tune in Treasure Island,² but not very successfully.

¹ *Scrapple* - traditionally a mush of pork scraps and trimmings (head, heart, liver, and other scraps boiled together and fat removed) combined with cornmeal and flour, often buckwheat flour and spices.

² General Electric established the first west coast radio station on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. W6XBE (later KGEI) began broadcasting on February 18, 1939. In Shanghai, Viola Smith sent press releases to the English and Chinese

Last nite Merlin Bishop had a dinner party for the younger contingent here in Foochow Missions. What a time. Many other “country cousins” were down for the winter vacation – from Yenping, Yankow, etc, where some of our schools have gone. We all “dressed” for it. There were 14 of us – 7 couples who sat down to dinner, including the U.S. Consul,¹ who came in a business suit! Awfully conceited and does about as he wishes but very earnest, however. He’s throwing a party over Friday night for us all – whoopee! More about that after it happens.

At Merlin’s, after a grand dinner, we danced the Virginia Reel until we couldn’t see straight. Then M. brought out his music – he has a perfect electric record player and beautiful records. We heard Yehudi Menuhin playing a Mozart concerto for violin & orchestra. Then had some of Kreisler and Heifetz, and Handel’s “Water Suite Music” played by the Philadelphia Orchestra and (getting late by that time) the 1st movement of the Cesar Franck Symphony – going to hear the rest later! What a gang! They’re all just swell, and Merlin makes a very gracious host – he’s swell. The Consul’s Radio Man² was there – very nice! I’ve tried several times to get radiograms thro’ to U.S. but somehow they haven’t worked! Connections with U.S. now are not too good; later in the spring they will be better. I’m going to try again. Not getting home until the wee small hours of the morning, Helen and I slept late then went into the city compound for lunch with Dr. Dyer. Before going there, however, we went to the P.O. to collect all our Christmas packages – Helen had four and I had one – a small fruit cake from Peg! Was I pleased and excited! So packages are coming through in as good time as letters are! Helen and I sampled the cake for our supper tonight. We’re now spending a quiet evening at home (!) writing letters, trying to get caught up etc. before next semester begins!

This afternoon I went curio hunting with Hazel Atwood (head of nursing at the Mission Hospital). She’s a grand one to go with—what fun. I’m getting more stuff! Mrs. Beard has a group of women who do beautiful work on grass linen³, much better than you can find in any of the stores at home. I’m going to have some ordered for the in-laws and out-laws, but laud knows when I’ll get it home. I may not be able to until the time when I come home. I know I’ll have to hire a freighter when I do come home!

I’m riding Eunice’s bike while here in Foochow. Much better than depending upon rickshaws to get us (or me) around! It’s also much better for the waistline.

Must write more letters tonite, so I’ll hang up. The choir stationery is grand – how thoughtful of them.

Love to all ~ *Mary*

newspapers and local radio stations, and distributed copies of the station’s program schedule. It was the first American radio signal that could be heard across the Pacific. [theradiohistorian.org]

¹ Robert S. Ward, Consul for the United States in Foochow from 1938 to 1940, then transferred to Hong Kong, where he remained until after the Japanese occupation. His unpublished report, *Hong Kong Under Japanese Occupation: A Case Study in the Enemy’s Techniques of Control* detailed the occupation for the Far Eastern Unit of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 1943.

² H. Vilroy McVay. This is the “pal” in Foochow who furnished information. This is Mary’s first mention of the man she would marry in 1941.

³ *Grass linen*: Also known as ramie, grass cloth, or China linen, made from the fine, strong fibers of the inner bark of the grass cloth plant (*Urtica nivea*), a species of nettle which grows in Sumatra, China, and Assam.

Wen Shan School, Foochow , Fukien, China
Feb 16, 1940

Dear Mom & Pop:

Still in Foochow. Our school opening has been delayed for various reasons. One problem is getting enough rice for the term. There's plenty of it, but it's not on the market, it's an awful mess, especially when we know there's plenty but people won't sell it. This crazy government (local) is making plenty from it, too!

Since all our students and teachers are in Foochow at present, we've decided to put on a program for alumnae and families of students. That takes a lot of work, and to have it done well we are taking more time to do it than usual. The program comes off next Tuesday night. So far we've had a bit of trouble getting people together because of almost hourly air raid warnings.

For the past three days we've started the morning off with a siren. About an hour later 2 or 3 planes fly over, going into the interior of the province. As suspected, they are bombing at government headquarters which has moved inland. These are the first planes I've seen since arriving in China. It is a mighty queer sensation to have them zoom right directly over head when it was known they were loaded, and 'mistakes' are so easily made! Today – this morning – three groups of 3 have gone over, the siren is still on, that is, after the morning and the planes go over (up river) no one is allowed on the streets until the 'all clear' is sounded. Since the planes haven't come back yet everything is at a standstill as far as getting anywhere is concerned, and it's noon already. One group just flew over on their way back.

Helen and I have invited several of our 'good neighbors' to a Chinese feast at a very fine restaurant here. We're supposed to be there now, but we can't go until the rest of the planes come back, darn it. And we're both starved. Maybe there won't be any feast after all! I'm getting hardened by degrees. The first few days we had just siren warnings, then planes began appearing. They have increased in number and frequency, so, I suppose, one of these days I'll see action. There comes another group back now – I can hear them in the distance!

Being spring, there's a general feeling that things will start humming again. All we can do is sit tight and wait. I feel very calm and cool about it all—very safe, in fact—so don't for goodness sake, worry about me. There's no point in their bombing Foochow and I doubt that they'll last out long enough to attempt invasion. There's me own sentiments. Hope the censors enjoy the comment! The paste they use is lousy and they make a mess of my mail!

Night life has slowed down a bit for the first part of this week, since we're getting ready for that program. Tonite, however, (here come those yellow jackets, right over head) Merlin has invited us to a piano concert.

Saturday.

Well, between sirens we got to the restaurant and had a marvelous meal – seven of us. Mr. & Mrs. Christian, Donald Hsueh, Miss Sun, Lydia Houston, Helen & I. Dr. Dyer & Hazel Atwood were supposed to come but couldn't make it.

The concert, though poorly played, was very interesting. Bach (Ave Maria) Grieg, and Beethoven: Moonlight Sonata & the 5th Symphony—all piano. It was all familiar and enjoyable to that extent, but the man isn't much of an artist. I came down the coast with his wife & 2 cute youngsters. He is German and she has a German father and Chinese mother. Her family were the aristocrats of Foochow in the good old days. Their estate is tremendous

and quite beautiful. The house is a massive affair, like a European diplomatic estate – columns, large rooms, etc. Quite impressive, but most of the place is empty now!

After the concert Eunice, Helen & I were invited over to the consulate for dancing the rest of the evening. Helen declined the invitation since her foot is troubling her some. Eunice & I went, had a grand time, escorted home by consulate [*sic*] & his secretary!! I spent the night with Eunice over on south side. Just got back here a short time ago – between sirens. Eunice goes this p.m. up country. I'm going to try to get down to see her off. Tonite, going over to "Writers Club" in the city compound – supper, too. Plenty of work waiting. Must run along.

Lots of love to you both,
Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien, China
Feb 24th, 1940

Dear Mama and Pop:

Another full week has ended, and I'm still in Foochow. Latest plans now are that we will be going back to Ingtai about March 1st. All schools have had to delay opening because of the rice situation – it's almost impossible to get – and frightfully expensive when it can be gotten.

Everyday the rice shops are opened, they are mobbed with people, shouting and pushing and climbing over one another to get a bit of rice before it's all gone. They have to bar the rice shop doors to keep the stampede out. The people thrust their little bags – with their money in there – through the bars to be filled and plenty of sand goes in with the rice to help make up the weight. Talk about rackets. This rice situation is something. Several of the shops soak the rice & sell it wet—anything to cheat the people! Several times I've had to push my way through these crowds! I don't know what keeps them from rioting. Perhaps it's because they all know that the soldiers are fed first – that is, they're the most important class in the country now – and too much cannot be done for them. For all their qualms, these people are very patriotic.

Well, I said the week has been a full one—mostly socially for me. The radio operator at the Consulate – Bill – has been most attentive in giving us a good time, good eats – all in all we (and I) have been having lots of fun.

The school finally put on their two programs Friday night and Saturday night, so between times, Helen and I were working on 'sets' and lighting and one thing or another. We had a lot of fun doing that, too. Helen is a dabster when it comes to anything! We wanted awfully to go to the 'Anti-Cob'¹ (cabaret) Meeting – a community (foreign) social held every month. They have tea and a program. But we couldn't work it in this time.

Tonite Bill is having us over at his house for supper after church. On 'south side' (of the city) there is an Anglican Church which has a very nice service Sunday evenings. That is where most of the community people go, it being the only English service. It's a very attractive little stone church, like a bit of England transplanted.

¹ The Anti-Cobweb Society: "A handful of unusual Americans and English, they believed that to know, or to try to know China in all her aspects, was an essential prerequisite of any form of good relations with the Chinese. They felt that it was more important to learn before they taught, to know before they condemned or offered alternatives." [Mackenzie-Grievens, 1959, "A Race of Green Ginger," pp. 129-131, posted on Amoymagic.com, February 24, 2009 by Bill Brown of Xiamen University]

Mon. A.M.

Interrupted last night for church! Had nice supper and hymn sing over at Bill's after church – Helen, Merlin, Bill & I.

This afternoon we're to play tennis at the Foochow Recreational Club if the rain holds off. Queer about this weather – it's been very mild and sunny for two days at a time, then it clouds and threatens to rain, but nothing happens. Just as well – we're doing so many things out of doors these days – picnicking, even teaing, bicycling and hiking.

Did I tell you that Merlin took me for a ride on his motorcycle? It's the only one in Foochow at present. Funny I'd come all the way to China to have my first motorcycle spin – it was fun – he tried his best to scare me, but I hung on!

Mon. P.M.

Just back from tennis, Helen, Bill, Loren (Methodist minister) and I—lousy on my part as usual but fun. You must think that all I do is tear around. Well, that has been about it this vacation, but work is ahead.

Now we're not sure that we can go to Ingtai on Friday. This time it's a question of boats—life sure is full of variety out here. You can't tell one day to the next what is going to happen!

This is my last sheet of writing paper – all the rest is in Ingtai, along with most of my clothes. I expected to stay about 10 days when I came down, and so brought nothing extra. My stockings have all gone through—if I stay much longer I'll have to send up for a few things.

Tonite Miss Sun is cooking a special dinner for Helen and me. She's very capable for one who is principle of a school and who comes from a wealthy family.

This sure is a helter-skelter letter and most incoherent if I'm not running out for tennis on a date, I'm running out of ink, so here ends my spiel.

Hope you both are o.k. and enjoying life as much as I am.

Mary

I'm sold on China, particularly some of the people! -M

Chapter 3

Bill

Born the sixth of seven children to James Nichoelsen McVay and Nancy Maude Ester in Hudson, South Dakota, on April 27, 1914, Harley Vilroy “Bill” McVay left the family farm in South Dakota for a career in the United States Navy.

“His family called him ‘Vilroy,’ which became ‘Bill’ by his schoolmates,” Mary wrote in her journal. “He was active in sports – baseball and basketball in particular, and he was the pitcher for the Hudson town team that defeated most of the other towns around that part of South Dakota. He was closest to his brother, Wayne, who used to read the funnies to him. Finally one Sunday, Wayne said, ‘Here, you read them,’ and so Bill learned to read.

“Two of his brothers were ministers, one uncle was a fairly wealthy farmer. His aunt taught at a university. After high school there was no money available for college, although Bill could have attended U.S.D. in Vermillion on an athletic scholarship. He worked for his brother for a year hauling road fill. There was no future in this so he joined the Navy in 1933 and went to San Diego for classes in communications. He learned both U.S. and universal codes, finishing the course short of the regular required time.

“Bill served aboard several ships, arriving in Shanghai harbor in 1937. He watched the Japanese invasion of Shanghai and because he had an 8mm movie camera he filmed it. Those pictures are the only movies of that invasion; they were taken to the U.S. Navy archives by his son, Peter, Cmdr. U.S.N.

“During the Chinese New Year the schools were all closed for one month so I went down to Foochow with Helen Smith for the holiday. The American Consul, Bob Ward, had a dinner party for us Americans and that’s when I first met my Bill.”

“He was the first one who ever really paid any attention to me,” she said during an interview. “The first man. Oh, I dated people and they were all right. But he paid attention to me. He liked me, and I had to learn to like him. Before, I would have a fascination with some guy and we might have a few dates. It was all on me, I was ready to do most anything. With Dad it was... the situation was different. He just wanted to do things for me and do what I wanted to do. And I found out afterwards there were many things that I did he didn’t like. I mean, he didn’t really dislike, but he really didn’t

approve of but he sort of let me go along with them.”

“Bill was very interesting to me,” said her sister, Harriet. “He talked about his life in South Dakota and how he felt about things when he was that age. He was like a brother to me. He really and truly, hung on to his wife. He just wanted to be there and be with her. He knew a good thing when he saw it.”

“He didn’t know what he was getting into,” said Mary, laughing.

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

March 4, 1940

Dear Mama:

Golly, what a wow of a mail I got tonight – 18 letters and Christmas notes! It was perfectly marvelous! Mr. Mc [McClure] just arrived in Foochow and brought a swell bunch. I couldn’t believe my eyes. The radiogram I sent in November was a bit curt as I remember, but you know by now that I’m getting mails quite regularly. I’m so far behind in correspondence now that it’s not even funny! Heard from Felix, Ruth Julow – Christmas & Birthday greetings! – Ruth Selkirk, Randy, several Northfield girls, Auntie Caddie,¹ with her account of Marg’s coming wedding and 2 swell pictures of Betsy. Mary E. wrote, too – Doris, Bill & Teddy, Hat and David, and several others. My, I was thrilled – and the Kyans!

I just got back up here from Foochow Saturday night, March 2, after 4 glorious weeks of a social whirl, as I said before!! You’d better not send this letter around, on account of it’s very personal.

Mom – I’ve gone and done it, fallen head over heels in love and that’s all there is to it. Yes, it’s Bill – the old dear – radio operator at the Consulate! Funny, he feels the same way about me!! We’re just as far gone that you can’t see us for dust. We haven’t said anything to anyone, but from remarks and looks from folks there’s no need to say anything. You’d love him, too, Mom – he’s a dear. I feel as though I could conquer worlds, perhaps you’d like to know his name – H. Vilroy McVay, or Bill for short. He’s 4 years younger than I and that’s the rub. You see, he’s really a Navy man – on duty here – and will be until next March. Then he has to serve until the following August before his discharge. Now I want some advice – darn it – wish I could talk with you. He wants to study medicine, and far be it from me to stop him – he’s quite sure that he wouldn’t be satisfied otherwise. The mission folk here just think the sun rises and sets on him and they include him in everything. He’s just dear. Well, to get back to what I was talking about, we weighed the pros and cons. It will be 10 years before he’ll be in a position to practice. I’d wait to the end of time for him, but that isn’t being fair to Bill – he’ll be 36 and I’ll be 40 (my gosh!) and that’s hardly a propitious time to start raising a family!! We’ve discussed it all. I can’t feature life without him. He’s given me something to work for. I also feel that he depends on me now – to stand by him – thank God he does feel that way. Oh, what to do. It’s hard enough being here in Ing tai, knowing I can’t possibly see him until June.

¹ Caroline Reed Buckhout Edwards

You probably think I'm a factitious¹ soul but I never, never felt like this about anyone. Bill feels so sure of me. I haven't tried to keep anything from him – warned him in fact of my vicious temper – but he wouldn't be scared!

Now you wonder how I get any work done, or perhaps why I ever came out here! Work is not difficult; it's just that my heart and soul are in Foochow. With the new term just starting it's a bit hard. Well, what do you say – you're good if you can make anything out of this. We'll send you a radiogram as soon as conditions (atmospheric) clear up. Speaking of radiogram, I did not get Nate's. Maybe I will later.

Helen – the old dear – treated me royally on my birthday. I was still in Foochow. At breakfast she presented me with a new diary feeling quite sure I needed it! At noon she, Arthur, Bill and I went to a very grand club in Foochow for lunch – delicious Chinese food! There Merlin, the old dear, had a dinner party for us in the evening. Bill and I didn't know much that was going on!! We came back to the school and Helen made coffee for us. Bill gave me a jar of sandwich spread, bottle of cherries, box of candy, etc, so I was all set for the trip up river. I hadn't packed a thing and was leaving in the morning at 3 A.M. After Bill left, which didn't improve matters much, I packed and got an hour's sleep before starting the 5 mile trek to the launch. I never, never felt so all alone and blue in my life when the launch pulled away from shore. Things of the past weeks had been rushing through my mind. It was hard enough leaving home, but this was quite different! Well, I'm here and Bill's there. We've decided to work like the dickens!

Helen doesn't come up until day after tomorrow. Her aunt came in with Mr. Mc, so she was staying to see her.

The mail I got has stimulated me into writing a million letters. Everyone was so swell! I feel quite guilty when such grand people like the Manley's, etc, write so encouragingly and appreciatively about the very little I've done so far. I must make myself worthy of their praise. Now I think I can do it.

Helen was so decent to me all vacation. I know I wasn't particularly helpful to her – I was really selfish. Now I could pick myself all over the lot for not being a little more self-sacrificing, she's such a peach, and far from blind! I probably looked like a sick calf when I left Sat A.M. – she wrote me a sweet note that very day. I knew then that she knew. I'm just biding the time till she gets back here. I've got to talk to someone!

Well, it's late and there's another day coming. Do you think I'm absolutely crazy??

Much love,

Mary

P.S. Haven't heard from Helen (B) yet, but expect I will soon. Had grand letter from Hat. Account of Christmas made me a bit homesick.

M.

¹ *Factitious*: not real or true; imaginary. The spelling of the word in the document is unclear, either fictitious or factitious, but neither is a word. "Factitious" is the closest word that makes sense.

In a letter dated June 2, 1940, Dr. Willard Beard wrote: “We are watching two couples at the game of “sparkling.” Is that an ancient word whose meaning you do not know? Mary Francis Buckhout who came out with us, now in Ing Tai receives a letter from Foochow every evening- watches for the mail carrier and meets him every evening and gets the letter so neither Helen or I will see it. Funny isn’t it? The other two are here in Foochow. Lots of love, Father”

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien, China
March 5, 1940

Dear Jean and Felix:¹

What a perfectly whopping mail Mr. Mc brought in to me, and many other letters that were not in his lot. They came to me here in Ingtai just a day after I’d returned from Foochow – 18 of them. I was so overwhelmed I couldn’t see straight. Now to answer a few! I also – some time ago (February) – received that grand bunch of letters from the Fellowship. I will answer that soon. I’ve been waiting to get a few pictures to send along with my answer. More about that later.

Yes, the sensors at Shanghai certainly do an excellent job. They ought to be very proud of themselves! Air mail seems to take longer than ordinary mail, but then I should pick when I’m really getting fairly regular mail now!

And Jean – I do hope your troubles are clearing up. Mama had written about it earlier and I wondered many times how you were coming along. Goodness, I don’t know what I said about my malaria attack, but I’m certainly none the worse for it now. Guess it was more than half homesickness! My clothes began to get tight immediately after I got on my feet – as you see. I’m not likely to fade out right away. While in Foochow this last time – 4 weeks – I rode a bicycle day and night, consequently clothes are loosening up again – whoopee!

Your letter and greetings and report of the church year just took me right back to South Hadley! Not homesickness, however! It was most encouraging and inspiring to read about the progress our church is making. All reports from home, including those outside the family, seemed tremendously enthusiastic about the work. I only hope I can hold up my end out here. Very often I’m afraid I lose sight of the responsibilities of such a job as this. I enjoy teaching ever so much, but I’m still ‘feeling’ my way, as it were. There are times when my classes must be frightfully cut and dried for the students, and then too late I wish I had approached the subject in quite a different manner. Trial and error is o.k. but it’s pretty hard on the students. Their favorite mannerism in expressing disgust is tsk-tsk – then I wake up!

We do have awfully good times together, though. We’ve been on several all day hikes to points of interest around Ingtai. We’ve picnicked together on the rocks down by the river. Soon we’ll start our swimming again! They all enjoy that so much. They’re not afraid to try anything. In January we – or rather the Magistrate of Ingtai held an athletic meet – all schools around here participated and believe me, there was some lively school spirit shown. The students really haven’t a very good idea of sportsmanship, but it will develop along with other things.

¹ The Rev. Felix Manley, pastor of the First Congregational Church of South Hadley at the time.

Our winter vacation was to have been but three weeks long. Because of the rice situation and boat difficulties it was extended to five weeks! Helen and I stayed in Ing tai for the first week, then went down to Foochow. We “camped” out at the school in Foochow and had a glorious time. Everyone treated us royally so the matter of getting meals just wasn’t considered. We were ‘out’ most of the time. The Consul more than put himself out to entertain us all. Many of the other mission folks refugeeing in the country were in the city at the same time so it was a regular ‘old-home’ week. Such fun – dancing (yes, we do that here!) – picnicking, hiking and bicycling – really I’ve forgotten how to work.

The American Board has a monthly prayer meeting followed by a supper (other than their weekly meetings). At the February meeting the topic for discussion was the stand that the Christian Church should take in this war. Is war ever justified? The comments were interesting. Some who profess to be pacifists felt that, in the case of China, war is justified. Others, the true pacifists – felt that there are ways of counteracting invasions other than fighting back by means of arms. What ways I can’t say. Would Finland have been better off if she hadn’t repelled the Russian invasion? A country with such a high ideal as Finland certainly won’t stay ‘down’ forever. It looks now as though she were breaking under the terrific strain. In the case of China, I can’t imagine any nation really conquering her completely. She is too clever. The war will set her back in some respects, but sooner or later she will absorb her invaders rather than being absorbed. Look at what she did to the Manchus¹ – I think she’ll do it again, though I probably won’t live to see it.

If I can get over the idea of world fellowship to one or maybe two students, I would rejoice! It certainly can’t be stressed too much.

If only the U.S. will refuse to fight! (Maybe I’m wrong!) She is in a good position to set an example by ‘clearing decks’ in other ways. It doesn’t look very hopeful with the defense program she has launched! I must say I’m not sure which side of the fence I’m on.

Only hope you can make something out of this very incoherent scribbling.

The weather? Oh yes! Yesterday we had torrents of rain. I thought surely we were in for our spring deluge, but today it has cleared considerably. It’s quite warm and very ‘springy.’ The plum trees have passed the blossoming stage, all the trees that shed their leaves have new green ones. There’s a definite spring odor in the air. You people at home will be having spring about the time you receive this letter. We’ll be sweltering by then, probably.

Thank you for your birthday greetings which were very much on time! And here’s a shipload of best wishes on your birthday – almost twins!!

With best wishes to you both and a ‘hello’ to David.

Sincerely,

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

March 11, 1940

Dear Mama:

I do hope you are being discreet about some of the information I’m sending home now and then. Glory – don’t send all my letters around – certainly not before they are

¹ Probably a reference to the Wuchang Uprising of 1911, which eventually led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China.

censored! Maybe you didn't get the last one, the wild tale about Foochow and its inhabitants – one in particular! If you have, you'd better keep it under lock and key! I'm really coming down to earth – that is I can work like furry now – but so far our relationship hasn't altered. Helen, poor dear, was quite worried and still is. Maybe I was a nut. If it weren't for her I'd probably be off the deep end now! Fortunately she returned to Ingtai in time to snatch me out of my dilemma. I see things in a more sane light, but there's something about him that makes me want to do everything in the world for him! But all I can say is it's a good thing I came back here when I did. It'll give us both a chance to cogitate! This is not ancient history, definitely not!

After nearly four days of hard, juicy rain the skies cleared today. My but the sun was a joy. Alice, Lucy and I immediately took advantage of the clemency and took our supper out on the rocks by the river! That's the chief blessing of this district – any spot down by the river is beautiful! And we all enjoy 'eating out!'

Sunday afternoon after church I went up to Helen's and had supper before her fireplace. It being so nice and cozy I was easily persuaded to spend the night there. She's just like a doting mother! Honestly there never was a person like her. It's a question yet as to what she is going to do in the summer, but if she's in China she's bound to go to Chung King, and I'm going with her! Otherwise she'll be home and I'll be on Kuliang.¹ There are some grand young folks in the Methodist Mission who will also be up there, so whatever I do there's bound to be plenty going on. Bill has to stay in Foochow, with the exception of a possible day now and then on the mountain. So I might just as well be in Chung King. Anyway, I'm not passing up any chance to travel in this country. The west lures me on – it really must be something.

Yes, Mom – there are things from the 5 & 10 I'd more than be glad to have. Once in a while it would be great if you'd send out small packages, and don't over evaluate them – the cost is plenty, otherwise the duty is terrific. But you can always stick in toothpaste, Arrid (deodorant) and darning cotton! If you really want to splurge, those little colored tea napkins go over big out here. I could use many more of them. We're always teaing.

By the way, with some one of the folks going home I'll send some real jasmine tea, and you can distribute it as you wish. I know Peg and Rena would like some! Just when these people will be going home is rather indefinite. It's very difficult to get sailings, but they expect to be leaving by the first of May & sailing from Shanghai about the end of the month. Helen's father and sister, Arthur, our treasurer and her husband, Fran & Brewster – golly it's going to be a regular cleaning out of the mission as far as I can see. If Helen goes too I sure will be lost!

Tues. March 12

This is getting to be a serial!

The weather was still grand this morning so we all had breakfast out by the river. We're just the fresh air fiends!

I do hope, Mama, that you are taking things easy! As if you could! After such a strenuous fall, you should. If you get the chance to visit anywhere, you just do it. Aunty

¹ Also known as Kuling or Guling. Some documents record "Mt. Kuliang, near Foochow". To escape the heat of the Yangtze during the summer months, foreigners fled to Kuliang on Mount Lushan. Kuliang provided a cool climate, villas, wooded hills, lakes and streams. Favored by missionaries, the town was noted for its churches.

Caddy wrote that Uncle Bill's foot was troubling him. Goodness, I hope it's not the same thing! Did I tell you he sent some corking pictures of Betsy – she's beautiful! Mary wrote me again, too! She's a cute kid. Speaking of Aunty Caddy, etc, brings me around to what I was about to say – if I were in your boots I'd hie-me to State College this summer. I suppose Papa's having or has had his vacation. Why doesn't he take one this summer? And both of you go out. There's no time like the present, says I, and that's going to be my motto for the rest of my life. If anything comes along that looks interesting, I'm going to do it!

Each day I get feeling more 'at home' in this country! Of course associations with the foreigners in Foochow makes a great difference. They're all such grand people, but there's something about the country, too, that gets me. As Helen says, 'there's something about the orient.' There's one bone of contention between Bill and me. I'm quite sure I want to come back to China. Bill thinks he doesn't. His associations with the Chinese have been quiet different from mine and we don't see them in the same light, but time will tell just how everything's to come out!

I feel like an old dowdy. Helen's aunt brought her a bunch of new sweaters and a beautiful knit skirt. She looks like a million. My clothes began to get tight before my stay in Foochow, there I lost a few pounds, thank goodness!

Doris writes that she is dieting again. I wasn't dieting (exactly) but plenty of exercise between meals took it off me! It's pretty hard to keep down up here in Ingtai. I don't get enough consistent exercise here except going up and down steps! Can't bicycle here, otherwise I would.

Well, I hear the mail man pounding on the gate – hope there's a bit of a scrawl from my old Bill.

Here's one of the pictures of our residence, at the N end of the school building. My room is just off the left end of the upper porch. I do most of my work out on the porch – it overlooks the whole compound and the river and is sunny most of the day now. Those bushes in front of the house (against it) are oleanders! Can you imagine them?

I'm trying to get caught up with my correspondence. The last batch of mail was so overwhelming I'm afraid it'll take me some time to answer it all.

Must run along now – it's getting late.

Lots of love to you all,

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

March 17, 1940

Dear 'fellowshippers':

It was sometime ago (!) that I received your package of grand letters and the pictures – such good ones of the church and parsonage. Was I surprised and thrilled! You have no idea the excitement there is here when 'home' mail arrives. For a few weeks it will come quite regularly, then we won't have anything for a month or so. Finally, when the censors have gotten around to pasting them up again, why we get a bunch all at once! It's a grand sensation having 7 or 8 letters arrive at once, but it's a little different story when it comes to answering! My last batch of mail was 18 letters. You couldn't imagine the squeals I let out! (Maybe you can, though.)

Well, to get back to your letters, you'll forgive me, I hope, if I answer them 'en masse.' I notice many new names among your members. I'm so glad, because that means new ideas and progress in your group. Then, too, I've heard since of the excitement of Dot and Don's wedding and Amy & Gordie's! Say, what are you people conducting anyway – a matrimonial bureau? My best wishes for good luck and happiness for them!

You asked what you could do – well – it's hard to say or it's hard to know where to stop saying! What this country needs is more of everything – more hospitals, doctors, nurses, agriculturalists, engineers, there's plenty of room for anyone who really wants to work, and it's thoroughly invigorating and inspiring work because the people are so responsive.

If you have money or can raise money, that would be the most beneficial of anything just at present. Exchange being what it is now, anywhere from 10-1 to 14-1. US gold goes a long way. Just now \$10.00 gold would bring \$140.00 Chinese! That \$140.00 would practically see a student through 4 years of high school or college prep! Imagine! Now what to do to raise that – here is one suggestion. Miss Helen Willcox of Holyoke (sister to the librarian) has written a play – "Dawn in the East" – centering about a school that has moved into the interior because of the war. It's really quite good and could be produced quite readily! It's a one act play and has very natural human touches about it. You can get it by simply writing to the Church Committee for Chinese Relief – N.Y. City. And it's free for the asking!

There are a number of students in our school who are very well to do and some are very poor. This term one of the girls decided she wasn't going to return. Her classmates found out that she had no money. They – 3 or 4 – having plenty, pooled their allowances and saw to it that this girl's expenses were paid. The girl thinks the school is giving her aid – she doesn't know that her own classmates have done this for her. That is the kind of spirit many of the students show. We have several girls who work for their tuition and board and room. Board is \$7.00 a month now – that being quite expensive – that is hardly more than \$.50 gold. So you see, any money that you could send would help out a number of people. As long as the future of the country depends on these present students, we can't do too much for them to raise their standards of living, give them a chance to pass on to the next generation the benefits of education. The good students are excellent – of course there are always the poor ones. They all have the warmest feelings for America and all of them want to visit or study in America. How I wish they all could. I think one or two of the girls in my classes probably will get to America! Several – I think 8 or 10 girls – are going to join the church Easter Sunday – next week. In the morning we will have a special baptismal service followed by the regular church service which we hope to have out of doors. Then they will take communion in the afternoon. The choir will sing special music – "Break Forth Into Joy" (Barnaby) and a Provencal Easter Carol "Three Men Trudging." One of the Foochow College teachers (Amer.) is going to play the violin and the Foochow College 4 piece brass band will play something. It's so exciting to be working up these programs. It takes a lot of work, but it certainly is worth it. I hope – I hope we can sing the Halleluia chorus at commencement!

It's nearly time for church now. Though I haven't said half what I'd like to – I'll save it for a later edition.

Do write me again – it's like a trip home to hear from you all.

Sincerely yours, *Mary F. Buckhout*

P. S. If you do send money, make the check out to me – *M.F.B.*

Ingtai
March 18, 1940

Dear Mama:

After having gotten your Jan. 3 letters, your Dec 14th came yesterday and the 26th came today! In time I'll probably get all of them. Felix's letter with all the church news came thru tonite too. Golly, it sure is good to have news from home – everyone has been so grand & thoughtful. Even the cleaning woman at the M.H.C. gym sent me a Christmas card (Mrs. Ramsey). I was so surprised! And your letters are just like a trip home! I had a streak of homesickness reading about Christmas at home and here it is nearly Easter! The Christmas program and Felix' recognition service gave me the shivers – the choir singing "The Blind Ploughman" must have been just about perfect!

It makes me feel a bit chagrined, seeing my name on the church calendar below Felix! It seems so very little and what I am doing is so little. I'm still so dependent on other people. If I'd had some real teaching experience behind me that would have taken the edge off my helplessness. But live and learn! But I'm afraid I'm doing it at the expense of the poor students! Another year I'll at least have some idea of what's supposed to happen. If Helen goes home I'll be lost. The poor girl has to hear everyone's burdens, as if she didn't have any of her own. Her father hasn't been any too well this winter. Now he has been confined to his room with rheumatics. If this raw, rainy weather would clear he'd feel quite good. We had 2 glorious days last week, really hot – so off came my winter underwear! Tonite we're hugging the stove – New England's got nothing on these changes out here! It's a wonder to me that some of these Chinese people last as long as they do! The kids run around with bare feet and bare hands sticking out, and they'll always wear a hat – sometimes two – and about 6 coats and they seem to live thro' it all! Rain and slosh, cold and heat. The sudden changes are enough to finish some people.

I was shocked to hear about Mr. Crocker's death! What will Elizabeth do? If she wasn't the strong wonderful character that she is I'd hate to think what might have happened! I'm ashamed to admit that I haven't written to her yet, but I will do that. This very week!

Do see Miss McElwain¹! It must be a frightful strain for her, but I know just how she'll take it. How can people stand those things? We all must go through it of course, and time and age, mellow us, but I get "on edge" sometimes -- things happen so suddenly! It takes something I'm afraid I haven't got yet! That makes me feel so inadequate in this work. Maybe I had given myself completely up to it. I'm lacking something and I think it may be unwillingness to let go entirely. I love it out here, I'm enjoying my work, some days I have grand classes, other days they're a flop! I'll have one grand choir rehearsal and the next one will be lousy. Yesterday, at church, the choir was rotten! And it can't be anyone's fault but my own! There again, the students have to suffer! What the Easter music will be like, I dare not even think!

True, my attention at the moment is divided, which probably, or rather, isn't a good thing. You've probably guessed that already! Why do we human beings have to be so complicated!! I hear from Bill daily. My work revolves around him, in fact it makes me want

¹ Harriet Aurelia McElwain was secretary to Penn State President George Atherton, Mary's grandfather. Born February 12, 1859, in Becket, MA, she would have been 81 in March, 1940. [Centre County Historical Society, centrecountyhistory.org/history/mcelwain]

to work like the very dickens, but at the same time I feel it should be one or the other, and I don't want to give up either. I don't know why I should bother you with such things, perhaps it's because I know you'll understand! But there's my name right before me, on the calendar--am I being hypocritical? I know one thing, Bill really depends upon me more than I dare to think! Whatever I've done for him I'll never regret. From news that "leaks" in from the city, he's really flourishing, and I'm glad. I couldn't let him down. In the first place, I love him too much to do that; in the second place, he's sincere in his love for me. I know he is – he wouldn't write me as he does if he weren't. Now that's my conflict – should it be one or the other. People have been known to combine such interests! Of course he has his studies before him, which he thinks he can take out here in Peiping (P. U. M. C.) an excellent school! He's investigating – through the school and the doctors out here. Goodness knows there's plenty of room for more doctors out here. The question would be could one of the missions take him on??? There are so many questions. Maybe I'm not borrowing trouble by looking ahead. Well, don't worry about it. Somehow things will straighten out. Meantime I'm going to work like the devil tried to live up to what's expected of me!!

Among the Christmas cards I got last night there was one from Paul Anderson – from Boston – guess you forwarded it. Good old Paul. I wonder what he's doing now, is he on "the job?"

I hope Papa hasn't been doing "night duty" all winter! He ought to be relieved of that now. I don't see why he can't be! (Do I sound like Aunt Helen?).

Haven't heard from Helen – she must be busy!! I'm glad to hear Jean Manley is getting much better. And Mrs. Stevens – is she improving?

Well, Mom take care of yourself and don't be cutting your afternoon naps so often or you will end up in the hospital. What's the idea of staying up until 2 AM. Even I don't do that, now that I'm back in Ing tai!!!

Bill has contact through to Boston, now, via Manila. I'll try sending a message now and then. It doesn't make you seem so far away. With people coming and going in the mission every year, it makes you folks seemed quite close.

Must dash off a word to Bill, or he won't be able to do his day's work!!

Lots of love to you all—Mom, Pop, and Ab, whoever is at home!

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien, China.

April 1, 1940.

Dear Mom:

Time's aflyin', mail's a'comin' in fast and I'm a'gettin' miles behind in my correspondence! It sure is grand, though, getting seven and eight letters at one time! But the consequences are apt to be overwhelming.

Here it is, more than a month since my fling in Foochow. It just doesn't seem possible! But it is!

I had dandy mail this past week. Birthday cards and letters from all the Hadleys, two letters from you, one from Rena and Nate, and air mail in December! And finally one from Helen! With a few more thrown in, especially my daily's from good old Bill!

I was shocked year about George's operation. Goodness, it sounds like a narrow escape. Having heard nothing else, I take it he's coming along okay. I hope so!

I asked Bill to send an Easter message through for me, but the last I heard he hadn't been able to get any messages through because of atmospheric conditions. It was just about the time (March 21st) when you were having a blizzard at home and the northern lights were cutting up! Almost all communication between China and the West coast was off at times.

Goodness. When I think of you having March winds and snows and we out here are beginning to melt already! Easter Sunday was cold and rainy, but the last of this week has been perfectly beautiful!

We had planned outdoor services, but of course we couldn't carry them out. Easter morning I got up at 5:30 to help one of the girls hide Easter eggs – 200! It's an old Wen Shan custom. It brought back childhood memories! We had a song service at 6:30 in our assembly room and then the egg hunt. Some 50 students joined the church that day. It was really quite thrilling. The baptismal service came just before the regular church service. Then Communion was taken in the afternoon. So Easter was one round of churchgoing. The services were very impressive, even more so than they were at Christmas time. This is quite a new experience for many students, never before have so many joined at one time. Maybe I told you all about this before. I can't quite recall. The decorations were simple, but effective. At the back of the chancel was a huge cross – 15 foot high, of palm leaves – very lovely. The foot was banked with light colored flowers, mostly yellow and white. The altar table was covered with a white cloth and on it stood two brass candelabra with seven white candles in each. It was really beautiful. Each member (new one), lit a candle from one main candle and followed the choir out in the recessional. The whole thing went off beautifully.

The day before the choir practice was simply awful and I dreaded Sunday morning, but they came through and did quite well considering the short time we had to practice. We sang Barnaby's "Break Forth Into Joy" which has Chinese words, and a double quartette sang Gaul's "Three Men Trudging" which they did quite well, in English, too.

I've already started on the Hallelujah Chorus for commencement. I'm cutting the middle section, where one part follows another; it's just something they can't do. Maybe after years of work in the lower classes, they'll work into it. Neither can they sing chromatics! Sometimes it's mighty discouraging.

I am attempting a very much condensed version of 'The Merchant of Venice' with the senior girls. They're marvelous when it comes to doing a little Chinese plays, but English is a different story. However, we're going through with it.

Arthur Rinden was up for the weekend – a bit more – he is sailing for home May 20th and I hope some time or other he gets to South Hadley. He's a grand fellow, and just wrapped up in his work. The young people would like him as well as they did Gertrude. He, Helen and I hiked up to a village beyond here, some 2000 feet up!! Such marvelous scenery, simply unsurpassed! It's no wonder people love to come back to Fukien. More than one person has said it is the most beautiful province in China. It's certainly some of the most beautiful scenery I've seen anywhere. We went out yesterday, Sunday, and it was perfect weather, warm, etc. The sky was full of billowy clouds, much like a June day at home, that enhanced the mountains, of course. When I came back, I must confess I was pretty well pooped, but had a bath and tore off to church in the nick of time.

Here are a number of people returning to the mission next fall. By the way, did you see Walter Judd's article in the February Reader's Digest? He's a former and possibly a future 'Foochow' -- there's a man! If you get a chance to hear him, don't fail. Possibly you heard his "Town Meeting" broadcast. It's been much publicized!

In Helen's letter she spoke of yarn. It's almost impossible to get wool out here, so if anyone is inclined they can send some out. Don't send needles – we get bamboo needles made here. And I forgot to even thank her for the sock pattern she sent. We're going to try it. Much work to do and more letters to write.

Take care of yourself,

Love to you and Papa and Ab,

Mary

Wen Shan Girl's School, Foochow, China.

April 5, 1940

My Dear Felix:

I just couldn't help sitting right down and writing you, having five minutes ago, we see your October 2nd letter! Six months on the way. Why it sounds like the dark ages! But there's no need to be kicking about mail now. Since January it's incoming quite steadily; it's down to three months now. Got one from Mom in 5 weeks! Times are looking up!

I certainly approve of the Japanese writing paper. It's a bit higher finished than what we can get now. My good old USA paper is holding out splendidly.

If you recall that letter of October 2nd, you took for your text that Sunday Exodus 17:8-12, which I read. It certainly gives me a feeling of confidence to know that my home folks are giving me such grand support. I only hope I can live up to these responsibilities and can add something of joy to the lives of these courageous people. It's a big order, but I must confess I've never been happier in my life. It's an entirely different kind of happiness! Certainly I haven't really done anything yet. I still feel most dependent on the other people of the mission, but just being with them gives me hope and inspiration!

Often my classes aren't what they should be. It is difficult to make myself understood. With the senior high girls I have more of a chance to put it across, but with the junior girls I still find it quite difficult. I'm actually getting to the point where I can remember a few names! The girls certainly enjoy my pronunciations! Someday I'll conquer it. Not being able to speak the Chinese language is really quite a benefit to the English classes, but when it comes to teaching music it's a different story! I'm looking forward to the time when I can study the language, something that I rather dreaded at first. I am learning some of the local Foochow, simply conversation. The Chinese must be thoroughly disgusted with me, it takes so long to memorize one word. They have such keen memories, I really feel ashamed. However, I find myself understanding quite a lot of their conversation, but when I want to say anything, there just aren't any words!

Our Easter service was very impressive. The church was simply decorated with a large cross of palm leaves at the back of the chancel, banked with flowers. It was very effective. Nearly 60 students from the four schools here joined the church. There must have been at least a thousand in the congregation. Most of them were students, of course. The choir sang "Break Forth Into Joy" by Barnby, and a special double quartette sang Gaul's "Three Men Trudging." Considering the short time we had to work it up, the music went much better than I dared hope! Our second term didn't begin until March 5th due to the shortage of rice and lack of boats to get us up here. Whether our rice holds out until the end of the term remains to be seen!

At Easter time I was still receiving Christmas cards! It's just like Christmas all year around out here. There are surprises every day!

Mama sent me a number of paper clippings telling all about your recognition service! My, I should like to have been there! She sent programs and the church calendar etc. -- it makes me feel much closer to people at home receiving bits like that. In fact, I think I'm better informed on what's going on at home than I was when I was really there!!

It is an unexpected honor to see my name on the calendar "Roll of Honor." At the same time, it frightens me – and gives me a thrill.

There seems to be a general 'clearing out' of the mission this summer. The people I've come to know best are all going home. Then I certainly will be on my own. However, there are a number of people returning in the fall, as perhaps you have noted in the February Missionary Herald. There is a general feeling of hope that many more will be returning, whole families rather than just one person here and there. It must take tremendous courage and sacrifice on the part of these families that have been separated for so long to carry on. We hope it won't be that way always.

So far, the proposed new government at Nanking¹ has been fairly silent. What it holds for us remains to be seen. In this beautiful village of Ingtai, one can scarcely believe that this country is undergoing such strife and stress. Central and western China goes on building roads, railroads, and forming new airlines despite it all. Reconstruction is going on continually. Wise folk!

I'm glad to hear Jean is recovering from her disorders and hope she doesn't have to go through that again. Mama also wrote me the sad news of her sister-in-law. I believe I had met her in the summer. It's very hard to understand such things. For a young person with life before her it doesn't seem right. Why do those things have to happen? Two young men in the Methodist mission here died last year, very suddenly. They had everything to live for! One of them was engaged to Helen's sister. She's a plucky person, [and] is carrying on her kindergarten training school up in Yankow, in much worse quarters than we have here in Ingtai. Yet she carries on! It's something I can't understand yet! Perhaps life has been too easy for me and I have yet to learn to appreciate it to its fullest.

Keep the letters coming, even though it takes 6 months. I appreciate it even more when I do receive them. Remember me to Jean, and give little David a hug for me. He's probably growing up to be quite a boy now.

Sincerely,

Mary Frances

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien. China.

April 7, 1940

Dear Mom and Papa:

It's glorious spring weather out here, supposed to be "unusual" for Fukien, but then it seems to me weather, anywhere anyone happens to be, is always "unusual." The usual thing

¹ In March 1940, a puppet government led by Wang Jingwei was established in the Republic of China under the protection of the Empire of Japan. The Reorganized National Government was meant to rival the legitimacy of the government of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, which was of the same name and based in Chongqing. [Narangoa, Li; Cribb, R.B. (2003). Imperial Japan and national identities in Asia, 1895-1945. Routledge.]

here is days and days of rain. This year, the days have been few and far between, but when it rains, it pours.

I received the second batch of radio guides this past week. Was I glad to get them, and those lovely Christmas cards, too! Along with those, I finally got Felix first letter to me, dated October 2nd !! Six months on the way! Bill has been trying to get a message through to you, but atmospheric conditions have been quite poor, so poor in fact that it has been difficult to receive his own messages, etc. i.e. – government stuff. We'll keep trying, however. Maybe we'll surprise you one of these days. I'm sending to Boston for a portable radio to be brought out by some of the folks returning in the fall.

The president¹ of Fukien University (F.C.U.) came to Ingtai yesterday. We've just had a 'feast' for him here at Wen Shan. He's most interesting and very enterprising. The university is now up in Shawou, about three days trip from Foochow, up river. Helen and I went down to their campus in Foochow during vacation. It's a beautiful spot, right on the river, just gloriously ideal for a school site. Beautiful, well-equipped buildings standing idle! It seems a shame. Mr. Lin (Pres.) said he expects to get the school back in Foochow, but does not make any dates! Along with him came a foreigner, from the Dutch Reformed Mission in or near Amoy. Very interesting, too. Hardly a week goes by up here without some guests. We are quite a thriving community. Now, if they'd only fill in the bus road between here and Foochow, we'd really be civilized. Roads are being built through the western part of the province. I suppose someday we'll have a road too. Then only two hours to Foochow instead of 12! Whoopee!

Helen continues to receive boxes of candy from all her friends at home! Are we ever glad she is a popular lady and that we are all her friends!

Our first (2nd term) monthly exams start this week. April 19, 20 and 21 we'll have a holiday – spring vacation!! Just too short a time to run down to Foochow, darn it! Maybe it's just as well! We're planning daily hikes for the students. There are such grand hikes around here. We're trying to further the use of English conversation among the senior students. Out of 27 who signed for it, only four had the courage to attend our first meeting yesterday. We try to keep it very informal, so we took a walk, talking about things along the way, etc. The girls are really quite good at it and are anxious to use their English. We're hoping for more recruits next week.

Last Sunday I started my Junior Choir singing for the church service. We sang 'The Spacious Firmament' and did very well. I must confess that they process and recess in much better shape than the senior choir. I'm going to have them sing once a month for the rest of the term.

Last week I sent down to Foochow for some green vegetables – celery, lettuce, etc., from Union High School – and they arrived Friday night. Alice and I practically stood on our heads with joy. We can't get things like that, unless someone goes down or happens to be coming up from Foochow. I happened to strike the right time! Later on, when it's warmer, the stuff won't keep well, because there is no ice, but we'll enjoy it now, and hope for the best later on. In Foochow, one can get ice – artificial – but not in Ingtai. It's so much water power up here, it's a shame it isn't harnessed to produce electricity. If these schools stay, it would be well worth while to go together and put up a plant! Maybe someday Ingtai will see that. It would open up new and better industries, etc.

¹ Ching-jun Lin (aka Lin Jingren), president of Fukien Christian University, 1927 – 1946.

There's silver in these hills and other ore which could readily be marketed. There's just no end of what could be produced in this place if it had proper supervision. It's so easy to grow things that agriculture could be boosted with no effort at all, and fruit is abundant. Well, so much for Ingtai! Not quite; there's scarcely any meat or vegetables on the street these days. It seems that people from a coast town about 30 miles from here bring in smuggled goods across the mountains to Ingtai, sell it and send most down the river to Foochow. They are well paid, better paid than most teachers, so they can buy up anything on the streets here at any price. Consequently, the city is practically drained of supplies, on top of very little rice. It's a great life. Some people can't see any farther than their noses!

It's nearly church time, so I must be off! If Bill were here, I know he'd send his love along with mine.

Lots of love,
Mary

P.S. This might well be published and volunteers called for. The American board might help out if we'd do our part!

Note on back of paper from Albert Buckhout: Dear Hattie, Thought you might like Mary's letter. Everything going ok here. Got your card last night. Love, Albert.¹

Ingtai, Fukien
April 23, 1940

Dear Mom:

According to my little book. I skipped last week somehow or other! Time is slipping by so fast that I can't keep track of it. My correspondence has increased so that I have to keep the book listing names and dates of my letters, otherwise I'm lost. Never had to do this before in my life.

Gertrude Rinden sent out a box of large Hershey almond bars, which came through in perfect shape in about 10 weeks. She was sending old sheeting to the hospital and wraps them in that, evidently it was just the thing to keep the chocolate moist. Was I surprised! We've been enjoying them too! Helen seems to have a number of pals at home who keep her fairly well supplied with sweets.

After our first six weeks of study, since March 1, we had three days of vacation, supposedly our spring vacation. Ordinarily, we would have a week or so, but due to our lengthened winter holiday we couldn't spare all that time. In fact, I didn't think we would be having any at all! Of course it was useless to go to Foochow, since it takes a day to get there and a day to get back! I would have given anything to have had that one day with Bill, but I knew it would be only tantalizing and I'm coward enough not to want to make the trip back after such a short time! As the weekend drew near (April 19-21) I nearly made up my mind to go, but my better judgment prevailed and I managed to live through it!

We took (Helen and I) the students out hiking on Friday, a perfectly glorious day. Went up to Gido-Say, a mountain village, where Arthur, Helen, and I had been before. I guess I told you about that. It took three hours to get up there. I had to return early for a rehearsal at 4:30, so I left up there about 3:30, with six girls. They were soon left in my dust

¹ Apparently Albert was at home, or he would not have received the letter. Harriet may have been elsewhere and he forwarded it to her. Several letters have notes written between them.

for I tore along over rocky paths and made it down in an hour! Granted that coming down a mountain doesn't take so much energy, but it does weaken the knees. Then I went over to Foochow College and rehearsed the Hallelujah Chorus with the boys!! Maybe I wasn't pooped that night.

The next day, Saturday, was almost as pleasant a day. All classes planed to have supper outside, so my 4 senior girls and I cooked ours down by the river! Had a grand time.

Alice Tapley's class (F.C. Boys) decided to have a picnic that day too, so we called on them after our supper and sang together for while. It's the funniest thing to try to get boys and girls together. They want to and yet they don't! Of course, that is quite an innovation for China – women and girls weren't supposed to be seen ever except in their own homes. There is a bit of rivalry, naturally, between the Wen Shan and Foochow College, and that may account for their unwillingness to do things together. Yet when our girls are giving a play, they borrow all the boys' clothes from there, even to shoes; the poor boys are left destitute.

The choir has been a pull because of this situation. Really, I think they want to be together, but out of loyalty to their sex, they don't dare admit it. So both boys and girls feel quite superior about the whole thing.

Either way, I see by the Radio Guide, that the Chase and Sanborn Hour has flew the coop, but Edgar and Charlie still carry on! That must've been quite a blow. Information Please still holds forth and Oscar Levant seems to be making quite a name for himself!

Isn't the world a mess? I feel safer here than I would at home! Just at present, all is fairly quiet out here, but there's such noise in Europe.¹ Nothing could compare with it. With Norway and Denmark under Nazi control, Holland seems to be the next step! What is going to happen! Bill keeps us posted fairly well. The news he gets in from San Francisco or Manila. There's seldom Chinese news, so maybe you know more about conditions here than I do!

The Beards are arriving in Ingtai tomorrow. Mrs. B. is staying but a few days then goes back to Foochow to carry on her work there. She has a number of women who do exquisite embroidery, luncheon set etc.! Dr. Beard has very recently been operated upon for hernia. It couldn't have been very serious because he was up in two weeks. But of course he has to take it easy.

Helen's father leaves for Hingwha next Tuesday. From there he takes a boat to Shanghai and then a steamer for home. I'm sending some tea via him which will be sent to you, you may distribute it as you see fit. This is real tea, only a pinch for a good pot full, so don't be wasting it!!! It's light colored, too. Mr. Smith has a two days' trip across the mountains to the coast. Here's hoping he has good weather!

After he leaves I'm going to move in with Helen! Acting as chaperone! Since Dr. B. will be living there, too. It means walking back and forth to school, which I need desperately!

Are you having decent weather this spring? Except for rain now and then, we've had quite ideal weather. More like June at home. Probably by the time you get this, we'll be sweltering out here.

Foochow College is really digging in to stay here two or three years more! Unless something drastic happens we'll probably be here too! But there's no telling! One just can't plan ahead out here! Life's full of surprises!

¹ On April 9, 1040, Germany seized Oslo, Norway and set up their own government under Vidkun Quisling, the former minister of defense. Denmark surrendered and Germany moved into the Faroe Islands. Meanwhile, Britain pushed to free Norway, to no avail.

Well, I'm off for a bath and bed.
Hope everyone is o.k. Had a dandy letter from Hat!
Lots of love,
Mary

Note at the end in pencil in Harriet Buckhout's writing: Here's a chance for engineers who want a job also a few good agricultural families! I received Mother's Day Radiogram – came thru in 24 hrs! They raised the dickens at the consulate during vacation, but everyone seemed to enjoy it! Radio Operator at Consulate in Foochow – that's not his name, only nick name.

Wen Shan School, Foochow, Fukien. China
April 29, 1940

Dear Mom:

Just received your Feb. 22nd letter, and such a grand one, telling all about Peg's visit, Helen's job and the D.A.R. doings, as well as the church suppers! In the same mail I had a letter from Doc telling of his trip South and conditions there. Also put in a dozen or so questions so I'll have to get busy.

Gosh, what a mess of colds you folks have been having this winter. (When you get this it will be last winter.) Outside of that cold I had in November I've been pretty free from colds etc. all year. Had snuffles now and then.

I think I wrote last week that I was sending some tea to you through Mr. Smith. Well, I'm not, because the tea isn't what I wanted at all. I have to get it in Foochow, so now I won't be able to get what I want until I get down there myself. Eventually you'll be getting some! There'll be one or two folks leaving in July. Maybe then I can send something along. Mr. Smith leaves tomorrow morning for home -- U. S. A.!! He has a two day trip across the mountains before he reaches the coast and the boat for Shanghai. He'll undoubtedly be in South Hadley and Amherst some time, but I can't say when. He is an Amherst man, '96 or '98, can't remember which, but knows Mr. Sam Hayes, Sr. – Miss Hyde at the college – was in Amherst with her brother. I told him he certainly must call you people if you do get a chance to entertain him. He is wonderfully interesting and can give you the inside dope on conditions here, particularly Ingtai. He doesn't really want to leave, this having been his home for nearly 40 years. He's dreadfully afraid he won't get back! Helen isn't sure, yet, whether she can leave to go home this summer or not. I am going to move over there this week, to keep her company now that her dad is leaving. Besides, she needs a chaperone, for Mr. Beard is living there now, taking Mr. Smith's place. Mrs. Beard isn't coming up until next fall. They'll both be on Kuliang for the summer, however.

The days go by pretty fast here at Ingtai! Here it is nearly May and but a scant two months of school left! It doesn't seem possible! Naturally, I'll head for Foochow, and H. V. Mc as soon as I can!! Bill had a birthday Saturday, so to make things a bit exciting for him, Helen and I devised a plan whereby he would have to call at various places in Foochow during the day to collect his birthday greetings! I haven't heard all the details yet. I did up crazy things like a pair of sunglasses with Chinese cakes stuck in for lenses with small holes in the center! Made up a wristwatch of dried persimmon, Alice made a face and hands for it

and a cellophane crystal. Had about five things he had to collect. With them, I wrote silly verses etc. even sent one of the packages ("spirit money" used by non-Christians¹ – placed at the graves) to the Consulate, asking his cooperation in carrying out the plan. Evidently he fell in beautifully for I've had echoes! Merlin gave him a birthday dinner party, about which he knew nothing! One of the packages I sent here, some mien² (similar to spaghetti), which is the Chinese symbol of long life and happiness. Have yet to hear from that. Well, t'was a lot of fun making them up and I guess Bill got a kick out of it too.

There's always the greatest scramble to give programs for welcoming people or bidding them farewell. The Chinese had the idea that you must put on a program regardless of any preparation! That's one time when they can work fast! Today, Foochow College decided to have a farewell shindig for Mr. Smith this afternoon. They came over here asking us to take part in it – 11:30 this morning, and the program was to go on at 3:30 p.m.!! But that's the way they do things. So I got the choir together and practiced a hymn we had done before (Hark, Hark My Soul) then got the school together for the school song. At 3:15 we went over and rehearsed once with the boys, and hoped for the best. There were two short plays, one by the boys and one by the Wen Shan girls, some Chinese music and speeches by the two principals. Four hours to work it up! Whew! Programs never start on time, so it was nearly 4:30 before it began and nearly 6 PM before it ended. Mr. Smith was very appreciative, but I think he's tired out, he's been fêted so much lately.

I hope next year I know enough to be prepared so that when the last minute things come up there is something to draw on.

This week, too, there is a student "New Life Movement" program of speaking contest, sports etc., in which Wen Shan must take part! So now I must teach some patriotic songs. I had sworn I wouldn't teach the things, but the time has come when I have to! What's next on the program remains to be seen. At least no farewell parties. Probably the students will be starting a farewell dinner or feasts next!

There's really only four weeks of work for the top junior and senior classes. Then they start reviewing three years work in preparation for government exams in June! Commencement programs etc. are staring me in the face. At least, next year I'll know something of what to expect and what to prepare for. I wondered why the school didn't have definite dates for vacations, holidays, closing, etc., but they can't simply because the government orders things - programs etc. to be given. I think that on the average there's something every month to upset our curriculum. Well, it sure lends variety, and makes an awful hole in the work sometimes, but we manage to struggle through it. The government's educational policies are too ridiculous (provisional gov.). Get Mr. Smith to tell you about them. A mission school is not a private school in our sense of the word. It has to conform to government regulations, no matter how ridiculous, but then one would rather expect to do so in order to accomplish anything the school set out to do. However, the government seems to be getting a bit more sane since really intelligent people are being put at the heads of the departments. But they have a long way to go yet. The head of F. C. U. blows them up now and then and it has had its effects, so we hope for more.

It's late, and I must crawl in.

¹ Joss Paper, also known as ghost or spirit money, are sheets of paper that are burned in traditional Chinese deity or ancestor worship ceremonies during special holidays. Joss paper is also burned in traditional Chinese funerals. [nationsonline.org]

² *Mien* – mung bean noodles

Lots of love to you all,
Mary

THE AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE					
RADIOGRAM					
VIA AMATEUR RADIO					
NUMBER	STATION OF ORIGIN	CHECK	PLACE OF ORIGIN	TIME FILED	DATE
1	XU7HV	--	Foochow, China	4 May, 40	
To			Mrs A.T. Buckhout.		
			South Hadley, Mass.		
			THIS MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED AT		
			AMATEUR RADIO STATION W1Duk		
			OWNER P.E. Littlefield, Jr. PHONE 8		
			STREET ADDRESS 3 Furbush St		
			CITY AND STATE Rochester, New Hamp.		
Lots of love to you on this day of days set aside for you. Hearing from you quite regularly. Everything is fine.					
Sig Mary.					
SENDER'S ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER FOR REFERENCE:					
REC'D	FROM STATION	LOCATED AT		DATE	TIME
	W6BDZ	Ventura, Calif		4 May, 40	2316
SENT	TO STATION			DATE	TIME
	Mailed			5 May, "	1400
<small>YOUR REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE WILL BE HANDLED WITHOUT CHARGE BY THE RECEIVING STATION WHOSE ADDRESS IS SHOWN ABOVE. AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS AND MEMBERS OF THE A.R.R.L. LICENSED BY THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION OFFER TO THE PUBLIC A MESSAGE SERVICE TO ANY PART OF THE U.S.A., ITS POSSESSIONS AND CANADA, AS MESSAGES ARE HANDLED BY RADIO AMATEURS SOLELY FOR THE PLEASURE OF OPERATING. NO COMPENSATION CAN BE ACCEPTED BY A STATION OWNER. NO DELIVERY IS NOT GUARANTEED BY THE LEAGUE OR ITS MEMBER OPERATORS. AMATEURS ARE NOTED FOR THEIR WORK IN PUBLIC EMERGENCIES. FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS INTERESTING HOBBY MAY BE OBTAINED DIRECTLY FROM A.R.R.L. HEADQUARTERS, WEST HARTFORD, CONN.</small>					
LITHO — U.S.A.					

Ingtai, China.
 May 5, 1940

Dear Mom:

The days and weeks are clicking off faster than ever this time of year. There're only 6 more weeks of actual classes, then final exams!

I moved over to Helen's house this past week, but I'm still not exactly settled. It's changed my routine quite a bit, too, since I can't run back and forth to my room between classes! It's a good thing for me, though. I can't possibly get in a rut when things are always changing. There's always plenty to do, and a variety of things to do, so I doubt that anyone really gets fed up with anything here, or even gets in a rut. It's grand being here with Helen and Dr. Beard. We have breakfast about 7 A.M., each of us takes turns with grace or some kind of devotions before the meal.

I'm beginning to realize that a moment of grace really has effects, especially in the morning. The moment of quiet sort of gets the day going in the right way. Everyone out here does it, even the men who are living alone, and I'm getting to like it more and more. At the fanciest dinner parties we either sing a blessing or someone asks it. It certainly does something for our fellowship together. But we are all far from being saints. Every one in the mission is an individualist and sometimes meetings get a bit hot when questions are being decided upon. But they certainly are a grand group! They make life worth while for others and in doing so they gain pleasure from it. Any one of them will [turn] himself inside out to

make things pleasant for other people. I'll never forget when I arrived in Foochow I was welcomed like an old home-comer, as though they had known me always.

The Christians and Bingham's are on their way to America with Mr. Smith and Arthur Rinden. They were all gaily feted by both Chinese and Americans before leaving! I guess I told you Mr. Smith left from here while the others left from Foochow and all met at Hingwha where they took a 'tub' for Shanghai. They'll probably be arriving home about the time of this letter, possibly before!

The past week has been hot – I don't know what the actual temperature was, but it was as hot as any of our summer days at home. Yesterday it cooled off and rained, so today we are enjoying the fireplace (Helen's).

Bill's the greatest!! We ran out of coffee here and couldn't get any more from the co-op, so I wrote Bill asking him where he got his. Well, last night when I came home here was a package from Bill – a can of Chase & Sandborne coffee. Where he got it I can't imagine – probably raided his own pantry! That's one for Charlie!

Big doings again this week in Ingtai. The No. 1 Man, head of the educational dept of the Fukien Gov. is visiting us. Wen Shan is serving him a foreign meal! Soup, fish, chicken, vegetables, steamed pudding, etc. – under Helen's direction! Then the school will put on a program of plays and music. I've gotten a sextet going that really does quite well. We're going to sing Amaryllis. Some of our best students are in the Sr. I class, but because we are not legally allowed to have a Sr. I class this year (!!) we have to keep them under cover.

There seems to be going to be (!) a change in the school administration this summer, and all for the better, we hope. Things haven't been too pleasant for Helen nor for some of the other teachers, so our illustrious principal is to be replaced. She really had resigned last year but was asked to stay on until another principal could be found! Times being so unsettled, people moving to different parts of the country, it has been difficult for the board of directors. They are recalling the former dean from America where she has been studying at Schauffler¹ (That's where Dot Haynes went to school for a year) and Helen has a line out for a pretty good possibility. So we have hopes. According to the law the schools must have Chinese principals, which, after all, is the only way of doing things.

The postman has just arrived with my "daily." Time out while I read! Bill does send his best, too!

Had a letter from Levada telling, too, about the blizzard in February (15th?). Sounded like true New England weather.

Susan's house is coming along in grand shape – she expects to be in by June 1st. Have I told you how they build houses here, all mud walls. They build a stone foundation – quite broad – 1½ to 2 feet – then pack down mud (in a wooden mold – similar to a concrete mold) and that's all there is to it, as far as walls are concerned. They are as hard as brick – all done by hand – that is basket after basket of earth is brought up and packed into the mold. My, the patience it must take! But the houses stand the gaff! She has a living and dining room, bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen. It's in a grand location on a hill where she can look up and down the river. The windows are large and many, which is unusual for a Chinese built house. She has to sit on the contractor's tail to get things done as she wants them done.

¹ The Schauffler College of Religious and Social Work, Cleveland, Ohio, evolved from its original mission into an institution of collegiate grade for young women training for religious, educational, and social leadership. It was eventually renamed the Schauffler Missionary Training School and is now known as Schauffler College. [Oberlin College Archives]

He put one door in the wrong place, but made him change it. That isn't so easy where there are mud walls concerned. She was pretty discouraged for a while, but the house looks as though it were really going to be quite comfortable.

It looks as though Wen Shan will be up here next fall. We're even considering another dormitory – which we must have if we come up here next fall! In a way, I hope we'll be in Foochow, particularly if Helen is not here – and for other reasons, too, which I find difficult to leave out.

Time crawls on, and my stack of letters doesn't dwindle very fast. Still have some Christmas letters I haven't answered! Now I must drop Bill a line, telling him how much we enjoy his coffee!

Lots of love to you all,

Mary

Ingtai, Fukien, China

May 15, 1940

Dear Mom and all the fambily [*sic*],

You'd think it was mid-August, were you out here! Wet, sticky, humid – the temperature isn't so high – in the 80's – but the humidity is something to write home about. It's like the worst damp weather we get at home in the hottest part of summer. I don't mind it except that my clothes are soaking wet most of the time. When I got through playing for church on Sunday (a reed organ) I was positively ringing wet – perhaps it will take a few pounds off me too – here's hoping! Despite the weather, I still maintain my appetite!

Three of my classes will end next week – junior high class and a senior high class with whom I have English Lit and Composition. Have music with the juniors. These classes are preparing for government exams the end of June. They have 3 years work to review for the old things. This government certainly ought to revise a good many of its educational policies. In time they probably will. They are interested in education anyway, as a vital step in the progress of the country, and that is something. Last year and the year before senior high students have been sent out all over the province to town educational classes for men and women in the country districts. Now, rather than have the students spend a year of their school time doing that, the government is training and hiring unemployed teachers (of whom there are very few) and middle school graduates to do this work. A group of these teachers held a 9 day conference in Ingtai, having discussion groups and lectures. So they are looking forward and preparing for the time when the people will have the running of the education department. I assume, having something after the pattern of our local educational boards – school committee, etc. We've been expecting the No. 1 Man of the educational bureau here, but as yet he hasn't appeared. We'd had a dinner and a program practically ready for him when we found out he wasn't coming until later. F. C. had sent representation down to Foochow to escort him up in grand style! Now, he'll probably come when we are either in the midst of exams or commencement.

Mail just arrived with my “daily.” Time out to read it.

They're still having ‘visitations’ in Foochow with no particular interest.¹ Seems to be ‘sight-seeing’ time, nothing else. We hope that's all there is to it. The last one took place during a thunder storm. Certainly aren't fussy about the weather.

¹ Probable Japanese planes flying over, worded in this way to escape the censors.

Finally, Helen and I planted the lettuce seed Doris gave me. It is up and I transplanted it the other day. Our tongues just hang out for fresh greens. We get plenty of vegetables but everything has to be cooked unless it comes from our own gardens. The Foochow folks have been more than generous and thoughtful about sending up vegetables with people going back and forth.

By the way – if you haven't already sent on these recipes I asked for, I wonder if you'd stick them in sometime. Here at Helen's I can try my hand now and then. I made an Indian Pudding the other day which was o.k.

There must be more of your letters and Levada's on the way since you are writing so often, but I'm sure I haven't gotten them all. Levi said she was writing every other week. I've gotten 6 letters from her. Your last one was Feb 23rd or 4th! Did you get my Mother's Day greeting? Bill said he got it off o.k. to a fellow in California – direct!

Monday I went out on an all day camping bout with the Senior I class. They have wanted to do it for some time so they were allowed to go Monday. They left at 5:30 A.M.!! It was something crawling out of bed at 5. Didn't go far – just crossed the river and camped on the bank, but they certainly had a lot of fun! Actually they did nothing but cook all day! Chinese food is the dickens to prepare anyway, let alone doing it over an open fire out of doors, but they were in their glory. In the midst of dinner, at noon, it began to pour, so we made a dash for the trees, and tried to finish eating there. Most of the teachers had come over for dinner and the students were dashing around trying to keep umbrellas over us all. We got more water down our backs than we would have without the umbrellas. We finally had to give it up and pack up the stuff to be taken back to the dormitory. The girls were bound to cook their own supper too, so they did at the dormitory and invited all the other teachers. After supper, Helen and I taught them to waltz!! And taught the Virginia Reel which was a lot of fun. They're a great bunch. I'm looking forward to having them in English Lit. next year.

It begins to look as though Helen will be here next fall too. Things are so unsettled at the school. If so, we'll be living together, etc. Plans for the summer are still unsettled also! I guess, tho', that I'll be in Helen's house on Kuliang. You'll probably hear by the end of the summer about what I expect to do during the summer!

The rains have brought the river up quite high! And it has filled up all the rice paddies for the farmers, which we needed! The rice has been planted and transplanted and is well on its way. This crop will be harvested in July. The second crop, which will be planted soon between the rows of this present crop, will be harvested in November. They no sooner get thro' with one crop on the land when it's planted with something else – wheat or turnips particularly – and sweet potatoes. They certainly squeeze the land!

Despite the fact that I slept 1½ hours this afternoon, I'm ready for bed now, so I'm off.

Los of love to you all,
Mary

P.S. Had nice letter from Aunt Agnes B, & Levada.

Ingtai, China
May 20, 1940

Dear Mom:

It seems like no time at all since I wrote the date April 20th! Helen and I are just floored to realize it is so late!

Last night the Radio Guides came in with all the grand newspaper clippings. Via news that Bill sends up, we had heard about the terrific cold in New England and Florida, but I didn't realize it was quite so bad. By this time I hope you're having a bit of decent weather. For the last week it has rained nearly every nite, with some let up and occasional sunshine during the day. And it has cooled off a bit – thank goodness. It makes working a bit more pleasant.

Just a year ago I had the first inkling of the possibility of coming out to China. It really doesn't seem possible that I've done so much, had so many absolutely new experiences in that short time. Life certainly full of surprises and joys if we only take advantages of what's about us! It seemed like an awful step to take at the time. When I first got the news of this possibility I was thrilled – but frightened, I must confess. Anyway, I wouldn't have done anything different for the world.

Tues-

Back from the wars. The day's classes are over. Helen and I have just thrown together a spice cake for supper! By the way, if 'you all' haven't sent out those recipes, send 'em on anytime. This summer I'm going to try a few things, provided I have a 'sympathetic' cook! These folks are tempermental; they don't usually like to have people come into the kitchen and do things. They feel that they are 'losing face' but Helen's cook doesn't mind. It looks, now, as though I'd be on Kuliang and Foochow for the summer. Helen's plans are still very indefinite and probably will be so until the problem of school administration is settled. Helen has been acting as dean while our former dean has been studying at Schaufler (Ohio). We expect her back by fall and we are in the throws of getting a new principal. It's hectic not having all these things settled before the end of the year. If H. doesn't go home she's going out of port if it's only to Shanghai – but, by golly, I'm not going with anybody to Shanghai – even for ice cream sodas and movies! Perhaps someday I'll develop an appreciation for the place, but I'll never forget those first few miserable days I spent there. Of course, now that I know one or two people there and could make connections with folks thro' the Board, it would be an entirely different story.

Anyway, I'm looking forward to Kuliang, which everyone just seems to love, and which I have not yet seen! Whether Helen is there, or not, I'll probably have her house. Her sister Eunice sails from Shanghai about July 20th for U.S. 'They' say the mountain will be more or less deserted in comparison with the 'good old days' before so many folks went home.¹ But I won't mind that. I rather think my time will be pretty well divided between Kuliang and Foochow anyway!!

As I look back over this scrawl, I've written a lot and said nothing! The days roll by all too fast to get everything done that should be. This week we've started final exams for the two upper classes in Junior and Senior High School. After these exams, they spend the next three weeks reviewing 3 years work for their government exams. What a mess! This

¹ Before the Japanese invasion of Foochow, many prosperous families spent summers on Kuliang.

educational system is not so hot! We foreigners can do pretty strong suggesting, sometimes, but let any criticism be voiced by a Chinese, and he's clamped into jail. China is on its way to democracy, but there's not much of free speech or press unless one wishes to suffer the consequences. There has been a bit of discrimination against the Mission schools – quite a lot, in fact – primarily because they can not collect taxes on the property. The government is a bit jealous of our progress and the fact that the best students come to our schools and we are apt to produce a better project [*sic*]. Well, sometimes all these will be straightened out.

Just finished supper, and the cake (spice) was dandy! Every time I open a Radio Guide, another clipping or church program tumbles out. I like getting the church programs – it helps a lot in keeping in touch with what's going on.

Exchange at the present is 20 to 1!! Which is to our advantage, but frightfully hard on the Chinese. It costs me about \$100/ month to live, on the average, which, at the present exchange is only \$5 gold. Isn't that disgraceful? I've given up figuring in gold, though. Just can't do that out here. I had some pictures printed the other day and they cost \$20.00 (Mex.). Gosh, I was having it done for the students, thinking they'd be about 10¢ a piece. They came to \$3 a dozen!! Guess I struck the wrong ship. Here's one of the pictures – taken before I left Lucy's house. It's in her front yard – looking down river toward Foochow (which can't be seen, darn it!!). Helen took it on my camera.

The oleanders are in full bloom – white and pink – and are beautiful. Gardenias grow wild all over the place. H. has a beautiful bush here at the house and the blossoms are far superior to any White House blooms I ever saw. I have one in my room (one blossom) that's been here for 4 days and it's just as fresh as it was the first day. You'd love all the flowers that are so easy to grow.

Well – must get some work done – and get a note off to Bill. Wish you could meet him. You'd like him, I know!

Lots of love to all,
Mary

Ingtai, China
May 27, 1940

Dear Mom:

Hope this gets to you with all the other fire-crackers! Happy birthday!¹ Long life and happiness! “May your joy be as great as the Eastern Sea.” “All the happiness of the Southern Mountains.” Now, were you in China, those would be some of your greetings. We'd have a great feast, to which all the family and relatives would be invited. All would come with all their kids and pay you due respect by bowing before you, O honorable one. There would be anywhere from 10 to 20 dishes to be eaten, one of them being mien (spaghetti to you) which is the symbol of long life. We'd set off fire-crackers in your honor, for that is the most significant way of honoring such a respected person! It would certainly be an occasion. I'll fire a few crackers that day regardless of what the other folks do. The Consul usually has some kind of “blow out” so I'll help them “blow.”

I've been staying in bed today, waiting for the doctor to diagnose my case. Immediately after church yesterday I began to feel grippie – that's the way malaria started with me before. Went to bed – not knowing what I was in for – and am taking it easy today.

¹ Harriet Buckhout's birthday was July 4, 1876.

Feeling much better this afternoon, so I guess whatever it is or was I'm coming out of it. This is a fine time to be upset! This coming Saturday, we – Wen Shan are “guest artists” for the Foochow College concert!! Naturally, I'm having rehearsals every day and every one counts! I think I'll be able to carry on tomorrow. My ribs are as sore as if I'd been thoroughly bruised. Our part of the concert grows day by day. At first the girls didn't want to do anything – weren't interested – now they can't do enough! I started 6 girls on Amaryllis and I guess it spurred others on. They really do it quite well. Our program is as follows:

Amaryllis – sextet (3 parts)

Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes (3 parts) 10 girls

Finiculi, Finicula (2 parts) 10 girls

Loch Lomond – 2 parts – Senior I class

Send Out Thy Light – combined choirs (they asked for it!)

Country Gardens, }

Oh Suzanna } Harmonica duet.

For not doing anything, this is pretty good! Except for Amaryllis, these were their own choices. They certainly are a funny complex – the girls I mean. I never know what they are thinking, and neither does anyone else.

The doctor was just in, says it's a touch of malaria, which means quinine and a big head!! If it will do the trick, I'll take it.

There have been all kinds of rumors circulating about the mission schools. No one knows what to believe. But it's certain that here in Fukien, the government is very much against them. Proportionally we have more students than the government schools, better teachers and equipment. Fukien has more Christian schools than any other province of China. The general feeling is that the Christian schools are in a more critical state than they were in 1927 when there was open rebellion against all Christians.¹ There is even some talk of closing five of the Christian high schools in Foochow – one of which would be Wen Shan – but we don't take much stock in it. Rumors are more prevalent than anything else around here anyway! And they usually amount to nothing.

The other day a young Chinese was arrested for having published some articles criticizing the government's treatment of the Christian schools, but it seems someone else did the writing and signed his name. He is a splendid young man, and has many friends so we think he won't have too much trouble proving his innocence. This may be a democracy, but one can't criticize the high mucky-mucks yet! And still keep his head. All this sort of thing seems so queer to us who are used to free speech and press!

When I get to Foochow, Bill will send a radiogram for me, and I hope you can get it. He's had direct contact with U.S. lately, so there are hopes of it getting through.

By the way, while looking at one of the radio guides yesterday, out fell the recipes I'd been asking about, and the note from Helen! Every time I pick them up, something else drops out. According to the reports, the Met has been having difficulties again and there's a possibility of Flagstad [Flagstad²] returning home! That will certainly make a hole in Wagnerian productions if it's so. Bill sent to Shanghai for some records – among them are

¹ An intellectual and political “Anti-Christian Movement” in China in the 1920s... attacked and rejected all religions as superstition. They were inspired by attitudes derived from both nationalist and socialist ideologies, and fed on older anti-Christian sentiment that was in large part due to repeated invasions of China by western countries.

² **Kirsten Målfrid Flagstad**, a Norwegian opera singer and a highly regarded Wagnerian soprano who ranked among the greatest singers of the 20th century. [Wikipedia]

Beethoven's 7th Symphony and the Don Juan tone poems of R. Strauss as well as L'Après Midi du Faun of Strauss!¹ I'm so excited I can hardly wait to get down to her them!

I'm gradually getting caught up on my correspondence, thank goodness! There will probably be a whole lot more soon, so I had better get caught up! I'll be busy this summer!! Bill's as thoughtful and sweet as ever – I had to laugh – the other day he sent up a whole stack of funnies!

Helen's home and we'll be having supper soon, so I'd better stop.

Lots of love to you all and I hope you have the happiest birthday ever. Wish I could be home just to help you celebrate!

Lovingly,

Mary

Ingtai, Fukien, China

June 2, 1940

Dear Mom,

Your April 22nd letter came thro' in record time. I got it May 28th!! That's marvelous, but so far I haven't gotten any March letters. Well, that's the way it goes. They'll be coming along soon.

It still continues to rain out here, but, being quite warm, it is welcome. Today – Sunday – is perfectly beautiful – clear, dry and breezy – a typical June day, with soft clouds hanging in the sky. Quite a contrast to the blizzard and snow you had in April!! The sun spots worked havoc with Bill's receiving set – sometimes it being so bad he couldn't receive anything. I guess that is clearing up, though.

I was shocked to hear about Jays' sickening experience and all the upsets the grandchildren have been going thro'! I suppose that is all part of the trial and tribulation of bringing up youngsters. Peg seems to have had more than her share. I haven't heard from her for some time – i.e. directly – but she certainly has excuse enough not to be writing.

"Pren" sounds like a nice chap! I hope he is. Aunt Agnes wrote that Uncle Bill was highly amused at Helen's affair, really getting a kick out of it.

Well, last night the concert went off with a bang! Wen Shan girls were "guest artists" and believe me, they did a good job of it. The Loch Lomond was especially good – their tone was far the best of any. And – one flattering remark was that the words were understood!! I'm enclosing a program, more as a curiosity. Of course, there were several patriotic songs, as there always are on any program. Miss Tapley played two violin solos – Souvenir and Cinquataine – for which I played – imagine!! The kids (students) just brought the house down after she played – did it in true American style – thunderous applause and whistling & shouting. There's room for a vast amount of improvement in such a program, and in the numbers presented, but it was an achievement to have them present such a program anyway – all music. I think all the students enjoyed working for it, too. The stage was simply decorated with a draped blue curtain on which was pinned a G clef of orange crepe paper – about 5' in height. Pots of ferns were placed along the front of the stage – all was very effective.

¹ Debussy

Now the next thing is commencement. Guess I told you that the two choirs are singing the Hallelujah Chorus – very much cut (by me). We expect to sing that June 23rd when F.C. and Wen Shan will have their last Sunday service together. Graduation exercises for the girls will be very simple, if we have any. One class I want to sing Estudiantina with different words, “Come Where the Viols are Ringing” – a short version. The “Amaryllis” girls are working on Finlandia – 3 part arrangement. That plus Amaryllis will be the musical end of the program. We haven’t decided just when the exercises will be held. Our exams begin June 21st, probably we’ll have them the following Monday, June 24th. Everything must be over by June 28th when the graduating classes have their government exams to take. (Don’t mind the blots all over this letter – I dropped my pen!) As to sending out things, you can always send out some darning cottons – neutral shades – tannish etc. Any cute cotton dress goods will be welcome, preferably broad cloths and gingham, nothing too sheer. I guess you know what I like. We wear a dress about once – at least that’s about all I can get out of it in hot weather! Never mind sending any patterns. The tailor does the sewing for me now. I don’t have time. Anyway, the tailors are good and can copy anything from a picture, and if you stick at it and insist, they can do fairly well at fitting. Miss Tapley just got some materials from Shanghai – among them a yellow and brown figured material which I bought from her. If you want my preferences, I prefer a colored ground if it’s a’goin to be figured material. But don’t go buying the town out, now. I like stripes, too.

Don’t send any paper out because I can get what is necessary out here. The postage makes no difference. 50¢ Chinese is only 3¢ U.S. gold right now – it won’t break me! You can send out stockings any time – cotton mesh, lisle,¹ silk, and wool. Gosh, I didn’t know I’d come to this – you should see the patched things I’m wearing now! This country life sure is hard on the stockings, so send them along. I still have 5 pairs of whole chiffon which I’m hanging onto for special occasions only. Sent to Shanghai for some service weight silk which may be coming soon.

Wool is almost impossible to get – now, that is real wool. I’ve been going to make some sox, but that will be a summer job, I guess.

From all the things I’ve planned to get done this summer, I’m going to be rather busy. Hope to catalogue the music at school, which will be a job in itself. I’m saving all my reading for this summer, too, and there’s plenty I should read. By the way, I’m subscribing for the China Weekly Review – when I finish I’ll send them on home. You’ll find good reading and a real incite [*sic*] into China – probably send them on every month. I think you’ll enjoy them.

I’ve had a camphor chest made at the Christian Herald Industries in Foochow – which Merlin heads. I haven’t seen it yet, but Bill saw it and said it was a beauty. My design was very simple. Most of them are heavily carved, which is o.k. but I prefer something more simple. All I have as I remember is a bamboo spray on the left hand side (of the top). Something like this [illustration], carved, etc. I’m going to take my woolen clothes down to Foochow and douse them in gasoline,² then store them in the chest. That’s another job.

Another 6 days work is about to begin; before I know it, the week will be past and gone. It means that I’m so much closer to Bill. It doesn’t seem possible that I’ve been away from him 3 months. Just another month before I see him – joy, oh! Joy! Then, too, I’m

¹ Lisle – a cotton used for stockings and gloves when nylon or silk was not available, usually drab brown or gray and usually baggy.

² Figuratively, for cedar oil.

dreading it in a way; being together is going to be trying in more ways than one!! Just now I feel that the sooner I get to Foochow the better. As the time gets shorter I get as excited as a 6 year old!

Must close & drop Bill a line,
Much love to you all,
Mary

P.S. I hope Papa's not going to have a repetition of his throat condition. That surprised me!

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
June 11, 1940

Dear Mom:

Your March 25th letter came June 5th! I'd gotten your April 22nd one a week before – or nearly that. I had a grand letter from George the same day written about the same time, telling all about his operation and recovery and Peg's trouble with her ears, all of which I'd also gotten from you.

Did I tell you in the last letter that Peg and Geo. Sent me a box of stuff? Golly I was so excited! I had sent asking Peg to get me stockings and a few other things, never expecting to hear anything from it until fall, and it all came last week, too. Life out here is just one surprise after another. Besides the things I "ordered," they sent some canned goods and a grand huge fruit cake! I asked for tooth powder and the can opened & spilled (at least half of a pound can) all over everything, flavoring the cake slightly, but it's all o.k. and tastes grand. As soon as the box came I rushed a note to Bill asking him to send a message to them which he did immediately. He got direct contact with U.S. (California) and asked the fellow to mail the message right on, so by this time Geo. & Peg have probably heard. That is probably the last message Bill will be able to send to U.S. since the ban on amateur operators has been put on.¹

Well, I'm assured now that this is truly the rainy season! It's been raining steadily since last Thursday – day and night – and there seems to be no let up in sight. The river is so high, no boats are running and one day no mail came up. Mr. Beard and Mr. McClure did get up from Foochow after spending two days on the way – Mr. B. three days – to come a mere 40 miles. Mr. McClure is a peach, says what he means how he likes to and when. What's more he smokes a pipe and Half & Half tobacco, so the house smells a lot like home. As far as I know he's the only one of the mission who does smoke, and he's just independent and individual enough to do so, not because he wants to raise criticism but because he enjoys it. He certainly is grand, and likes to kid the ladies. Has four children & wife at home – 2 boys and 2 girls, and they're a most attractive family, and is he proud of them! One of the boys who has graduated from college this June has a scholarship to Yenching (Peking) to study there. I think it's international relations, but I ain't sure.

We all had dinner at Susan's last night, in her darling new house – it's very cozy and pleasant. I've taken a few pictures of it inside and out, but so far they haven't been

¹ Since "ham" radio transmissions were not scrambled or encrypted, for security during World War II the U.S. Congress suspended all amateur radio operations. With most of the American amateur radio operators in the armed forces at this time, the US government created the War Emergency Radio Service which would remain active through 1945.

developed. Now that Bill has his outfit for printing and developing I'll have plenty of business for him.

Conditions at school are a bit upsetting, if one wants to think of them in that respect. Miss S. resigned last year and though she stayed on this year there has been no successor – suitable one – found as yet. She is ready to leave the 23rd she says, before school closes, and so the students are quite wrought up about it (a la Chinese). It seems that so much display must be made, sincerely or not, that's part of the game, even to throwing fits, etc. Well, this mess coming before exams isn't so good, and it has to be settled thro' the alumnae & board of managers ultimately. All sorts of rumors get around about there being no school next fall, etc, which doesn't help matters any, so all in all the immediate future seems a bit black. There's nothing much I can do about it. One faction wants Miss S. to stay (again, that's Chinese policy) but it's time a break was made. Everything will work out eventually. Meantime, Helen can't make plans yet about the summer. If Miss S stays she (Helen) won't – she'll go home. If there's no one to take over, Helen stays – it's all so indefinite! If the government would only keep their hands off there wouldn't have been this mess.

We are planning for a new dormitory to be built here in Ingtai so it looks as though the school will be here next fall, and not in Foochow. However, everything changes so quickly here that we may be in the city after all!

Your March 15th letter did sound tired, Mom! Now take care of yourself. And by golly, if you can go out to State College, you go right ahead. There's no time like the present. But there's no need to you working your head off at home. It's time you took it easy! I hope Papa is o.k. by this time. I'd certainly join some sort of hospital plan, and go there when anyone has to be in bed! They have the hospital plan here, but I didn't join last fall, but I'm certainly going to. I've been perfectly well, but you never know what's going to happen. Things come up so unexpectedly out here and all conditions are so different from those at home. Anyway, it helps out the hospital as well as me.

The Union Hospital in Foochow (Methodist & Congregational) is a dandy new one – grand building – off hand I don't know how many beds, but it seems tremendous and excellently equipped.

Well, Mr. Mc has come back from dinner at F.C. Now he wants to discuss business with us since he is leaving tomorrow morning, so I'll have to stop.

Lots of love to all,

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

June 21, 1940

Dear Papa:

It seems queer to be writing to you on the longest day of the year, to wish you a happy birthday!¹ But I hope you have the grandest birthday ever – and – as the Chinese would say – many tens more of them, long life and happiness! I don't know where I'll be on August 4th, but I'll certainly be thinking of you, and sending greetings mentally – since amateur radio operators can no longer “operate,” I won't be able to get a message through to you. I'm disappointed, too, that I can not send one to Mom, for I'd had it all planned! But

¹ Albert Buckhout was born August 4, 1877.

this is an upset world and I suppose we should feel thankful that we are so fortunate to be able to think and say what we wish, when we want to!

We just got the news today of France's fall,¹ though we'd been expecting it for some time. It undoubtedly will affect the whole world. One big question is the orient – what does it hold for us out here? All we can do is wait, now, hoping for the best. Many of our British colleagues in Foochow and this district are nearly frantic, wondering what is in store for them and their homeland. This is as bad as the chaos of the barbaric ages and Atilla [*sic*] – or whatever his name was.

We started our exams – finals – today and will wind up next Thursday. After that it will probably be a week before I can get to Foochow, seeing there are always odds and ends to be cleared up. The question of school administration next fall is still unsettled, though it looks as though our present principal will stay on at this time. We are definitely planning to be up here, in Ingtai. With that in mind, plans are under way for a new dormitory, to ease the crowded conditions here. In that case, school may not open until the latter part of September, pending the completion of the building. War conditions do not seem to dampen the spirits of the students. We expect a large enrollment in the fall, too.

This coming Sunday (June 23rd) we have our baccalaureate service for Foochow College and Wen Shan – together. That will be the last service of the term! It doesn't seem possible that one whole school year has passed! So much has happened, and yet, I don't feel that I've progressed any. I really feel as though I were in kindergarten, and am still full of wonder and questioning. Besides, I still have to depend on other people to get me around and 'take care' of me, more or less. Regardless of that, I really feel 'at home' here – and it's grand.

In a place like this every person (foreigner) counts for something and has something definite to give to the community life. There are no 'hangers-on,' so to speak, and it's a most stimulating and inspiring atmosphere. We're looking forward to the new missionaries (Mr. & Mrs. Smith) who are coming to Ingtai in the fall. We'll really be the envy of all the other mission centers in the district, and be nearly as large as the Foochow board at present! Life is exciting out here – something new and unexpected coming up all the time! I love it.

We had planes flying over here this morning, but we couldn't see them because of rain clouds coming up the river. They were probably flying high. We've had reports of fearful bombing in Chung King and fierce fighting at places along the river to the capital. So far, have had no details. Planes fly over Foochow quite often and now and then we have an air alarm here, but so far it has been quiet.

Plum season is in full swing. The markets in Foochow are overflowing with tomatoes and other vegetables. By the time you get this you'll probably be having your first corn which out here is not too successful! Other vegetables are quite good though. The Union High in Foochow makes a specialty of raising vegetables, and they are delicious!

We have, very recently, acquired a new Magistrate in Ingtai, so things are looking up. We now have hopes of a little cooperation between government and the schools, as well as with the rice question, which is eternal! There is plenty of it, but it's like pulling eye teeth to get any – or has been. And it's frightfully high too. Consequently the board at all the schools has gone by 4 and 5 times what it was in the fall when I first came! In gold it's a mere pittance, but to the Chinese, it's a lot. I've been helping one girl by paying her board. There are many others who need help!

¹ Germany invaded France and the Low Countries beginning on May 10, 1940. Paris was occupied on June 14th.

Mama wrote that you'd been having a bad time this spring with your throat. I hope it has cleared up now and that you don't have a return of it. She says, too, that the furnace has worked beautifully. I'm glad it has. I was amazed to hear that you had a blizzard the 21st of April. We didn't even have freezing weather all winter! Now, the weather is quite muggy most of the time.

Supper is calling, and I'm hungry though I haven't done much for my newly adopted country!

Again, Papa, I wish you the happiest birthday ever. I can wish it in person birthday after next!

Lots of love to you,
Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
June 27, 1940

Dear Felix:

If I leave this letter another day it will be many more days before I'd get it written!

It doesn't seem possible that we are "winding up" the school year out here – my first year at Wen Shan. I dare say I've learned more from this year's experiences than I've taught! I'll really be able to start the fall term with both feet on the ground. I'm really beginning to feel like an old hand, now, eager to welcome our new missionaries who are coming out in September. Probably you have heard about them – if I haven't already told you – they are the E. Walter Smiths from the south, coming to Ingtai! We feel very much flattered and honored since several other districts were bidding for them. Helen and I may possibly be living with them too. They sound like a grand couple – young and full of life. Before we get through adding to our staff here we'll be a larger station than our headquarters at Foochow. But a number of the "stand-bys" are returning in the fall, plus their families, we hope.

Enclosed is an account of Helen's father and his work here at Ingtai. I do hope you people get a chance to see and hear him in South Hadley. I know he'll be there sometime – or was there – because Amherst is his old stamping ground. The picture in the folder is really a very poor print. Little "Duckling" with him is a cute intelligent youngster – everyone is crazy about him. He may be an orphan but he never comes to ask for anything for himself, it's always for the other fellow who is much worse off than he. We think he's going places – he certainly has stuff in him.

Last Sunday we held our Baccalaureate Service with Foochow College at the church. The speaker was the principal of the Ingtai Higher Primary School, a splendid, upright, sincere man if there ever was one. His sermon was concerned with Joshua who "graduated" when Moses gave over to him the command of his people. He stressed the fact that it was determination that got him over to the Promised Land – a very appropriate sermon.

Our two choirs sang the Hallelujia [sic] Chorus – a somewhat cut version, but they did it very well if I do say so, with the exception of the lost Hallelujia!! One of the tenors was over anxious, or else carried away with it, for he burst out in full voice with a Hallelujia just before the final long one!! I tell you, life's never dull out here – something always comes up unexpectedly!

Neither school is having any formal graduation exercises, primarily because of government examinations which start tomorrow. No diploma can be awarded until the results

of these exams have been returned to the school, which will be probably mid-summer. So we put all our effort into making the service Sunday a joyful one. The choir led all the graduates in – some 100 or so – with the hymn Holy, Holy, Holy. The recessional was Fling Out the Banner. Miss Tapley, English teacher at F.C., played Gounod's Ave Maria on her violin. The whole service was really quite impressive – all students were unusually attentive during the whole thing.

Now that it's the end of the year, I'm getting stirred up about things I want to do next year, especially in music. I've been giving individual music tests to all the girls and finding out just what I might stress next year. We collaborated – i.e. were “guest artists” on a F. C. musical program last month. My girls sang Amaryllis (3 parts), Loch Lomond (2 parts), and Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes (3 parts) and did very well – enclosed is a program – hope you have more success reading it than I did!! Oh yes – Finiculi, Finicula too (2 parts). The F. C. Glee Club did a good job, too. Some of the boys doing solos. It was a lot of work, but a lot of fun!

If I put anything more in this letter I'll have to pay book postage!

I expect to go down to Foochow July 3rd, the day before Mom's birthday. There's no telling what the fireworks will be at the Consulate, so I thought I'd better get this off to you before I leave here. I'll be in Foochow for several days – no telling how long – helping Helen's sister Eunice get off for the U.S.

No doubt you've heard of the frightful bombings in Chungking, but the Chinese seem anything but discouraged! Just now Ingtai seems to be the safest spot on this earth! The name means “Eternal Happiness” and it certainly is that!

Mail comes in quite regularly – just received a whole bunch, so I'm off to read it.

Love to Jean. I'm so glad her skin trouble is clearing up. Love to David, too –

As ever,

Mary

P.S. Mama writes that Louise Gaylord wants to go into mission work. I'm going to write her. I hope she does – it's fascinating and she's just the kind of person who should go into it.

~*M.F.B.*

Wen Shan School
June 30, 1940

Dear Mom:

If I don't get this written now there's no telling when I'll get another written. You see it's like this: I'm going down to Foochow Wednesday, July 3rd, from there on my time will be pretty fairly taken up with various matters of which you will be hearing!! Golly, I can hardly wait, though there are but two days left! From there I'll write more details, but I've never felt more certain of anything in my life than I do of Bill and our relationship. This summer either confirms my feelings and we grow or there will be a complete change the other way; we shall see. I definitely expect that our relationship will be stronger than ever.

Now to what's been happening in this end of the world. Probably the fact that 7 schools and hospitals, German, French, Soviet Consulates at Chungking, have been bombed, thousands killed, etc., has had very little show in the U.S. with such conditions in Europe and

England about to be wiped off the map.¹ Everything out here seems to be concentrating on Chungking and the reports are anything but encouraging! It may be the last gasp, like the end of the Mountain Park² fireworks! The last one is the heaviest. We don't know what to think. There has even been a rumor that we are going back to Foochow in the fall, but it doesn't seem very probable.

We are now laying plans for a new building – dormitory and classrooms here. It will be quite expensive for a refugee school and somehow it seems so useless when there are such grand facilities in Foochow. Well, again, it remains to be seen just what's going to happen. School is closed – tonight is the last party of the season, Thank Goodness!! I didn't go, because I didn't have an invite, or thought I didn't. When I came back from teaching the kids some songs and taking some swimming, I found Helen's note saying she had gone and was I going?? First I'd heard of it! It being so late, I stayed home and scraped up a bite of supper for myself.

Helen & I have been packing all day, trying to decide what can be left here safely (from moths), what we need in Foochow, and what we need on Kuliang. It's all a big mix-up, still. I'm packing my steamer trunk with things I'm leaving here, hoping I can get some mothballs!! I'm taking Bill's (W.A.B.'s) Army trunk with me, taking down my woolens and dressy clothes to store in my new camphor chest. The canned ham, beans, and sandwich spreads that Peg sent and the remains of the fruitcake etc are going to be taken right to Kuliang too!

Bill writes of all the “doings” at the consulate and various other places over the 4th, so it looks like a busy social season ahead! We're going down to F.C.U. for a swim in their grand pool sometime besides doing a million other things. Helen's sister, Eunice, is leaving for U.S. about the 9th of July. Well, she can – I'm staying in Foochow!

The other night in the rain, nearly 50 feet of our new wall crumbled! Lucy had put up the money for it, so she's none too pleased about it. All compounds and homes have walls around them to keep thieves out, but thieves still get in!! Rice has disappeared at the school, chickens too! When I told one of the senior classes that we had no walls around our homes in America, they were thunderstruck – just can't imagine anything like that. I think the sooner China gets rid of a number of her walls the better she will be.

Mr. Beard went to Foochow last week. We have been expecting him back since yesterday, but he hasn't appeared yet. Up here we have to go on the assumption that “no news is good news” This is a scribble, but I'm sure next week at this time I'll really have some news, including all that's going on in Foochow.

Lots of love to you all,
Mary

¹ On October 27, 1938, the Japanese captured Wuhan, then the political, economic, and military center of China. The government was forced to flee to Chung King (Chongqing) to set up a provisional capital under the leadership of Gen. Chiang Kai-shek. More than 50 embassies, factories, and educational institutions moved with them. A total of 268 air raids with a total of 3,000 tons of bombs pummeled the city from 1939 to 1942. [Various sources.] The bombing of Chongqing was focused almost entirely on the civilian population, thus it can be seen as an early example of terror bombing. In the first two days of the campaign, the raids of May 1939 killed more than five thousand Chinese civilians. [Herbert Bix (2001). *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*.]

² Mountain Park, on Mt. Tom in Holyoke Massachusetts, was an amusement park. Their Saturday night summer fireworks displays were readily seen from the Buckhout's home on Pine Street in South Hadley.

FOR MARY BUCKHOUT
July 10, 1940

*I have sent a
copy to Mary.
Y.M.*

Eternal Father, our Father, Father of all men and women, boys and girls, we would try to believe, showing "by-life" our belief in the fundamental brotherhood of all peoples.

We confess how easily we have yielded to the temptations to consider other races inferior to ourselves, rather than just different. We confess how easily we accept our bountiful American heritage as our just deserts rather than good fortune to be shared.

Pardon, we pray, our proneness to ask Cain's question "Am I my brother's keeper?" Strike us alive, our Father, with the stark fact that Thou hast made of one blood all the races of men for to dwell on the face of the earth; we stand or fall together.

In these dark days of world wars and rumors of wars when national anarchy builds unnatural walls between the common people of the earth, we thank Thee for the quiet zeal of the Christian Church which like flood waters finds the cracks in the walls of hate and misunderstanding through which to flow in consecrated, skillful, serving, healing, teaching, saving love.

From the secure shelter of our hill-encircled valley home, we take vicarious pride, our Father, in the faith and courage and energy and craftsmanship and Christian consecration of one of our own, representing us in one of the front line trenches of Thy Church across the world.

We thank Thee for Mary Frances Buckhout, interpreter of America at its best to the girls and boys of China. For her healthy, wholesome zest for living, for her natural simplicity and humility, for her knowledge and skill in her native tongue, in the language of music, and in drama, for her resilient strength, and for her happy devotion to the Christian enterprise in China we give Thee our thanks.

Strengthen, we pray, the three way current from Mary to Thee to us and back again to her. We would send along the current of Christian love our prayers, our letters, and our "coined life." May we, O God, never falter in the easy ministry of supply, that she may strive on without handicap in the difficult ministry of service. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Felix A. Manley

Wen Shan School
Foochow, China
July 15, 1940
July 16 –

Dear Mom and family:

It's the same old address, but at present I'm upon Kuliang, a perfectly gorgeous place! I hope you'll forgive my pencil. I came up here without ink and no shops have opened up here yet so I'm reverting to childish habits!

We came down from Ingtai, Helen and I, on July 4th – your birthday! There were several festivities going on in Foochow but we were too late to take them in. The trip down was quite fast and easy, so we were at Wenshan by 3:30 in the afternoon. Needless to say I called Bill immediately and went over there for supper. Helen went over to help Eunice with last minute things and packing in preparation for her trip home. Eunice was down with malaria and generally miserable and not too anxious to go home. She said the first thing she'd do in California would be to go to Pasadena to see the Foochow people there! There are a number there, most of them waiting to get back to Foochow at the earliest opportunity.

Helen's aunt came down from Shaowu the same day we came down from Ingtai! She's a peach, like Auntie Caddie. They managed to get Eunice packed, and such a load of stuff she had to take! Everybody sent letters and packages to be taken home – it was really an imposition. I resolved not to send anything by her, she had so much!!! Saturday afternoon we saw her off on a little sampan on the first step of her trip down the river. She was still a bit shaky, but always jolly and smiling. I do hope you get a chance to meet her. I have no idea where she will be, but there's always a possibility that South Hadley might be on the program.

Helen and I had made our headquarters at Wen Shan and got our own breakfasts most of the time, but, as usual, all the mission folks were more than hospitable and provided us with our other meals. Most of mine I got over at Bill's.

We were in Foochow about 9 days, Helen finishing up accounts, running around getting supplies and servants to go up to Kuliang. Picnicked a couple of times and went swimming once. The city is awfully hot. The last day before we came up here (where it's heavenly cool) I simply dripped! I came back to Wen Shan, stripped, and sat writing and the water just rolled off me. That's no exaggeration. Up here in Kuliang I can't believe it's really hot in Foochow. It takes about 4 hours to get up here via rickshaw and chair!

Before the road to the mountain (foot) was torn up, the husbands used to commute – drive to the foot of the mountain in fifteen or twenty minutes, then hike up or take a chair up in about 1½ - 2 hours. They'd come up in the evening after work & go down early in the morning. Now it's a bit more difficult. Bill is bound to come up. Since he has no vacation and has to be on schedule at 9:30 a.m. 12 m, and 6:30 p.m., it means that he'd leave the consulate after 6:30, get here about 10:30, and have to leave next morning about 6:30 in order to get down in time for his 9:30 sked. He insists upon trying it anyway, but I'm afraid it's going to be strenuous. He's coming up tonite and I'm going back with him in the morning. I still have a number of things to do in the city and Helen & I must see Miss Sun off for home anyway.

Kuliang reminds me a lot of Pennsylvania. All the houses up here are stone cottages, set in the hillsides with glorious views all around. So far the mornings have been clear, like

State College, but a thunderstorm has come up every afternoon. The moon is getting full now and the nights have been beautiful. Helen & I came up without any cook or servant, and really roughed it for a couple of days. The neighbors have been more than generous having us in for meals, sending down tea & sandwiches & cake in the afternoon and even flowers to cheer us up. Helen expected to find her house all repaired but when we arrived we found the floors up in two rooms! Everything was pretty much of a mess, but we're really getting to look quite civilized now. Helen's father put in a grand swimming pool just below the house – very secluded, delightful spot. It's fed by spring water so cold all the time.

One great relief about this place is that there are no walls. Everything in the city is walled in – it has to be. The city compound where the Board office is, is quite spacious and open, but still the wall around it gives a feeling of being shut in! Up here, without walls, there's such a feeling of freedom! The coolies take advantage of the freedom, too. Things disappear quite easily!

I'm running all over the lot in this letter. I hope you can get something out of it!

As usual, I had quite an experience coming up! I certainly wasn't built for travel in China where one has to be carried around! After the first stop coming up the mountain my chair literally flattened out under me! The coolies stood for some time looking at it. Finally I decided to try tying it together. They finally got the idea and rigged it up so that it held the rest of the way, but I had to sit bolt upright with my bag in my lap and that position on a steep grade is a bit difficult to maintain! I still say we can expect most anything to happen in this country, and then be surprised. However, I find I'm not the only one the coolie find difficult to carry, so I feel better.

Well, I got Helen's¹ letter telling me of her engagement and your May 8th letter, too, just after I arrived in Foochow. Pren sounds just dandy and I'm sure Helen knows what she's doing. I'm glad she's going to be married soon, too. I had hoped, though, that I'd see one of my sisters married. By the time I get around, their families will probably be grown up! I'll write Helen soon, but give her my love, meantime, and assurance that I highly approve! I must confess that I was tickled to death when I got her letter but before I was through I was crying like a fool – out of sheer happiness and excitement! Wedding presents will have to wait since sending things home by mail is not too satisfactory. I think when I do come home that I'll have to charter a freighter!

The longer I am out here the more I am convinced that I want to continue work out here. I may change my mind – perhaps the Board will too – there's always that possibility! If it only didn't take so long to get anywhere! Bill has but one more year in the Navy and there's a possibility he may be leaving Foochow in August! When I think of it, an awful pang goes through me. But there is this consolation – that next fall ('41) he will be starting his pre-med course at home. He's so anxious to get started I'm sure he'll make good. He enjoys studying. He's been studying Mandarin twice a week in Foochow, which shows he's enterprising.

Our one week together was delightful, miserable, and trying, but I think we've come out on top, and can look at things a bit more sanely than we could at first. If I don't stop this ramble pretty soon it'll never get mailed, so here goes –

Lots of love to you all – and Mom – take care of yourself,

Mary

¹ Mary's youngest sister, Helen Buckhout.

Kuliang
July 21, 1940

Dear Mom:

Since I've arrived here I've had a letter from Felix and one from Levada. Was certainly glad to hear that Jean is much better. Probably by the time you receive this their second heir will have arrived.

I've been wondering what you are all doing this summer. Though you vowed not to, I'll bet anything you're up to your old tricks and running a regular hotel! Sometimes I think perhaps my missionary work should be done at home, running the summer hotel myself! Maybe I'll do it yet!! I have a dread sometimes, too, of you & Papa letting the old house go. I certainly wouldn't blame you, but I hope you don't. I know George doesn't want to see it go, so between us we'll have to keep it in the family.

We've been up here on Kuliang for a week – Helen, her aunt, and I – thoroughly enjoying ourselves with the coolness, sleeping, eating, and sleeping some more. People are late in coming up but they are getting here now, so there is quite a community. The first church services started today. Our American service is 5 o'clock vespers.

Though we have been here but a week it's been quite busy, socially, tearing here and there, and dinners out etc. I guess I wrote Helen about our moonlight hike to Kushan Peak¹ for the sunrise and breakfast. Bill came up on Tuesday nite, making the trip from the consulate in record time. Then if he didn't walk in again on Friday nite – making the trip in still less time – in 2 hours. I didn't dream he was coming and could hardly believe my eyes and ears! It was just 9 o'clock – we had started to close up the house and go to bed when I saw some long-legged individual stalking down the path and “Anybody home?” Maybe I wasn't excited! We took a dip in the pool and had such a good time. He had to leave by 6 or 6:30 the next morning, so we had a 5:30 breakfast and I walked part way down the mountain with him. If I'm not mistaken he must be fairly pooped out – two trips like that in a week is something!! Fortunately his work is such that he can sleep between schedules.

I'm going down to the city tomorrow morning for a couple of days to pick up a dozen little things Helen and I forgot to put in. Also have to have some dental work done – not very much. Saturday nite Dorothy Brewster, the surgeon's wife,² had a dance on their porch in the moonlight. It was lots of fun. Though the men were few and far between we had a good time. Harold is a grand host and he was feeling tops last night. Bill was invited but having made the trip the night before, last night was out! The Brewsters are going down in the morning so I'll be traveling with them.

I'm getting a fairly decent tan up here, even on my legs. I've worn stockings but once since I came down from Ingtai. There's just no point in wearing them up here – the paths are rough and the brush is thick. Besides, we're always taking short-cuts across rice fields, so Helen and I have sworn off stockings. Very few people wear them anyway. The sun, of course, is quite hot and being tropical one can not go without some sort of head covering or

¹ Kushan Peak, also known as Drum Mountain...rises 2600 feet from the plains of the Min. Kuliang (Drum Ridge) sloped down from Kushan Peak to form a two-thousand foot backdrop for Foochow.” – *China Coast Family*, Caldwell, John C.; 1953. All interested in the Missionary experience in China are strongly encouraged to read this book. Free copies are available digitally at www.archive.org.

² Harold N. Brewster (1906-1965), born in China, took charge of the Wiley General Hospital (Methodist, Episcopal) at Fukien in 1933. [*The Friend*, Vol CIII, Number 9, 1 September, 1933]

umbrella. In fact one never goes out without an umbrella here, either for sun or rain. If it's not doing one thing, it's doing the other. Such picturesque umbrellas, too. We've been very religious about taking afternoon naps. Yesterday I slept from 1 to 5 p.m.!! – having been out late the night before and up early in the morning.

This morning we went around calling on some of the folks who arrived yesterday. Many of them I have met before – many I haven't. But they are all such grand people. Probably a number of them will be over for the hymn sing at the Brewsters' this evening.

There are reports of the tightening of the blockade along the coast, which is nothing new. We still can't look ahead! The new cabinet in Tokyo, closing the Burma Road, etc, don't look too promising. As to the political situation at home, I'm inclined to think I'd rather see a third term for Roosevelt than take a chance on Willkie!!¹ What a world!!

Well, I must get in my nap – before vespers – and I'll need a few extra winks since I'm leaving about 6 a.m. tomorrow, so I'm off.

Lots of love to you, and anybody who happens to be at home!!

Mary

Kuliang, Foochow, China
July 29, 1940

Dear Mom:

I'm willing to bet dollars to doughnuts that you are having a house full this summer despite your resolutions! How about it? I hope that you are sensible enough to let someone else do the work, however!

Kuliang is a quiet place, but never a day goes by without someone dropping in. We are usually up about 7 and go to bed quite early and sleep most of the afternoon! So when people do drop in there's not much time left for other things. I find it difficult to write letters up here, too.

Lyda Houston just came in this morning asking me to take over Sunday school for the foreign youngsters on Kuliang. There are only 10 of primary age. Never having worked with kindergarteners, I don't know how it's going to work out, but there's nothing like trying. This is the time I wish I had some of Levada's skill in craft work etc and someone else's in telling stories. Mrs. Brewster will help so I guess we'll get along. Dorothy (Mrs. B.) is a good sort. The mothers would teach their own youngsters, but they have them to teach all year around and want someone else to take over during the summer. Since the summer is half gone now it will mean only 4 or 5 Sundays – an hour each time and I ought to be able to do something with them. They are all very cute youngsters.

Our Sunday choir has gotten underway! Yesterday we had 4 sopranos, 4 altos, 3 basses and 1 lone tenor!! More tenors are looming on the horizon, however! It's a relief to sing with a group that reads at sight! And to sing English words. Maureen Downey, wife of a Dr. at Yenping, has charge of the choir. She's very unassuming and quite delightful to work with. The poor reed organ is about on its last legs, but we manage to get along. Next Sunday

¹ Wendell Lewis Willkie: corporate lawyer and a former Democrat who became the dark horse Republican Party nominee for the 1940 presidential election. He crusaded against the inefficiency and anti-business policies of the New Deal. He was of German extraction and was the only major-party nominee for President in history never to have held elected office, a Cabinet position or high military rank.

we are singing “As Torrents In Summer” but I’m afraid it won’t begin to compare with Meg’s¹ finishing!

This weekend we’ve been having a Kuliang typhoon! Does it blow! I came back from Foochow Friday nite and it had been blowing up here then for two days and nites, though we hadn’t gotten any of it in Foochow. It continued to blow hard all day Saturday and that night and finally began to rain. It poured down in torrents. When it rains out here it really rains. Here it is Monday morning and still raining some, tho’ the sun is trying to break through. From the radio reports you’ve been having some scorching heat, too. But I think I prefer that to the awful humidity in Foochow. I don’t mind it, and it’s alright as long as I don’t have to move, but then I’m literally dripping. My clothes are in a frightful state most of the time. As you know, I spent 5 days – delightful days – in Foochow. Bill turned himself inside out for me!! Such extravagance – steak is nearly prohibitive out here, now – even an ordinary roast of beef is seldom seen. He came back up the mountain with me Friday night and left Saturday morning at 6:30. He’s already been up several times & plans to come tomorrow nite. I don’t know how he stands it. He refuses to take a chair because he can hike it twice as fast!! When he arrives he’s soaking wet. It usually takes 4 hours but he does it in 2!!!² I walked down the Mt. when I went down and it wasn’t too bad – that was Monday – On Wednesday I was lame as anything – funny I did not feel it on Tuesday at all.

Well, Helen and I are going in for a dip soon! By the way, what possessed the president to finally put and embargo on war materials.³ The excuse he gives is simply a means of “saving face,” I think – but why on earth wasn’t it done 3 years ago. It’ll take all of that time before it will really have much effect! What do you think of the new Republican candidate? I certainly don’t approve of his tactics! He’ll lose more than he’ll gain by them. I’m willing to bet on a 3rd term and have a feeling I’d support it when I weigh the qualifications of the two men at this time! Of course, we probably see things a bit differently out here, but Willkie doesn’t seem to have what it takes.

Take care of yourself, Mom – and take it easy – a la Chinese – they are the people who know how to take things easily – never hurry, never perturbed – it’s a wonderful quality in some ways.

Lots of love to you and Papa,

Mary

Kuliang, Foochow, China
Aug. 9, 1940

Dear Mom:

It certainly sounds to me (from your June 6th letter) that the summer parade has started at South Hadley!! Kind of wish I were there to see all the folks when they came

¹ Margaret Burgevin, choir director of the South Hadley church.

² Bill McVay was an avid athlete who played basketball, ran cross-country, pitched sidearm softball, cycled, and fought in the USN lightweight boxing division. It is entirely possible he made the trip in that time.

³ From 1938-1940 the wide-spread bombing of Chinese civilians by the Japanese aroused indignation in the United States and resulted in a “moral embargo” that discouraged the sale of airplanes and aeronautical equipment to countries whose armed forces were using airplanes for attack on civilian populations and eventually resulted in the suspension of the export to Japan of aircraft, aeronautical equipment, and other materials within the scope of the moral embargoes. These operated ultimately to stop the export of arms to Japan. [<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/japan.htm>]

home! I'm glad, too, that you've been galavanting a bit – to New Bedford, Bridgeport etc! Do it every time you get a chance, say I!!

Time goes as swiftly upon Kuliang as it does in Ingtai! And there seems to be so little time to do all that we want to. When everyone finally arrived on the mountain (i.e. – all who are coming) the Council decided we should have our “Thursday Nights” which are programs arranged & carried out by the various groups here. They put me on the committee along with Miss Thomas, Maureen Downie,¹ Miss Bryant (an Anglican missionary) and Florence Smith (Methodist). We've found material enough for two programs, we think – musical and readings etc. Our first one comes off this next Monday night – August 12th. So far, I've done darned little toward it because I was in Foochow from Monday to Thursday night, having entrance exams at school! And today we've had Mission Meeting all day, which is continued tomorrow morning! So the program & rehearsals have fallen on the shoulders of others! The choir is doing a couple of numbers. Finlandia – mixed, and To a Wild Rose – for the women. With readings mixed in and special musical numbers, I think it will be fairly good. We'll see.

Our mission meeting today was a “pooling” of our various school problems, and, as ever, the pressing need is money! From Boston comes word of a big cut in the next years' budget, and that means cutting down of appropriations etc as we see most fit, out here. All of the schools have to have additional buildings to house the horde of students wanting to enter. Wen Shan examined 220, of which we can take only 60! The conditions are the same in all schools. It's worse now, since the schools are all refiguring in improvised crowded quarters! The teacher question is a problem because government schools pay a higher salary than do our Christian schools. But despite all this everyone feels that the educational policies of these schools have taken great strides because of their contact with country people, having to rely on their own resources for everything in the country, and all students feeling a keener companionship because of their living at the school and not at home, as they do in Foochow!!

Much later- Monday morning, Aug. 12th

Well. Things have happened. First of all – now take a deep breath, Mom. Bill and I are engaged! We have been, more or less, for some time, but hadn't announced it. In fact, it isn't officially announced yet, but will be by the time you receive this! Helen, grand girl that she is, is trying to think of some clever way of announcing it – she would! And it'll be different, too.

Well, Mom – Bill and I have been through the heights and depths this summer, from the height of happiness to the depths of despair and misery! And it's certainly been far from easy!! I never dreamed that two people so in love could be so miserable at times. But, thank goodness, we've had our sane moments, too. This past week has been the most trying I've ever experienced and – darn it – I look a bit worse for wear which draws remarks from some of our closer friends – but I can take it.

Bill got it in his head he wanted to be married this summer – which, of course, I wanted to do, too. But it can't be done as easily as that, and I've had a time holding him

¹ Wife of Gerald L. Downie (1900-2000), a Methodist Episcopal Church medical missionary assigned to the China mission field with his wife Maurine from 1932 to 1950. He worked at the Nanping Methodist Hospital and his wife was a children's school teacher. They were forced to leave China in 1944 when the Communists came to power. In 1946 they returned to China and remained there until a furlough in 1950. [<http://www.yale.edu/adhoc/WMC/WMC-Methodist.html>]

down, and not too successfully! After talking with Helen I went to Dr. Beard, who was perfectly grand. Believe me, he's no fool! Of course I have to consult the Board, in Boston, because I don't want to give up this work. It doesn't mean getting permission exactly, but stating my plans. Dr. Beard thinks that if we wait a reasonable amount of time – a year – that my relationship with the Board need not be changed. I don't want it to be – neither do I want to upset my relation to my church. He was most understanding and helpful. A load seemed to have lifted after having talked with him.

Of course there are many factors to be considered. Bill has had to reenlist. If he can get home before his present enlistment expires (July '41) he could probably contest his enforced reenlistment. Then he could start his school next fall – pre-med, and I'd wait until my term here is up. At the present, it looks like 4 more years for him in Foochow, and for that reason Bill wants to be married now. Well, I'm going down to Foochow Wednesday p.m. for a few days and try to make him look at things a bit more sanely.

You may be sure, Mom, I've been looking at this thing from all angles, and there have been times when I've been foolish about what I've said and done, but with the help of some of the folks in the mission – Helen, Merlin, & Dr. Beard – I've been brought down to earth so I can be more sensible about it all now. The last time Bill was up – Saturday night – we put in a hectic time together – both of us wanting so much to be married now – but I know I couldn't do it that way and feel that I'd been fair either to my responsibilities or to Bill.

I've heard of such problems & perplexities between two people in love, but never knew it could be so utterly soul-raking! Perhaps it would be just as well not to make this public until we have done so out here! I'm going to write Felix, owe him a letter anyway. As soon as we have announced our engagement here we'll cable if it doesn't cost all out-doors. Come to think of it, I'll probably not cable until I've written Boston – my next letter will give you particulars.

Now I must close or I'll never get this in the mail. I've been writing it now for 5 days.

Lots of love to you all, and rest assured, Mom & Pop, that Bill and I do love each other with all our hearts. These have been some of my happiest days as well as most miserable ones, but with Bill's love and mine for him, I'm sure we'll see it through as it should be –

Lovingly,
Mary

Perhaps you'd like the full name!! H. Vilroy McVay, U.S. N.

Foochow, China
Aug. 18, 1940

Dear Felix and Jean:

Ever since your April 28th letter arrived (a month ago!!) I've been thinking of all the things I should be writing about. But – do you know – there's no more time out here than there is at home! In fact I think there is less. Altho' watching the Chinese people and dealing with them, one would think there were all the time in the world. No wonder they have been able to endure so much – they've never felt pressed for time – never hurry, take things as they come, make the best of them, and come out on top. They are born diplomats, clever and

patient!! I wish we Americans could acquire some of the ease and grace with which they do things – anything, from entertaining to a business deal, is carried off with equal politeness.

Well – to go back – this summer was to have been the time to get caught up with reading and writing! So far I'm still "catching up." First, a few things in your letter. But this time I think congratulations are forth coming for you and Jean. I hope it is a girl! And I hope, too, Jean, that everything goes nicely with you.

I was much surprised to hear about Marjory Wells' illness! They are sensible people, and I feel sure Marjory will come out of it alright. I have great admiration for Marjory and I think she is quite an unusual girl.

Beatrice wrote some time ago that Louisa Gaylord wanted to go into Mission work. There is no one better suited for such work, and I know she'd love it and the people, wherever she would be, would love her too. I hope the folks at home encourage her to do so – really. She's a grand person for that – steady and sincere!! I was tickled to pieces when I heard it, and I hope she carries out her intentions.

Conditions here don't improve, altho' (in one way I suppose it's an improvement) we have had over 200 girls register and take exams for entrance into Wen Shan. Of those (220) we can take only 60 or 70 so we have a fairly good choice! All of the schools are being swamped with students who want to enter, just at this time it's impossible to take in all we'd like to because of lack of teachers, space, and equipment. Now isn't that a predicament! There was a time when Wen Shan used to pay the students who came there to study! Now they flock to us and we can't begin to accommodate them. So I said, all other schools that are refugeeing are in the same predicament.

Besides there's still the same rice problem – it just can't be bought. If it is, the soldiers get it before it reaches our schools. Of course, the government's policy is soldiers first and students second – but the students barely stand a chance. As it is, we should be opening school in a month or less, but there's no telling now when we can open. We need rice, teachers, and more dormitory space for our students. We'll get out of it somehow. But it certainly hurts to have to spend money on temporary buildings when we have just what we need in our compound in Foochow. Someday I hope, before too long, we can have the privilege of using our own property again.

The schools held a student conference at Hwa Nan College in Foochow last week. Hwa Nan is the Methodist School for girls – high school & college.¹ About 70 boys and girls attended and it seemed to be quite successful. Of course, everything was in Chinese so I was pretty much at sea, but I could get in on the singing and the social side a bit. Two of their drawing cards were a boy and a girl (about 20 years old) who had been in the front lines working with the guerillas etc. The girl had been doing Y.W.C.A. work in the villages and a lot of song leading under the leading Y.M.C.A. secretary in China! She was a fascinating girl – healthy and full of pep – and she knew how to make those students sing!! She's going to Hwa Nan this fall and prepare for Y.W.C.A. work in the future. They had five speakers on democracy besides religious subjects. The conference lasted but 3 days, which wasn't long enough. By the end of the 3rd day they were just getting acquainted and really getting

¹ Founded by Lydia Trimble in 1914, Hwa Nan Women's College was China's first private college for girls in Fuzhou [Foochow], China. After the Japanese invasion of China in the early 1940s, its students and supplies fled inland. The Communist government forced them to merge with other schools to form Fujian Teachers' University, but in 1985 it was re-established and now enrolls some 2,000 women, who are mostly 18 and 19 years old and drawn from throughout China's Fujian Province. [worldpress.morningside.edu]

interested in their discussion groups. This is supposedly an annual affair, but for the past 2 years they haven't had a conference because of conditions.

The blockade along the coast is being tightened and a great deal of bombing being done, tho' none in our immediate vicinity. We are beginning to wonder how those returning from furloughs are going to get down to Foochow. They'll probably have to come overland – a long tedious trip – but they don't look at it that way. They are all just itching to get back to Foochow.

The summer has been perfectly grand up here on Kuliang. It's a beautiful spot and the people who gather here from all over the province (sometimes from all over the world) are a marvelously congenial group. The British, with their harrowing news, or lack of news – have been facing things most courageously.¹ Really, they are to be admired. Nearly all of them have some children in England and few of them know where they are or what they are doing! Just the same, they enter into the social as well as the religious life here on Kuliang and give the best that they have! Last week we had one program of music and readings at our club house here, and tomorrow night we are having another. Yours truly is leading community singing and helping with the choir. It's lots of fun and there is such a response from everyone. They all enter into what ever they do so heartily!!

Well, Felix and Jean, I'm ending the season with a bang (for some folks). At a breakfast party this morning down by Helen's pool, I announced – well – yep – I took the fatal step. I'm no longer independent – yes – I'm engaged!!!! And Bill is grand – you'd like him I know. He's U.S. Naval Radio Operator at the consulate and a peach. Now the Kuliang folks know, but there are a few in Foochow who still must stand the blow!!!

This letter will go on forever if I don't stop soon, so here goes –

Sincerely,

Mary Frances

P.S. I trust Bill and I have your blessing! I only wish we were a little nearer so we could run in to see you.

M.F.

Kuliang, Foochow
Aug 19, 1940

Dear Mom and all the family,

Yep – I've went and did it! Bill and I are engaged – it's now made official and public! I've been walkin' on air ever since, and particularly today. I'm still up on Kuliang but going down to Foochow this Wednesday for the rest of the summer!!!

After much consideration and debating, Bill and I decided to announce our engagement here on Kuliang before I left. Of course Bill isn't up here, but this is what happened. Maureen Downie & Pauline Humphrey gave a breakfast party this morning over at our house. Their original intention was to make it a swimming party etc with breakfast following! The day wasn't too pleasant – cool & foggy & raining – so the party ended up on our porch, cooking breakfast over small Chinese stones, but what fun! Helen, her aunt, & I planned last nite, that we'd announce the engagement at this party, knowing Maureen

¹ The Battle of Britain, a twelve-week battle (July 10 to October 31, 1940) in British air space between the German Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force, was Germany's attempt to win air superiority over southern Britain and the English Channel, and the first major military campaign to be fought entirely in the air. [history.com.uk]

wouldn't mind, so we made a small raft (10" x 4") of pine branches and pinned my picture and one of Bill to the branches and let the raft float around in the pool. Merlin was "in" on this, so he led all the folks to our house via the pool where they couldn't help but see us floating – and the news was "out." We had a gay time over breakfast. Then Merlin played his records of Cesar Franck's symphony!!! Helen's orthophonic¹ is very good, excellent tone. The recording was excellent, so it was a treat. About 11 o'clock 6 of us went over to Humphreys to play croquet – sounds rather mild – but we have quite snappy games! Of course all day I've been meeting people & receiving congratulations. One of the girls said, "I'm so glad you've come through your problems so happily!!!" Wheeeeeeee... Never having gone through this engagement business before – nor the prelude – it was a bit trying, to say the least. Problems seemed to mount from nowhere and everything certainly looked pretty black for a while. So I look back now – it was so needless – but at the time it was very serious. Bill is like a kid out of school, he's so happy – and needless to say I am, too! I will send pictures, I promise. Bill develops & prints his own. They're all in Foochow, excepting the one or two I have up here, but I simply can't spare those. The first thing I do when I get down there will be to get another of his pictures and send it on to you.

We're goin to make the announcement in Foochow with small cards like this one enclosed – very informal! Bill never uses his first name – simply H. Vilroy McVay.²

I'm so excited I can hardly wait to get down to Bill again, tho' I was there for three days last week. Merlin is giving us a party Friday night. Everyone is being so grand. Helen's turning herself inside out. Though, when I broke the news to her it wasn't unexpected, it nearly took the wind out of her sails!!

Well, tomorrow night is our second musical & reading program. The choir is singing Finlandia. I'm singing a couple of numbers – Rubenstein's "Du Bist Wie Eine Blume" and Grieg's "Im Kahne" with "Hark, Hark, the Lark" of Schubert in reserve. I don't know why I consent to do these things when I haven't been practicing. Sunday I sang Come Unto Him – it being communion, led by Dr. Beard. Maureen sang the first part of it – He Shall Feed His Flock – and did it beautifully. She has a lovely mezzo voice, full and mellow.

Mrs. Beard is having a sale of her beautiful embroidered linens tomorrow. I'm going to see what I can pick up. Wednesday A.M. I'm out to another breakfast party then off to my Bill!!

There are many more letters I ought to be writing and much to do before I leave this lovely place, but I don't regret it a bit. I've had a marvelous month here, but just now I'm most interested in seeing Bill.

Much love to you all,
Mary

¹ *Orthophonic* – Victor Orthophonic Victrola, the first consumer phonograph designed specifically to play "electrically" recorded disks. The combination was recognized instantly as a major step forward in sound reproduction.

² His reason was not liking the name "Harley." His childhood nickname was "Vil" that eventually became "Bill" – probably from a misunderstanding of the pronunciation. In the Navy he was known as "Mac."



H. V. McVay, Foochow, March 1940

Foochow
Aug. 26th '40

Dear Mom:

Here are a few pictures I've been promising you for some time! They are not particularly "showy" of Bill, but I'll send others of him along, more recent ones, as soon as he can get them printed. Those of Helen, Eunice, and Merlin are especially good! I do hope Eunice gets somewhere near South Hadley sometime – she's a grand girl!

I came down from Kuliang on Wednesday afternoon – last – and have been tearing around ever since between social and business engagements! The last concert was pretty good, and did they take me for a ride!! By that time all the mountain knew of our engagement and I've been pestered & peppered ever since. One of the British missionaries announced the program for us, and when it came to introducing me he just fell all over himself getting my name out!! One of the songs we sang in the community singing before hand was Glad That I Live Am I. Well, our M.C. said he thought that was quite true of two people at least – mentioning no names, of course! Then he went on to elaborate & extend good wishes etc to "Mrs., oh, I beg your pardon – Miss Mary Frances McV... oh – Buckhout." By that time I was ready to crawl out of the club rather than get up and sing. The whole audience was in an uproar, too.

Needless to say I tore down to Foochow after the concert arriving about 7:30 and I'm still tearing. Bill is moving. Until now he's been sleeping in his quarters at the Consulate and eating in another place. He's now going to take a house & really live. So we're in the midst of picking up enough furniture around, in case he gets tired of sitting & sleeping on the floor.

I'm staying in the city compound (Amer. Board) until Helen comes down on Thursday, then will go over to Wen Shan. Our principal is leaving in October. We don't know when we can open school at Ingtai, since we have to build a dorm which isn't even started yet. All schools have had to delay opening for the same reason. Teachers are hard to get but we have all and more students than we can handle.

I gave English entrance exams on Saturday to our second group of candidates, which can't begin to compare with our first group! They are much poorer students and probably we can't take many, if any. I'm due now to run down to school to see what's what & then over to Bill's to help get settled. Merlin gave us a grand party last Friday nite. Several folks came down from Kuliang for it.

Must run – more later –
Lots of love to you all,
Mary

Is Helen married yet?? Got her swell pictures. Pren looks grand!

Norwich Town, Conn.
Aug 28, 1940

My dear Mrs. Buckhout—

Your very kind letter just at hand – I do look forward to my visit to the So. Hadley friends and to your home on Oct. 10th. Eunice is now due in Frisco and I trust the boat will bring us some long overdue letters from Foochow. I think of Mary Frances, Helen and Eunice Thomas together in the Kuliang cottage these long summer days, but we do want late news of course. A new building was in prospect to hold the new class in Sept.

Very gratefully yours,
Edward H. Smith.

<small>ROCKWELL HARMON POTTER, D.D., PRESIDENT</small>	<small>FRED FIELD GOODELL, D.D., EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT</small>	<small>HAROLD B. BELCHER, TREASURER</small>
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<small>ALDEN H. CLARK, D.D. MISS HAZEL E. EMERSON WYNN C. FAIRFIELD, D.D.</small>	August 28, 1940	<small>HERBERT E. B. CASE MEDICAL SECRETARY MARK H. WARD, M.D.</small>

Mrs. A. T. Buckhout
South Hadley
Massachusetts

My dear Mrs. Buckhout:

I have your letter of August 26th. I find that the last missionary to China who is going out to Foochow is Roderick Scott, who is sailing from San Francisco on September 6th. I think he would be willing to take out a package to your daughter, if it is not too large or heavy. I do not know his plans just before sailing, but you could send the package to him addressed as follows:

Prof. Roderick Scott
Passenger, S.S. President Cleveland
Pier 42-44, San Francisco, California
Sailing September 6th.

Of course your package could be sent air-mail if it is not too heavy, otherwise you will have to arrange through the post office.

I am sharing with Dr. Fairfield what you write in your letter about your daughter. As far as we know the schools are continuing although a number have gone into the interior. I believe that Wenshan is in Ingtai. The missionaries are holding on and busy with their work.

Sincerely yours,
Herbert E. B. Case
Herbert E. B. Case

HEEC/b

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
Sept. 3, 1940

Dear Mom:

September already! A year ago I was on the Pacific wondering what I was coming to. Little did I realize or know that so much would have happened in one year and I'd be an engaged woman!!

This week has been full of house cleaning, moving & planning! Bill has taken a house where he can be away from his work when off hours. Until now he has had his quarters at the consulate which were neither "homey" nor quiet. So we've been trying to settle the place before I go back to Ingtai – probably next week. People are being grand, lending pieces of furniture, even china & silver. Now the problem is sheets & blankets, and no one has any of these to throw around. Sheets especially are a premium. Helen and I are going out on the street this morning to try to find something that will make up into sheets! Bill has his own blankets, but his guests will have to bring their own!

It's more fun fixing the house up – in fact it's a little too much like home! I'm going to feel badly to have to leave! But it will be there to come back to – wheeeeeee! And Bill, of course, will be there too – whopeeeee!

The opening date for school has not yet been set but we'll probably go up to Ingtai next week sometime. We still haven't our new building which we need dreadfully.

The other school folks are gradually leaving and getting back to work. Helen's Aunt Eunice goes up to Shaowu today; we're going to see her off, as well as some others. Our principal stays until October. Beyond that we don't know what happens, but we have no fears!

The past three days we've been having typhoon winds & rain. Today is clear and bright – quite "fallish". The one mar is that an air alarm just rang, so I suppose we'll be having visits as long as the weather is good. One can walk on the streets while the alarm is on, but can't ride a bike or get a rickshaw, nor go across the main bridge until the alarm goes off. This is the kind of thing that ties up and delays getting things done!

Merlin is having a "formal" for us before we go back to Ingtai! The Consul promised us a party too – for Bill and me. I'm sure I don't know where he's going to squeeze it in.

Must run now – hoping this alarm goes off soon.

Love to you all – *Mary*

P.S. Labor Day certainly wasn't much like the family gatherings we used to have at home, but I did work.

Take care of yourself –

Love – *Mary*

Foochow, China
Sept 10, 1940

Dear Mom:

The summer is nearly over, schools are opening and I'll soon be back at classes, trying to get a little "larnin'" into the students who are clamoring for that. We're opening school in Foochow – that is, we'll have "Freshman Week" here, to initiate the new students,

then go up to Ingtai and begin classes the 23rd. I'll really be glad to get back to routine work; though it's going to be hard leaving! The summer has been strenuous – much more so than I had anticipated, but I'm happier than I ever was, all because of Bill. It hasn't been easy being together, nor is it easy being apart – but we've learned a lot through our ups and downs. He's very dear to me and though we don't agree about lots of things we have grand times together. I probably told you that these past couple of weeks we've been trying to fix up his new abode and have lots of fun doing it. I feel as though I belonged here! My one consolation in going up to Ingtai is that I'll have Bill and this to come back to – and that can't be too soon for either of us.

I hope you can make out this scratching – it's Bill's pen, so blame him!! I haven't yet gotten together all the pictures I want to send along home. In all the moving, Bill hasn't had time to do any printing. He's fixing up his dark room for developing and printing here at the house (where I am at this moment). In time there'll be some to send along to you.

I had a grand letter from Hat this week in which she sent such exciting news!¹ I do hope all goes well this time. Both she and Dave seem so thrilled! She sounds happy and quite like herself.

Last week Helen and I went 25 miles down river to buy rice for the school. We went down expecting to find the rice already and loaded on a sampan to come up to Foochow. We left at 3 A.M., took the launch down to the village, arriving about 10 o'clock, only to find that nothing was ready! After trying to hurry the coolies into getting the rice on the boat – the job was finished at 7 o'clock that evening! We had missed the afternoon tide and were high and dry on the mud flats with no prospect of getting out until the next morning! There was nothing to do but spend the night sleeping on the rice bags on the boat – which we did. Fortunately both of us had taken our steamer rugs which kept off mosquitoes and rats! I've never before eaten quite so many Chinese meals at a throw – four of them – good, but I was glad to get back to good old meat and potatoes and vegetables. Rice for breakfast, rice for lunch and for dinner, then more rice for another breakfast is a bit monotonous for any great length of time. However we survived and had quite an experience.

I give up! This pen is awful – if you can forgive the blots & mess I'll continue thusly.² We wanted to get back to Foochow for the enthronement of the new Anglican Bishop who has made such an impression. But at the time of the service we were sitting 25 miles down river on a rice boat, champing at the bit because we couldn't leave until the tide changed at 11 A.M. the next morning! When we finally got going, all went well and we sailed into Foochow at 5 p.m. filthy dirty, not having washed, brushed teeth nor had our clothes off for nearly two days! Fortunately it was neither hot nor raining and the scenery all along the way was beautiful.

I haven't heard from you for nearly a month, but I expect there are letters on the way. I keep wondering how the summer went with you – is the hotel business still flourishing? I think, too, of the vegetables from Pop's garden and wish I could have an ear of green corn!! We do get things like that here, but this is just between seasons. The folks here are about to plant vegetables now for late fall eating – imagine!! There's a grand space for garden here at Bill's house and he likes nothing better than getting out & digging & working in it! Since he

¹ Janet Frances Ward, their first child, was born January 28, 1941.

² The first two pages of the letter are nearly illegible; most of the words lack ink and are decipherable only by reading the indentations. Mary switched to pencil.

has quite a lot of spare time between schedules, he can do a lot and has already started. He's just a farmer at heart, I guess!

During the spring & summer the folks have been having Sunday night hymn sings at various houses. We all chip in, contributing something toward the supper menu and make quite a time of it. This coming Sunday, Bill is having it at his house. It will be the last one for me until next spring anyway – possibly until next summer! Then, we hope, Bill and I can have one at our house!

This is anything but a coherent letter, so much happens that I think of it in spurts!

Our student body is twice as large as it was last year and still we haven't our new building. It's amazing how all schools are crowded to the roofs and then some. There certainly is a craving for learning in the new China and it's such exasperating business not being able to meet it with better facilities than we have. Plenty of students but few teachers, little space and less food than ever before, and prices still going up – as much as 600%! With exchange as it is – hovering between 15 and 20 to 1, it's to our advantage, but at the same time we are looked up on as multi-millionaires by our Chinese friends, and that's practically what we are in comparison with most of the Chinese!

Bill's down at the Consulate copying press, but will be back soon. I'm going to catch 40 minutes before he does get back.

Lots of love to you all,
Mary

P.S. Have you had a chance to get my diploma yet?? I want it out here as an affidavit, in fact I need to register with the government. Can send??

Love – *Mary*

P.S. Had a letter from Elizabeth (Mrs.) Krieg!!

Helen Smith and Mary Frances periodically sent reports to the Boston office. The following is from Mary's carbon copy. Though Mary's signature at the end indicates it was written after her marriage, the transcription is included here to illustrate the lengths to which they went for rice.

R-I-C-E

Beginning

The fall of 1940 opens with a stampede for schooling. Although we chose from only every three applicants, yet we find ourselves swamped with 600 students and our biggest problem - food. After three months' effort to buy rice, it was landed at Ingtai only to be confiscated by soldiers. In a time of war, soldiers come first and students second – if at all!

Bribery

By the grape-vine telegraph, we hear there is rice in a distant village. A student from this village appears to beg us to accept her sister who is rather far down on the waiting list. The principal says, "You buy us rice - we accept your sister." The negotiations are now under

way. Four trips by sampan down the river from screech to screech of dawn and umpteenth visits to the magistrate, food commissioners and numerous petty officials for permits to buy, to pack, to handle, to transport the rice which may, in the end, go down the gullet of a soldier, since you have forgotten to get the final stamp on the permit to eat it, or the date has expired. After all this the mere matter of money which literally takes all the fees for the term seems like a minor consideration. We scrape the dollars together from every possible source, pouring it out frantically, well knowing that it leaks into many channels.

Contrasts

We crawl out at three A.M., hoping to be back by three A.M. the next day. The first meal is rank extravagance - our last bit of coffee and Swiss cheese enjoyed on the prow of the launch facing the sunrise. Arriving at our destination 7 hours later, we find our host and purchaser living in a new gabled house. After crossing a pig-sty and entering a stockade-like gate, we found an attractive garden. The view makes up for the incompleting [sic] front door of the house, the "Fenshu"¹ is exceedingly propitious — rice fields on one side, a canal on the other, a view of the mountain ranges in front augers well for the future of the household — according to Chinese legend. The foreign exterior belied what we found inside. The bareness of white-washed walls, rough wood floors, lack of comfortable chairs detracted from the hominess as we know it. A few conveniences were lacking; there was a place for a bathtub but was running over with old shoes, rugs, bottles and torn rain hats. And of course no lighting or plumbing. Slightly incongruous with the new house was the hostess who came shuffling out, nursing the youngest member of the family which she continued to do the rest of the day. Also incongruous for a wealthy family, there was no servant and the oldest daughter, a Wenshan student, efficiently cooked three meals for us.

As foreigners, we press the business of the day, but it does no good. We must first have tea, then breakfast, see the sights, procure another permit. By 12 o'clock, hoping we can't leave that afternoon anyway, so why worry????? In fact the tide won't be right for sailing until 9 or 10 the next morning! We impatient westerners insist that we can go out on the night tide and we all but carry the 100 pound bags of rice to speed the process. The boatmen are still discouraging – three inspection stations have to be passed and we might as well use our fifty-eleven permits rather than risk being shot as smugglers in the middle of the night. The westerners still insist and say they'll take the last launch up to the inspection station and await the arrival of the rice boat and save a few rounds of ammunition for the government. The boatmen with the ready tongue replies that we can't be at three stations at once and besides, they won't be open at midnight, to which we reply, "How can they see to shoot us, then?" There's an answer to everything, but none to, "How are we going to get back to Foochow?" Finally we resolve to accept the inevitable which we might as well have done in the morning and save our breath and energy, count the bags one by one as they are carried aboard, weigh them.

As the heat of the day cools with the setting sun we suddenly realize the beauty of the spot in which we've been stewing all day. The bridge above the prow of our boat becomes a stage across which the villagers stream in from the fields, a constant succession of silhouettes against the cyclorama of the sunset sky: a young lad with his frayed but jaunty straw hat,

¹ Feng shui – the Chinese system of laws considered to govern special arrangement in orientation and relation to the flow of energy.

driving home the lumbering water-buffalo, a group of men with their hoes and empty lunch baskets, - young girls carrying buckets of water on sticks across their shoulders, children (some bow-legged, none fat, all pop-bellied from malaria) with small baskets. More men, more women, more children, more cows, ducks, and even a sedan, wedding-chair pass in view. According to the latest U.S. fad, pictures are now scented. So this aesthetic and animated picture did not escape the perfume of fertilizer being stored for the night in boats surrounding us where we expected to sleep! We'll have you understand that night in China is not "Evening in Paris"!!

Conclusion

There is no conclusion! But we go on the assumption that "nothing lasts." The spring term opens with the usual stampede and the eternal question, "Any rice?" What faith we had mustered begins to diminish when the government suddenly stops our only source of supply. But you can't keep a good man down" and the Chinese keep proving it.

Helen H. Smith

Mary F. McVay

President Cleveland [Lines]

Sept. 11, 1940

Dear Mrs. Buckhout,

Your package for your daughter, Mary Frances, reaches us all right and we will be very glad to take it to Foochow, and then send it to Ing Tai. I know how much it will mean to her to receive something from home.

We are glad we had the opportunity of meeting your daughter before we went out to China, when she was in Bridgeport with her brother.

We are having a very good trip so far. We reach Honolulu today. A number of missionaries are on board – 17 of our American Board – and there are many young people among them, going out for the first time.

We are looking forward to getting together with your daughter. We may not see much of her until next summer at Kuliang.

Very sincerely yours,

Agnes K. Scott¹

(Mrs. Roderick Scott)

¹ Address on the envelope is "Mrs. R. Scott, Fukien Christian Univ., Foochow – Shaowu, China."

Wen Shan, Foochow, China
Sept 23, 1940

Dear Mom:

Judging from the stationery you see I'm back in Ingtai – at last! This paper was too precious to carry around with me so I locked it up here at Helen's house for the summer.

Yes, I say back in Ingtai "at last". We've been coming since the first week in September, but you may be sure that each time opening was postponed my heart sang for joy! It meant a few more days with Bill. Nevertheless, despite heartache and the awful pangs of emptiness that come after parting, I am glad to be back at work, and what I mean is work, but still enjoyable.

I'm teaching 24 hours of classes a week this term, besides two hours of choir work, and probably more. Also have some piano to get in somewhere. Besides English Lit & Composition for the three senior classes and music for senior I, II, III, and junior III, I'm teaching gym!! There's practically no equipment but the river for a swimming pool, a basket ball and volley ball & net. While the weather is good we'll have swimming, then graduate to basketball & volley ball in the cold weather, I guess. I'm trying to instill the importance of posture and breathing correctly into these students. Posture is particularly poor, due, to a great extent, to their clothing!!

We opened school today and for a beginning without our principal, it was very smooth, thanks to Helen. Our principal hasn't been particularly well all summer and is still in Foochow, recuperating. I don't remember whether I told you she is leaving us in October. But the school goes along as if we'd been in session all summer. It doesn't seem possible that we have been away for nearly three months – 10 weeks, to be exact!

Last Wednesday (Sept. 18th) Bill gave me my ring! A lovely piece of jade – quite large, but very nice shape and color, "methinks." The band of the ring isn't right yet. We sent it back to the jeweler once to have it made narrower, but he didn't taper it from the setting so it's still clumsy looking. When I go down in November for Annual Meeting we're going to get it done! Meantime, I'm wearing it and checking off the days till I can get back to Bill.

Just a few days before we left Foochow the Humphreys – dandy young Methodist couple – gave a boating supper party! It was in honor of a new arrival – a young college fellow from home who was in Japan for some youth conference and was induced to come to teach at Anglo-Chinese College – formerly in Foochow, but now in Yangkow. He's only a kid, but a dandy fellow, good sport, etc. He has another year of college, but decided he'd do this for a year as long as he had the chance. His introduction to China was being just off a steamer with 750 Chinese at a distance of 150 miles from Foochow. From there he had to come by chair, taking 8 days for the trip, sleeping in filthy, buggy inns and living on Chinese food. He's lived to tell the tale, and none the worse for it, I guess. The only other foreign teacher at A.C.C. is Edith Semester – of whom I've probably spoken before. She'll just fall on Don's neck when he arrives. In fact, Edith is the only foreigner in Yangkow – Helen's sister Eunice was with her last year.

We've had the sad news that the new Smiths are not coming to Ingtai this year, but are going to Peking for language study first. I think that is wisest, but we were so looking forward to having them here with us. Next year Helen definitely goes home, but I'll have the fun of helping them get "introduced" – that is, if Wen Shan is still in Ingtai, as I suppose it shall be.

Our nice Consul is being transferred (and promoted) to Hong Kong – to the sorrow of everyone. He’s been grand to us all. He knows the new one coming in and says he’s a grand fellow – young and unattached. We’ll certainly hate to see Bob go, though!

Postman just arrived with a letter for me from my sweetie – wheeeeeee! He’s happy & busy, but misses me!! Maybe I don’t miss him! For that reason I’m glad to be more than busy.

I’ve just reread your letter of June 26th (Rec’d Sept 4th) which you wrote before a “snapping fire.” Ever since May we’ve been sweltering and will for another month at least. I can’t believe that Helen is married – golly I’m itching to hear all about it! As I write there are probably letters on the way telling all about the great event. With your letter I had a grand one from Felix giving all the church news and your special meetings in July! I do hope you can have the Rindens with you sometime, and Mrs. E. H. Smith, too. Honestly, they’re grand folks! That’s just a sample, too, of Foochow folks.

My goodness – judging from Felix letter, as well as yours, South Hadley is certainly “China Conscious” and it’s a good thing! With Europe so near (only a couple of days away, now) the orient doesn’t stand a chance! A closer study and understanding of this country would certainly do a lot toward preserving democracy!

Well, I can’t go on & preach. Classes tomorrow, so must prepare for them, and turn in. Up here I get sleepy at 9 o’clock. If this keeps up I’ll be putting on weight again, as fast as I took it off.

Much love to you and Papa & Ab – and hope I get all the low-down on the wedding. Wonder if all the folks got there – all you were expecting. It must have been fun!

Lots of love –

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

October 1, 1940

Dear Mom and what family is left!

I’m nearly crazy, waiting for new of all the big doings at home this summer. Without doubt, all your letters are on the way, telling about it! I was amazed (whee – every day I get worse!) at the conflict in dates for Helen’s wedding. You said it was the 9th of August and Felix wrote he was to perform the ceremony the 10th! I certainly hope you got together on it! But I certainly am frightfully curious to know what happened, who was there, etc. Now that I’m in Ingtai, away from Bill, my own excitement of the summer has calmed down a bit and I really do think of other things and people once in a while! But that’s not saying that I don’t miss my Bill because I do, frightfully! And I’m more than thankful to be busy.

As I remember, most of my last letters have been pretty much ‘Bill & me’ – and what else I told you I can’t recall – but the school has begun! We began last Monday (Sept 23rd) – 8 a.m. And have been going full steam ahead ever since! Our former dean has returned from 2 years study at Schauffler, where, Felix says, Evelyn Woodland is going! Good for her! She (the dean) is a peach. I like her a lot. She’s a good head on her shoulders and was quite shocked at some of our conditions which are not as bad as most refugee schools. I’m teaching 24 hours, 4 of those are music and 5 are gym. We’ve been having swimming for our gym work and I’d just gotten a bath house put up down by the river for us. Also had a section of the river, where we swim, lined off with poles & ropes. Yesterday a typhoon blew

up and today I looked out to see our bath house collapsed, floating off down over the rapids. Of course there's nothing left of the poles around the pool, either. It's the second time we've lost those. In 24 hours of rain the river rose higher than I've seen it ever – much higher than it got last June in 2 weeks of constant rain! It looks tonight as tho' it might break. But it's nothing like the blow and rain we get on Kuliang during a typhoon! So much for typhoons – and they are something!

There are some 1500 students here this fall and our church situation is quite a problem. We've finally settled on 4 services on Sunday to accommodate all of them – 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 2 p.m., 4 p.m. With only one minister it's a problem now as to who is going to take all these services.

I'm not even suggesting a mixed choir this year! It turned out to be quite a problem last term, and I think the girls are much happier having their own choir. So on top of everything else I have 2 periods of choir each week. I want to start a Glee Club for secular music since we don't have time for that in choir. There just aren't hours enough in a day nor days enough in a week to get everything in. So far, I'll have 2 piano students. I'm truly glad to be busy. Any free moments, my thoughts go flying to Bill and that just doesn't do!!

We've been hearing from our folks who went home in the late spring and early summer. Judging from all the people they've been visiting all round the country there are more Foochow people in the U.S. than there are natives! All of them, of course, just itching to get back. And well I can understand it. I'm sorry the Rindens failed to get to South Hadley when you expected them to, but I hope you will have a chance to see them sometime.

I must confess, I was oblivious to the fact that I had my own day on the Prayer Calendar of the American Board. I was in Foochow then, getting ready to go to Kuliang! I wish I had known it then! When I got Felix's letter in which he enclosed a copy of the prayer he used that day, I had a grand weepy time of homesickness and remorse for all the things I hadn't done! It sort of brought me down to earth and made me realize what my responsibilities are. I'm trying to meet those with better success this fall. I'm really enjoying my work twice as much, too. The class that was out teaching last year has returned to finish their schooling and they are a joy! They're full of pep and are ready for most anything – they save the day for me!

All my troubles and problems are certainly small and petty when you consider what's going on all about us. Here it's as peaceful as any spot on earth could be, except when they catch a bandit and execute him down on the river bank as they did last week Sunday! I saw nothing of it but heard the shots. So it goes here in China. If it weren't for the news that drifts in, one would never believe that war is going all around us!

Well, I'm off for a bath and bed – full day ahead so I'm turning in early –

Lots of love to you and papa & Ab –

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

Oct 2, 1940

Dear Felix:

Your letter of July 10th was received about the middle of September while I was still in Foochow. My! What a lot of news you packed into it. Really it was like peeking into South Hadley for a moment.

I was quite ignorant of the fact that July 10th was my day on the Amer. Board Calendar and not a little chagrined when I read your grand letter. For that day I was in Foochow, getting ready to make the trip up to Kuliang, enjoying life in general and looking forward to another new and different experience in this missionary life. To be sure, my thoughts went back to South Hadley many times during the summer, to my family and friends, not with the longing of homesickness, but with the regret that they all couldn't be up on Kuliang with me. Really, the people one meets in this work are certainly the most worth while folks I ever hope to meet anywhere. They are leaders in their own branches of their work, both here and at home, but they still remain folks, ready to meet any emergency and help out even the lovelorn! Just now our treasurer and husband (Leonard Christian¹) are in the U.S. Judging from their letters received back here since they got home there are more Foochow people in the U.S. than there are people in Foochow itself! With such an influence thro' out the country, just from one tiny part of this world, why isn't the mission cause more keenly felt and supported? By the way, if you get a chance to hear Leonard Christian, do so. I don't know what his program is while at home, but he's most entertaining besides very interesting! I do hope the Rindens get to South Hadley before they return here. As for Helen Smith, she didn't get home this year but is definitely going next summer. I'm simply going to be lost without her. I miss her terribly!

School here in Ingtai did not open until last week – Sept 23rd – and nearly two weeks have gone by! We had “freshman week” in Foochow the week before. It consisted simply of opening exercise, information about rules & regulations, and a welcome party for our new students. I'm getting quite a thrill out of seeing the old students returning this fall and I'm more than enjoying my work. We have twice the enrollment of last year, but not twice the space. We are having a new building which will let us spread out a little more, in two months or so. Meantime, we're getting on quite nicely. Our principal has been ill in Foochow for nearly three weeks, but we're expecting her soon. She will be with us only until the middle of the month, however, then she goes home and our acting principal takes over. Our dean, who has been studying at Schauffler College for the past two years, is back and knee-deep in work. (Emelia Wang) I was certainly interested to hear that Evelyn Woodland is going to Schauffler and that Mary Welles is going to have a chance at school, too. And I sincerely hope Louisa Gaylord carries out her ambition to go into mission work. She's just the kind of person for it.

It was a year ago yesterday when I “arrived on the field” – that is, in Ingtai – to begin my new work. What a world of changes have taken place in that year, especially in the world. What does it all mean? I can't believe [that] Germany and all she stands for can possibly win out, certainly not to last! We hear echoes of momentous decisions by the Americans in Shanghai and other parts of China, but Ingtai continues to live up to its name – “eternal peace” – for one could scarcely believe the world is in such chaos while in this lovely spot.

What are Jean's parents to do, since pressure has been brought to bear on them and the others under the same circumstances? I can't believe that such things happen, but it seems they do, and have many times before!

¹ Leonard J. Christian is listed in the Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions as head of the Foochow Mission in 1910. *Christianity in China: A scholar's guide to resources...* pg. 35, notes that Leonard and Agnes Christian's letters from China for the years 1939, 1941, 1944, and 1947 are listed in the Hartford Seminary Archives.

Our church is smaller than ever this year – it can't begin to take care of the 1500 students in this town! Now we've arranged to have 4 services each Sunday in order to get them all in!

In true Chinese (and also American) fashion, prices have soared here in Ingtai, the merchants knowing the students must eat, and there being no other place to buy things! It's impossible to transport rice from one village to another without a government permit and paying revenue. Besides, it's almost impossible to get the permit. We have rice in Foochow, but for that reason we can't get it up here where we need it. None other is coming in and no local rice will be on the market until next month. Meantime, we have enough to feed the students another week – then what? This is all so unnecessary, too. These people are becoming westernized in the wrong way I'm afraid! Talk about politics, this government (provincial) sure knows how to squeeze!

I had letters from Mrs. King and from Kossy Nash. I hope soon to hear all about the wedding, especially Helen's! You said it was the 10th of August, and Mom wrote that it would be the 9th. I sure hope you all got together on it.

I'm off now to learn a dance to teach some of the girls. Yep – I've even come to that! I really should have joined a circus, but I guess the elephants would have been jealous, so it's just as well I didn't.

By the way, we've had a lot of rain so the river flooded – higher than it was last June. No mail has come in for three days. I expect a deluge when it does get through.

My best to you and Jean and David and the new addition – what's its name?

Sincerely,

Mary Frances

Ingtai, China

Oct. 5, 1940

Dear Mom:

The week has rolled around again, almost before I knew it! Since the typhoon the weather has cleared and it is cooler. It was almost unbearable before this. The typhoon took down our bath house and the boom I had as a safeguard in the river! This being the second time, I dare not ask for another!

Now that the river's gone down I want to have more swimming before real cold weather comes. We'll be having warm weather all this month, I hope.

Dinner bell just rang, so I'd better obey!

Monday Eve – or rather Tuesday Evening – Oct 8th –

Nope – I haven't been eating all this time. Tho' I've just finished supper!

I did take my gym classes out swimming yesterday! They all put up a kick saying it was too cold, but I got them all in the water and when the end of the period came none of them wanted to come out – just like all kids!

Rather than coax and wear myself out trying to get the boys of F.C. & the girls of W.S. together for a mixed choir this fall we're all out on our own. We alternate Sundays, the boys singing one Sunday & the girls the next. The girls' choir this year is much more responsive than they were last year! For some reason or other the senior III class seems to think it is superior to doing choir work, and none of them turned out for it! But they're going

to do it, tho' I'm not saying so. I'm planning to have them do the work in their music class period, then inform them they are responsible (some Sunday) for the music at the service! Each class is supposed to have 2 hours a week of music but there isn't time or space to work it in. We haven't half enough classrooms. But our new building coming along, we ought to be able to expand in a couple of months.

Helen's been having a time with Hong Kong foot (extreme athlete's foot!) and hobbles about as best she can. She ought to stay off it, but you can't keep her down. It has been quite painful at times, too. So far I've escaped all oriental disorders except malaria – once- and worms! Yes, I had worms this summer so now I'm really initiated, I guess. I'd been told the symptoms, but hadn't had any so didn't realize I was inhabited. I wouldn't have known at all, but before coming up here I thought I'd better have a physical, not having had one since arriving in the orient! Then it was I made my discovery – and I'm none the worse for it. Really, the things that one takes for granted out here are simply horrifying, probably, to anyone at home. And it's a disgrace & sign of sloppy housekeeping if the clothes and shoes & books are allowed to gather mold & mildew. Well, that too, is all part of the program here! Just another problem to put up with, and not at all disgraceful. It's absolutely impossible to escape it. Consequently, my shoes gathered mildew and my winter clothes got it, too, but brushing and sunning takes care of it pretty well. My camphor chest is a joy. I've left it in Foochow with my good clothes in it since there's no occasion to put on the dog up here in Ingtai. It's moth proof, of course, and such a delightful odor to store things in!

Thursday is the China day of Independence (the 10th of the 10th month). We'll have a holiday and take the girls out hiking, at least I'm taking one group out. They have to parade in the afternoon at the public parade ground, so do all the students. Each school is responsible, too, for a certain amount of propoganda – what it will be, or how they will do it, I can't say!

Bill's having quite a time in Foochow, what with running a house, hiring & firing servants, keeping his schedules at the consulate & trying to study between times! He really thinks he needs a wife! I told him I'd be on the look-out for him, see what I could do about it. He was quite upset when he had his second cholera shot the other day and couldn't understand why, since they had never affected him before. Come to find out, the doc had given him the typhoid & cholera combination, which proved to be a bit too much!

The American community in Foochow held a farewell tea for our Counsel, Bob Ward. Did I tell you he's leaving for Hong Kong – having been promoted. Everyone regrets having him go, but then that's part of the job! He's been awfully decent to Bill.

Well, I've just gotten a letter from you and two from Levi, and am gradually getting all the happenings of South Hadley!

I didn't know, until your letter, that Mr. Smith had written Felix! He's a dear, and I hope you see him. And then, Felix's grand letter that I spoke about before. Things like that make me wonder sometimes if I've "let down" having accepted my Bill! Last spring, I know I did some, because it was an awful struggle getting thro' the term. All I wanted was to get thro' it so I could go to Foochow! This fall, however, I feel quite differently! True, I miss Bill and would like nothing better than to be with him; on the other hand, I really feel like doing things, I mean, actually making some contribution, somehow – really digging in. I'm getting a kick out of my classes and the choir gives me great joy! I only hope I can give them as much of pleasure as they give me. There's no doubt in my mind about my love for Bill. It's the strangest thing I've ever felt. I wrote Felix, and I've written the board in Boston.

Do you think they'll feel I've let them down? I'm not – and I said, in my letter to Boston, that I had no intention of breaking my contract. Do you think the folks at home feel that way? I don't know what I could do about it if they didn't "approve." My feelings are still divided. However, I'm trying to bring them together – my love for Bill and my love for the work here! They are distinct and very strong, both of them. This summer the struggle was partly that – being torn between the two. Now that I'm back to work, I feel that Bill's and my relationship has even strengthened my attitude toward my work. Human nature certainly is topsy-turvy sometimes. I'm so glad Hat has been able to get home – golly I'd like to see her and the rest of you, especially all my new nieces and nephew(s)!

What I want, more than anything else (besides some rayon panties) is a picture of you & Papa! A snapshot! I haven't a good one – do get someone to take one and send it along!

The yard sounds beautiful and the garden news makes my mouth water – thinking of those raspberries!

It's getting late. I must drop a line to Bill, then crawl in. Tomorrow is a big day – 6 classes at a stretch!

Much love to you all,

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
Oct 14, 1940

Dear Mama & Papa & Ab,

Undoubtedly you are wondering what we are doing or going to do out here with all the news that you are getting now about conditions in general. I'm really quite convinced that our little area here is near paradise as anything could be! What you've heard scarcely concerns us and no change is expected. Even thro' the thickest of times and events, the policy upheld unanimously, was one of sitting tight and sticking! We've had no official communication as yet from Bob about anything, and tho', as one of our good Chinese ladies says, "There's a lot of atmosphere in the air..." we are going on as usual. If anything did change, you'd certainly get word from Boston right away! So rest easy & don't worry.

I've had no word from Boston about anyone bringing out a radio for me. There are still some folks coming in so maybe I'll be getting it yet. I wrote last May, asking for a portable set, but I know nothing more about it! Helen has her grand orthophonic Vic up here this year, and some very good records, too. We're enjoying it immensely. Last night a few of the girls came over to play records and look at Life, having a real good Sunday evening of it. We have one Richard Crooks¹ record which simply thrilled them! Merlin is "sold on" Richard Crooks, and sent to Shanghai for all the records they had of his! If there's anything that man wants, he goes ahead and gets it. He's built up a whale of a business with the Christian Herald Industries. Everyone goes to him for everything from baby carriages to complete household furnishings – Chinese checkers included!! He's the most amazing fellow – there's nothing he can't make in that shop, and they are overwhelmed with work. Now he's scouting for ideas on kids toys. All the mothers depend upon him to fill their

¹ Richard Alexander Crooks (1900 – 1972) was a lead singer for the New York Metropolitan Opera, and hosted "The Voice of Firestone" radio broadcasts where he sang both opera and current popular songs, often with Bing Crosby.

Christmas orders! My camphor chest, which he made, is a joy and I'm going to have another one made this year.

Last spring we tried some three-part singing with a few of the senior girls. Thinking that it made no impression and they were bored with the whole procedure, I didn't start anything this fall outside of choir. Today a couple of girls informed me they wanted a 3 part song – English words – for one of their Saturday night programs!! It takes a long time for things to come back, but they sure are worth waiting for!

Well, my teaching hours now amount to 29 hours a week – all not heavy, of course, but music lessons & choir outside of regular class periods count up and keep me hopping! Bill is doubled up with work at the Consulate, what with the consuls changing, etc – but he's glad to be busy. It keeps him from thinking too much. Here I am planning & anticipating the time when I'll see him again. Which, I expect, will be with middle of November – about the time you get this!!! We're having annual meeting then. By the way, Helen & I are on as "editors" of the next Foochow Messenger but we're not being too successful in getting material in! It ought to be in the press now, but it isn't! Besides, Lyda – our other colleague – is in Foochow, and it's a bit difficult carrying on "editing" by mail.

Getting back to present international relations, I'll bet Helen's father is kicking himself to think he ever let himself start for home. All his letters since he left are full of China – he just can't get back soon enough! Now he's probably pretty forlorn, not knowing when he can come. Eunice, too, is probably in much the same state of mind, as are the Rindens and others who were planning on returning. We can hope for the best. I noticed, on the Northfield bulletin you sent me, that Walter Judd was one of the speakers there this summer! I wish you might have heard him! He's fire & brimstone they say!! Yes, a package of Radio Guides arrived, full of clippings which I devoured! The article about motor boating around Quabbin – riding over places that were our favorite haunts, sort of got me! I think I'll never forgive Mass. Gov. for ever allowing that beautiful country to be flooded!¹

Tues, Oct 15th

More Radio Guides arrived last night! The article about the "Nash Bros Mine"² was certainly an eye-opener! Kassy had written me about it, but I never dreamed that they were really in the business and world-famous fellows!

Our principal got off this morning after much weeping and sobbing and clinging by the students – yes, and the teachers too! We were up at 4:30 a.m. The students raised such a rumpus she wasn't able to leave until 7 a.m. I may say, here, that we of the board are relieved! Relations have not been too pleasant, but there's no need to go into that any further.

Dr. Beard has been in Foochow this past week. We expect him tonite, since his load of luggage has arrived! He's gotten quite a garden started up here – all kinds of vegetables. Isn't [it] queer when you think of starting a garden in the fall? But that's the way it is – crops the year around. And such a variety of fruits – almost all year, too. There is, however, a time in the spring – last of May & June – when we get very little but plums, but they are good!

¹ The Quabbin Reservoir was built in the 1930's by flooding a good deal of the Swift River Valley in Massachusetts. The residents of Greenwich, Massachusetts were relocated and much of the town erased from the map, though neighboring towns' boundaries were redrawn to incorporate the un-flooded parts of Greenwich.

² Carlton Nash of South Hadley bought and excavated a large outcropping that contained dinosaur tracks. The area soon became known nationally as Nash Dinosaur Land, and still exists as a popular educational and tourist site.

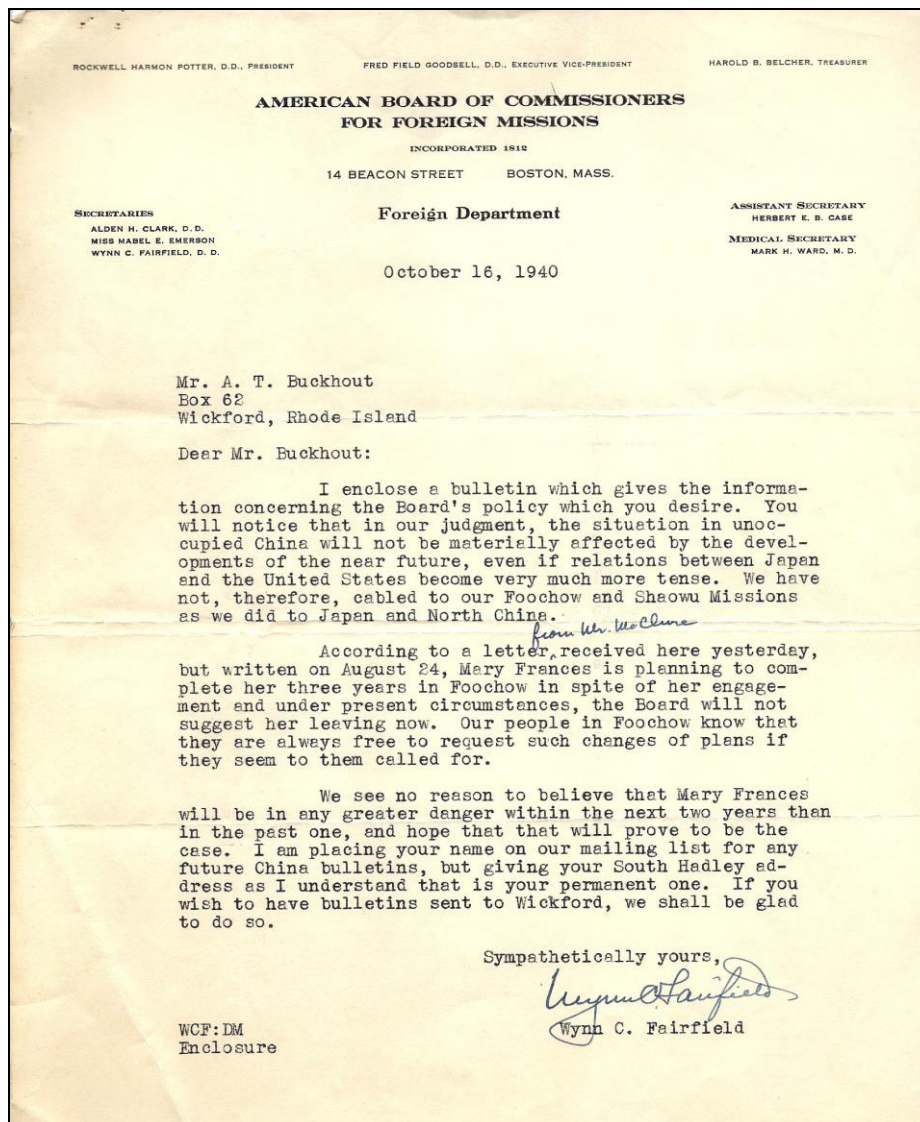
Then peaches flood the market and delicious tropical fruits – mangoes and lichees,¹ etc. Now we are in the pomels² and persimmon season! Soon there'll be oranges and elegant tangerines! You'd think that all I lived for was eating – the way I write – but I'm really living for quite a lot more!

And now, having been up since 4:30 a.m., I think I'll turn in, tho' it's but 8:15.

If you're sending things anytime, some soap would come in handy – Ivory – it's impossible to get, and I'm getting low – also darning cotton kits – ain't got any!!

Lots of love to you all, and don't go to too many football games –

Mary



¹ The usual English spelling is *lychee*, but it is also spelled *lichee*, *laichi*, and *lichu*, it is the sweet, fragrant fruit of a tropical and subtropical tree primarily found in Asia, Southern Africa and Mexico.

² Probably *pomelo* – a citrus fruit native to Southeast Asia.

Ingtai, China
Oct 20, 1940

Dear Mom & Pop:

Dr. Beard brought up your grand letter and pictures of Helen & Pren and you all! He had seen the Scotts who arrived in Foochow last week! Golly, maybe I wasn't thrilled to have those pictures. They're wonderful, of everyone! Helen looks sweet & Pren seems so very proud of her! He certainly is a handsome chap. The picture of you and Papa is dandy, too. Hat certainly looks grand! I would have liked to have been there for all the excitement, but I still have it to look forward to! The garden certainly must have been beautiful, according to the backgrounds of the pictures. It seems to me everything must have been just about perfect! I haven't yet rec'd your letters giving the minute details, but they'll be creeping into Ingtai sometime!

I certainly wish I could send things home! There are so many things Hat & Helen would like & could use right now! I'm going to have camphor chests made anyway, in hopes that I can bring them home!

This week, again, has been quite full. Our principal left Tuesday morning from Ingtai. Believe me it was a sullen bunch of students we teachers had to face that day! But they are coming out of it. We had word from Foochow that she left there on Thursday night. Friday morning our consul left for Shanghai and Hong Kong. Everyone was sorry to have him go. I suppose the new one has arrived by this time, but we haven't heard. Bill saw Bob off, and he said he (Bill) hated to see Bob go. Bob's been awfully decent to Bill, as he was to everyone. I had written him a crazy note wishing him success etc. He answered my note, which I never expected, and ended by saying, "I hope you & Bill have six children and all eight of you live happily ever after!" The same old Bob, still kidding folks along.

The news we get via Bill's news sheets is anything but encouraging! We all hope & pray that U.S. thinks a long time before she resorts to force. But sometimes we can't help but feel that perhaps that is the only way out. I still believe that it would be a major victory morally and a great step toward progress if other means can be found! But the way things point, "peace" has certainly vanished.

The weather has turned so warm again, that I've been taking my gym classes out swimming. They're so funny. They say it's too cold, but once they get in they don't want to come out! Just like kids. The football season must be in full tilt. It's much too warm to play any kind of ball here, now. I'm hoping, when I get down to Foochow in November, to get in a bit of tennis. I think I played only twice on Kuliang. It was either too wet or too hot! We contented ourselves with croquet, which is quite a favorite game out here!

The choir problem has eased up quite a bit this year. Foochow College & Wen Shan alternate Sundays. That means the senior choir sings one Sunday each month, as does the junior choir. That gives us time for more thorough work, too. I had the junior choir girls up here yesterday afternoon. They had a great time playing the victrola, looking at Life and playing Chinese checkers. They really quite enjoyed themselves.

From the Radio Guides I've been cutting out program notes and opera notes for future use here at school. There is so little of that kind of reference material.

This shows you how everlastingly long it takes to get things from Shanghai! Eunice sent some things down by one of our men who came in the first of August! The things haven't been through the customs yet! But we hope to get them soon. Helen & I wonder how

the cheese will be at this late date, having been all the summer on the way and in the hottest kind of weather. I'm going to close this. I'm running out of paper fast! Have to get some in Foochow.

Lots of love to you both—

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China

Oct. 27, '40

Dear Mom:

Just after I had mailed last week's letter, your August 16th letter came full of the news & details of Helen's lovely wedding! How I wish I could have been there! Your pictures came first. When I saw Helen's cute dress, I thought – instinctively – of it being coral and white. I don't know what put it in my mind – and when the sample of her dress came I wasn't surprised at all – just the colors I had imagined. I rather surmised, too, that Hat's was blue & white. Really, your letter made me feel as though I had actually seen the whole thing. I should have liked nothing better than to have had a finger in preparations. I thought of you all so many times before I knew just what day Helen had chosen, wondering if you were tearing around – as you were!

I wrote Helen and Pren during the week. I hope to hear from them soon.

Did I tell you I wrote Boston in September, telling them of my engagement and our plans. Bill and I want to be married next summer. We are planning on it, provided the board has no objection to it. We would have been married this past summer had Bill had his way! I'm glad, now, that we didn't. It's bad enough as it is – having to be away from him. I'm sure, too, that Bill realizes it was better to wait. Bill's a dear but awfully persistent, but not beyond reason. Just now he's enjoying working in his garden where he finds his western farming a big cramped for style. However, he's counting on a good harvest – here's hoping! I wish I were going to be there and could do some canning!! You'll probably laugh, but I honestly think I'll never be really happy until I have my own home and can cook & bake and can, etc, etc. I'm getting so I can handle materials out here for cooking. The oven is the biggest problem. With charcoal it's impossible – almost – to get a slow enough fire without having it go out in the midst of baking! Well, I'm learning!

I also heard from the Scotts while they were in Foochow, saying they had your package for me. Golly I'm so thrilled! I'm hoping it will be sent up soon! Helen and I have been betting as to what's in it. I'm hoping for some darnin cotton!! But then, I'm not going to be fussy – anything – even needles are welcome. But the way, you might stick a package of needles in a letter next time. Somehow, mine disappear!

I've just taken on an organ student. The principal of the Tung Jen School¹ here wants his daughter to study organ. Boy oh boy – that will be a job since I haven't ever really studied or thought much about the technique of organ playing. Maybe someday I'll be a musician!

I've started the choir working on Christmas music! It doesn't seem like a year ago I was doing the same thing. Was also looking over possible plays and pageants for Christmas! I wonder where we'll all be by that time! So far as Foochow is concerned, no change is

¹ Tung Jen – possibly Tung Jen Middle School, Dartmouth Christian Association, Paoting. It may have been moved to Ing Tai along with other schools when the Japanese pushed inland from the coast.

expected, but conditions outside do not seem to be improving. There continue to be bombings along the coast not far from us, as well as inland – especially Chung King.¹ One report is that there isn't any mission property in Chung King that has not been destroyed almost completely. In fact there's not much of anything but ruins left in the city!

So far nothing has been cut from any of your letters! I think you'll be very wise to rent the house for the winter! But don't, for goodness sake, "sell the old homestead!" George wants it kept, and so do I, and we'll figure some way of keeping it, if it takes my last red cent! By the way I'm not turning all my salary into Mex.² At present I have enough Mex (Chinese money) in the bank to keep me going for the rest of this term and the next, so Mac is keeping my gold for me. By the end of the year (1940) I think I'll send home a draft for my acc't in the Hadley Falls Trust. My bank book is around home somewhere, with about 2 or 3.00 in the savings account! If you can find it, so much the better. I'll add to that account. If the bank can't be found, I'll have to open a new account – can that be done for me? Or do I have to sign something?? If necessary, I'll write to the bank. Meantime, I wonder if you could find out about it for me?

Again, I wonder if you've gotten my diploma yet? And if you've sent it out? If not, I'm changing my mind again – don't send it. I'll get an affidavit at the Consulate; it'll be more convenient. I'm not yet registered with the government! But I can if I get an affidavit. Anyway, that will be a good excuse to meet our new consul!

Your letter was the first I've heard that Roly is in the Springfield Library – Assistant, no less! Good for him! I suppose next I'll hear that he's married – good old Roly!

Well, I've other letters to write and here's the mail. Three from my Bill – wondered why hadn't heard for a couple of days.

Lots of love to everyone - & you and Papa –

Mary

Wen Shan School, Foochow, China
Nov. 7, 1940

Dear Mom & Pop:

Just back a day or two after 3 glorious days in Foochow – not counting one day to go down and one to come back. The senior class had its annual "outing" for which they were allowed 4 days – because of rain they had an extra day. Since I was made advisor to the class, I went along too. We left here Thursday morning at 6 A.M. (Oct 31st) It was all decided so suddenly no one knew I was coming to Foochow, and least of all, Bill. So Thursday night, about 6 o'clock (Hallowe'en) I walked in on him. I wish you could have seen his face! I swear he thought he was seeing a ghost. All he could say was, "Goooooosh." It was pretty hard for me to believe I was actually there! We had a marvelous time – exceptional! I met the new consul, who's a peach, and he invited us in to dinner on

¹ On October 27, 1938, the Japanese captured Wuhan, the political, economic, and military center of China. The government fled to Chung King (Chongqing) to set up a provisional capital under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. A total of 268 air raids with a total of 3,000 tons of bombs pummeled the city from 1939 to 1942. [Various.] The bombing of Chongqing was focused almost entirely on the civilian population: an early example of terror bombing. In the first two days of the campaign, the raids of May 1939 killed more than five thousand Chinese civilians. [Herbert Bix (2001). *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*.]

² Mei - probably a slang term derived from the presence of the mei flower [*Prunus mume*] on currency and national symbols.

Friday night. He's very fond of music and has a dandy collection of opera, symphony – light classical, etc., and some good dance records. We couldn't stay all evening because I'd promised to go to the Chinese Theatre with the girls. Bill went too but was bored stiff!! But it's fun – better than vaudeville! It rained all the time I was there, but we managed to get around. Saw all the folks just flying visits. Saturday nite, Bill, Merlin & I went to the movies – yes we do have them now and then – at the Y.M.C.A. None of us knew what the picture was, or who played in it even after we'd seen it – simply crazy – but we had a good laugh. I had to come back Monday morn at 5 A.M. Bill went out to the launch with me on the other side of the island. It was rainy & the road very muddy & slippery. The girls had decided, of their own accord that they wanted more time, so when I got to the boat there wasn't a sole there! However, I had to come on, so I made my first trip alone. It was hardly that, tho' for our contractor for our new building was on the boat coming up so he looked after my bag and me. He can't speak any English, but we managed to get along. Later I ran into the young doctor going up to Foochow College, so we came along together. He speaks English fairly well, so we had quite an enjoyable trip. It was a relief to have some one to talk to & something else to think of after having to leave Bill.¹ After getting off the boat we had a 7 mile hike – it was rainy & muddy and dark, but we struck out and did it in less than 2 hours. I think I wore the poor man out, but I was dead tired and the sooner I got back, the better. 5 A.M. to 9:30 p.m. is a long stretch. Needless to say, I had very little sleep the night before, and I'm still making up for it.

When I got here, your package was awaiting me! And such a package – perfectly wonderful! I'm hanging on to the toilet goods for Xmas and most of them for Bill and me, since we'll be needing them next summer! Goodness only knows when we'll be able to get things in again, so I'm going to hang on to most of them.

Bill and I want to be married soon. We have planned to by next summer – after school closes – but maybe before that!! Bill wants to (and so do I) during winter vacation the end of January. Then I'll have 2 weeks anyway, probably more. We'll just have to wait & see.

The girls finally decided to come back and arrived this morning. Of course there is a disciplinary problem now to deal with and just at the particular time of unrest in the school, it's a very delicate job. Just what will happen hasn't been decided yet!!

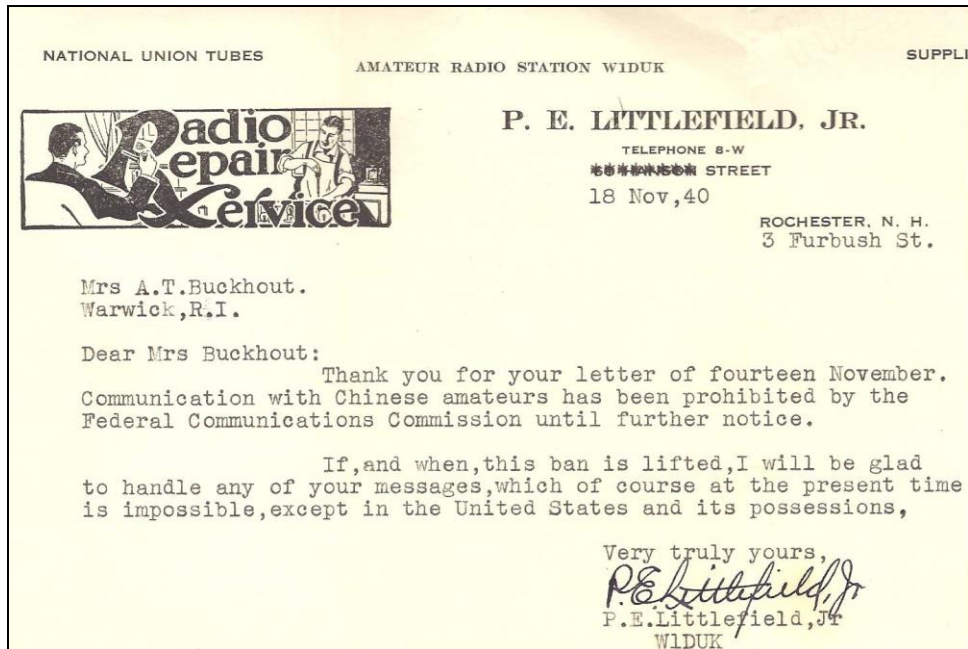
I'm off for bed now, and will right [*sic*] more details later. But thanks loads for the grand box.

Lots of love to you both –

Mary

Take care of yourselves –

¹ It was also dangerous for a woman to travel unescorted.



Foochow, China
 Nov. 21, 1940

My dear Jeanne and Felix:

Is this Thanksgiving Day for you at home? We, of Ingtau, do not celebrate until next week. Somehow we foreigners stick together on traditions, and out here it seems much stronger (tradition, I mean). However, the new consul in Foochow is celebrating today. He, by the way, is a fine young man who recently came up from Canton. Our former consul was promoted to Hong Kong. We were sorry to lose Mr. Ward, but feel very fortunate in having such a grand young fellow as Mr. Rice.¹ He tried to get into teaching in a mission school in China, but failing, he took the Foreign Service exams and was accepted and shipped to China, just where he wanted to be! The missionary field doesn't know (or maybe it does know) what it missed! Undoubtedly he can do as much for the Foreign Service, since he has a way of making people feel right at home, meeting people as equals.

We have had quite a shadow of gloom over the school all fall. In the first place, our principal, who had resigned last year, left in October. She had been carrying on the work until that time. It was generally known she was leaving, but when the time came, the students were very much upset, even to the point of refusing to allow her to go. For a week or more all were sober and discouraged.

This past week, two of our Senior III girls were taken ill, one with a partial paralysis of the face. She is now in the hospital in Foochow. The other girl died this morning early of complications which our new young Chinese doctor couldn't diagnose. He feels terribly, poor chap, but he worked day and night for three days to save the girl. She herself was a Christian, though her mother is a strong Buddhist. She arrived last night and talked with

¹ Edward E. Rice was a language attaché in Peiping from 1935 to 1937. Posts in Canton, Foochow, Chungking, with details to Lanchow and Sian, followed. After World War II, he served in various capacities overseas and stateside for the U.S. government. [American Foreign Service Association]

Hsiu Chieau before she died. The whole class was dreadfully upset, of course. At such times these people show their background of superstition, even those who are 2nd & 3rd generation Christians. We held a short service at school at which the Senior II class sang her favorite hymns. It was very quiet and comforting to all, even the mother who was on the point of distraction.

What we are mostly worried about is her “complications.” We are assuming that she had small pox and are taking all the precautions of vaccinating and fumigating. We have no proof and probably won’t have, but we’re not taking chances. Such a case is not unusual here, and there have been several cases in Foochow this fall, along with cholera and malaria – always malaria.

Well, I’ve been up since 4:30 this morning when I helped the teachers get clothes made for the girl so that she could immediately be put away. It’s the custom to have absolutely new clothes, and five layers at that. So Helen went tearing down to the street about 3:30 A.M., woke up a tailor, while a couple of other teachers bought cloth after getting the merchant out of bed. There are some advantages in living and sleeping on one’s shop counters!! With tailor and cloth at the house, we set to and all the clothes were made by 7 A.M. The Chinese are slow about some things, but if they have to hurry, they certainly can.

This letter was begun with the intentions of it being a Christmas letter! Don’t get discouraged. We do have our bright spots and one of the brightest is looking forward to Christmas. The girls just love it. We are working on Christmas music – and how they sing it! The girls’ senior choir is working on “Jesu, Little Babe So Fair,” a carol of Haiti; “Oh Have Ye Heard The Tidings” (Bach) “O Holy Night” (French) and Gloria in Excelsis Deo (French) which we hope to do with the Foochow College choir. We have started a faculty singing group composed of the singing members of our three schools here. I expect we’ll have about 12 or 15 when they all get together. We’re also working on Christmas music. One thing I hope they can do is the Sioux Indian Carol, “Stars Lead Us Ever On.” Maybe my hopes are too high!!

The U.W.C.A. at school is putting on a religious program with the pageant “Why the Chimes Rang.” We haven’t yet made any plans for the church program, but it will probably be the Christmas Story which I always come back to as the very best.

About three weeks after Christmas we’ll be giving our final exams for this term. That’s only two months away, and two months out here is simply nothing at all, time goes so fast!

Our pastor at the Ingtai church was ordained during the Annual Mission Meeting in Foochow. He’s an excellent preacher but hardly a leader in the church.

I do hope Mr. Smith finally came to South Hadley. Mama wrote that he would probably be with you October 10th (guess you said so, too). Is there any wonder that the Ingtai people, especially the children, love him so?

Ever so often people ask if “E Seeman” has come back (“E” being his Chinese name, “Seeman” I don’t know about the spelling, but it sounds like that, meaning “teacher”).¹ Now we wonder if our people who went home are going to be able to get back! Our new missionaries, the Smiths, went to Peking intending to study. Just after arriving there they were advised to leave. They decided to stay on, however, but the other day came news that they are on their way down! We’re so excited! There are other Foochow people up there – a

¹ They may have been calling him *shī*, which means “master,” usually used for a martial arts teacher: *shī fu*. They probably combined it with the English word “man.”

young British couple who are coming down so the Smiths thought it a good chance to come! We hope they'll come to Ingtau – but there are too many other places after them! Anyway, we haven't given up. The people who came out on the boat with them say they're grand!

There's always something of excitement around here. Last weekend we had three visitors from Foochow – all American Boarders – and we celebrated with a dinner party.

November 28th – our Thanksgiving – Helen has asked all the folks to come here for dinner. Our principal, Foochow College principal & wife. Tung Jen's principal & wife will also be with us. Dr. Beard is fattening a rooster. Helen is hoarding a squash and I guess I'll break open a plum pudding Peg sent me! Last year we were all in Foochow for Thanksgiving and had quite a time.

Well, here's a Merry Christmas to you all. Jeanne, Felix, David, and?? There's one thing I'd like and that is a snapshot of the whole family – that's all I ask – but I'd certainly like to see what the new member is like.

A Happy New Year, too, and greetings to all the South Hadley folks.

As ever,

Mary Frances



Foochow, China

Nov. 23, 1940

Dear Helen and Pren:

Here it is only a month to Christmas. When you receive this it will probably be a month after Christmas. Nevertheless, my greetings to you are just as chuck full of the best wishes, good luck, and heaps of love. So it's a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for you, Helen & Pren, on your first Christmas together.

Christmas Carols already ring in the air out here! The students had just as soon sing them all year around they love them so well. (Been correcting too many compositions I guess.) The choir is working on a carol of Haiti – lovely thing – “Jesu Little Babe So Fair.” It has been translated into Chinese. We're also doing Bach's “Oh Have Ye Heard the Tidings” with Chinese words. I hope to have a mixed choir do “O Holy Night” (French) and “The Shepherds” (French) – that one with the chorus of “Gloria, in excelsis Deo.” The girls love it. Each of my classes is doing a special carol – that is, learning it anyway: A Bohemian one: “Hearken Ye Shepherds,” the French “With Ox and Ass,” “Deck the Hall” (Welsh), and “Sing We the Story” (French). We are having quite a time with “Mid Ox and Ass,” but I think the girls will get it eventually.

The girls themselves decided they would have a concert in January, just before final exams, so I'm trying to work in music for that, too. By the way, we have a faculty chorus composed of the teachers of the three schools here. I'm trying to get them to do the Sioux Indian carol, “Stars Lead Us Ever On.” Now am I crazy? Or am I??? I've got some grand basses, but tenors are lacking, as usual.

One of our senior girls died this week, and it cast a shadow of gloom over the whole school. She was one of the class to which I am advisor, a dandy girl who was engaged to a fine young man. Fortunately her mother arrived in time to see her. We don't know what she had exactly, but it was a complication of several things and we are afraid one of them was small pox!! Naturally we are taking every precaution available. The other students now are scared to death if they are the least bit sick.

Our new young doctor (Chinese) felt very badly, for it was his first real case, but he worked for 3 days and nights with practically no rest at all. Another girl in the same class has a partial paralysis of the face. We sent her home last week and her classmates had quite discouraging news from her, but we hope for the best.

Does Pren have to be conscripted? I suppose Nate does too. How we hope and pray that it doesn't have to mean anything more than training! We are not affected by the evacuation¹ since this is still free China. However, our new missionaries who went to Peking were advised to leave so they are coming on down to Foochow as we had hoped they'd do in the first place. Helen and I are looking forward to seeing them (as is everyone else). Eventually, they will come to Ingtai, but where they will continue language study is still a question. We are pulling all the wires we can to have them up here.

Thanksgiving, which we U.S. citizens of Ingtai are celebrating according to tradition despite F.D.R., we celebrate here at Helen's house. There will be eleven of us, six foreigners – Dr. Beard, Lucy, Alice, Susan, Helen & I, and the principals & their wives of Foochow College (Donald Hsueh), Tung Jen, and our new principal at Wen Shan. She's a peach – just returned from 2 years study at Schauffler.

I'm sitting before our open fire place with a simmering fire. We have dinner here every night – Dr. Beard, Helen and I. It isn't cold enough yet to have a fire in the stove and we are all enjoying the fire place much more, anyway. It's just enough to take the chill off. Our coldest weather will come in January – at least it did last year. Then mornings are foggy and damp. If it rains, the dampness just never dries up and thought the temperature never gets below 32° (seldom as low as that) it seems much colder than it ever got at home. Believe me, my snuggies sure feel good!

Helen, I finally finished that turquoise blue sweater I was knitting when I started out here last year!! Yep – finished it this week, and I'll wear it with the rose suit Auntie Caddie knit me years ago. The sweater, too, that I have raveled and am reknitting. One just can't have too many sweaters out here!

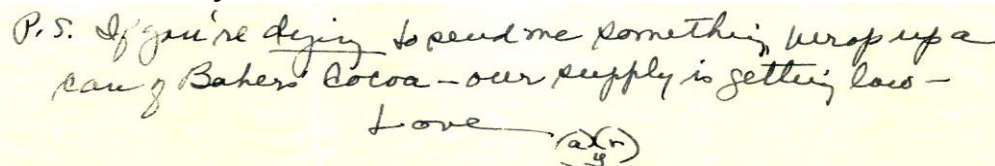
Maybe I told you this before – Bill and I are to be married as soon as we can. We hope to during winter vacation at the end of January, but I don't know yet how much time I'll have, and we are more or less waiting to hear from Boston. If we don't do the deed then, we'll be married as soon as school closes in June – which means we'll be married in July. We both want like the dickens to do it in January – we'll see!!!

The fire is dying and it's getting cool. In that case, the only warm place is bed, so I guess I'll crawl in.

I'll bet you have a grand Christmas. I do hope so. And be careful New Year's Eve!

Lots of love,

Mary



P.S. If you're dying to send me something, wrap up a can of Baker's Cocoa - our supply is getting low -
Love (M)

P.S. 2 – Happy Birthday, too, Helen!

¹ On September 12, 1940, U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew cabled Washington from Tokyo, switching his support to the hard-liners in the U.S. government who wanted to punish Japan for its aggression on the Asian mainland. However thousands of American civilians were living in the Japanese Empire. In October it was decided to evacuate "non essential" American civilians from East Asia.

Foochow, China
November 24, 1940

Dear Mom:

Your grand letter of Sept 23rd, telling of Papa's new job, came this morning and I just gloated over it, as usual full of news! And I'm glad Papa has another job, but being so far from home must make it somewhat hard. He must be fairly near Hat and David, isn't he? I should think you would go down there and live with him. There's nothing Pop would prefer. But now that you've gotten started on roomers with a possibility of renting the house, I suppose it would be hard to leave? I have a laugh when I write such discussions because by the time you have received my comments pro and con, you've gone thro' with your plans so many weeks before that my comments must seem silly! But I feel closer than ever to home, and your letters are almost as good as a visit!

Good for you and Papa! It's about time you did some gallivanting together. This is the first time in your lives together that you've really had time and didn't have a family to be tied to! And you sure deserve it. Here's hoping you keep it up! The next thing I expect to hear is that you've been to State College – and there's no reason why you can't make the trip.

I had a letter from Levada – mailed the same day as yours and rec'd the same day! She certainly had a tough summer, but is happy to be back to work.

Today, while cleaning up my room (!), I discovered the news clippings in the last Radio Guides. I hadn't looked thro' them because of lack of time, but I've been enjoying them so much even tho it is June news!

Writing about Helen fixing her house in Pleasantville makes me think of Bill in Foochow – fixing up his house – or ours. Before I left I had gotten a few sheets made, but they're nothing like good old U.S.A. sheets. He's been picking up small rugs and down (feather) quilts and things! He's a regular old house-keeper when it comes to those things. Every once in a while he writes that he's picked up something else. There's much more to be done, but that's being left all for me!! Curtains, bed spreads, etc. etc. and I just can't wait to get at it! There was a time when one could get most anything but “them days is past.” Thru my tailor I've been able to get some materials, though. Merlin made two dandy easy chairs for me, and a couple of end tables. We're going to pour over the Montgomery Ward catalogues for ideas and design of tables & things we need. Dishes is another problem. Before Bob Ward left, he gave us a set (4) of dishes oyster white – plain, but neat – some he'd had at the consulate. How I'd love some Canton China, but there'll be no getting that unless we go down there!! Anyway, we'll make out, and I'm thrilled & excited when I look forward. Less than two months to go and I'll be in Foochow again. No, that's not all I think of – because there's too much doing here – but Bill crowds my thoughts when I have a free moment! He's been sending up small sections of a candy bar in each letter – he's crazy enough to belong to our family alright. We're trying to play checkers by mail, but the girl insists upon moving my setup and disturbing the checkers so that I don't know where I'm at! Have to run off to a rehearsal now – faculty chorus.

I'm back again – been to church and have had supper besides. Only three of the chorus showed up. Most of them are sick! Helen's been trying to have a mean cold all week. We had a good score at school this last week. One of the senior girls died of complications one of which we thought to be small pox! Tho' the doctor thought it was some kind of measles. The poor doctor felt very badly – he's new, young, and this was his first big case.

Naturally we are taking every precaution against small pox, if it was that. The girls are frightened to death, for the least little illness they run for the doctor which isn't a bad idea, but the poor man has been tired out – up three days & four nights with almost no rest at all. A lot of the students have been having malaria, etc. The girl who died was one of my class, a dandy girl, tho not a brilliant student, and engaged. Her mother arrived before she died, fortunately. Next morning, or rather the morning she died, Helen went out (at 3 A.M.) to find a tailor so clothes could be made immediately. Not knowing what the illness was, we wanted to put her away as soon as possible. By 4:30 Helen was back here with a tailor and 2 teachers had bought cloth for the clothes and we started in. By 7 o'clock all was ready – 5 layers, which is customary, and all must be of new cloth. It makes no difference how they are made as long as they are new. We had breakfast then went down to school to find her whole class weeping and carrying on in good old Chinese fashion. About 10 o'clock we had a short Christian service for her, tho' her mother is a Buddhist. Some of us gathered flowers & ferns to put on the coffin and the Senior II class sang her favorite hymn. It proved to be very quieting and comforting, even to the mother. The Ingtau pastor offered prayer and read. That concluded the service. Another member of the same class went home with a partial paralysis of the face! The poor class feels that it is doomed! Time out – the mail just arrived – 2 letters from Bill who's feeling on top of the waves!! The Consul had his annual Thanksgiving tea and service and Mr. McClure (Mac) gave a talk. Bill said 'twas very good.

Some more Methodist missionaries have returned to Foochow, one young couple of whom Bill is very fond so he's feeling pretty grand with some of his many friends back. He's just counting the days till I get down there – maybe I'm not, too! Bob Ward gave him his chow dog when he left, so Bill's trying to train the dog (Foxy). Says the dog is really smart and I'll bet two cents he has the run of the house.

It's raining and promises to get colder. Last year we had a beautiful December. Maybe that's what we are getting ready for now.

Must drop a line to Bill and then off to bed –

Much love to you and Papa & Ab, *Mary*



Foochow, China
Dec 1, 1940

Dear Mom:

Another week flown by! Before we know it the year will have gone, too. The faculty chorus met again this afternoon and had a good number out – 4 sopranos, 3 altos, 2 tenors, & 3 basses! But the pianist didn't show up so I was up a tree trying to play "Fall On Your Knees" in D \flat ! We struggled through, though I must confess I felt we didn't accomplish very much!

The week has been fairly quiet – no change except in the weather. Today we had our first stove fire in the dining room and tonite I'm going to enjoy my hot water bottle. Did I ever think the day would come when I'd go to bed with a hot water bottle? That seemed unheard of, let alone woolen undies and stockings. But that's what I've come to, and I have to admit it's comfortable. Today has been perfectly glorious, clear and cold, tho' the temperature was down only to 50! The sun was so warm that at noon we could eat our dinner out on the porch in the sunshine.

Helen & I had a regular shampooing bee, I helped her and she gave me a much needed hot oil treatment before my shampoo. Then we sunned our heads. I feel several pounds lighter and more comfortable! We have ground soft spring water, so washing, head or clothes, is a pleasure.

Had a dandy letter from Helen and one from George. I was certainly glad to hear from Helen about her wedding trip, etc. George says he has taken on a Sunday School class, and wrote me for help!! The subject being China. That will take a little thought, I guess.

Our poinsettias are blooming, the blossoms growing larger every day. The bushes must be 12' to 15' high and some flowers at least a foot in diameter. They make our little plants at home seem stunted! Ours here are blooming all around the porch. We pick a rose now and then. Chrysanthemums are in their glory now. In Foochow they are exceptionally lovely. We haven't so many up here.

Bill writes that he has tried out the hot air furnace in his house. The first time he nearly smoked himself out, but it does actually work. However, he'll not use it, since coal is prohibitive and wood is too expensive. Besides, he's not home enough to warrant having the whole house warm. There is a fire place in the study, one in the living-room and one in the bedroom above the living room, besides a place for a stove in the dining room so he can keep warm. He's just counting the days till I have my vacation and, needless to say, I'm doing exactly the same thing! Vacation will probably start shortly after the middle of January and we'll have at least three weeks, possibly a month, so our principal says! Here's hoping! Helen plans to visit her aunt at Shaowu where the Fukien University is "refugeeing."

Things are fairly quiet for the present thro' out the country. There seems to be a concentration of troops in southern China, around the South Seas, etc. It doesn't seem possible that our eastern neighbor would care to engage the U.S., but we can't tell! There seems to be a definite move toward the N.E.I.¹

We had word this week from our new Ingtai missionaries (Smiths) that they are on their way to Shanghai from Peking – are probably there now. They hope to be established in Ingtai to do their language study, since they were appointed to this station. However, that has not been decided yet. An awfully nice young couple, the Humphries, of the Methodist Missions and of whom Bill and I are very fond, have just completed a year of language study. They are appointed to a town about 75 miles or so above Foochow, but only 30 from Ingtai across the mountains – a good day's hike!! They'll probably be leaving after Christmas and I doubt very much if I'll see them again before next summer. They're grand people and I know Bill will miss them, too. Next summer they'll be going to Kuliang, but not I!! I'll be biding my time with my Bill! And probably melt!! But I won't even notice that! Bill, of course, can't leave the consulate excepting for a few hours at a time, and anyway, there won't be any need of that!

We are in the midst of Christmas preparations and tho' the time can't go fast enough it seems as tho' I can't squeeze everything in! Did I tell you we are giving a concert in January (4th) and we are working on that music too – busy, busy.

The girls are getting up some interest about interclass basketball games, so this season is very full.

¹ Netherlands East Indies, now known as Indonesia. As Japan widened its hold on the Pacific, Australia became a key target. In early 1941, Japan began to systematically take possession of islands in the South Pacific, including the Netherlands East Indies and Australia. By conquering these areas, Japan would effectively control all shipping routes and solidify their hold on Asia and the eastern hemisphere.

I think I'll start that letter to George and send him a few pictures of students. Maybe that will help him out. How I wish I could mail stuff out. I could send a raft of it!! Aunt Clara Probosco wrote last summer for some lacquer, but I couldn't even mail it to Shanghai!!

Take care of yourself and have a good time.

Lots of love to you & Papa & Ab

Mary

Foochow, China
December 8, 1940

Dear Mom:

Your long awaited reply to my engagement has at last been received and I had to chuckle. "Sweet sorrows." I can look back and wonder now why I took some things so seriously and why I didn't do some things a different way. But the end is not yet! Bill wants so much to be married this winter vacation, and I do too, but somehow I'm not quite convinced we should! He understands perfectly that I don't wish to do it until I've heard from Boston, anyway, which word I expect to get by the end of the year. Sometimes I think it would be best to be married the end of January; other times I feel that we ought to wait until summer. The one thing I have against summer is that it's so awful hot and sticky then I can't feature me running around getting ready!! Besides, Helen will be leaving for U.S. and I want to do all I can to help her then and I certainly can't think of her going without having "attended" me! Such arguments are probably very weak in the face of the real problem. Would it make any difference in the "atmosphere" at school since we've already had a couple of upsets this term! Otherwise, I see no reason why we shouldn't be married then! I'm not planning on it; neither is Bill, but it's not saying we aren't hoping for such results. To be in Foochow a month will be strenuous, otherwise. Perhaps it would be better to stay in Ingtau or go somewhere else, but I know I wouldn't be able to do it! Bill has become so much a part of my life that I cherish every moment I can be with him. He's so darned sweet about it, and yet I know that he's hoping we can be married in January. You see, my troubles, sweet tho' they may be, are not over, and I don't expect marriage to solve everything! No doubt some day I'll look back on this and wonder why I felt as I do now!

Now, Mom, of course you'll be at home when I come. I don't believe for a moment that you won't be, and don't worry, for I am coming! Just when is another question. I'll have another year at Wen Shan, then my term is up. There's always the possibility Bill may be transferred, but it's not likely. It depends, somewhat, on conditions out here. His tour of Asiatic duty may be extended and may not, but I doubt very much if I'll be staying here after my term is up. As for making my home out here, I'd really like that. I love it, but Bill's going to study, and the only place for him to do that is at home. So, Mom, I expect to come home "on time" and I'll surely want you & Papa waiting there for me. You'll like Bill. You must see him. He's like us in that he thinks a great deal of family relationships and he's kept in close touch with his own family all the while he's been here.

I'd forgotten how little I've told you of him in all my months of excitement. He comes from Hudson, South Dakota, a very small town only 50 miles from the place where Guy Thelin,¹ one of our Foochow mission, comes from. It's a small world. One of the Methodist Missionaries here went to school with Bill's uncle! He has 3 or 4 older brothers

¹ Guy A. Thelin, a teacher at Foochow College.

(I've lost count) and 3 sisters, one younger than he, of whom he is very fond. His father is not living, died about 4 years ago, and Bill misses him very much. They are the kind of people that have family reunions and grand times together. His dad had a large farm where Bill got his taste for farming, but the place was sold and his mother took a small house in town. She's alone now but trots around visiting her children & grandchildren. Bill's youngest sister is studying nursing in Chicago. His uncles, on his father's side, are either ministers or doctors, as far as I can make out. Two of his cousins got their M.D. after they married, and Bill takes that as incentive for him. There's one thing about Bill – he's no slacker. And he's interested in things in general. He's a real good housekeeper (!) and it makes him so provoked when the servants don't do their work thoroughly. Guess that's Navy training coming out!

Miss Wang, our principal, was so worried about Bill when I told her we were going to be married, but I'd continue teaching. "Well, who will keep house for him?" Naturally, Bill in Foochow and me in Ingtai isn't an ideal arrangement, but in talking it over with Dr. Beard, he said, "Look at Mrs. B & me! We're doing it; but I should certainly go down once a month to Foochow." Heavens! I had planned I'd go down perhaps a couple of times during a term, but no more than that. But I'm sure going to follow his advice. I don't think it will be too bad. It will be quite impossible for Bill to come here, so I'll have to do the traveling! I just rec'd two dandy letters from Bill and he's feeling on top of the world. His moods are easily reflected in his letters. This is enough about Bill & me (he just had lunch at the consulate!).

Now how about you. I hope you have found a place down in R.I. with Pop. And I wish Ab would leave Leonard's & quit the town, or else buy out Leonard! Guess I'll write him one of these days. I wish he could meet Merlin Bishop who's out here. I think they'd strike it off marvelously. Personally I think Ab is built for foreign service and could get into consulate work with a little training. He knows how to handle people.

Well, enough raving for one letter, but pouring all my "sorrows" out helps me see things a little clearer. I feel better already!

Lots of love to you & Papa –

Mary

Foochow, China
December 15, 1940

Dear Mom & Pop!

Here it is the middle of December so soon! And I wonder where you are and hoping everything is O.K. While Miss Wang was in Foochow this week, Helen stayed nights at the girls dorm. Since Dr. Beard, too, was in Foochow I held the fort here. The weather is getting colder, altho' when the sun comes out in the middle of the day, no coats are necessary. We have a fire in the stove mornings & one in the fireplace evenings. We usually have supper around it, being much more cheerful. Tonight Susan & Miss Wang were in for supper – baked beans and brown bread! And lettuce from Dr. Beard's garden! Soon we'll have carrots, too. I'm happy once more with peanut butter and lettuce sandwiches! And have initiated Helen to them. Oranges are in season, so are tangerines, and such large juicy ones as I never saw at home. Fruit is certainly the prize product of Fukien and they don't have to bother with it, it just grows. We're still getting persimmons, native bananas, and have a couple bushels of pomalo stored away. Helen has been making pomalo juice today (really like grapefruit marmalade) and it's delicious.

At school we're running low on kerosene & rice. The same old question! We have to have government permits to buy either, one tin of kerosene at a time, and rice – only enough for one day at a time! Such a nuisance, when we haven't enough servants to run to the gov. for rice & do the school work too. Some day they'll learn how to control food!

Foochow College is seriously thinking of installing a Delco light plant!¹ Kerosene costs them 300.00 per month! In fact, I guess they have actually purchased the machinery for such an outfit. I still think it's a shame to put out such amounts when there are all the facilities in Foochow. There was a rumor of possibly going back there, but I doubt if anything comes of it for a couple of years or so. Do I ever wish we could!! Ingtai is beautiful, but my heart's "no longer in the highlands."²

Through the squeezing process that has been going on in official circles, government schools have come to the point where they (gov. universities) offer students tuition, board, room, books, and clothes, even to handkerchiefs! It's unbelievable but true! Primarily due to the rice situation – taxing of it and the tight control the gov. has had over it. It is also noted that these schools, as a rule, don't compare with private schools for standing (in Fukien, anyway).

At last – here's a real good picture of your son-in-law to be! This is true Foochow fashion – shirtsleeves – always sport shirts!! The twin to this picture is a real smile, which is a dandy, but I can't part with that one. I'll be seeing him in a month, maybe less. Golly I can hardly wait! Having an earlier vacation this year may mean an earlier closing in June – here's hoping! You probably think that all I live for is vacations – right now that's what I'm looking forward to! But with so much to do between now and the end of the term I just don't see where it's all going to be gotten in! Helen's birthday comes this week, and we are taking time out to celebrate with a picnic supper! More about that later.

Next Sunday being Christmas Sunday, the week is crammed with rehearsals of one kind or another. Saturday rehearsed the two choirs – F.C. and W.S. – and had an excellent rehearsal. We're doing "O Holy Night," "Gloria In Excelsis," for Christmas and for our concert we're doing "Stars Lead Us Ever On" as a mixed number, and they love it, and do it very well, too! I was so excited during rehearsal, I thrilled all over. We have no less than 5 programs between Saturday (21st) & Wednesday, the 25th, besides a special communion service on Sunday for those new members who join the church. Susan has 42 or 43 boys joining on Christmas Sunday. While I think of it any Christmas cards you receive, do send on out here because we can use them next year. The students are crazy about them. And too, if you are home and want to get rid of some woolen things, especially knit goods, send them out here – in bags!! We never have enough yarn for the little primary school kids (orphans) who knit their own sweaters, etc. Any yarn will do – scarfs, mittens, sweaters – they rip them up and re-knit them. Colors make no difference. You should see some of the combinations they get. But the main thing is to keep them warm. Did I tell you the little boys took their chop sticks and whittled them down for knitting needles!! They come up here in droves for yarn & Helen doesn't have enough left now for some to finish their sweaters! They are cute kids, too. I took some pictures the other day, and in time you'll be getting some of them.

¹ Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company's co-founder, Charles Kettering, introduced the Delco-Light electric plant to rural America in 1916. [www.doctordelco.com]

² A reference to *My Heart's in the Highlands*, by the Scottish poet, Robert Burns.

This week is monthly exam week. We'll no sooner get them out of the way than we'll start in preparing for term finals. That can't come too soon for me! I never knew I could be so all-absorbed in one person before. But that's just what I've become. Bill means everything to me, and I've never known such happiness. He's seen me in all phases I think – with & without temper and must know pretty much what he's getting into. He's stubborn, too. As bad as our own family, and many's the time we haven't agreed!! But he's dear, and is too much inclined to put me on a pedestal, which may or may not be a good thing! I'm not even a flag-pole sitter, but he gives me a lot to live up to, and at the same time I feel a bit chagrined! Never before have I felt that I wanted to live with a person as I do with Bill – he's himself always – and a “straight shooter.” He reminds me a lot of David, in his actions & reactions.

Guess I'd better call a halt. The fire's nearly out & my feet are cooling off. I'm hoping the mailman gets thro' tonight with some American mail for a change - & my daily.

Lots of love to you both, & take care of yourselves.

Mary

Foochow, China

December 29, 1940

Dear Felix:

Good old 1940 is about to “pass out” and what a marvelous year it has been! Despite chaos all over the world, unsettled conditions here and the inconvenience of refugeeing, much has been accomplished, if nothing more than giving the well-to-do a taste of living under less favorable conditions than they are used to. Living and working in the country has given the students a chance to see the importance of spreading learning and decent living among the laboring people. Of course that was the government's idea when they ordered all senior students boys and girls to take one year out of their school time and go into the country to teach both adults and children. The experience, though not ideal, has been of value to all, I think. And it has probably been one of the biggest steps toward unity of China. That experience, however, is no longer required of the seniors. The students here in Ingtai are learning to appreciate the beauties of nature all around them, and there is such an abundance of it here. For so many hundreds of years the girls in particular have been shut away from the outside world. Now that they are free to come and go they are beginning to enjoy being out of doors merely for the sake of being out, and walking, or playing ball. They were out in the city, too, but it hadn't the same effect on them that the country has – wide open spaces. They have a deeper appreciation for each other, too, simply because they are together all the time. In the city, many of them are only day students. So refugeeing has its advantages – and though it's a headache for those responsible for the students, it has and is doing a great deal for the students.

Our Christmas season was full to the hilt and very joyous. We began the 21st with a faculty Christmas party at our house. There were nearly 70 teachers here – from all three schools – Foochow College, Tung Jen and Wen Shan. A government school inspector was our guest and when asked to speak, he said he was much impressed with the kind of entertainment the teachers were making for themselves. And we did have a good time playing games and singing carols.

Christmas Sunday, 43 Foochow College boys were baptized and taken into the church. It was a thrilling experience to watch the ceremony. Besides, 5 townspeople joined, two elderly blind men, two women and a young man in the local government. All five had such eager and earnest expressions on their faces as Dr. Beard and our pastor Mr. Ling baptized them. The combined choirs of Foochow College and Wen Shan did the members proud singing “O Holy Night” and “Shepherds We Have Heard on High.” In the afternoon there was a communion service for all the new members as well as others. That was simple and very reverent. I always enjoy playing for that service.

Monday – 23rd – Wen Shan had its own religious service in the church and presented “Why the Chimes Rang” with the whole school body taking part in the church service of the play. The whole thing was perfectly lovely. I wish you could have seen the transformation the church went through! Can you imagine bare, stark, white walls, colorless glass windows (some with no glass) and plain ordinary benches for seats? That’s what our church is, but it’s quite elegant compared to some. Just before Christmas the walls had been white-washed. Fortunately, the chancel is quite nice and lends itself to decoration very nicely. At the back we draped a dark blue curtain, just behind the altar, and suspended the gold cross about 3’ above the altar. On each side were a seven branch candlestick and one very tall Chinese candlestick, all with red candles. Half way into the chancel were placed 5’ candelabra which Helen had made of plain ordinary wood – each holding 7 red candles. The corners were banked with bamboo trees and 10’ poinsettias. The effect of the red against the white walls was beautiful. The choir sits outside on each side of the chancel and against each wall was another 5’ candelabra. The stems of the candelabra were wound with ground-pine. But that isn’t everything. The colorless glass windows were covered with paper glass windows and made to look like the most beautiful colored glass windows you’d find in any church. Where the paper didn’t stretch over the whole window, we draped with dark blue curtains. Behind each window was hung a lantern so the whole window was shown off to advantage. All around were wreaths hung on the walls! Let me tell you, it didn’t look at all like the same place. The lighting was entirely by candles. The girls seemed to feel the reverence of the place and entered into the spirit of the whole service completely. I’ve never known them to be so receptive! But I must not forget the choir. They wore their white robes, gold bands in their hair and each carried a lighted red candle – it was the most effective processional I ever saw!! And they sang beautifully – “Jesu Little Babe So Fair” – a carol of Haiti. I can see right now that next Xmas I’m going to be wishing Helen were here instead of at home! If anyone deserved and needed a furlough, she certainly does. I think no one knows how really disappointed she was not to be able to go home this year, but that doesn’t stop her from going right on as per usual!!.

Well, to get on with Christmas, Tuesday afternoon and evening we three schools combined to give the Nativity play for the church, much the same as we did last year. Tung Jen had the shepherd scene, Foochow College was responsible for the Wise Men’s scene and Wen Shan planned the Manger scene. Our Mary was an exquisite Chinese girl and Joseph was one of our very fine senior girls. During that scene, the choir again sang “O Holy Night.” The program opened with the W.S. choir singing “Dost Thou Remember the Prophet of Old.” Each scene was accompanied with appropriate carols and the whole effect was very lovely.

We were all dead tired when the final curtain went down, but I hadn’t the heart to refuse the seniors when they asked me to go caroling with them! So Christmas Morning at 3

A.M. we crawled out and visited all the dormitories and sang. What fun! It was the first time that some of the juniors had ever seen or heard such goings on – and they were all agog! Christmas Day was our only holiday. Being too rushed with feasts and a social program at school, we didn't attempt to celebrate our Xmas until Thursday evening (26th) here at our house before the fire place! Then we crashed through with some good old U.S.A. canned tuna fish and plum pudding – over which we are still smacking our lips. Yes, we had a tree and Santa was exceedingly generous. We did have such fun. And now the year is practically over – both for us and the Chinese. Their New Year comes the end of January, which, at the rate time is flying by, won't be very long in coming! It's then we have our winter vacation; probably ours begins about the 16th, so you see there isn't much time left! There are no less than 1500 students in Ingtai that must be gotten down the river to Foochow, so the question of boats is what determines our closing date.

Dr. Beard reminded me tonite that in two months time we will have spent half of our term! It just doesn't seem possible.

We had word from Foochow that our new Ingtai Smiths have arrived so we are looking forward with great anticipation to seeing them and bringing them back with us after vacation.

This week the government has its annual athletic meet and all schools take part. Some 3,000 people are expected in town besides the students! It's a grand idea but it sure cuts into school curriculum the way they run it.

By the way, last spring, I think, you wrote saying that in the contributions for church work, money was especially sent in for me, to be used in the school out here! Or did I dream it?? I might say that the school sure is in need of money this year, with prices going sky high and if there is any coming this way it will be more than welcome. If such money is sent into Boston, the best way of assuring its getting to me is to send it special for M.F.B. Rice is such a problem – we had to advance up to \$5,000 or more in order to get it. The kerosene problem is nearly as bad!! But we've still got our heads above water, but that's all! I guess I'd better call it quits before this extends into next year!!

I'm afraid this is too late for any message for the annual church meeting; however, here's what I'd like to say to them. That anything, no matter how trivial it may seem to them, is appreciated to the full by those in this mission field and, no doubt, in any mission field. I doubt that one can really realize that until one has been associated in some way with the missions – at home or abroad. Your support is needed, tho' it may constitute no more than a friendly word; that, in the end is what really counts. The more I see of mission work the more I am convinced that such work will go farther than any other in bringing order and peace out of this present chaos. The future certainly looks black, but with a friendly word of encouragement what a difference is made! If, in the new hymnal there is the hymn, "In Christ There Is No East or West," I'd like to have it sung some Sunday. The Chinese are very fond of it. It's that kind of spirit that will eventually make us all part of a world brotherhood.

Let me wish you, Jean & Felix, a very Happy New Year and best wishes to follow you thro' out the year.

Most sincerely,
Mary Frances

Chapter 4

1941

A Brief History of United States – China Relations

From The United States Department of State, Office of the Historian
[history.state.gov/countries/china]

In 1784, a Philadelphia financier sent the ship *Empress of China* for the first voyage of direct trade between the United States and China. In the 60 years following, relations among U.S. citizens and Chinese were private and largely commercial. Nevertheless, Sino-American trade grew under the Chinese system that limited foreign traders' access to a single port city, Guangzhou (Canton).

In 1928, the Nationalist Government established its capital in Nanjing (Nanking) while the United States kept its Legation in Peking and set up "sub-embassy" facilities in Nanjing to facilitate official diplomatic contact with the Nationalist government while remaining in close proximity to the diplomatic representatives of other foreign powers in Peking. It was also skeptical of the Nanjing regime's long-term viability. The Legation in Beijing was elevated to the level of Embassy on June 18, 1935.

Throughout the "undeclared war" between Japan and China (1937–1941), the United States maintained its official diplomatic mission in Beijing while the U.S. Ambassador began to reside intermittently near the Chinese government in Nanjing. In 1937, the Ambassador moved to Hankou, then to Chongqing (Chungking) in 1938, after the government of the Republic of China moved in response to Japan's invasion and capture of Beijing and Nanjing. Following the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States on December 7, 1941, and the Japanese capture of U.S. Embassy facilities in Peking, the official U.S. Embassy was moved to Chongqing.

The United States appointed a number of consuls, usually merchants, to serve the interests of U.S. merchants in Guangzhou. These consuls served intermittently and without instructions from Washington, and never received formal acknowledgment of their limited consular credentials from the Chinese Government until after 1843. The start of official consular relations dates to the appointment of a U.S. consul to the ports of Fuzhou (Foochow) and Xiamen (Amoy) in 1844.

At the dawn of 1941, France, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, and Greece had been overrun. Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania had joined Nazi Germany and a Tripartite Pact was signed, making Japan an Axis nation. When Hitler's proposal for European peace with the stipulation that Britain acknowledge the superiority of Germany was rejected by the government of then Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the Blitzkrieg began. Though word of British planes bombing German cities in return and the defeat of Italian troops in Africa encouraged the British population in general, bombing produced widespread disruption. Gold and foreign exchange reserves were moved to Canada, and preparations were made for a defensive guerrilla war.

In China, the war with Japan continued. The population endured endless bombings and rampant mistreatment as well as severe shortages of food and fuel.

Though the United States had cut off supplies of oil to Japan in July, 1940, it did not appear that British and American citizens in China would be threatened. As Mary wrote to her mother in March, “Despite rumors, international situations and all that, this place seems to be the safest! There is no necessity for anyone to leave, now, and probably won’t be. We can’t believe that Japan wants to engage the U.S. Anyway, we are staying here!”

News from China

The Rev. Felix Manley to the First Congregational Church of South Hadley

January 5, 1941

Tomorrow is Epiphany, from ancient times the day of remembrance of the visit of the Wise Men to Jesus, his manifestation unto the Gentiles. Traditionally the day has emphasized missions, the out reach of a little hand of disciples, and then a church, and then churches, taking seriously Christ’s missionary commandment, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mk. 16:15)

Jesus drew the distinction between true and false missionaries in his discourse on the good shepherd as recorded in John. He called himself a good shepherd. I don’t know any more appropriate title for a true missionary than good shepherd. One of our own members, Mary Buckhout, deserves that appellation, for she is out shepherding some of the lost sheep of the vast land of China, the girls of Wenshan School.

Today I would bring to you news from Mary Buckhout in China, as it has been vividly reported in her letters to family and friends during 1940.

Find Foochow on the map and its north latitude will be about the same as Miami, Florida, so it isn’t strange to find Mary writing about their gardening the year round. Foochow is a city about 30 miles up the Min River from the coast. There for many years Wenshan School for girls has been developing Chinese Christian womanhood. Its leader has been Helen Smith, daughter of Ned Smith who spoke to us at our Fall Rally Supper. But because of the dangers of war the school left its fine buildings in Foochow and took up temporary quarters in the hill village of Ingtai, about 50 miles up the Ingtai River¹ from Foochow.

Mary arrived at Ingtai a year ago last October 1, to begin her duties as teacher of English and music and drama at Wenshan School

Ingtai means “Eternal Peace.” Mary writes that it seems like the most peaceful spot on earth except when they catch a bandit and execute him within earshot down by the river.

Of course the news which comes up to Ingtai almost every day is not encouraging. The radio operator for the American Consul at Foochow, Mr. Harlan [Harley] Vilroy McVay, a very special friend of a member of the teaching staff at Wenshan School, keeps them informed of the tightening of the blockade on the coast, the almost complete destruction of Chunking, mission property and all, and the occasional air raid warnings in Foochow. And yet, Mary writes, reconstruction goes on continually, motor roads, railroads, airlines – wise folk, the Chinese, born diplomats, clever and patient. One cannot imagine any nation conquering China completely. As for the missionaries, their policy is one of sitting tight and sticking.

¹ Actually Dazhang Book, a tributary of the Wulong River.

Yes, China has needs: more of everything, more hospitals, doctors, nurses, agriculturists, engineers, more money. American money goes a long way in China; the exchange is 15 to one. \$10 American, worth \$150 Chinese, will see a student through four years of prep school, room, board, tuition, and all. A poor girl was going to have to leave Wenshan. Her classmates pooled their allowances and arranged, without her knowledge, to provide her a scholarship through the school, to pay her board, \$7 a month, about 50¢ a month in our money. [Hand-written side note: “*In 1944 \$80 our money for a years’ training.”]

Mary’s task as shepherd is education. China’s people, young and old, are craving for learning. “It’s inspiring to work with them,” Mary writes, “because they are so responsive.” Wenshan School has twice as many students as last year. Housing accommodations are inadequate. Teachers enough are hard to find. Fortunately Emily Wang, the former dean, is back after 2 years study at Schauffler College where Miss Woodland is. The teachers on the job carry loads as heavy as they can bear. Mary is teaching 29 hours a week, English drama, music, gym, with 3 private music lessons and 2 choir rehearsals besides.

Her greatest joy in English are the senior girls who are back after a year’s experience teaching in the rural villages of China, part of the New Life Movement of that awakening land. The Y.W.C.A. gave the pageant “Why the Chimes Rag” for Christmas. Mary’s choir of Wenshan girls and Foochow College boys sang a cut version of the Hallelujah Chorus for commencement last June, which went very well until one of the tenors burst out in full voice just before the last hallelujah. “I tell you, life’s never dull out here,” she writes. For Christmas her girls’ choir sang “Jesus, Little Babe, so Fair,” “O Have You Heard the Tidings,” “O Holy Night,” and “Gloria in Excelsis Deo.” Her description of the Wenshan girls in their choir cottas winding down over the hill in torchlit procession at 5:30 Christmas morning to serenade the teachers makes one think of the Mount Holyoke College carolers early Sunday morning before they go holidaying.

As long as the weather is warm enough, Mary’s gym classes swim in the river. She had a bath house built by the river which stayed until a typhoon took it on the last day of September. When last seen on October first it was a collapsed bath house on the rapids. The girls love basketball, volleyball, and hiking.

Knowing Mary, it is easy to picture her picnicking with her girls on the rocks down by the river, or entertaining her junior choir girls in her room, listening to the victrola, looking at Life Magazine, and playing Chinese Checkers.

Of course there are occasional shadows. In the middle of November a senior girl was taken ill with smallpox and complications. The young Chinese doctor worked half the night trying unsuccessfully to diagnose the complications. At 3:30 in the morning Helen Smith went down the street to wake up the village tailor to buy the cloth for the customary new grave clothes. At 4:30 A.M. Mary and the other teachers were busy making the required 5 layers. They were ready at 7:00 A.M.

Of course the rice problem is always with them. Fukien province feeds its soldiers first. Rice cannot be transported from one village to another without a government permit. Early in September before school opened, Helen Smith and Mary left Foochow at 3 a.m. for a 25-mile launch trip down the Min River, almost to the coast, arriving at 10 a.m. at a village where a load of rice was supposed to be waiting for them. The rice was finally loaded on the boat by 7 o’clock in the evening, and then the tide was out and the boat high and dry on the mudflats. There was nothing for Helen and Mary to do but wrap their steamer rugs about them to ward off the mosquitoes and the rats, and spend the night on the rice bags. Next

morning at 11 the tide let them go and late in the afternoon two filthy dirty but successful rice traders reached home a day late.

Naturally we're interested in the Christian Church in China, for it is the Church which stands back of, which supports the good American influences in China. In this hill village of Ingtau there are now four colleges and preparatory schools temporarily located. The one church building is so taxed that four services are necessary on Sunday: 8:00, 9:30, 2:00, and 4:00. Christmas a year ago 40 students joined the church and at Easter, 60 more. Mary describes the Easter Service as very impressive, the church simply decorated with a large palm leaf cross banked with flowers at the back of the chancel. Her choir sang "Break Forth Into Joy" to the congregation of a thousand.

It's in lands where Christians are very much in a minority that they are easily distinguishable. There's quite a distinction between Christians and non-Christians. She writes, "Even the poorest Christian seems to have the desire to make the best of what he has; his clothes may be poor but they're clean and patched; their faces are bright and smiling. The others have such a fatalistic attitude. It's not 'I don't care' but 'I can't do any better.'"

A great deal has happened to Mary personally since she reached China. She's had homesickness, malaria and worms. She's been thrust into leadership in a land of people hungering to be led. It has brought out her best. The greatness of the task has challenged her. "I've never been happier in my life," she writes. It has humbled her. At the end of the first year she confessed that she had learned more than she had taught.

She has fallen deeply in love, with a man, and with missions. She writes, "Why isn't the mission cause more keenly felt and supported?" It will be a joy to write to Mary some day soon to report that this church fully met its missionary budget in 1940.

I remember a story, a word picture of a carpenter mending a broken world globe in the basement of a schoolhouse. Mary is our representative on the other side of a broken world, mending, building better lives, Christian lives, for God.

Felix A. Manley

Foochow, China
January 5, 1941

Dear Mom & Papa:

According to my little book I'm behind again! And I'll be jiggered if I can remember whether that letter was written after our Christmas party or before! So if I repeat, it's me old age creepin' up on me! Anyway, it was a swell affair here at our house, recalling the menu. I guess I wrote all about it. Scalloped tuna fish & mushroom soup, baked potatoes, new carrots, lettuce & tomato salad and swell plum pudding that Peg sent out last spring! Of course rolls & jam and coffee. We sat around the fireplace in the living room, having served ourselves buffet style. It was a grand leisurely evening after all the Christmas rush! Then Dr. Beard played Santa and "unloaded" the tree! What a Christmas. Bill gave me a beautiful padded silk robe – aqua blue and golden brown! It's gorgeous! And also some lovely silk pjs – exquisite things! Helen gave me much needed writing paper and a lovely tooled leather pod case. Had guest towels given me, hankies, cute calendar & a lacquer necklace. I wrote Ab all this and have a funny feeling I wrote you too. Well, to get on, it was a lovely

Christmas but I certainly miss home more at that time than any other. Had Bill been here, it would have been perfect! But he's being very sensible and patient and his Christmas too was a happy one. Folks in Foochow are simply grand to him; he's counted "in" on everything, by the women as well as the men. Just now he's storing up a bit of knowledge in preparation for an exam he has to take in a day or two.

Well, well. I started with Christmas and wind up with Bill. That's not unusual since that's where I'll wind up eventually whoopee! One would think that after Xmas things would quiet down a bit! But no such luck. For the past two weeks we have been running a basketball tournament, rehearsing for a concert and competing in the government athletic games here! Now that all that has passed, we'll settle down tomorrow to reviewing and start final exams on Friday.

The concert came off last night and was much better than I dared hope it could be. Because of the athletic meet our rehearsals were all interrupted and very unsatisfactory. As usual the athletic girls are the girls who are good students and my best singers!! The two didn't go together very well. Besides, by last night they were tired out, having made an excellent show for Wen Shan at the games, both in basketball, volley ball, and individual sports. It was impossible to get F. C. & W. S. glee clubs together so my pet number – Sioux Indian Carol – had to be left out of the concert! However, the girls did very well and we were unusually supported by the Hsueh¹ children (principal of Foochow College) who had a major part in the program. The oldest daughter, 12 or 13, played 2 piano numbers for us – one was a Chopin prelude – and she is excellent! She's a brilliant player. Then, too, she's had excellent training both here under Mr. Faurat (who is on his way back here) and for the ten years that she was in America. The second daughter plays violin. She's 7 or 8, and absolutely unconscious of her ability. There's a little girl about 4 who is learning to play the guitar but she didn't perform for us! Foochow College also performed and did well. My girls did not do their best but this is what they "done did." Oh Susanna, Sweet & Low, Brahms's Lullaby, American Indian Lullaby (Luchita's Sleep Song) and the Negro spiritual, I've Got a Robe. Of course there were the indispensable patriotic songs which, this time, were not shouted quite so fiercely. Two of the girls played a piano duet – Beethoven's Minuet – and one of the teachers played a duet with a student and did it quite well (Spanish Dance). It turned out to be a nice program. The girls spent a great deal of time and effort decorating the assembly hall with banners – a dark blue backdrop on which were all kinds of musical notes. It was very effective. They had ushers to seat the guests and lights along the path leading to the school, so it was quite festive and grand. Thank goodness! It's our last program for this term.

School closes the 17th for three weeks. I'm hoping that can be stretched to four! And so is Helen. She's going up to Shaowu where her aunt is teaching at the university (F. C. U.). Our earlier closing & opening this year means we will not have to go so late in June for which we will all be thankful, it gets so infernally hot & sticky. Then, too, Helen will have a bit more time to get things together before going home.

To get back to vacation – Helen & I will probably go down the 18th – as soon as we can, anyway – so two weeks from last night, I'll see my Bill! I can hardly wait! These last few days seem interminable, but it's worth waiting for.

The new Smiths arrived in Foochow the day after Xmas after a rather harrowing trip across country in the rain and mud. The Mission Christmas dinner there was put off until

¹ Donald T. M. Hsueh, married to Catherine Lin Hsueh.

they arrived, and Mr. McClure – keeping bachelors’ quarters – did the honors. Bill had been invited to a reception tea for them over at the Compound, but because of his schedule he couldn’t go over! Everyone says they are perfectly marvelous people and Ingtai sure is lucky. Thank goodness there will be some grand young folks here next year! With Helen away, I’d be lost otherwise! They’ll be here in Helen’s house – now, whether I shall be, or not, is a question, but I sure hope I can be. I don’t like living on top of the school – it’s too handy – I prefer this compound too; it seems more open than the school compound.

After a few days of cold, raw weather we are back to warm mild weather again. It probably means rain which we need very much both for gardens and the river! Let it rain! Let it pour! For there’s only two weeks more!! Dr. Beard & Helen keep teasing me, saying I ought to go to Shaowu with Helen for the company, etc. etc, and Dr. B can think of more reasons for staying in Ingtai, but I’m not biting!

The Radio Guides came – 2 batches – and the clipping of our announcement. I sent it down to Bill, but haven’t heard any repercussions yet!

We’ve got to get a new cook for next term – our present one is almost as good as nothing! And his wife is worse than that. Helen & I do most of the “fancy” cooking. With the Smiths coming, we’ve got to have someone who can carry on without having to be told every little thing! For some unknown reason they (cooks) are few & far between, especially since so many people have gone home in the past 2 years – one would think that cooks would be rampant, but not so. And servants are a necessity the way we live out here. It’s a great life, this, but I’ll be glad when the day comes when I won’t have to depend on servants.

Well, one more letter from Ingtai, then the next from Foochow. I’m off now to drop a line to Bill.

Lots of love to you, Mom & Pop,
Mary

Jan 13, 1941

Dear Mom:

It’s real Foochow January weather – rainy, cold & raw – but spring begins with the Chinese New Year which is the end of this month. Seems odd, doesn’t it. We can’t complain, for most of December and up until this week it has been lovely. Exams always bring rainy weather, it seems, anyway.

We started exams last Friday. I have one to give tomorrow and one the next day, then I’m through for a few weeks – three, to be exact. It goes without saying that I’ll be tearing off to Foochow, probably Thursday morning at the screech of dawn, unless I have to stay for a faculty meeting or other school business. Mr. Beard left last week, so Helen & I are holding forth by ourselves – no cook, nawthin’ – always down to the last of everything. Breakfasts are easy, we have lunch at Lucy’s anyway and for supper we weed the garden for

lettuce & carrots. Susan sends over bread, we make our peanut butter so we’re all set. Helen has been initiating me to Ingtai recipes, using purely Ingtai products! We made a persimmon

<p><i>Persimmon Pudding</i></p> <p><i>1 c sugar</i></p> <p><i>1 c persimmon pulp</i></p> <p><i>1 c flour</i></p> <p><i>½ c milk</i></p> <p><i>1 T melted butter</i></p> <p><i>½ tsp vanilla</i></p> <p><i>2 tsp soda</i></p> <p><i>Steam 1 ½ hours</i></p>
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pudding of milk, persimmon and dark brown sugar. It bakes 6 hours and is very much like Indian pudding. The beauty of it is that it can be made & kept almost like fruit cake etc and it's delicious. I've just filled a jar to take down to Bill. You see we live out here much as your mother did, I guess. White sugar just can't be bought now. What we get & call white is a light brown sugar. For molasses & most of our cooking we get the dark brown (red) sugar in cakes – buy it by the 100 lb load!!! It's marvelous stuff. Fruit we buy the same way – by the load – and store it. Wheat likewise, in the hull and grind it as we want it! You'd be floored at the amount of peanuts we got this fall – over 100 lbs! It's as much a staple out here as canned soup is at home. Our morning cereal is the same wheat – ground very course – maybe it isn't good! I have to snicker when I think of how we live at home from day to day, never thinking in quantities that we do out here. Shades of my grandmother! But it's lots of fun.

The weekend I spent at Susan's in her nice cozy little house of four rooms, having my own suite. We didn't wear ourselves out “gadding,” but had a restful, relaxing time – knitting, darning stockings & talking. Again that sounds like grandma! We did go out between showers and get a few ferns & plants from the river side and transplanted them around her house. Helen came for dinner & supper on Sunday. Since she is staying at the dorm while Miss Wang is away I stayed last nite with Susan, too, & was up & had breakfast at 6:30. I'll be glad when it begins to get light mornings, it's still dark at 7 a.m. but that won't last much longer. The sun sets about 5:15 p.m. so this time of year the days are much as they are at home.

My tongue is still hanging out for home mail, especially Xmas mail. Last night I had a card & note from Edith Towne. Says she's studying Spanish in hopes of going to Mexico & So. America some day! By the time I get to Foochow all my mail will probably start coming in. The next time you hear from me will be from Foochow direct. I only wish there were amateur radio connections between here & U.S. I'd have Bill send you a message. Anyway I'll write. We'll be so busy making plans for the summer and when I think of it I don't know where to begin! I guess the first place is the tailor. I think I'll follow Helen's (B's) precedent and have an afternoon dress for my wedding gown – that's the way I feel now – and all such things will have to be done this vacation. Have to get some white shoes made, some undies etc. I don't know what I was thinking of when I came out here with only 2 pairs of panties!! Of course I can't get rayon panties, have to have silk crepe things made and I'm not very fond of them. Guess I can stand it though. Bill's nearly standing on his ear 'til I get down and I'll bet he won't be any too pleased when he finds out how much time it'll take for fittings etc. Helen & Dr. Beard have been kidding me to death, saying I'd be much more rested etc. etc. if I stayed in Ingtai this vacation!

The new Smiths are not coming to Ingtai right away, much to our keen disappointment. They'll stay in Foochow until the first heir¹ arrives, which isn't due until July! The population is going to take a decided jump that month they tell me. More excitement. The hospital (in Foochow) has a new doctor (Jewess) whose husband is a physiotherapist. They feel quite set up. One of the doctors – Margaret Tucker – is supposed to go home on furlough and has been trying for 6 months to get into the interior to join her parents and go out via the Burma Road. As far as I know she's still in Foochow! But that's life in China.

¹ Their first child.

If you feel the urge to send out anything don't hesitate to do so. Everyone is receiving packages out here in good order! But make them small and compact, like that sent via the Scotts, and they'll come thro' ok. Cocoa is always welcome, small packages of cheese, deviled meats, etc. We'll use anything you send. I'll be needing hairpins, too. When I lose these that are in my head now, I'll have to wear my hair in braids down my back. I have a feeling that Peg has sent a pkg, and I hope it's small. Then I'll be more sure of getting it. Helen got some stockings via letter post ok! How about some of that new nylon hose.¹ We're dying to try some!! I used several little things in the box you sent me for Xmas gifts. But I'm hanging on to most of it.

It's my night for a bath, so I'd better get it in – or in it! Maybe by that time the postman will have come with a load of U.S. Mail. Here's hoping! I haven't yet heard from Boston since I wrote them of my engagement and I'm very anxious to. Maybe tonite's the night.

I assume you're in R.I. and I hope everything is going nicely. Say hello to Hat & Dave when you see them.

Lots of love to you and Papa.

Mary

January 25, 1941
Foochow, China

Dear Mom & Papa,

Three days of a new, glorious life have passed and I can't understand why I didn't do it before! Bill and I are the happiest husband and wife there could ever be! It's a long story, so I might as well start at the beginning!

When no word came to me from Boston by the end of the year I could not convince myself that Bill and I should be married this vacation. From up in Ingtai such a perspective was o.k. Everything seemed to be going nicely and we decided that July 4th, your birthday, would be the propitious time. I left Ingtai with such intentions on January 17th at 4 A.M., arriving in Foochow January 18th at 7 A.M. after spending the night on a sandbar in the middle of the river just above the city with scarcely a place to sit, to say nothing of trying to keep warm. About 20 kids were huddled under my steamer rug and so the night finally passed. I slept at intervals, sometimes squatting, sometimes sitting, but was so excited that sleep wouldn't have come had I a feather bed.

The Pilley's – friends of Bill's – people whom I'd never seen, invited me to stay at their home while down because it was nearer Bill's and because they're such swell folks anyway!

¹ Before the invention of nylon by DuPont, stockings were made of cotton and were more like leggings than stockings. They were introduced at the New York World's Fair in 1939, but during WWII they became scarce as nylon was used for parachutes and tents. [*The History of Nylon Stockings*; Mary Bellis]

Saturday & Sunday we tore around, seeing folks (Helen didn't come down until Sunday). Monday we began talking over future plans and it seemed both unnecessary to wait until summer so we decided to ride over to the compound and see Dr. Beard. He knew of our plans and knew I'd not heard anything but had to take time to talk it over with Mr. McClure and help us as much as he could! Both of them came to see Bill and me together Tuesday afternoon and Mr. Mc – having written Boston before for rules & regulations in such a case as ours – could find no reason for not doing as we wished and still not break my contract. Well, from that moment Bill's & my thoughts were anything but orderly. We just couldn't think! I didn't know where to begin. Dr. B. was supposed to leave for Ingtau on Thursday and said he'd postpone it, etc, and we didn't object. He decided then that we'd be married Wednesday



evening. 24 hours in which to prepare! Mrs. Beard offered us her house, everybody in the compound turned to for decorating, lending potted plants, giving flowers, time, energy, and such wonderful encouragement! Bill & I wanted it very simple, but the folks insisted upon doing everything for us. Merlin gave us a dinner after the ceremony to which only Dr. & Mrs. Beard, the Consul, Mr. McClure & Lyda (who helped me no end!) were invited. Everything was perfectly lovely. I can't begin to thank them all for such a beautiful few minutes! Dr. Beard was more than reverent, just beautiful in the way he conducted the ceremony. Bill was scared, and I was so nervous I wanted to cry! I'd always thought of you two being at my wedding – in fact couldn't think of taking that final step without you there – and the mission folks realized that, I know, in the way they turned to and helped me. How I wish you both, Mom & Pop, could have been here.

To the decorations: I was in the living room – quite a lovely room with casement windows at one end. Between the windows they banked bamboo and potted ferns. Just in front of that they arranged iris – purple and white with some white narcissus in a lacy fern basket. Candles – white – were arrayed at either side in groups of three, and other candles and iris about the room. You may be sure I didn't see it all that night, but went over

afterwards and had some pictures taken of it and us. I hope they came out. I'll send some home to you. The guests – only about 30 or so – came in long gowns & dress suits and stood on each side of the room. Bill and I came down the aisle together – no attendants. What did I wear?? Well, I hadn't time to get anything so had planned on my long blue dress – evening gown – and your emerald and pearl pin. I was all set, bathed and practically dressed when Muriel Pilley came into my room and said, “Dorothy Brewster and I want to fix you up,” so what did they do but get out their white dresses for me to try. Dorothy's white organdy fit perfectly, and Muriel's own wedding veil put the finishing touches. Even had to borrow hair pins from Dorothy! I wore your emerald pin at the neck and it was just right! Susan made a bridal sheaf of lovely calillies [calla lilies] which are in full bloom here now. They were tied with a big white bow. So with the help of most all the foreigners, Bill and I were started on our wonderfully happy life together. I've never known such happiness, though before I thought I couldn't be any happier than I was! Bill is sweet – all that I'd ever dream of. I still don't know quite where to begin! So far I've accomplished nothing in “settling.” I did more in the summer!

I suppose, too, you're wondering where Helen was all this time. That is my only regret! She wasn't here. But it was all my own fault. She'd planned this trip to Shaowu and had to leave on Tuesday, the day before we were married. If she didn't go then, there would be no going at all. And of course we couldn't tell her definitely until Tuesday that we were tying the knot. I'm so sorry that she wasn't there because I'd counted on her but I can blame no one but myself.

Well, I never believed such a life could hold all it does. Bill and I love each other so much. I'm sure now we've done the right thing. Dr. & Mrs. Beard put themselves out to take your places as best they could, and I shall always be grateful to them.

Well, Mom & Pop, we know there are ups and downs ahead of us but we are willing to take them together. The first comes when I have to go up to Ingtai, but I can come down more frequently.

It's getting late. Must crawl in. Bill sends you his love along with mine. I hope by the next letter I'll have pictures to send.

Lots of love to you both, *Mary*

Tien An Ching She
Foochow, China
Feb 4, 1941

Dear Mama and Papa,

The above address is the name of the house – our house – in Foochow, however my Wen Shan address is the one that will reach me, since I'll not be here long enough at one time to vouch for using it! It's pronounced something like this: *ti-en on jing sha*. I wish you could see it, the place is really lovely. I hate to think of leaving it at all, as well as my husband, but that can't be helped. But while we can be together it's perfectly wonderful. Never have I spent two – nearly three – happier weeks in my life. I wish, too, you could see the things that people continue to send in! I'll never get over the way the people in the American Board compound just turned themselves inside out to do everything for us. Mrs. Beard, I know, was more than pleased to have the wedding at her house, and I'm so glad now that we did it that way. When the Beards were home they prepared for their daughter's

wedding, then it had to be postponed a year because of her to-be husband's work. Meantime, the Beards had come out here and their daughter was married last summer in Newfoundland. Of course it was a disappointment not to be with her then and many have told me since our wedding that Mrs. Beard was really thrilled to do this for me. She wore the dress – a beautiful lavender lace gown – which was to have been worn at her daughter's wedding. They certainly were lovely to me, and I can never really repay them.

All the folks in the compound went together and presented Bill and me with a beautifully carved camphor¹ wood chest, a small one, just right, as Merlin said, for baby clothes!! However, such use will be delayed for a while anyway! Meantime it's grand for keeping linens in! Bill has a large chest, and so have it. It's just one of those things one must have out here, absolutely moth-proof, and besides very good looking pieces of furniture.

Linen – both table and towels – have been coming in, lovely vases, jardinières,² etc, lacquer plates & finger bowls, candle sticks, everything so useful and what we need. Even people I've known so very slightly have sent in gifts. Bill is better acquainted with people here, really, than I am since he is here all the time.

I'm planning to come down from Ingtai once a month this term. It means at least three days (and I'd like four) out of the month since it takes a day each way for the trip. Speaking of trips, I didn't tell you about the hectic trip down here at the beginning of vacation. It's something to write home about.

We left Ingtai about 6 A.M. after I had gotten up at 3 A.M. & spent nearly 2 hours waiting on the boat while students and luggage were loaded on! We finally got started – 10 boats with about 15 – 20 students in each. About 5 miles down the river, one of the boats cracked up on some rocks, the water being very low (about like Stony Brook in spots). Thank goodness I wasn't on that boat. They had to pull to shore and hawl [*sic*] out all baggage & repair the boat. Guess everybody got a bit wet, too. The rest of us kept on and arrived about noon where we get the launch. There was but one launch for 200 students, and they'd promised us two! I was hopping [mad] and we spent two hours there, deciding what to do. Finally they took my suggestion and tied a small boat to the launch and towed it down river. We were packed in like sardines, literally – scarcely room to sit. Everything was ship-shape and we expected to make Foochow by 8 P.M. Instead of getting off at the usual place and walking across the island on which Foochow is situated we had made arrangements to sail around the island right to the city. It takes longer but with such a crowd it is more convenient. The island isn't very long but I thought we'd never get around the end of it. Just about dusk, we stuck on a sandbar! Got off, went about 10 feet, and were stuck again! We fiddled around that way for nearly 2 hours. Each time we stuck, I'd try to hustle the girls off the launch to the small boat so they could get the launch off the sand bar. That worked a couple of times, but after that they were asleep or didn't understand and just wouldn't cooperate very much. They were all disgusted about being delayed, but true Chinese fashion, they wouldn't bother to do anything about it. Just doesn't pay to hurry, take your time and eventually everything will turn out as desired. Well, the captain gave up trying to pry us loose so we prepared to spend the night on the boat! What preparations – it simply meant

¹ *Cinnamomum camphora* (commonly known as Camphor tree, Camphorwood or camphor laurel) is a large evergreen tree, native to China, Japan, and Taiwan. Camphor is a white crystalline substance obtained from the tree. It has been used as a culinary spice, a component of incense, a medicine, and is an insect repellent and a flea-killing substance.

² A decorative pot or urn for plants.

staying “sot” or standing and stretching once in a while, trying to keep warm. I started to spend the night on a couple of ridge poles just wide enough if I didn’t roll over. I did snooze and, thinking it about morning, was ready to get going, but it was only 11 o’clock and I just couldn’t bear thinking of spending 7 hours more out in the middle of the river, no place to lie, no blankets, the one I had was helping warm about a dozen students, but what could one do! I made “rounds” on the boat then once in a while could squeeze in between a couple of students for a snooze. However, I was well off with my heavy warm clothing. Some of the students didn’t have a coat and huddled behind umbrellas to keep warm. I really don’t see how they stand so much exposure. True, they wear a lot of padding, but even then it isn’t enough.

Just about 4 o’clock the crew came to and started the motor once again, pried us loose and off we went around the end of the island and as one of the students said, “Our destination had arrived!” At 7 A.M. we arrived at the city jetty – dirty, messy & dead tired. Got a rickshaw, piled my stuff in and went to the Pilley’s where I was supposed to spend the vacation! Bill had been waiting there all night for me, but gave up at 6:30 A.M. and went home to shave! Muriel had a hot bath for me, and I just finished dressing when Bill returned – and you know the rest!

What have I accomplished this vacation? Nothing! I’ve spent my time and Bill’s sleeping, eating, and gadding, but we’re so happy and everyone is so wonderful. Helen has just returned from her trip up river to Shaowu. We’re not going up to Ingtai until the 10th or 11th which will be too soon anyway!

Our pictures are anything but flattering but will send them on when they arrive. This had better stop before many more pages.

Much love to you and Papa ~

~ *Mary*

P.S. Felix letter told me of Bill (B’s)¹ real trouble and I was shocked! I’ll write Doris. Felix says she knows the condition but Bill doesn’t, probably! It’s worried me ever since, but here’s hoping that everything turns out for the best.

~Love again,

Mary

Foochow, China

Feb 13, 1941

Dear Mom:

If I put off any longer writing this letter it just won’t get done. Got as far as the date last Thursday; now it’s Sunday! Lots of things have developed in the last week or so, the most important being that, unfortunately for the school, only two classes could return to Ingtai because there is not rice enough to feed them all! So last Wednesday the Senior III and Junior III classes went up. They have enough food for six weeks or so, and they trust that by that time more will be available. But until the rest of the school can go up, I’m staying in Foochow!!! This is a case of joy & sorrow at the same time. For me, of course, it’s perfectly heavenly but it’s most unfortunate for the school. Just how long this condition will last is uncertain. It may be for two weeks, it may be for all spring. Anyway, Helen went up with the classes and I’m being treated to a longer stay with Bill.

¹ Bill Buckhout, her oldest brother.

Just as I really got started doing things in the house, like cleaning closets and cupboards etc, we discovered that our servants were not as trustworthy as they made out! I had been missing some money and Bill thought he had, then we had definite proof that it was being taken, so we cleaned house of them, too. One just can't get away without servants out here,¹ so Bill and I are boarding out with the Brewsters until we get our own cook. I'll certainly be glad when the time comes when I won't have to depend on servants. As soon as people knew we were looking for servants any number of them have been over or sent word that they'd like the jobs! We hadn't been married more than a week when I had a note from Laura Ward,² fifteen miles down river that a servant of hers said I was looking for a woman servant and she (the servant) had a relative to recommend, etc, and would Laura write to me, etc! That's the way it goes, and I wasn't even thinking of a woman servant, much less any servant at that time! Well, Merlin is looking up one for us, other folks are helping in getting us "outfitted," so we'll probably be a going concern again soon. Neither Bill nor I likes this business of eating 'out' all the time. I did get breakfast the other morning, but that took nearly 2 hours, having to build a charcoal fire, make biscuits, etc, etc – what a job, but the biscuits were good! It's such fun, heating water at every turn and keeping drinking water.

Tues. Feb 18 –

Really, for one who hasn't anything to do I sure have no time!! Running a house & hiring servants out here is some job! We have a cook who is filling in, etc. On top of all this I've started to study (!) Mandarin! It may not be any great advantage to me, especially if I just get started and then have to go to Ingtai. Up there I wouldn't have any time to study anyway. I'd like to get so I could read the characters, for the sake of singing, etc.

Last night we had dinner with the Pilleys. Their other guests were Dr. & Mrs. Lee and Dr. Lee's sister, also a doctor. They are wonderful people, Dr. Lee being eye, ear, nose & throat specialist and one of the doctors at the Union Hospital. His sister is doctor down in Hoachang where Muriel Pilley's parents are missionaries. Her father & mother came up last week, and such folksie talks – grand people – her father (Caldwell)³ is a renowned naturalist and expert tiger hunter. In fact, he has accompanied Roy Chapman Andrews on some of his expeditions here in China and has been directly responsible for a number of R. C. S's specimens he has brought back to U.S. for display & his lectures. Being nearer the Methodist compound and included in all their doings, I feel as tho I belonged as much to them as to the American Board!

Bishop & Mrs. Gowdy,⁴ head of the Methodists in this district, are retiring and left for Shanghai (& U. S.) last Sunday. They came out on the boat with the Beards and me, and are grand people. They gave Bill & me a lovely picture – colored – of the Temple of Heaven (at Peking) as a wedding gift.

¹ In later years Bill and Mary explained they had servants for two reasons: the economy depended on foreigners hiring locals to "preserve the rice bowl." Those with means were socially obligated to employ laborers. Secondary to that was the labor involved in shopping, cooking, and cleaning, as Mary describes later in the letter.

² Laura Dwight Ward, missionary in Foochow from 1914 to 1950. [*Christianity in China: A Scholar's Guide to Resources*; Crouch, Agoratus, Emerson & Soled]

³ Harry R. Caldwell: Methodist missionary and author of *Blue Tiger*, 1924. He hunted big-game, believed that hunting man-killing tigers paved the way for effective mission work, and discussed the political landmines of trying to affect peace between soldiers and bandits to spare villagers caught between the fighting. [Coachwhip Publications, Apr 30, 2007]

⁴ John W. Gowdy

It seems we've had someone in for meals or staying in the house ever since it became my home! Last week one of the main buildings at Hwa Nan, the Methodist College right next door to us, burned! On Sunday morning we'd had Beth Richiey over for breakfast. She is one of the staff who, just now, is keeping things going, taking care of the campus & buildings, etc. Now that the college is refugeeing in Yenping up river, she was the only one on campus when the fire was discovered. Our cook told us and Bill & I dashed over. The top story was afire and smoke pouring out. No school furniture or lab supplies were saved. Many people had stored their valuables – pianos, jewels, rugs, etc – in the top story; all was lost. We did manage to get things – records, files, etc – out of Beth's office, and saved most of the library. Beth was just sick and Miss Wong, the principle or president of the college just arrived in town in time to see the place burn. She had come down for meetings, etc!! We took Beth over with us to stay, but she didn't get much sleep the three nights she was here. The morning she went home, Loren Humphrey dropped in on us from up country and was here until Sunday, so we've been in a whirl, what with trying to hire servants, etc.

I had another letter from Pren saying he was not mailing my package because yours had been sent back from the coast. Well, go ahead and mail it again!! Other packages are coming thro' all the time. Some have been returned from the coast, but on second mailing have gotten thro' o.k. so try again!! Keep them small. Here I was all set to get a couple of surprises and now Pren writes that he is not sending me my kiddie-car, stove, etc that he promised!!!

Before anything more happens I'm closing this. Hope you can make something out of it. Undoubtedly it reflects in its incoherency just how disorderly & messed up everything is for the present.

Lots of love to you & Papa,

Mary

P.S. Bill says – add his two bits' worth of love.

The following is written by Harriet Buckhout, Mary's mother. The announcement that their 11th grandchild was born the day she wrote it. This dates the letter to April 14, 1941, when Cynthia Reed Buckhout Watson was born.

Latest letter from Mary (Feb. 13th '41)

Only 2 classes of girls Wenshan Senior III & Junior III could return to school after Christmas vacation on account of rice shortage. They had then enough for six weeks and unless conditions improved would have to close the school. Mary remained in Foochow, Helen Smith taking over classes.

The Methodists lost their school building (next to Mary's home) by fire. There wasn't one care taken there – the school had moved into Yenping up river.

Mary & Bill dashed over and helped Beth Richiey save documents from her office and most of their library – everything else total loss. Fire started in top story where many townspeople had rugs, pianos, etc, stored. Miss Wong, president, came down for some meeting just in time to see the school go up in smoke. They are terribly afflicted over their loss.

Mary is studying Mandarin during her enforced absence from Ingtai.

Harriet just became acquainted in Brockton with the former Gen. Supt. Y.M.C.A. whose daughter Dorothy is married to Dr. Brewster of Foochow and one of the girls who helped dress Mary for her wedding! What a funny little world! She wrote her parents about the wedding and they copied that part of the letter for Hat. China doesn't seem very far away any more. Now that Joyce Homer's book about China¹ is out we'll all have to read it. The N. Y. Times gives it high praise.

My – our – eleventh grandchild today! Eight living children, eleven grandchildren – what a reunion sometime!

Attended 6 a.m. Easter service – four choirs processed into church singing “Christ the Lord is Risen Today!” and after scripture reading of Easter story the fifty voices sang “Unfold Ye Portals!” Piano and organ and such fine tone and precision! My hair fairly stood on end and tears were pretty near the surface. I longed to be home to hear our music and service, but our car was laid up and we couldn't even go to Brockton where Hat was expecting us for dinner.

It is almost hot today - 78° by the P.O. thermometer. May will soon come tripping in and I'll have to plant my seeds and see the precious baby girl. Bill phoned us just one hour after the event and immediately wanted to know when we'd be coming up!

I hope you dear people are all well, that Jean is getting out in the sunshine every day and for as long as possible.

This didn't start to be a letter, just a note of Mary's doings to date. We haven't had anything for over two weeks, but as her father dryly remarked, “She's a married woman now, you know!”

The church bulletins are such a source of joy. I sent last week's to Mary. She will open her eyes as did I upon seeing the names of children that were just wee people a short time ago – some we do not know – but everything is interesting.

Love to you all,

Yours as ever

Mom Buckhout

March 4, 1941
Foochow, China

Dear Mom:

Does time ever fly – here it is going on three weeks since I last wrote you and now I'm back in Ingtai! As I look back on these past 6 weeks, they've been pretty full, mostly of just staying at home which I still find the most enjoyable, especially when one's husband is there too! A lot has been done, and yet more should have been done; but so many things I let go because I could not see using our time together for school matters, especially since I did not expect to be with Bill very long. Now the time has come for work, and what wasn't done during vacation I'll do now. Then take a few days at the end of the month to run down and

¹ Probably *Dawn Watch in China* by Joy Homer; Houghton Mifflin & Co, 1941 and Collins, London, 1941. “Joy Homer was sent to China as a reporter for the United American Relief Board. She travelled throughout China during 14 tumultuous months. She experienced battles from the front line trenches, was a target of the Japanese, drove a truck some 1200 miles into the Northwest, & travelled with the Chinese guerillas. Speaking Chinese, she interviewed China's leaders throughout the country and became an authority on the Sino-Japanese War of the 1930's. Her heart-warming portrayal of the Chinese is based on an intimate knowledge of them.” [Rare Oriental Book Company, Aptos, CA]

see my Bill. It was a hard pull to leave, Monday a.m. – but not too bad after I finally arrived in Ingtai 16 hours later, muddy and tired. Bill walked across the island to the boat with me. I haven't decided yet whether that is a good idea or not!!

Our Senior III & Junior III classes came up three weeks ago. The other classes are coming this week so we'll soon be in full swing. We're lacking at least two teachers, one of them is very seriously ill. Our principal is in the hospital with a light case of typhoid, but even that has to run its course and she won't be back for a few weeks. Helen and I have been trying to make out a schedule for what teachers we have!! When I got through I found I had some teachers teaching two classes the same period! What a mess. But it's good to be busy. Now, I hope to catch up on my correspondence. I had a letter from Rena rec'd Feb 14th which she had mailed Dec 30th – was I surprised! Heard from Hat & Helen & Felix and Boston – as well as other Xmas cards – one from Laura Titus, bless her. I'm still expecting Christmas mail.

My birthday was duly observed by my husband! He's the sweetest thing! When Mar 1st arrived I forgot, temporarily – that is, it didn't dawn on me that my birthday had arrived and Bill said nothing about it. After breakfast I went into the kitchen to see the cook and saw a cake ready to be frosted. He suggested a chocolate filling, and I agreed, saying that would be nice, so got out the cocoa for him. Nothing dawned then! He asked if I wanted chicken for dinner (Sat nite) and I said no, we'd have it Sunday noon, etc! Still oblivious!! I had errands to do while Bill was at the consulate, so he got home ahead of me! When I arrived I found a note telling me to go to the front gate; there I found directions to go to the basement, then to the attic (!). Then to the bathroom and from there to the kitchen and finally back where I started from where was this Parker pen waiting for me. Meantime, it had all dawned on me. Then Bill said rather sheepishly, "Can't we have chicken for dinner?" Then I knew I'd put my foot in it! So he evidently explained in detail to the cook why all the fuss. We were alone for dinner, which was simply grand. The cook had a floral decoration in the middle of the table in true party style. When he brought the cake in, lighted with candles, the boy set off firecrackers outside in true Chinese fashion. It was lots of fun and made me feel, more than ever, that I wanted to stay in Foochow.

Being married does make our separation more bearable - perhaps I should say 'less harrowing,' for it's difficult at any rate. But there's a keener, deeper understanding that doesn't have to be put into words. We are gloriously happy, and that makes up for all the pains we suffered before. Why did we wait so long???

I had a dandy letter from Boston, expressing approval etc, and for that reason I'm glad we waited as long as we did tho! To be sure, that wasn't very easy.

Anyway, Mom – I'm about the happiest woman alive, and will be the happiest when we have our own home and don't have to depend on servants. Now that I'm back in the country, my writing will be more regular, I hope.

Lots of love to you & Papa,

Mary

Foochow, China (Ingtai)

March 7, 1941

Dear Helen & Pren:

It would never do to write to you separately, so here goes for a joint letter!!

I was sure glad to hear from you – Hellie – and exceedingly glad to hear from you Pren. Where to start!! To begin with you have no idea how excited I was when I heard a package was being sent out – a kiddie car, kitchen stove, and above all, that pogo stick. Gee, am I disappointed! Sniff, sniff. And the pin cushion – golly am I sore!! Wheee! But other packages have been coming thro' o.k., why does the U.S. P.O. have to pick on pour little me way out here with only my husband to love me. Wheee – that reminds me – mustn't forget to tell you, you've a new brother-in-law and is he swell!!! Of course I can't begin to compare him with my latest brother-in-law but you can take my word for it that Bill's tops with me, and you'd better be good to him!! But don't tell the U.S.N.¹ or they'd ship me right home. Just tell Carrie S. – Helen – ya know!!

Well, no doubt any more about the wedding would be mighty boring to you both, having recently had one yourselves, and probably having heard all the news from Mom – but let me tell you, once we got started we tore through with it, wedding march and even a veil!! Shut your eyes when you look at the pictures; they'll seem so much the better. If you're good, I'll bring Bill around in a couple of years or so to let you look at, but mustn't touch.

You are quite right, there's nothing like marriage to double one's joy (and bills!). Why Bill & I waited so long seems so absurd, now. And Boston was heartily for it!! Of course I didn't know it until I heard from them. But remember you address all my fan mail to Mrs. H. Vilroy McVay now!!

My vacation was unexpectedly extended to six weeks instead of three. Maybe I wasn't glad, but poor Bill had to stand having me around for that extra time!! Up until the day before we were supposed to come to Ingtai, I expected to go, and needless to say, felt pretty blue about it, then came a note saying only 2 classes were going back – no rice for the rest of the school! Now what was I to do, cream with joy or wail with – well, what does one wail with?? Anyway, I did a little both – joy for Bill and me, but a bit of sorrow for the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the students and the school.

After it looked as though we might get some rice for the school, I came up to Ingtai – this week Monday – and here I am! Sob! Sob! Have youse guys tried being separated yet?? It's no fun!! But fortunately I've got enough to keep me busy, etc, etc. And time flies, etc, etc. And anyway by the time you get this I will have been down to Foochow and returned, for I'm going down to see my da-ling the end of the month!

Soldiers² thronged into Ingtai last week, monopolizing everything, taking all the rice there was, for it takes a bit to feed 1,000!! Besides, they housed some of them in one of our dormitories! They're moving on, now. The day I left Foochow, 27 planes flew over Ingtai, and there were 34 over Foochow. I, being on the river, missed the whole show. They raised particular Ned³ along the coastal towns but nothing happened around here! Bill was sure I would be delayed on the river because of them but we didn't even see them.

We are reveling in the presence of Bert Fauret who has just returned to Foochow College. Naturally, he's up here with us, and is mighty welcome. He's a marvelous pianist and is already head over heels with plans for choirs, etc, and maybe I'm not glad to see him!!

¹ Later in life, Bill confided that he had not received the standard USN permission to marry from his commanding officer on the *USS Mindanao*, the ship to which he was assigned. Technically, since he received permission from his immediate commanding officer, the U.S. Consul in Foochow, he could marry, but Bill was a stickler for regulations, so the situation made him uneasy.

² Chinese Nationalist Army; at that point, Ingtai was not under Japanese control.

³ Raise Ned: create a disturbance. Ned is an old folk name for the devil. [word-detective.com]

But he's got the surprise of his life coming when he hears me tickle the ivories! Whoope – and I'm playing in church next Sunday – Wow!

This has got to stop before I run out of paper, which I couldn't even buy in Foochow! When this gives out I'll send you messages by mental telepathy. By the way, the station on Treasure Island (U.S.A.) broadcasts to the orient every Sunday nite letters to people out here. Just write me a letter of 50 words or less, send it there, and it will be broadcast to us here. All the folks in Foochow listen to this hour – “The Mail Bag” – and almost all the folks in Foochow have rec'd news from home that way. There's news for someone in Foochow nearly every Sunday. They could listen in for me and send me the news from Foochow, see??? Try it, huh?? Don't mention any politics or war news, etc, you can say anything else. You try it and I'll tell people in Foochow to be on the “listen out” for the letter. Better use my name Mary Frances McVay just in case the admiral is listening in. Gee, I'm all excited about what you'll tell me. Bill hasn't a radio yet at the house! I'll tell him to go to his pal's to listen.

Now I'm really going to stop.
Much love to you both,
Mary

P.S. Pren, your work sounds grand.

Helen, don't know the boy you mentioned.

Am getting my Reader's Digests, tho' still waiting for Dec '40. Some folks have their Jan. issues!

Love → *M* ←

IngTai, Fukien, China
March 10, 1941

Dear Mom:

One week away from my husband certainly doesn't improve my disposition any! But I think I'll live thro' it. Bill writes that it's no fun, but we both have plenty to keep us busy and write crazy letters back and forth! Once I really get back to work, I do feel like doing things and now Easter music is uppermost. Bert is back at Foochow College and I look to him for inspiration and guidance, and I get it! It's such a joy to have someone like that. We're going to combine the choirs and fight things thro' together. He's also enthusiastic about a faculty group. Even after my feeble attempts last term, I still think something will come of it. He's brought some grand music with him and we're all set to go! Here's hoping for some different results from last term! With such things on my mind it helps to dispel the longing that could make me miserable, if I let it! It's true, tho, that being married somehow tempers our separation and makes it more bearable.

Spring is well along its way here in Ingtai. The plum trees had passed their peak before I came back and are now leaving [leafing] out. All the trees are getting new leaves & the pines are acquiring bright new cones. Our vegetable garden is yielding all sorts of things from lettuce to strawberries (which aren't ripe yet, tho), carrots, beats, turnips, etc, are in abundance. Later we'll have tomatoes. Flowers are flourishing - calendulas, pansies, nasturtiums, sweet peas – most everything. Down in Foochow the calillies [calla lilies] were still blooming and the fresias [freesias] were in full bloom. You never saw such

quantities of flowers. The seeds you sent I can't plant until next fall. It would be too hot for them if I put them in now. Imagine!

The monthly book club is flourishing again this year. Lyda got a good collection in – I don't know how, but I suppose by mail. I've read Mrs. Miniver, which you'd enjoy, and am now reading The Family¹, story of a Russian family in Tientsin at the time of the incident.² Others on the list include New England Indian Summer which promises to be good. Life Magazine ran a whole section on it, beautifully illustrated with scenes of Concord, Mass. Maybe it didn't make me a bit homesick! Leonardo da Vinci is another! If I can read a book a month I'll be doing well!

Despite rumors, international situations and all that, this place seems to be the safest! There is no necessity for anyone to leave, now, and probably won't be. We can't believe that Japan wants to engage the U.S. Anyway, we are staying here. The only reason I'd be sent home is that fact that I'm married to Bill. But unless the admiral finds out there's no need of worry on that account!

When Helen goes this summer I shall send a few things by her – very few because baggage is such a problem. I hope to get some tea to you! You may distribute as you see fit. Hope to send some lacquer too. These are hopes, conditions may be such that Helen won't even be able to get out.

There is continual threat that the schools will have to close unless the rice situation eases up soon. We have enough for this month, but after that we go on thin air unless something does happen.

The Y.M.C.A. Cabinet is meeting here tonight for supper, so I'd better make myself presentable.

Lots of love to you & Papa,

Mary

P.S. When do you expect to go back to So. Hadley or will you stay in Wickford [Rhode Island] as long as Pop is there.

P.S. 2 The mosquitoes are beginning to bite already!

Mary

Foochow, China

March 11, 1941

Dear Felix,

It wasn't quite Easter when your letter arrived – in fact it was only a little over 6 weeks on the way! At the rate the town is changing and youngsters are growing up I'll just never know the place! It's a bit startling to think that Bill & Doris & Ab are the only Buckhouts holding the fort! What really makes me homesick is the fact that none of the family is in our house, though one could ask for no one finer than the Donnellans to take over.

¹ *The Family*, by Antonina Tiasanovsky, aka Nina Fedorova, was the tenth highest selling fiction book in the United States 1940 and tells the story of an exiled White Russian family in Tianjin, China.

² In 1939 when the manager of the Japanese-owned Federal Reserve Bank of North China was assassinated by Chinese nationalists at Tientsin's Grand Theatre. Four Chinese men who were living in the British concession were arrested and tortured to confess. After their return to British custody, Madame Soong May-ling, the wife of Chiang Kai-shek admitted that the accused assassins were Chinese operatives involved in resistance work.

No doubt you know all there is to know the why & wherefore of what I “went & done” January 22, 1941!! Your blessings arrived the very day Bill and I were married, just as I was preparing to take the most wonderful step – as you said we wonder why we waited so long now! Maybe we didn’t go thro’ some capers before we actually came to a decision – after having definitely planned (we thought) to be married in the summer. That’s nothing to what the mission folks went thro’ getting ready in 24 hours! And we had all the fixings & the U.S. Consul! Wheee! Despite the rush and all we haven’t gone into this blindly. We agreed that I should finish my term at school, which means separation (which I’m now experiencing for the first time!) (Sniff, sniff) Then there’s always the possibility that Bill may be transferred. With the ever threatening relations between U.S. & our neighbor things could change suddenly and drastically which would mean – we don’t know what! Besides Bill has no way of getting back to studying for at least two years. So there you have it – everything indefinite, but we’re willing to face whatever comes and make the best of it. But I’ve never known such joy! I was in Foochow with Bill for six weeks before coming back to Ingtai – six weeks of the nearest thing to heaven I’ve ever experienced! It has seemed to us the most natural step, and though it’s a new life it hasn’t ever seemed strange. Living near the Methodist Mission, Bill is more or less counted in on the Methodist activities as well as the American Board doings. So while I’m away I can rest assured that he’s very well taken care of!

Since returning to Ingtai I find that I haven’t lost interest in my work & the doings of the school, much as I want to be in Foochow. For a time I couldn’t see how, if I did marry, I could reconcile the two. In fact I think being married is going to help a lot toward steadier and I hope better work.

Getting this term started has been a hectic affair. We originally planned to begin the middle of February but here we are starting the term late again. One of our Junior High classes hasn’t returned yet, though we expect them tomorrow. It’s the same problem of rice!! The government lets us purchase so much per student, but it has to be bought daily and can’t be gotten ahead of time. Often they “forget” they have promised us, and there’s nothing to do but hope. To get rice from another section of the province is a frightful job for all the red tape that has to be gone thro’ for permits every time you breathe! We had feared last year that the time would come when we would have to make a decision as to whether we’d let the students starve at school or at home! We are sure of another month, meantime we hope for some change that will keep us going after that time. It’s really getting serious and it’s not lack of finances, nor lack of rice. It just can’t be bought. The situation can’t be realized by folks at home unless one can imagine being without any kind of flour – even then it wouldn’t seem as drastic as China without rice. Of course, if a person is fortunate enough to have fields he’s all set, and do you think he’ll sell his rice? Nothing doing. The longer he keeps it the higher the price. Now it’s up to \$140 a bag¹ (100 pounds) when it was \$10/bag in the fall of ’39, and they thought that was frightful! So it goes, but the amazing thing is that the Chinese are not discouraged!

We are reveling in Ingtai in the fact that the Foochow College music teacher has returned – a superb pianist – and the students are thrilled! So I’m all pepped up again about choir work, after having been in the lamest depths about it. Bert is a peach to work with and

¹ \$1 U.S. in 1941 had the buying power of \$16.28 in 2013, making \$140 U.S. worth \$2279.20 in 2013. Therefore, converting the cost into 2013 dollars, rice cost \$22.79/lb in 1941 as opposed to \$1.63/lb in 1939. [dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation]

is anxious to get the two schools together on choir work! Whoopee! After all my thinking that our work on the Hallelujah Chorus last June was fruitless, the girls have asked for it and want to do it for Easter! There are a lot of bright spots like that in life that make it worth living. Far be it from me to discourage them. I'll never forget how we literally sweat over that last June in miserably hot sticky weather. Bert is enthusiastic about faculty chorus, hoping it's more successful this term. I started out with 15 and ended with 6 last December, but with Bert here – boy oh boy – I wonder if he realizes how I'm banking on him! He's a young fellow, just back from U.S. after getting his M.A. Started language study at Peking in the fall, but when things got too hot there made tracks for Foochow. And maybe we're not glad!!

By the way, the new Smiths, slated for Ingtai, are now in Foochow but will not be coming up here before fall. While in Japan – on the way over – they visited at Doshisha¹ & were duly entertained by the Warrens. I didn't know this until I saw their general letter just before I left Foochow, and so haven't seen them since. They are a marvelous couple and both as handsome as they are sensible and swell. The American Board certainly knew what it was doing when it picked them.

We don't know when to expect our furlough folks back, now that conditions are as they are – and they are all itching to get back. We may have an influx from North China – it's not definite yet – but we sure could use some extra people. We, at Wen Shan, are short at least two teachers & F.C. needs 4 or 5, really. All teachers are carrying terrific schedules. Mine is the same as last term, 24 hours with 6 of them gym, so not too heavy.

I'm planning to go down to see my husband the end of the month for a couple of days – since he can't leave the consulate I have to do the traveling. In fact, each month I'll be seeing him!!

Helen is getting excited about going home and has expressed the fear that something may happen before she can get out! Much as I hate to see her go I hope everything works out for the best in her case! Those letters you enclosed in your last letter I gave to her for some Junior High youngsters whom she teaches. I hope they get results.

Your "card index" of news certainly made me feel as though I'd been back for a little while – it's grand. Hope you and Jean & David and James are all enjoying life, as best one can with such harrowing news as comes from across the seas. If Hitler keeps on spreading out, there just won't be any getting back!! And Russia is none too pleased!

These ravings had better cease before I say something the censors won't like.

Remember me to all the folks, though my name is changed I really don't think I am!

Most sincerely,

Mary

Foochow, China

Mar. 16, 1941

Dear Mom:

Here goes my last sheet of good U.S. paper! In fact my last sheet of any kind of stationary! I keep expecting Bill to send up some from Foochow! Even in the city it is scarce. Makes one feel as tho' the Dark Ages were upon us!

¹ Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan.

The early spring rains have descended and there seems to be no letup ahead. In the past month the sun has shone for a part of 3 or possibly 4 days. It broke thro' yesterday and we all thought "how grand" and today it is pouring again! Anyway, it means the spring is here and in no time the weather will be stifling and we'll be wishing for some of this coolness.

Tonite Bert starts his faculty chorus, and we are beginning on Easter music. You remember A Legend by Tchaikovsky that the choir has sung (Christ when a child a garden made). We are trying that, it having been translated into Chinese as so many of these good things are now. We plan to do the Hallelujah Chorus with the two schools. But we sure run up against things when we try to get together for rehearsals!

This weekend the National Y.W.C.A. & Y.M.C.A. Secretaries¹ have been here at Ingtau, so yesterday was just crammed with meetings. Miss Shih (pronounced Shir) stayed with us last night, a grand person, but had to leave today for Foochow and other schools up the river. Traveling is no easy undertaking these days. In the three weeks since she left Shanghai, she'd had but one bath! She's on her way to Chungking,² which is an all day bus trip from Yenping³ (100 miles up river from Foochow).

I've just finished reading The Family by Nina Fedorova. It's the fascinating & moving story of a Russian family in Tientsin at the time of "the incident" – a story in which the reader is moved to compassion, but not pity. If you haven't already read it, I know you'll enjoy it.

For some unknown reason the mail has been delayed for the last few days and I ain't had nothin' since the middle of the week. The last mail from home was Rena's letter which I got the 12th of February so I feel due a whole pack of mail soon. Not having heard anything, I suppose Bill is o.k. but I would like some assurance of it! Our delivery is so irregular here it's not surprising. The launches are in such need of repair and with nothing for repairs – no materials – it may be they have all "breathed" their last. Here's hoping the launches do hold up a little longer! I'm planning to go home the end of this month. Without a launch it would take two days instead of one!

This being separated from one's husband is no fun. How Arthur & Gertrude Rinden stood it for three years is beyond me. One's work or one's children helps a lot, of course, but I'm afraid if it meant years instead of weeks, I'd be inclined to throw over the work! I get a powerful longing in my heart to see everyone at home, too, especially the youngsters, before they all get out of their babyhood – perhaps I'd better say 'childhood.' Bill has a big family – all married and he's an uncle many times over. We both look forward to getting home and seeing everyone. It sure will be a treat! But meantime, you mustn't think we are bemoaning the fact we are out here – nothing like that. The friends & contacts we've made out here we wouldn't give up for anything. Nor do we want to leave them right away. But being away from Bill is a little stiffer thing to bunk up against⁴ than I'd planned for. Well, it's experience like this that make for a closer relationship and understanding! All that I understand is that I miss him terribly! What a missionary I've turned out to be. And yet, being married to Bill, I

¹ The word "secretary" when used in reference to the YMCA or YWCA means "associate" or "representative." During WWII, YMCA Secretaries worked to create camp committees to run programs providing educational opportunities, physical instruction and equipment, theatrical productions and musicals in conjunction with putting Christian principles into practice by developing a healthy "body, mind and spirit."

² Now Chongping

³ Now Nanping

⁴ "bunk up against": to be pushed up by another in order to climb over an obstacle like a fence.

can settle down to my work more steadily than I could last spring – I know that full well! Why I should write you all my woes I don't know. They're really not so bad as I make them out to be! I'm sure I'll live through it all and appreciate my family and my husband so much more for it!

Bert brought out a lot of new records, so Helen and I are reveling in them. I haven't yet tried anything much in the line of music appreciation, so I think I'll see what I can do with that this spring. I'm singing in church today. Bert's playing for me! I'm also going to learn the Chinese words to some of their hymns and sing them once in a while. With Bert to play for me, I feel inspired to do some real singing.

What I want most of all is a good snapshot of you and Papa. How about having Hat or Dave snap you at your best? That makes me think of Hat. I do hope everything has been as it should be. I'll be anxious to hear. You might send the news by K.G.E.I. (Treasure Island) that would be exciting.

Did I tell you – you can write letters to K.G.E.I. and they'll read them Sunday night to us folks out here in the Orient. It's a special broadcast for such as us out here and the folks in Foochow get messages continually. I hope you try it. I've told Bill we'd have to keep tabs on the radio Sunday nights. We've already had congratulations via one of the daughters of the superintendent of the Foochow (Union) Hospital!

It's nearly church time, so I'd better collect myself and try to get down there between showers. It looks now as though it would clear at last! A little sustained sunshine would improve everything.

Lots of love to you and Papa, and don't forget the pictures! *Mary*

Ingtai, China
Mar 23, 1941
Sunday

Dear Mom & Papa:

I'll bet you're not having the piping hot weather we're getting. Of course we expect it to begin to get warm but the thermometer has been hovering around 70° and has for the last 4 days. Today is awful hot. I'm wet through and I don't dare take off my winter undies! Been having a head cold and I'm still sneezing and dripping! It's 6 p.m. now and it's 80° in our dining room. Now that's a bit warm, considering it doesn't go above 90° very often in the summer. It's not quite as humid as it gets in the summer, though.

Today was Susan's birthday so Helen gave a dinner party here for her. We had a ham – cured & smoked by Alice, etc. – delicious. She also made some bacons which are as good as any American bacon I ever tasted. Mrs. Christian had sent out Xmas gifts for us all by the Toffings [spelling unsure], so we all got presents as well as Susan. It's lots of fun having things come along later even tho' it is nearly Easter.

We put in an excellent rehearsal yesterday with Foochow College Choir and thought we were all set for today. Bert and I were all set, but the choir didn't know enough to start when we did – ah me! They are told every week, but they are never ready. Bert is about ready to give up, being just back from U.S. I guess he's forgotten what a tribulation a Chinese choir can be. But I've gotten so used to it now I just keep going. When they once get going they do very good work.

We are enjoying a lot of Bert's victrola records he brought with him. It's so grand. I'm planning to use some in my music classes, too.

After much demanding and threatening we've finally gotten the officials here to open the grainery [*sic*] and you should see the rice they produced! From authoritative sources we've been told that it is 300 years old! It looks it! Black and hard as rocks. It is supposed to have been stored away in the Chang Lung dynasty and I guess it's true! We feel a little more hopeful now about keeping the school open, tho' not because of the 300 yr old rice! But we have promise of enough for the rest of the term.

The "blockade" along the coast is being "tightened" again and we hear rumors that there will be no more boats from Shanghai. It may be true this time, but ever since I've been here, each boat has been "the last!"

We just got in a few supplies from Shanghai for our cooperative society. Bill is the business manager and is having a time rationing it because the orders exceed the amount of stuff brought in. He's trying to get it all taken care of before I get down there this coming weekend. If all goes well, I'm planning to go down next Friday and come back Monday.

Our principal is getting back today. She's just recuperating from her typhoid attack and isn't very strong yet, so it has been doubtful whether I would take the time just now. But I sure get lonesome for my Bill and can't stand it much longer!! Time out while I "blow" again!

I hope, by the next letter, I'll have something beside this to write on! Bill's sending some up, so I ought to have some decent paper soon.

Dr. Beard we expect back here next week, then we'll be seven, including 2 men instead of one. It certainly makes a difference having a male or two around. Except that it's never the right one for me –

It's getting dark so I'd better stop before I ruin my eyesight. I must confess I'm getting like the Chinese and can do most anything in the dark now.

Lots of love to you both,

Mary

P.S. Are you going back to So. Hadley this summer?

Ingtai, China

Apr. 1, 1941

Dear Mom and Papa:

Though this is April Fool's Day this is the real McCoy! Last Thursday nite I got a lot of home mail, some addressed to Mrs. H. V. McVay – my very first from home! It certainly was a thrill to have "the" news have actually reach you! And in such good time! When all the mail came – 2 letters from you – I was in the throes of getting a few things together for a weekend in Foochow! So I stuffed all in my purse & read them at leisure on the boat the next day. Had several birthday cards and your nice hanky. I was glad, too, to have and read parts to Bill – he'd had a wonderful letter from you, he said, and was really thrilled. He was going to read it to me, but I'll be "darned" somehow it never got read to me!

I had a good trip down on Friday (18) and arrived at the landing about 3 p.m. which is excellent time. While walking across the island I sort of wondered if Bill would try to come out to meet me. Just as I arrived at the rickshaw stand, whom should I see coming down the road on a bicycle but my husband! We never know what time the boat might get in and

trying to make connections with anyone there is simply absurd, so this meeting Bill there was just pure luck. Maybe I wasn't glad to see him! And what a weekend. Bill just thinks of everything.

We got home about 4 o'clock, the cook had sandwiches, cocoa, & cake ready, a hot bath and bathroom! It was certainly wonderful to get home to Bill. I was even glad to see Foxy, the dog, and he actually seemed pleased to see me. Bill had the house looking spick and span. The floors had all been waxed, the walls washed, etc. etc. I hardly recognized the place!! He sure is a swell housekeeper. We've gotten quite a nice set of living room furniture from one of the Methodists who was breaking up housekeeping. Divan & 3 easy chairs & 2 straight-back chairs – grand pieces – so we feel quite civilized. He also got some excellent pongee¹ silk, very heavy stuff which we might use for more drapes – we ain't decided yet. Saturday it poured all day, but after being finger printed at the consulate for my new passport, Bill & I came home and just lolled around the whole afternoon.

Sunday was a beautiful clear day. The mountains just stood out as if they were but a block away! We took a short walk in the morning, then went to the consulate for Sunday dinner. Mr. Rice is a grand host, played some ping pong after dinner and consequently ruined my last whole pair of chiffon hose. (By the way, if you want to send out anything, make it silk stocking – chiffon for best, service-weight or lisle for everyday & silk & wool for winter!! That's what I need!)

After dinner Mr. Rice went with us, by bicycle, over to the hospital to see the Brewsters' latest arrival – a boy – first brother of three darling girls. Maybe Harold (B.) isn't proud and Dottie too. Our cook makes excellent divinity fudge so I had him make some and filled a large Easter egg with it & took it to Dottie. After making a few calls in the compound Bill & I came home where we stayed until 5:30 a.m. Monday morning when I left for Ingtai. Dr. Beard came back with me, so the trip wasn't too bad. Got here at 8 p.m., nearly 15 hours to go 45 miles! And I'm ready for some sleep tonite!

This being separated from one's husband is a little more than I had bargained for. Altho' it doesn't really hurt either of us, it is far from ideal. Bill gets frightfully lonely and needless to say, I do, too. Bill always looks on the best side of things & tries to make light of the situation when I leave him saying "It won't be long before you'll be coming back," but at such times everything looks pretty black to me and it wouldn't take very much to persuade me to stay in Foochow. Once I get back to Ingtai things don't look quite so hopeless but just the same I miss Bill frightfully. The two days with him were heavenly and I wouldn't exchange them for any other days of my life. Coming home for the first time is exciting and made me realize more than ever how much I love Bill and how very close we are growing. I've always felt very close to Bill, even from the very first, but I'm just beginning to realize the full significance of this love for me and mine for him.

I may not be up here as long as I expect! When I came back I found that Foochow College had sent all but the graduating classes home, for two weeks anyway. No food! No kerosene! We don't know how long we can keep going, possibly to middle of May. If everything goes I'll be going down there for a weekend, otherwise it will be for the summer. And that time can't come any too soon!

¹ Pongee Silk: a thin, soft, washable, silk fabric, woven from the natural, uncolored raw silk, without further manipulation after it leaves the cocoon than to boil it "out of the gum." [*Dictionary of Dry Goods*; George S. Cole.]

But the situation here is very tense as far as food is concerned. Rice has been as high as \$460 per 100 lb bag! People are just starving in droves or else doing away with themselves. Finally, a commission has been sent to the provincial government and we hope something will result from that, for there is plenty of rice in the northern part of the province.

By the way, people have been writing asking what they can send out as wedding presents. Well, if you can send anything, always toilet articles – soap & toothpaste, etc, and stockings or sox for Bill (11½). But don't try to send anything for the house; we can get things we need pretty much.

I'm so sleepy it's not even funny, so I guess I'll say goodnight.

Lots of love to you both,

Mary

Ingtai, China

Apr. 2, 1941

Dear Hat!

The greatest news just arrived last night. One of Mom's letters told me of Janet Frances. Congratulations and all that, but most of all I'm so glad that I'm an aunty again and my Bill is an uncle again! Even though it isn't a boy, I'll just guess you're proud as punch and you ought to be. Tell Dave not to send out cigars, but a cigarette would do!! Gee, though, I'm glad everything is over, Hat! I was so anxious to hear. Mom didn't give details because she hadn't seen you, but I'm hoping everything is fine.

This last weekend I was with Bill in Foochow and what a glorious weekend it was. I went down on Friday morning about 5:30 a.m. and arrived at the island at 3 p.m. While walking across I was thinking Bill might try to meet me, so when I got to the rickshaw stand I wasn't at all surprised to see him bicycling down the road! On one of these trips, one never knows when one will arrive and it's impossible to make arrangements to have anybody meet one! This was pure luck. I stayed until Monday when I started back at 5:30 a.m. arriving in Ingtai at 8 p.m. and it's only 45 miles!!! But the two days with Bill were more than worth the trip. How I wish you could all see him. He's swell, and I know you'll all like him. One of our friends had a boy, born the day before I arrived – their first boy. They have three darling girls and they were so excited about their brother. We visited them in the hospital while I was down and it made me want to have a family too. Bill is crazy about youngsters and they love him – he's much like Uncle Charlie when it comes to youngsters. He gets a big kick out of playing with them and spoofing them. How they love it, too. We hope to have a family when we get home.

Mom wrote me all about your shower Mother Ward had for you and it sounded like lots of fun.

While in Foochow I learned something you and Dave would be interested in. The man who was formerly head of the Y.M. in Brocton, Mr. Sidney Davidson – now retired – is father to Mrs. Harold Brewster out here in Foochow. In fact, it was the Brewsters who had the baby boy! Harold is the surgeon at the hospital here! If Dave gets a chance to see Mr. Davidson he'd be very much interested to know about you folks. The Brewsters named their boy Sidney Davidson, too. It certainly is amazing how one makes contacts in this world, and so interesting, too.

I've been fingerprinted by the Consul! And lo – our fingerprints are fundamentally the same! This is a new regulation for passports which all have to be renewed now. The

Consul had us over for Sunday dinner. He's a peach. We played ping pong and I ruined my last good chiffon stockings!! Woe! Woe! So if anybody wants to send me anything tell them to make it stockings and they can come by letter! Helen's sister sent her some that way o.k.

When I got back to Ingtai, in fact on the way back, I met the Foochow College boys and Susan & Bert headed for Foochow. No rice, so they are having a 2 weeks spring "vacation" which may be extended indefinitely. Our school is still going, but we don't know for just how long – a month, perhaps – after that if rice can't be found we'll have to close too.

Conditions are so bad that a commission was sent to the provincial government. There is rice in the northern part of the province and in neighboring provinces. One rumor is that the governor of a neighboring province has a grudge against our governor and is trying to starve out Fukien!! Maybe so, but meantime the F. government is lining its pockets thro' this "control" and people are starving. Rice was up to \$460.00 last weekend when it used to be \$3.00 & \$6.00 a bag!! It's perfectly awful. I may be back in Foochow earlier than I expected if this keeps up! But I hate to think that my joy and pleasure means sorrow and suffering for the people around me! I planned to go down to Foochow once more during the term, but next time it may be for good!!

I got such a stack of mail last nite – 7 letters – and last week one night I had a big pile. That's the way it comes.

Send me some pictures of my new niece and tell me all about you & yours. It must be quite a job settling a new home and bringing up a daughter too. But will I be tickled when I can do that!

Lots of love to you, Hat, and Dave. Bill would send his too if he were here so I'll put his in too.

And a kiss for Janet Frances,
Love, *Mary*

Ingtai, China
April 6, 1941
Palm Sunday

Dear Mama & Papa:

Here's the first week of April gone like a flash, so my students love to begin their compositions, "Time flies like an arrow...!"

Four letters from you and Papa this week is quite a shower. So I am getting my letters gradually – Jan. 7, 8, Feb 4 & 17. Your letters of last of January came before! So now I think I'm caught up with receiving, but certainly not with answering.

And, Papa, I was tickled to death to have a letter from you. Now write again! It was only through your letter that I found out where you & Mama spent the Xmas holiday! Probably I'm still lacking some December mail. But don't think that anything you write is old stuff out here. Everything is news to us, so write some more.

A couple of weeks ago we had a spurt of real hot weather and this week we had a couple of warm days - 86° in the shade! But today has cooled off after a big rain yesterday. It's trying to clear and it's more like an April day at home. If it weren't for the dampness it would be ideal for you, Mom. How I wish you could come out here to visit anyway. The fall is the driest time I guess, so when you plan to come, come that season!

I've just learned from Helen that the Golds – Mr. Gold¹ who is general secretary at the New Bedford Y.M.C.A. – were here in Foochow years ago. She says they are splendid people – of course all Foochow people are. If you get a chance to look them up or if David should, you'd undoubtedly have an interesting time. I guess I told you – told Hat anyway – that the former head of the Y.M.C.A. in Brockton is father of Dorothy Brewster here in Foochow. His name is Sidney Davidson, and he now has a new grandson bearing his name! It's a small world. Makes us feel much closer together when we hear of people connected, or close to our friends at home.

This winter our new consul, Mr. Rice, discovered that one of the Methodist missionaries (Maureen Downie, Dr's wife) was a classmate of his at home! They were so surprised. To have gone all thru college together without becoming really acquainted, then meeting way out here in China!

I started receiving "Today" last month. They came exactly a month late but that isn't bad. So, though you are following with me, I'm a month behind. Thanks a lot for sending it. I think it is full of good common sense and is most encouraging. I'm glad you are enjoying it.

How glad I was to hear that Ab was finally gone into something besides tending a gasoline station. Of course there is merit in everything, no matter how mean the work, but Ab is due for something more worth while. And I'm glad, too, that he's in Bridgeport under the "influence" of Geo & Peg. His social life will be much more to his liking! Wish the old buzzard would write.

Helen's last letter said that Martha & Bob are fine and the kids are much more bearable! Haven't heard from Geo or Peg for some time, but I'll probably be hearing after the winter rush is over.

School goes along as long as we have rice. We think there is some more on the way but we'll not take stock in it until it's actually landed in Ingtai. If this doesn't arrive we will have to close. The sooner I can get back to Foochow, the better, but just the same the reason for closing school is most inglorious! I'm hoping, rice or no rice, that we do close earlier than last year. Running up into the very last of June makes a long term and it's so hot then. Helen has a sailing for July 24th, which means she'll be leaving the first part of July, no doubt.

I'll bet you are both anxious to get back to South Hadley, and I hope you can very soon, altho' it's so nice being near the sea during the summer. I get longings for So. Hadley too, but once in a while I get an awful longing to be in Greenwich. So. Hadley may be home, but Greenwich seems more than that to me. Just now my one longing is to be in Foochow with Bill. I really find the separation bearable because I can look forward to being with him when I go down, and think I'm more content than I was last spring when we first "plighted our troth." Nevertheless, being away from Bill is a little more than I really thought it would be. We're both so happy. We try not to let this "get us" and Bill is so sweet & thoughtful.

My girls are singing The Palms today at the service. Though next Sunday is Easter, we are postponing our program since Foochow College isn't here and we were planning it together. So next week my girls will be holding forth again. I'm going to have them sing the hymn, "The Strife Is O'er," as an antiphonal. It's most effective! And they love it. The Hallelujah Chorus we'll save until F.C. gets back.

I'm "in" the paper again. My darling husband found this for me so once more I can write in civilized form. You speak about sending out things – don't try to send things for the

¹ Ralph G. Gold was Educational Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in Foochow, China, from 1911 to 1927.

house, but toilet soap – above all Ivory – is most welcome and I think any toilet articles – tooth brushes, etc. Bill needs sox, but where to get them!! So if someone is coming out and you can send things like that it would be marvelous. Have you tried the nylon stockings yet? I'm crazy to have some. "They say" that they really outwear any kind of hose!! You could send those by letter post. Eunice sent Helen stockings that way! Just enclosed them in a letter!!

Well, my correspondence is piling up after two floods of mail so I'll have to get busy answering some other letters.

Lots of love to you both,

Mary

P.S. I doubt if my letters are censored. You wouldn't get them so promptly if they were. Besides, the mutilated envelopes are my fault. The flaps are all stuck together because of the dampness and I have to pry them open to get my letter in. Thus I often tear them. Some of yours are censored, especially if they go to Hong Kong first –

Love –

Mary

Ingtai, Fukien, China
Apr. 14, 1941

Dear Mama:

Here it is, the middle of April already! Do I begin all my letters that way? You see what's on my mind constantly – getting back to Foochow!

This weekend we've had company from the big city – Merlin and one of the nurses (Freda Stauble) from the hospital. What a gay time we've been having, too, despite the downpour for 2½ days. Yesterday, Easter Sunday, it poured all day so Merlin & Freda stayed over another day. Because of Foochow College vacation our music planned for Easter was postponed. So the Wen Shan Choir held forth yesterday. When I woke in the morning and saw what a terrible day it was, I didn't expect to see a soul at church, let alone having any choir, but they all came – 32 of them – so many, in fact, I had to borrow cottas from Foochow College. And did they sing! We had to get something ready in a hurry because we couldn't sing our planned program without the boys. The girls learned a descant to "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" and sang that while the congregation sang the hymn. For our anthem we took the hymn, "The Strife is O'er," and sang it as an antiphonal, ending with a descant which was most effective. The girls really out-did themselves!

Apr. 16th –

So you see, I had to leave this in the midst of something which I've forgotten by this time. Since our very rainy weekend we've been having gorgeous clear, dry, warm days – regular "State College" days you'd call them! Dry weather is so unusual up here, or anywhere in Fukien! It has been so beautiful, Helen and I have been taking our gym classes out for walks. Only I haven't been too successful! Helen has the younger kids and they are just thrilled to hike but the seniors feel superior to it, I guess. I took them up a valley to wade in a brook, but they were just too snooty for wading. They are the craziest class! Three of the girls did wade and I think the others wanted to but didn't dare! One day I took the girls up over the hill behind the school. They were bored stiff until I spotted some red azaleas and

then they climbed everywhere, thro' bushes, down slopes to get them. You don't know what azaleas are until you come out here!!!

Getting back to Sunday, Helen asked the folks here for dinner, since Merlin and Freda were here. We had a grand dinner of home grown, butchered, smoked, and baked ham! In good old U.S. Easter style. After dinner we talked and lolled generally, listening to Susan's & Bert's report of their visit to Shaowu and Fukien University during their spring vacation. They had just gotten back Saturday night in all the mud and pouring rain.

The end of the term seems frightfully near. Bert & I were planning the music for the services for the rest of the term and there just seems to be so little time left! We are doing quite a number of things with the combined choirs. In fact, we're planning Mozart's Gloria from the 12th Mass for our commencement Sunday, June 15th – of course, if we are still here!

We "hear" that our rice is on the way up river; we hope so and expect it the end of this week.

This pen is one Bill gave me for my birthday – it's a Parker – but the point is none too good – probably been hanging around Chinese shops too long. As soon as I say something about it not working well, it seems to perk up a bit. My gray pen is still my favorite but the rubber tube just went to pieces and I can't replace it here.

Well, Mom – drastic changes have taken place and more are to come! This separation isn't all it's cracked up to be. I'm finding it very hard to carry on my school work as it should be when my heart is 50 miles away, and my mind too, I'm afraid. Most of the time. I know Bill needs me and wants me to stay home, but he'd never suggest such a thing! I had a frank talk with Dr. Beard & with Merlin, who I think is Bill's closest friend. Both say I should be with him! I've known it all the time and I've wanted to be with him. We had made our decision before we were married – made it quite dispassionately! Well, it all comes to this – as long as I'm not being fair to either Bill or the school, I'm asking the school to release me! I haven't written Felix yet but will soon. It means, too, that I'm giving up my Amer. Board position. However, it doesn't mean I'll be doing nothing. There's plenty to be done and in Foochow I won't be exactly idle. If the school were in Foochow, that would be another thing. If I stayed here at Ingtai I'd want to go to Foochow at least every month, but that would be most upsetting & demoralizing to the rest of the school staff, especially since my salary is stupendous beside any of theirs. Two weeks away from Bill is about all I can stand and after that I'm no good. I'm hoping you don't think I'm shirking! I can't do both jobs and I feel strongly my responsibility is to Bill, now, and that should not be shirked! I've thought and argued this with myself for a number of weeks. I've said nothing to Bill yet, but when I do I know I'll make him happier than he's ever been. I want nothing more!

Other letters are waiting to be written so this will have to close now.

Lots of love to you and Papa – please, Mom, don't feel badly!

Mary

Ingtai, Fukien
April 20, 1941

Dear Mama:

It's a lovely warm sunny Sunday and both Helen & I have been sunning our woolen clothes preparatory to putting them away! Yes, we have gone into summer dresses now, though we may have a day or two of cool weather. However, a sweater will be enough. I'm

hoping this weather continues so I can take my gym classes in swimming. We've been walking out – not very far – and enjoying the lovely scenery there is around here. It's much too warm for basketball & soft ball. Swimming seems to be all that's left!!

These days I wish I were home in Foochow. A lot of my winter clothes are down there and they, too, need sunning. My cotton dresses will probably hold out this summer – after that I don't know what happens!

I've definitely decided against teaching next year and have asked our principal to release me. I haven't written Felix about it yet. I don't intend to terminate my connection with the church at home. I'll no longer be teaching at Wen Shan, but I'll find plenty, I'm sure, to keep me busy. I'm going to write to Boston immediately. Perhaps I have let them down – the Board & the church – but I can't help feeling that I've done what I should since I wasn't & can't carry on my work here as I should! My conscience is clearer than it has been for some time! I knew I wasn't doing my best and pretending to have my heart & soul in this work was not right when my heart was & is in Foochow all the time. I haven't heard from Bill yet – he probably has gotten my letter this very day and I can't help but know that he approves and is overjoyed, though he never would have urged me to give up my teaching. He's loyal and honest as the day is long – besides being sweet and loving. Everyone respects him because he is so square & fair in all his dealings, and that was one reason why I loved him! But there are thousands of other reasons, too. Being away from him is nearly torture. As each day goes by I realize that my place is beside him. God knows just how much I want to be there. So, Mom, I've made my decision, though, primarily to satisfy personal longings. I can't help but feel that it is the thing to do.

We had rumors that Foochow was bombed yesterday, but we hope it is just a rumor. I'm hoping tonight's mail will clear up the matter. Planes have been visiting and we've had an alarm or two up here, one this morning, but until now nothing has happened in the immediate vicinity.

Next Sunday is Bill's birthday and I wish I were going to be home with him. I'm going down the weekend of May 10th for a couple of days. After that, time will be very short, less than six weeks, probably. Two weeks is long enough to be away from Bill, let alone 6 weeks.

Our tea roses are blooming lustily. I have a couple of buds on my desk and I just realized that the strong tea odor I was smelling was coming from them. I'd never realized what a strong tea fragrance they have.

It's "autograph" season. The girls bring out their autograph books and ask for pictures, too. I'm all out of pictures at present and I've got a stack of books waiting for them. My last passport pictures are something! I look as though I'd been on an all-night bat!¹ All our passports must be renewed because of a new form recently issued. Had to be fingerprinted, too.

Helen expects to go to Foochow next weekend to get hers.

It's nearly time for church so I'll have to be running along.

Lots of love to you & Papa,

Mary

¹ Spree, binge

In her letter dated 20 April 1941, Foochow resident Ellen Kinney Beard¹ wrote:

“Yesterday was a hectic day. The siren blew at 5 o’clock but I was asleep and did not hear it. Just before 7 I heard planes coming and decided I had better get dressed and be ready for business. A few minutes later, two guns were fired indicating there were more than 20 planes on the wing. Somewhat later they boomed over us but I could not see them (there goes a bomb away down the river! and another! and another!) There were 11 in all and the Toppings from their veranda saw 7 of them (another bomb!) They were going over by 2’s and 3’s and singly at intervals all day until mid-pm. I heard 6 bombs go off up river; the Toppings heard 8 (another plane roars over low). Dr. Dyer from her back veranda thought they fell above Upper Bridge somewhere. Yesterday was the longest time between the Ging-Bo and the Gai-Du – the siren and the all-off – there has ever been since the war began. The Consul says the Lieng Gong² and Diong Loh³ have definitely been taken and the Government offices of those places have fled.”

The fall of Foochow to Japan in April of 1941 did not prompt American and British citizens to leave, though they did take extra precautions regarding conduct and safety during bombing raids. Full-scale war between Japan and China had been waging since July of 1937, but not until December, 1941, would the United States and the United Kingdom declare war on Japan. For the most part, the missionaries there were worried about welfare of the Chinese, especially their young students.

Foochow, Fukien,⁴ China
Apr. 24, 1941

Dear Mom & Papa:

For the first time since coming out here I’m getting a taste of what it is to be in territory which is nigh onto invasion. By this time it must be stale news to you, but Foochow has finally fallen and was the last of the China coast ports to go.

We’ve been living through the effects of it up here since Sunday, the 20th, when news first reached us about the possibility of the city going. We have had no definite information as yet and have been living amidst panic from rumors that have been seeping in to us. The uncertainty of everything makes it seem so much worse!

Sunday, the first news came that there had been a great deal of bombing of the city. Bill’s letter verified that. That’s the last letter I’ve had from him and since our mail has to come by a round-about route it may be another week before I hear from him again.

News of bombing and troops landing and taking places below Foochow got here. Classes Monday were interrupted continually by alarms up here. By Tuesday we had given

¹ China Records Project, Yale Divinity School Library

² Possibly the Department of Labor

³ Possibly the Kindergarten and Nursery. As the Japanese pushed into one area, the government would move to another area and take over school buildings as temporary quarters.

⁴ For reasons unknown, the word “Foochow” is written over an erased word, presumably “Ing Tai.” The context of the letter suggests that Mary was still in Ing Tai.

up the idea of trying to hold any classes, there was such fright and panic, and no news from the students' families so of course they believed them to be wiped out!

The Foochow College boys started right away leaving here and heading to the northern part of the province where they hope to form classes eventually and carry on. Anyone who wanted to could go with that objective. Most of the senior high school has gone and some of the teachers with them. As soon as they started, our girls, many of them having brothers in Foochow College, got the fever and started to leave. The faculty, too, was in a panic to know what to do with the students. They, naturally, could not be sent home to Foochow, and we couldn't guarantee feeding them all summer. We finally planed that of the senior high girls, those who would relinquish the school of all responsibility could leave if they wanted to. Our Senior III class had completed its work anyway and we were about to give them final exams. The school – what was left here – would stay and take the magistrate's word that he would warn us if we should move, and provide protection along the way. We'll move on up river if need be.

Yesterday girls began leaving, some with their brothers and cousins at Foochow College. This morning more of them left and tomorrow the last troop is going, all headed in the same direction. It means walking over these mountains, probably 2 days, then on up the river by boat. It's not uncommon for boys & girls to be traveling together in China. It's amazing, the strides they have taken in some ways! (On the other hand, it's almost impossible to get a mixed choir to sit together!!) There is a strong sense of family relationship and they stick together like glue!

The girls have been weeping copiously, half from worry about their families, as well as having to leave their classmates. Some of them, a good many of them, may never see each other again, and probably many of them will not see their families for some time, if ever!

To watch these girls go off to unknown destinies is a bit difficult, and in some cases heart-breaking. Many of them I've come to know very well and am fond of. They hate to go, and yet, what is there left for them to do if they still want to belong to their own China? In most cases, it's our best students who have left. They will undoubtedly make their way out of this chaos. Unfortunately, for the school it means, more or less, beginning from scratch again. While this is occupied territory, they don't think of taking the schools back to Foochow.

Foochow College is planning, now, to move up to Shaowu where F.C.U.¹ is, or near there. For the time being, we are staying where we are. There seems to be no need right now to move, but we can't tell! The report today was that everything is quite peaceful in the city. So far as we can make out, there was no resistance whatsoever. A handful of soldiers simply came into the city and that's all there was to it, which all indicates that the ground work was laid and has been working for some time undercover. And with conditions as they have been these past few months, the time was ripe, and the signal was given. It's a general opinion that the high prices, "shortage" of rice and abominable profiteering, was all a part of the plan, so the city would simply turn over its complete government without raising a finger. That's exactly what happened.

Our mail is taking a round-about route, and I hope to get some soon. Not hearing anything from Foochow or the board down there, Susan and Bert decided to go down today. No launches are running, so it means taking a boat as far as they can, walking a great deal of the way. They'll be spending at least one night on the way. There's a question whether they

¹ Fukien Christian University

can get a boat to take them clear down to the city! So they may get there tomorrow & they may not!

The new government seems to want to please the people. They have clamped down on profiteering. Rice has fallen in price, as have other things. They'd greatly please us if they'd get the launches running again so we can at least get some mail.

No doubt the consul will try to keep any who come down from up here in Foochow. "Crossing the lines" is not going to be too easy. We'll have to have passes and one thing or another. Just now I haven't even got my passport! I was planning to go down the 10th of May but that is out of the question unless launches are running, and it may be out then! My plans, now, are to wait until I'm going down for good, which probably won't be too far in the future. Bill's probably frantic wondering how & when I am coming down. He's probably not been getting any word, but Susan is taking him a letter for me. And it's his birthday this Sunday – 27th!

Just heard some shots and went out to see what was up. Some little boys came up, telling us that some traitors had been caught and that's the end of them! I only hope the magistrate knew what he was doing!

Apr. 25:

Some parents continue to come in for their daughters. They say Foochow is peaceful but the magistrate last night gave us orders to move, where as, the day before he said "stay." Now we don't know what to do because the place we'd planned to move is reported to be full of bandits, which isn't surprising. His only reason for having us move was that he's heard they are killing people in Foochow. Of course there would be some of that among the soldiers, etc. Anyway it has added another problem to the teachers & they are trying to keep it from the students. Just what today holds we won't know, so I guess I'll eat breakfast & go down to school and see. Be back with more news later.

Friday pm – we held classes this morning. The students are much quieter and are settling down. The last group who are moving on got off this morning early with their blanket rolls & much weeping. It is raining now and I wonder where they are. They were planning to make the 30 mile trip today, which would mean pretty fast walking. I doubt that they have made it.

We had a more detailed report of what happened in Foochow. A father of one of our students arrived from Foochow last nite and he reported that the city is really fairly quiet and there was no resistance offered except for destroying of property by the Chinese to keep the invaders from occupying those places. Flags are flying and there are signs of welcome! More proof of inside work. However, the first few days there was enough to eat, since the troops brought in food with them. Now they are beginning to find out there isn't anything to eat in the city and looting has begun. That is far from heartening news. It has been rumored that one of our mission houses in a district down the river (where troops first landed) was looted! This man thought there was no need for alarm here, but we have made plans and are going to send a few necessities up into the country up river with a view of having to move on. The students who are left here do not feel the urge to move and expressed the desire of staying here at least as long as they can. Probably, if we can hold out long enough, most of the students will have been sent for by their families. However, we are not banking on that. At least our plans are made, but moving will undoubtedly be delayed and, as H & I think, it may not be necessary at all.

We had one rumor that students—both boys and girls in one of the Methodist schools along the coast—did not get out in time and all there were massacred! We can't tell how much of this to believe, but it seems quite probable.

Now that the coast is entirely gone there seems to be little need of going inland. What the invaders wanted was points of vantage all along the coast for trade, perhaps, but more likely for transporting troops north or south, as the case may be—more likely south. Now they have that. I doubt if any attempt will be made to take over mountainous towns and villages. There's no percentage; that is the general consensus of opinion.

We'll all be relieved when Susan and Bert get back from Foochow. The fact that no one has come up from the mission in Foochow seems to vouch for the quietness of things. We may be all wrong. Fortunately the post office hasn't been molested in any occupied territory because the system is very good as is – too good! Naturally, though, mails will be delayed for a while! Many things will be cleared up when Susan returns next week. We're all sitting on edge waiting for their news!

Saturday night –

Things are quieting down quite a bit both here and there. We resumed our regular schedule today with those left. Even got together the remains of the choir to help lead in the singing at our service tomorrow. The general feeling is one of calm & sanity once more. Ai Li¹ is going to play a violin solo for us (Handel's Largo) with yours truly pumping!²

The evening about 5 o'clock a little tad came running up saying there was, he thought, a foreigner in town. We kidded him because he didn't know the difference between foreigners and his own countrymen! About 7 o'clock, who should walk in but an Englishman from Foochow. He'd been out on business along the coast, and on his way back to Foochow, was taken by bandits, robbed of everything but the clothes on his back & his watch. He'd been walking from the coast inland for four days – over a hundred miles. Two months ago he'd been operated on for hernia! But he's hale & hearty and now that he can see the amusing side of it, his story is side-splitting. Though at the time he was ready to die willing to get away from the treatment he expected! He reports that the invaders were not the “pure brand,” but sheep in wolves clothing with the traditional “poached egg” badge!³ This further substantiates our beliefs that the whole business was inside work. There have been rumors, too, that some of the places along the coast have been retaken, but we don't know how much stock to take in any rumors. We take them all, hash them up, and pick out what we like! At least it keeps up the morale!

We are planning, now, to finish our term here. Today the magistrate seemed to think there was no need to worry or to move on right away. Next fall, we'll probably (that is “they”) open up in Shaowu where the university now is and where our girls & Foochow College boys had headed! The most exciting news I've almost left out!! This afternoon a messenger came in from the Board in Foochow with letters for us all, and good news from Bill, who up to that time, had not heard from me. But what a relief to have word from him & the others in Foochow reporting quiet and order. We are sending the messenger back tomorrow a.m. with letters, etc. Bill had been trying since Sunday (20th) to get word though to me, but no soap. He was trying to get a messenger to come up when he found out that Mac was sending one. We expect the mails will resume scheduled runs soon. Here's hoping.

¹ Alice Tapley, called Ai Li by the Chinese because they could not pronounce the English name, Alice.

² Playing the organ involved an assistant who pumped a bellows handle on the organ's side.

³ Possibly the Chinese KMT KuoMinTang (National Revolutionary) Army Field Cap Badge insignia.

Before this reaches any larger proportions and I have to hire a freighter to get it home to you, I'd better stop. Don't worry, for there's nothing to worry about. Boston will keep you posted. No doubt you've heard already.

With lots of love to you both –

Apr 26 – finished!!

Mary

Ingtai, China

May 3, 1941

Dear Felix,

Don't let this "floor" you! Just sit down & take it easy for a few moments. Two letters within a month is almost too much!

As you know by now things have been happening here about Foochow, and no doubt you are wondering what it is all about. We are still wondering, too, what it's all about and one guess is as good as another. For the present we are living one day at a time, for there's no point in trying to plan definitely with such uncertainty all about us.

It was April 20th when the first rumors came to us up here that Foochow had been bombed. That was not exactly surprising since the spring usually brought such results. Following that were rumors that one of the districts down the river from Foochow (Diong Lak) had been taken. We didn't take much stock in that because we'd heard the same thing several times in the past few months and it turned out to be a raid by bandits. When the rumors persisted on Monday, and Bill's letter confirmed the landing of troops, we knew that this was no joke. By radio, we received the report that Ningpo had fallen and on Tuesday the report came that Foochow was now 'occupied,' and people began to leave the city, some of them drifting up this way with wild and wilder tales. We didn't know what or how much to believe, but being less than 50 miles away from the enemy you can imagine the panic and fright that seized this place and the stampede by the students.

Foochow College boys began leaving by the tens. Many of them having sisters at Wen Shan or relatives of another description were willing to take the girls with them. Such is the custom in this country – boys & girls raveling together and often unchaperoned! Shocking to some of our missionaries, but perfectly all right from the point of view of modern Chinese society (and yet coeducation is frowned upon!!). The only means of travel, of course, is on foot across these mountains. The students were so aroused – and well they might be, knowing the fate of students in other parts of China – that there was no means of trying to keep our girls here under one roof. So the senior high was given a choice. They could go, relinquishing the school of all responsibility, or stay and move with the school. Where they were going, what they would do when they got there – these questions are still unanswered. They felt they had to go if they expected to remain in free territory and so they went, leaving most of their belongings behind, taking only the barest necessities, a little rice, and less money. The F. C. boys had planned to head northwest toward Shaowu, hoping to reestablish the school up there and our girls headed in the same direction, many of them going with Foochow College. A few F.C. teachers went along. It didn't seem so bad to have the boys going, one would expect them to want to move on, but when it came to seeing our own girls starting off in the gray dawn, each carrying her own pack, not knowing what was ahead of her, cut off from her family, not knowing what had become of the family, cut off

from all security, believe me it was somewhat of an ordeal! I have wondered since what American students would do under similar circumstances – their country invaded suddenly cut off from all security they'd always had, not knowing what had become of their families and no way of getting word one way or another! We have never had to face such conditions and just don't know what these students here have gone through, some for the second time, and they may have to do it again.

About 100 of our girls left, the last group going on Friday morning, the 25th of April. Meantime, the faculty was trying to keep the school together and staying comparatively cool. There was no point in trying to hold classes while the girls were packing off. The school had made plans to move, in a body up the river about 50 miles, to Sing Kao. We foreigners felt pretty certain that there would be no attempted invasion of this place because it's off the beaten path and leads to nowhere. Besides it's mountainous and dangerous and difficult to get to. But we couldn't offer any promises that this was as safe, or safer than any other place. Meantime we had all run out of money and none could be had except from Foochow.

The last mail came April 20 and we haven't had any from Foochow since then. No messenger of any kind had been sent up so two of our station here – Susan & Bert – decided to go to Foochow, find out what really was going on & secure funds etc. Some loaded them with letters and messages and requests and they left Thursday p.m. By Saturday night they were back – regular walking newspapers and treasury! We had had all sorts of rumors about bandits who are now finding it to their advantage to pursue their professions. This river is good old bandit territory anyway, so, knowing Susan & Bert would be bringing a deal of money back with them, we were somewhat worried until we knew they had arrived safely. Meantime we'd had all sorts of excitement here.

Finally, a messenger got through from Foochow, laden with letters for us all, and maybe we didn't welcome him. This was a week after our last mail. Bill had been trying to get in touch with me all week and even the one telephone this town sports could not connect with Foochow. He (Bill) had been trying to find someone who would come up when he heard from our treasurer (Mac) in Foochow that he was sending a messenger. All reports were that things were quiet and fairly peaceful – at least it seemed so. Even when the first bombing occurred the people didn't seem disturbed. The city was taken over without a shot being fired – they simply walked in – only a few – less than a hundred at first! It seems apparent that the groundwork was laid and had been going on for some time. When the right moment came, the city was simply handed over, with no resistance. It is generally “breathed” that the economic conditions of the past few months were a prelude to the present occupation and that when conditions reached the peak that they did the people were ready for a change and welcomed the invaders with signs and flags! Well, there are many theories, but the heart-breaking part of it is the [that] Foochow is no longer free territory. When Susan & Bert arrived in Foochow they fell in with part of the parade reviewing the troops, thus sharing in the ovations accorded the rising sun!! Even these grim times have their amusing moments.

Many parents have come up to see their children. Some have gone on over the mountains, some have tried to go home. Our immediate purpose now is to try to finish this terms work here. If it becomes too hot before then, we'll start up river. It's peaceful & quiet here in this spot, once again. Classes are going on as usual and we expect to finish up this month right here. If we stay long enough, probably all the students will be sent for by their parents. Several have left this past week.

These conditions have brought us visitors who might not have come here at all! Last Saturday (Apr 26th) some little boys came running up to tell us a foreigner was in town and an hour or so later, one of the Foochow business men appeared – an Englishman who has charge of salt distribution working for the central government. He had quite a story to tell. While on his way in from the coast after a trip on business, he heard that Foochow had been taken. He immediately made tracks for the city, and within 5 miles of the place, he was taken by bandits and relieved of everything except the clothes on his back. Lost camera, glasses, food, bedding, clothes, good shoes, & money, etc. Not being able to get back to Foochow when the bandits released him he started up this way & walked a hundred or more miles in four days. We were as surprised to see him as he was to see us – not having laid eyes on a foreigner for nearly 2 weeks and speaking nothing but Chinese all the time. We sent him off down river, laden with messages & letters to all our folks there, so within 2 days we'd been able to communicate with Foochow – sending & receiving news. Maybe it wasn't a relief after a week of emotional strain and living on rumors!

May 1st brought us a May basket – a Methodist from across the mountain (27 miles). He wanted to get to Foochow and had to come this way in order to go down river. He & his wife had helped our girls along their way when they got over the Mt. He had written a killing letter to us, telling what they'd done for the students and saying he might “drop in” for supper some time – which he did the very next day. A 27 mile hike in 11 hours is nothing to sneeze at on the level. When it comes to doing that over mountains, well, I'd think twice!! So we sent him off to Foochow the second day after his arrival, also loaded down with letters. We expect him back next week (this week) on his way home.

Today I had another pleasant surprise. Another messenger arrived from Foochow with letters! So through all this commotion & upheaval we've been kept fairly well informed. The mail isn't running yet between Foochow & Ingtai, but we hear rumors that it may be soon. That means censorship now. We are told our U.S. Mail goes overland & thus escapes censorship usually, but one never can tell.

Meantime, this quiet city of ‘Eternal Peace’¹ lives up to its name and things go on pretty much as usual. We've had all sorts of reports as to the number of troops in Foochow. If we really knew how many there were we might be able to guess at what their plans were. The provincial government had moved inland 2 years ago, so the province has by no means fallen until the government is taken. Whether that will be attempted or not is a question. Foochow is an important sea port, so what more would they want? “They” are not anxious to penetrate too far inland, it seems.

We have air alarms here, and within the past 2 weeks, one plane has flown over. As I said, the fate of the school hangs in the air. Nothing can be decided right now. We're simply going on finishing this term if possible and then try to find some solution to the problem.

I had planned to spend next weekend in Foochow with Bill, but that is quite out of the question since travel is more uncertain than ever. Now I'm planning to wait until the end of the term before going down. If we have to move before then, I'll go on with the school & finish out.

This brings me to a very personal matter, Felix. Sometime before the invasion I asked our principal to release me from teaching next fall. Then, it was assumed that the school would be here. I did not take this step without a great deal of thought and also consultation

¹ The City of Eternal Peace is commonly known as Chang'an, today known as Xi'an, though this refers to Ingtai (now Yongtai).

with Helen and Dr. Beard. Being separated from my husband is more than I thought it would be. Before I was married, I'd been advised, by more than one person, that such a separation would be difficult and that my responsibility would shift, and naturally I should be with my husband. At the time I pooh-poohed the idea, seeing no reason why I couldn't carry on the two jobs – school & being a wife – even thought it meant separation. I fully intended to finish my contract & wrote to Boston that I wanted to. I've learned that the circumstances are quite different. I began to realize that I was not giving my best to the school, that my heart was elsewhere, and I hadn't the same feeling toward my work here. I still enjoy it but it's not uppermost with me, and I can't be fair either to the school or to Bill under these circumstances. I talked with our principal, and she was not surprised, nor was anyone else (married and unmarried folks). I had planned that I would go home every 4 or 5 weeks for a couple of days. I did it once. I found it cut into the class work too much, and that any such practice would create friction among the rest of the faculty, who were not too contented anyway. That was only natural.

Bill has never breathed a word about me giving up my teaching – he's that loyal and wouldn't suggest it to me, but I know he wants me there at home, and needless to say, that's where I want to be. Since I couldn't do both jobs, I was either the school or Bill. I have written Boston, asking to be released. Since I made this decision, we have experienced the invasion and have no idea, now, where the school might be by next fall. It will move inland, but where, we don't know. Felix, I feel that I've done the only thing I could do and be perfectly fair in doing at least one job well. I realize, too, that I'm not finishing the job I was sent out here to do. It doesn't mean, however, that I am losing my interest in missions – far from that. No doubt there are plenty of things I can do via Foochow while I'm living there. Just how long I'll be there, I could tell, it all depends on Bill. He may stay for some time; he may be transferred; he doesn't know. I feel that my mission now is to stick with Bill.

My love to Jean & the kiddies, and hoping that you don't think me utterly "lost."

Most sincerely,

Mary Frances

Ingtai

May 9, 1941

Dear Mom:

You see by the heading we are still here in Ingtai and probably will be for a few weeks more, at least to the end of this month. Operations go on as usual with interruptions now and then – calls from the neighbors¹ which always take up valuable time. Despite that, we are going on and expect to close the books at the end of May.

We're having gorgeous summer weather now, if it would only last, but it means real hot weather later on when one feels as though one were being steamed in one's own juice! Then it's impossible to keep a dry stitch on! But why should one worry about what's ahead, when there's so much to do right now!! We go on in a sort of doze, trying to do what's supposed to be done depending on our own ideas & resources making things as bearable as possible. How thankful to be in a quiet peaceful countryside with the smell of pine needles all around us, and perfectly gorgeous moonlight night. I miss Bill terribly, more than I'd thought I would, and not hearing from him except when someone comes through makes me miss & long for him all the more. I know he's o.k. I've had two letters in the past two weeks,

¹ Air raids by the Japanese

so I shouldn't kick. But having been hearing almost daily then suddenly cut off kind of takes the wind out of my sails. We both are looking forward to being together this summer (naturally) and I guess that won't be so far off.

Loren Humphrey (Methodist) came through here last week on his way to Foochow. He & his wife, Pauline, are very good friends of Bill's and mine. They come out just a month or so after I did and they are dandy folks. We are looking for Loren to return, possibly tonite, laden with news etc!! He usually stays with Bill when he goes to Foochow, and was expecting to do so this time. He & Pauline are only 27 miles across the Mts. from us, a good day's hike, which hike Loren made in less than 12 hours when he came over! When Bill was running up and down Kuliang last summer he stayed nights (??) at the Humphreys' cottage. We don't know just how many folks will be going to Kuliang this summer. There's been quite a scramble for houses. Helen has rented hers for the summer but now the questions is will they be occupied (by those who rented them!). I rather think that the folks will be going up as usual. Those, anyway, who are already in Foochow. Maybe those up country won't try to get down.

No doubt there's a whole stack of mail – letters, American & otherwise, magazines, etc – in Foochow just waiting for someone to censor them or burn them. Whether I'll ever see them is a question. Haven't had anything for nearly five weeks and the news would be mighty welcome.

Well, we can't have everything and we're lucky to have enough to eat, I suppose. Bill said we might have trouble getting enough to eat this summer, and in having privacy, but we'd have a good time anyway!

This must stop. I'm just hoping this gets out & across to you somehow.

Lots of love to you & Papa, *Mary*

Norwich Town, Conn. May 16. [1941]

My dear Mrs. Buckhout—

Glad to get your card. Yes the State Dept. held me up and I am busy speaking this spring. I am purposing to return by the first shipment in early fall.

In my trunk is the package that came for Mary Frances from the So. Hadley ladies. There seems no way to get things into Foochow until things are cleared up. I hear even cables are refused for Foochow. I keep sending letters for them but by Dr. Beard's last letter (March 26) money sent out took about 4 months to get to them. Before Foochow was taken we cabled funds to feed my orphans.

We wonder what is happening there. Helen's latest said Mary Frances was with her in Ingtai. Expect Helen & Susan Armstrong in August. Very truly yours,

Edward H. Smith.

Ingtai, China
May 16, 1941

Dear Mom & Papa:

Was I ever tickled to hear that I'd had a message from you via Treasure Island. I did not know it until a week later, but it was just a welcome and worth waiting for. Loren Humphrey who went down to Foochow via Ingtai happened to hear it and so gave me the

message when he returned. I was thrilled to pieces! Now, we have direct contact with Treasure Island! Bert's radio is finally working splendidly so we can get daily news and Treasure Island just booms forth on it. Helen got her antenna from Foochow & sent it over to Bert – that's all it needed. We're so thrilled to have contact with the outside world for a change. Even dance music – good old U.S. dance bands sound like symphonies to me! I'm so glad Doris has her girl at last, and I wonder if she has red hair. It wouldn't be surprising. Keep the messages coming since we can receive up here as well as in Foochow. When I go down home, Bill and I will just hang on the radio at the consulate, or at one of our friend's homes to get news. By the time you receive this I'll be in Foochow – I hope!

There was another scare this week that almost sent the whole shebang up river!! We held tight, things cooled down, and since it was raining when we voted to go, we're still here. But it has resulted in closing the school now, as soon as we can give final exams. It's been a month of unsettled, helter-skelter classes, but it's remarkable that we have been able to keep going under such circumstances. It has taken all the self-control and patience of us all to hold things down, since the first idea in the minds of these folks is to run and run fast! Believe me, I've never before exercised such self control on my part. Teaching under such conditions is a job. But circumstances like this certainly show who has stuff & who hasn't. And there are plenty of these people with inner selves of force and wisdom which comes to the fore in times like this.

This, however, has been but a mild taste of what others have had to stand up under in North China. It's no wonder that so many of our missionaries broke under the strain.

Undoubtedly school will open next fall in Shaowu. Foochow College will be a few miles from the same place. The university is there, so it is fast becoming a literary center whereas Ingtai is losing that claim. We can scarcely plan more than a day at a time now and we are not surprised at whatever develops. Our school is half its size, now. F.C. has closed and is on its way. Susan, who teaches there, has to leave her nice little house she built last spring! She's going home, however, for a furlo [*sic*]. It's ironic that the people who have built houses out here have occupied them but a year and have had to move on. Susan's is a very cute house, too. I wish it were in Foochow; Bill & I would take it. The place we have is so big! But I'll sure be glad to get there. It's been seven weeks since I've seen my husband and it hasn't been any too much fun! It will be nearer 10 weeks, probably, before I do see him. The last word I had from him, he was very much set against me going down unless I could stay – which, of course, was the only thing I could consider under the present situation.

We've been swimming several times in the river – having hot weather. The last two days brought out our sweaters again! And rain flooded the river so no more swimming for a while. The cool weather is welcome, especially if we are to give exams, etc.

There's no mail system yet between Foochow and Ingtai and is it exasperating! We've had no U.S. mail since the first week in April! And there seems to be little prospect of getting any for some time. The coastal towns seem to waver between friend and foe. At present they say the friends have the lead. We thrive on rumors! And when those don't suffice, we make up our own & solve all the worldly mysteries. Just now we've all the best reasons we can think of as to why Hess dropped out of the sky into Scotland.¹ At least we

¹ Rudolf Hess piloted a Messerschmitt to Scotland in May 1941, parachuted over Renfrewshire and was arrested by a farmhand. He was apparently trying to contact the Duke of Hamilton to set peace talks with Winston Churchill in motion under his own initiative. A notebook written by Major Karlheinz Pintsch, a long-time adjutant to Hess, claims that Hitler hoped that an 'agreement with the Englishmen would be successful.' Hess's task was to 'bring about, if not a military

find a bit of entertainment in our own theories! One guess is as good as another and the best sounding one wins!

If the sun tries to rise upon U.S. it will mean dark days for us here. Some say the sun is soon to set here. Who knows?

Much love to you both and don't let the propaganda get you –

Love, *Mary*

Ingtai, China

May 25, 1941

Dear Levi,

Glory me! According to my little blue book it's two months since I wrote to you and it's almost as long since I've seen my husband. Maybe a lot hasn't happened since then. I've lived through lots of things – invasion, evacuation and air raids!! What a life! Always something doing! I wonder what the reports were at home. No doubt you all knew of Foochow being occupied as soon as we did up here in Ingtai – less than 50 miles away. We lived on rumors for two days, and then began to take some stock in them when we finally got word directly from people fleeing in our direction. I forgot – there was a radio report we got – “strong resistance” – a little more than was expected – Oh yes! The word was “stiffer resistance than at Ningpo!!” That's a laugh – the only difficulty the uninvited guests had to put up with was stepping from their boats to the shore – just to make sure the city was theirs! Resistance! Whew! They were greeted with signs of welcome and flags by those who remained in the city. The rest ran as fast as they could and are still running! There was quite severe bombing – practically at Bill's front door – the day before the J's walked in.

The repercussions up here were something fierce. There was no such thing as trying to hold classes! That was impossible. When the students got wind of the conditions they just filed out of there as fast as they could. Consequently our school is half its size and our brother school has completely disintegrated for the time being but plan to reassemble in the northern part of the province. We had a week of hectic, frantic panic. We couldn't decide what to do – move or go on with classes (if possible). We couldn't send the girls home. Horrible rumors reached us from Foochow. But, as usual, most of them turned out to be just rumors. Many parents sent for their children – and still some are sent for. After things quieted down, and our seniors had trekked off across the mountains, we finally settled down to classes, but most of the teachers and students expected to have to entertain some of the Foochow guests any day! Worse luck. They haven't come yet! But they called and left calling cards in the shape of five or six bombs yesterday. Nice folks. “More people killed – more blood on streets.” (There aren't enough trees!)

Well, I've experienced my first air raid and if this is a taste – hardly that, only an infinitesimal part of China – I believe in people's hair turning white over night!! Send me some dye quick!! But, all joking aside, unless you have experienced enemy planes dropping death all about you, you can have no idea of what it is like. I can't begin to express my sensations of those few minutes.

We had just finished a final exam, and two planes appeared from the Foochow direction. The signal was given and all the girls scattered. Apparently there was nothing to be

alliance of Germany with England against Russia, then...a neutralization of England'. [excerpted from: dailymail.co.uk; Hitler gave go-ahead to Rudolf Hess mission...; Allan Hall; 29 May 2011]

expected. The planes went completely out of sight and out of hearing. I settled down to correcting papers and the students started coming back into the school. Just then we heard the planes returning, sounding much lower, and they were, for without any usual circling, one of the planes simply let a bomb go. We couldn't see anything, but heard the sickening thud as it struck! Evidently they were aiming for something in the city, but the deuce of it is they are such rotten shots that it's ten times more dangerous – you just can't bank on anything – or even guess what they're trying to hit! Well, after the first bomb, I decided I'd better get clear of our building, so went out with the girls – and maybe my knees weren't shaking.

By this time, both planes circled again and dropped a couple more bombs somewhere. Each time they were coming lower and zooming right over our heads. Boy! for a pea-shooter! (Thinks I!) The third time around they really let go – over the city again, and by that time I expected our building was next on the list, but evidently they were fed up on their game or hadn't anything else to dispose of, so went home for dinner!

I dashed back to our house, found Dr. Beard on the porch and we went into the city to see what had been done! One bomb had struck! That's the stuff that does damage – the flying shrapnel – you just never know where it's going to fly, and most people are injured from that. We couldn't go far into the city; it was being patrolled carefully. But we learned later that twenty people were killed and that many were injured. I don't know what the property damage was – or is. Then I went home for dinner. Soon after the raid it began raining and has been raining off and on since!

Tonight we're having regular cloud bursts and let me tell you, an ordinary rain out here is what you'd call a hurricane at home (minus the wind). Weather like this I simply go barefooted back and forth to school. There's no possible way to keep dry with less than hip boots. This weather, though, is welcome – at least we are unmolested while it lasts. But how people go on working and living under similar conditions (of bombing) is certainly beyond me!! Now I've got a pretty good constitution, and don't consider that I'm of a nervous temperament, but a year of this life would find me pushing up daisies, or maybe pansies! Believe me, all the praise in the world isn't enough for those who do carry on under such circumstances – bombings and constant raids – here or anywhere!

Well, Levi, that's what six littlecensoredese bombs did to me. Now I have two white hairs instead of one!! For a time last month things were pretty tense among the foreigners. Many thought of going home without further adieux, but the last letters we had from Foochow (which come only by special messenger since the P.O. is not yet functioning this way) the feeling had died down, and news reports have been less discouraging and tense – though not exactly anything to cheer about! Except for the faux pas that Hitler pulled in Crete!¹

Well, my fun is not yet over for this term. After our first fright which lasted two weeks, we finally decided to finish here. In the midst of that decision we had another fright, and if it hadn't been raining cats and dogs that day I'd be in No Man's Land now, but it was too wet and rainy to evacuate, so we stayed here. Consequently we are finishing the term tomorrow when we give our last exams. Then comes the fun.

We are moving, and right away, up some 350 miles or so to the northern part of the province. Bill was expecting me to come home the first week of June. Little did I realize that I'd be helping the school move then! So it will be some ten weeks since I will have seen my

¹ Expecting light resistance, Hitler's elite Fallschirmjager (paratroopers) and gliders were decimated before they even hit the ground when they attacked Crete on May 20, 1941. [historynet.com]

husband when I finally get back to Foochow. And believe you me it's not much fun being worried and away from your husband with no means of communication except a messenger who is hard to find and convince that he can go to Foochow. But I've been quite fortunate, and have heard almost every week since the invasion. Nearly every week some foreigner has been travelling this way since it's the only route to Foochow right now!

I started back a few dozen sentences ago to tell about moving the school. Very simple!! Wednesday Helen and I start out with about 100 girls and hike 27 miles over the mountains to our first stop which we must do in one day. There (Mintseng) we stay the night (both Methodists and American Boarders there), then go on 15 miles the next day to the river where we hope to have a launch waiting for us to go on to Yenping. If the launch isn't there it may mean waiting several days. After arriving at Yenping we hire busses or trucks, or whatever there is to get us to our destination, Shaowu. There, Helen's and my responsibilities end. More easily said than done. The university is at Shaowu. In fact we will be housed in their buildings! They are ready for us – that's the only thing we are sure of. We'll be starting at 5:00 a.m. and I'll bet anything that the weather will be blistering hot! Anyway, I can write you all about that later!

After getting the girls to Shaowu, Helen and I are hot-footing it back to Ingtai and on down to Foochow where she has to get things together and get off to Shanghai by the 15th of June!! So you see we've got to do some hustling. It will take at least a week to go to Shaowu, but we can come down in much less time, they say! That remains to be seen.

Our troubles are not ended, however, until we actually get into Foochow. There have been bandits on the lower end of our river, and I don't care to lose all my possessions such as darned stockings and patched underwear, and faded dresses, since I've no idea how much longer I'm going to be out here. Helen and I will just hope that if we meet the bandits, they won't like the looks of our stuff! Can't you just see a bandit cowering under my gaze? Ah, brave little me what would probably cave in at the sight of one! Well anyway, we're going to take a chance and take our things down the river.

Did you know that I'm not teaching next year? I had made the decision before all the trouble. At least I'm not teaching at Wen Shan. If I'm still allowed to stay in Foochow I'll probably have enough to do. I say if because there is still the possibility of the admiral telling Bill to send his wife home!! However, I'm counting on being at home with Bill until such an order comes, which may never happen. I don't know, and Bill doesn't know where he'll be next year, but we are hoping that we can be together.

Well, Levi, you have my permission to share this with whomever you wish, since I won't be writing more letters until I get home to Foochow. Then you'll get the sequel. Say hello to everybody. The U.S. mail isn't so good on getting to use now, but it's coming gradually. I've had one U.S. letter since the first week in April. Not having the Foochow P.O. functioning rather gums the works. Our magazines are so old that they are ancient history now. Someday everything will be straightened out. When I get to Foochow I can't be so free about writing since everything will be thoroughly perused, and therefore delayed, too, in getting home!! Well, things could be worse – and I still say it's a great life and there's no place like China!!

Three days later a few teachers and a select group of students from Wen Shan Girls School began the long trek to Shawou. The following, transcribed from her type-written primary document, is Mary's account. Together with Helen Huntington Smith's account, it became "Wenshan On Trek," the official report to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. A transcribed copy of "Wenshan on Trek" follows Mary's account.

We left Ingtai May twenty eight at six thirty in the morning, 110 students and 12 teachers. We were headed for Lek Du, thirty miles away over the mountains. We planned to do it in one day. So off we started with seventy load carriers and each student carrying about a fifteen pound load. Before we had gotten three miles out of the city those fifteen pound loads seemed like fifty to the students. It was quite cool when we started so most of the girls had their winter coats on. As the sun got higher the coats got hotter, so they took them off and tied them around their waists. In their packs they had a change of clothing and three pounds of rice, one pair of shoes – just the bare necessities.

When we were about six miles out of the city we heard planes overhead. And looking back we could see them circling over Ingtai. And heard the thud of bombs being dropped. Though the planes weren't anywhere near us the girls instinctively ran for cover. But the farmers in the fields went on with their work as though nothing were happening. Except for the hum of the planes, one could scarcely believe that this was a country at war.

Our road followed a stream nearly all the way. Now and then we would stop to wash our face and hands and cool off a bit. By noon we had reached the half way point. We met load carriers coming from the opposite direction carrying mail and rice to Ingtai. We stopped at a farmhouse where we could get tea and the girls ate their lunches of rice cakes which they carried in enamel cups. The country side was so beautiful and the stream so inviting that we wasted quite a bit of time along the way enjoying them. Little did we realize that the harder part of the journey was at the end of the road.

At five o'clock we had reached the last village at the top of the morning [mountain] after a stiff climb. We were still ten miles from our destination. Many of the students were far behind and the others were tired out and so they planned to spend the nite at this village rather than go on. Helen and I wanted to push thru that night so we took about twenty-two girls with us who thought they could make it. About a mile out of the village one of the girls fainted and was taken back to the village.

No one knew the path to Lek Du but we thought we could get thru somehow. We were all right until we came to an unmarked crossroads. The load carriers had never taken this trail before so they didn't know the way. From the top of the mountain the load carriers looked down on the river and decided which path we should take. It was growing dark, for darkness comes quickly in these latitudes and we still had to go down the mountain and across the plain of paddy fields with dozens of paths leading in every direction.

By the time we had reached the foot of the mountain we were in total darkness. The torches that we had brought we attached to the chair that was bringing up the rear, which chair we never saw until the next day. There was nothing to do now but simply go on and hope we hit the right path. With Helen leading we crawled along the narrow path between rice fields hoping we were hitting the right one. At every house we saw we called for a guide and offered to pay, but no one was in the mood for guiding us into Lek Du that night. But we kept on, single file, inch by inch, mile by mile, footsore, weary, and blue. I had visions of

lying right down in the paddy field and spending the night there. I almost did when I slipped in knee deep into one of them. But the girls hauled me out and I had to go on.

Finally, someone with a flashlight was approaching us. That, at least, was a sign of civilization. The whole country side being under martial law, we were afraid it might be a guard who might shoot and ask questions later. So we called out, "We are girls, students, don't shoot!" The man with the flashlight was a kindly old gentleman who, after hearing our story, offered to guide us into Lek Du and even went back to get lanterns for us. Tired as we were and hungry he gave us new hope. With one lantern at the head and another at the end of the line we went on our way. He said it was only about two miles in to the school where we were going but that two miles sure seemed like ten. The students began to fear that we were being led away but we suddenly came upon a public playground. We felt sure that things were all right. The girls were just dragging along and one of them nearly fainted away but she kept on and in a few minutes we were at the gate of the Methodist Mission.

It was now ten o'clock when all good folks are in bed. But we pounded on the gate and after a few minutes it was opened by a sleepy gate man who roused the other folks and led us to the school building. By this time others were out and came bringing us water and lights. The girls just flopped on the school room floor never even thinking of a bed they were so exhausted. The rice was prepared for them (they had been expecting us that day). Blankets were doled out by the foreigners there. Then Helen and I were taken into the Humphrey's house where we sat and drank until we thought we would float away. They wanted to feed us but all we wanted was a bed. Before we turned in, however, we made the rounds of the students to see that they were settled for the night. They had never felt so good as they felt that night. We didn't know another thing until seven o'clock the next morning. Thus ended the first day.

Next morning the rest of the students came in tired and dirty with aching and blistered feet. So we set up a clinic, got out the first aid kit and treated everything from flea bites to Hong Kong foot.¹ It was surprising how few girls had blisters. They all wore Chinese shoes which are made with cotton tops and paper soles which give very little protection and no support to the feet. The farthest [*sic*] that some of these girls had ever walked was seven miles.

The rest of the school staff had planned to come on to Lek Du May twenty ninth but were held up because there were no chair carriers. It was fortunate that they were delayed because one of the men teachers who had come half way with us and was returning to Ingtai that day over the same route we had taken was relieved of his money and possessions by bandits. However, the next day our teachers came along unmolested and joined us at Lek Du. During the two days at Lek Du the students appointed committees to take care of food and baggage. There is no such thing as checking your baggage right through in a country like this so 211 pieces of baggage including everything from bedding rolls to kitchen utensils had to be checked and rechecked at every stop we made. So when you come to China bring only a toothbrush and a mug and you'll have nothing to worry about.

After much dickering and bargaining we finally got the baggage into small boats but the rest hiked the 15 miles to Minchiang. This was like a picnic compared to the other hike. So we took our time and at noon were royally entertained by a government school about half way to the city. At Minchiang we awaited telegrams which were to tell us about our next

¹ Athlete's foot

move. The regular boats between Yenping and Minchiang were not running. We didn't know but what we might have to spend a week there before we could get a boat.

On Sunday morning, June first, we got two telegrams from Yenping, one saying a launch was being sent down and the other saying take small boats to go up the river. We didn't know which to believe but we hoped the first was the one to count on. Sunday afternoon our baggage arrived from Lek Du. It had just been taken off the boats and packed in a storehouse when we heard that a launch had come in at the mouth of the river a mile down from the city. The water was too low to have it come up to the city. Our business manager went down to investigate and came running back with the news that it was our launch and that we must get down there right away. Meantime, three other schools, also waiting for a launch, had news of his and rushed out to the mouth of the river. A reservation in China means first come first served.

By the time Wen Shan got out to the river mouth there was scarcely room enough for the students to get on, let alone the baggage. And before the teachers had gotten out there the launch had started up-river because people were pouring on by the tens. They were afraid she would sink before she had started. Helen was trying to call Yenping so she and I were left behind with that darned blasted baggage just waiting to be checked and re-checked for the next trip. Anyway we contented ourselves with having another night's rest at the foreign house at the Methodist compound. The next day we spent at the telephone trying to get word through for a launch to come and rescue us poor, stranded refugees at Mintsing. No launches were available we were advised to hire rice boats to take us about twenty miles up the river where we could get a launch. Then we spent the rest of the day looking for rice boats. Which we managed to get about four o'clock then we moved that blank blank blank blank baggage into the boat and went back to the Methodist Mission for another night's rest and a good Chinese meal. I should say here that Loren Humphrey¹ came with us from Lek Du and was bound to go up the river with us.

Four o'clock the next morning we packed our tin trunks for the third time in two days and went down to the river to board the rice boats. We found them waiting for us. We were struck with the number of "boatmen" that they had acquired during the night. None of the boats needed more than three boatmen apiece. I said no boat needed more than three boatmen. They said all their cousins, uncles and aunts had come to help them because the boat was so heavy. We insisted that we couldn't take so many people on the boat because we expected to pick up a few students and also a police guard farther down the river. Thru further questioning the relatives turned out to be refugees who had paid the boatmen a nominal sum to take them up the river. There was nothing to do but put them off the boat which we did first by "inviting" them to leave and when that didn't work we escorted them off individually. Home was never like this when it comes to bouncing refugees. There was no need for their riding on our boat because the gov't was providing boats for refugees so we felt justified in forcing them off.

An hour later we were on our way to the mouth of the river where we picked up our police escort. About ten miles up the river our number of policemen was increased because the bandits in that area were rumored to be pretty bad. Helen and I were carrying about 12,000 dollars² between us in our hair, under our clothes, in our shoes, in our trunks, hoping

¹ Rev. Loren R. Humphrey

² With the 1941 exchange rate at 20:1 US, 12,000 Chinese "dollars" = \$600 U.S. = \$9,768 US in 2013.

that if we met bandits they wouldn't find all of it. Loren Humphrey was our good luck piece. But he was thoroughly disappointed not to have had the excitement of meeting bandits.

About the middle of the afternoon we arrived at Shuikow where we could get a launch to take us up to Nanping. We hoped that now our worst troubles were over and that things would move along swiftly and smoothly. Not so out here oh my no!!!

Although there were about six empty launches there, we had to wait for other launches to come back up-river. At five o'clock they began to arrive and we had hopes of stacking our baggage on one immediately. But nothing like that. The launches had been sent down the river for the express purpose of bringing refugees out of occupied territory. But even that didn't give us the privilege of boarding one immediately. We had to go to the boat officials and after a couple hours of talking and persuading we were finally granted permission to ride on one of the launches. It was dark now and loading the launch would be difficult but we didn't dare wait until morning. We started to load the baggage on the launch when we were suddenly stopped because we had no permit to load that night. Another hour of talking, arguing and persuading and we finally got the necessary permit. Baggage was never loaded faster than that was. In the dark we checked each piece as it was stacked in the baggage room and on the front of the launch. Another days work done. The boat was full of refugees and the only place they left to sleep was on the roof where Helen, Loren and I rolled up in blankets under a beautiful tropical moon.

About three o'clock in the morning more refugees came aboard and there being no other place but the roof they piled out where we were. That was the end of our nights rest. Loren decided he had better look for a boat to take him back to Mintsing. Helen and I took refuge on top of the baggage on the front of the launch where we snoozed at intervals for the rest of the day under a hot sun which left us in the "pink" of condition.

By the time we got to Nanping we looked like a couple of lobsters. The students had arrived two days earlier and came down to the boat to meet us. Once more we shifted baggage and had it carried to the church where the students were staying. Helen and I went to the Hwa Nan campus where we stayed with the foreigners, got hot baths and a good supper and rolled into bed. Having had only three hours sleep the night before we were ready to sleep the clock around.

In the middle of the night we were awakened by gunfire all around us. We knew Nanping was military headquarters and it had been rumored that the Japanese were attempting to move toward the city. The thought that came to us was that the city was being attacked and we had run into just what we were trying to run away from. We were so tired we couldn't even crawl under the bed for safety but then one of the missionaries told us it was just night practice for the soldiers so we went off to sleep again.

It took two days at Nanping to hire a truck and a bus for the students and our baggage to take us to Shaowu so once more about 5 o'clock the morning of June seventh we packed in our baggage and sixty two students into the one truck. Many of the students had gone to relatives in and around Nanping where they would spend the summer.

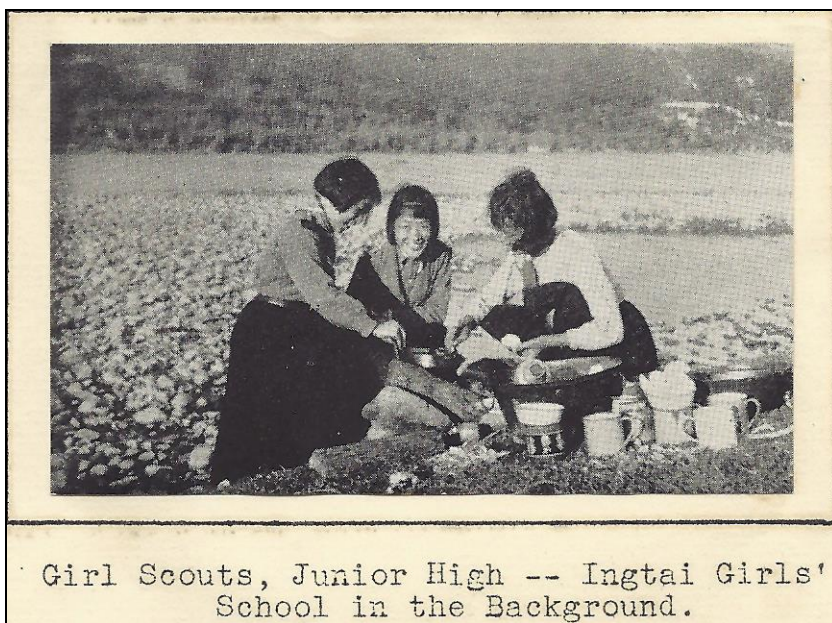
When I saw the truck they had given us I had no hopes of making the 120 mile trip that day and when we got started I was more sure of it than ever. The radiator leaked like a sieve and about every two or three miles the driver had to stop and fill her up. He had to stop two or three times to tinker with the engine. I guess we made about ten miles an hour. The bus was in better condition and ran out of gas only once but anyway it was [a] feeling of luxury to [be] riding with four wheels under us although we didn't know just how long they

would stay under us. The narrow road twisted thru the hills thru beautiful country with rice fields on all sides. Here there were signs of prosperity and plenty to eat. Just about dusk we saw the Shaowu pagoda and we knew that our destination had arrived – as one Chinese student put it. We drew up at the bus station and for the last time unloaded the baggage and the students.

“WENSHAN ON TREK”¹

THE FIRST MOVE FROM FOOCHOW TO INGTAI

When Amoy (coastal city south of Foochow) fell in 1938 the Orlinda Childs Pierce Girls School (Wenshan) was forced to move fifty miles inland to Ingtai, one of our American Board stations. Here we were beautifully located in the Girls' School built for sixty girls into which we had to crowd 300! The second year we were able to put up a temporary building – a two-story building, the top floor of which had no partitions and 100 girls slept in the double-decker beds. It had large windows overlooking the river with beautiful mountains and a pagoda across the river.



The life at Ingtai was quite ideal for a school. We were one mile from the town, but also we were located on the main road from Foochow to the city.

AFTER THE FALL OF FOOCHOW IN APRIL, 1941

When Foochow fell all the refugees streamed by on this road and for about ten days it was absolutely impossible to carry on any regular school work. The girls at that time were terribly upset naturally, the younger children weeping and weeping in their rooms; the others worried and distracted kept saying, “Now we have no homes, we don’t know where our parents are – probably they have been killed, we have no money. What shall we do for the future?” The teachers likewise lost control of themselves and it was difficult to keep up any

¹ This document is transcribed from a typed document sent as a report to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Boston, Massachusetts. It was probably written by Helen Huntington Smith in collaboration with Mary Frances Buckhout McVay (attested to by her transcribed account preceding this document) and published for the American Board by Mary D. Uline, Secretary. Some unnecessary subtitles were eliminated; otherwise the document is without edit.

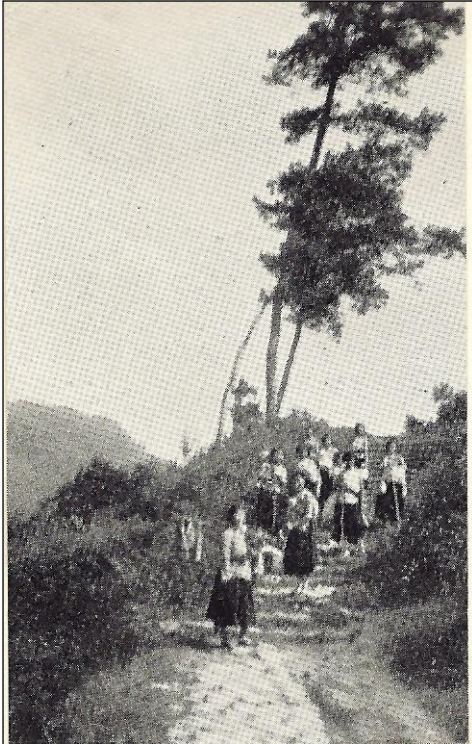
kind of morale. Because of our fear of being bombed we tried to hold classes out under the trees. We would barely get organized when another group of refugees came along and the girls would tear down the road to find out if there was any news from home. Sometimes these refugees told lurid stories of what had happened, many of which were exaggerated. Another expression the girls kept using was, "We have no heart to do anything." If we tried to encourage them they became sullen. They said, "Oh, you are a foreigner, you don't understand." My first reaction to this attitude was one of disgust. We had talked about being good sports and they were not showing any sportsmanship spirit at all. Then as I thought about it I realized that they were young girls in their early teens who felt entirely cut off from all security and all family ties.

The first two or three days after the invasion of Foochow the boys of Foochow College left in large numbers and many of our girls wanted to follow along with their brothers. Because we did not know whether or not Ingtai would be safe the principal allowed the students to go with their brothers and many of them started off with only a small pack of clothes, a little rice in a bag, to hike for ten days over the mountains. Our school announced that it would try to continue its work for a few weeks, and close the term in good form. At the same time we would investigate places to which we could move. Almost daily we had telegrams from the Board of Education telling us to move to this town or that, 300 or 400 miles inland. It was easy for these executives to sit with a map before them and choose places where we could move but quite another proposition to pick up 200 and more girls and transport them and their necessary baggage over mountainous country with absolutely no means of transportation except the backs of coolies.

During the month that we delayed some children got in touch with their families and we were more than glad to have the younger children return to Foochow. Messengers were sent from the parents across the lines to bring their children home and probably said, "We will never be slaves to Japan." Others stubbornly refused all pleas from their families to return. Even twelve year olds would stamp their feet and say, "We will go to Free China!" It was naturally very difficult for the school administration to advise these girls because if we assumed the responsibility of taking them inland we might be responsible for them for life and how could we be sure of food and safety? On the other hand, we could not advise them to return to Foochow where we knew they would live in fear and uncertainty. Several of our older girls openly through the newspapers severed their relationship with their parents, because by the second and third week we had heard the names of the leaders of the puppet government. This step would be difficult for American students to take and even more so for Chinese students for whom the family ties are so strong. But as one girl said to me, "I can never claim a disloyal citizen as my father." Under these circumstances we were trying to continue school work.

Mary Frances Buckhout McVay and I never knew where we were to have classes for the day. The classes under the trees were most irregular to say the least. It was too hot, "mosquitoey," and the girls could not put their minds to work and several, if they felt like it, would not appear saying that they had misunderstood the location! Finally in desperation we found a small farm house which was cozily located between two high cliffs. Here we felt that airplanes could not find us. One morning as we went to school we saw whole rows of girls carrying desks and chairs coming up in our direction and we found that we were going to have classes in this farm house. At last we had desks and two blackboards which we moved from room to room as needed and some order was restored. I was calmly teaching a

class of little seventh graders when all of a sudden everybody shouted, “Airplanes!” Several jumped and ran and I said, “It is perfectly safe to stay here. Those of you who wish may go out to the back under the trees.” We listened some more and the sound was not continuous. I went out to investigate and found in the back yard the farmer grinding his wheat between two stone slabs! After that we continued in peace.



Wen Shan girls begin their 300 mile trek.

We had classes there exactly one week when one morning going to school we saw the girls with their desks and chairs streaming down the road in the opposite direction. We asked, “Where are we going now?” And they said, “The soldiers moved in last night.” In China soldiers first and students second – and they too had decided that this was a good location. Because of troop movements through Ingtai we had two air raids that following week. In a large city one feels a little more secure because the bombers may not be looking for you. In this small town one had a feeling that she was the most important spot in the landscape. There were no sirens because we had no telephone system in the town; it was only when airplanes were heard that we could escape. There were many, many trees around our buildings and we led the girls in various directions out under the trees far away from the school buildings.

The bombing of two other schools in Fukien during the month didn’t add to our feeling of security. Naturally we did not know what to expect from day to day and at all odd hours long faculty meetings were held even into late hours of the night. Some teachers felt that we should pick up and move immediately; others tried to be calm and collected. One night after we had gone home and finished a late supper we heard a very alarming rumor that the Japanese were within twenty miles of Ingtai. We tried not to believe it and felt that it couldn’t be. Another faculty meeting was held until late that night and we voted to leave the next morning unless we had better news by daybreak. Mary Frances and I were much relieved to find that a torrential rain set in the next day and it was absolutely impossible to take one step, but the students spent the day packing and we spent the day trying to calm nerves. By night we did have the report that the Japanese had turned back. But we sent our baggage on small sampans up the river, two girls taking bedding and books and essentials together in one bundle. This we did in preparation for another scare, so that we could run empty handed when necessary.

ONE HUNDRED TEN WENSHAN GIRLS START ON THEIR 300 MILE TREK

Finally by May 26 we finished our examinations and with one day for closing school, accounts and businesses, we planned to set out for Shaowu which is about 300 miles inland, where the Fukien Christian University is now located. The night before I had warned the girls that our first day’s hike would be long and difficult and that they must not carry anything and that we must start promptly at daybreak. Mary Frances and I were up before five and waited

for the girls to come. We lived a mile away from them and were not eager to add two miles to our thirty. Five-thirty, six – no one appeared – so we went down to the school to hurry them along. It is not easy to get 110 girls started promptly on a hike nor is it ever easy to transport baggage in China. There was great confusion at school as the girls tried to get breakfast, pack their baggage and get 80 load-carriers started. Finally in desperation I blew a whistle. “If anyone is going to go we must start in five minutes. I am leaving! All those going to Mintsing must start immediately.” We had organized in groups of twenty but in the confusion we said, “Let’s get going,” and did not bother about our groups. It had been a cool night and the girls foolishly had taken out of their baggage their winter coats. These they were wearing. Each one had a small bundle of clothes and innumerable cloth handbags each carried an enameled tooth mug which she was to use for her rice bowl; each girl carried two rolls of rice cooked rather hard and mixed with salt. Many had taken their bamboo poles from their beds to use as canes, and so the line formed.

THE FIRST DAY – 30 MILES

I was horrified to see how much each one was carrying, but it was too late to remonstrate. It was a beautiful, clear day and the first six or seven miles of the hike lay through some of the most beautiful country I have ever seen. We followed a clear mountain stream through valleys, across small plains. About 9:30 we heard the hum of the inevitable airplane. We knew it could not possibly be looking for us and yet we could not control the flutter of our hearts. I was especially concerned about 30 or 40 girls who were at that moment crossing an open plain, remembering that at another place a row of students had been bombed as they were hiking along. These girls scattered as quickly as possible and we hid under trees and bushes until the plane passed over.

Shortly after we heard the thud, thud of bombs dropped at Ingtai, again attacking what they thought were ammunition dumps, actually killing several peasants. By noon we were hot and hungry. This trail being an isolated one, we did not pass many villagers. But by one o’clock we came to a small farmhouse. I had run ahead to tell the farmer and his wife to prepare hot water for 110 thirsty hikers. Some of us stopped at a lovely spot near a mountain stream and cooled off in the spring. This part of the trail was through quite tropical jungle territory. Here we called the roll and waited for everyone to catch up.



**Mary Frances, carrying rice, leads a group.
Each student carried a “small bag of rice.”**

Besides Mary Frances and myself there were two men teachers, one leading and one bringing up the rear with a sedan chair. Here one girl begged to go back but naturally we couldn't allow her to return alone. Except for that one girl there were no complaints. We had four children of one family, three families of three children each, and innumerable pairs of sisters. The four brothers in the party added a lot of merriment. The afternoon was spent climbing a high mountain ridge which we had to cross. By five o'clock we had come to a fairly good-sized village where about 90 girls spent the night, four or five sleeping in one bed. There were not many beds so most of them slept on the floor and I am not sure if they were all board floors.

Thirty of our best hikers were ahead and when we reached them at five o'clock they wanted to push on to the main town, nine miles away. Mary Frances and I also preferred to reach this town and a foreign house, so we foolishly consented to go along. She led the line and I waited a few minutes. She had not been gone more than ten minutes when one girl fainted and her friends brought her back to the village. She had been so determined to make the trip in one day, but was much too exhausted to attempt it. Mary Frances and I had our load-carrier right with us all the time and in our two small tin boxes (made from kerosene tins) we carried necessary clothing, the medicine kit, and \$8,000 (\$400 U.S. currency).¹ As we left this village we came out on a lovely ridge and looked down upon the plain, rosy in the late afternoon sunlight. The trail here was not too difficult but we were not certain which valley to go down. Finally one girl in the distance said, “Here is a sign.” Many other students had been over the trail and some boys had put up a few wooden signs. From there we got our second wind and practically ran down the mountainside reaching the foot after seven. It was dusk and we were afraid of losing our way across the plain to the town. When we passed a villager we called, “*E Bah*, (which means great-uncle) come and help us, lead us across the plain,” but the tired farmer coming home from work was not interested in an extra trip across the plain.

¹ Equivalent to \$6,512 U.S. in 2013. Exchange rate being 1941:2013::\$1:\$16.58.

So we hiked along, inquiring as we went. Soon it got so dark that we could barely see the path and several girls slipped into the paddy fields. The 100 bamboo torches which we had bought for the trip were left behind with the last group whom we had thought would need them the most. The older girls in our group had wisely brought a few candles and a few paper lanterns, but during the long day's trek the paper lanterns had been discarded and all we had were candles. I had tried to buy lanterns or torches in the village, but they used only primitive vegetable oil. We tried to use the candles, but it was impossible to keep them from blowing out. Mary Frances shielded them with her dark glasses and was surprised to find the rims on fire and threw the glasses into the rice fields.

Finally, we came to a cross road and it was too dark to see what direction to go. The girls sank wearily to the ground and a student and I started out to the left to investigate the possibilities. We saw a building where we thought we might find help, but it turned out to be a temple and we didn't have much confidence that the idols could help us. Then we tried the other direction and ran into a stream. Finally we tried the other direction and ran into what we thought was a house. We knocked on the door calling loudly, "*E Bah, E Bah*, great-uncle help us!" The girls grabbed me by the arm and pulled me away and said, "This is a rest house for coffins!" (A house where coffins are kept until a propitious day for burial.) They were petrified and so we went back to the group. I, personally, was more afraid of soldiers in that area because we were going toward a town where the Japanese had been expected the week before, and I knew there would be strict martial law. I was afraid if they saw thirty girls in a string coming across the plain they might fire on us.

Just then we did see a big flashlight in the distance and as only soldiers are equipped with flashlights I was afraid we were in for it. I told the girls to shout together, "We are students, we are girl students, we are refugees." The flashlight came nearer and it turned out to be a kind old farmer. He said, "Why! You have no lights." That was no news to us! He said he would get two paper lanterns in the village and come to our aid. We put our candles into his paper lanterns and started off in high spirits. At every narrow plank bridge he would halt and hold the lantern to light the way across and each time the line stalled for a few minutes the girls would drop to the ground. He kindly took a coat from this girl and a bundle from that and we would pull them up and on we would go. After a half hour the girls said, "Why don't we get there, you said it was not far away?" The farmer said, "You are tired and hungry, and going is slow at night, but it is not far now." So we continued seeing nothing in the darkness, and finally a girl came and grabbed me by the arm and whispered in fright, "He may be a bandit taking us to a bandit camp." I still had confidence in him because of his extremely kind manner with the students, but after we had climbed another hill I began to worry that he was taking us to the wrong place. The schools in this town had likewise scattered to isolated villages and I was afraid he was leading us to a distant village. I said, "Are you taking us to the foreigners?" and he said, "Yes, not far now."

On and on, until in the darkness here loomed up two basketball goal posts and he said, "See, here is a school," and in our relief we almost hugged the goal post! When we arrived at the mission compound we were taken to the girls school, but it was true this school had moved, so there were no beds and the girls flopped on the floor. Mr. and Mrs. Loren Humphrey of the Methodist Board ran and got hot water and drinking water and revived the youngsters. We roused the cook and cooked soft rice sweetened with red sugar,¹ but this had

¹ Red sugar: this may be the same as brown sugar or it may be Turbanado or Golden sugar. Red sugar has the molasses left in when dried.

to be brought to the girls. They couldn't move an inch once they were down. Mary Frances and I, who are not known for delicate appetites, found we wanted nothing for supper and couldn't get to bed fast enough. The next morning the other girls arrived and we called the roll at lunch time and not one of our 110 girls was missing or laid up. The last group of about 20 had stayed at a village, or rather a tea house, two miles from the larger village. At two o'clock in the morning the teacher with them was alarmed by rumors that he had heard that evening before and he got the girls up and with lighted torches they joined the larger group. We had not heard of bandits on this route before, but one of our men teachers who went back to Ingtai the next day was held up by bandits and lost his watch and money. Other boy-students coming that day were relieved of over \$500. We think it was too much to see 80 loads and 110 girls go by the day before and they evidently expected another contingent the following day, so we are glad we did it as one group and did not divide. Two days later the rest of the faculty and families arrived. The blistered feet had been partially healed and we were ready for our next hike.

I'll never forget how difficult it was that night to get 110 girls fed, washed and into bed with only a few small flickering candles, and those cost \$2 to \$3. Here we had only two face basins and water carried from the foot of the hill. So many of the students that came with us had not a penny to their names and before leaving Ingtai each of them had spent hours talking with the teachers and begging for an opportunity to go with the school. At that time they promised to do anything that they could to help the school and we had a good opportunity to test their promises.

One girl I was particularly interested in. We knew that she came from a country village and when we were discussing moving she had come and begged to be allowed to go along. She said, "You know I am the only girl in my village to have had an education. If I go back I will be swallowed up by my family of nine and tied down to the farm and it will be worse now under the control of an invader. I cannot stand the thought of giving up. I hope to finish Junior high school and then take a rural high school course to be prepared someday to return to village life to improve it. But I can't go back now. I'll do absolutely anything that needs to be done." When it came time to take the trip she had a very bad case of athlete's foot and could hardly walk from one room to another. I tried to insist that she wait for a later group of teachers but she was so afraid of being left behind that she made the hike of thirty miles on terribly sore feet. The second section of our trip we followed a small stream and the baggage was loaded on small boats. Six or seven girls who were sick with malaria had an opportunity to ride. I tried to find a place for this girl, but there was absolutely no room for her to ride and so I said, "Chang-hui, I'm afraid you will have to walk." That evening when I was washing and treating her feet she said to me, "The other girls asked me why I did not make a fuss to get a ride today and I replied that Miss Smith would have given me a ride if she could have possibly planned it." Then she added, "Of course, I could do it; my feet are much better." I said, "It was because of your pluck that I chose you to walk."

WAITING FOR THE LAUNCH TO TAKE US UP THE MIN RIVER



Wenshan Girls Boarding a Sampan

We had written two or three weeks before for launches to come down the Min River to meet us at this place, but our chances were slim because they had been commandeered by the military and came only part way down the river to Hsin Ko. We were expected to take small sampans from here to the launches, but this lower part of the river was infested with bandits and practically every refugee across this area, between the Japanese and Chinese lines, had been robbed by bandits. It was a beautiful June Sunday and we received a telegram from the governor saying that the best he could do was to give us water police protection on small sampans. Another telegram from a missionary friend said that he thought he could secure a launch for \$2500. We waited hopefully. We planned a baseball game to keep up the morale and evening vespers for sunset. Our baggage – 220 pieces – which we had checked and weighed three or four times already, arrived, but the boat people saw it was too good an opportunity to make money so between lines of students we put the baggage in a store-house. As we were doing this the other groups of refugee students went by us and when asked where they were going they said, “A launch has come for us.” I thought this was a little peculiar because I knew the other groups waiting had not made any effort to secure a launch. Our business manager ran out to the mouth of the stream a mile and a half away and came running back to tell us that our launch had arrived and that other people were getting on! It was too good to be true! Our girls swallowed their supper whole, grabbed their bundles, and ran for the launch. For the first time I had discovered that I could borrow a military telephone and telephone long distance to Mr. Bankhardt, in Nanping. I wished him to cancel the \$2500 launch which I was afraid he might send the next day. After a good deal of difficulty I reached him and he said, “Nothing doing here. You are very lucky to have a launch there; run and jump on it and God bless you!”

Mary Frances and I went back to pick up our baggage and the 200 lbs of rice which we had bought for the next day and made a wild dash for the launch. Just barely through the village we met two boys returning and they said, “The launch has gone!” We could not believe our ears and we didn’t; so we continued along the path. Soon we met two soldiers and they said, “What are you doing out here this time of night? Don’t you know there is strict martial law and you will be shot if you go any further?” When we said we were going

to the Wenshan launch they, too, said it had departed. For once the speedy Americans were left behind! We just giggled at each other and went back to the house only to find that the principal and the dean had been left behind delayed by the old mother of the dean who, on her bound feet,¹ could not make the one and a half miles to the launch as quickly as the girls.

Later we found out that this launch had been sent by the head of the water police because his wife had at one time visited Wenshan and was much impressed with the school and insisted that he help us in our need. The launch had not waited for us because it was so crowded that they could not have taken on another person and in the hurry and excitement they did not realize that they had left behind the leaders of the expedition, all their food and their money! There were, however, teachers with the girls and they arrived at Nanping the next night, having fasted all day. But not a word of complaint did we hear. We were left holding the bag with the problem of getting the baggage and the money safely through the bandit area.

We still could not give up the hope of a launch which would carry us safely through this dangerous area, but one launch for our school was really better luck than we really had any right to expect so we were reconciled finally to piling the baggage on to four sampans. We had two water police guards on each boat and our whole flotilla included fifteen boats filled with other refugees who took protection under our guard. Even with this precaution, Mary Frances and I still felt a little nervous about the thousands of dollars we had with us, so we hid rolls of money in our curls. Mary Frances had \$500 and I had \$300 in our hair, more in our shoes and in other inconspicuous places on our persons.

It was a hot, tiresome day, and we covered only 20 miles. That night we arrived at a small town where the launches stop. Military launches brought soldiers and rice down this far and took the refugees back up river free of charge. At each step of the way there was wrangling to do because no boat company is eager to transport heavy baggage for nothing, even though under government orders. It was not until about 12 o'clock that night that we had our baggage loaded on to the launch. It had been so hot all day that we decided to treat ourselves to some fruit juices if we could procure it. We found some arbutus fruit² and bought an ounce of brown sugar for sixty cents and cooled it in a black kettle. It hardly looked like the red fruit juice we had at home. As we tried to cool it in the river some of the river water splashed over our cups, but we took a chance of dysentery and enjoyed what we thought was good fruit juice. The launch that night was so crowded that we slept on top of the straw matting used for a roof. There was a beautiful moon and it was delightfully cool even though our bed was far from soft.

¹ Bound feet were a status symbol that allowed Chinese women to marry into money. The process began in early childhood and involved breaking the toes and binding them underneath the sole of the foot with bandages. The process was banned in 1912, but continued, in secret, for some time after. [*Painful Memories for China's Foot-binding Survivors*, npr.org]

² Also known as Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*) Koumaria, Koumara, Pacific Madrone, and Madrona, Bearberry, Cain Apple, and Caithne, the edible fruit tastes like a cross between guava and nectarine. [eattheweeds.com]



Wen Shan Girls Live in the Methodist Church, Nanping

The next day landed us at Nanping. Here the girls who had been put up in a Methodist Church came to meet us and it was only the best sports among them who were willing to be seen carrying their baggage through the city streets. Nanping has now become the biggest and liveliest city in Fukien. You would be surprised how comfortably you can live in a church building – two wooden benches put together make quite a comfortable bed; the back of the bench is a good towel and clothes rack. Each girl's baggage was put at the head of her bench and the girls spent their time playing rook, reading, cutting each other's hair or seeing the sights of the town. The first night we were awakened at 3 a.m. with a "put, put, put" of the machine guns at the foot of the hill where we were staying. We thought the Japanese had arrived for sure, but were too weary to do very much about it. We found out the next morning that it had been a mock battle! From here on refugees were supposed to walk to their destinations. It was only 180 miles to Shaowu where we were going and it took a lot of talking to convince the transportation bureau that we needed busses and trucks. He insisted that he had no extra cars for us at any price. But finally we secured one truck and one bus for a tremendous price. The only night I stayed awake on the trip was the night before we left Nanping, trying to figure out how to pack 220 pieces of baggage and 90 girls into one bus and one truck. We finally had to leave some girls behind to straggle along day by day on the regular bus line, but we did accommodate about 70 girls. Out of courtesy I call these vehicles busses and trucks! No one in America would recognize them for such! It was a long tiresome day bumping and jogging along the road. One half hour out the radiator broke and every fifteen or twenty minutes we stopped for water. The feed line from the gas tank broke near the end of the trip and they tried to pour the gasoline from bottles into the engine – a bottle-fed engine.

About 9:30 that night on the eleventh day we reached Shaowu to be met by the Wenshan alumnae. They ushered us to the campus and told us not to worry about the baggage which they efficiently handled. Here we found a brand new house, new beds, and electric lights awaiting us. Don't be misled; the new house was an infirmary built for about ten beds and every conceivable place was filled with single double-decker beds, but we had

four girls sleep in each one. In that way we squeezed the whole group into this building and they felt that they had reached heaven!

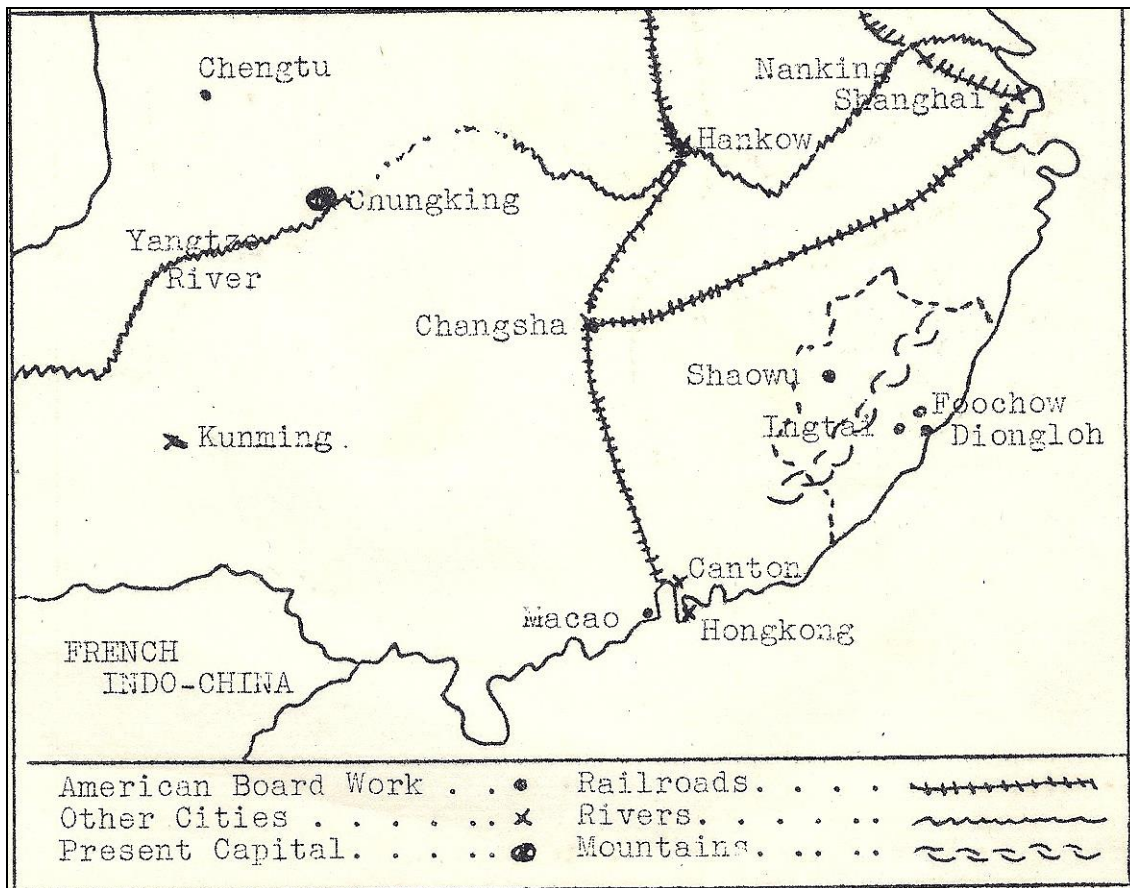
The next night the electric lights which we had enjoyed we found were defective and almost set fire to the house. The university is very proud of its own electric light plant built from a model T Ford engine, but it is impossible to buy wiring and the old wires burned a good section across the ceiling before we noticed it. It would have been a tragedy for sure if all our goods had gone up in smoke after we arrived. This building was only temporarily lent to us, by the university, and we cannot tell how deeply grateful we are to the university for all that they did for us. This fall the school will move into a building which the university is vacating for us. They, themselves, are more than crowded and will have an entering class of 200, so we feel guilty to take even this from them. We have to build two temporary shacks and we don't know whether even those will be adequate. Of course, we could move no equipment – tables, chairs, tubs, or dishes – so life will be simple to say the least. Many of the girls were working in the agricultural department of the university this summer. They are willing to do anything to earn even a few dollars. Some will have money sent to them from relatives from other parts of China, but many of them are depending upon the school. The extra expense of moving and the high cost of living is making it very difficult, and yet when you see the spirit of these girls you realize that it is tremendously worth while.



Three Girls of the Class of 1941 they were leaving I gave them new English testaments, which I had planned to give when they joined the church.

One of the girls wrote back and said, "When our group reached a certain town we heard that the Japanese were coming there, too. We were so scared we threw away everything and ran, but I kept my testament and I read it every day."

In choosing girls to take with us we tried to pick out the future Madame Chiang Kai-Sheks! And I am convinced that some strong leadership will come out of this class, as well as the other fine classes. But oh! The help and encouragement they will need as they face the difficulties ahead.



INFORMATION SERVICE AND PLEDGED WORK
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 MARY D. ULIN, SECRETARY

Ingtau-Fu, China
 June 17th, 1941

Dear Mom;

My little book is packed up so I can't begin to know how long ago it was that I last wrote you. Anyway it was before the trip, and what a trip. I shouldn't try to give details now, but when I get to Foochow I'm going to write it up in proper form – at least my husband thinks so!

And now – I'm most on my way to Foochow, starting tomorrow afternoon. Since it takes more than one day, now that there are no launches running, we're planning on spending a night on the way, rather than hoping to make the try in 12 hours.

Briefly, our trip was this. We left Ingtau May 28th at 6:30 a.m. & hiked 30 miles to Lek Du where the Methodists took care of us for 2 days. May 31st we hiked 15 miles to Mintsing. The students went on up the river on June 1st, but Helen and I were stranded with 211 pieces of baggage to be dragged up river. We finally got boats on June 3rd and went part way up the

river to Yenping, spending the night on the roof of the launch until we were gradually forced off that spot by hoards of refugees piling on the boat. June 14th we arrived at Yenping – dirty, hot, hungry & tired! Maybe a real bed didn't look good after 48 hours! It took two days of careful debate and political pull to get the bus company to agree to take us to Shaowu by bus and truck, which place we descended upon at 7 p.m., Saturday, June 7th after 12 hours on a truck piled high with baggage & students. There was so much business to be settled at Shaowu about school – where they'll be established, etc – that isn't determined yet. So Helen & I left Shaowu (after being partied by everyone, including the dean and the president of the University), we left there on Thurs. a.m., June 12th, arriving in Yenping that evening for supper. Believe me, the truck ride up was more comfortable than the bus ride down! Such vehicles wouldn't be allowed on the roads at home! Old Diesel engines, which seem to go but if they don't, they are made to go by sticking a match here, or tying a piece of string there. But I had an amazing amount of faith in them and they got us to our destinations safely! Because there were no boats going down river we couldn't leave Yenping until June 14th & we got to Mintsing that night in pouring rain. At Yenping we picked up Don MacInnes who was out here for a year, teaching at A.C.C. He's on his way back to U.S., probably be on Helen's boat. Sunday, June 15th, we hiked 15 miles in pouring rain and slippery mud (knee deep) to Lek Du, arriving just in time for dinner! We managed to get to our destinations in time for a meal, if for nothing else! After dickering all afternoon, we finally got load carriers & chair coolies to go to Ingtai, and we arrived here last night – 10 hours for 30 miles – not too bad. Helen & I had a chair between us, but I walked most of the way since the coolies couldn't carry me up mountains anyway.

Today I've been packing & trying to straighten out last minute things. Don & I are going on to Foochow tomorrow, but Helen is waiting till the end of the week when a couple other folks will join her.

So I'm looking forward to meeting our uninvited guests¹ in the big city, but more so to my Bill! I can't quite believe that I'm going to see him at last after 2 ½ months!! I'm counting the hours, now, and so is he. He was expecting me May 31st when he found out I was on my way inland! But I've heard from him since and he's being a brick about the whole thing. He's such a dear. Golly I can hardly wait to have you all meet him. I know you'll love him as much as I do! More will be coming later about the past month's experiences. Meantime use the Mail Bag – just as often as you can. We'll be listening in Foochow every Sunday night. You can write letters – 50 words long. Must get to bed and try to sleep so Bill won't think I'm about to fold up.

Lots of love to you,

Mary

Tien An Ching She, Foochow, China
June 27, 1941

Dear Mom:

Back home! And what a wonderful complete feeling it is. But this time of year I always have the urge to see the home folks! Next to being here with Bill I'd like to be in South Hadley and have everyone and all the kids pour in at the house. When that day comes

¹ The Japanese occupation forces.

and I can show my husband to my family our happiness will be at its peak. Perhaps it's foolish to think of such things, since changes have been and are taking place. The longer I stay away the more you & all the family mean to me. If it weren't for Bill and home out here, I think I'd be on the same boat with Helen, hitting it for good ole U.S. and South Hadley! What a joy it would be to see you all for a while. But that day is coming. My one fear and dread is that day might come and I'd have to go without Bill. Until then, we are living life to the fullest, even though it's hot as hades and I'm wet even when I'm sitting still. Despite everything, Foochow is a pretty grand place!

I came down from Ingtai last week, the 19th, a quick trip considering complications. We left at 4 a.m. and I was home by 6:30 p.m. Just as I came around our corner, Bill was at the gate having just come from his last schedule at the consulate. No further explanations necessary. We were both so glad to see each other after 2 ½ months, we didn't care who was around. I had seven of our school coolies with me who took care of my baggage in return for riding on my boat. We were thoroughly inspected all along the way which only exasperated me further to be delayed when so near home. It's over, I'm home, and happy. I've done very little besides sleep since arrival. I gave Bill warning that I wanted a week of sleep and I've had it! While on the trip to Shaowu and back, it was a simple matter to get up at 4 and 5 a.m. every day and felt good doing that. But once relaxed there was just no end of sleeping. No worries, no anxiety, and no particular need for getting things done immediately. What a wonderful feeling of abandon. But the week is up and I've got to buckle down to a routine or nothing will get done.

There were six letters waiting for me when I arrived from you and Helen, Ruth Selkirk, and Miss Purington! What a feast of news. What broke my heart was the nylon hose which someone else is wearing! If you hadn't said you were enclosing them I'd never had known the difference! Maybe I didn't see red. I'm sure as anything that the lifting was done right here, but I have no come back since it is all a matter of luck and not according to the rules. Your second letter hasn't arrived. That one may escape, but I doubt it! I'm still so mad I can't see straight. Unless someone is coming out, I wouldn't try to send anything!! I'll just go bare-legged.

It was grand hearing about Hat's new home first hand, and your trip home the end of March, and Felix's note was dear. The calendar bearing my new name is a bit of shock for I can't claim that title anymore. Sometimes I wonder if I've done the right thing. I felt I couldn't carry on two jobs and do either one justice! Is that just rationalizing? Guess I told you I've written Felix. At the last Synod meeting in Foochow I was not appointed to any work for the next term, so my resignation has been accepted. Yet, when I hear from Felix, and from you, about all that's going on, I can't help feel that I've let you all down.

Mail is slower than ever now and goes through censorship which is evident only by the messy way in which it is repasted. No doubt my letters home will be slower, too. But do we use the Mail Bag. We listen every Sunday full of hope. It's lots of fun to hear the messages to other people out here. It comes on at 10 p.m. and lasts for an hour or more. Just before that, "Information Please" is on. Bill and I get such a kick out of it. They haven't deteriorated one iota.

I'm trying to write up our trip to Shaowu in hopes of using it for publicity at home. Wen Shan is down to her last red cent and in desperate need, so I hope this will bring forth contributions!

It's nearly time for Bill to come in. I'd better stop. I'm planning to send a more detailed letter by Helen when she sails next month.

Lots of Love,

Mary

Foochow, China

July 15, 1941

Dear Mom and Pop,

Still alive and kicking, though my silence for the past three weeks would hardly vouch for it. Really, you've both been very much in my thoughts, but I've not taken the time to put it down. What I write, now and probably for some time to come, will be purely domestic affairs. But when the opportunity arrives, more details will be forthcoming.

July 4th – Mom – I especially thought of you and wished you a happy, happy birthday.¹ Then I remembered, with a shock, that I hadn't sent greetings earlier so that you'd get them about that time! Here they are, anyway, and much, much love. I'm thinking you are in South Hadley – hoping so. Bill & I try to listen to the Mail Bag every Sunday night, hoping something will come over! No doubt my letters home are much slower, now, but home mail is even more so. Since April (first week) I've had only your two letters – dated April – which were waiting for me here when I came down from Ingtai. Everybody is in the same fix and we mourn with each other. Now and then something gets through! My June Today came before the month was out. No magazines since April, except my June Reader's Digest which arrived last week. Haven't had April, May, or February yet! I may never see them, but I don't give up hope, nevertheless. I'm not being abused, tho' it sounds that way. It's wonderful to be home with Bill and more wonderful to realize that the end of the summer we don't have to separate. Though even on that score I keep my fingers crossed.

To date, the folks going home on furlough are still with us! They are ready for a 24 hour notice anytime, telling them the boat has arrived! A transport is supposed to be coming in, the ruling party says, but none has appeared yet. There will be at least 7 of our mission going out, and several from other missions, about 16 altogether. The community gets smaller and smaller. By fall we'll probably be able to count on one hand the folks left on south side (the residential section of Foochow where Bill and I live – ahem!).

The afternoon of July 4th, the Consul had a tea for all Americans. He's a very gracious host. It being very hot, he kept it entirely informal, even to having the men take off their jackets. We had real iced tea, the first I've had since I arrived in China, and that's no fooling. The folks who have Frigidaires have ice, of course. We poor folks who have ice now and then can't use it in anything. Though artificially made, the water isn't boiled before hand, so there you are! Electricity runs all day, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. which makes for a lot of convenience. These terrific hot days, when it gets to 94° with a depressing humidity, our only relief is an electric fan. This heat makes it pretty hard for mothers with babies! And prickly heat isn't confined to babies either! I'm sure that Bill breaks out with it. Everyone is too occupied to go to Kuliang and cool off.

For all the years mosquitoes didn't bother me particularly, I'm making up for it now. Since getting back to the city, I've been eaten alive with the things, and get welts the size of a

¹ Harriet Cushman Atherton Buckhout was born on July 4, 1876.

house. Never before can I remember them affecting me so. I don't know whether it's the combination of the heat, too, or not.

Time slips by. I don't know where, and I have very little to show for my puttering! Won't I be glad when I get home where I can go to the kitchen and cook when & what I want to. Here supplies are very limited. What we can get is a terrific price. Today I've been mixing baking powder, after trying for weeks to get the ingredients. With all my growling you must think we're pretty hard up. We really get along quite nicely, even with eggs at 45¢ per!! And lard at \$3.50 per pound!! While I'm trying to manage servants and keep my husband fed – and happy – Bill spends most of his spare time repairing all the radios about town. He loves to do it, and it means that we have a radio in the house most of the time. The other night, while at supper, I happened to look up and see flames spurting from a radio in the living room! Nothing happened, excepting the ruination of the machine, but were we ever thankful it didn't happen in the middle of the night! We've had a streak of bad luck lately. I lost a lovely jade pin Bill had given me, and Bill lost his fountain pen!! Worse luck – but we get along.

The sounds I hear night and day remind me of the good old Tuesday night firework displays at Mountain Park – some as heavy, too – but the after effect is quite different, as you may suspect.

Our new Smiths are expecting their first heir sometime soon! Lucia is being absolutely impartial as to sex! I'm adding a pair of crocheted shoes, blue & pink, trying also to be impartial! By the end of the summer there will have been five new arrivals to folks here & near Foochow. Exciting!

I keep hoping more of your letters will be coming along sometime! Meantime, I'll try to be a bit better about writing. A husband does make a difference and I'm not really settled yet. I'm nearly as changeable as Doris when it comes to arranging the house.

Here comes our news – local and foreign – so I'm signing off here.

Hoping to hear from you via The Mail Bag.

Much love to you both,

Mary

During July of 1941, the increased presence of the Japanese along the coast forced some missionaries to consider leaving Foochow. Because Mary Frances and her husband were under the protection of the U.S. military and Mary was reluctant to leave her husband, Mary Frances remained in Foochow, and was saved from what appears to have been a harrowing experience with the Japanese. In his journal of 1941, Donald MacInnis [*China Chronicles from a Lost Time: The Min River Journals*; EastBridge, 2009] recounted their exit on a Japanese ship. Below is his account of the experience. His full collection now resides in the Yale University Divinity Library.

Sat. July 26

We prepared to board the Japanese troopship, Tainan Maru, at Pagoda Anchorage. As we prepare to board a launch at the jetty in Foochow, the Japanese soldiers spray us with insecticide “to kill the fleas that carry bubonic plague.” (Bubonic plague was prevalent in

Foochow.) There are about 20 of us, mostly older people including 3 Catholic priests and 2 French Catholic sisters.

We board the Tainan Maru, an empty Japanese troopship, amid hostile stares and no helping hand. Our luggage was loaded aboard by Chinese coolies. Most of the Japanese crew speak some English it seems, even the grizzled old boatswain. We had supper and so to sleep about 8:00. It was hot! Not much sleep, cockroaches, mosquitoes, Pop Newell and Dr. Beard snoring. Pop Newell got seasick. Next day Helen Smith said she went on deck to sleep and got her feet tickled in the middle of the night by a Japanese sailor. She quickly came back down.

The ship's staff provides service, but grudgingly it seems. Why did they ever take us out at a time like this? Japan has invaded French Indo-China and FDR is threatening reprisal. I am uneasy about our first stop at Keelung, Formosa

Monday a.m. July 28th

Last night on deck we talked, we sang, we ate some snacks (we supplement our Japanese-style meals with toast, cookies, peaches). I slept out on deck until midnight, then came in when it began to rain. Good sleep. The morning dawned beautiful in Keelung harbor – deep green sea, blue fluffy sky, serene. The chug-chug of tugs and barges. Brightly painted little sampans. Breeze ruffling the water. Mist around the breakwater and beyond.

The Quarantine launch pulls up. Green hills with three tapering steel towers. A well developed harbor. Quarantine inspection: stool sample, cameras and glasses, forms to fill in. Will be a hot day.

Tuesday:

Moved into the inner harbor last night. Jammed with vessels, big and small. Tremendous busyness. Yesterday in mid-morning we all piled onto a massive, splintered old barge towed by a steam launch – Americans, Spanish, French, Chinese, passengers and Japanese crew. It was HOT! We marched past a quarry into a decaying building, an old army barracks, for de-lousing. After much stalling around, we were lined up and went into the building in groups. The crew and Japanese first, our ladies last. We put our gold rings, watches, etc. into bags. Put our clothing in other bags. Stripped, we soaked in a 4-minute hot bath of disinfectant. Great stuff! Then walked out a passage and into a second room and a hot bath – with only a little rag towel not much bigger than a washcloth for cover. Finally, a dousing with a basin of water and out, where two stolid Japanese women (starchly clean) put on and tied our kimonos- we still with no covering. Dr. Beard didn't flicker an eyelash. I said, "If she doesn't mind, then I don't."

Then we walked up into the barracks to a room with tatami mats on the floor and waited for our clothing to come through the big "vacuum sterilizer" (made in Japan), and a good one, well polished in this broken-down, moss-grown building. We went out to get our clothing, then back to the tatami room for a long wait. Finally got a good box lunch at 1:30 after

everyone had been cross-questioned one-on-one (Why were you in Foochow? Were you ordered out? How many Americans left? etc.) Then a long afternoon and finally, after another thorough spraying, back to the ship on a steam launch.

* * * * *

Lithia, Mass. August 5, 1941

My dear Mrs. Buckhout,

Glad to get your card.

I am still trusting that the right time will come someday to return but there seems no hope for leaving in the immediate future. I am impatient to go to be with my orphans, the students and workers. Last word by air mail was from Eunice Thomas – Helen and Mary Frances had arrived safely with 100 girls & 7 tons of freight at Shaowu. Traveled 10 days, on foot over the mountains, then by boat through bandits, then by bus.

Later cable from Foochow came “Helen, Susan Armstrong, Hazel Atwood, the Beards, and the Newells, 7 more ready to leave for America by first boat!!” Glad they had made safe return to Foochow. No boats now and we wonder where the funds are all held up. I will let you know before we start.

Yours,

Edward H. Smith

P.S. At present Eunice and I are here at this Missionary Camp above Northampton.

If unable to get passport I plan to be at Auburndale after Sept 12

Address Norwich Town, Conn

APARTMENT B
530 WEST 113TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Aug. 14, 1941

Dear Mrs. Buckhout:

This very stirring letter¹ of my niece Helen Smith’s had come to me by way of her father. He asks that it be sent to you because of the part your daughter, Mary Frances, played in the dramatic story. When you have read it will you please return it to Rev. E. H. Smith, in care of his daughter, Mrs. Charles E. Thrasher, 128 Belcoda Drive, Rochester, N.Y., where he goes tomorrow for about two weeks?

These are anxious days for all of us and any mail that gets through from China is doubly precious because of the difficulties involved in handling of mail and the experiences of the writers.

My sister, Eunice Thomas, at Fukien Christian University, was so glad to see Mary Frances and Helen arrive at Shaowu, after their dangerous and responsible direction of the trek of the 110 girls from Wen Shan for ten days. How strong and capable they are!

Cordial greetings to you

From

Edith Lovell Thomas

¹ Helen Smith’s recollections of the Wen Shan Trek

Foochow, China
Aug. 7, 1941

Dear Papa:

This should have been written ten weeks ago, or at least on the 4th, your birthday. I have no excuse, either, for not getting greetings to you on time! Anyway, late as it is, I still wish you the happiest birthday ever! I hope, too, that you are in So. Hadley, or that you were there for a proper celebration. Mail has been coming through at last! Some March letters just arrived and a couple May letters. Heard from Ab, Mom, Levada, Helen, & Rena, and others. One day I was delighted with 10 letters. It stays hot here, though, this month. The nights have been much cooler, but I'm still in the stage of sitting and perspiring with no effort whatsoever. This has our home August weather beat a mile! Consequently I'm about as lively as a mule. Very little gets done. If it weren't for the servants, probably nothing would get done.

Our mission folks got off for U.S. on July 26th, arriving in Shanghai a week later. The trip usually takes 2 days! Their boat must have visited a few ports on the way! They had to go to Formosa first and were probably delayed there. Anyway, the middle or end of this month will find them homeward bound. We'll be listening around September 7th for news from them via "The Mail Bag" at K.G.E.I. By the way, let me know what's going on at home once or twice a month!! By the time your letters get to me they are anywhere from five months to two months old, altho' they are mighty welcome. It'll cost you only 3¢ instead of 5¢ and I'll be getting more recent news, etc, etc, and you won't seem so far away!

Tell Mom I have rec'd her lovely white hanky but the letters and darning cotton & needles haven't arrived. Maybe they won't ever. Mail is interrupted everywhere so I expect nothing and am surprised when I get something.

Aug 10 – This is the way most of my writing goes these days! Write a word, fan a while, then finally give up entirely. The last three days & nights have been almost unbearable! Never before has heat made any particular difference to me, but this does! Right now Bill is up soaking in the bath tub to try to get a bit cooled off!

The international situation doesn't seem to improve much, does it. We were surprised – as probably you were – to hear of C. Hull's probable resignation, but I think the rearrangement in the cabinet sounds good.¹ We get news daily from Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, and San Francisco (every nite) and feel much more in touch with things. Our favorite news commentator here is Carol Alcott² for whom the J's [*Japanese*] have no love. He's splendid, tho' sharp!

Having electricity all day now improves living ease!! We can use the radio during the day and the electric fan! At the rate prices jump, electricity is cheaper than charcoal, now.

¹ Cordell Hull (1871-1955) was Secretary of State for President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 to 1944, when he resigned due to ill health. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1945 for his role in the formation of the United Nations. His tenure as Secretary of State was rocky because of his stand for action in the Pacific years before the U.S. entered that theater. "From 1936 on... he advocated rearmament, pled for the implementation of a system of collective security, supported aid short of war to the Western democracies, condemned Japanese encroachment into Indo-China, [and] warned all branches of the U.S. military well in advance of the attack on Pearl Harbor to prepare to resist simultaneous, surprise attacks at various points." [excerpt from Nobelprize.org]

² Carroll Duard Alcott, an American who broadcast from Shanghai radio station XMHA. A 1940 *Time* magazine story captured the intrigue then swirling around Shanghai. [excerpt from RadioHeritage.net]

Would that I had a few other appliances. Not being able to get things in from the country makes some things very expensive! It's costing almost as much to live here as at home. Some change in 2 years! This had better get off! So I'll close.

Much love to you,

Mary

P.S. Bill would like nothing better than to go fishing or hunting with you! M!

Foochow, China

Aug 18, 1941

Dear Mom:

In the last two weeks I've gotten 4 grand letters from you, the first since June! Maybe I'm not tickled. Hat's letter, too, was grand. Hope she gets a chance to write and send a picture of Janet along with herself and David.

Your letter from S.H. sounded more like you and there's no doubt that you are glad to be home. What will the fall bring? I get ambitious to fix up the place with flowers, etc, and then it seems useless since I don't know how long I'll be here. If I were teaching this fall, I'd be on my way to school now, or trying to get there, probably via the route Helen and I followed in May.

Seems like another full summer of weddings, etc, at home! Heard from Mrs. Barney & Mrs. Nash, both giving a lot of town news. I was not surprised, tho' somewhat shocked to hear of Mrs. Stevens' death. But I don't think I'd ever want people, no matter how dear to me, to live on, always in bed! I had an attack of malaria last week and two days in bed was too much! It came on me suddenly while in church on Sunday. I had no sooner gotten there (and in the choir) when I had to leave! Bill took me home & put me to bed. Then I had a fever of 102° and I burned all night getting hotter so that I couldn't sleep at all. Bill kept sponging me when I got so I couldn't lie still, so he didn't get much sleep. Besides the temperature was around 90° and terribly humid! Bill just waited on me hand and foot. Monday I was so weak I couldn't even scratch a mosquito bite. It's the most awful feeling, lying on one's back wanting so to sleep and not being able to. I didn't care much if I lived or died, as long as I couldn't sleep. I ached all over, just like grippe. Bill kept sponging me all day & feeding me quinine & aspirin and finally managed to sleep a couple of hours in the afternoon. Now that is nothing to what people have suffered, but it was enough. The attack wasn't as severe as my first one in fall of '39. Then I ran fever, chills, and sweating for two days. It was too hot this time to get a chill!! I got up Wednesday feeling like a kitten, I was so weak, but it's all out of my system now and I'm myself again.

I had a grand letter and darling pictures from Rena. My, Carolyn looks exactly like Nate, and she's so cute. How I'd love to see them. Ab wrote me!! Whew – a March letter, but rec'd it last week. I was sure surprised, and tickled, too. He sounds as tho' he were really finding life worth while! I'm so glad. He's in the right environment now. I wish he'd find someone and get married. Mary Lyman certainly has pluck! Of all the people to have to go thro' all she's been through. The new Smith's heir has not yet arrived, but they are expecting momentarily.

After all this, I hope everything is o.k. Lucia (Mrs. S.) is very well & looks fine. After her party they will head in another direction, probably east to the P.I.'s [*Philippine Islands*] for study.

I think I've said not to try sending things out! Only 1st class mail comes thro', so all our magazines are being enjoyed (I hope) by someone else!

I told Dorothy Brewster about your visit to the Davidson's and she was quite thrilled. Her mother also wrote her about you folks, enclosing the note you had written Mrs. D. after visiting her. It's a small world and full of swell folks. But so few people seem to realize that!

The meeting between Churchill and Roosevelt I think is the beginning of a new foundation for world fellowship, shall I say, instead of world peace. I can't see that any peace right now could be a just one with feelings running so high. But this may be the beginning of that and will be, if a few hot-headed people could be made to see how much more could be gained by fair & square dealing without force. What little I see around me makes me understand why there is hatred. Such can't be discussed now, but there will be a time when I can fill in details.

I'm sending this along, now don't worry. We are well & happy and prices here are high, too!!!! But we manage.

Lots of love,

Mary and Bill

P.S. For details, you can always find out from the State Dept. Our consul is in constant touch!!

M.

Foochow, China
Aug 24, 1941

Dear Mom,

Another week has rolled around. This past one I had resolved to write one letter every day and stuck to it pretty well. But I'm getting caught up on my correspondence. Then, too, the weather has cooled off a bit and I feel more like doing things. The 21st I rec'd your March 1st letter, my birthday letter!! I don't mind how long they take in getting here, if they do get thro!

This is Sunday night and I've tuned in on some grand symphony music from Hong Kong. They do play excellent records – just now it's a Handel Suite, but can't tell you which. We'll be listening to San Francisco later on, to Information Please and to The Mail Bag, hoping we'll have a letter! Meantime Bill is working on a square-knot belt he's making me of string. It's Navy blue and very good looking. He's working a diamond design in it. It's made of entirely of square knots and is quite a job.

Bill's been taking a few pictures lately, of the Pilley's youngster who is darling; he's just 2 years old. We took some of ourselves which (if they are worth it) we'll be sending on. We've tried, also, some interiors of the house, but then they won't look very much like the house, I'm afraid. You see, most of our fun hours are spent inside since there is no particular joy in trying to go out anywhere, either to walk or ride. Our recreation is rather limited, but we have hopes of being freer later on as fall approaches.

Time out for the news! Right from San Francisco! Hotel, not Treasure Island! Tension in this part has let up again for a bit. Probably the rainy season in Siam [*Thailand*] is holding up the works. The case of the Coolidge being refused docking at Japan to pick up U.S. folks is interesting since Helen [Huntington Smith] probably sailed from Shanghai on that boat! That reminds me, yes – Susan [Armstrong] is a very good friend of Mrs.

Davenport. She – Susan – didn't know what house the D's had taken in S.H. and I tried to think of all possible places, never thinking of the Skinner house. I hope you do see Susan. She's a bundle of nerves now, but a grand person.

I met with the executive committee of our Anti-Cobweb Society and helped plan the year's program. So you see, there will still be a few people around. We count nearly 75 members. I have charge of the music for the programs, which are monthly, beginning October, with the first meeting at our house. Bill is scheduled to give a paper on radio, some phase of it, in January. Isn't that something? Merlin has charge of the first meeting which promises to be good. Anything he does would be! He generally spends one night with us here during the week. He's one grand person, too. I only wish you could meet all these people.

The new Smiths have a son, born on his father's birthday! I hope to get over to see Lucia & the baby tomorrow. Bill's too sleepy to stay up, so I guess I'll crawl in too and set the alarm for 10 o'clock to hear The Mail Bag.

Much love from Bill & Me,

Mary

Foochow, China

Aug 31, 1941

Dear Mom:

Your July 5th arrived August 25th. Pretty snappy for these days!! Especially when you consider the time it took your March 1st to get here. That came Aug 21st!

Bill and I have just come back from John & Muriel's where we had Sunday night waffles & coffee. Dorothy & Harold [Brewster] were there, too, and we had a jolly time. Now I'm killing time, waiting for Information Please and the Mail Bag. Bill is at the piano and I'm using some of Levi's paper she sent me!

After weeks of hot, almost unbearable weather, we've had rain & it has cooled considerably. We are fortunate in being able to get ice which does very little more than cool our boiled drinking water. One person in the compound has an electric refrig, and is very generous in sending around her ice cubes!

The weather improves, conditions improve, and the outlook, as a whole, is far better than it was. Probably nothing will be made of it in the home papers, but you may find an obscure article tucked away in some corner, saying the Chinese once more have this city back. We have heard such reports from London, Manila & Chung King. As a matter of fact, this is the last day of Japanese occupation, though they probably will not all be gone for a few days yet! They are leaving, but not because they've been forced out. They are just leaving. All week there has been a great amount of moving of goods & supplies. This had been rumored for some time but no one would take much stock in it. I'm keeping my fingers crossed until the last one has really gone. What the results will be I can better say next week. But a great sense of freedom is already abroad. Planes have been flying over us continually, and quite low, probably to guard against any possible attack by an incoming army, if there is one.

Bill & I had dinner Thursday night with the Consul. He said it would be "pot luck," so I sent over some wheat crackers the cook had just made, for the "pot." By the way, I'm

picking up a few recipes that can be made at home! These crackers are one of them and they are delicious.

I haven't yet been over to see the new Smith baby! If this hot weather continues, he'll be walking before I do get there.

Tomorrow p.m. the program committee for Anti-Cob meets here, and that means tea, etc. Despite the fact two of the members are British, I think I'll serve coffee and cinnamon sticks. The other day I had the cook try a date & nut bread (without nuts!) recipe Helen sent me, and it's delicious. But it needs creamed cheese!!

For the third time we've been robbed! This time the servants' quarters were raided and our cook lost some of his clothes. Walls & gates mean nothing in this land of starving people. That same night there was a huge fire just below our house. It burned out 300 yards of buildings, shops & lumber on both sides of the street. That was enough excitement for one night.

Bill is joining the Masons on Tuesday, as well as Merlin. I'm glad he's going into something like that. He needs the association of other folks once in a while. At present we are so confined we can't even go bicycling. But these conditions may be changed very soon.

It's nearly time for the program, Info. Pl., so I'll run along.

Much love, *Mary*

Foochow, China
Sept 22, 1941

Dear Mama:

All my good resolutions seem to have gone for naught! Even tho' I didn't write last week, you may be sure I was thinking of you and all the family. In fact, I was darned home-sick; then, all in one day, had letters from you and Hat & Helen & Levi. Levi's paper continues to come and I can think of no better use for it than to send it back to its native place! I hope her supply hasn't run out!

Much has been happening. One of these days I'll get a letter off to Felix, plus the story of the moving of the school. Until this past week it's been too hot to do anything, but now I feel like doing things, so Bill and I have been going out bicycling and hiking between his schedules, and such fun; but more of that later.

Muriel & family left us on Monday, the 15th, and it's been a mighty quiet household since – quite empty, in fact. I had word from them at Yenping where they were waiting for their goods to arrive. Loren & Pauline also arrived at Yenping that day but their trip was much more exciting! At last Loren has come up against bandits, and several people on their launch were killed. It's just a miracle that L & P escaped, for they were right in the midst of those killed. I haven't heard their own story yet! But that is all in the life of a missionary, especially one who has to travel very much.

I'm writing this while waiting for Bill to come home to tea! It's an afternoon ritual with us. We seldom have a dinner before 7 anyway. We had a holiday (24 hrs) this weekend. We packed a picnic lunch Sunday morning and left on our bicycles for Kuliang about noon, Sept. 21st, the day of the eclipse, which was total up in the N.W. corner of Fukien, just beyond Shaowu. How exciting it was, for we'd have a pretty good view of it here. But it would be a cloudy day. We smoked our already dark glasses anyway and took them along with us. It's probably an 8 or 10 mile ride out to the foot of Kuliang, and since the eclipse

came at noon we wanted to be out in the open, if the sun should appear. We could see the sunlight in spots on the mountain, but the clouds overhead were mighty thick. Just at eclipse time, a very queer light came over the plain, just like the light I recall during the first nearly total I saw at home. But no sun. We kept going, riding our bicycles across the plain on the newly repaired road (for which we can thank the Japanese) and all of a sudden it got bright & the sun came thro'! Were we excited! Then, a good $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sun was still covered so it must have been very nearly total. In all the villages we passed, we could hear gongs and tin cans being played upon, presumably to drive away devils or bring back the sun! Last week Dorothy Brewster & family went up to their house on Kuliang and that's where we were headed for. Part way up the mountain, Bill & I stopped for lunch, took some pictures, then cut across country for part of the way up, rather than following the regular path. When we reached the top we met Dorothy & the baby & youngest girl on the way down! But Harold & the two older girls were staying up, so we stayed the night with them. It was such fun, going up with Bill. Our first real holiday. We left this a.m. at 7 so Bill could get back to his schedule. He thinks we ought to do something like that every month and I heartily agree.

We've been developing & printing pictures this cool weather. Enclosed are a few samples. The film was mildewed – very common out here.

Hat sent out cute pictures of Jan – she is darling – and one excellent picture of herself holding Jan – also of Dave.

Did I tell you Robin's (that's Muriel's boy) name for me – “Mu Mu” which is “Aunt” in Foochow, and Bill is “Bah Bah” (Uncle). The name sticks like glue – everyone calls me “Mu Mu.” By the way, I'm down to 154 pounds & feeling fine! Still I eat like a horse, especially this cooler weather. The trip up the mountain yesterday I think took a few pounds off me! We both feel better, having had the exercise.

We had dinner with the Consul the other night, the occasion being Merlin's expected departure for the U.S. when he can get out. We were very much flattered because Merlin was asked whom he'd like to have at the dinner, and Merlin said the McVays! (I didn't know that until later.) Our cook makes delicious divinity fudge, so I had him make some to take over to the Consul (who likes it) when we went over.

Having had tea, printed a few more pictures. Bill is now off to his shed after which he's going to try a little amateur work to which I'm going to listen thro' our radio here at home. It's most exciting! But he can't send home!! Nor can anyone at home send out of the U.S. We'd be sending messages right along if that were possible!!

Our magazines have started to come thro' again! I rec'd the September issue of Today last week. Miraculous!

There are a thousand & one more letters I should be writing, so I'd better close this. You may be sure that Bill & I are looking forward to coming home whenever that will be. I hope that you folks will get a chance to meet Merlin. He's a peach. Just itching to get home, hopes to be there by Christmas. He, the Smiths & Rindens are all in the same class!!

Lots of love, *Mary*

Foochow, China
Sept 30, 1941

Dear Mama:

If Levada's paper continues to come, I'll be able to open up shop! It's so grand having smooth paper that doesn't blot or tear at the least provocation!

I got your message last Sunday night! What a thrill it was, even though I had to guess where you are and what the family is doing!!! I'm a bit surprised at Leonora! How delighted her mother must be. I often hear from Mrs. N[ash] but haven't had a word from Lee since I came out. Well, she probably has other interests and particularly now.

Bill and I are pretty well "settled in" since it doesn't look as though he will be transferred for some time and there's no apparent reason for me having to be sent home.

Yesterday & today the air raid alarm has sounded; whether they are testing it or warning us, I haven't found out.

Our magazines are pouring in! Yesterday we received 4 Lifes – all back numbers. Your envelope of clippings came, full of defense activities. Somehow I can't imagine So. Hadley having to make such preparations and holding demonstrations, etc.

From your Aug 8th letter it seemed you had not been getting mine! Since we've been left alone, our mail service has stepped up considerably, particularly local & Shanghai mail.

Merlin got off the 27th for U.S.A. He says he's not staying long and doesn't intend to come back alone. We certainly miss him already. I do hope you have a chance to meet him.

We're sharing a gardener with Dot Brewster, and I'm keeping him busy. Of course, no seeds have come, so the vegetables consist of cabbage & tomatoes, but there are a number of shrubs around the place which I'm having thinned out & rearranged. Plenty of poinsettias which are already 10 or more feet high. In the spring I ought to have millions of iris, and I'll bet they are all lavender! It's fun, though, fixing up with what there is.

One of these days I threaten to get a letter & pictures off to Aunt Mary.¹ She just loves to visit with you, I know, and hope she does it often.

I wonder how Hat & Dave like Nantucket! I must write them, too, as well as everyone else. My correspondence is way behind. It scarcely seems possible that here it is October again. The weather turned suddenly cool & has stayed so. But I feel more like doing things. Once I get ahead of the bills I feel better, too. This is marvelous weather, cool, clear & invigorating, much like early fall at home.

That reminds me, are you staying in So. Hadley this winter? The prospects for renting the house sound grand but I assumed you'd be staying there too. In some ways I hope you can & in other ways, no.

It seems the J's [Japanese] have been concentrating on Yunnan Province since forsaking us. Also moving far north. It still is somewhat amazing to us why they left here, once they were in. It's true, this city suffered nothing of what other places have had to undergo. Maybe it's because there were few here and no business or industry to clean out. They really came into a dead city, and it cost them money.

Well, it's time for breakfast, so I'd better run along.

Much love,

Mary and Bill

¹ The relationship is uncertain as there were no Buckhout or Atherton aunts named Mary who were living in 1941.

Foochow, China
Oct 6, 1941

Dear Ab,

Your March 6th reached me in July, but I sure was glad to hear from you, and surprised, too! This has been on my conscience for some time – this letter, I mean – and before the new year rolls around, I'd better get it written.

Nothing was more gladsome news than to know you were out of S.H. and doing a real job in Bridgeport. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since you wrote me. In the first place, I'm no longer a school marm, and I must say being a housewife is much more to my liking; it's fun. There's nothing like it! In fact marriage is an institution, a marvelous one! So I'm home in Foochow with Bill. It looks now, as tho' he'd be here for some time, and there seems to be no reason why I can't be here, too.

We've been thro' the occupation and the evacuation. The two experiences are distinctive, and, I must say, our taste of this war has been more than plenty, even tho' it has been comparatively mild. During the occupation, we did enjoy electricity 24 hours a day, which is novel for this city since the war began. We are back on 'war rations,' again! A number of the roads were repaired, perhaps I should say "filled in," for the traveling over them is none too pleasant yet except by foot. Bill [and I] have tried them on our bikes and there's just one we'd really care to do again. That's the road to the foot of Kuliang where, normally, people go in the summer (i.e. to the top). This year, of course, being occupied by others, no one went up. However, a few went up the last 2 weeks in September, and others are planning weekends there this fall. It's only 2 or 3 hours to the top from the city, so it's handy. Bill and I spent a very short weekend (Scotch one) there – Sunday noon to Monday a.m. at 7! We rode our bikes to the foot, hiked up, picnicking on the way, and took a lot of pictures. That was Sept 21st and consequently, we were the only ones in Foochow to see the eclipse of the sun, which was total in the northern part of the province. It rained at Chung An, 'the total spot' and it was cloudy here. But as we rode toward the mountain, the clouds cleared so we had an excellent view of it, and then it was more than $\frac{3}{4}$ covered. We were very excited!

Bill and I joined the Recreation Club here where we can play tennis or play golf, or buy fruit juices from sixty cents to 2.50 per glass! Some privilege. That's Mex, of course, but I stopped figuring in gold months ago! Some things cost as much, or more, out here than they do at home, and what you can't get is appalling! But we get along and have a grand time doing it. Can you imagine being without cheese? Well, I'm surprised we do so well. We'd do without a lot of things if all of China could enjoy the freedom we have!

Not teaching, I'm engrossed in the social life of Foochow, which consists of tennis games, teas (afternoon), coffees (mornings, only as long as the present supply of coffee lasts!), dinners now and then, choir practices, etc etc. All very exciting from one who has spent nearly 2 years in the country. I might even take to darning my husband's sox if I could get darning cotton!!

Our Anti-Cobweb Society, which includes most all the foreigners in the city, gets under way this month with the first meeting at our house. Even with all the people out of town, either home or "refugeeing," there are 70 odd members! It's my job to see that we have music of some description for all of the meetings!

News which we get from San Francisco each night is still far from encouraging. KGEI has taken to broadcasting many of the best N.B.C. programs. For instance, we hear Fibber Magee & Molly, Baby Snooks, Jack Benny, Johnny Presents, besides symphonic programs and Information Please. Sunday nite everybody here listens to The Mail Bag and there's always news for Foochow people. How about sending me word of what you are doing & that brother and sister of mine, Peg & Geo. I've gotten one message all summer. You can say an awful lot in 50 words. Besides, it will cost 3¢, not 5¢ and the news gets to me quicker! Just mail your letter to me to KGEI San Francisco and they read it to me on Sunday nite. You have no idea how exciting it is to get news that way!

Since the change in government here, magazines & other mail has been pouring in, so now I'm way behind in reading as well as my correspondence.

Bill is out this evening. He's joining the Masons & taking his second degree tonight in tux, no less! It's the English Lodge here, which gives only 3 degrees, but it gives him membership at home, too. He gets quite a kick out of it.

Is it too early to speak of Xmas?? But anyway, do you know what we'd like? A subscription to a magazine. We have Readers' Digest and Life. Life expires this December. I know it costs like fury; we'll take anything if you feel in the mood: Time, Life, Sat. Eve Post or American, or Good Housekeeping. Packages can't come out, but magazines do. You couldn't please us any better, really.

Helen sent me pictures of Betsy & Nancy & Jay. My, but Nancy is certainly some young lady! Jay & Bets look about the same, but more worldly. I'd sure love to see them. Give them all my love – Peg & Geo, too.

Lots of love to you,

Mary & Bill

Foochow, China

Oct. 7, 1941

Dear Mama:

Here we go, laughing and scratching. I hope you can make out this scratching, for I've been putting in a bit of tennis lately and I'm beginning to feel the results when I try to write. Bill and I joined the Recreation Club so we can play anytime. Loren made us a present of new tennis balls which he can't use up country and which can't be bought here, so we've gone in for tennis in a big way. It's either that or golf, and our equipment settled the question for us.

Bill's off this evening, taking his second degree for the Masons. He went off in Tux! before dinner, and is making a night of it. Meantime I'm listening to news and music from KGEI. Jack Benny is on tonight – my! it seems like old times – haven't heard him since I left home. Lots of other programs come to us now and it's quite a treat – Hour of Charm, Fibber Magee, Info. Please, etc, etc. Fred Waring,¹ etc.

¹ Fredrick Malcolm Waring (1900–1984) was a popular musician, bandleader and radio-television personality, sometimes referred to as "The Man Who Taught America How to Sing." During World War II, Waring and his Pennsylvanians appeared at war bond rallies and entertained the troops at training camps. He composed and/or performed dozens of patriotic songs, his most famous being "My America" best known as "This Is My Country." He created, rehearsed and broadcast his radio programs throughout the 1950s.

Dorothy B[rewster] wants me to take her oldest girl (9yrs) for singing lessons! I think it will be fun. There won't be much I can do with her, probably, except try to keep her from singing incorrectly!! Dot has to teach her own youngsters, and what other youngsters there are of school age. She says it costs more than sending them to school in Shanghai! It's just like a country school – all different grades.

We've got our garden going at last! Lettuce, carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, spinach, beans, mustard plant, & cauliflower. All are up. One of our good neighbors, the Lacys, gave us grand tomato plants. But I started some more from seed which look fine. I only hope they bear. They're the hardest things to raise out here.

We're running into snags for our Anti-Cob meeting! I can think of just the music I want for it, but it can't be had here! So I've resorted to nursery rhymes & folk songs to go along with our Hobbies, which is the program. Here comes Fred Waring, now! He still keeps the high level of his programs! Our reception isn't too good, but it's better than nothing.

Our lovely weather continues and Bill and I get out as much as possible. He's already planning what we shall do our next "holiday" which will consist of about 24 hours.

October 10th is a national holiday in China, like our 4th of July. There's to be quite a program, international here, including a mixed choir (also international) which I've said I'd join! I'm trying to learn the Chinese words to the hymn we'll sing for the occasion, "God of all Nations Whose Almighty Hand"¹ etc. – a grand hymn.

This Foochow social life is getting a bit beyond me, what with morning coffees (as long as there's coffee) and afternoon teas, tennis tournaments and dinners!! But it's fun and far from harmful. The British go in for it more than we, but we're pretty well mixed now, at least there isn't the "distinction" there was once. I haven't yet got my story of our trip from Ingtai to Shaowu in shape yet, but one of these days I'm going to revise it & dress it a bit.

It's nearly time for Bill to be popping in & for Jack Benny to come on.

Good night and love to you & Papa,

Mary & Bill

P.S. Could you slip flower seeds in with my letters? Pansies, petunias, etc – anything.

-M

Foochow, China

Oct 26, 1941

Dear Mom:

It's time to get Christmas thoughts going homeward, but not until this week did it dawn upon me! Now there'll be a mad rush since I'm told that postage will be double the present rates by Nov 1st! Whether it's the Scotch² or Missionary in me, I'll have to get them off this week (i.e. my Xmas letters).

Believe it or not, I'm going to Ingtai for over the weekend with one of the hospital staff, Freida Staubli. She's a great sport. I still have a few minor things up there, and want to put in a winter supply of fruits. Ingtai is the place to get them. I know that country better than

¹ Revised from "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand."

² Scottish frugality

Foochow! Your mother would laugh at seeing the way we live out here; buying in quantities & storing it – even things like wheat in the raw & grinding it ourselves for everything except the finest flour. But it's fun. I won't know how to trade when I get home. The funny part of this is Bill suggested that I go, so off we go. Freida & I either Thursday or Friday. Lucy will be surprised.

All this reminds me of the Beards. I do hope you get a chance to see them in Shelton (Conn.). Dr. B. wasn't any too well when he left here – i.e. he'd had a return of his painful & swollen foot, for which the cause has not been discovered. He's a true New Englander, & so is Mrs. B. – both quite different!

Since the 10th we've had alarms sounded & planes flew over one day. If it's not one thing, it's another! We've sent list upon list of things to Shanghai, hoping there will be means of transportation to us, but it gets more doubtful every day! Meantime I search for substitutes for baking powder, but even getting the ingredients is difficult. So far, so good. I'm hanging on for dear life to a pound of Calumet¹ I got from Merlin. That's to be opened only as a last emergency. Beef is the cheapest thing we can get besides fish, and that's sky high. Other eats you just can't see. Bill & I have Chinese dinner at noon, usually we both love it, but didn't indulge much during the hot weather. The way to eat rice is absolutely plain, no salt cooked in it & cooked until dry. But you need chop sticks. Have a highly seasoned dish or two of vegetables (greens) and bamboo shoots & highly seasoned pork bits in a rich, sweet gravy, mushrooms!! Oh Boy!! Is it good. Take a dip of veg or meat etc with chopsticks, then a bit of rice. But remember—hold the bowl of rice in your left hand—dip as you wish with your chopsticks into the main veg dishes!! That's the only way it's good!

The 19th we were on Kuliang again, and had perfect weather! We've had a glorious October. Saturday it turned cooler after the tail end of a typhoon and it's quite cool these days. Anyway a fire in the fire place feels kind of good.

Our garden is coming on nicely. We finally got some lettuce seed & a few plants. The Lacys have been over generous with seeds & plants. Have broccoli plants in & hundreds of tomato plants. I hope to goodness they bear well; and a number of cabbage. So far only one carrot, and how we are nursing it! Peas are coming up, so we may have something after all. So far only 8 bean plants appear & cut worms got 4 of them! Bill & I'll have to draw lots for the carrot or take turns on the beans! I've invested in some pots of chrysanthemums which are coming along. I'll have sweet peas, too, from the neighbors!! If you think of it, could you slip in a package of pansy seeds in one letter & some petunias in another, maybe some more lettuce, which is very scarce! The seeds you sent in the spring didn't germinate!

Well – I've got to get busy on Xmas things. I won't say it now (Merry Christmas!) since I'll be writing again soon.

Love to you all from us both,

Mary

This was Mary's last letter until February 25, 1942, but that letter did not arrive in South Hadley until July 8, 1942.

¹ Baking powder

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on the United States naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, leading to the immediate entrance of the United States into World War II in both the Pacific and the European Theaters. Before that time, the Sino-Japanese war had already led to the Japanese occupation of much of China, including the seaports of Foochow and Shanghai. Despite that Japanese occupation, Mary felt safe from the war. When the United States entered the war, however, they were ordered to move inland. The following excerpt from an oral history recorded by Melissa Martin on May 9, 1999, fills the gap that exists in her letters.

“...we did [sense something was about to happen], because things were getting very tight. The Japanese had been in Foochow up until October of '41, and they got what they needed out of the city and just stripped it and left. So when Pearl Harbor was attacked the Japanese weren't there, in Foochow.

“We found out about the attack on Hawaii, on Pearl Harbor, when Bill and I were sitting there, having breakfast Sunday morning and one of our British neighbors came tearing across the lawn and he said, ‘Pearl Harbor's been attacked by the Japanese!’ Well, Bill just left pronto to get to the radio station and find out what he could. That was it.

“Bill got orders from Foochow to pack up and go to Chung King... so in January of 1942 we packed up and the consul had to pack up, too, of course, and destroy anything they couldn't take.

“So the end of January we started upriver on a launch to Nan Ping, because there was a mission there and they could house us for a while, until we got transportation across the country to Chung King. We left together.

“It was safe [in Chung King]. They did have warnings and they did have planes going over, but there was nothing there while we were there. The Flying Tigers came in when we were in Chung King, so we felt very secure.”

The Flying Tigers was American Volunteer Group (AVG). Led by Claire L. Chennault, they flew Curtiss P-40's that had red and white shark's teeth painted around their air scoops. Former U.S. military pilots, they were under contract to the Chinese Air Force.

In an article published December, 2006, in Air Force Magazine, John Correll wrote, “The Flying Tigers existed as a combat unit for only seven months. They never had more than 50 combat ready aircraft at a time, and never more than 70 pilots ready to fly. They faced an enemy force that was 20 times larger with better airplanes and were chronically short of parts and supplies. Nevertheless, they shot down at least 10 Japanese airplanes for every one they lost, and they held the line in China until the regular Army Air Forces could get there. The AVG's combat run was brief, but it was long enough to establish the legend. The

Flying Tigers are one of the most famous and admired organizations in all of military history. No fighting airplane is more quickly recognized than the P-40 with the shark's teeth and the glaring eye. Almost 50 years after [Chennault's] death, the Air Force was carrying on the Flying Tigers legacy as A-10s of the 23rd Fighter Group, emblazoned with the distinctive shark's teeth markings, flew combat missions in Afghanistan."¹

January of 1942 ushered in a period of unbridled success for the Axis powers. Aided by the weak response of the European democracies to their expansionist policies, Germany, Japan, and Italy rolled over most of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Prior to its entrance into global war after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States had supported France and Britain against Axis aggression, while President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had continued to prepare Americans for a conflict he felt was inevitable.² With the entrance of the United States into the war, it had truly become global.

On the home front, the lives of the American people were upended. Food, gas, and clothing were rationed; town commons and city parks became scrap metal collection points, and women entered the work force as electricians, welders, and riveters, replacing the young men who left for war. Homes installed blackout curtains to make aerial targeting more difficult in the event of a direct attack, and civilians watched for German U-boats along the coast. Most citizens relied on the radio to bring them news of fighting in Manila, Bataan, Malaysia, Singapore, and elsewhere.

February saw little Allied progress. The battle for Bataan continued and stories of Japanese atrocities to combatants and civilians alike enraged the American people.

Though communications had always been slow, they became increasingly difficult, especially for civilians. Those at home were left wondering if they would ever again see their loved ones trapped in Asia. The State Department as well as organizations responsible for sending civilians overseas were inundated with requests to track them down. At the end of February, 1942, the American Board of Foreign Missions sent the following letter to South Hadley:

¹ *The Flying Tigers*, John T. Correll; Air Force Magazine, Vol 89, No. 12; December 2006

² The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project; George Washington University; World War II (1939-1945);

**AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS**

INCORPORATED 1914

14 BEACON STREET BOSTON, MASS.

SECRETARIES

ALDEN H. CLARK, D.D.
MISS NADEL F. FARRON
WYNN G. FAIRFIELD, D.D.

Foreign Department

February 25, 1942

ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

HERBERT E. D. GAGE
MEDICAL SECRETARY
MARK H. WARE, M.D.

Mr. William A. Buckhout
13 Hadley Street
South Hadley, Mass.

Dear Mr. Buckhout:

Although we have not been trying to keep you closely in touch with developments at Foochow recently, since your sister joined the Consulate staff, it is possible that we have word concerning her plans that has not yet reached you.

On February 12 and 13, we tried to send radios to Foochow, but were informed that neither the Radio Corporation of America nor the Mackay Radio was in communication with Foochow, so that they would not receive the message. One of them told us that Foochow was regarded as "occupied territory".

On February 14, I therefore sent a radio to the Department of State, stating the circumstances and asking whether they had been informed of the re-occupation of Foochow and whether they could forward a message through the Consulate.

We received a reply from the State Department reading:

REFERENCE YOUR TELEGRAM OF FEBRUARY 14. DEPARTMENT UNDERSTANDS
FOOCHOW STILL IN CHINESE HANDS BUT AMERICAN CONSULATE THERE
CLOSED JANUARY 31 1942 SUGGEST THEREFORE YOU COMMUNICATE
THROUGH USUAL COMMERCIAL CHANNELS WITH ONE OF YOUR REPRESENTA-
TIVES AT CHUNGKING CHINA AND REQUEST BE REPORT CONCERNING
MISSIONARIES AT FOOCHOW BY ANY MEANS WHICH MAY BE AVAILABLE.
CORDELL HULL SECRET OF STATE

Since then, we have had a radio directly from Foochow via the Chinese Government Radio Administration and the Radio Corporation of America so that presumably Foochow has not been occupied, and the difficulty of sending messages is due to our own government policy.

Very likely you have been informed either through the State Department or through the Navy Department that Mary Frances has left Foochow and where she has gone. Under the circumstances, the probability is that the Foochow Consular staff was transferred to another point or points in China,

-2-

by launch up the Min River and thence by bus or truck to some other point, possibly with the idea of leaving China for other assignments. If you have had word from either Department which you can share with us, we should be glad to know it.

Very sincerely yours,

Wynn G. Fairfield
Wynn G. Fairfield

wcf/mfk

In March, Bill's mother, Maude McVay, received the following in answer to her queries:

RUSSELL HENRY STAFFORD, D.D., PRESIDENT FRED FIELD GOODSSELL, D.D., EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT HAROLD B. BELCHER, TREASURER

**AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS**
INCORPORATED 1812
14 BEACON STREET BOSTON, MASS.

Information Service and Pledged Work

Mary D. Uline, Secretary
March 7, 1942

Mrs. N. Maude McVay
Hudson
South Dakota

Dear Mrs. McVay:

I am so sorry to have delayed one day in answering your question about Mrs. Mary Buckhout McVay, your daughter-in-law. In Miss Uline's absence from the office, I took up the matter with the Foreign Department. It just so happened that both Dr. Fairfield, Secretary for China and Japan, and Mr. Chandler, who is helping him, were away the day your letter came, so I have just been able to get information to send to you.

Mr. Chandler is very sorry not to be able to give you any information either, but he thinks that the State Department must have some information for you. He suggests that you write directly to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C. He knows that the consulate office in Foochow City was closed, but he has no information as to where the consul had gone.

We can understand how you long for some word of them, and only wish it were possible for us to help.

Best wishes to you and with hopes that you may get some good information from Washington.

Sincerely yours,
Olive B. Chase
Secretary to MARY D. ULINE.

P.S. I am sending this letter air mail because of the delay in replying, and because we know how anxiously you are awaiting an answer.
O.C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

In reply refer to
FA

March 17, 1942

My dear Mrs. McVay:

I am in receipt of your letter of March 9, 1942, in which you inquire in regard to the whereabouts of your son, Mr. V. McVay, Radio Mechanic First Class, United States Navy, formerly stationed at the American Consulate in Foochow, China.

We understand that your son is accompanying Mr. Edward E. Rice, former American Consul at Foochow, who has left that city under instructions from the State Department for a post in the interior of China. It is thought that they may be en route to Chungking. In the thought that you may care to send a message to your son, it is suggested that you address an air mail letter to him care of the American Embassy at Chungking. You can be assured that every effort will be made by the Embassy to forward the letter to your son.

Sincerely yours,

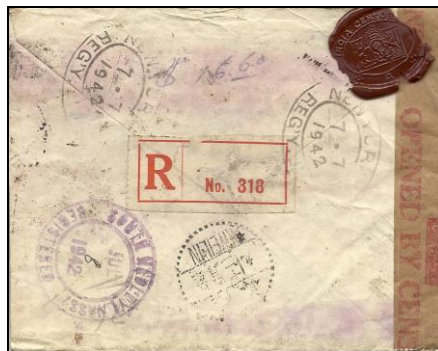
For the Secretary of State:



Mrs. N. Maude McVay,
Hudson,
South Dakota.

Harry A. Havens
Harry A. Havens
Assistant Chief, Division of
Foreign Service Administration

Mary's letter dated February 25, 1942 arrived in South Hadley on July 8, 1942. The envelope reads: "By British Overseas Airways USA to Lagos, Nigeria via Calcutta, India PAA to destination." Multiple stamps show its route; the censors' stamps are still in place.



In January, the U. S. State Department ordered the American Consulate to move inland, from Foochow to Chung King. The only known record of that move is in the U.S. Navy journal kept by Radioman H. Vilroy McVay.

From the Journal of H. Vilroy McVay, USN:

Feb 5, 1942. Left Foochow for up river at 1412 arrived Shuikow 2213. Departed Shuikow 0630/6 [6:30 am on Feb 6th] arrived Hsiatao 1930. Departed Hsiatao 0630/7 arrived Nanping 0800.

Feb 10, 1942. Departed Nanping for Yungan 0730 arrived 1500.

Feb. 12, '42 Departed Yungan for Nanping 0745 arrived 1500.

Nanping, China

Feb. 15, 1942

On February 1st the consulate at Foochow was officially closed and preparations were made to move inland. Mary had been packing things in our house and I had been packing up as much of the radio station as I could.

I held my last schedule with Chung King on the 4th and finished dismantling my radio station and packing it away ready for shipment.

Feb 5th we started loading our stuff on a motor launch loaned to us by the Salt Gabelle.¹ The launch was a converted junk. We learned to our sorrow that we could take only a few of our goods. My radio equipment, our clothes & household supplies were all we could take. Our furniture, dishes, etc, had to be left behind.

We had wonderful weather. It was chilly but clear. We stayed on the forecastle as much as possible in order to see the scenery.

Fukien is mountainous. The mountains are jagged & rough and are just about solid rock. Being semi-tropical, the flora is luxuriant and the scenery is beautiful. Also being of rock there are many rapids in the Min River. Another reason we could not take as much baggage as we should have liked.

The first night Mr. Rice, Consul of the U.S.A., his teacher & boy, slept ashore and Mary & I slept in the coxswain's cabin.

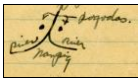
The next day, Feb. 6, was a very warm day. The temperature must have been close to 80°. While our launch was being hauled over some especially bad rapids, Mr. Rice & I went swimming. The second night Mary & I again slept on the launch, Mr. Rice slept on his cot on the forecastle. At 0200 it began to rain & he had to move down below.

We arrived in Nanping (Yenping) at about 0800. Feb. 7.

Mr. Rice had his cook & boy & we had our cook so our meals were prepared & served on the launch by them.

Nanping is at a fork of the Min River. Nanjing has often been ravaged by floods so the Chinese character for fire was made by placing pagodas on opposite banks of the Min

River like this:



¹ The Chinese Salt Commission. For thousands of years, salt was the major cash crop in China and was in such high regard that control of it caused major wars. It was used not only for consumption and preservation, it played an integral role in the discovery of gunpowder. [beyondtheshaker.com]

Nanping is a very beautiful place. It is surrounded by the very rugged, rocky mountains.

We were met along the street by Mr. Frederick Bankhardt, Dr. & Mrs. Downie & Rev. & Mrs. Dennis.

We worked until about 1430 getting our stuff unloaded & up to the Methodist Compound. Mary & I stayed with the Dennises & Mr. Rice is staying with the Downies.

The tenth, Mr. Rice, Mary and I arose at 0530 in order to catch the bus for Yungan. We got to the bus station at 0645. Dr. Downie came down and at the last moment asked us whether our baggage was with us or not. We didn't know so Dr. Downie checked up & found our baggage would be sent the next day. We had nothing with us except our lunch so Mary crawled thru a window—the bus was so crowded she couldn't go out the door—and got our toilet articles. We planned to stay in Yungan for one day so our baggage was sent back to the house.

Our bus was just about new and our driver was very good. The bus had a Ford chassis but the cab was made in China. The first sixteen seats were numbered and reserved. All other available space was occupied by as many people as could squeeze in. The roads are very rough and full of curves and mountains. Quite a number of the Chinese became sick. Some of them were able to put their heads out windows but others could not.

After Mary had gotten our toilet gear & climbed back thru the window we started off. At the outskirts of Nanping we passed the match factory. Along the road were about 100 trays approximately 8 feet by five feet placed at an angle of about 45° & piled five inches deep with match sticks. They were drying.

The scenery up the river to Yungan is about the same all the way. At Shawsien, half way between Yungan & Nanping, the mountains roll back and the country is rolling prairie. At Yungan it is hilly but not mountainous.

The ride to Yungan was cold & rainy. We were met at the bus station by Mr. Hsieh, head of the provincial foreign relations, and Mr. Ts'ao Yao, head of the Fukien Farmer's Banks. We were taken to a hotel—Yungan's best—in Mr. Ts'ao's car. Then Mr. Ts'ao invited us out for noodles. After our long ride the noodles "hit the spot."

Mrs. Dennis had prepared a huge lunch for us before we left Nanping, so after having had a meal of noodles and after we had walked around for a while, we decided we would eat a few sandwiches, cake, cookies, and fruit for our regular supper. After we had finished eating we were told by a hotel boy that Mr. Hsieh had invited us for supper. There was nothing for us to do but to sit down to a Chinese feast.

We spent the next day looking around the city. We ate lunch with Mrs. Ts'ao and had supper in our room at the hotel.

The next morning we got up at 0530 in order to catch the bus back to Foochow. It was quite cold as we had no heat in our room. Mr. Ts'ao & Mr. Hsieh came to take us to the bus station. Mr. Ts'ao gave us a lunch. The bus left at 0745 in a drizzle of rain.

At 0900 it had turned to sleet then snow. It snowed all day long & all night. The temperature was just a little below freezing so most of the snow melted as soon as it hit the ground. Along the road we saw a number of coolies wading through the slush & mud barefoot!

It was the 12th of February when we left Yungan & it started to snow. It is now the 19th and the last of the snow was washed away by the rains last night. The ground was white with snow for 3 days—something unprecedented for this part of Fukien.

We are now staying at Dennises waiting for word from Chungking before we make another move.

Day before yesterday (17th) I was helping cut down a tree. We had a line tied to the top of the tree to pull the tree down so it wouldn't go over the compound wall & down a hill. The line broke & the tree went over the wall & down the hill where it had to be cut up.

Mary was sick yesterday. I spoke to Dr. Downie about it & he said she was a "strong buxom lassie" and would be all right if she stayed in bed. She was all right in the afternoon & was able to eat chow with us.

John Pilley came from Yangkow a few days ago – also Edith Sinester - & left for Foochow this morning.

Feb. 20th 0700. Quite a bit warmer this morning. We received a message from Chungking yesterday that we couldn't decode because Consul had burned all his codes. I had a premonition this morning that Mary & I may be ordered to leave Nanping & establish the radio station somewhere else.

Feb. 20th (continued). War news very bad. Singapore has fallen. Japs attacking Java & have bombed Darwin, Northwestern Australia; British retreating in Burma. Burma road expected to be cut.

Went "duck hunting" with Dr. Downie, M.D. to an island in the river about 4 miles away. Doc fired 6 times & I fired twice. I knocked down a teal but couldn't find it a couple hours later. Mary, Mr. Rice & I were invited to a tea to meet the Hwa Nan faculty. I thought it was a regular tea for all foreigners to meet the faculty once every semester but it was really for Mr. Rice, Mary & I. So I was sorry to have missed it.

Feb. 23rd Japs have half of Bali. Fierce fighting in Sumatra. Although allies have supremacy in air over Burma Japs seem to be gaining ground. Jap subs shelled southern Calif. town. On Feb. 21st I went to a feast given by General Li. It was really a drinking bout & I haven't fully recovered yet.

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis left for country this morning so Mary & I are alone.

Mr. Yen, Mr. Rice's secretary, seems to be cracking up under strain of being away from home for the first time in his life.

Feb. 28th 1942 – John Pilley, a teacher in Anglo-Chinese college, and I left Nanping at 5:30 and headed for Yangkow 30 miles away. We walked on a motor road for 5 miles then went across paddy fields and over a pass 2,000 feet high. Although we were on the main footpath from Nanping to Yangkow, many times we balanced on the edge of paddy fields and slipped & slid down hills. At 10:30 we ate our lunch & pushed on again. After we got over the pass we started down the other side & came to a branch. We took the wrong path & soon came to a village & asked if we were on the road to Ai Young. We were told we had taken the wrong branch so back we went. It had started to rain while we were eating lunch & rained off & on for the rest of the day. We continually were going up & down mountains but it was a very beautiful walk. Sometimes we passed through forests of pine trees. We reached Ai Yung, 20 miles from Yangkow, at 1. We passed over one more range of hills, stopped at a tea house in a covered bridge where we had rice cakes (gaw') & tea and reached Yangkow at 3:55.

¹Nanping-Fukien China, February 25, 1942
[Send to] Bill's mother: Maude McVay, Hudson, So. Dakota

Dear Mama and Papa and anyone who is home! This is my new paper-saving device! My plan is to write one letter a month—airmail if possible—and use postcards as fillers for the rest of the time. 3 postcards preceded this. I wonder how many, if any, you rec'd. Bill & I left Foochow Feb 7 and are here with the Meth. Miss. Folks—grand people. But I do miss our home in F. We'd just gotten it fixed about as we wanted, specially the living room with green drapes & a taupe & tan Peking rug & our set covered with tan (heavy por...). It was really quite swank. That was the stuff we owned, besides two small chairs and a cute Chinese cabinet I'd just invested in. Not knowing where we'd be I packed rug & cabinet, both of which I hope to get someday & send them along with Dorothy B's family and goods when they moved back to their old home in the country. Our living room suite we sold to one of the Methodist ladies, a good friend of ours & who is at present in Nanping. The rest of the stuff we packed hoping to get it up there sometime. We brought our clothes, what shoes we had, and a bed. When we came to pack I found we had quite a collection of linens, silks, and bed linens. Bill's (Bucket's)² Army trunk is full of bedding! Oh yes, we do have some dishes which we've sent for & our bowls & music, etc. So our household furniture consists of 1 desk, 1 straight chair, 2 small stuffed chairs, 2 nests of end tables, one card table, one lap board (which Bill gave me for Xmas), 1 bed (Chinese style!). Now we are living out of our suitcases but very comfortably in a cute house with the Dennis's, new folks here. As yet we don't know if we are to be here permanently.

You probably know by this time the Consulate is closed and Ed is here, too. This is Bill's first vacation in nearly 4 years, and he's enjoying it. He's been out hunting once with the Meth. Doc up here, a good sport! We had a tremendous snow the week after arriving & below freezing weather—something I've never seen in Fukien. The snow stayed on 5 days! The week before, Ed and Bill went swimming in the river on the way up to Nanping. That was a lovely leisurely trip, lovely weather. Since then we've had only 2 days of sunshine, but it's darker this week. A couple of nights ago we had a freak storm, thunder and lightning (continuous) and hurricane wind which took the roof off of some of the flimsy buildings around and blew others to bits! The day before had been almost suffocatingly hot. Just now Bill and I are keeping house here for the Dennis's are out touring the country for a couple of weeks—Mr. preaching and Mrs. giving health talks. They'll be back for a week then go out again for another district. They must love the life to stand traveling and living Chinese fashion in such weather. Our trip to Yungan, the capital of this province, was uneventful and uninteresting for the most part. It's a small place, grown steadily since the war, excellent electric power, etc. and my hope is that we don't have to settle there. The folks here have taken us in like we're members of their group.

I don't know quite what sect I profess now. In Ingtai I thought I was a fervent Congregationalist. In F. there was a cross between Methodism and Anglicanism, but since I sang in the Anglican choir and most of my neighbors were Anglicans, my leanings were there. Now I have to be Methodist in spite of myself since there is no other order around here. However, the more I see of the working of these different orders, the more firmly I cling to my original beliefs & upbringing. One of these days I must write Felix, for I haven't

¹ The entire letter is written on thin onionskin with a pencil in approximately 6pt font.

² Buckhout's

by any means forgotten or given up my connection with my own church. What one would like to write isn't "passable" and so the inspiration is stifled at the beginning.

As soon as some of my friends knew we were coming to Nanping they immediately had plans for me to teach at Hwa Nan College which has temporary quarters here! I immediately put it out of their heads. It would be fun, I should like to—probably just voice—but there's nothing permanent about staying here and besides there's plenty to do taking care of my Bah-bah! Another teacher here isn't as vital as one at Wen Shan so I couldn't be disloyal to the Board or Wen Shan! "Mac" has been perfectly grand to Bill and me. (He's Mr. McClure) and if there was anything I can do for the American Board I shall do it! He's kept my account for me—of what little there is left! For a time when mail wasn't (& still isn't) getting through, Bill's checks were just not coming. If it hadn't been for "Mac" we would have starved. So I have a soft spot in my heart for Mac. Living expenses rise daily, but we still can keep our heads above water. Next week we hope to go see folks up the river a way where another Meth. school is refugeeing.

Bill & I are getting such a kick out of using the [?]. There's no use in writing about conditions on this side of the world—it's a mess—but it's my firm conviction that once "we" get really going there won't be anything to stop us. Meantime, we sit tight and my return will be delayed. However, don't worry, for we're healthy, happy, and safe. Boston will always give you the latest conditions if you ask them. I expect we are here for the duration, and I say 3 yrs. Keep your chin up and chest out for we're (Bill & I) are just living for the day we'll be seein' ya! Much love, Mary & Bill.

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

March 1. Mary's birthday. Sent her a telegram. Rested up from my trip. Found I had hurt one of my feet, otherwise no after effects of trip.

March 2nd. John Pilley & I had seen 2 deer along the road when we came up from Nanping so we took Mr. Caldwell's "tiger gun," a .300 Savage rifle, & John's shotgun & went out after game. We saw lots of signs of game but no game, nor did I see any while there.

During my stay in Yangkow I worked around the house in the mornings—cleaning the yard, fixing air-raid shelter, etc., & afternoons I went hunting.

Mary came up the river in a launch & arrived March 7th.

On 9th received telegram from Mr. Rice asking us to return to Nanping so we left on 11th at 8 A.M. & arrived in Nanping at 2 P.M. Mr. Harris & Mr. Hampton, cable operators at Sharp Peak,¹ stayed with us for a week & left March 20th. They were on their way back to England.

Mar. 21st. Been working on Bankhart's refrigerator this aft. Lights were off so I couldn't test it. Got Downie's running yesterday & made them very happy.

¹ Sharp Peak Island, near the mouth of the Min River.

March 19, 1942
Nanping, Fukien, China
[This letter arrived in South Hadley May 20, 1942]

Dear Mama & Papa:

Spring is here in all its glory—lovely sunny days—when it doesn't rain! Bill and I got back from Yangkow just a week ago. Couldn't stay as long as we wanted to! Things continue to happen here. In a couple of weeks we may be moving into temporary quarters until we can get something more permanent. Meantime we're still with the Dennises, who are, at present, out in the country again, holding district conferences in the churches. Bill & I are holding forth here. We've been entertaining two Britishers who are on their way to wherever they can get (to their home soil). One of them gave Bill 2 pairs of brand new sox! and an old sweater of excellent English wool which I can reknit. They expect to get off tomorrow. Yesterday I capped the climax by spraining my left ankle, which means staying off of it for at least a week! That puts a crimp in our walking trips around here, and also in my tennis game. But it's a good excuse to stay in bed, lay around and get some letter writing done, as well as much needed mending! I guess I told you Hwa Nan staff wanted me to teach their voice pupils, but I've given that idea up this term anyway!

Bill & I decided there's no point in waiting any longer or putting off a family any longer. But so far there is no evidence of a blessed event, despite rumors that get to me constantly! All the mothers here are pulling for me & saving all their outgrown youngsters' things & maybe that's the wrong approach! Last month I'm quite sure it was a painless "miss!" I feel grand—have put on my usual winter weight—but even with that I'm only 160! That's still 10# less than when I came out! From now on thru' the hot weather there will be no chance of gaining. Besides there's no danger of getting too much of fattening foods! The height of the fruit season is past, but plants will be coming on & then our summer fruit. Fortunately I have a number of trees of guavas and lychees which we put up last summer.

I've had 'requests' to visit Shaowu, particularly from the Wen Shan principal. I know they need help. Were I up there I'd give it, too. That's another reason for not being so anxious to teach at Hwa Nan: they really aren't in such need as the other schools. The school at Yang Kow is in greater need, for there's no music teacher there and there are no other schools there. These other places have other schools & have a chance of exchanging faculty etc. Shaowu has the university for further cultural inspiration.

We have just found out about a "mail bag" service from Chung King, and am going to try it. The news these days seems more encouraging, but the astronomical figures of spending seems like a myth. Regardless of who is at the head of it, an "all out" offensive is what I'm pulling for, at any cost. I feel sure enough of the results eventually. The moving around of our gallant leaders certainly puts an edge on our move to friendly neighbors. Much gnashing of teeth, etc!!! We continue to get back issues of magazines & papers, now over a year old! But it gives us something to read! Bill & I are reading together "Moment In Peking" and it's most charming & especially interesting, having lived among these people. When out on the street, I often meet some of my former students, boys and girls. There are a number here—some in Hwa Nan, others working here, most of them in the post office. I'm so anxious to have my own place so I can have them in for tea once in a while. While in Yang Kow, Edith asked in all the former Wen Shan students (several of whom are teaching there) for tea, one afternoon, so I had a chance to make new acquaintances. Some of the

teachers have families, but teaching just the same. It's wonderful to have such people in the work here. Well, there are Bill's sox & mine waiting to be darned, or rather, patched! So I must close. Much love to you all. We're happy & healthy & flourishing and more optimistic just now.

Love - Mary & Bill.

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

March 23. Sunday. Mary sprained her ankle few days ago has been going around on red-lacquer canes ever since.

April 1st. Mary still using canes. Went to prayer meeting heard reports from returned country missionaries.

Nanping, Fukien

April 3, 1942

Dear Mom:

You were certainly right about tea! The longer I stay in this country the more I realize how refreshing a cup of good tea is, either in hot or cold weather! Whenever I'm hiking anywhere, practically all I want is a cup of good hot tea. Now Bill & I are trying all kinds, we're becoming such hounds. Bill never drank it before we were married, now he's as fastidious and regular about tea drinking as any Englishman would be! It is amusing!

I've finally come down to this for writing paper, but it's really not bad—also good as toilet paper and wrapping paper.¹ You see, there's no distinction out here! Think I'm inhabited with worms again—also to be expected most anytime! But I'll not be feeding them very long!

This is the third week I've been doing on crutches or canes with my sprained ankle. It's getting back to normal, however, and another week or so ought to clear it all up. It's been such beautiful weather, and I have not been able to get out at all except in the compound. These days, too, bring air alarms quite often, but that's to be expected.

We hope to get into our own place in a few days! The building we are to have had lovely big, airy rooms, plenty of windows and just grand. These rooms have now been cut up into small ones, blocking windows & doors! I sometimes wonder at my patience, but such things are to be expected, I've learned. Fortunately we'll be there a short time. Meantime we are making plans to build.

Isn't it a coincidence that Nate's² & Bill's birthdays come this month, and they're the same age! And so much alike in their actions & reactions! I think they'd have a marvelous time together! Oh for that day!!!

The Masonic Lodge members were putting pressure on Bill to go down to F. for installation of officers; we'd about decided to go, but what with moving again we decided against it. Then, too, I'm not much good at walking yet. My morning duty is to go over and feed Maurine's youngest (7 mos) while she teaches her two little girls, 1st & 2nd grade!

¹ A very thin, fragile, onionskin paper.

² Mary's youngest brother.

We often get letters from Mission friends in Shanghai. I know no one there, now, except thro' associations in a business way.

The Holy Week services at Hwa Nan College have been lovely. The Good Friday service this morning was music from The Crucifixion sung by the choir which is very good. Maurine has all the records of The Crucifixion with Crooks¹ & Tibbet² singing the main parts. She played them for prayer meeting a week ago and it was very effective. The minute the tenor began, I knew who it was. K.G.E.I. still continues to send out some of the better programs: Telephone House, Amer. Album of Music, etc. as well as good old Jack Benny, Baby Shorts, & Charlie!! We don't feel quite so cut off when those programs come thru! Fibber Maggie is on too!!

It's nearly dinner time, so my stomach says. Eating and such little exercise tightens my belts! I don't imagine this will stay on in the summer, though. Revelation: unless you hear differently we are o.k. We are thinking of you constantly—all our love to you, Mom, and take care of yourself. I hope you are in So. Hadley!

Much, much love,
Mary & Bill

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

April 8 – we returned to Foochow for TAV Portable radio equipment. We went down on a launch without bunks. We left Nanping at 6 A.M. & arrived at 6 P.M.

April 16th – left Foochow for Nanping and arrived on April 17. Left at 4 pm & arrived Nanping at 7 PM May 6, 1942 0830 (+8)³ left Nanping for Yungan. Raining when we left but stopped in 15 mins after we had crossed the river on a ferry. Mr. Bankhardt reported Corregidor had fallen.

Miss Wallace, Miss Reik, Miss Savage, Miss Cole, Mr. & Mrs. Bankhardt, Dr. & Mrs. Downie & Imogene & “Mei Mei,” Dr. Li, & Mr. & Mrs. Dennis saw us off. We had an old French made cargo truck which we had loaded the day before with our stuff leaving a space of about 2' in the front of the truck box for us to sit.

After we left Nanping we set our watches one hour back to Chungking time.

We arrived in Shabsien at 1100 where we stopped for a few minutes while the driver ate lunch.

About 5 miles out of Shabsien we passed a fellow pushing a wrecked bicycle. We stopped for him and found he had had an accident. He said while going down a hill the wind had blown his hat into his face and he had run off the road. His face was scratched & bleeding & the front wheel of his bicycle was bent all out of shape. We put his bicycle on a running board & took him about 20 miles to San Yuan. We ate lunch at 1230. We had sandwiches of lettuce & cucumber, hamburger, fried chicken, boiled eggs, cookie, cumquats (p'I pas) & coffee.

We arrived in Yungan at 1500.

¹ Richard Alexander Crooks, tenor, lead singer at the Metropolitan Opera and host of “The Voice of Firestone.”

² Lawrence Mervil Tibbett, baritone, lead singer for the Metropolitan Opera from 1923 to 1950.

³ Greenwich Mean Time plus eight hours.

While standing in a small shop having a broken loop on my camera case repaired, I was tapped on the back & turned around to find Mr. Ward's boy. He had left Hong Kong April 6 and had gone to Foochow in the hopes of finding someone who would give him a job. We (the consul & I) were not there so he had gone to Nanping only to find we had returned to Foochow. He had then gone to Yungan where I met him today.

While in my hotel room Mr. Ward's teacher, Mr. Li Chin Ching, came in. I invited Mr. Li, Mr. Rice & Mr. Yen to dinner. While at dinner Mr. Li told us the story of H.K. At first, after HK fell on Xmas day, Mr. Ward & other foreigners lived in a consular residence. On January 8, all American, British, & Dutch were moved into what had been a jail. Because Mr. Ward could write characters so well he interpreted for the Japanese. The foreigners were able to buy goods on the street but a Japanese soldier accompanied them. Their money (HK) was worth only half the Japs money. They had to do all their own work.

Mr. Li & Li Kuan Shihti had no work so I gave Mr. Li 300 & Li Kuan Shihti 200.

[Postcard, marked "Rec'd Jan 1943"]

May 4, '42

Nanping – Fu – China

Dear Mom: Another 24 hrs will see us on our way to Chungking, riding atop our stuff in a truck. Ed, Bill & I. We're thrilled, yet hate to leave our grand friends here. Had an Air Mail from Felix today (mailed Jan 20) full of good news & gossip, my first word from home since November! Weather warm, but not too warm, just right for travelling. Some of my former students gave us a feast tonite in farewell. We've been celebrating Bill's birthday rather extensively. Coke & coffee & music one nite, party at Maurine's another night and a picnic on the river—lots of fun—had ice cream several times. We are in the last throws [*sic*] of packing & getting together some food for the trip. Will have several days in Kweilin. Air signals here almost daily. Glad to know Dot & Bill are in So. Hadley again. From Felix's report, everyone in S.H.'s getting married. Write to us at Chungking, Amer. Embassy-

Love – *Mary & Bill*

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

May 7, '42

I woke up at 0300 and looked at our alarm clock. I mistook the alarm hand for the hour hand and thought it was 5 P.M. I woke Mary and told her to get up that it was 5. After I got my socks on I noticed my mistake & went to sleep again.

We got up at five and had breakfast in the hotel restaurant, paid for our room (\$7.00) and were on our way at 0630.

It was a beautiful day—clear, cool with only a few clouds in the sky and remained that way all day long.

The road was much the same all the way winding through sharp, rocky mountains that are characteristic of Fukien. At the end of a particularly bad road that led down a mountainside was a sign about 3 feet square with "!" in the center of it & that was all. Only those who have been over these roads know what they are like.

At 0900 we stopped & had lunch while a broken spring was being replaced. We saw it would take some time so we went swimming in a swift river nearby. At 1030 we shoved off again.

At 1400 we stopped at P'eng Kow. They claimed then that gasoline could not be obtained over the rest of the route so we had to shift baggage & make room for a 50 gallon drum. At 1545 we shoved off again. We are now as red as beats from the sun & wind.

At 1900 we arrived in Cha'ng Ting, had supper, bath & prepared to turn in.

May 8

Mary & I were up at 5. Mary had soft rice & I ate 2 fried eggs for brkfst. Mary & I made coffee on a charcoal stove & put it in our thermos. In doing so we got a look at the kitchen!! (dirty as a sty!!). Called Mr. Rice & we got underway at 0715. A few miles out of Ch'angting we came to a broken down charcoal burning truck. We were told that the day before the truck had broken down and that an English man & his wife were at the next village. They were Mr. & Mrs. Forrester. He was manager of the Asiatic Petroleum Co. in Changchow & they were on their way to Kunming. We took them & their interpreter to Juichin, about 45 km from the place their truck had broken down. We were in Juichin (Lucky Gold) from 1015 to 1115. Juichin is over the border in Kiangsi. After we left Fukien the scenery changed from rocky wooded mountains to sand bluffs with dwarf pines. The road changed from one full of chuck holes & moth eaten bridges to one comparable to a gravel road at home.

We arrived at Kan Hsien at 515. It was a prosperous town of about 70,000. It has wide hard-packed streets & good electric lights.

After bathing we went out & bought some candy & fruit & came back for chow.

Then we called on the Catholic fathers, Father Matty & Father _____. We got caught up on the news. Corregidor not yet confirmed as having fallen, & 17 Jap ships damaged or sunk off Solomon Islands. They gave us Curacao & peppermint & after chatting 20 minutes we returned to the hotel.

May 9

Up at 0500. After getting our stuff back in our bags we looked around for a place to eat. It was so early the hotel restaurant was still closed so we paid our hotel bill—room & bath \$10 & tip \$5—& were on our way.

It had rained in the night and was drizzling when we set out. We put an umbrella in front of us, a coolie hat & a raincoat so were able to keep dry. It was 0545 when we left Ch'ang Ling. After riding for a while we broke out some of our supplies & had breakfast—melba toast, eggs, dates, dried persimmons & fresh oranges & pumelo [*sic*] we had bought in Ch'angting. The oranges were \$5 per pound & the pumelo \$2 each.

The driver forgot to get something at Ch'angting—some sort of a permit—so we had to go back 6 km and get it.

It was 0945 when we reached Taya & finished our breakfast.

At 1200 we reached Nan Yung. We had quite good roads so Mary & I had a snooze. I held her for a bit then she held me.

At 1700 we reached KuKong (which is Shin chow in the Cantonese dialect & Hsiaw Kuan in the Mandarin). It is quite a large city between 2 rivers which join & which

eventually become the Pearl River.¹ The streets are crowded with refugees. Mat sheds cover the outskirts. First we went to the China Travel Bureau but the hotel was full so we called on Mr. Lockwood of the Y.M.C.A. & he took us to a Chinese restaurant for supper then out to his house to sleep.

May 10. (Sunday)

Up at 0630 brkfst with Mr. Lockwood, down to the train to see about tickets & sending our baggage to Hen Yang.

Mr. Rice wanted to get a check cashed but could not because it was Sunday. We thought for a while about going on (Mary & I) & leaving Mr. Rice behind or a day but decided against that because we thought it unwise to be separated. Eventually we got our stuff off the truck & checked at the station to be sent on. Then we were free for the day. We got Mr. Lockwood & he took us to a Cantonese restaurant out of town for chow. The food was really excellent. We ate in a large mat shed by the river.

After chow we decided to do some shopping. The prices of things are fantastic—cotton stockings \$40, cotton men's undershirts \$25, men's socks \$29, pumelo \$10 each. Mr. Rice bought a pair of garters for \$16.

Cigars are quite reasonable & good. \$3 each for large ones & \$2.40 for ten, small, excellent ones.

We bought 2# of Crescent baking powder for \$36 each.

I believe just about anything could be obtained here if one desires to pay the price. Mr. Rice bought a tin of Embassy cigarettes for \$55.

We came back to Mr. Lockwood's at 1800, listened to the news, then went out again for supper.

We went into a restaurant & ordered a regular course of Chinese food. They brought us knives & forks but we said we didn't want them! Then we were served soup in foreign dishes so we had to have our soup spoons. Then they brought us fried chicken foreign style so we had to give up & use knives & forks. We finally found out they served only foreign food there, not good foreign food at that. Mr. Rice said he preferred good Chinese food to bad foreign food any day & we all agreed.

Then we went back to Mr. Lockwood's for the night & listened to the news from KGCI on his portable radio, big sea battle, 19 Japs ships lost,² & went to bed.

May 11, '42

Up at 0700. Had brkfst at Mr. Lockwood's. Rested until noon. Went to a Cantonese restaurant had a fine Cantonese meal. From there we went to the Y.M.C.A. to say goodbye to Mr. Lockwood. I bought 10 boxes of cigars, 10 in a box, \$2.40 per box. Then we shopped for shoes for Mary. Got 2 pairs. One pair shoes \$95 & one pr sandals \$60. Then we went back to Mr. Lockwood's, had tea & went to the station.

Train pulled out at 1800. Mary & I had a compartment. The Pullman we rode in was made by the American Foundry & Export Co. so was quite good. We had chow on the train. Very poor food especially after having had such good Cantonese food.

I was unable to sleep after midnight because of bugs! We got into Hen Yang at 0400

¹ The Pearl River or Zhu Jiang or less commonly, the "Guangdong River" or "Canton River."

² Battle of the Coral Sea, May 7-8, 1942. Probably a preliminary report as the number of Japanese ships lost is incorrect.

May 12.

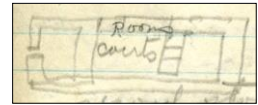
The manager of the China Travel Service took charge of our goods at the railroad station to transport them across town to the other railway station for the trip to Kweilin. After 6 hours our goods finally got to the other station & were weighed in. We had to cross a river & the railroad bridge was out so we had to cross in small boats.

After we had the goods checked in we walked a couple miles to a restaurant for chow.

Heng Yang is beyond a doubt the dirtiest place I have ever seen. Mary and I sat at a table in the waiting room, put our heads down and snoozed for a couple hours. We got on the train at 1700 & the train left at 1900. The compartment car was more luxurious than the first one but I didn't even try to go to bed. Mary had the lower berth & fought bugs all night. I sat by a little table with my head on it & got quite a bit of sleep.

May 13.

We were met at North Station of Kweilin by a representative of the China Travel Service. We continued on the train to the south station where we got off & went to the "Paris" (Pa Li) Hotel. I hope I never again have to stay in such a place. It was, perhaps, at one time a Chinese home & had been converted to a hotel. It was a series of courts, like this with rooms around the courts. We lived in second story. All water & refuse was tossed into the courts. We had no windows except paper with numerous peep holes for the natives to look in. Mary, fortunately, was asked to stay at the Baptist Mission Compound by Miss Stalling. There she met Dr. & Mrs. Cauthen¹ whom she had crossed the ocean with when she came out.



I stayed in the Paris Hotel & again fought bugs all night. Mr. Rice said he killed 21 on his net & 11 on the bed. I was too busy to keep count! I put on a pair of long sox & pulled them over my pajamas, put on a shirt & stuffed it in my pj's & put a pair of sox on my hands. I got to sleep at one A.M. I was so tired by that time, not having had much sleep for two nights that I let the bugs eat.

May 14.

Up at 0930. Mr. Rice had gone & left a note saying he was going to see about Radio gear.

Went to see Mary. She was still in bed. She still had a sore throat & a sniffing cold caused, perhaps, by lack of sleep & coal smoke.

Local military would not release radio gear. They had instructions to let it pass but they said the instructions had come through long before we arrived! Mary & I had chow at the Gov't Hotel (foreign style). 1530 tea as a guest of Mr. Rudy Yung. Radio gear released & arrived at 1800. Put it in Mission godown. Had sardines, toast, peanut butter, dates & coffee in our room with Miss Stalling then turned in.

¹ Baker James Cauthen was Secretary of the Orient of the International Mission Board and lived with his wife and two children in China until 1954. Some of their life in Kweilin in the early 1940s was published in the Baptist Press, August 23, 1965, in an article by Robert Hampton, found here: <http://media.sbhl.org.s3.amazonaws.com/2078,23-Aug-1965.pdf>.

May 15

Up at 0600 after a wonderful night of rest. We realized more & more how nice our home was in Foochow. Over to gov't house for brkfst of oatmeal—no milk—eggs, rolls & coffee.

Put radio gear in godown on rice bowls to protect it from white ants.¹

Found my whites² that we had kept in my seabag were wet & mildewed.

Had lunch with Mr. Rice then out for a walk to the top of a hill, after looking at a few air raid shelters. Caves are utilized as air raid shelters. The rock formations here are very strong. They remind me of ice pinnacles. Mr. Rice invited us to chow with Mr. & Mrs. Werrink,³ former Dutch Consul in Canton. The war has unbalanced Mrs. Werrink. Sat on lawn waiting for Mr. Werrink to return.

May 16.

Up at 0630. Mary not feeling very well. We tried to find a shop that was said to be serving good coffee. Unable to find it so we went back to gov't Hotel for bkfst. After brkfst feeling rotten so we both went to bed & slept till noon. Mary was feeling worse. Mr. Bansam came with a soldier who had been appointed to guard us while in Kweilin.

Read most of afternoon still not feeling very well. Mary had temperature of 100° at noon. Dr. Bakon came at night & thot Mary had flu. Mr. Rice also had temp of 100°. At 1800 Mary's temp had risen to 102°.

Mr. Rice received a telegram ordering us to proceed to railhead to arrive May 21st so we shall probably leave here 19th or 20th.

At dinner tonite Mr. Rice told me a story he had heard from a white Russian who had escaped from Hong Kong after its fall. Here are some of the things:

Canadian forces who hadn't been in HK for very long didn't know their way about. When ordered into battle they didn't know where to go & some never found their regiments. Stone Cutter's Island was abandoned but the forces on HK didn't know it & blew up munition barges as they brought munitions over from the island.

Troops trained on Kowloon were used on KH side & vice versa; men did not know terrain.

Morale of Scottish Highlanders was at very low ebb. They were not allowed in first class hotels or recreation centers frequented by officers. They had been stationed in HK for a number of years. Of the 900 men 3,000 venereal cases were treated.

All boats along Kowloon side were ordered destroyed. They were destroyed before any of the mobile units which had been concentrated in Kowloon had been transported to HK. Many block houses had been mined by Japs before war broke out. Mr. Rice said that would have been very easy. We had often been around those block houses when they were unguarded.

During peace time maneuvers the same place was always attacked. This was the weakest spot in the defense of HK. The Japs attacked the same place.

One place four Japs swam across & landed on HK. This was reported by outpost but COs⁴ would not believe it. It was 2 hours before outpost could convince headquarters; by that time 4,000 Japs had landed.

¹ termites

² Dress white U.S. Navy uniform.

³ Spelling uncertain

⁴ Commanding Officers

In the gap between Victoria & Repulse Bay the Jap landed & advanced inland. British ordered withdrawal but did not inform one regiment which forced Japs back & delayed capture of HK for 6 days. Kowloon was ordered evacuated but Indian policemen were inadvertently left behind with rifles without ammunition.

British officers were seen drunk in HK hotel during siege.

Mosquito boats¹ were very effective.

Isolated units fought bravely & some did not surrender & were wiped out.

HK was not prepared for land attack. Exploding shells were of armor piercing type & would not explode until they had buried themselves too deep in the ground to be effective.

Japs did not come down roads as had been expected but came over rough terrain which was not properly fortified.

May 17.

Rain, wind, thunder. Up at 0600 Mary still fever 100.2 – 100.6. Got meals for Mary. Mr. Rice has slight temp. Mr. Rice's boy, Lu, finally arrived. Prices here fantastic. Coffee \$130 per lb. Cocoa \$180 per lb. Shoes, cheap grade \$140. Suits \$2,000 & up. Oranges /\$35 per doz, electricity \$2.50 kwh. Carnation milk \$16 for ½ pt. Palmolive 12 per cake. Tomato juice ½ pt \$65 Delmonte pineapples \$75.

May 18

Mary still in bed fever down. 15 grains quinine per day. Got her meals for her.

May 19

Air raids in morning. Went to caves north of town. Bombs dropped outskirts. Went to movie at night. Mary ok – little weak.

May 20

Up at 0530 to get radio gear to railroad station. Stuff was put on one man carts (5). On way to station we were caught by air alarm. 4 J planes over no bombs dropped.

Had bkfst & lunch at 1200 in Cantonese restaurant. Had to leave when another air raid alarm sounded. Went out to a cave. I went exploring after alarm, did little shopping.

3 cans Carnation milk \$102.00 pt size

1 tin cocoa ½ lb 90.00

1# sugar, brown local, 7.50

Got on train at 2100. Left Kulilin at 2140.

May 21st arrived Lin Chow at 0500 (south station). Our baggage had come but radio gear had not. Mr. Rice & Mr. Yen remained in Lin Chow. Mary, Mr. Rice's boy & I came on to Ching Cheng Chiang arrived at 1400.

Mr. Framey CMM was here with Navy truck.

Mary & I roomed at Liek Su Ping Kuan. Had supper here. Waiters would not accept tips.

¹ Small, fast, unarmored and lightly-armed torpedo boat usually used in inland waters.

Chungking, China
May 21, 1942
(c/o American Embassy)

Dear Mom:

What a thrill it was for Bill and me on arriving in Chungking to find Air Mail for both of us! Just before leaving Nanping, May 6th, I'd had one from Felix, full of news, but it sure was thrilling to have one from you. It arrived here May 5th (written April 5th) – pretty good! I can't possibly begin to tell the trip in detail, but here we are, having traveled by truck, train and truck again; riding on top of our stuff! If we hadn't had such a marvelous driver we'd never had lived to tell the tale. The most dangerous mountain roads you ever saw! In some spots and nearly every turn showed evidence of accidents, some remains of trucks still there or a few hundred feet below in the valley! I'm not the tough guy I thought!

On arriving at Kweilin (just about half way) I picked up a flu bug & was in bed 3 days with fever. The 4th day I had to get up because of air raids. We were there a week so I quite recovered, except for a miserable cough which hangs on & on. Bill & Ed both had colds, but Bill seemed to throw his off quickly. We got thoroughly sun & windburned riding in the open, so I'm peeling, for the 2nd time on the trip.

Chungking is frightfully hot & damp! And full of soft coal smoke!! Otherwise it's quite a city & very active. Bits of old & new China mixed. I expected a real old Chinese city, but I've found wide streets, electric power, cars galore and frightening prices. It will take every cent that Bill draws out here to live. No houses to be had & no rooms, hardly. We were fortunate in finding a kind of apartment on the top floor, but on a hill where there's a breeze and excellent view. We will probably melt but it's a roof over our heads. No bath & no running water, but that's nothing new. There was a time where rents were comparatively nothing, but not so now. A new house will rent for \$13,000 per month! That's Chinese currency but with exchange (maybe) 20 to 1, you figure it out.¹ Meanwhile, while getting our new place cleaned up – our new flat – Bill & I are in the Navy quarters just below the embassy, and are wonderfully taken care of. The food is wonderful and there's ice-cold water!

For hills, the city is worse than San Francisco – it's all up & down steep steps anywhere you go except along the river front. Our place is a good 20 minutes climb from the quarters here. I doubt very much that I'll be going out very much in hot weather. Fortunately, we are on a hill and there are lovely gardens – cool spots all around the place. When not in an air-raid shelter I shall probably be under the trees. Today it's 91° in my room right now – and sticky! Foochow was bad enough! You must be getting letters now, for I've written nearly every week and have sent several air mail. From now on I'll use only air mail. In fact, that's the only way they get thro' now.

I'm so glad you like Helen [Smith] and we are thrilled, Bill & I, to know that Merlin and Eunice [Bishop] are finally to be together. It's been a long, patient struggle for M. and Eunice, I'm sure, has finally given in wholly & happily. How we'd love to see them, but not until after the war. How fortunate, too, that the Beards and a lot of others went home last summer! When in Bridgeport I hope sometime you'll have Geo [George Buckhout] drive you out to Shelton (Century Farm) to see them – please do for Bill's & my sake!!

¹ \$650 1942 U.S. per month, equivalent to \$7,558 in 2013 U.S. dollars. [<http://stats.areppim.com>]

We've had rumors that Foochow is to be (or maybe is) occupied again! Bill & I are very fortunate to be here! There are others of his pals here, all itching to get home. Bill has been out the longest of any—nearly 5 years. This had better be a birthday greeting, too, Mom! I hope it reaches you by then. You know all my love goes with it and Bill's too. A very Happy Birthday and keep away from the erry sepalis!¹ You can always find out about us thro' the Navy Dept. It's funny, Bill's mother wrote the Amer. Board to find out how to reach him.

Much love,

Mary & Bill

P.S. Boston office holds my policy which is paid thro' May 42. Could you take policy and hold it for me. Meantime I'll write them to transfer what money I have in accts there to you so you can make payments. They are no longer under obligation to hold the policy for me!! #49503081 is policy.

Love, Mary.

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

(written July 12, 1942)²

Mr. Rice arrived with the radio gear May 22nd. Gear was loaded on the truck & we made preparations to leave the next day.

May 23rd we left the railhead at Chin Cheng Chiang (Golden City Rivers). We were quite crowded. Framey had consented to take a Mrs. Stoneman, her daughter & an interpreter to Kwieyang. We were, besides the above party, Mr. Rice & his boy, Mary, Framey, Frankie (Framey's interpreter), Mr. Yen, & myself. The truck was a 2 ½ ton Mack diesel. We rode on top the baggage in the front of the truck.

We spent four days on the road & arrived in Chung King May 26 just about 3 weeks from the time we left Nanping – exactly 20 days.

The scenery from Chin Cheng Chiang to Chung King was much the same all the way. Sometimes we would come to what we thought might be rolling country only to come in a short while to mountains 4 or 5 thousand feet high. It was mountainous and, in many places, going through gorges, thru winding trails. I was reminded of our own Rockies at home.

When we arrived in Chungking we went to the quarters where the Navy men live. We were met by no one so we went to the "Dutchman's" for chow.

Mary & I had to stay at the "club" for 3 weeks. We slept in the library & ate with the men.

We were then able to obtain apartment at "Ma An Shan" for \$700 a month—nothing furnished but a few pieces of wicker furniture, table, bed, writing desk, etc.

¹ The exact meaning is unclear, but often Mary joked by mispronouncing words or reversing syllables. The editor's best guess is 'erry, a cockney pronunciation of *hairy* and *sepalis*, Latin for *sepal*, part of a flower. Mr. Buckhout's father was a botanist, Mary grew up with botany, and this phrase may either be part of a running family joke or it may caution Mrs. Buckhout about her allergies.

² His own note.

c/o Naval Attaché
Amer. Embassy
Chungking June 18, '40

Dear Mom:

Since living in this fair city, I begin to feel like “Andy” when it comes to doing accounts – “\$2,000, \$5,000, \$8,000” – and that’s not the end! It’s a wonderful city. We’ve seen two movies, namely “Broadway Melody of 1938” and “Honolulu” which wasn’t quite so ancient! The one praiseworthy thing about this place is its connection & communication with the other side of the earth—at least there is that! Even tho’ we may be some 5 years behind time. Anyway, it’s a grand feeling to know that when a letter is mailed it will get to its destination. That’s something we were pretty sure would not happen from Foochow. But if I were given the choice of the two cities, I’d grab at Foochow! The more I see of China, the better I like Foochow!!

A “flu” bug overtook me on the trip and tho’ I’d had some rest on the way it caught up with me again upon arrival here, so that getting into a place of our own was delayed. We’re in, however, merely camping on the few pieces of furniture that were here. Fortunately there is a comfortable bed, and a lovely big sun-porch window effect that looks out over the river and the dirty city beyond. However, we have a breeze and green trees around us! We’re in an apartment (?) on the 3rd floor. There’s nothing gained by going into detail about it, but it’s a roof over our heads and a place of refuge, away from most of the soft coal smoke [that] fills the atmosphere. I still have a cough from my cold and I doubt that it will clear up very soon. White clothes will never be white again!! We have quite a climb up steps, etc., before we get to the floor, but then one has to climb anywhere one goes in Chungking. I’m sure getting old, I guess. These steps just take the tar out of me and I’m good for nothing when I get to the top. Climbing Mt Tom, as we often did at night, was just nothing!! There are chairs, of course, but it’s a choice of having a meal or riding to the top of the hill!!

We haven’t even a stove or a bathtub yet, but in due time we hope to have. We are fortunate in being allowed a certain amount of the stores from the canteen—that is a blessing and a boon I never expected. When I think of having some pineapple & maybe a little coconut—it’s almost too fantastic.

June 24th

On rereading this, I guess I was in a grumpy mood when I began it! Since then I’ve been “on duty” for Bill came down with malaria, his first taste, and it really has taken the tar out of him, but he’s coming along & feeling more like himself. Sunday night 3 of his buddies from the Radio gang came up to see him & brought a big supply of excellent ice cream. I’d have Bill sick every Sunday if that would be repeated!

We’ve had some stifling weather, broken yesterday by a hard blow & rain—also again today. The coolness now is wonderful. It’s the usual thing to “steam” during the summer here—worse than Foochow, really. I hope we don’t have [to] put up with it any more than 2 summers! As yet, I haven’t answered Felix’ grand latter! There are a dozen & one things to attend to in a new place and servants can be so stupid! I’m losing all the patience I ever gained in Ing tai!

This is enough of ‘letting off’ in one letter. Maybe the censor won’t approve of it anyway –

We’ll be thinking of you in good old So. Hadley & all the kids. I keep thinking, too, each day, if this is Helens’ day!!¹ Give our love to everybody. I’ll have to rely on you to get the news around. It’s quite impossible to write everyone under the present conditions. Give ‘em all my love, anyway –

Much love to you and Pop,
Mary & Bill

32 Ma Ngan Shan
Chungking, China
June 29, 1942

Dear Mom:

I’ve just sent in a radio message to you, hoping you’ll get it on the 4th or soon after! We’re gradually (and I mean gradually) getting settled in the apartment. If I had to do the work myself, I’d get along faster. The day I set foot on U.S. soil will be the happiest for several reasons, one being that there won’t be any servants!! But that’s minor!

Right at our front door there is a small chapel where they hold Anglican services every second Sunday. We have been attending, swelling the congregation to 12 sometimes! I can go in and fiddle on the organ whenever I want to.

July 8 – still 1942!

Your birthday went by but I thought of you and your birthday cake with frosting!! I hope you were allowed enough sugar for that. I thought of you all gathered on the lawn for a picnic party—everybody home & all the grandchildren. If that didn’t happen, don’t tell me, because I like to think of you and Pop & all the family out there under the trees while we stew, sometimes up on the top floor here! But Chungking has its compensations—for instance, apples!! Tiny tho’ they be, they’re still apples and being without them for three years makes them seem twice as good as they really are.

Last week I went to my first luncheon party (“tiffen,” they calls it!) up in the hills where everyone used to spend the summer in the good old days. There are lovely spots under the pines, reminds me somewhat of camp in Pennsylvania.² The only drawback to living here is expense! So we’ll just content ourselves here in 7th heaven.³ There are what are called 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Ranges.⁴ The trip to 1st Range is very short and much easier than any trip up Kuliang. We’re planning to picnic out there soon.

Both Bill & I are feeling fit as fiddles, now that we are passed our “flu” & malaria spells. This atmosphere isn’t as wet as Foochow was last summer and tho’ the temp is higher, it’s much easier to bear. But I still get wet thro’, no matter what the atmosphere is like.

Meeting a few people & seeing more of the place does give a very different impression. The first few days seemed unbearable. We’ve heard that some of our friends from Foochow will be stopping here en route to India. One rather elderly gentleman,

¹ Mary’s sister, Helen, gave birth to Edith Packard Howe on June 16, 1942.

² Cherry Run, north of State College, where Mary’s mother and others from State College spent their summers.

³ The highest heaven, wherein sits the Throne of God.

⁴ Possibly the Daba, Wu, Wuling, and Dalou mountains surround Chongqing [Chung King].

Methodist Missionary, intends to have an operation for cataracts somewhere in India [where] there is a specialist for that. We're planning to put them up here with us, but they don't know it yet. It will be such fun having news from the folks in Fukien. I miss them all much more than I believed I would. Just asked Bill what he wanted to say – "Hello," says he! And some other things, but he means well!! Must be my influence.

One of the fellows is living with us temporarily. Most of the time we were in Foochow, someone was with us, seems natural to have someone here.

Nothing exciting, not even the 4th! Very quiet, peaceful, bah & lazy! River is very high & dirty. I'd give most anything for a swim somewhere. You should see our tub & bath! Shades of the 90s and GrandMa. The water consists of the coolie who runs from the well to the bathroom! Runs & fills the tub, then runs and empties it!

Well, love to you & everybody, and here's for bigger and better baths.

Lots of love,

Mary & Bill

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

July 13, 1942

Temperature dropped to 85° during night. It was up to 99° yesterday & going to be hot again today. We are high above the dirty, yellow Yangtse River here in our apartment. From our dining room window we can look across to the city of Chungking. At our backs there are quite high hills where there are summer homes.

14th 1942

Hot again today!

Had night watch at radio station last night. There are 4 of us who stand watches in 2 sections. One section is on for a day & off a day. One man takes a watch from noon till supper, from supper to breakfast & breakfast to noon. It is a twenty minute walk from here to the American embassy where the station is located. We are now communicating with Karachi, India; Kunming & Dinjan. We have two receivers & one 150 watt transmitter.

July 18.

I had the night watch last night so slept from 11 this morning until four this P.M. Mary had tea for me when I got up. The relative humidity is much lower here than in Foochow. Usually there is a difference of about 10° between the wet & dry bulbs. Therefore, the air is much clearer & the sunsets are spectacular.

I was told yesterday that I have been recommended for advancement to Chief Radioman. If it is approved I shall receive an increase in salary from \$245 to over \$300. This will be very welcome as we are spending all my salary & subsistence and are forced to stop our allotment.

c/o Naval Attaché
Amer. Embassy
Chungking
July 20, '42

Dear Mom & Papa,

I'm sending off a birthday greeting to you, Papa, hoping it will reach you in time (via radio). This may be late, but Bill and I are sending you our love and heartiest greetings for August 4th! We'd love to be there to give it in person, but that time isn't so far off.

I've been awfully slack in getting letters to the rest of the family but I think of them and will have to count on you as distributors!

For nearly a month we had a young man living with us. He left for the States! It's wonderful how people get around. We've recently heard of folks on their way here from Foochow. What fun it will be to see them. Hope to send you news (!!!) by word of mouth, then.

We stew & broil & bake alternately here, but I've had two lovely trips up into the hills. At last we have found a swimmin' hole and plan to go up for the day, soon. We lost our swim suits on the way out here, but that's a small matter!

I'm feeling better than I've felt for a couple of years (during the hot weather), even to the extent of doing all the washing in a wooden bucket with only water and soap and good old "elbow grease." Sheets, too! So far, any outside laundry sends the things back worse looking than they were when I sent them out! So, I've taken to trying to clean them up. The poor cook has his troubles, too. His first bread was delicious. The second batch is worse than a failure! Perfectly good flour ruined! The coolie is too darned lazy even to wash himself! You folks don't know just how lucky you are with no servants to mess up the house & spoil food for you! Gripe! Gripe! Outside of our domestic troubles, we get along pretty well.

Last Sunday I played for my first Anglican service on an organ with a B^b counterpoint in the bass! A few of the notes just don't sound and most of the stops are useless. "We" got through the service, however. Went out to dinner this Sunday. Bill couldn't because of his hours. One of the native foreign families, very nice, had Ice Cream! Last nite we had Ed come over for dinner and an evening's chat. He's such good company. Isn't it wonderful that Bill wants to have folks in! It's such a task to get anywhere in this place that I don't get out very often. When it gets cooler, tho, we can really do some hiking around & see the country. I said I'd been to the hills—to a "sewing circle"! It means a good lot of gossip, a good luncheon, & tea in the p.m.! Thro' the gossip, however I detest it, I'm learning quite a lot about "the former" days.

Wish we'd hear from Helen B & Helen S & Eunice & Merlin. Bill & I were and are very fond of the Bishops, as we hope they are by this time, wondering what Helen B's offspring is, too.

Keep writing. It's a bit trying not to know what's going on. Much love to you Mom & Papa – from both Bill & me.

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

July 27.

Although the temperature has been high, Mary & I have felt much better than we did in Foochow. The thermometer has registered at least 97° every afternoon. The relative humidity has been around 80 to 90 percent. We have had no rain & everything is drying up.

Washington approved the naval attaché's recommendation that I be advanced in rate to Chief Radioman. Under ordinary circumstances I would not be eligible because I wasn't first class long enough & had not been graduated from the Radio Materiel School at Belleview (Washington) D.C. I was recommended because of "meritorious service." "Meritorious service" in my case was being able to stay in China for 5 years without going completely crazy.

We have been having trouble with our water coolie. I have insisted that he be fired and a good one hired but have had no results as yet.

July 28.

Just heard another example of the graft of Chinese police. One of our workmen, a Chinese, was bringing an electric motor back from the city when stopped by the police. They asked to whom the motor belonged. When told the U.S. Navy they said, "How do we know?" and took the motor to the police station. Alson, RM 1/c, went over after it but they said they wouldn't let him have it until he had a letter from the Embassy. Alson became angry & told them to turn the motor over to him or he'd refer it to his commanding officer, whereupon they turned the motor over to him.

Had our first air-raid since being in Chung King last nite. Just before supper at 1900 our cook said one ball was up. We ate our supper. I insisted on doing so. Mary was too nervous to eat much. After supper Mary, Miss Webb & I went to the cave near the British Embassy, about 200 yds from here. After about an hour planes were heard. I stood outside the cave but could not see the planes. They circled overhead a half dozen times then flew away. We didn't wait for the "all clear" but returned home ½ hour after 2 balls were run up.

The system of alarm is as follows:

1 ball, planes are approaching probably 200 miles away.

2 balls, planes coming nearer, within 100 or 75 miles.

No balls or a black streamer, planes have arrived

2 balls planes going away – 75 – 100 miles away

1 ball – 200 miles away

No balls – all clear

It was a beautiful night, clear & moonlit. I saw about 100 searchlights but they made a pathetic attempt to find the planes.

32 Ma An Shan
Chungking, China
Aug 2, 1942

Dear Mom:

Only 99° in the house this p.m.! and our tongues hanging out for rain. We've just had tea with our neighbor, Sara, whose apartment opens off of ours. The one who has the most to

offer for tea is hostess on our floor! When her cook has just baked bread, tho', I manage to have tea with Sara. No matter how hot it is, tea is a must.

I wonder if you are getting our radio messages—I hope so. I haven't kept count. One a month is the limit and I plan to use it. If I ever get the ambition I'll stay up some nite for the broadcasts from here. We get the most wonderful music from Germany! Japan is a close second, then London, & U.S.!! I've had it in mind to write San Francisco and ask for U.S.'s marvelous symphony concerts which never seem to be sent out here. It would be a deal sight better propaganda than what they do send! Guess I wasn't meant to be a propagandist or politician!! Just a pelican!

Bill and I took a walk into the country the other day in a boiling hot sun. We were soaked going & coming it was so hot. I haven't been able to quench my thirst since. Our cooling system at night consists of a washdown, no drying, and each of us taking a wet towel to bed to use for further dampening, and it works wonderfully. How I yearn for a New England summer!! The furniture is hot, the walls are hot, there's no such thing as a cool sheet or the cool side of a pillow!! Strangely enough this agrees with me much better than Foochow climate, but I'd like to be back there!

You probably read or heard of the night alarm we had here last week. The first air alarm since we've come. No doubt you knew as much or more than we did about the whole thing. We were in a dug-out an hour or so, heard nothing, knew nothing, had to get my information from San Francisco!

I'm nothing but a lady of leisure, now, since getting some servants who seem to be able to do things. So I've gone back to knitting & mending. It's quite fun to do sox. I've finished 2 prs for Bill and have one of a pr done for myself. Have gotten hold of old Readers' Digests & National Geographics which provide plenty of reading material and most interesting "Will F. D. R. take a Third Term", "No War in Europe" etc, etc—dramatic irony. Old Geographics (1922) telling of the Czechs' new freedom & their celebrations.

Our neighbor, Sara, was relieved of most of her winter blankets the other night! Besides some things she had stored for friends. It's a great place!

When it cools off, we may have a greater appreciation for our new home!

Take care of yourself, keep the home-fires burning. We'll be hitting the trail when the last gun is fired, and may that be soon.

Much love to you all and my best to all the S.H. folks.

Lovingly,

Mary & Bill

P.S. "We" are no longer "Rad. 1st" but Chief Radioman, now. Just got the "promotion."

M&B

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

Aug 7, '42

I just opened a new can of "Prince Albert." For the last few weeks we have had on hand a goodly supply of cigarettes, 2 cases were brought up from Kunming in a Navy truck and 2 cases were flown in from Karachi, India. 1 case of pipe tobacco was brought in from India. I could take the cigarettes I have on hand and sell them in Chungking for quite a bit of money. I have eight cartons of cigarettes which I could sell for \$8,000 (\$400 U.S.) and 5 tins

of pipe tobacco at about \$500 (\$35 U.S.) making a total of \$425 U.S. The tobacco cost me about \$5.50 U.S.

The money exchange situation for foreigners is fast becoming acute. Prices are steadily marching higher but exchange is remaining about the same. Prices are fabulous for the most ordinary things. I asked my cook to get me two rough boards about 4' x 2" to make two shelves. I would saw the shelves to fit myself. He reported he could get the boards for \$62 (\$3 U.S.). I made a wind closet for Mary out of a packing box and covered it with mosquito netting. Our cook said it would cost at least \$400 if we were to buy it. He priced a plain wooden bath tub at \$600.

We had a respite last night & today from 5 weeks of hot weather. The thermometer has dropped to 85° & it has been raining off & on all night & day.

Capt. Keller, an American employed by the Chinese government in the Salt Gabelle¹ was down at the center a couple days ago buying U.S. checks to send to his wife. He said he is being forced out of the Salt Gabelle. He has no authority & the job has become intolerable. He showed me a letter he had received from the head of the Salt Gabelle, an American, who had devoted 24 yrs to the job & was forced to resign.

Capt. Keller had just been to the American Embassy to register a protest. 15% of his salary had been kept back as a savings fund. According to his salary contract this money could be turned into U.S. currency at the rate of 3 to 1. The Chinese gov't cancelled that ruling & made it retroactive for 10 yrs., thereby practically confiscating that amount of the employee's salary.

[Postcard, postmarked 1942]

ChungKing

Aug 12th

Dear Mom:

Just to let you know we're fine & flourishing. Coolness has returned; can sleep now! We'll probably be hankering for some of these past hot sunny days in the winter! The neighbor's cat decided she would have her kittens in our wardrobe—found her just in time! Am knitting, mending, & sewing these days. You might put some 3¢ U.S. stamps in your letter—you see I can use them. Hope our messages are getting to you. Enquire about the Chungking Embassy Mail Pouch for your mail coming here.

Lunch is ready – have to eat!

Much love to all –

Mary & Bill

U.S. Navy Journal, H. Vilroy McVay:

Aug 22. '42

There was quite a bit of excitement yesterday. We heard only portions of the news in the morning & thought a second front had been opened in Europe. At 1500 we heard news reports from London & learned it had been a large scale raid on Dieppe² France.

¹ The commission that regulated the salt tax.

² On 19 August 1942, a disastrous seaborne raid was launched by Allied forces on the German-occupied French port of Dieppe. What was supposed to be a hit-and-run attack resulted in 3,367 Canadians and 275 British commandos killed, wounded or taken prisoner, the loss of a Royal Navy destroyer, and 33 landing craft,

Weather continues hot 97° yesterday. We were very uncomfortable during the night. Mary is just getting over a sore throat & cold & I have a sore throat now.

Have heard rumors that we may be sent home. Having been out here for 5 years “fighting the Chinese,” Mary says, the Naval Attaché things we have been here too long. Mary & I are beginning to think maybe he is right & we should go home.

c/o Amer. Embassy
Chungking
August 26, 1942

Dear Mom:

A letter from Etta got me caught up with what’s going on in S.H. and also told me she’d be Mrs. Joe Reynolds which, by now, she probably has been for a few months. I’m glad & relieved that they are finally married! And I have no doubt but that they will be very happy. I’m judging from experience, of course! There are, probably, their letters on way to me. I’m dying to hear just how the house was changed, etc. etc. and about Geo-Peg’s house & Helen’s baby. Everything seems so remote until a letter creeps in, just mentioning things, assuming that I know all! Someday I will, and soon, I hope.

A couple of weeks ago we had a 25° drop in temp one night - 98° to 73°!! Was hot again for a while and last night we had another such drop! I don’t know whether it’s the heat or the cool that makes me so sleepy, but I sure can sleep, except when it’s too hot.

My cook takes to changing our retinue of servants once in a while. He evidently takes our welfare quite seriously. We are now training in our third coolie who carries water & washes & sweeps floors, and our second amah¹ who does washing and ironing, etc. We seem to have a pretty good outlay now. Isn’t that terrific – 3 servants for two people! I may as well enjoy them (if I can) now, for times are coming when I won’t be so blessed (?). The sooner the better, says I. There’s nothing like being your own boss. When you’ve decided you want beef and the cook thinks you really mean pork, grrrrr! He’s really not so bad, though. I have to keep a couple of jumps ahead of him. One thing he does excel in is pie. And that pleases Bill. We’ve even had apple pie which neither of us had tasted since leaving home!

I plan to go up on the hills for a luncheon party on Saturday. Our land lady, who will soon be our next door neighbor, has invited me up before she has to come down. It will be a pleasant change!

It looks to me as tho’ this war were in for a good long session with a lot of beard-pulling and nose-tweaking afterwards. It would do my heart good to do some tweaking on my own part—wouldn’t have to go far, either. Christian influence and foreign influence are two different things unfortunately! But we are all part of the Allied Nations, now, and let’s hope both sides—all sides—are going to be broad enough to consider the other fellow’s point of view. Sometimes my patience reaches the limit!

Have you heard anything from or about the Beards? I’ve been thankful so many times that they went home last summer. Hope you have met Susan, too, as well as others.

suffering 550 dead and wounded. The RAF lost 106 aircraft to the Luftwaffe's 48. The German army casualties were 591. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk>]

¹ House girl

Merlin & Eunice ought to get up your way sometime. Golly, we miss all those folks. We might nearly as well be on a desert island as this place. There are lots of nice folks here, but it's not quite the same as having your old friends to call on. Guess I'm still "stodgy."

Will you be in "Californaiay" or "Floridy" this winter? Depends on the furnace, eh?? Maybe Alasky?

Lots of love to all at home & not at home. We think of you all the time.

Love from us both,

Mary & Bill

c/o American Embassy

Chungking

Sept 15, 1942

Dear Hellie and Pren:

Your November '41 letter just arrived, telling of "your condition" – tsk! Tsk! We had a radio message last year about this time, methinks, saying June would be a big month. Oh Boy! How big! And what's "it's" name and how are you, and "it" and how did Pren stand the ordeal, etc, etc - + a million more questions which can't possibly be answered until I see you! Boy, oh, Boy! What a day that will be! Keep this under your hat, for I don't know that there is anything to it, but we may be home within the year. I haven't said anything to Mom simply because she'd get all excited and it may not turn out that way at all. You can do as you think best about saying or not saying anything. Bill has been here (in China) as long, and longer than most of the fellows, and there are constant changes—he's ready to go and so am I altho' it undoubtedly means separation at home. That's the one thing that makes me think about staying here. But if "the boys"¹ do as well as they are right now, who knows but we may be "relieved" before we expected.

Now during my "spare" time—ahem—I'm trying to learn to type by the touch system. Bill brought a typewriter down from the Embassy, so I've got to learn, now. Also have a sweater in the making for Bill, and some more wool sox for me. We're just going to make do what we have in the line of clothes, for we wouldn't take any of those things home with us anyway! With most of my clothes I wear here, I wouldn't be seen in the kitchen at home! Haven't had a pair of stockings on since last winter, and no sox since the trip down here. Every time I come in from the street I have to wash my feet. Now I can understand why it was the custom in Biblical days to wash the feet upon entering a house. It's quite imperative where everything from soup to slip is thrown into the streets. And what a stench! Whew. Stink is too good a word for the odors that one gathers as one goes thro' these village streets! Oh well, we all had to learn, and maybe these people will, too!!

It will be wonderful to get to a place where there is running water, and water that's fit to drink without boiling. I'm living for the day when I won't have any servants about me, and when I can go to a market and buy my own food!!

Did you ever realize what a pleasure and delight that can be? We could live for much less at home than we have to spend out here. Bill's present income is twice what Pop was getting when I left, and it takes nearly all of that for living expenses only! This isn't complaining, it's just so inconsistent! In Fukien, living is about 1/3 what it is here. Even then we do without butter & cheese and good milk. We'll sure have a marvelous time at home!

¹ The troops

The American Bureau of Information puts out a fortnightly paper digest of other Amer. Papers & magazines, which keeps us in touch with things at home (and thoughts). Now and then we're lucky enough to see a Time or Life or Readers Digest. We haven't gotten any Digests since our Oct '41 issue, and do we miss it! We get news from London & San Francisco every day, and some of the good programs – Command Performance, Contented Hour, Hour of Chorus. Germany puts out wonderful musical programs and so does Japan, but when they put on their propaganda, Boy oh Boy – it's like comic relief!!! Time out for a cup of tea, but I'd better finish this off and start it on its way.

Love to you & Pren and "it" – Mom said "it" would be Mary Jane! Was it? Is it?¹

Much love,

Mary & Bill

c/o American Embassy
Naval Attaché
Chungking
Sept. 15, 1942

Dear Mom:

Yours of May 15th rec'd a few days ago. Yesterday, Helen's Nov 11th ('41) came thro! That's the way it goes, but I don't mind that, as long as they keep on coming! Every letter makes me want to get home and see everybody—the new babies, the new houses, etc!! But that, too, will come, sometime. We're doing our best to bring the rising sun² down out here. As one correspondent reworded—ahem—"The J's are gathering the largest undersea fleet in the world, and it is not composed of submarines!" Pretty good! It sounds good to hear about your "galavanting" about—go to it! I'd certainly do it every chance I'd get if I were in your shoes. I'm one to talk—it seems all I've done since being in China is go from one place to another. The gypsy life for me. Already I'm trying to figure out a way of getting to Chengtu³ to see what's going on there at the mission schools & college, and the "foreign" school—I believe the only one now functioning in free China.

Last week some of our Foochow friends arrived here for conferences, etc. The Caldwells (Methodists) who are about to retire were on way to Chengtu where Mr. S. must undergo an operation for cataract. So [as] well as "The Church Builder of China" he's made a name for himself as naturalist and bird authority and tiger hunter, and most anything you can mention, he knows about!! Fascinating to listen to and wonderful people to live with. Before leaving F. last summer, they lived with us a while. In the spring, Bill and I visited them and the Pilleys at Yangkow. Mrs. P. is their daughter. It was grand to have some first hand news of Foochow and the folks we left behind. Very hot summer, everywhere, and very trying, but they are sticking by and seem quite optimistic again. The C's just got word that one of their sons is "missing" in Java! again.

Bill is putting on weight I guess. Haven't any scales to prove it but he looks & feels so much better than he did last summer. He always said he didn't worry, but I know now that it was worry that kept him "down." My girth has increased too, darn it. Some of the

¹ Edith Packard Howe, born June 16, 1942, in Pleasantville, New York

² Japan

³ Chengtu: Ginling Christian Women's College was forced to move to Chengtu, where is shared the campus of West China Union University.

clothes I had taken in last summer are beginning to feel snug! But even with that, I don't weigh what I did when I came out. Whoopee!

Finally had a letter from Helen S.! Also a November '41 issue! Bill rec'd an Xmas card yesterday! (Xmas '41)

The Club is putting on a kind of dinner-dance and show next month and the committee asked me to help out. Singing "Over There" and a couple of other 1916-17 songs. Believe it or not, I don't know the words to Over There, and so far, can't find anyone who does know them. It'll be sort of fun, I think.

During my spare time (!) I'm trying to learn the touch system of typing, and it's a job after having hunted & poked for so long. Also have a sweater under way for my husband! And some more wool sox in the making. I find knitting quite fun and it goes quickly even with just a few stitches when listening to news or when visiting. Last Sat p.m. we listened for a message (telling you to use the address on this envelope—it's the embassy pouch!) we sent you & Mom McVay, but I guess we must have turned in too late or the station hadn't rec'd my letter.

Ed left for home last week. Guess he was pretty happy, too. He's been more than grand to Bill & me, was especially so on the trip out here.

How about some snaps of you & Pop, and the new arrivals and all that? Like nuts, we left our pictures etc. in Fukien, with some exceptions. Haven't any of Cynthia, for instance. Tell the in-laws & outlaws that they couldn't please us any better than by sending snaps of themselves and families!! That's the only way we'll know who's who when we see them all!

Much love to you & Papa – take care of yourself,

Mary & Bill

P.S. Bill is now rated Chief Radioman. Maybe I told you in a previous letter! Enclose some 3¢ stamps. We can use them in the Embassy Mail pouch.

Love – *M & B*

Chungking
Sept 27, 1942

Dear Mom:

Washington is sure letting your letters come right through! Once more I feel in contact with the family—for a while I began to think I was ostracized. I know, too, there are several of your letters still on the way. Your Aug 23rd rec'd this a.m. was the first indication what gender Helen's baby is!! Wherefore the Edith? Thank goodness it's not another Mary! There was something about "Hat on the war path again," which still is meaningless, since you explained in a previous letter not yet rec'd. All will straighten out soon!

By the way, Bill's rating has been boosted. I think I told you he's now Chief (CRM).¹ Isn't that grand? And while I'm about it, this paper is marvelous. Our supply is getting low, but it's enough to see us thro', especially if you keep on sticking this in now and then!

Earlier in the summer, I think, I wrote about my insurance policy which Boston still has. They no longer have any of my accounts so they cannot make any more payments. And as yet, I have not written them. However, in the near future I expect to send you a check

¹ Chief Radioman

which I'd like to have deposited in the H.F. Trust Co as a savings account in my name and from that payments could be made on my policy; i.e. if Mom B is willing to carry my business for me until I get home! You'd have to write Boston for the policy, however. I'll give no. & all data at end of letter; it's locked up at present & I can't get at it. We've had a week of drizzly rain & damp cool weather, but what we've needed. The next gripe will be the lack of sun, probably. The autumn ought to bring forth a few nice days, tho –

The Club opens its season with a dance Sat nite and yours truly has to perform—sing—you understand! Since music is scarce, it's still a question just what. Probably Roses of Picardy and Indian Love Call and some more stuff!! It's fun (for me anyway). Geo & Peg's house sounds like a mansion. Tell them to keep the guest room ready for us; we'll be wanting it. Why, Mom, you weigh as much as I do now! Chungking diet (?) or atmosphere agrees with me. Bill's putting on weight, too – he's needed to for some time. He was very thin last summer. Some of the fellows came over the other night and I had one of the standby cocoa cakes for them & coffee. I'll have to keep stocked up on cookies or something in case they drop in again. We want them to do just that. We were singing so lustily & playing the little portable organ to such an extent that one of the pedals gave up! Fun while it lasted! Nearly time for afternoon tea. Wish you were here to have some with us. I've written Levi often but probably nothing has reached her, but give her & Ets [Etta] & Joe [Reynolds] my love and here's a bushel of love for you & Papa.

Mary & Bill

c/o Naval Attaché
Amer. Embassy
Chungking
Oct 8, 1942

Dear Mom:

It certainly is grand having this paper! You're probably wondering why the scrap of music. Try it over and see what you think of it. I first heard it last year, in fact we sang it at the carol concert in Foochow. At first I wasn't much impressed, for the other tune we always sing to "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem," I thought couldn't be surpassed. However, this tune¹ haunts me and has all year. I think it is an exquisite melody, and can hear Meg's² choir singing it to perfection. I'm sending it to you, hoping she may take a fancy to it and have it sung this Christmas. There is room for improvement in the arrangement, that is, if it were to be used as a choir number. I think it needs more of a moving tenor for one verse & maybe a descant for soprano on another verse. Bill gave me the Songs of Praise two years ago and it's full of wonderful melodies, ancient ones & new, and a number of carols. That is one of the two books we brought from Foochow!

Within the last week Bill & I have been hitting the night life rather hard! Tsk! Tsk! We seldom stay up later than 9:30. Once the "early to bed" habit is formed, it's terrific trying to stay up any later. Last Saturday nite there was a dance at the club. Most folks danced until 3 a.m. but we called it quits at 11:30! Bill had to be up by 6 a.m. next morning anyway. Our "show" between dances went off quite well, the folks quite enjoyed singing a

¹ The tune known as "Forest Green"

² Margaret Bergevin, choral director for the First Congregational Church of South Hadley at the time.

few of the old War I songs and watching a few of “us young things” take exercises as training for bomber hostesses!! We were a clumsy lot, but it was fun.

Sunday nite a few of Bill’s colleagues took us out for Chinese supper—excellent food. Tuesday nite we saw our first movie at the Military Mission: “The Man Who Came to Dinner,”¹ a clever picture, excellently done. Tonite we’re gallivanting again! To the movies at the Mission. Then we shall probably settle down for a month of quiet life again! In between the “nite” life, I have luncheon dates and “tea or coffee” dates. “Sech [*sic*] social doin’s.”

Cool weather comes around & I start furiously knitting on Bill’s sweater again. A few warm days intervene and I put it aside. Last spring I had an old sweater given me; the wool was so good I ripped it up and am now trying to stretch it with some other wool I have, to make a sweater for Bill. It was originally sleeveless. I’m trying to get sleeves out of it too! It’s wonderful what one can do if one has to. But it’s most exasperating when I have to take out 10 or 12 rows & knit over!

Wendell Willkie² is in town, being feted by all good Chinese officials. I don’t expect to have the honor of meeting him, however. I’ve seen evidence of his presence, but not the man himself. He’s caused quite a stir. Last night we were surprised & delighted to hear from K.G.E.I. the voice of J.B. Powell, the publisher of “The China Weekly Review.” He was most cruelly treated while a prisoner in Shanghai. It was encouraging to know he, and probably many other Americans, had arrived home safely.

We shout for joy when we hear that the wizard, Kaiser,³ has come across with some more ships! I’m sure we’ll be overcome with the speed of things when we get home!

I’m looking for more letters from you! It’s almost as good as a trip home when one comes, and they’ve been coming fairly regularly. We just got the announcement of Eunice & Merlin’s marriage. We’d known it for some time. How we’d love to see them. I wish they’d make a call on you. Maybe they will. This is the last sheet, so I can’t write any more.

Much love to all,

Mary & Bill

Chungking. Oct 29 ‘42

Dear Mom:

Last week brought a letter dated Oct. 1941! This week, had your Sept 15th, also one from Hat and one from Helen. Hat seemed terribly down. Thought we were going without proper food & clothing, which is quite the contrary! We don’t splurge, but we have plenty. The other day we had a gift of 12oz of butter. Tinned, but it was butter! We stretched that over a week. We’re getting pretty well trained for rationing, don’t you think?

We’ve been having lovely days this past week and yesterday some of the fellows, Bill, & I took advantage of it—rode (by pony) off to the hills and feasted on fried chicken, potato salad, tomatoes, brownies (made by yours truly) and coffee made over a pine wood fire. It was a marvelous day, despite the fact my horse dumped me in a rice paddy! Fortunately, the field was dry! You can imagine me on a pony, for that’s all these horses are! No bad results, not even a bruise to show for it. We plan to go again soon. About once a week some of the fellows come over for coffee & cake or something in the evening. Lately

¹ A 1942 film adapted from a Kaufman & Hart comedy.

² Wendell Willkie was the Republican Party’s nomination for President of the United States in 1940.

³ American industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, creator of the Kaiser Ship Yards.

it's been brownies. Since I gave them the recipe I'm having competition, so I dare not serve them again. Will have to think of something very different!

On the average of every two weeks, we can take in the movies at the Army headquarters. It's much more pleasant than the public theaters, even tho' it's "pot luck."

Helen, in her letter, spoke about magazines. We do have access to Life & Time & Reader's Digest once in a while. No matter how ancient, we devour them. None of my Digests have gotten thro', now, for over a year! My subscription ran out in September. Ordinary mail is so slow and doubtful, I don't think it's worthwhile to try to send anything but the Reader's Digest, if she wants to do that. Even then, it may be just throwing her money away. However, if it's sent in care of the Amer. Embassy, we might stand a chance of getting one now & then (only one yr's subscription) no telling where we'll be next year! It would be wonderful to have it.

The International Women's Club will have a bazaar in December and one group of us is making dolls! My first experience. It's fun and uses up scraps of material! My specialty is clowns! Last week the group came here for the meeting. It was the coldest day we'd had & we nearly froze! With coal at \$2000.00¹ a ton, we'll just pile on all our clothes this winter and continue to go without fires! It takes a half a ton a month for the kitchen alone. I guess it will be a matter of moving the bath tub into the kitchen when a bath is wanted! So, you see, my knitting is a necessity for Bill & me—sox and sweaters, and more of them! There's no reading between "them lines."

The clippings were most interesting. It amuses me the way the army slaps on officers' tags!! Maybe I'm prejudiced! Why is Geo going to the Army? Higher rating?? Just assumed he'd stick to "ye good olde Navy." Well, there's work to be done. Must finish my clowns before tomorrow and do a bit of cleaning, which is eternal!

Much love to you from us both,

Mary & Bill

c/o Office Naval Attaché
American Embassy
Chungking, China
c/o Naval Intelligence
Washington D.C.
Nov. 11, 1942

Enclosed: 1 check for \$662.00

Dear Mom:

Here's something to add to my millions in my Hadley Falls Trust acct; probably there are \$2.00 in it! *Nance, could ya do it fer me?*² No doubt I owe you something for my insurance; at least there's a payment due in January, so keep out enough for that, and also how about getting yourself something you've been wanting (nothing more than a Buick) but didn't exactly need? Being way out here, I can't imagine just what that might be, but you must do it, from Bill & me and something for Papa. Santa doesn't like doing things this way, but it's the best he can do this year. You know our love goes with it. Don't forget to wrap them up & put them under the tree!! Now, if there's still anything left, and you have the

¹ \$329.40 in 1942 US currency. In 1944, coal in the U.S. cost \$4.50 per ton. [<http://www.telusplanet.net>]

² Possibly a quote from *Harper's Magazine*, from the story *An Altar on Little Thunder*, by Elmore Peake. It also could be from a number of popular cowboy westerns of the time.

occasion, could you get some sox for my Bill. I'm sure they'd come thro' in a letter or two. Couple prs of Interwoven sox, size 11 ½, mercerized or part wool, some real snappy ones!! Then later, a pair of silk stockings (does nylon¹ exist anymore??) fer me! This is quite an order I know. We can get along without them, but we'd be more presentable with them. Bill needs things more than I do. The rest of the money goes to my acct.

I heard via Mr. McClure via Boston that you had taken over my policy. I had written Boston to send it to you, but they got ahead of me.

Life goes on pretty much the same, with a few more magazines & papers coming along now & then. News reports & good old Charlie McCarthy! The Internat. Women's Club is getting ready for a bazaar next month. The Club is also busy with coming programs. The English church service needs some boosting. Think our Xmas choir might help some! Thank goodness, it's still mild and we get along without fires. Occasionally the sun comes out. On that day we wash everything!

I've had to take the cook in hand and teach him to cook without everything swimming in lard! He's finding out that it's quite possible. We also have a set-to now and then about the fire and smoke. No fire is any good unless it's fanned until the whole house is full of smoke. Oh Blessed Day! When I can run my stove the way I want it!! It's a great life. I'm glad I've had the experience. It'll cure me of servants forever! Enough of griping!

In spite of everything, Bill & I keep fit and make plans. We really ought to have quite a model family sometime!

Tell the kids to write, even if it's only a penny postcard – it would mean everything to us.

If there are any signatures necessary for this account of mine, or any blanks to be filled – can do. Just send them along. I've been out of “banking business” a la U.S.A. for so long that the procedure is entirely foreign to me.

Much love to you all,
Mary & Bill

c/o Office of Naval Attaché
American Embassy
Chungking –
Dec 23, 1942

Dear Mama:

At last there is something to write home about! If it hadn't been for Bill reading the *Army & Navy Journal* (Aug. 1942) we'd still have nothing to write. It seems he came across a list of promotions and found his own name among them! Upon investigation this morning it was verified that he's been Warrant Officer (Radio Electrician) for some months!! We're both thrilled and a better, or more encouraging Christmas present couldn't be expected! He could hardly sleep last night he was so excited, wondering if it were really he, or a twin! I was too pooped last night to catch the significance of it, but it's finally dawned on me.

I've been rehearsing—often and hard—the carol choir for the 25th at the church and the 26th at the club! Our program is enclosed. I guess my last letter was so long ago that you

¹ Most nylon was reserved for military use.

hadn't been told about it. The club wanted a carol program, and that's where I began! Even if I do say so, we have a good little chorus, a little heavy on the bass side, but then! 5 tenors, 7 bases! Two of the basses are really sub-bass! 7 sopranos and 4 altos (only one is a real alto; the others are doing it out of kindness of their hearts). We've been having great fun and they are doing excellent work despite the over-powering men. It's quite well balanced, too, for tone. Still, I seem to find plenty of "educatin'" to do. They didn't know one of the carols. I'm sticking to missionary work among our own kind. The fact that these people will sing at the church is one mile-stone crossed!

Meantime, we're trying to make the house Christmassy with a few decorations, such as we can create from cigarette tinfoil, etc. I've made some pomelo jam – really marmalade – which turned out grand! Now it's fruitcakes – very much modified tho' – but they do taste good.

Christmas Day we're having a few in for breakfast, our neighbors in the house who live alone – there are but 3 of them. Then we're all going to the church service – in fact we're all in the choir. Bill & I will be at the canteen¹ for Christmas dinner – after that I just won't eat for a few days! They put on excellent dinners there!

We sent a message last week, hoping it would get to you by Christmas. This month has just flown by! The international Women's Club held a bazaar and I'd been sewing (making dolls) for that until I didn't want to look a doll in the face. I haven't had a chance, yet, to attend one of their monthly meetings. After starting this carol business, it meant making individual copies of all the carols by hand – and that kept me busy. I think I'll write Helen and have her send me some Easter music. She'll probably be able to get it more conveniently than anyone. Maybe I'm being a little previous [early]! I left all my music in Fukien, except a hymnal!

Well, I've a gentleman coming in this afternoon for a singing lesson! No, I'm not in the business; he just wants a bit of help! So I'd better stop and prepare!

Much love to you all,
Mary & Bill

On January 2, 1943, Bill received orders to proceed "via first available China National Aviation Corporation airplane to Calcutta, India" because he had been reassigned to the Gulf Coast Base Service Unit in New Orleans, Louisiana. Mary related her experiences in the oral history taken by Melissa Martin.

"He was sent to New Orleans 'by any means possible.' So in a week or two he was out of there. I couldn't go. They didn't even know we were married. I mean, the Navy Department; we just didn't tell them because he was afraid that if he told them we were married that they would send me home, something like that.

"Well, there in Chung King I couldn't go with him because they wanted him to go 'by any means possible' and that meant flying him across Africa, which was in the throes of

¹ Cafeteria for military personnel

the African campaign¹ then and there were no accommodations for women, so it left me in Chung King.

“Anyway, we talked to his commanding officer when we were in Chung King and they arranged that I could go out later. Beyond that, I didn’t know. I knew when I’d get to India I would find some way of getting home.

“Bill got to India and his commanding officer there said, ‘Well, why don’t you want to travel with your wife?’ And he said, ‘Well, I do, and I was told I couldn’t!’ The commanding officer gave word that he could stay there, wait for me, and we’d go home together. So that’s how we got together finally, when I got to India.

“I flew the hump with a Chinese pilot, who was a real good guy. His name was Wong—I don’t know what else—but then millions of Chinese were named Wong. It was a civilian plane, but the commanding officer there could arrange for things. That was one thing about being with the Navy: they always made arrangements. They might not be what you wanted, but....

FLYING THE HUMP WITH DONALD SAM WONG



Donald Sam Wong, Captain
China National Aviation Corporation 1936 – 1942
U.S. Citizen, Native of Chicago, Illinois
[Image courtesy of cnac.org]

Born on April 11, 1909 in Chicago, Illinois, Donald Sam Wong secured his pilot’s license to fly single engine airplanes on August 31, 1931 and joined his buddies in China in January 1933, enrolling in further pilot training at Sky Harbor Airport to master flying passenger planes and ferrying cargo. In December of 1933 he

¹ The African Campaign began when Italy invaded Egypt in September of 1940 and ended with the surrender of Axis troops in Tunisia in May of 1943.

became the first certified Chinese/Chinese-American pilot for China National Aviation Corporation. By September 1937, he had logged over 3600 flying hours for CNAC.¹

Through December 16, 1944, Donald made many trips in DC-3 aircraft carrying supplies into China and people out via “The Hump,” to avoid detection and attack by the Japanese. In an April 1945 radio interview, Donald described the Hump as “a chain of mountains stretching down from Southern China from the Himalaya range of Tibet.” With peaks as high as 15-18,000 feet, passage was dangerous, compounded by unpredictable weather, where sudden storms reduced visibility. They flew ammunition, guns, trucks and gasoline into China and ferried scarce materials available in China... back to India. In addition, they flew refugees and wounded soldiers out of Burma.... While planes could seat around 30 passengers, the Hump pilots loaded on many as 75 refugees on some of runs out of Rangoon. As related by Donald, two Japanese MiGs chased him on one cargo ferrying trip between Kuming and Dinjan. With his cockpit full of holes, and his co-pilot passed out from the oxygen loss in the cabin, he was struggling to keep his plane airborne.

From *Flying the Hump* by C.V. Gines, Air Force Magazine, March 1991:

The distance from Dinjan to Kunming is some 500 miles. The Brahmaputra valley floor lies ninety feet above sea level at Chabua, a spot near Dinjan where the principal American valley base was constructed. From this level, the mountain wall surrounding the valley rises quickly to 10,000 feet and higher.

Flying eastward out of the valley, the pilot first topped the Patkai Range, then passed over the upper Chindwin River valley, bounded on the east by a 14,000 foot ridge, the Kumon Mountains. He then crossed a series of 14,000-16,000 foot ridges separated by the valleys of the West Irrawaddy, East Irrawaddy, Salween, and Mekong Rivers. The main 'Hump,' which gave its name to the whole awesome mountainous mass and to the air route which crossed it, was the Santsung Range, often 15,000 feet high, between the Salween and Mekong Rivers.

Pilots had to struggle to get their heavily laden planes to safe altitudes; there was always extreme turbulence, thunderstorms, and icing. On the ground, there was the heat and humidity and a monsoon season that, during a six-month period, poured 200 inches of rain on the bases in India and Burma.²

“Oh, I tell you, that was something,” Mary remembered. “Packed with Chinese, and their baggage and so forth. I was sick as a dog ‘cause we flew the hump with no oxygen. 20,000 feet over the Himalayas down to Burma, then a plane there to India. Everybody

¹ <http://www.cnac.org/donaldwong01.htm>

² *Flying the Hump*, C.V. Gines, Air Force Magazine, Vol. 74 Num. 3, March 1991.

was provided, of course, with a paper bag, just in case, and boy, I used it! Once I got rid of it I was fine.

“We were overnight in Burma in an Air Force station there. At least, that’s where I stayed; I don’t know where the Chinese stayed.

“A lot of the Chinese from Foochow area, the parents had gone to the South Sea Islands because they could get jobs, and rather lucrative jobs, and the younger people would stay up in China and they would send the money into China for their families. When they could they would leave to join their parents and grandparents or whoever, down in the South Sea Islands. A lot of them made a lot of money that way.

“We got a plane into Calcutta and while I was there I got this note from Bill that was brought in by some American servicemen who were on their way into China. That’s how I found out that I could join him and we could go home together.

“He joined me in Calcutta and they sent us back over to Bombay, thinking that we might be able to get a ship that’s going to the United States, ‘cause you had to be *on the spot* when the ship was leaving. There were no advance reservations, nothing like that. We did get a ship down to one of the other ports on the west coast; I’ve forgotten where it was. We couldn’t even go sightseeing, excepting locally, so we saw a lot of that place. Then they sent us down to Colombo, in Ceylon—Sri Lanka—Ceylon in those days. And we were there two or three weeks, it must have been, waiting for notice that there was a ship going to the United States.”

* * * * *

Karachi, India
Jan 29, 1943

Dear Mama & Papa:

Shops! Shops! And more shops! I’ve been hounding them every day and staring at things I ain’t seen fer many a year!! And ice cream!! It’s a marvelous discovery. Must get the formula for it! It’s taken 10 years off my life and put as many inches on me! I’ve never had such a splurge and I don’t expect another for some time to come. All in all it’s a wonderful world where you hit the good spots, and there’ll still be plenty of those left, I’m thinkin’!!

Needless to say, we are having the time of our lives here, and are looking forward to bigger and better things, for we’re headed in the right direction, don’t you think? Yours of the 28th Dec. arrived in the nick of time, otherwise you’d probably not be hearing from me! I’d decided that writing paper was excess baggage, etc—details following when they can be given verbatim.

We’re having ideal clear, sunny days and are bicycling everywhere. When we get tired of pushing ourselves we just get into a horse & carriage and off we go. Evenings are full of movies, some rather ancient, but all new to us!

Time out for lunch!

Back again, having done some more shopping. Meantime, my husband has run off with my pen! We're staying with a very lovely Christian Indian woman. She's been showing me some of the native shops and stores. Here's Bill—back with my pen!

My clothes are down to a minimum and what I mean is just that. The old blue suit is certainly proving its worth, and being overworked, too. A barrel is the next step. You'd revel in the fruits we're getting. Well, this is enough! I'm so full of things I meant to tell you, but that must wait a little while.

Lots of love to you –

Mary & Bill

* * * * *

Panama

Apr. 22, 1943

Dear Mom & Papa:

We're on our way – the last lap and hope to see you about the middle of May. That's as definite as I can be now but will telegraph you as soon as we hit land.

We'll go to Rob's & Martha's first. Then to Bridgeport then on to R.I. unless we've heard you are somewhere else. Anyway, it won't be long. We want to go to South Hadley via Boston (where we have a mission to perform) and want you to go with us! Now no excuses! There are books and things I want to send to New Orleans. Must go to the bank, attend to some business at M.H.C.¹ besides a million other things! Bill has only one month and we must divide that between New England and So. Dakota. Where is Helen Smith? I'm hoping she's in the Boston office!

I don't know where to get Hat but I hope there's a chance we can see here. Can you let her know – I'm dropping a line to Helen, too. I'm not writing to So. Hadley. Where can we stay? Do Bill & Doris have room?

We're so excited we can hardly contain ourselves. Expect to see land within the next 24 hours – after 5 weeks!

Much love to you both – see you soon.

Mary & Bill

“The name of the ship was Flying Cloud, or something like that,” Mary recalled in 1999. “[We] went south into the roaring forties, south from Australia, clear south to the coast of South America and then up the coast of South America to the Panama Canal. We went south to keep away from all shipping. One day we were given an alarm and we had to put on our safety equipment and all that sort of stuff just to be ready. We saw one other ship, but it was just like a haze in the distance. That's all it was. Never knew what kind of ship it was.

¹ Mount Holyoke College.

“Gee, I can’t remember the name of that captain.¹ He was so good. He even cleared one of the places where you carry freight, a hold, and filled it with water so we had a swimming pool. Oh, he was great. It was really a very comfortable trip. Even in the roaring forties. I got down there and I thought, ‘Oh, boy, I’m going to be seasick,’ but I wasn’t. The ship would just ride like this [*Her hand swoops in the air.*], over the wave like this, and down, and that way, and it was a smooth *zoop*.

“We convoyed from the Canal all the way up to New York. We didn’t encounter anything.”



[Image courtesy of Leif Høegh & Co., warsailors.com]

The Norwegian vessel M/S Høegh Silvercloud with Captain Odd Findahl arrived in Karachi from Durban, Australia on January 28, 1943 and departed on February 11, arriving at Bombay (now Mumbai), India on February 13; at Cochin (now Kochi) on February 20, and Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) on February 23. To avoid German U-Boats and Japanese warships, they traveled with various convoys that were directed by a joint allied agreement to use allied merchant ships and military escorts for protection in strategic areas.² Convoys listed in ship’s records are Independent, ZG.29, GN.56, and NK.543.³

They sailed from Colombo and arrived at Fremantle, Australia, on March 18, then hugged the coast of South America, arriving at Balboa, Panama, on April 22, then traveled through the Panama Canal to arrive at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on April 28. The “last lap” took eight days as the convoy hugged the U.S. coast, finally arriving at New York City on May 6, 1943.

Bill served in the United States Navy, received his commission, and retired at a Lieutenant. Mary Frances and their two children, Peter Owen and Mary Ai-Li, accompanied him to postings in the United States, post-World War II Europe and Turkey. In 1955 they returned to the family home at 39 Pine Street in South Hadley,

¹ Because information indicates that the ship from Colombo left in March of 1943 and arrived in New York City on May 6, 1943, it must have been the M/S Høegh Silvercloud. Her captain was Odd Findahl, who was in command until late 1943. More information can be found at warsailors.com/singleships/hoeghsilvercloud.html

² www.history.navy.mil

³ A list of ships in the convoy can be found at www.convoyweb.org.uk

Massachusetts, and eventually moved to 86 Ferry Hill Road in Granby. After a long life of serving God and country, H. Vilroy McVay passed to the Lord on March 1, 1999, at the age of 84. Mary Frances continued to serve God as an active member of her church community. With a passion to sing, love, and serve, she represented the First Congregational Church in South Hadley and the United Church of Christ in Granby in regional, state, and conferences of the United Church of Christ, and she maintained contact with her missionary family until she, too, passed at the age of 100.

~Mary Ai-Li McVay Kuntz - 2014