

YUKON ARCHIVES DONOR PROVIDED FINDING AID

Synopsis

We are making available the following donor provided finding aid as a source of additional information about the [Bill Labar fonds](#), as it may be a useful tool in your research. Please note that the document may not coincide with our current standards for description and / or may contain inaccuracies. Contact the Yukon Archives Reference Service for further information or assistance (867-667-8061 or yukon.archives@gov.yk.ca).

Fonds/collection title:	Bill Labar fonds
Accession numbers:	2016/27, 2017/5
Location codes:	MSS 560 to MSS 561 (2016/27) MSS 561 (2017/5)
Further information:	Synopses created by the donor

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Notes on the text in these synopses

- Anything in *italics* was composed by me in order to summarize or provide context.
- Words or phrases within [brackets] are insertions of mine for clarity.
- It was mostly unnecessary to correct spelling or grammar.
- Punctuation was also unchanged from the original in almost all cases.
- Ellipses (...) were inserted by me to indicate the omission of content that was immaterial or content that would have had meaning only to Bill.
- Indention of paragraphs is mostly faithful to the original with some insignificant exceptions at my discretion.
- Once in a while, paragraphs were rearranged to provide continuity of content.
- When Bill left the U.S., Helen and boys were visiting her family in southern Michigan. Evidently, the family had left the log cabin in the tiny community of Yarnell, Wisconsin, because Bill began to address his letters to the village of Edgewater, on Lake Chetac in the SW quadrant of Sawyer County.

Arthur T. LaBar

001 – Saturday, March 13, 1943 Edgewater to Union City, Michigan

Dear Helen and Boys:

Helen and boys (Martin, age 5; David, age 3; George, 8 months) are in Michigan with her parents and brothers. Bill had received a letter from David. Lonesome and looking for work without success, he hears of jobs on the Alcan Highway and also thinks of going to Rice Lake or Eau Claire to find work. Helen is suffering from back trouble.

Daddy Bill

002 – Monday, March 15, 1943 postcard Rice Lake to UC postmarked March 18

My Darling Wife:

Answer to prayer comes at last. I receive notice from Oke's today and went right to Hayward.

There, at the county seat, he had to get a permit card from the U.S. Employment Agency and permission to work in Canada from the Draft Board.

I am leaving for St. Paul Tues. 16th and will see you again about Sept. 30 or thereabouts suggest you remain in U.C. till I send first check as you will need coal. I have burned nearly every thing.

Walked about 25 or 30 miles again today. *He may have walked the entire distance to Hayward.*

I saw a bald eagle today.

Bill

**003 – Wednesday, March 17, 1943
Frederic Hotel, St. Paul to Union City**

Dearest Wife and sons:

It appears he took the Greyhound bus out of Rice Lake but had a wild ride because of a storm of rain, lots of wind and blowing snow. The rain in St. Paul froze and turned the city to ice.

Well I'm in St. Paul but it remains to be seen whether or not I get any further. I was first told that they wouldn't be able to send anyone because the main camp was overcrowded and it would be about ten days before they would be ready for any more men. Then Bunkold or whatever his name is said I could go tonight as a laborer and would get 96½ cents per hour. After I took my physical he delayed departure until tomorrow night because he said there wouldn't be any trains tonight. There are to be three others who were to go last night that will go tomorrow night too.

I bought me a small camera today a vest pocket size #127 films. I used to have one just like it that I carried until it broke. It was a rebuilt camera.

I sold Mrs. B[enson] 10 hens for \$12.

. . . How do you like it at Grandpa Pops boys? Does Uncle George let you help him with the cows? Have you been over to see Uncle John yet?

Bill liked to walk and did so to see the Mississippi River and the state Capitol building. Also the Montgomery Ward store.

What a place, about three times as large as any other store I've ever been in, that is, just the retail store and then there is the Mail Order and Office portions besides. The place must cover about ten acres or so.*

I was over to Okes again this morning and he says he will know about trains this afternoon. It seems that the snow has stopped them there hasn't been any service between here and Calgary for 3 days. From the map I gather that I will go to Fargo and hit Canada at Portal N.D. then Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat and Calgary and Edmonton. Either that or go north from Shelby Mont.

I will be glad when I can get settled long enough to get a letter from you.

All my love and kisses for the Boys
Daddy Bill

**The St. Paul [Montgomery Ward distribution] center... employed up to 2,500 employees in the 1920s. It had more than 1 million square feet, or 27 acres, under roof, making it the largest building in St. Paul at the time. – Wikipedia*

**004 – Friday, March 19, 1943
on the train, postmarked Minot ND to Union City**

Dearest Wife:

We just passed Fessenden N.D. and its about 11:30. What a country. So flat you couldn't hide. It is nice out now. Sun is shining but there is frost in the air. I don't know why people live in this country its so monotonous, but the soil does look good.

We should get to Portal N.D. and cross over into Canada about dark this evening. The train is running about 2 hrs late because of the mail. This is the first train north since the storm.

. . . There are at least ten men going north to work on the road. One is a welder for another company he is southern and seems to be very nice. Came from Florida and is going to Fairbanks. Says he will have to take a plane from Edmonton.

It's costing Okes about \$60 to get me up there but they say Okes does not get berths for you on the way back.

I said something about Dawson Creek. It is merely a change point. My destination will be Ft. St. John, B.C. Where I go from there will depend on how fast the work progresses. Each contractor under Okes has 20 miles to build and when he gets that finished he moves 20 miles beyond the last man out.

Dinner prices are high. I had cereal, two eggs rolls and coffee 85¢.

Bill

The envelope included a map entitled, "Proposed Route of Pacific-Yukon International Highways" that carried a description of Carcross, Yukon Territory.

**005 – Saturday, March 20, 1943
Calgary to Union City**

Dear Helen + Boys:

I am now in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and in a few hours I shall be on my way to Edmonton, we arrive at 6 in the morning and leave there at 5 tomorrow night for Dawson Creek. From there a truck will take us on to Fort St. John or Ft. Nelson. It will remain to be seen which it will be.

He goes on to describe the country between the border and Calgary – We didn't see anything that looked like mountains until we were pulling into Calgary. Suddenly low peaks could be seen and grew gradually as we came on they couldn't have been more than ten miles away and rough and rugged as a saw tooth which they resembled very much.

Like most people getting their first view of the Rocky Mountains from the east, he underestimated how far away they were. The closest mountains of 2,000 meters (6,561 ft.) or more are about 50 miles west of Calgary.

Calgary the trains and everything else are full of soldiers, aviators, sailors, etc. I talked for some time with two lads in RAF. One was from London and the other from Scotland. Both are training to earn their wings.

How are you getting along boys. Take good care of your mother and Baby George.

Must go and get something to eat now.

Love to your all
Bill

In the envelope on a separate, smaller piece of paper, was this note:

Dear Son Martin:

I was very glad to receive your letter and do hope you will write often.

Son, lots of the time I wish I were with you. But you pray for Daddy and in the fall we will have a good time together

Daddy

**006 – Monday, March 22, 1943
somewhere in Canada to Union City**

Dear Helen + Sons:

It commences to sound commonplace to begin a letter with those words but believe me that is not the case. Please don't forget those words also mean I love and miss you.

Today we are on the next to the last leg of the journey north. We should be coming to Lesser Slave Lake soon. Its a tiny thing only about 50 miles long!

Evidently the train was pulled by a steam locomotive – We crossed the [Smoky] river and stopped to let the engine eat and drink and then we puffed our way up the side of the hill again.

He writes a detailed description of the countryside he saw from the train, including this: The only decent looking farm land I have seen this morning was in the Smoky River Valley. It has been country very like that along the Omaha* at home, popple and brush.

Speaking of breakfast. I had a small bowl of cereal, tea, toast, ham and two eggs. One buck please. We stopped at a jerkwater joint for an hour this morning. I went over to see about breakfast. Two fried eggs 40¢. I came back and ate on the diner [car]. You get better portions for your money there. I had a steak dinner the other day \$1.25 but there was nearly ¾ pounds of steak.

This train is loaded to the roof. About 50 American Engineer troops are on besides men for two or three different contractors. The soldiers were having a furlough in Edmonton and are going back now. One fellow said he had been up here a year. About half are colored.

This is the first train on which I have seen no soldiers except U.S. since we got into Canada.

In Edmonton I saw men from Australia and...

New Zealand.

I saw one fellow dressed in blue with wide yellow stripes down his pants and a yellow band around his hat. Finally, wondering what hotel he worked for

I walked by him. In gold letters on his shoulders was
TR, C.M.P.

Well, I'm here at Dawson Creek for a few days. I don't know what my badge number is but as soon as I get one I shall mail this and if I move the letters for me will get to me eventually.

What a trip, just a week since I left Edgewater. . . This is a boom town all right everything in a bustle nothing finished and everything temporary.

. . . I saw some very pretty/or cute women on the way up. The first was a blue eyed, curly black haired beauty of about 3 yrs. She had a pink shirtwaist and slacks. I don't believe I ever saw a lovelier child unless it was the little blond of the same age. The third was Chinese girl at Calgary.

**The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha (C. St. P., M. & O.) Railroad track and trestle was just behind the log cabin Bill constructed in Yarnell, Wisconsin.*

007 - Wednesday, March 24, 1943
Dawson Creek to Union City

Dearest Helen + Sons:

By the end of the week I will have made enough to come home. I just figured my time at \$39.74 + \$2.50 for meals and lodging. 14 hours on the train up here and 20 hours in two days. It is necessary to take a day a week off according to the new ruling. That goes for monthly men too though there is no cut in their pay. Man after man goes through this camp, dissatisfied and on his way home. One hears all sorts of stories, most of them questionable. I am beginning to like it here. Some men are having their families come up but it's a poor place for a family. I wouldn't want to ask anyone to travel to this rotten money mad place.

For example I walked to town tonight and bought a paper of a girl. I gave her 25¢ and got no change. The hash houses are terrible. They run several shifts at the table and I saw one place so full that they were locking the door. Gradually, however, the army are getting messes started. Okes had the first meal in their Dawson Creek mess hall the night I arrived.

What meals. For breakfast there is always some sort of fruit juice and coffee to drink, so far there has been pan-cakes and spam or bacon, cereal if we want it and fruit. For dinner there is of course the coffee in six quart pitchers meat in some form vegetables and/or potatoes and pie or cake and fruit. Supper is on the same order, all you want to eat as long as it lasts.

Yesterday I varnished a table in the office, moved some supplies for the male stenog (the woman didn't start until today), rode out to Sweetwater logging camp with the cook and to town with him to get supplies. The baker is out at Sweetwater and so is the water. They can't drill wells here there is too much oil in the ground. Sweetwater is 13 miles out.

... Tomorrow, if I make it, I go up to St. John to get on the pay roll and receive my dog tag. When I get that I can go any place on the Alcan Highway and get board and lodging by just reporting my number. That is in any of the camps, including the Army Camp.

Today I did a little more. Swept the bunkhouse shoveled paths and scrubbed the floor.

I rather imagine I shall stay on here at Dawson Creek and may be changed over to a monthly man. However, that is just a guess. The address will still be Ft. St. John Okes Construction Co. I will get mail more quickly that way. Anything but air mail takes from ten days to two weeks to make the trip.

You may or may not have heard or seen about a big fire here in Dawson Creek. It took a whole block except one store that was separated by alleys from the rest and 11 soldiers lost their lives. Several hundred were injured. It seems that no one knew about 3000 lbs of dynamite and caps stored in a building. The soldiers were on the roof of the building fighting the fire when someone located the dynamite but was too late for everyone to get to safety. It wouldn't have exploded except for the caps being with the dynamite. The whole square burned to the ground.

Life here at camp isn't so bad and when one can make the trip to St. John one doesn't miss town nor desire to go there.

However, I do miss my wife and boys.

Love and kisses

Daddy Bill

008 – Friday, March 26, 1943
Fort St. John or Dawson Creek? to Union City

Dearest Helen:

I was up north today to Ft. St. John. What a journey.* I hear that the farther north you go, the worse it gets, that up around Ft. Nelson they have some 70% grades. How would you like to go up one of them?

Starting out from camp... For a mile or two you travel through the biggest conglomeration of unrelated objects you ever saw. It is the army warehouse grounds. If you could see it you would know why you can't find anything in the States anymore.

At the end of the warehouse area you see a stop sign, Alcan Highway all trucks register in and out, drivers number, truck number weight of load, where and for whom. Then you are free to proceed.

They arrive at the construction of the Peace River Bridge – the biggest on the road. It is being built by John A. Roebling Sons, the firm that built the Brooklyn Bridge I believe. Today, they were pouring concrete and trying to get a 100-foot tower known as a stiff leg in place. From its boom will dangle the ironwork of the bridge as it gradually spans the river which is around a quarter mile wide at this place [Taylor, BC].

Eventually, they come to Fort St. John where there is the army camp considerably bigger than the town. You pass several more camps and then swing left into Okes Camp #1 where from 500-700 men eat at a time. Every where along the road and in the camp proper are signs of the hustle of American men and American Money.

I can truthfully say that I am glad to be an American, these Canadians do not have the enterprise the business sense that makes things move.

You can't tell when the stores will be open nor if you can get what you want after you get in one. For example there are men going in and out all the time and not a place in town where you can purchase a decent lunch. Thousands of men to eat and not a clean place to eat in town except here at Okes Camp. I do not know about the army camps but I understand they do not eat very good.

Bill asks Helen for #127 films – You can't get them here for love or money, no one can keep them in stock.

. . . I made some miscalculations in my pay, I collect 34 hours and \$10 expenses plus 42 hours \$92.84 -\$11 for a canteen book or \$81.84 total at present and there are 5 days remaining in the pay period.

I am sorry boys that I have seen nothing lately that would be of interest to you except perhaps some little white weasels skipping across the road.

I am hoping I will soon get a letter from each of you. I love you all dearly. You help Martin take care of Mama and George, David. Daddy will expect to hear that you have both been good boys.

Love and kisses,
Daddy Bill.

**Bill was riding on a truck carrying 15 tons of bridge steel about 40 feet long. On the way, the truck had to negotiate some sharp turns and steep drops and climbs.*

009 – Monday, March 29, 1943

Fort St. John or Dawson Creek? to Union City, forwarded to Edgewater

Bill says letters mean so much to him. Helen's back is bothering her. He's to take shots for typhoid and smallpox.

I understand that P.R.A. (Public Roads Administration) will move out shortly and leave the army in full charge. It will be a good thing. Things will move much faster if the army is boss. As it is two bosses for the same job make a lot of waste. . .

[Helen's brother] John is right about the men being rough but even some of those who are the roughest outwardly have a soft spot. The ones I dislike the most are those repats, as we call them here, who couldn't take it and will spend the rest of their lives telling how it should have been done. The average man up here stays but 2 months. . .

The wages or the work will matter little so long as the time goes and I get home to you all. Of course I'll be worth \$10,000 to you dead but there is little satisfaction in that. One can expect most any kind of a change at any time up here. The only thing that matters is the knowledge that I have your prayers and your love and that in the fall, God willing, I shall see you again.

With love and kisses for you all,
Daddy Bill.

**010 – Sunday, April 4, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Dear Wife Helen:

. . . In a way I am glad you are going to be at home [in Edgewater], and yet I don't know. It is good to know you are having your teeth fixed, and that the boys are all set for whooping cough. I will be fixed against typhoid and smallpox when I get home.

Don't you suppose the boys were getting somewhat homesick? After all visiting is not their normal life.

Sorry to hear about John and Dorothy [Helen's older brother and his wife], but glad to know it came out before you decided to stay there. We have our own lives to live and I believe we will live them far better in our own atmosphere.

. . . I do not think I shall stay longer than my 9 months which will be November. If I stay that long I would like to have you down there [*Union City*] when I come home and then I can see our families too.

If any of you are bad sick don't hesitate to telegraph me and I will be home at once, just remember that "at once" means at least a week from the time I hear from you.

I am glad to hear what you say about being together. It seems as though it will be but a short time and we will be together again physically. It is hard to realize that we have not seen each other for several weeks and that it will be months before we get together. You always seem near and just sweet as sweet can be.

. . . I have from 7 at night till 6 in the morning to read or what have you. If you wish to send me something to read I shall be delighted. We get the [Reader's] Digest here and various other magazines which we all share.

The letter quotes his regular time at \$0.965/hr. as follows:

Straight time:	74 @ \$0.96 ½	\$71.41
Overtime:	13 @ \$1.44 ¾	\$18.82
Meals en route:	4 days @ \$2.50	\$10.00
	sub-total	\$101.23

But a slew of deductions diminished his take home for the period:

Board and Room:		-\$6.25
Commissary:		-\$10.00 ¹
Med. & Hosp:		-\$0.92
Repatriation:		-\$20.00 ²
Victory Tax:		-\$3.30 ³

	sub-total	\$40.47
	Total "take-home"	<u>\$60.76</u>

Still, in another letter he says he's lucky he wasn't in the Army where he said soldiers were paid only half what he was getting.

I believe they are planning to change me over to Bull Cook in the office bunk house. If they do I will get \$225 per plus expenses and can pick up something washing for the fellows in the office. At present I am getting about \$10 clear per day and with Bull cooking I would get about \$8.50. Bull Cook is another name for janitor and handyman. As laborer I stand to lose for rainy days etc while as bull Cook I would get \$225 regardless and 4 days a month off with no deductions for same.

Fabulous wages is right, some truckers make as high as \$600 a month. \$10 clear a day is good too.

This is decidedly no place for women and children. Mud, no water, nothing worthwhile to do, besides the monotony of the long journey up here would about finish all of you. I don't wish to make the trip but once more. When I get back I want to stay there.

The Road will not be paved at any time in the near future. And don't let anyone tell you this job is about finished it will take at least 2 years. There are over 200 bridges to build yet. The road is readily passable for only about 250 miles of its 1600. The rest is tote road. The road will be graveled 8 inches deep as it progresses.

. . . Imagine if you can what the population of a town of 15,000 will need in the way of supplies, groceries, tools, materials, etc. and then think what it would mean if all those thousands of articles and thousands of tons were dumped off the train on a railroad siding something like the Omaha ⁴ (in a town the size of Couderay ⁵) and then reloaded on trucks to be carried 40, 50, 100, or 1000 miles further to where they were needed. If you can picture it you have something of an idea of what is going on here.

Army warehouses stretch for 2 miles. They are going to double their size this summer.

. . . When the ice goes, all this bustle will stop for maybe a week and then two ferry boats will carry on till the Peace River Bridge is completed.

This end of the road is worn out as fast as it is built because of the continual hauling. 1 ½ ton trucks carry 7 ton. Three or four months wears out a brand new truck. God only knows how much is actual cost and how much foolishly waste.

Love
Daddy Bill

¹ The \$10.00 is my canteen book with which I can buy things from the canteen at St. John.

² The repatriation will pay my fare home. They will deduct \$60 all told for that purpose. *An earlier letter says that's what the Okes Company (Alcan contractor out of St. Paul) spent getting him up to Dawson Creek initially.*

³ *The Revenue Act of 1942 created a Victory Tax of 5% on all incomes over \$624. The Revenue Act of 1943 reduced the tax from to 3%.*

⁴ *The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha (C. St. P., M. & O.) Railroad*

⁵ *Couderay is a small town just north of their first home in Wisconsin, the population of which was probably never more than a couple hundred people. Today's population is less than 100. The name Couderay is a corruption of the French name of a nearby Indian Reservation, Court Oreilles.*

011 – Tuesday, April 6, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

Dear Family:

Thank you for all your letters and for the sewing David and the pictures Martin.

I suppose that by tonight you are all safe at home in Edgewater. I wish I were too. It is a lonesome night. I can but think you have chosen wisely in returning to our own neighborhood. It seems from what you say that one or the other of the family would be after you all the time if you stayed around U.C.

I am sorry that you had to borrow but it's the best I could do. The money should come in steadily from now on.

His work assignment is still uncertain. If there is an opening he will take Bull Cook because it is steady work and a certain income, not dependent on the weather.

. . . It is somewhat hard to keep clean in these surroundings but our prayers and God's grace will see me through.

I am not worrying how you will administer the money for I know you realize as well or better than I what it will mean to us next year.

Its so very muddy now. The army is clamping down on truck movements. They are holding trucks until 9 P.M. before letting them go north. It takes a bull-dozer to get them in and out of the loading yard.

Love to you all

Daddy Bill

012 – Wednesday, April 7, 1943

Dawson Creek to Edgewater

The letter is not dated. April 7 is estimated as the date of writing based on the postmarks of origin and destination on the envelope.

To my dearest Family:

I had not heard from you for some time and today I got three letters when I came back from supper.

I am very sorry to hear about mother and yet I rather expected it. For her sake I hope she doesn't last much longer. *He may be referring to his mother, but she did live until 1947.*

. . . I trust by this time our boys are quite well, the good Lord having seen fit to heal them of their colds.

As to the work I am doing, I sometimes wonder what it is too. I sweep, mop, help carpenters, wash windows, wash dishes, drive truck, etc. just anything there is to do.

Word was circulating about a change in the length of the workweek. Bill was prepared to return home if that happened but hoped he could stay out his 6- or 9-month term.

I am sure God will see fit to heal George completely.

I regret that Martin must take so much responsibility but perhaps it will be for the best.

Helen had apparently written about the lack of firewood in the house when she returned to Edgewater. Bill responded – I do not know just how to explain about the wood except there was quite a bit of bad weather especially just before I left. It may be though that it is just that old thief procrastination. I do believe I am getting the better of him. Having practically no boss and trying to fill in 11 hrs a day has helped some yet it also hinders as I cannot be sure just what to do, when.

It is lonesome here too. Everyone swears, tells stories plays poker etc. I have found none but Tommy the office boy who does not. He is just 18.

. . . You are right about this being a hard place to stay, the average man stays 21 days. I believe it is because so few ever lived under such conditions before.

Bill comments that it might be possible for him to attend church meetings on Sunday nights.

I was told we are insured for \$10,000 in case of death. I can get a \$5,000 accident policy through the Edmonton paper for \$8.25 for a year. I think I shall do that. \$1.25 insurance and \$7.00 for the paper.

I don't know what the temperature is here but there is snow only in the hollows of the distant hills. The past 3 days have been lovely. We keep the doors of the barracks open all day.

. . . I lay awake for some time last night trying to plan some way whereby we could be on our own place. I guess we must trust God to work it out.

. . . I am going to purchase some more overalls and some shoes I think. You can get such good shoes here. My work shoes are pretty well gone.

It is quite light here yet and will be for an hour. It is 7.45. They say that in June it is light until 10.00 and gets light at 2.30.

Helen may have asked about crime in the camps – I do not believe there is any stealing to amount to anything as there are Provincial Police, Military Police, Mounted Police (RCMP) and armed soldier guards.

From our barracks door you can see farms in all directions to a certain height up the surrounding hills. The hill to the south is about 5 miles away and must be about 500 feet high. The real mountains, as I told you, can be seen on the way to Ft. St. John at Peace River. From there they are about 85 miles and you see just the snow caps. I am going to the top of the hill some day and see if I can see them from there.

I have not seen a H.B. [*Hudson Bay*] blanket but I believe I can purchase them in Edmonton, St. John or Calgary. I shall bring them home as the duty [for mailing] is 66%.

Goodbye now till the next letter. I wish I could express my love in some way other than writing.

Your Husband
Daddy Bill

My darling Sons:

How daddy loves to hear from you. It makes him feel so much happier to get your letters.

You must have ridden on a lot of trains [*traveling to Michigan*], David. Don't you think you may be a little mistaken about Martin? I'm sure he is good too. At least most of the time.

We will have a great time when I get home.

I don't know about the little train.

Love to my boys.
Daddy Bill

013 – April 16, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

My darling Wife:

So George is growing up. I suppose he will be walking by the time I get home. I shall have missed quite a bit of him by being up here, but if my being up here will make our life together more sure more comfortable, perhaps that will not be too great a loss.

You mentioned about George. He must be more sympathetic than the others. I notice that you say you would not want to live near any of your brothers. The Lord God knew what he was doing when he sent us into Wisconsin.

Speaking of Gods grace, there has been several times, and even yet, when there was a question of how long I would stay here or if I would even be able to come up here but through it all God has shown his hand and in spite of everything, the U.S.

Employment included, I shall stay here until God sees fit for me to come home or until my period ends.

Martin, Mother has told me what a fine boy you are, and how much you have helped her. That is what I like to hear. It makes me feel good. Mother has told me about you, too, David how you helped Uncle George. Daddy will have to have you help him when he gets home.

Bill comments on the abundance of wildlife including the pronghorn antelope with their F-shape horns. He also wishes to see the scenery farther north before returning home.

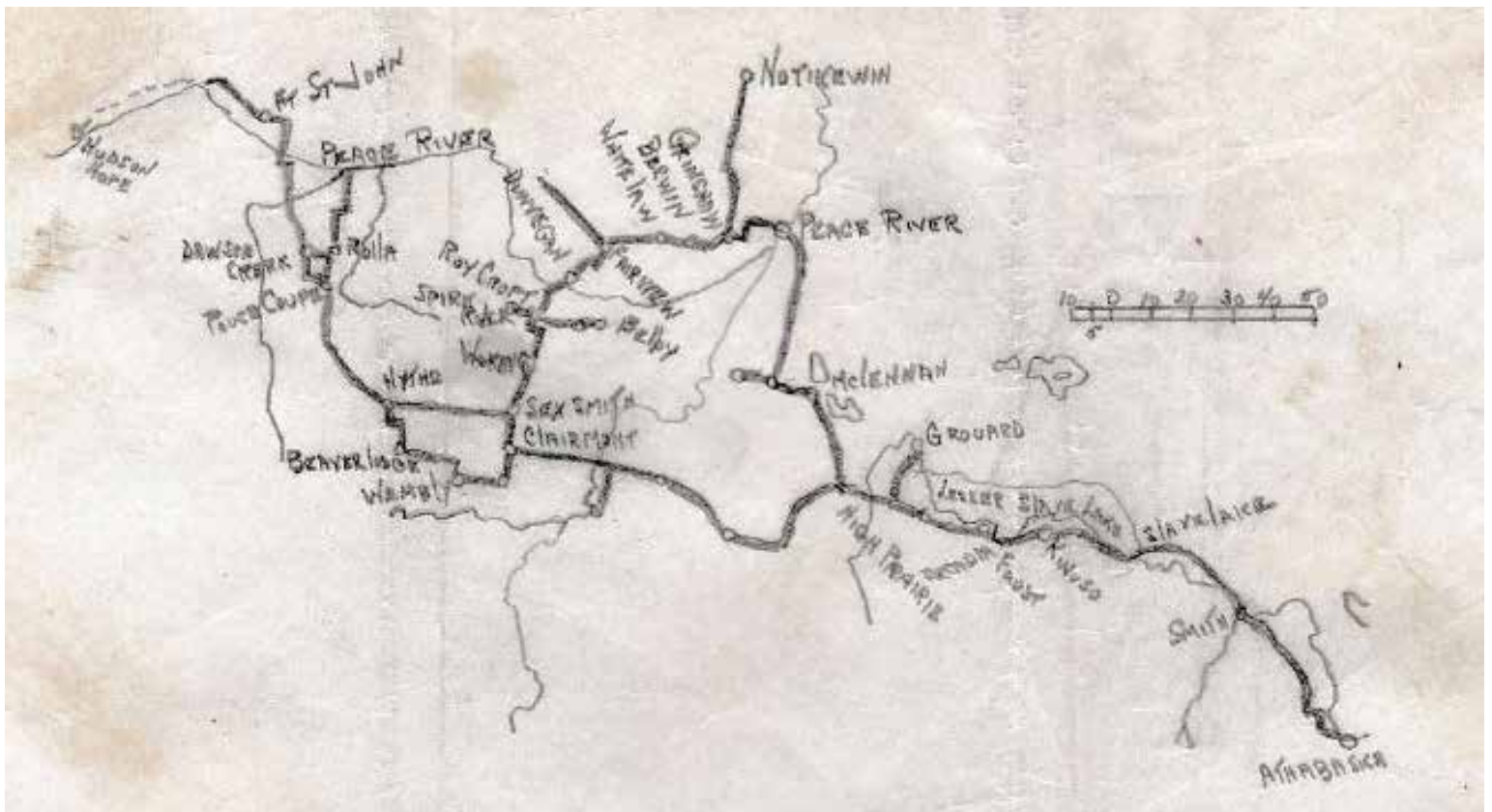
The Peace River Bridge is a drop in the bucket, even though it is the largest. There are 230 some bridges to build. The bridge across Teslin Lake may be longer. Speaking of bridges, the ice took the P.R. wooden bridge out last night. It will be some time, from a week to three weeks before traffic north will be resumed.

In the meantime all northbound freight must be unloaded from cars and stacked somewhere until trucks can get through once more. And will there ever be a rush when business starts again. I imagine it will be day and night for a while to get things cleaned up. I am unloading freight now.

Well my dear, it is time to say goodbye again. I wish there were more ways of saying I love you.

Your
Daddy Bill.

The following enclosure appears to be a map of Alberta/British Columbia railroads drawn by Bill.



014 – Tuesday, April 20, 1943

Dawson Creek to Edgewater

The Peace River Bridge nor the Ferry are evidently not yet carrying the mail following the destruction of the bridge by the ice breakup on April 15

Dearest Helen + Boys:

I thought that perhaps your letter might get over the river in time to be answered, but conditions are such I must wait.

We have had another cold snap, but I doubt if it lasts long though they say that last year the thermometer went to -30° about this time.

They are flying mail down from St John and also using a boat on the river now, but the ferry isn't in operation yet, too much ice for the big boat. The plane has been making several round trips a day.

I was sick enough yesterday afternoon that I didn't work. The flu is bad here right now. There are two down with it. I got some lemons today and had a lemon soda and feel better, but my nose runs so much it is sore. I put in 11 hrs again.

Now about the money orders. They are for \$125 American. I paid the difference up here so don't let them stick exchange on again for it is paid.

The score this time is

80 hrs @ 96 ½	77.20	
72 “ “ 1.44 ¾	<u>104.22</u>	181.42
[Deductions]		
Board & Room	19.50	
Med.	.92	
Repat.	20.00	
Victory tax	<u>8.50</u>	<u>-46.72</u>
	148.17 Canadian.	134.70

Bill elsewhere mentions an 11% discount for Canadian money but his accounting method for Canadian vs. U.S. dollars here is unclear.

We have had something I'll bet you haven't even seen in the store at home, raw tomatoes. I was to the Royal Fruit today and got a crate of cabbage, 2 of oranges, 2 of apples and a crate of grapefruit. We have grapefruit practically every morning. We had a lime gelatin and sliced orange dessert tonight. Pineapple pie for dinner.

I still don't know from one minute to the next what I am going to do. Today, I helped carpenters, helped with plumbing, dug, and drove truck. Each day is a mess like that. You get started at something and someone says, "Come with me Bill" and there is something else to do. I don't mind though as long as I get paid.

How are you making out sweet? Did I leave too much? Have you had much trouble? Have Don's* been over yet? Have you been to church?

I do know that as long as we trust God, this thing is going to be for the best.

Love, and kisses for the boys.

Daddy Bill.

** Don McLean, a cousin to Helen, settled in Wisconsin some time before Bill and Helen did. He and his wife Edna were influential in Bill and Helen moving there after they were married. Don's brother Hugh McLean, his wife Amanda and their children became lifelong friends of the LaBar family in Wisconsin.*

**015 – Friday, April 23, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

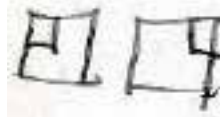
Dear Helen and Boys:

No letters from the north yet.¹ They should come sometime soon for the ferry should start any day now. I understand though that the Army Garage fire at Peace River, last night, destroyed the ferrys engine. I heard Magee, a truck boss, telling about an incident of last summer. The fellow in charge of the ferry looked a certain truck over and said to the driver, "You go out on the the front end." The fellow drove his truck out and the front of the boat went under the water. The truck had a 40 ton load on. They had to hitch a "cat" to the truck and pull it back to the middle of the boat.

Today we got the first shipment of candy since I've been here, two truck loads of candy, cigars and snuff, mostly candy, any kind you would care to mention.

We started building a 20 x 40 warehouse here Wednesday. Today part of the roof is on and they are needing the space so badly that they unloaded several trucks into it already. I helped for a while but today I was changed to painting. We are painting the building white.

In case the building of the warehouse seems speedy, it could have been done faster if the floor had been prefabricated too. The buildings come in sections 5 feet wide and can be bolted together quickly. All trusses, etc. are made to a pattern and can be used anywhere for that type piece. There are blank wall sections, sections with doors,



and sections with right or left hand windows and roof sections.

I am enclosing something which I hope will reach you safely, something for two little boys. They are blackout nickels² the corners are the only way you can tell them from pennies.

I hope you are all well and are getting along alright.

Your loving
Daddy Bill

¹ Letters in and out of the camps at Dawson Creek were routed through Fort St. John. Via today's Alaska Highway, the distance is about 75 miles to the north and west.

² *Blackout nickel was a name for a Canadian five cent piece of World War II, struck in 1942 and 1943. The 88 percent copper and 12 percent zinc (brass) alloy quickly turned the color of a cent and in dim light could easily be confused with it. – Source: <http://www.numismaticnews.net/>*

On the back of the envelope, Helen noted prices of the day for some staples: weiners 16¢, and cake flour 35¢.

**O16 – Easter Sunday, April 25, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Dear Helen & Sons:

. . . Easter Sunday, I worked but a half day today and then went south to the hills. Walked about 14 miles and got back in time for chow. It was worth the walk. – *Bill happily describes for Helen his view of the valley encompassing the town of Dawson Creek and other sights.*

For as far as you can see, both ways, there are wheat farms and still more wheat farms. The farmers here have a trick of digging a hole for water and ditching snow water into it.

Bill and Helen were both avid bird-watchers. He obviously enjoyed getting away for a while, writing close observations of nature in the area – The bird was about the size of a snow bunting, a light brown and white mottled all over. There was a black mask something like a Maryland Yellowthroat's. The bird hugged the ground and yet walked rapidly through the wheat stubble. He could not find its nest on the ground.

Later on – In the woods I heard chickadees, saw a downy [woodpecker] which seemed to be rather dark and what I think was a whisky jack it was a light blue gray with a sharp bill and a black streak through the eye. about the size of a robin. I saw no other markings. Could not see its back. There seems to be hundreds of snow shoe rabbits here. I also saw moose droppings and fresh deer tracks. The willows are about done blooming.

His frequent mention of farms and farming seem to indicate that Bill looked forward to coming home to a farm of his own – Most of the farmers here are burning wheat straw stacks now. The ground here is marvelously black and free from rocks. (The place where they first settled in Wisconsin was so covered with rocks that they joked that you could walk a long way without ever setting your foot on dirt.)

Finally – Just a little of the day's happenings with my love, sweet.

Your
Daddy Bill.

**O17 – Wednesday, April 28, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Dearest Helen and Boys:

Did I get mail today, five letters, from the 13th to the 22nd. I don't see why mail should come so irregularly to you, I try to write every other day.

Won't we all have fun when we get together again. The boys and I can build and lots of things and you and I can talk etc.

I am so glad that you write quite a bit of George for I will not get to know his progress otherwise. Even at that he will probably shock me when I get home. I can readily see that your troubles are commencing with him. He will be running around before summer is over.

. . . Martin and David, it makes Daddy so happy to hear you are such fine boys, helping Mama wring clothes* and other things. You take good care of Mama while I am gone. . .

There is more talk floating around here. The Sweetwater sawmill and Camp 35 also a sawmill have both shut down. At the same time I hear Okes is opening 10 more camps north of Ft. Nelson. Every new day brings a new story. As the fellow said, "One day the job is ready to fold up and the next we have 17 days work in one."

I believe I did miss telling you about our barracks. All buildings here are prefabricated and are one of these three designs



The first is half round and of metal. The second is metal with a flat piece about 3 feet wide on the peak of the roof. The third is the type we have. These are old WPA shacks... The building, which includes the kitchen, dining room storage and two bunk rooms, is about 180 feet long by 20 feet wide....

It freezes here every night but during the day it gets quite warm at times. It snowed Easter Sunday morning and the afternoon was as nice as could be. The Northern lights are brighter here.

Bill offers thoughts on how Helen can supply herself with wood for her cook stove. Helen evidently had an emergency of her own – So you had a fire. I know from experience how it goes. Not so good for the one that is trying to put it out.

Have you any ideas yet as to how we can make it next year? Very likely the war will still be on...

I am making quite a bit more than I would have by the month. As a laborer at 40 or 48 hours a week I don't see how I could afford to stay here. God will help here too.

He goes on to discuss unknown business with their neighbors in Wisconsin... Then –

You do tell me how you love me in every letter every word. I hope I can convey the same to you. Many of the men here dance etc with the girls and women in camp, but such things do not appeal to me. I think of you waiting for me and me waiting for you and am satisfied.

Mail to you goes directly to the southbound train and takes the air either at Edmonton or Grand Prairie.

. . . Dear Big little David Brother Son, I'll be glad to get home too... That boy Martin. He is a regular little man isn't he. If you can find a tricycle, get it. I enjoyed David's letter about breaking his dish but am sorry that it is broken.

As far as I am concerned this is just another job. I neither like nor dislike it. The last few days I have been painting steadily but that is about at an end. I don't know what comes next.

Somehow I believe you did right in coming back home. I believe the boys will do better and I know that sooner or later you would want to leave your folks anyhow...

With all my love

Your Daddy Bill

I believe \$25.00 to the college is due soon, also taxes. *Sounds like today, doesn't it, still paying for college after you get married! He's probably referring to Anderson College in Indiana. That's where Helen and Bill met.*

**To "wring clothes" is to use a contraption with two rollers that, when wet clothing is cranked between, help to squeeze out the wash water before they are hung on the line to dry.*

**O18 – Sunday, May 2, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Dear Helen:

Things are stirring up here, I don't know what is going to take place, but rumor has it we will find out tomorrow. If I get cut to 40 hrs a week I think I will come home as it will only mean \$28 a week. But it may mean changing to a monthly job or/and going north. Until I know this is all speculation... Somehow I know the Lord will keep me here until he wants me back home and that he will take care of you until I get there.

. . . You had better get a car from Stone Lake if I am here for the next few months.

. . . The ferries are running O.K. now. Last night the wind and current put one on the bank and broke the rudder. They say the pilot was watching some women. It is going again now... They will have a temporary bridge in again by next Saturday and the big bridge will be done in July.

. . . I'm still painting but its mostly little things to fill time. There are men going both ways yet.

I heard a robin the other morning and forgot to mention that I saw a junco last Sunday.

This is an awful place for dust. The ground gets quite hard when dry and the fine dust comes in clouds when the wind blows, which is often. It gets muddy almost as soon as it clouds up. Again, I'm glad to be here, for at St. John there are 5 men for each one here and consequently more dust.

The score this time is

80	hrs @	96 ½	77.20	
74 ½	" @	1.44 ¾	<u>107.84</u>	185.04

Deductions

Board and Room	17.50	
Med	.92	
Repat.	10.00	
Victory Tax	<u>8.30</u>	<u>-36.72</u>
Canadian	163.15	148.32

Bill elsewhere mentions an 11% discount for Canadian money but his accounting method for Canadian vs. U.S. dollars here is unclear.

I believe I shall send you \$115 this time and buy those clothes. I need shoes and believe I shall get a pair of rubber bottoms and a pair of regular work shoes, as you can't get the rubber bottoms there and they have good ones here. I may send you a little more later.

I have been trying to find something a little boy would like but have seen nothing yet.

I do not know of a thing I need that you can send me except a little candy, and if that is quite a bit of trouble, your letters and those of the boys expressing your love will cover everything.

Yours,

Daddy Bill.

One of the fellows saw a bear and 7 deer at Sweetwater this week.

**O19 – Wednesday, May 5, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Dearest Helen:

Not much news this time, *Bill writes. He is still painting and still does not know how long he will be doing so.*

Unless you desire me to come home soon I shall stay a while and if this blows up shall try to get on with a different company. God will direct to the best.

He asks about David's health and comments that Martin must be a wonderful help.

Helen must have been worried about making ends meet for herself and the boys. Bill writes, Sweet you are living as cheaply as possible I'll vouch for that. Think how much better it is than to have me in the army and you were getting less than \$100 a month to live on.

Bill mentions trouble with his camera but thinks he can fix it.

I got a pair of high shoes \$6.50 not exactly what I wanted but they had very few shoes in town my size. Too many customers. I bought a pair of pants too. They were rather high \$3.45 but could do no better.

Yes this is a great wheat country. All the way up here you can see from two to five big elevators every few miles even if there were no towns in sight ...

All my love for all my family.

Daddy Bill.

020 – Friday, May 7, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

Well, I'm still here. I've had but one letter this week and no package. Things are beginning to straighten out. They sent 3 laborers and two carpenters to Ft St John today. They are supposed to be working 9 hours a day now. About 50 men have gone north and 60 or 70 south this week.

They have me on another kind of a job now. I'm getting in from 12 am to 12 pm guarding four carloads of dynamite about 6 miles east of Dawson Creek. I will be here until the bridge, temporary, is in and they can put the stuff across the Peace. The authorities won't let them bring the stuff into town after what happened in February.

Took a roll of film yesterday of the big bridge about a mile down the track. It is about 700 feet long and 100 high all wood, over the Dawson Creek gully.

He mentions the spring influx of birds and describes nine different species he has sighted.

There is heavy traffic on the road near here all the time. They all seem to be hauling gravel, even at night.

Can't think of much more except I love you and will be glad when we do not have to separate again.

Kisses for the boys.
Daddy Bill.

021 – Monday, May 10, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

My Darling Wife and Sons:

Bill received a letter and a package containing a picture. The picture may have been a portrait made of the three boys that I believe was made in either Michigan or Indiana while the family was visiting the Mathews or LaBar grandparents. Dad says, The package came by way of Seattle, Washington, so the biscuits were rather hard by the time I got them.

I'm still on the dynamite watch, but hope it will be over by Wednesday. The [Dawson Creek] bridge is across now and planked one way but has no railing and must be planked the other way before it can be used.

I figure that if I send at least \$200 home a month and stay nine months we should have \$1,000 in the fall and all debts paid. I do not know how we could handle 8 cows on our own place, because of pasture and hay. I hope things are fixed so we can have either good cows soon. I would enjoy take care of them. Perhaps we could work out something with [neighbor] Bill Libby though I would rather not. Surely God has a plan and will show it when the time comes.

He thanked Martin for a pencil that he promised to save for special purposes, and told David that his pictures were improving.

This is not a road camp. It's more or less a hotel and freight depot. There are no real road camps this side of the Peace [River]. The camp is painted white now, trimmed in a bright deep green.

He then mentioned the "Anderson payment." They must have owed Anderson College for some of their college time. A \$24 obligation to Montgomery Ward was also mentioned.

Bill offered Helen some advice on preparing firewood. If you split, use the old ax. A dull ax is better for splitting anyhow.

In closing, To be frank with you I would like it much better here if there weren't so much waste. The road will cost at least twice what it should because there are too many bosses.

I'll try to be the best husband you'll ever have.

Good by sweethearts

Daddy Bill

022 – Wednesday, May 12, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

Dear Wife:

Bill comments on spring plowing and gardening at home.

Someone there must have had an earache. Don't they put a drop of warm oil in ears when they ache? I think warm olive oil should be alright. I remember Dad blew smoke in mine and mother put a plug in it.

... It sounds good to hear that we are catching up on our debts at last...I hope we can get started again without too much debt.

...So the boys take turns at housework, fine.

It's queer about people isn't it? How we heard the Skars were – and how they turned out very differently so far and how others who were supposed to be so so also turned out the opposite. It seems hard to trust people though.

I still don't know what my change in work will be. Okes loaded out their dynamite this afternoon but Big John, the boss, and I mean he is big, said to stay until I got different orders.

He mentions some other odds and ends, including sighting a junco, then ends with this:

I'll be glad to get home but I'm not coming till I have to because I love you and want us to get ahead.

Love,
Daddy Bill

**023 – Thursday, May 13, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Sweethearts:

I'm off dynamite now and back painting again. Sure was quite a load of the stuff. From three of the four cars Melville Smith loaded out 10 trucks, averaging 310 50 lb boxes per truck. They were big 4 wheel drives, the kind that have the 14x20 inch tires which look like doughnuts. It went 186 [miles] beyond Ft. Nelson.

I don't know how much longer it will be until I have to move, but the painting job here should last a week and by that time something else may turn up.

I don't know how you feel about such things but I've been to the movies and must tell about "Sergeant York." *Bill then describes the Gary Cooper film in some detail, dwelling on York's conversion to Christianity and efforts to acquire a farm for himself and his new wife. MHKCB had built a movie theater at Camp McCrae for its highway workers. The theater opened in the spring of 1943. (see below*)*

...York got drunk again and started out in a storm to kill [his rival] and lightning struck him down destroying his gun and knocking the shoes off his horse or rather mule. As he went home he passed the meeting house, heard singing, went in and found Christ. *York's Army experience is recounted next.*

When he not home he was afraid he shouldn't be married by the Governor of Tennessee as he didn't have a thing to give Gracie [his bride-to-be] as a wedding present ... The people of Tennessee had built a house, barn etc. on it and gave to them, he and Grace as a wedding present. As the show wound up he said, "The Lord sure do work in mysterious ways."

The reason I tell you all this is because I feel closer to God since seeing the picture for I know he works in mysterious ways for us.

... I am getting along fairly well with washing about every other week. I soak the clothes then wash them out the dirt comes easy that way.

I doubt if more than ¼ the things you hear about this country are true. The men do not like being up here where things are so different than they are back home. This is the ¾ part that is true.

Bill closes with thoughts about purchasing the "Nohejl place." A Nohejl family apparently owned a farm in the same Couderay township as the LaBars. He advises Helen to take the place if she can get it for \$300, although she might need to get a short-term loan to afford the full price.

With some of the house we own now we could fix the Nohejl place. Perhaps there is enough in our buildings to make a small barn. Then again, we may be about to sell [our place] as is for a hunting shack for what the Nohejl place would cost.

... It is good to know that God is there and here at the same time and that he has many good things in store for us.

Love
Daddy Bill

**MHKCB movie theater at Camp McCrae*

First Broadcast - TITA Theatre

A CKRW Yukon Nugget by Les McLaughlin, CBC announcer and author

When the men and women of the American army, along with civilian contractors, were building the Alaska Highway, there wasn't much time for entertainment. There wasn't much entertainment to be found, but in the spring of 1943 there was an event worth remembering.

McCrae, near Whitehorse, was the main base for contractors working the northern section of the Alaska Highway. With financial assistance from the American army, a private contractor, Metcalf Hamilton Kansas City Bridge Company, built a 600-seat movie theatre near the White Pass railway crossing.

It was called the TITA theatre - an unusual name to be sure. TITA stood for 'This Is The Army'. The entertainment event, perhaps of the decade, in that spring of '43 had military and civilian personnel talking about it for months.

It was the North American premier of a smash new movie called "This is the Army", with music written by the most famous composer of his day - Irving Berlin.

It was such an important event that the Mutual Broadcasting Network of the US teamed up with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to carry live coverage of the proceedings. There were speeches by all the top American military brass in the region - live interviews and an introduction by the CBC's famed broadcaster, J. Frank Willis, and a tape of greetings from Robert Service, who sent his best wishes to the men of the new north, who had hewn a great highway into the land of the midnight sun.

The special broadcast was delivered south over the new telegraph line which had been built by the U.S. Corp of Army Engineers. In fact, they had placed 40 telephone poles every mile between Whitehorse and Edmonton - a total of 65 thousand poles.

The TITA theatre is no longer standing in McCrae, but if you ever see a rerun of the movie "This is the Army" on a late night TV, think for a moment what those entertainment-starved men and women building the Alaska Highway must have felt on opening night in the spring of '43.



· Source: <http://www.hougenroup.com/yukon-history/yukon-nuggets/first-broadcast-tita-theatre/>

**024 – Monday, May 17, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Dearest Helen:

Bill is grateful for the arrival of mail from Wisconsin in 6 days. Evidently Helen is frustrated by inconsistent delivery as well since he tells her how frequently he has written. Bill comments about a firewood shortage at home and also recommends a neighbor/friend to cultivate the home garden.

David sounds to me like a very normal boy. I sure would like to see you all. The idea of turning the light on because it was getting dark instead of going to sleep.

We will try to farm again next year if we possibly can. If we get the Nohejl place and live there instead of where we did, a little work in the spring and during winter should fix it up nicely. By fall we should have \$1,000 in the bank, God willing. Somehow or other I think we could manage to get the things that would be necessary to help us stay on the farm with that much, since it is more that we borrowed either time.

How you must appreciate Martin. I hope we can all be good friends when we get together once more.

I am on a new job, and in spite of the fact that it does not pay as much I think I shall make the change. It is dishwashing at \$225 per and board. The way things are I believe I can make more in the future, by the month. Charlie Paul, a minor official, said Okes had been cut from \$21,000,000 to \$7,000,000. This is what is causing all the fuss. One thing about that job: it will last longer than working outside, as this will be the last camp to fold up.

I am sending you \$115 instead of sending any more to Hayward as you suggested because I thought you might need it if we buy the Nohejl place.

It's after 10 and still quite light out.

Love,
Bill

**025 – Tuesday, May 18, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

My Helen,

Mail got to him in only 3 days this time.

You certainly are having a time. But, Helen, I do not understand why you expect to get as much done as if we were both there. You must not try that or I shall have to come home, for if you keep trying to do so much you will get so you can't do a thing.

It sounds as though the boys had the mumps all right.

I'm still washing dishes at .96 ½ per. I am not positive I shall want the job permanently. After working in the kitchen just a few days, nothing tastes good.

Those boys, what blessing they are. And Martin's summing up that we should be like Jesus. Doesn't it all make you full inside and just sort of wonder? It must be another of God's blessings.

That [dynamite] guarding was volunteer. There were two of us, but the other fellow was scarcely human. I've seen lots of dogs that showed more signs of intelligence than he.

This camp has its advantages over a road camp and yet I would like to spend some time in one in order to get into the woods to see what wildlife I could.

Boys I thank you for your picture and letter. They are very nice.

Goodnight.

Love,
Bill

**026 – Thursday, May 20, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

Note: subjects in this letter have been rearranged for the sake of continuity.

Dear Wife:

Bill is in good spirits for this writing, seemingly without knowing why. Midway in the letter he says, ...looking over what I have written, I feel rather pleased with myself tonight for no reason and wish to talk to you as intimately as I can.

Do you know, Helen, I still think you are the most wonderful person I know, the best wife a man could have. Again, I thank God that he brought us together.

For a time I have felt a little jittery but tonight I know that my redeemer liveth, that he is able and willing to do far more than I could ask or expect. Even as I write though the suggestion comes, "Are you sure?" Just like the devil, isn't it?

Seems as though I am writing a little foolishly tonight, but take it cool, Helen. I love you. And I assure you I'm perfectly normal. Just happy thinking about us and rambling in ink in whatever comes to mind.

Well, I am a monthly man now, washing dishes 9 hrs a day. It may sound foolish to have changed [jobs], but I think God wanted me to and I think I can make as much money at dishwashing from now on. Things have changed so much here. They are slicing right and left. Labor is on a 54 hr week now. All hourly men have had their hours cut. If for no other reason, I'm glad I have changed because I like it better in the

kitchen than at anything I have done so far. Clarence Nelson, the cook, says he will teach me anything I want to know about cooking. He has cooked in the Lowry Hotel in St. Paul and Childs in Chicago. One thing – this job here will be the last to fold up of any on the Road. Already, the Okes Dawson Creek Mess has the reputation of being the best place to eat on the Road.

The remainder of the letter is devoted to characterizing several of his workmates. ...
some fellows here I would like to know at home.

... One is a big blocky redheaded truck driver that used to be [a] sparring partner for Max Baer, a former heavyweight boxing champion.

... Another fellow... is rather sissified, quite small, would be about 5' 5" and 100 lbs, and about 18 years old. He has lots to learn yet but I think he must be quite a bit like me at his age. He hates girls and doesn't mix with the men. I'm going to the Catholic church with him some Sunday.

..."Mike" is a fellow I wouldn't care to know any better. He is a Norwegian about 45, bachelor, and a woodsman. He has just three things in life to live for: poker, whisky and bad women. Harmless except to himself. Whisky is his god.

Big John Heidenreich, the boss here, is quite a character too. About 6 foot, 300 lbs at least, quiet, likes his food and drink. A fellow hardly knows how to take him.

Little "Mickey" Cecil Mcquire, one of the carpenters, is another I like. We seem to get along very well together...

Mike Magee is another character: he is the truck dispatcher, knows machinery like you do a dress pattern. Anything that has moving parts is a book to him.

I've sort of run out of everything except that I love you and the boys.

Good night,
Bill

027 – Friday, May 21, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

...Yes, 10 weeks and more apart yet it seems but yesterday that I left Edgewater and it can't be much longer than tomorrow that my time will be up.

A reference is made to Helen's being sick. Bill also expresses appreciation for underwear sent up by Helen. It is impossible to buy anything resembling shorts here at present.

...So you have \$123 in the bank now. That is a lot of money isn't it? But wouldn't it be something if there was a zero on the end of that figure.

I know you are praying, Helen, but I am requesting a special prayer that I may know definitely whether to stay for Okes or to try some other job. All signs seem to point to Okes being nearly through on this job but I want to follow God's will in this matter.

A new company is starting up now, the Utah Construction Company. they are to work out of Whitehorse. Right now they are unloading trucks and supplies. They don't even have their bunk houses built.

Love
Daddy Bill

**028 – Saturday, May 22, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater**

In the past few letters, Bill has expressed a high degree of ambivalence regarding what job he should settle on. Is he better off as a laborer? A cook/dishwasher? In 027 he brings up Utah Construction Co. for the first time as a possible employer. His grappling with the whole matter finally came to a head today when he resigned from Okes. No particular reason is given except for his job rating and the wage that goes with it.

Helen:

Hold everything until you hear from me again as I do not know where I will be. I quit Okes this afternoon. It will be Wednesday at least before I get my release. I shall try to rehire with Bechtel-Price-Callahan [on the CANOL pipeline] or I may go to Edmonton and try to get on with Utah Construction.

In either case I shall probably try to get to Whitehorse or up that way. I am going to do my best to get a higher rating, as truck driver or lineman. Both pay \$1.50 an hour.

That kitchen job wouldn't be so bad but they kept piling on hours. Last night they asked the cook for service at 2:00 a.m. They wanted chili after a beer party. If they paid for extra hours, O.K. but they don't even say "Thanks."

In any case I prayed a great deal and I am still praying so expect God to take care of everything.

He then tells about a walk he took along Dawson Creek where he found some violets and spotted several species of birds. It's his first mention of walking in the woods, one of his favorite pastimes, in nearly a month.

Bill describes how he washes his clothes. I soak [them] in a bucket and then wash them out. No ironing. After the shirts are worn a short time they lose their wrinkles.

I found a trick in the kitchen. After you wash a skillet put it on the stove till it gets dry and hot and then rub salt around in it. It's supposed to keep things from sticking.

I know God will work out everything for the best.

Love to all
Daddy Bill

A letter from Martin is enclosed ...

Dear Daddy,

What are you doing?

A pumkin is something that's sweet but seems naughty?

Love, Martin

029 – Wednesday, May 26, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

Dear Helen and Sons:

After quitting Okes Construction, Bill may be without a job at this writing. I am now ready to move somewhere. Where that will be, I do not know, I can only trust God. He hopes to move north, perhaps to Whitehorse, possibly with Bechtel-Price Callahan as a truck driver. He thinks Okes will fold up within two months.

After writing about his job prospects he comments on the children ... George is getting around nowadays isn't he? I have noticed an improvement in Martin's [age 5] writing since he has started script.

I was up to [Fort] St. John yesterday and saw about my papers. I took several pictures of the Cut Bank bridge. It's about halfway between here and the Peace [River]. The road will be nearly 125 feet above the water. The bridge is being made entirely out of wood with the exception of a few plates and pins to hold it together. It is made on the pattern of a steel bridge. It has a curve in it and is higher at the St. John end.

Roebing is stringing cable for the Peace River Bridge now. They put two across while we were waiting on the ferry. It took from 2:30 to 6 to get the truck on the ferry. [The ferry makes] a round trip an hour if nothing happens and haul six to ten trucks depending on size. Some of the Canol trucks hauling pipe were shortened to 35 feet. This allowed 6 inches on each side of the boat for space.

The country at Cut Bank and Peace River is beautiful. At both places there are banks a couple of hundred feet high that drop at a 60 degree angle. You wonder how the dirt stays in place.

He closes the letter with a postscript for Martin and David in which he describes the sighting and behavior of a wolf pair while out walking.

Love,
Daddy

030 – Thursday, May 27, 1943
Dawson Creek to Edgewater

My Darling Wife:

The opening sentence belies the change in work Bill has just begun ...

Not much of a letter tonight. I just wish to tell you that I am on a new job. I am going to Peace River to work as a feller and buckler for Metcalfe-Hamilton-Kansas City Bridge Co. or MHKCB Co. You reach me care of them, better use initials, at Dawson Creek. I am to work in the woods at 1.16 ½ an hour.

I don't know how this is going to come out but at least it will be better for a while.

Already I have found that this company is different than Okes, for it seems to be organized better and more for work.

I will send you some money as soon as I can get to some place where I can get a money order.

I love you sweet and will be glad when I can get home.

Love,
Bill

031 – Friday, May 28, 1943
South Taylor, B.C., to Edgewater

Helen & Boys,

Well I'm finally located in Peace River. It is certainly a beautiful place with its trees and hills and steep banks. One of the fellows just told me that a trucker said there was no prettier spot between here and Whitehorse on the road.

You will notice my new address. There is no such place as South Taylor but the men here in camp address mail that way so it will be sure to get here. The army flying field is between here and the village of Taylor... Any mail for me will get here quicker than it did to Dawson [Creek]. One fellow told me 48 hr service. All Dawson mail will be sent here.

I am enclosing a money order for \$100. I wonder if the bank wouldn't accept it for deposit.

I must say I surely love you.

Your husband,
Bill.

032 – Tuesday, June 1, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

Bill devotes most of the letter to a detailed description of his walk on Sunday. This is one of the most beautiful places I have ever been, he writes. He climbed to a high point overlooking the Peace River Valley, coming across signs of both moose and bear.

I went down for a ways and then cut across toward the camp. Suddenly I saw some queer marks on some popples [or aspen]. Looking closer I found they were claw marks, bear trees. It was just as though one had stretched as far as he could and then raked the bark off with his hands for about a foot. There were about a dozen of those trees. The highest marks were so I could just barely reach the top of them.

I feel closer to God here in the woods.

All my love, sweet.

Bill

033 – Wednesday, June 2, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

Sweethearts:

When you tell me you love me I can only say, "Whee!!"

Helen had apparently mentioned coming to Canada to be with Bill. I don't know what to say about your coming up here. I would like to see you and know would enjoy it here, but what to do with you is more than I know. You may be able to find a place to stay in Edmonton, but aside from that, I do not know ... I heard that all wives not working here have been ordered home by the army. I do wish you could meet me somewhere along the line and ride back with me. A ticket to Dawson [Creek] and return would cost you in the neighborhood of \$150. We should be able to spend a day in St. Paul at least.

He writes about it being rather rainy in B.C, creating a half inch or more of pea soup mud over everything on the road.

There are a couple dozen Indians living here in the old bunk houses that were first put up. Most of them are children between one and twelve. They do washings, make moosehide jackets and moccasins etc. I believe some of the men are up river cutting logs.

So "little" David is getting to be quite a big boy. That's fine. I know he does a good job sweeping.

Of course you will have to wonder what I'm bringing you but – keep this quiet – I'm having beaded Indian moccasins made for the boys.

Helen I do not know for sure how many camps there are in Dawson. This company [MHKCB Co.] has four. There must be at least five different army camps for the various units. Then there is the PRA camp, Bechtel-Price-Callahan, Millers, and several others that I do not recall.

I got two letters from you today.

It's now 10:15 and still fairly light. The sun goes down around 9:30.

I'm sure no one could do better than you have done or are doing. Good night
Helen: I love you too.

Your
Bill

034 – Friday, June 4, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

Today's letter provides many details regarding the sawmill Bill worked on in South Taylor. He included a drawing of the machine, and describes the mechanics and design of the

machine, the way it handled logs and lumber, and the functions of the sawyer and other workers that fed and tailed it. A drawing of the various patterns of lumber it produced was also included.

At present my job [on the sawmill] is on the green chain which is merely a chain with lugs [see Drawings] which catch the lumber, force it through the saws and up the sorters. When they saw a lot of timbers I don't have so much to do but when they cut lumber only they can more than keep two busy.

A reference to the Hayward debt leads me to believe that they borrowed money from a bank in Hayward in order to purchase the land where he built the log cabin. Perhaps we should make steps to pay off our Hayward debt entirely, but maybe not all at one time. Perhaps \$50 a month till paid.

I don't know about going farther north but it may be necessary later to keep on the job. I do not know how much more they plan to saw here. I do not want to go north until they can get the bridges fixed up so supplies can go north. Of course, at Whitehorse, supplies would come by water through Skagway.

The [Peace River] bridge is coming right along. They have strung 12 of the 24 cables necessary.

We can't use the Nohejl place at \$600. It's not worth that.

He again considers the possibility of a rendezvous with Helen before he returns home. Helen, I've been thinking it over and if I stay here till fall at as good wages as at present, I don't see any reason why you could not try to come up and we will go home together from Dawson Creek.

A stem of wildflowers and a bit of spruce gum are enclosed in the letter.

Your husband,
Bill

035 – Saturday, June 5, 1943
(envelope missing)

Sweetheart:

This letter is devoted almost completely to a detailed description of the Peace River Bridge construction at Taylor, British Columbia. Bill's description is so well written, even the technicalities, that it is easy to form a mental picture of the scene. From his apparent familiarity with the project, it is possible that he spent time talking to some of the bridge-builders. He may have met them in the MHKCB camp, or perhaps on May 26, when he had to wait at the bridge site for 3 ½ hours for the ferry to cross the Peace River. The wait was necessary because workers were putting two bridge cables across the river that day.

Bill begins with a drawing of the steel towers and suspension cables before the road deck was built. His vantage point is the MHKCB camp on the Pine River, upstream from the bridge.

The men have a platform atop each tower which they reach by a hoist and an old oil drum, riding the drum two at a time with one leg inside. At each end and in the center are moveable platforms which may be pulled back and forth as necessary in

order to work on the cables between towers. In fact there are so many wires, ropes, etc strung around I don't see how they can keep track of them.

At the end of the letter, Bill returns to the idea of meeting Helen in Winnipeg.

Love, Bill.

036 – Tuesday, June 8, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

My Dears:

In this letter, Bill says he expects to clear around \$90 a week. He is enjoying the opportunity to work on drawings and to improve his skills. Otherwise the letter is mostly about small personal matters.

It has gotten warm here now. I have had my heavys on and off a half dozen times since I thought spring was here.

The mosquitoes are bad occasionally and the other chief insect seems to be the earwig.* They say there are no ticks here.

... I would like to see that little George. I imagine he will be a marvel to me when I do see him.

... Did I ever tell you about a Finnish bath? I have an idea for rigging up one when I get home. Here, they use a barrel stove packed with rock. When you to in the bathroom the heat almost gets you until you get a rub down with warm water. Then you throw a bucket of water on the rocks and sweat. When you have had enough you douse with cold water and to you feel good. I think if we had a little room with a small stove in it we could heat rocks in a bucket or something and get the same results.

Once again, Bill returns to his idea of meeting Helen in Winnipeg but would agree to her coming even farther. I will assure you it won't be much of a vacation to make that ride between Edmonton and Dawson Creek. I would be very glad to see you whether it's here or wherever it is. I certainly miss you. I see so many things I think you would enjoy.

... [In Fort St. John this P.M.] I bought two shirts, one a brilliant green, the other a nice blue, and a pair of overalls that have patches on the legs. It came to about \$8 dollars.

The ferry broke down this P.M. [*He would have had to ride the ferry to get to Fort St. John.*] It took 5 oil barrels filled with cement to hold it against the current. The propeller is broken and the rudder gone. It's a stern paddle wheel outfit so I imagine they ran into some driftwood.

I think I will say goodnight sweet.

All my love,
Bill

Dear Boys:

Thanks for your good letters. Daddy is working in a sawmill. Perhaps Mama has already read you the letter that tells what Daddy is doing. At night Daddy climbs up

the hills or goes down to the bridge to watch the ferry boat. From what Mama writes you boys are doing a very fine job of helping. Has George any more teeth?

Love, Daddy Bill

**Bill spelled it erwig. If he is referring to the earwig, Wikipedia says they are found as far north as Canada but few earwigs survive winter outdoors in cold climates.*

037 – Wednesday, June 9, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

This letter seems to epitomize the uncertainty of work and work assignments in a wartime project under Army control. The entire text is copied below.

Dearest Helen:

I don't know for sure what is to happen, but tonight we had orders to write home that our wives should not write anymore until you hear from us.

The sawmill is to close and we are to be shipped to the Liard River, Whitehorse, or Fairbanks, we won't know until Friday at the earliest.

We may be here till Friday or we may not leave for two weeks.

I don't know what more to say than that I love you and know that God will be with us wherever we are.

Your husband
Bill.

Note that, on today's envelope, in the return address area, Bill wrote "I'm on my way?"

038 – Friday, June 11, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

My Helen & Sons:

We are still here at Peace River waiting for further orders and a plane for Whitehorse. At least that is supposed to be our destination but as things go it could be changed any time. At any case we have to wait on the Army for orders. [MHKCB Co.] does not have a contract with Public Roads [PRA] but with the army. The man they rented this sawmill of is going to try to keep us here.

It looks as though it would be a month before much work would be possible here as the snow in the Rockies is melting fast. The river has raised four or five feet and is still coming up, two inches since about 9 A.M. Yesterday it was 3 inches an hour.

...You should have seen the sight yesterday and most of today, an almost solid stream of driftwood floated past here for 24 hours. Green trees, dirt, brush, old snags, some logs 40 or 50 feet long, and oh the water, so full of silt that it looks like gravy.

...How I wish you could be with me for at least one day to see some of the sights here.

Bill expresses some jealousy over a young man who called on Mother. He was also worried about gossip concerning Helen's character. He does understand her need for companionship by someone who shares her interests and even suggests a woman from the Edgewater neighborhood. Then he changes the subject to a topic evidently brought up by Helen.

Somehow sweet, I don't feel very friendly toward preaching. Teaching or showing how to live by example is so much better ...

I would still like to see you in Winnipeg even if you brought the boys along. However, I wish for us to have a little time to ourselves at first to renew our acquaintance, as sort of wedding trip. I think you understand ...

... I don't want to stay up here this winter, but if I get an especially good opportunity I shall do so, but in that case I shall ask for a 30 day leave.

Love,
Bill.

039 – Sunday, June 13, 1943
South Taylor to Edgewater

Helen sweet:

We haven't got our orders yet. We are still packed, ready to go at a minutes' notice. As yet, the destination is Whitehorse, probably between there and Watson Lake [to the southeast] as there is very little timber the other way.

As the story goes a crew from Kansas that has scarcely seen logs has been up there for two months and isn't turning out anything yet. The most of this [South Taylor] crew are loggers from Minnesota.

Bill describes a few co-workers.

"Doc" ... was born somewhere near the ScotEnglish border and had traveled extensively: India, China, Africa. He wears Pan American Airways shirts with an African label.

Jim ... looks like a movie star and acts like a six year old.

Ben ... looks like he couldn't pound sand in a rat hole and knows all the answers.

Very good at figures.

We are having some fine weather here now. The river is dropping rapidly and the trash has almost ceased to come.

...Am enclosing a check for \$90.28. Shouldn't cost but a few cents to cash it.

Hope we can pull out today.

Love,
Bill.

040 – Monday, June 14, 1943

MHKCB Camp Mcrae (Whitehorse) to Edgewater

Dear Wife:

Bill seems to be quite excited to finally be relocated to MHKCB Co. Camp Mcrae near Whitehorse, even though his permanent station wasn't yet decided. He wishes Helen could have been with him to see the beautiful scenery from the air.

What a sight. So beautiful I doubt if words can describe it.

In typical Army fashion, the order to move, when it finally came, gave the men only 30 minutes to get ready. When they got to the airport there were no planes and Bill's group had to wait about 9 hours for a flight. To add to the inconvenience, the men had to find both their dinner and evening meal in Fort St. John. Going back and forth to town from the airport covered everyone in a fine gray dust with no place to wash up.

[Around 10 a.m. we were driven by truck from our camp] to the airport, about 5 miles out of St. John. Here the army seemed to know we were going but the Canadian Pacific Airline did not. After stalling around for 2 hours a message from the Radio Station said the planes were on their way from Whitehorse and the first one would be there about 2:30.

We returned at once to St. John for dinner, having left a turkey dinner at camp, and then back to the airport where 10 men received tickets. No one knew where the second plane was until 5 pm when it was said that it would arrive at 7 o'clock.

At five, we went to town again, accumulating more dust. Shortly after 7 the plane came in and gassed up. About 7:30 we took off, or rather taxied to the lane for take off, about a ½ mile. We hit the air at 7:40, about the time the first plane got to Whitehorse.

During the flight, Bill got his first good view of the snow-capped Rocky Mountains. There were lots of lakes. I counted 30 in view at one time. The biggest river, which we follow for miles was the Liard. Their flight may have stopped over at Watson Lake. He drew an outline of the shape of the lake.

[After Watson Lake] we saw so much ground that was bare of everything except a patch of snow now and then. Just barren brownish soil and rocks, probably frozen because we passed several lakes that were ice covered.

This may have been Bill's first aircraft flight. My ears grew so deaf that I thought the pilot had cut the motors, then I blew my nose and everything was o.k. again.

We gradually eased down till I saw a beacon light and an airport. We circled for a landing at Whitehorse at 11:30 P.M. and still daylight.

We are now at the KCB main camp out of Whitehorse about 12 miles and apparently are going 18 miles further.

Love,
Bill.

041 – Tuesday, June 15, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

(Subjects in this letter have been re-ordered for clarity.)

Dear Helen and Boys:

My but I will be glad when I can hear from you again. This being away from you all the time isn't my idea of a perfect life.

This place is called Camp Robison. There are about 50 men at this camp. This camp is not so good as the one a Peace River but the scenery is terrific and since I have to be away from home I hope to be able to put up with it.

What a place. Mountains all around. *Bill estimates the mountains to be 4,000-6,000 feet above the camp, some with snow and some without.*

At the present time, I am working in a little sawmill about 30 miles south of Whitehorse on the railroad that runs to Skagway. The sawmill here is a big fake. Talk about wasting money. There are 5 complete mills here, 4 sitting out in the rain [with] about 10 inserted-tooth saws getting rusty. Each would cost in the neighborhood of \$200. Also 5 or six extra cordwood buzz saws. [There are also] 3 extra diesel motors for power and several smaller motors. The mill itself turns out far less with 50 men than the mill at Peace River...

My job here [is to] turn cants for the sawyer on the night shift. It's called night shift, but it is so light here that we use the light plant but two or three hours during the shift.

The railroad here is a comical affair run by the army. A narrow gauge road, the tracks being but a yard apart. *(A drawing of a little caboose was enclosed)*

I can think of nothing more appropriate right now than to say – I love you.

Yours

Bill.

042 – Friday, June 18, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

My dear wife:

Pete Olson came up from Peace River today and brought your letter of the 10th. Sorry Lady. I had forgotten our [sixth] wedding anniversary (*June 10*), though I must say I feel about it the same way you do. thanks for the compliment, Helen. I could ask for nothing finer. Surely, the Lord was Good to us on the day we met in the woods and again when I stood on the stairs and knew that at last I had found the only woman.

If my writing is a little strange it's because I hurt my right hand last night and the thumb does not stand the pressure of holding a pen. It is nothing that will last more than a day or two. It got caught under a log and pinched: no broken skin, just a bruise.

I am sorry that you have so much to do. My share as well as your own. But again, it seems as the Lord wills so he will help us both. Last night before I was hurt I

had a good time singing and talking to God as the saw worked. Somehow I knew something might happen and I am glad God is taking care of us.

... It's beautiful here Helen but it's not home. The mountains are something to look at. I commence to understand why the Psalmist said "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills." Many times a day I look at the mountains. Always they are a little different than the previous times. Always they are a reminder of the greatness of God and the relative unimportance of man.

I suppose that the cloth is a sample dress pocket. I'll bet you look great.
May God be with you.

Love
Bill.

Dear David,

I am turning logs in this sawmill so the saw can cut them into boards. We have some pretty flowers here too. There is a large patch of bluebells. The yard is full of little gray gophers. They look something like a fat squirrel.

Love
Daddy

043 – Wednesday, June 23, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

I spent the last two nights trotting around, so I haven't had time to write.

Even though this letter expresses some discouragement with the separation from Helen, Bill expresses the joy of walking (trotting) about the countryside and exploring. He begins by describing his impressions of a river basin where he came upon patches of lupine and wild rose. At one of his vantage points he could see seven bends in the river (unnamed) at one time.

Bill also went fishing at a lake about seven miles from camp. He doesn't say if he walked there or had a ride. [The lake] is several miles long and fairly wide and deep and of a greenish color. The bank which must be at least 5 miles around is composed of what seems to be marl, as it is a grayish white substance just loaded with tiny snail shells that are very fragile. (Bill's observation was astute. A greenish cast in the lakes of the region near Carcross is caused by the presence of marl. Emerald Lake is perhaps the best-known example in that area of Yukon Territory.)

Bill again closely observes the local birdlife. There are lots of arctic terns there. They are beautiful with their white bodies, black caps and orange bill. The tail is forked and as they fly it opens and shuts.

There seem to be logs of fish in the lake, mostly grayling, about a pound apiece, and a species of trout.

I'm working in the woods now loading trucks. It is a fairly good job, but I'm getting so I don't care whether I stay any longer or not. Perhaps when I hear from you

I'll feel different. I miss you so sweetie and the boys. It will be a happy day when we meet again.

With all my love,
Bill.

The hand is alright now.

044 – Friday, June 25, 1943 (?)

(The above is the date of postmark since no date of writing is given on the letter itself.)

Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

I wish you could have been with us on the trip to Carcross last night. What magnificent scenery. *In what appears to be an attempt to bring him and Helen closer together, Bill first vividly details the vista from Camp Robison, especially the size and grandeur of the mountains, looking south toward Skagway.*

He continues with a description of lakes along the way, including 60-mile-long Bennett Lake. The lake itself is blue green. The people drink the water which tastes very good. [Carcross] itself is very picturesque being mostly log cabins. It is strung along the edge of the lake. On dry dock are two enormous lake boats which, I imagine, played a part in the gold rush days in '98. The TUTSHI is a flat bottom three story paddle wheel affair which looks in good condition.

Near the depot, which looks much like the usual wooden affair, is a little engine that is evidently a relic. Its name, which is nearly gone, is the "Duchess." Its firebox isn't as large as a coal stove and the water tank holds about a barrel. It is about 8 feet long and about 7 feet high in the cab. *A drawing accompanies the description.*

...Tonight I'm going into Camp Mcrae to get a bath. There are no bathing facilities here. So I must close.

Your husband,
Bill.

045 – Sunday, June 27, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

(This letter is yet another spirited account of one of Bill's exploratory walks.)

Dear Wife:

It's been some time since I wrote you so I think it high time. As yet I have not heard from you since I moved, that is, direct to Whitehorse.

Bill describes a long walk on Thursday after supper including a mountain climb. What a trip, he says. I didn't get back until 3 A.M.

He began on a good trail but then started bushwhacking.

It is difficult to say with certainty where exactly Bill went on this hike. He mentions seeing Bennett Lake and the Wheaton River. The Wheaton River empties into Bennett Lake just southwest of Carcross. The Wheaton River is in such a deep valley that it would not be visible except from a few places in the Carcross area.

Bill also made a rough sketch of a lake he saw in the distance and remarked that a railroad appears to cross that lake at one corner. Cowley Lakes fits that description. He continues...

To the south, White Pass Mountain seemed closer than ever because of its enormous bulk. At its foot Lake Bennett can be seen. Here, instead of White Pass Mountain, I believe Bill is describing Brute Mountain (2,100m), and only about 4 kilometers behind it, 2,200 meter Montana Mountain. Together the two mountains rise on the south shore of Bennett Lake.

Triangulating between Cowley Lakes, the Wheaton River and Brute Mountain, there are several mountains he could have climbed. Any of them would have yielded the wonderful views he writes of.

I walked toward the remaining height and found a canyon about 150 feet deep, floored with snow and walled with loose rock that looked as though some giant had tumbled it there. I decided to try it, and after a short scramble was at the bottom and up the other side. I did not get clear to the top, as it looked too dangerous by myself. It was about 100 feet further up.

For a mile, I followed [a] creek, which I could step across, as it thundered down the slope. At one time it disappeared in the rock and sand of the bed. At times it, or a portion, reappeared and at last it appeared in full voice and was joined by numerous side streams.

Bill also tells of the many kinds of wildflowers he spotted, most of them being unfamiliar to him.

It is light enough here at night to drive anytime without lights.

Remember sweet. I love you with all I have or am. May God bless you.

Your husband

Bill.

046 – Tuesday, June 29, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

My very dear wife:

How very much your letters mean to me ... If I could just speak to you for a few minutes.

To answer your questions, the quarters are good here since they built a new bunkhouse. The camp contains 60-odd men. Part, of course, cut the logs, about 12 men. If the timber were as good as that at the Peace, they could keep the mill busy, but as it is there should be more cutting. Then there are 3 cat(erpillar) skidders and their chokers (the men who hook the logs to the skidding rope), and the loading crew of truckers and

loaders. I load now. It is a good job. We load about 18 trucks a day. The regular hours are 70 per week. Payday is every Saturday ... They come at about \$90 per week.

God is surely good to us isn't he?

Find out ... the name of a good hotel in Winnipeg. If I come this fall I shall try to come through that way and if I stay all winter I want to meet you there this fall for a short time.

Helen must have offered to send him some clothing. The sizes of the garments are:

Shirt: 16 – 33 inch sleeves

Pants: 34 waist, 31 inseam. *With all the hard work, Bill has stayed slender.*

Your Husband

Bill.

047 – Thursday, July 1, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

It never gets very warm here. I am still wearing my heavy underwear and at times I am cold. Of course, it gets up to 70° part of the day but the underwear is comfortable because it is a mosquito shield.

... when you want me home quickly, telegraph to [my mailing] address. It shouldn't cost more than \$2 or \$3. You can telephone your message to the Omaha [railway] agent in Birchwood. *Helen and Bill did not have a telephone until about 10 years later.*

Bill addresses the issue of purchasing a farm. I rather thought I would like to go some other place when we got together but I wonder if Bensons is the right location. You know she (*Mrs. Benson*) wants \$2,300 for the place and owes 1,200 on it, the latter sum being about all it is worth.

Somehow ... I wonder if John Schones place wouldn't be a better buy. There are enough oak trees on the place to almost pay for it and enough pine to furnish all necessary lumber for building. I believe he wanted about the same money for it. There are fences on his place. Mrs. B's is just wire strung on posts. I believe that crested wheat grass would make [the Schones land] an exceptional place. Inquire as to his address.

This company has just started taking out repat money – \$100. They have collected \$20 already. If I come home this fall I shall try to meet you at Winnipeg as I mentioned. If necessary I could travel by Greyhound to Dawson in about three days. Sometimes it is possible to travel by air, either [Canadian Pacific Airlines] or Army bomber, in which case it would be about 6 hours travel time.

Most of the time trucks are getting through on the highway. There are at least three rivers to be ferried but these will soon be bridged. Our trunks all came by motor convoy.

Helen must have shown interest in traveling to the Yukon for a visit. You would have a great reception at camp here as no women are around, closer than [Camp] Macrae,

which is 18 miles north. But a woman here or in any these towns who stepped out without a man would be nagged constantly even if she said "no." Of course one might get by but I wonder. Many of the men would be satisfied if the woman would just say a few words, but others would want much more.

Most camps have chicken and/or turkey for Sunday dinner. We always have all we want to eat, and good food too.

Good night sweet. I surely love you.

Yours,
Bill

Dear Sons:

How are you boys? I hope you are both helping mama as much as you were.

How big was the turtle you saw?

Look in your bird book, Martin, and see if you can find a Whisky Jack (*Grey Jay or Canada Jay*). Today, while Daddy was waiting for the truck a Whisky Jack came down to eat some sandwich meat that had been left from someone's lunch. It bit off some and flew away. The next time, Daddy had a small piece on the palm of his hand and the bird lit on my finger and picked up the meat. It did not come back again.

Daddy saw a big fox in the road yesterday, too.

Take good care of Mamma and George.

Daddy Bill.

048 – Saturday, July 3, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

My Dears:

No letter now for a few days, but perhaps one will come out tonight.

It has been rather hot here for a few days and is getting very dry, yet a week ago there was snow under the willows not far from here and last night they found frozen ground about six inches down under the moss. You see, there was a small fire in the woods last night. Someone dropped a cigarette. It burnt over about an acre and is still smoking and blazing now and then.

Bill thinks their logging operation will run out of timber in a few more weeks. Then, so it is said, we are to go 125 miles north.

I've been thinking of that farm business, and though I know we would have a tough time [in Yarnell] isn't it possible that another place would run into hard work too? Anyhow we can continue to think and pray and at the proper time God will show us what to do. Would you consider moving south, not too close to your parents but somewhere near?

I've heard lots of talk about the clear atmosphere making mountains seem nearer than they are but I wonder how much of it is true. I wonder if it isn't the enormous bulk as much as the air that makes them seem close.

...Good night sweet.

Your husband
Bill.

Dear Sons:

The gophers, or flickertails, are about the size of squirrels. In fact, they look like squirrels as they are cousins. They have small speckles on their backs. They whistle when they see you and stand on their hind legs. They eat grass and dig little holes in the ground for houses.

Your
Daddy Bill.

049 – Tuesday, July 6, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen & Boys:

Just got back from a little trip into the mountains and found two letters from you...

About 3 miles southeast of camp there is a sharp drop in the mountainside that is plainly visible. We knew from Old Charlie McConnell, whose land this is, that there is a creek at the foot of it. Ed [last name unknown] and I started over to see it. Nothing of any importance until we reached the creek bed. What a wash there must be in the spring. The water now is no more than 5 feet wide but the gravel bed is at least a quarter of a mile wide in places. The water is very swift and clear and is it cold. The drop itself is the only gravel bank I have ever seen that was vertical, about 75 feet high. There were birds dwelling at the top. We saw mountain sheep tracks, moose tracks and bear tracks, also an old sluice box where someone had washed for gold.

... There is quite a little work here but all jobs up here are more or less fill time. The work here would go much smoother if there was someone in charge who knew how to do this work. There are several men who could run it but are not in a position to do so.

Sweetie we are right in the middle of some of the grandest scenery in the world. By this time you must have the letter I wrote trying to describe it.

Supplies come by rail and by road and hundreds of airplanes fly overhead. [Perhaps some are headed for Russia under the Lend-Lease program.]

Love, Bill.

Dear Sons:

Daddy is working in the woods now loading logs on trucks.

Son David, Daddy is proud of your words. You keep on and you will be able to write all by yourself. Good-bye.

Love
Daddy.

050 – Wednesday, July 7, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Sweetie:

...It is 40° or less every morning and gets up to 70° in the afternoon. Now that there has been a shortening of the daylight period here, I imagine it will get down lower. I guess I told you that it doesn't get dark in June.

There is continuing uncertainty about staying in the Whitehorse area or moving. Bill anticipates moving to Watson Lake.

As for sticking it out, I almost quit when I did not get the mail but I believe that I will stay until Sept 15 anyhow, after that, I don't know. I imagine that the mail is held in Whitehorse until there is a light load on the plane, as it goes by company plane to Edmonton. All mail by Seattle takes 15 days one way.

Camp Mcrae is 18 miles north. [At Camp Robison] we are 13 miles south of the Alcan highway. There is only one store at Carcross ...

I could get a tailored suit up here for about \$40 Canadian but don't believe I shall.

The checks come weekly now. I want to keep this week's check as it should last me till I come home, and then I can just stick the rest in an envelope with out the trouble of getting a [money order].

...My hand is O.K. now. I was put on woods work because I objected to the way the sawyer ran the saw. The change was decidedly for the better. We work from 7 to 5:30.

Please don't sell bread if it takes much of your time. You must have rest. *Helen had evidently started selling her homemade bread to the tourists, a small business she maintained for several years. Summer resort residents stayed in cabins on Lake Chetac in Edgewater and around the lake. Some of them became repeat customers for bread, eggs, and fresh chicken over the years.*

I had not stopped to figure how much I had sent home. It really mounts up doesn't it? I think that, unless we get a new place, I shall come home when we have \$1,000* in the bank. That much will give us a boost and there are lots of things in this world besides money.

McCrae is the company camp. The various departments of the army have camps scattered here and there all over the country, none very large. There is really nothing of interest at Carcross except [Lake Bennett].

Love
Bill.

Dear boys.

I'm so glad you help mama in the garden and around the house. You will have to tell me what you do.

Mr. [Charlie] McConnell, who lives across the tracks, has some dogs he drives to a sled in the wintertime.

Love,

Daddy.

*A 1943 dollar would be worth about \$13.59 in 2013.

**051 – Friday, July 9, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater**

Dearest Helen:

I have been thinking about coming home for a short time and then staying over winter but I do not see how it could be accomplished without cheating you out of your trip. Somehow it seems that it would be best to wait till September for something like that. I do want at least \$1000 when I come home. November in time for Thanksgiving should be just about right, then we could all be at your folks for that.

All kinds of talk still floats around here. It is unlikely that anyone could believe more than 10% of it. LaGuardia¹, former mayor of New York, was supposed to have gone through here day before yesterday. The army was to take over all convoy trucking. No more hitchhiking. 12 hours a day. New contracts for six months. You can drive convoy trucks back to Edmonton and get \$200. These are some of the things that float around. Of course some are true but the majority are not. This man is going home, that man is doing this, you can't do that. It's worse than a ladies aid meeting.

Of course the main topic is women, wives, and females in general and what will, has or might happen in that connection.

Some have quit because they could not see the use of having money they could not spend. Men pay as high as \$50 a quart for whisky and lose as much or more in one night's poker. Some are tough, some would like to be and many are kind at heart and the kind you would want to know. Very few are Christians, though many attend church at home. A small minority have a desire for a better life. I have met some who could do much for the Lord if they were working for Him. Yet, I have had no leaning toward trying to win them other than trying to live as a Christian myself.

It may be, that in my life, I have or do fail to measure up. I cannot say ... Whether I have acquired a wrong viewpoint on some things, only time will tell, but I do think I have more sympathy for my fellow men and more of an understanding of why they are what they are. I do not see how any Christian could live in this manner and not take on some ideas or at least ask good healthy questions about some things, minor points mainly. I wonder how closely Shakespeare came to it in a quotation I have read, "Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so."² At least it's something to ponder over. It seems that the Bible says, "To the pure, all things are pure."³

Good night sweet.

Your husband
Bill.

¹Fiorello LaGuardia was co-chairman of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD). With his Canadian counterpart, LaGuardia and the bilateral Board forged an agreement on the

route the ALCAN Highway should take, among other issues. The Board was a fairly belated move to bring Canada into the policy-making process after many decisions on the project had already been made by the American military, Congress and President Roosevelt.

² Hamlet: Act II, sc. 2.

³ Titus 1:15

052 – Saturday, July 10, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

My dear Helen:

You know what mail service means. Service here is so poor. I believe that most of the fuss here is raised about mail not being regular. I know that a day or two with no mail makes me feel like leaving everything and going home.

I rather like the job I have as it calls for a goodly expenditure of energy. We do more work here than is done on any other job that I know of.

Bill brings up another property that they are considering buying. [Charley Shrock] would probably want a price something like the Nohejl's. I would say that Nohejls would probably take less if one spread the money out in front of them. Cash has its appeal. However, let us continue to pray. God will direct.

Just how much do we have to the date you answer this and how long do you think it will take to accumulate \$1,000?

It was quite hot here today. I do not know what the temperature was though.

Sweet, your love is my life, without it there would be little to live for or work for. God bless you. Pray for me.

Your husband
Bill.

Dear Boys:

I must tell you what I saw today. Daddy was sitting on a log resting and he noticed a wasp light on it nearby. It was quite big for a wasp and was black and yellow with white spots on its eyes.

It was nearly this large: *Bill made a sketch of the wasp and described in detail how the wasp laid eggs in the log.*

There is also a drawing of a standing gopher. Daddy wishes you could see the gophers as they sit or stand and whistle at you. If you move toward them they dive into their holes. The little ones sometimes do not remember where their holes are and run and run. Sometimes they just sit still and eat.

Kiss mama and Georgie for me.

Love,
Daddy.

053 – Wednesday, July 14, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

I laid off all day yesterday and went in to [Whitehorse] to cash some checks and get a few things. I got \$285 in \$10 bills so you can imagine what a stack it made, a roll about 3 inches around. (*Bill was on a shopping trip for himself and some co-workers.*)

I did get the boys their moccasins and I believe they will be about right for all three boys. I got three pair of mittens, a duffle bag, a book on Canadian wildflowers, some magazines, tobacco, etc. Altogether it made the duffle bag quite full. I paid quite a bit for the moccasins but I thought it o.k. for this time. They have very pretty designs on them.

He was quite taken with a fur coat. It was made of braided rabbit skin that had been cut in 1 inch strips, so there is about as much fur on the outside as inside. It was just about your size. I do wish you could see it.

They had some very clever wooden carvings and carved ivory in the stores, but I think I could duplicate the wood carving.

There is still sign of us moving and they point to Watson Lake as the destination, but even if we go to Watson Lake the mail will come to Camp Macrae and be sent out from there.

I do hope your hands are in a much better shape than they were. God will surely heal them. Do try to find a little time to rest. All this money coming in won't be worth it if your get sick.

Love to you and the boys.

Daddy Bill

054 – Friday, July 16, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

This is the second letter to you tonight. I just tore up the other attempt as it was all so foolish and lopsided, mostly about my troubles, and not written in a good tone, so I hope I can do better on this one. I will state in one or two words what I had tried to tell you in the other letter, I'm homesick. If I can get letters regularly, I shall try to stick until we get our stake.

Helen had undertaken making and selling bread to tourists at cabins in Edgewater, something she continued for some years. Do you enjoy the social contacts in selling the bake goods? ...do not continue if it is much extra work and for the purpose of earning money. If you enjoy it, go ahead as long as you can find time to rest.

It's been quite warm here the last few days but I'm hanging on to my heavy underwear on account of the mosquitoes....

I rather think I shall come home to stay by November. By the way ask the draft board about the chances of an extension on my release. In any event I shall have to quit

and rehire for they do not give leaves anymore. If there is a chance of getting an extension to my release, OK, but if not there is no sense in coming home until the release is up in September. I would like for us to be able to head to your folks for Thanksgiving...

All my love
Bill.

The dandelions are just commencing to bloom here.

055 – Friday, July 16, 1943 (two letters on this day)
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear wife:

The desire for a rendezvous is discussed further...

I can't say any more about meeting you for I don't know what more to say. You desire a vacation and if the boys were old enough to leave by themselves the question could easily be settled, but as it is someone will have to keep an eye on all three if you go anywhere.

There is a place in Camp Macrae where the women in the office force stay but no place out here. There is scarcely room enough for the men and no place that could be fixed up.

Bill notes the difference between Greyhound bus and airline fares. Our fair (sic) from Ft. St. John to Whitehorse was approximately \$100.

He is uncertain about winter work but supposes most of it will be done by the military.

He lists 19 species of wildflowers that he has observed.

It's getting cooler here and warm in the daytime. Each night seems to be a little longer. About like fall at home. The snow is pretty well gone off the mountains now but before long it will start to pile up again on the peaks.

Goodbye for now sweetheart.

Love,
Bill.

A brief postscript to the boys follows in which he describes a goshawk, too young to fly, that had been captured and was being fed by a fellow worker.

056 – Wednesday, July 21, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Wife Helen:

Bill was pleased to receive a letter from Helen in only five days. He expects to be surprised by how much the boys have developed in his absence. They had been helping Helen work in her garden. He continues with various tidbits.

There is gold all through these hills but most of it is not in paying quantities.

The milk here is in powdered form. I can't see that it's any different than any whole milk.

I don't believe I shall get a suit till I get back to St. Paul (MN) anyhow. I should get a really good suit for about \$30.

I can't see any reason for not staying here this winter there wouldn't be much to do at home till spring. I'm going in to Macrae soon to see about getting off for a month.

He returns to the topic of purchasing a farm. I would like to know what John Schones wants for his place. We could get enough ties off the place to pay for it and enough lumber for all buildings we would build. Of course it has its disadvantages too. *Two other properties are discussed. He thinks one could be purchased for \$1,200 or \$1,400. The price of another would probably require borrowing some money.*

I guess we will be here at least 3 weeks longer. There is enough timber to keep going that long without moving the mill. The boss was looking around today and found some new patches.

It is quite dry and dusty here now. It has rained or snowed in the mountains every day for some time but not where we are. I'll miss those mountains. I look at them quite often during the day especially the one I climbed. Somehow they seem friendly and interesting. I know now why the psalmist said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

Well it's time to close this little chat but we'll meet again soon.

Love,
Bill.

057 – Friday, July 23, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Helen sweetie:

It snowed here today. The tops of the mountains were white, this noon, and now the snow has all gone again. It has been cloudy and sprinkling almost every day for a week. *Perhaps the dusty conditions mentioned in the previous letter were abated.*

Went with some fellow fishing last night out to Annie Lake. They caught about 30 and we fried them and ate them before we came back in.

Evidently Bill had received a critical letter from his brother, Nelson, about abandoning Helen. If I had been able to get to him I would gladly have wrung his neck.

Bill refers to dental work he would like to get done and to the fact that, without much to read, he spends most of his free time drawing or tramping around.

He again mentions his hope for a real home. I have been wondering about our future home and wonder if \$700 is too much for the Nohejl place... I understand that we could get a loan of \$1000 from the Federal Land Bank but I do not like their method of finance as I understand it.

I would like us to come up [to this country] in about 10 years to see what it would look like.

Oh sweetie, it's good that God has let us love each other. We'll be together in God's own good time.
Good night Sweet.

Love,
Bill.

058 – Wednesday, July 28, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

I'm starting this in the woods [in pencil] while waiting for logs. Got 3 letters last night.

Right away, he brings up a new farm that might be available. But he doesn't know this new place well and has reservations. Why not ask [a trusted friend] about the place and if it sounds favorable we'll see what sort of terms we can get on it.

I understand that the Federal Land Bank doesn't lend less than a thousand. \$500 of that is stock in the bank that draws 2 ½% interest and may be kept or dropped when you have paid the other portion. It is considered a good investment.

I'm sorry to report that it will be impossible to come home before my contract is finished, but I rather think this job will wind up for the winter in November and that they will furlough all of us until March '44. I think there were too many frosted lungs last year and the working day is very short 9.30 till 4.30 being daylight hours. Several hints have been dropped that we would not need to worry about the winter here. If I quit I would have to pay my own way home. It would be about \$125.

I believe I neglected to answer your question about what we are doing south of the Alcan. This country has very poor stands of timber and the best seemed to be here. The frost has already showed on popple leaves and a little of the flowers.

The mosquitoes are growing steadily worse as are the sand and black flies. There seems to be no deer flies up here.

Bill writes that he is still looking for gift moccasins for Martin. He also identified a closed-front parka. It was beautiful, a silvery gray color. Charlie McConnell says that rabbit skin is tough.

I knew you must have a good reason to [bake and] sell bread. While we're talking about it, I believe the best living we could make would be to sell bread, meat and vegetables to the summer people. *He also approves her idea to raise and sell chickens. Bill and Helen eventually went into sales to the "summer people" and kept at it for a number of years. Bill hand-painted a professional-looking sign advertising their goods and set it at the closest major intersection to where they eventually settled.*

He wants to keep all three of his wool shirts. Three won't be too many when it gets colder. There is one more thing I would like to go with that outfit and that is tin pants. They are a light canvas rainproof pant [soaked with paraffin and popular with loggers].

Bill is no longer concerned about his Draft classification. The company is supposed to be able to secure extensions without trouble. The fellow told me he had failed but twice in 1400 times.

Taking Martin and David to St. Paul to meet him was being considered but the train and bus schedules out of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, where the nearest stations were, would present layover problems. Rice Lake is about 27 miles southwest of Edgewater.

Bill spent one of his checks on a present for Helen.

I rather slipped on the writing as I was in Whitehorse again Saturday night and Macrae Monday. Last night I waited for the mail until 10:30. There hasn't been so much to write about lately.

If that Ford of [name unknown] has 4 good tires and runs, we should get it. I think we can buy a rebuilt motor and have a good car if the tires are good. Pay up to \$75* if necessary.

I'm enclosing a check for %62.80 – 60 hrs. It's 1 day short because of Whitehorse. The next check will be more because we are working 11 hrs now. Five more weeks will see my repat \$100 paid in. With the \$50 from Okes that I haven't received yet that will be \$150 to come home on or with.

Just about run down. Will try again tomorrow night.

Love,
Bill

Dear boys:

Daddy received your letter. I am glad you want me to hurry home and I would like to, but the man I work for says I must stay a little longer. Perhaps I will be home for Thanksgiving.

Do you enjoy helping Mama deliver baked goods?

How do you like your new swing? Is it in the tree behind the house?

Love,
Daddy

**\$75 in 2013 dollars could amount to as much as \$1,000.*

**059 – Friday, July 28, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater**

Dear Helen:

Things here are quite the same. Everyone kicks, no one seems to know what he's doing. The timber is scattering and puny. Of course there is a small pocket of large trees now and then but a great percentage would be about right for fence posts. The super here, the other one left, is not satisfied with the new mill site. It's eleven miles straight west and over an exceptionally rough road. Travel time to and from would take 3 hours out of the day, which would leave little time for actual work. The weather is getting cooler too and there will be more objections as the days grow shorter. It all sums up to some sort of a move, sometime in the future. The answer is I don't know either.

There is one thing I do know however, and that is, I love you you are still the most precious thing in this life to me. Next come our three fine boys.

Your letters mean so much sweet. Thank you for writing so often. I got a letter yesterday but none today. I can't do any kicking as long as you write the way you have been.

I take it son Martin drew the little house. I think it is very nice.

The MPs were here the other day and took one [name given] who was listed as a draft dodger. There was an error some place. It seems that he was called [up for active service] three months ago. I think is mainly because his wife failed to tell him or tell the draft board his address. There has been quite a scurrying notifying various boards since then. I believe he is to enter the army here without going home.

Good night my dears.

Love
Daddy Bill

060 – Saturday, July 31, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen and boys:

I certainly would like to have seen little George trying to clean beans. That will probably never happen quite that way again.

Bill wants to confirm that Helen actually received all checks he sent her by enclosing a list of all checks he had received since starting work for MHKCB on approximately May 28. His take-home pay for the period was \$658.79.

Helen must have broached the idea of her starting to teach. If you accept I shall be home to stay until the army wants me. You have enough to do as it is.

He notes the disappearance of some bird species due to the change of season. He also planned to write John Schones to find out just what Schones wanted for his place.

I do hope and pray that you may all continue well and happy. I know you must be praying for me for I am sure God is watching over me.

Good night dear ones. Kisses all around.

Love,
W.F. La Bill

061 – Tuesday, August 3, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Wife Helen:

Bill writes of photographs he has made, including of a hawk and a chipmunk.

Do not worry about the draft board as I have also written them, after the incident here, giving them my address. I doubt if I am in this country later than November as I believe all signs point to a curtailment of work during cold weather with a continuation next year. From an authoritative source comes the word that the camps are not going to be winterized and that the company has canceled an order for \$50,000 worth of winter clothing. Nothing but maintenance work will be done this winter it seems. The army is to take over Camp Macrae in 90 days and that means, if true, next year's work will be in Alaska proper. The camps keep moving farther north and at any time orders may come for the civilians to move out so the army can take over. The only difference between this and the army is that we get more pay and have a little more liberty. We are subject to army rules and discipline at all times.

There is much we could talk about and much we could do, but I believe the time is not distant when God will bring us together for good. In the meantime we can make the best of minor unpleasantness and carry on our love, life and thoughts by mail.

It seems sweet, that God has permitted this to be as a test and a learning time for us both. I do not know whether I have won or lost, I only know that I believe I have carried on the best I know ...

We limit ourselves and our Maker by the rules we lay down for conduct and by our definition of what is right and wrong. At times He permits us to see how foolish some of the ideas are, yet we cannot do much toward carrying them to others as only He can do that successfully.

One thing the Greeks stressed is very important, moderation in all things. With this is the love of one man for one woman, all else seems to be of minor importance in a greater or lesser degree. It is of this, I believe, that Paul spoke when he said, "I become all things to all men that thereby I may win some."

Remember also how he told some that they were able to eat only milk and that where they should be able to teach they were yet in need of teaching. Surely we know but little of what Christian life could be if only we were able to consume meat instead of milk. And yet it must be that only as and to whom God grants it does the power to eat meat, yes, even the knowledge of what it is, come to individuals.

Oh, Helen, it is only you that I love and only our family that means much to me, by experience, bitter experience I have been taught that one must be careful in whom he trusts. Even as Christ experienced it, one's brother and sisters may not be one's blood relatives but those who are able in some measure to think the same thoughts and share the same knowledge. The good in us that in degree brings out good even in worldly people helps us to find those we seek, though we may be unable to approve of all in their lives.

Thank you for sending Amanda's letter. I cannot help thinking that she, though she may not be fully aware of it yet is far along the path we tread. It needs only the finger of God to awake in her the knowledge of what she seeks.

Your husband
Bill

062 – Thursday, August 5, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen,

...I still hope for a termination in December at the latest.

Yes, we got fresh vegetables, cabbage, celery and tomatoes. Of course we have green beans, but they are the canned variety.

He muses about three different farm properties that they are considering, one for just \$1,200.

Our mountains here have practically no snow on them at the present time. Even White Pass Mt. looks rather bare.

Bill proudly comments on pictures from Martin. Then he takes his brother to task over a \$20 loan. Next, he seems to have given up on bringing home Hudson's Bay Blankets.

Twenty-one weeks. Is it possible? Yet it has passed quickly. Of one thing we can be sure, that the halfway mark is surely reached. You have done wonderfully well at home. Far more than you should have. I am glad for it, but I am happier for another thing. So many here do not trust their wives, nor any woman for that matter. I thank god I do not have that to worry about.

If I am here this winter, your doing the housekeeping for [your brother] George is the best thing I could think of having you do. There would be much pleasure in being near him wouldn't there, sweet. I know you must miss him at times, you meant so much to each other before we met.

...It's time for lights out so good night.

Love,
Bill.

063 – Sunday, August 8, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear wife Helen:

... eight letters in one day. My, My.

Bill comments about Helen baking and on how to clean a duck. He also expresses the desire to see valued friends on his return.

...You are not expected to do much work [here] except out here in the woods. On most jobs around here there are so many men you couldn't work hard if you wanted to

... the timber is almost entirely popple. We do not cut [it] however. It is small stuff on the average and very limby. In the states it would used for nothing but Pulp. Here though, even at the wages they pay us the cost runs around \$150 to \$200 per thousand [board feet] for the rough lumber as against \$400 per thousand freight to haul it from Dawson Creek.

...Do you mean that out of approximately \$1200 I've made that we have only \$200 left? *Bill expresses uncertainty over the difference between his and Helen's calculations on money they have accumulated.* You have never told me the times and amounts of the checks you received so I don't know whether they all reached you or not. Neither do I know exactly how much I sent home ...

Later in the letter his concern about the money comes up again. ... I know you are far better handling money than I. There must be something I haven't thought of or don't know about such as a check that didn't arrive.

It makes no difference when I lay off, I lose overtime at \$1.74 $\frac{3}{4}$ per hour. We must work 40 hrs before we draw overtime pay.

As far as I know the only bonus we get is to have our way paid home if the job breaks up before our contract is up. Of course I will get \$34 time on the way home too in that case.

I shall do my best to get moccasins that fit our big boy Martin. I may have another little thing for him too. Very likely there will be something for another boy or two also and I won't forget mama. I think she will love the present I got her, boys. Martin and David how many guesses do you think I should give mama as to what it is?

He discusses a shipment of clothing from Helen and the relative expense of different ways of shipping. I won't need a second pair of wool pants. If they prove too thin I can get tin pants here to go over them.

Sweet, I think of the days and nights before we were one. All those little things we used to do, and my heart grows big with longing to be with you again, while my mind still mulls over the miracle of our being man and wife. Those evenings when you visited me at mothers; the times we met when we were at college; the evenings in Herb and Blanche's little nook; that one trip to see you on Thanksgiving. I wonder at it all and treasure the precious memories of those moments. They bring you near though mile separate us. Oh God we thank thee for thy watchful care during our lives together in the past and for the years of thy gracious love that are in store for us.

Good night my dear,
Your Bill.

*Then, squeezed in at the bottom of the page ...*I've just been doing some heavy thinking and don't see how you could have much more in the bank than the \$180. X a kiss for you sweet.

Dear Sons:

Daddy is sorry that he has not written you more. [Your] letters are so good.

Do you like to ride in that nice blue [mail] bus? Did the fat man drive the mail bus when you rode on it?

Take care of brother George and Mama.

Love
Daddy.

064 – Monday, August 9, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Darling:

Your letter of August 2, and oh what a wonderful feeling it brings. A real love letter if there ever was one. A tone you and I have seldom let enter our correspondence. It is strange but very pleasant. I don't know how to whisper in writing but [in smaller script] I love you sweetheart. I hope you can imagine the whisper ...

I just stepped outside for a minute. It was beautiful. The sun just on the top of the mountains and a cloud touching one peak lightly.

Bill expresses pride in Helen's work at home. Of course there most certainly are minor breaks in the smooth flow of the days business but even those are apparently forgotten because of the good things that are more worthwhile remembering.

If you think you can drive that Ford of (name) and it has four good tires and tubes and the cost isn't more than \$75, by all means do so, for by so doing you will be able to get to church and perhaps go visiting now and then. *He wonders when she will be leaving for Michigan to visit her family and who will take care of the car in her absence.*

We are finishing up the strip of timber we have been working on and are due to start in the new location some time this week. The new mill is 11 miles west of here. There will be better than an hours ride each way because the road is so rough one cannot travel fast. In the time I've been here we have cut over a strip about a half mile wide and 2 miles long. In three months we have transformed 26,000 logs into lumber and timbers of various sorts.

The new mill is near the Two Horse river. There is quite a bit of game out there. The various estimates on the length of time we will be there is from 3 weeks to three months. If things go as they have the latter is more nearly correct. I rather imagine that if the cutting lasts that long that this job will be finished when we have logged that patch of timber.

...

Good night dear one.

Your lover husband
Bill.

065 – Tuesday, August 10, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

...I do not know yet when I will be coming. If I get a good job I may stay till next spring, but I will think I may get home for Christmas.

Bill mentions some co-workers who elected to quit and go home.

All the work done here is army contract directly. The main point of difference between this and being in the army is the wages. Some of the soldiers do not like the civilian rate of pay, nor do I blame them. There is a sign near Whitehorse saying, "Uncle Sam needs you draft-dodger." There are quite a few bona-fide draft dodgers here in Canada.

Mention is made of an eye ailment of Helen's and his wish to obtain Hudson's Bay blankets.

You may have seen or possibly heard of the articles on the Highway being written for a Minneapolis paper by Peterson and the opposing articles by Howdeshell. If you have or do, I must say that most of what either writes is bunkum. There is a thread of truth in each but both exaggerate in favor of their personal views.

I'm glad for your prayers and I need them. Living with unbelievers may have had a little effect on them, but I believe that I have been able to influence others as much or more for good, because of God's indwelling spirit. All the better men in camp seem to respect me and are friendly. Only a few times have I found it convenient to discuss religion with anyone. There isn't on here, including me, that wouldn't be happier if there were more of God in their lives and less of God Damn.

I often think of that psalm, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." I hope these hills will always be with me. Their calm majestic, peacefulness in all sorts of weather could be usefully copied by lesser bulking human beings.

Good night my sweet. May God be with you.

Love
Bill

**066 - Thursday, August 12, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater**

Sweet:

We started working at the new mill location today. There are not many logs but what are there are bigger than the average run before. It's a poor set up all the way around having to ride so far to work. There too, there is no means of protection when we ride. We got wet tonight. I don't see how present arrangements can continue for long after it gets cold. My feet got cold this morning when I rode out. I may ask for a transfer if things don't change.

I haven't been feeling so good the last two days as I have a cold. I believe it is better tonight.

Yesterday morning we saw bear tracks leading away from the garbage dump and again where the bear had crossed the road. About two miles from camp there were five big holes dug, two of them in the road, where the bear had been digging gophers.

Nothing much in news tonight Dear, just, I Love You.
Good night,
Bill.

A page with three drawings was enclosed. One is of the head and upper torso of a reclining figure. The others are a facial profile sketch and a frontal facial sketch.

067 – Saturday, August 14, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

Your letter of August 9, came today. From what you say, our bank balance should be on the increase from now on. I'm sending another for \$92.51. I could get a duplicate check if I could prove one was missing but it would take some time. The fellows here were talking about it and it would take 6 months ... I have \$80 repaid in now. Just two more weeks of that, and then the checks should be \$102.51 until the hours are cut.

I was rather sure you did not care to teach because you had mentioned it only once. *(Helen did take up teaching high school in 1951 in Birchwood, Wisconsin, and continued until her retirement.)*

Yes, we must think of the boys as well as ourselves when we plan our next move. Concerning the Schones place, I do not think we would be out even if we borrowed some. I believe we can cut enough oak ties from that place to equal a loan of \$1000. There is enough pine on the place to build a good house and any other buildings we would need. The fences are all good. The hay crop seems to be sufficient but I believe it could be improved with a change in seeding. I have always thought that this crested wheat grass would do better than most any other on that place. Of course no one around there grows it but it must be good when the Canadian Government seeded about 10000 acres to it. It was supposed to have choked out Russian thistles in a couple of years.

I used to say that, because he grew up in town, Dad had little knowledge of farming. His letters seem to indicate that I had not given him credit for the degree to which he was informed and aware.

The location of the Schones place is fair and that creek and the springs on the place would be worth quite a bit. The barn would need a little working over but on the whole it is good. The tin roof and the other things about it would make up the difference. John always seemed to make a living on that place and you know he didn't overwork. As to the disadvantages, the house is worthless except as to its original use, a chicken house ...

Bill urges Helen to keep up her spirits. We must always hold to that statement of Paul's in Romans: – who art thou to judge the servant of another, to his own Lord he standeth or falleth, for the Lord hath the power to make him stand.

As long as we seek for a higher plane there is hope ...

I believe the Lord has kept me safe on all major points. On other things I feel that we limit God in his greatness because of our own clouded thinking.

I yet believe that we will be home by Thanksgiving or Christmas at the latest. If it is necessary to stay until Feb 22, when my 9 months with this outfit is up I believe it best to stay until April and come home about the time I could start work there.

I have not heard as yet from the draft board. Have you? I do not want to shun army duty but I shall not go until I must...

Good night my dear, and may God bless you.

Your husband
Bill.

Dear Boys:

You are making some very nice pictures now.

How is baby George? Can he walk yet? How many teeth does he have.

Daddy.

068 – Tuesday, August 17, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Hello Sweet:

Tomorrow it will be 5 months since I started to work up here. I counted my letters and if I remember there are 56 of them now. *I sure wish we had them now!*

I have been off for two days because of a bad cold... The weather here has had a lot to do with it. It's been raining quite often and cold. *Reading these letters I am reminded of Dad's somewhat persistent coughing during the winters as I grew up and now wonder if that was related to his experiences in the Yukon.*

You should see the bugs. I wear a net most of the time to keep from getting all chewed up. Mostly black or sand flies. The only hope is that it will frost heavily enough to kill them soon.

... Well sweet. It's past ten and time for bed so good night dear. May God watch over us.

Love,
Bill

You have asked several times but I do not know if I ever answered. Macrae is the main MHKCB camp named after the RR Station.

069 – Sunday, August 2, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

No mail for two days ...

I just looked up that “awful letter” you wrote August 2. I’m very glad you did not destroy it. Once again it made me feel warm inside because it told me you still cared.

With quite a few women playing dirty tricks on their husbands who are gone it is good to know I have a wonderful wife whom I can trust without question.

I’m glad also that you write as often as you do. Budd’s wife, who is to have a baby in a month or so, writes him about once a month. The boy, he’s only 23, is so worried about it. When he is not working he sits around with his head in his hands. He continues to stay however for there seems to be some purpose for which he needs money.

Another of the fellows had the Red Cross check on his boys condition. I don’t recall what disease the boy has but the father is worried and always on edge. The company telegraphed for him yesterday and was to have heard tonight whether the R.C. thought it necessary for him to go home. If so, he can be on his way in 24 hours. They check on all sorts of cases in this way before releasing a man. The company does not want to lose any worker now unnecessarily for they are going south faster than they can get them north.

The situation here has not improved much. The boss is as bad as ever, trying to make a joke of everything and being so afraid of his shadow he won’t ask for a postage stamp. I don’t know how it will turn out. I was going to see about a transfer to another camp last Monday but decided to try to stick it out, for the present, at least.

It’s raining tonight and was quite cool today so I expect to see snow on the mountains in the morning.

I have a different job now. I’m unloading the trucks at the mill. It’s not as hard work as loading but a little more dangerous. However, as long as God watches and I’m careful it should come out very nicely. They are building regular logging equipment now that the season is about over. There will be bunks on the trucks with trip stakes and a jammer to load with. All that’s necessary to unload is to unhook the binder and jerk the trips so the stakes fall and let the load loose to roll. My main job is to straighten the logs after they hit the ground.

Bill closes by reminiscing about some of their meetings prior to their marriage.

Your husband,

Bill

070 – Friday, August 20, 1943 A

(the first of two letters on this date)

Whitehorse to Edgewater

Sweet Helen:

The letter begins with the usual complaint about lack of mail. No mail for two days, nothing coming in is one reason. No mail at camp for anyone yesterday.

I’m still barking with my cold, but it is does not bother me any.

A heavy frost on the ground this morning. This is the third time we have had frost.

Have you read lately Psalm 37.24, "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down." I wonder just how far that applies.

Charlie McConnell has been having trouble with wolves lately. Out at his hay ranch which is about 10 miles from here he has a tent. The wolves are bold enough that they have swung on the back of this tent with their teeth and have torn chunks of canvas out of it. He says they, the wolves, won't be worth anything now but his tent cost as much as one hide will bring and that he's going to shot them next time he sees them.

Helen I hope the time is nearer when we can be together again. This living apart is certainly not the way it was intended man and wife should live.

Good night my sweet and remember I love you.

Bill

071 – Friday, August 20, 1943 B
(the second of two letters on this date)
Whitehorse to Edgewater

My Darling Wife:

Two letters today. 11th and 14th.

It's been autumn here too. Down to 30° this morning and about 55° tonight. It gets around 70° at noon. The sun used to be up above the mountains by 3 AM. Now it barely tops them at 7 o'clock. It has moved way south. Dark comes about 9.30 now. It has only been during the past month that you could see the stars. Northern lights play almost every night.

I had planned on getting a little dog either wire haired fox terrier or a spaniel for the boys.

Sweet – I only wish I were more able to write you the things I feel. Somehow the binder has loosened and let a little of that love be expressed. I now you understand me probably better than I realize, yet I know also there should be something pass between us that will bind us closer each passing day and year until we really become one mentally, physically and spiritually. Oh, Helen, please believe that you are everything on this earth to me. May God bless our partnership with his presence.

I hope you have not ordered tin pants for I bought some in the canteen. Those leather heel savers would still be quite useful.

Ideas about possible work for Bill once he returns home conclude the letter. I feel that I could get a good [job working for the County] driving a cat. I've learned quite a bit about skinning a cat since I've been here. They are using D4 Caterpillar Diesels to skid logs and the skidders have all let me take a whack at it. If I can I'm going to try the bull dozer one of these days. [Name] – a homely, sarcastic, small creature, is going to teach me arc welding and burning as the opportunity arrives.

Good night my love.

Bill.

Dear Boys:

When Daddy was going to work the other morning we met a man and a dog. What do you think the dog was doing? He had two small sacks on his back. When he got near camp he ran ahead and tried to get someone to take off his pack. He would look up and then rub against someone. It was a big white dog.

Love
Daddy.

072 – Wednesday, August 25, 1943?

(No date of writing was given on this letter. August 25 is estimated based on the date of postmark at Edmonton. Bill's letters usually took a few days to reach Edmonton.)

Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

Your letter of 18th yesterday and of the 16th today. I'm glad they came that way because I read of your recovery first. I do hope you remain well.

I got a pair of moccasins today that will fit a big boy. They are a little different than the other two pair as they have been made by a different tribe of Indians. They have nice white fur around the top.

Yes, Georgie must be growing up.

There is still little of the old snow on a few peaks. The new snow is due any time. The weather is coolish, that is, the wind. The sun is plenty warm yet.

... They made a change today. Took out all men who were working at jobs other than that for which they were classified. I rather imagine we'll all move soon. One of the head men says practically all men will be out of here by Dec 15 for a month or two.

... Not much to write about tonight. I'm glad for your love.

Yours
Bill.

An indistinct photograph of a bird was enclosed in the envelope. The bird appears to be a raptor of some sort. It may be possible that the bird is the captive goshawk mentioned in Letter 055/3.

073 – Friday, August 27, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

No mail for several days so I hardly know what to write except – I love you.

I received the sox today. I wish now that I had waited awhile before letting you send those pants. I got a pair of company issue wools tonight at camp. They are a fairly good pant and I can wear them for work and turn them back when I am though without

cost. Later I may be able to get a sleeping bag. If I can get hold of eiderdown bag I think I shall bring it home as it would make a good comfort. A little later I can get company issue felts and rubbers. I have bought wool underwear and have a fairly good stock of all other clothes at present...

There is talk now of moving us 300 miles north but as yet it is just talk.

We finally got a bath house here with showers. I suppose they will move us now that it is finished. That's the way it usually goes.

...

Love
Bill.

074 – Saturday, August 28, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

Saturday again and almost the end of the another month. Two letters today for a change.

...

I just got through greasing my new boots. I got a pair for \$8.50 at Macrae supposed to be the best leather shoes made in Canada. I made my own grease, a pint of spruce gum, oil grease and rubber all boiled together. The shoes are very comfortable.

...

I'm sorry that I miss a day or two once in a while. It isn't because I don't love you, nor again that I don't think of you all. These days between letters are bad I know. That Bud Mahan on the picture I sent you hasn't heard from his wife for 4 weeks. The letters seem to come five or six in a bunch. I pity him. His wife is to have a baby in a month or six weeks.

...

I want to come home very much, Helen, but as long as we have less than we need I feel that there is a job to be finished before I do come. I hope we can both survive the time we are apart. I know we can with God's help. We must be at least 5 years ahead financially because of the few weeks I've been here. Yet I sometimes wonder if it hasn't been 5 years.

I have been expecting a call from the draft board instead of an extension. In a way I believe it will be good to have been in the army, after the war is over because the (*American*) Legion will be a great political organization. I wonder also, Helen, if war is as bad as it seems. I know that the killings are not right and yet the human race seems to advance quickly during such times in the way of science, etc. It's just a thought along the line that only the fittest survive, which seems to be the main law of this world. Let me have your idea about this please. The company insists that it is responsible to the army for us as long as we wear that badge they give us.

(Other comments were made about matters relating to the purchase of a farm.)

All my love
Bill.

075 – Monday, August 30, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

My Helen:

Your letter of Aug 22, today. I can't remember what I wrote you on the 17th, but I do know that I am growing increasingly disgusted with being here. And since your letter I wish I were at home. Please keep me informed as to how he is getting along. (*Bill may be referring to David. See letter 076/1.*) Do you think it is necessary to have a Doctor examine him? Even as I write God assures me that everything will be alright.

Yes, the trees are changing color. You pick out most of the popples on the mountain side as they are a brilliant yellow.

Today I went for a walk. I've heard of a waterfalls near here* and today I found it. I rode out to the woods and cut west through the trees to the river and followed it for quite a ways. At last I came to a burn and found a path going ever upward along the river bank. The falls couldn't be below me for the river was too far down. I mean the banks were too high. At times I grew almost discouraged but I kept on. Several times I saw bear sign but once only was it fresh. The river was almost 200 feet below me and the trees were thinning out. At last I came out on a level place and in about a half mile got my first glimpse of the falls. The drop was about 100 feet. The river here was narrow, about 20 feet wide. At the first drop it squeezed through a 10 foot gap and jumped 20 feet to a pool, whiled and shot through another, repeating twice more. I stood above the first drop and tossed a stone and counted 3 before it hit. Further down I counted 4 before the stone hit. I saw a pair of chickadees today and four large eagles that were a mottled red brown.

I'm glad for the information concerning the Soanes (?) place. We certainly won't want it.

...

God keeps, Helen. I still cough but otherwise I'm OK.

Oh, sweetie, this letter business is awful. You can't say all you would like and can express but a fraction of what you feel. I sincerely hope we shall never be apart this long again.

All my love,
Bill.

**The waterfalls is described further in Letter 083 where he locates it as being on the Watson River.*

076 – Wednesday, September 1, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

Your letter of the 15th was welcome though I did hope for word about David. Perhaps it will come when they get back from town tonight (*with the mail*).

...

I'm glad to know the boys are not forgetting (*me*). Those little pictures and letters tell me lots and help make life happier here. The rest of the men enjoy their letters too.

Bill encourages Helen to be confident in her ability to handle money. You are right about money having been scarce for quite a while. I do want you to have those things you need and a little more when occasion demands. I wonder what we have now; \$600?

Helen must be contemplating train travel. I think you would be foolish not to take a sleeper (*car*). It would be so much better for you all.

Yes, the freight runs around \$400 per thousand. Things are high here. Gasoline is 49 ½¢ per imperial gallon.* Nothing is rationed in the Yukon. It must cover as much or more territory than Wisconsin and there are about as many people as in Sawyer county (*Wisconsin – where Helen and boys are living*). Hay shipped in is \$150 per ton.

...

Certainly, sweet, we must certainly be better to and for each other after this separation or we won't get along at all. God will have his way with us. If things proceed under his direction as they did in the past the best years are yet to come. (*There follows a passage about the lack of being able to worship. It is not clear whether it is Bill or Helen who is not able to worship. Bill finds guidance in verses from the Bible.*)

The camp is still at the same place. We just spend two hours a day riding back and forth.

It snowed quite a bit yesterday but most of it is gone now. Nights and mornings are cool but the afternoon is quite warm when it's clear. Today was a very beautiful day.

...

To tell you a secret, I have been hoping in some way our new farm would be in Alaska. Everywhere one hears stories of how easy it is to get ahead there. Dick ____, the fellow from Alaska, says it's the only place he ever heard of where one can make a living and work only three months a year. He traps and says he has averaged from \$1400 to \$3000 per year for 20 years. The government of Alaska has refused to grant trappers' licenses to (*any*) able bodied males for the duration (*of the war*). They must all be engaged in war work of some sort.

Good night, dear. I thank God for your prayers.

Love

Bill.

Dear sons:

I have lots of drawings and some letters from two of Daddy's three fine boys. George would probably write too if he could.

I'm afraid, David, that the bear ate that lunch. And do you know, two men shot a bear somewhere north of here. A big grizzly bear. They left it lay and went off for a

while. When they came back, one of them kicked the bear and it killed him and bit the other. You see, sons, it wasn't quite dead yet.

So you canned blackberries did you, Martin? Are you going to put them in a little pie this winter?

I miss you too, sons, but never fear we will be together for a long long time one of these days.

Love
Daddy.

**An imperial gallon equals about 1.2 U.S. gallons. Gasoline sold for about 10¢ per gallon in the U.S. in 1943.*

077 – Friday, September 3, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Sweethearts:

I do not understand just why you haven't received any mail except it may be that no plane picked up outgoing mail for several days. They are very careless about both incoming and outgoing mail here. I get you letters of Aug 25 and 28 both today... I'm sorry as can be about the mail. I've written and that's the best I can do. I understand censorship holds up mail about a week or two. Perhaps that is what has happened.

I still have coughing spells but can't say that it bothers me much.

...I wonder if the Nohejl place wouldn't be a good buy after all at \$700. There should be quite a bit of hay ground that could be leveled off and seeded, also pasture and a considerable portion of fence. However the John Schones place would be still better as we would have only a house to build. I still think we could more than half pay for the place with the timber on it... I shall write to Schones tonight.

I figure if I can stay till Dec 15 we should have another \$1000 and if I stay till April it should increase \$1500 more.

...

If I have any serious sickness or accident I shall have the company telegraph my conditions.

...

What do you think of my working at B.C. this winter?

The time grows shorter here. Unless we find more timber we will have to move elsewhere. Estimates are from a week to 5 weeks yet. Just talk till we get orders, then we will know.

Must say goodnight my sweet.

Love
Bill.

Dear Boys:

I must tell you what happened today. One of the men, Jim, we'll call him, left his jacket on a stump while he went to eat dinner. When he came back he found that a big wolf had dragged his coat quite a ways. Daddy measured some wolf tracks and they were 4 inches each way.

He describes a bird for Martin, hoping Martin can identify it in his bird book for him.

Love
Daddy.

078 – Sunday, September 5, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

(In this brief letter, Bill comments, as usual, about the mail. Also on his mind were whether the draft board would want him and the merits of a potential farm property closer to Hayward at Whitefish. He closed with the following.)

You should have seen me last night. These issue blue wool pants had but one hip pocket so I cut a pocket out of an old pair I found here and put it in. I finished that and shortening the pants about 10:30. I must say I did a good job.

Not much writing but ever so much love.

I'm including a check.

Your
Bill.

079 – Tuesday, September 7, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

My Very Dear Wife:

Three letters to answer tonight 23rd, 30th & 2nd and what letters.

It's hard to stay here and hard to leave when you want to go. I wouldn't be bad if you could do a good day's work under someone who knows what he is doing. The way it is though, the woods boss is a man who has never worked in the woods in his life. That wouldn't be so bad if he had something on his shoulders to think with. I have heard of "dumb Swedes" all my life but never knew what I meant before. He deliberately makes things bad for himself and for us too. Then the office is screwy and acts as if it wouldn't want things done too quickly. In the face of all that they blame the men for not staying at one job. In can still leave when I wish but it takes at least a week to get things straightened out before you start home.

...

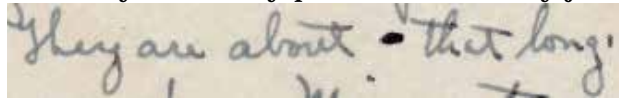
I have begun to think we are quite well off where we were – at home. I also think that if we were to buy any place it should be John Nohejl's. I wonder if we couldn't get

it for \$500 cash. What I was thinking of is that we would have less trouble trying to remodel that house than the one we have. No improved land...

I am not complaining of the cold today. It was cold yesterday but today the sun shone and it was over 70°. All my cotton underwear was dirty Monday when I took a bath so I put on my woolens. I about melted in the sun. The shade is 20° cooler anyhow. Did I tell you I had bought two suits of medium wools, \$9.95. I also got a sheep lined parka \$22.50 (which is cheap considering prices of other articles). A pair of 10 inch leather shoes \$8.50 at the canteen. These are Canada's best and the most comfortable shoes I've ever worn. They are \$10 per in Whitehorse.

It frosts about every other morning. The sand flies or black flies, whichever they are will be here until it snows. And do they bite. They poison some. They just raise

lumps like mosquito bites on me.



Most of the men here are from Minnesota. The kitchen help is from Kansas City.

...

I believe I would like to go to a church where they sing logs of those good old Methodist hymns.

For the past week I've thought continually of coming home. I don't know how it will turn out. The rumor still has it that all of us are to be sent home in December.

There are two bunk houses here and a big log house that we use. The army specifies from 3-5 feet between bunks.

One thing that seems strange here is that the North Star is so high in the sky. I suppose at the pole it's overhead.

Welding is hard on the eyes. The only reason this welder is here is because his eyes gave out. They have a medicine now that combats this eye trouble.

...

I don't think it necessary to worry about taxes yet. The company is to furnish us with blanks if we have to pay.

Good night my dear. God bless you all.

I dreamed of those kisses last night.

Love

Bill.

He closes with some remarks for the boys about letters from Martin and David.

080 – Friday, September 10, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

I don't know just how much of a letter this will be. I have had no mail for several days now, but I would like to keep it coming that way as regularly as possible.

I can state something about taxes that I hope is true. We won't have to make a return until December 15, and I should be home by then. I figure about \$200 if I work till December. I believe there is some doubt about our having to pay.

I had a little accident yesterday. Caught the tip of one finger between a log and the cant hook handle and loosened the hide on one end. It's hardly sore tonight and should heal quickly.

The weather is promising something. One hot day and since then it has been cool. Tonight it is quite cloudy so there could be snow again.

... *(The writing is taken up again the next morning.)* ...

Charlie McConnel was telling about someone who wanted to see some grizzlies. They saw a track first and then got a glimpse of them ahead. They had not been located by the bears yet and Charlie said, "I'll whistle and they will stand up." He whistled and the one bear stretched up on his hind legs sniffing to locate the scent. The fellow took one look and said, "Don't whistle anymore. Let's get out of here."

Love
Bill.

081 – Saturday, September 11, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Wife:

The letter begins with gratitude for two letters received and a comment on Helen's apparent consideration of a trip back home to Michigan. Bill expresses uncertainty about four or five potential properties for their new farm.

It rather puzzles me that we have no more than \$500 in the bank but there is probably a good reason. Well, there should be nearly \$200 counting this check that you haven't recorded. Yes, there was a day off each of those checks as I was off Sunday and Monday. Pay period ends Sunday night.

I guess we are lucky at merely being apart; some will never return to their homes.

I'm sorry about David boy. I do hope that he is well now.

By all means get that washer if you can.

I have socks for some time, but the woolens are not here yet. I can wear heavy socks in my shoes. The company furnishes felts for cold weather, also those rubber, leather top packs.

...I doubt if I am called for the army now as long as everything is going the way it has. The surrender of Italy (*) means thousands can be used for other purposes now... The (*draft*) classification means defense work.

Again I'll say don't worry about that tax. I'll have till Dec 15, to make out the report. I doubt if I have to pay anything.

Good night my sweet. May God be with you all.

Love,
Bill.

Dear Boys:

The boys must have heard of a gift he had promised. I'm afraid sonny that I will have to wait until I come home to get your moccasins to you. I'm sure you will like them, they are very pretty.

Love.
Daddy Bill.

* "The surrender of Italy..." *Word of Italy's unconditional armistice with the Allies on September 8, 1943, reached the wilds of Yukon Territory in just three days! The surrender, whose terms specified that "the Italian forces will cease all acts of hostilities against the Anglo-American forces, wherever they may be", was actually signed on September 3 but kept secret for five days.*

082 – Tuesday, September 14, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Wife:

I'll assure you of this – if possible I'll be home between Thanksgiving and Christmas at the latest. That might mean I'll be there most any time. I can't say how much longer I'll be here. I'm so sick of this. It wouldn't be so bad if there was a decent foreman but the fellow we have is dumb just plain everyday dumb. Then too, this is defense work and there is scarcely a man here who averages more than two hours of work per day. At that we do more than lots of men here.

... Did I tell you I had finally gotten that package you sent in May, with the underwear?* It came a little over a week ago.

...These pants the company furnishes are good enough to work in. The Co. issues sleeping bags to truck drivers or those going further north. The bags they have now are not eider down but wool filled and not much better than blankets. I have four grey wool blankets and a pair of cotton blanket sheets. I also have two mattress pads. The way you make a bed decides whether or not you stay warm. You tuck it under the mattress and pull out one corner enough to crawl in. That makes it like a sleeping bag.

...Our sleeping quarters are mostly too warm but then we live on our beds, no chairs or anything.

We have an automatic heater for water. No wells here. Water is hauled from Macrae. It gets around 70° below at times and around 18 inches of snow from all reports. The ocean affects Skagway but not here.

Bill drops a few hints about a special gift with which he hopes to surprise her on his return. What I have for you is a lovely color but I'm afraid it's not a snow suit. It may be before I get home though. There, I've almost told you what it was. You still can't guess though.

I hardly know how to think about the war nor of lots of other things. I only know that there are some of these men who are predominately evil the others are just not Christian, maybe it could best be explained by saying they are just men.

One young fellow here has a medical discharge from the air corps. He has plenty of trouble. His wife is an only child aided and abetted by her parents in refusing to live elsewhere than with them. He could have put his father-in-law in prison because of their first baby. The mother was very sick because of it. However he says his wife would never live with him if he did that. I'm afraid though that sometime he will get drunk and shoot his father-in-law. He thinks of it.

Good night dear one.

Love
Bill.

Dear Boys.

The time is getting shorter for Daddy to remain in Canada.

One of the men caught a lumberjack bird today. It ate cheese while he held it.

Love
Daddy.

*Helen made a type of cotton boxer underwear for all of us boys, so she probably made Bill's too back then.

Estimated Income	\$ 3895.76	
Deductions - Man Wife		\$ 1340
" 3 children (\$370)		<u>1170</u>
" Church		<u>300</u>
	2810.00	300
Taxable Income	\$ 1085.76	
	<u>.23</u>	
	\$ 257.28	
	<u>217.152</u>	
Amount of Income + Victory Tax	\$ 249.7248	
Less Victory Tax Paid	<u>28.32</u>	
	\$ 221.40	

083 - Wednesday, September 15, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

Helen must have lowered the boom on Bill in her last letter! Your letters of the 9th and 13th tonight. I ducked when I read the former. It sounds like you would have thrown something...

Farther along in this letter he recalls another difficult time. Our courtship had mostly sweet and happy moments but I recall at least one time when it hung on a thin cord. Do you recall how awful I acted that Thanksgiving at your folks' and how you cried? Those moments were few however, thank God.

He reiterates that taxes need not be filed until December 15... The company has enough political drag to get the extension. Metcalfe, of the firm, used to be a U.S. Senator under the old Prendergast [sic] gang.*

...Bill once more expresses how much he wishes he were home.

I'm thinking seriously, my dear, of coming back and going to welding school. I understand it will take about 400 hours to complete the course at government school. If

I get so I can pass the Navy test I would be able to get a job anyplace. Of course though if it come handier to go farming next year than to come up here again I'll forget the welding, though it would come in handy as a means of getting a little extra income on the farm.

Farming again, I don't see how we could go wrong on the Schones place if we could get it for \$2300 cash. I never thought much of Mrs. B's (*Mrs. Benson's?*) sheep. Schones had a better type. Is this the second time Mrs. B broke a leg since I've been gone?

I wished all the time I was on the trip to the waterfall (*probably the hike described in Letter 075*) that you were along. It was so beautiful. I got paid for that day even though I did nothing. I had already worked a day for which I did not get paid. The path is one the prospectors and trappers have used for years. *Bill adds remarks about Alligator Lake and Annie Lake and the great fishing to be found there. He even draws a little map of the natural features of the area.*

I'm as careful as can be about bear. Even the grizzlies are gentlemen unless surprised as in case of getting too close to a female with cubs. There are thousands of acres here with nothing but buck brush on them. The timber is patchy. You would be surprised at the poor quality of the land here. It will never be a thickly settled country.

I did not buy you an eider down. They cost around \$75 and this cost but \$25.

I bought the parka mainly as something I could use at home. Of course it will come in handy here too. The company furnishes parkas but they aren't as heavy as a blanket lined blouse, very thin and cheap.

Good night my dear.

Your
Bill.

Dear boys:

Thank you for your fine letters and the coloring you sent me. You are both doing quite well on your coloring.

Thank you for looking up those birds, Martin.

Love
Daddy Bill.

**There was a Senator Jesse H. Metcalf, of Rhode Island, from 1924-1931, but no connection to the MHKCB Co. has been found. The Tom Pendergast organization in Kansas City, Missouri, helped launch the political career of Harry S. Truman, a fact that caused Truman's enemies to dub him "The Senator from Pendergast." Source: Wikipedia. Neither Truman nor the Democrats were friends of Bill LaBar's.*

084 – Wednesday, September 17, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

My Helen:

The letter opens with the usual comments on the mail service.

You should have seen me before I shaved. I had a mustache of the variety you may remember from college days and a beard about an inch long on my chin only. It really didn't look bad. I would have passed for a Frenchman most any place. This morning the moisture from my breath gathered in the mustache because of the cold and I decided I had better change my mind about wearing it home. You would probably have laughed yourself sick if I had.

A description of the turning fall colors is offered. {The snow} comes and goes except on the highest levels such as White Pass Mountain. The birds are going south now. The ptarmigans are changing to their winter white. Charlie Mc[Connell] says it's very early for them to change. He mentions sighting a gyrfalcon, lumberjack bird, and an owl.

There is no call to be sorry about not having \$600, \$516 isn't so bad considering that's as much as we usually made in a whole year. The fact that most of it accumulated in August is good. The account should jump again this month. I may have to cash another check. I had thought I wouldn't need anymore but what with washings, and buying pictures, and clothes, it has disappeared.

Horses are worth \$150, he says. Gas in Whitehorse is 75¢ (per imperial gallon, I believe).

There is a reference to the "Matanuska set up", by which I assume he means the homesteads in the Matanuska Valley near Palmer, Alaska, that were pioneered by Midwestern families imported to the area by the New Deal administration in 1935.

<http://alaskacenters.gov/homestead.cfm>

I believe there are 35 acres cleared on the Schones place...

Good night dear one, I've enjoyed this chat with you.

Love,
Bill.

**085 – Sunday, September 19, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater**

Dear Wife:

No mail, but then the weather had been too bad to fly. Quite a bit of snow this morning, even on the lowland but by noon most of it was gone.

I was talking to Charlie Mc[Connell] about those birds (*gyrfalcons?*) and he says that one he shot had an eight foot wingspread. He climbed up to a nest once and says he wouldn't be exaggerating if he claimed there was a half cord of wood in the nest. They like lambs up three weeks old. They catch the lamb away from its mother and it's gone. The little lambs hide under their mother's belly when there is danger.

Do you recall that lake with the white banks I told you about? Charlie says someone had the bright idea of digging a ditch so as to lower the lake level 12 feet and thus save a fill in the road. What happened was that they lowered the lake level nearly 20 feet, practically draining it, and had to change the road anyhow.

Someone else had a brilliant idea of damming Marsh Lake, about 18 miles east of here on the other side of that mountain I sent you the picture of. The idea was to hold water at high level and then release it in the spring to break up the ice on Lake La Barge [sic] 50 miles north, a lake that is 50 times as big as Marsh. It cost around a million to prove the idea nutty.

Sweet, I'm so tired of the place, but I'm going to stay a while yet. We must have a good farm when this war is over. I'm still hoping too, that they will shut this place up very quickly some day and ship us home.

...

Love
Bill.

086 – Tuesday, September 21, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Wife:

Still no mail and still bad flying weather. I imagine they will be sending mail up the road by truck soon if this weather keeps up.

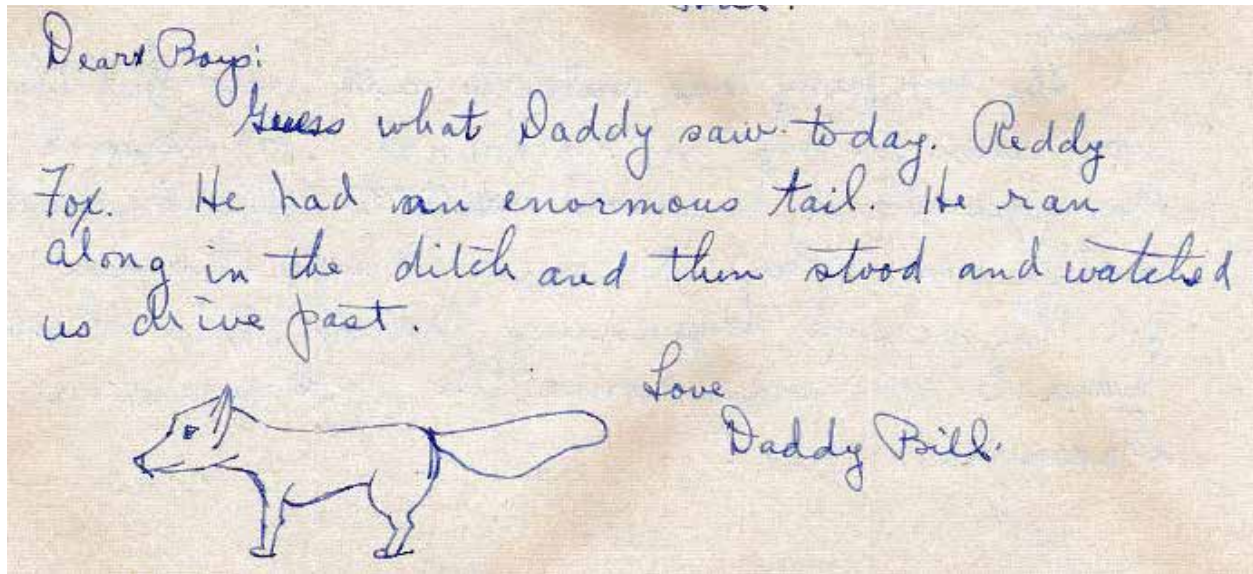
The snow is piling up very gradually on the mountains. It snows here and there a little each time it clouds up. The bugs, however, are very much alive. They are not active for such a large portion of the day though.

I was in Whitehorse today and saw a deep red Hudson's Bay blanket trimmed or striped with black. The price? A mere \$45. That is the first I have seen, but I believe I can find one for not more than \$20 when I'm further south.

The company has contracts out now but there was none for me in the bunch. *If a contract would come for Bill crediting him for a March 18 start date, he could go home the first week of December.*

A lengthy passage recounts part of a book he is reading called Microbe Hunters (1926) by Paul de Kruif.

Your own
Bill.



**087 – Wednesday, September 22, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater**

My Darling Helen:

...I know that you realize from experience that even the sight of an envelope from a dear one means much.

...In thinking about the Schones place it comes to me that there may be a slight difficulty arising from its purchase, that of finance. *Bill* lays out a scenario in which they would need at least \$1,750 to complete the purchase. He believes they will have that much by the time he comes home on December 18. He expects the mortgage rate to be 7%.

I'm supposing that we could sell \$700 worth of timber and cordwood, that would leave around \$350 a year beside to pay out in 5 years. Sounds like rather an ambitious program, doesn't it? But one thing sure we won't get anywhere unless we start, and again I say – God willing we can do it. A garden of several acres with selling to the summer folks should net us quite a bit. Six cows should bring in \$600 a year at the present time.

According to the way things were after the last war, the drop shouldn't come for at least 5 years after the war is finished. It has been predicted that it will be 10 years. Whether or no, I believe we should try it if we hear from God to that effect. If Schones could make a living and work only half the time we should make it by working a little harder.

I had thought of making another house of logs, sawing them on three sides. I've seen several here made that way. They fit together very nicely and make a much neater cabin... This is quite a lot of thinking on paper so please excuse me. I'm going to welcome the time we can talk it over in person.

Remarks about friends and relatives come next, followed by superlative comments about the book, Microbe Hunters.

Yours
Bill.

088 – Saturday, September 25, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dear Helen:

No letters tonight, but last night I received the package containing the shirt, pants, candy and flowers... I have had several offers for the shirt already....

It rains here quite a bit now. The road is so slippery that it takes nearly two hours to make the eleven miles out. By noon the rain has slacked and in the evening the road is getting a little dry.

I have a new job now. Jim _____, a 45 year young Irish lumberjack wanted to trade with someone for a while. I'm choking now. That is, I line up the logs for the cat to drag to the skidway. You pull out the cable from the winch on the cat and hook it around the log. If they come right you take seven logs to the load. Sometimes you work hard and then when the skidway is full you may have quite a wait. Always there are flies.

I'm choking for Seaman. I've mentioned him before. He is 35 and looks 10 years older than I. (*Bill was 38 in 1943.*) He lives at Deer River, Minnesota, and has 7 children.

The fellow who was going to show me how to arc weld dropped a log on his toe today and smashed it badly. I imagine they will ship him to Edmonton to the Alcan Hospital. It's going to be lucky if they don't have to cut off his toe.

Bud Mahan is on his way home now. He broke his tail bone some time ago on a toboggan. It bothered him so that the Doc ordered him home for an operation. The trip to Big Falls, Minnesota will cost him \$1, of which he will get 75¢ back when he returns his parachute. He went by Ferry Command. Civilians can ride Ferry Command planes only in case of emergency. The fare to St. Paul from here via Skagway, Prince Rupert (by boat), and Edmonton (by train) is \$92.75. Of course the government gets a lower rate.

Men are leaving as fast as accommodations will allow. Boats are on winter schedule of every tenth day and one can scarcely get out of here in less time than that. It's possible to come home by Seattle too or by bus. Planes are help up often by the weather now, though they are coming through.

No word from J. Schones as yet...

Good night, my sweet,

Your
Bill.

089 – Monday, September 27, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Sweet:

No mail yet today. I hardly know what to write about. There is so little worth mentioning now.

I...long for the day when my exile is over. God willing though there will be more in the land of plenty because of my stay here.

...

Love
Bill.

They told us today that all those who came before July 1 need not bother about income tax until further notice. The others will have 20% deducted from now on.

090 – Tuesday, September 28, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

Received three letters from you tonight. I am very glad for them but sorry that you are having eye trouble. However, I am sure that God has healed you by this time. God knows best and his every act is for our benefit...

I don't suppose I have told you more than half in my letters about how things are up here but be assured that this outfit is making several pots of money off the job that wouldn't have been made and aren't necessary now except that a Democratic Party grab is on.

He asks about a couple in Yarnell that were neighbors while Bill and Helen lived in their log cabin.

The company might see fit to let me come home for a short time but they do not expenses except in case of death in the family. Of course if they let me come by Ferry Command the expense would not be prohibitive.

Just rest peacefully in God's hands and all will be well.

Your husband,
Bill.

Dear Sons:

Charlie McConnell lives in a tent part of the time but mostly he lives in a nice log cabin. When I come I shall have a picture of it.

I have peanut butter to eat too, now and then, David.

I'm glad to know that you are fine boys.

Love
Daddy.

091 – Thursday, September 30, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Dearest Helen:

The letters begins with an apology for something said in a previous letter. It seems obvious that "conversing" by letter over a period of many months is less than satisfactory.

I...was going to the truck to get to Mcrae to see about going home when Chase handed me your telegram. From your telegram, you could have had an eye removed, but I can't believe it for God still is. I know your sight must be unimpaired in spite of that ulcer, for which I join joy in thanks to Him who made us.

And now the farm question. *A comparison of three potential places follows: the LeBrande place (\$2,500), the Benson farm (200 acres but with poor hay and fences would not be worth \$1,000), and the Schones places (still the best buy...going to write him offering \$2000 cash).*

Bill teases Helen with more hints about a surprise gift he is bringing for her.

...It will be only 65 short days until I leave here. Then I hope we will be together for always. Oh, my dear, if we were only together for a few short minutes. Just thinking about you makes life more bearable.

...

Love,
Bill.

092 – Friday, October 1, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater

Sweet Helen wife:

...

You say it seems incongruous to believe in the power of God to heal and yet go to a physician. Why? Has not God seen fit to endow that Dr. Cook with the knowledge and power to heal eyes? Isn't it possible, though far-fetched that his only mission in life was to heal your eye under God's direction? We both know that God has the power to heal directly and does heal that way, yet Christ saw fit to use clay and spittle on the blind eyes so that that person would have something to pin his faith to. Perhaps it is better expressed thus: the clay and spittle were not necessary and Christ had no belief in them, but the blind man believed in them, therefore Christ used them. Of course this is just an idea and my reason may be faulty.

...

I wouldn't call your trouble a source of expense if it had cost everything we have. Besides it really wasn't your fault in the first place.

...*Bill enumerates his expenses.* I imagine mine have been higher than yours. \$35 for board per month, then there are stamps, envelopes, clothing of various sorts, odds and ends to take home, including two very beautiful presents for a lovely wife, washings were about \$1 per week. I do my own again now. For a while there was no place to do one. All in all I suppose I have spent about \$45 per month since I've been

away from home. That is just a guess...I have better than \$50 Canadian at present. I hope I won't need any more till I get home.

...

Helen is evidently considering a visit to her family. Don't wait on me. When you get ready to go home, go, for if I come I shall just stay in Edgewater just long enough to get rid of the things I wouldn't want to take to Michigan. No matter where you are I'll be there sooner or later.

Ordinarily, Helen, those HB (*Hudson Bay*) blankets cost \$26 for a double one. It's raining hard out, harder than at any time yet. Probably snow by morning. Good night, Helen. Good night boys.

Love,
Daddy Bill

093 – Tuesday, October 5, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

(forwarded from Edgewater to Union City, Michigan, on October 11)

Dearest Helen:

...

I guess its my turn to say something I wish I didn't have to. I broke the outer joint of my little finger. It happened nearly a week ago but I wasn't sure until today. We were putting a shack we had built on the truck and I caught my finger between the iron band around the floor of the truck and the shack. It pinched right at the base of the nail and I thought I had lost a nail. It continued to be sore and I examined the finger closely and noticed that the end wiggled when it shouldn't. I put a splint on it night before last. Today I could hear the bones click together but even so most of the pain is gone. Tomorrow I shall go in to First Aid and get it done up properly.

...

I haven't received my contract yet.

I hope I can get a good microscope. Perhaps we will have a bug hunter in the family...

Somehow I felt concern about your eye but I knew at the same time God would work things out the best way for all concerned.

I'm enclosing the last check, and Helen, I am having them take three \$18.75 bonds out of my pay, one for each of the boys. I thought that it may help them start something of their own some day.

Your
Bill.

Boys:

I think the pictures very nice.

Love,
Daddy Bill

094 – Thursday, October 7, 1943
Whitehorse to Edgewater
(forwarded from Edgewater to Union City, Michigan)

My Helen:

...It was quite clear and several planes went both ways [today]. It was nasty all day yesterday, a hard rain down here and snow on the mountains, the most yet. Some of it melted but most of it stayed.

I went into first aid. Captain ____ took one look at my finger and said, "Send him down to U.S.E.D. for an Xray." Their verdict was "a clean break, keep a splint on it for two weeks." I'm getting full time as near as I can figure as I do a little. Can't do a whole lot though because that bone clicks if I do and it won't heal if it moves.

I do pray that your eye is healed entirely by now.

I'm glad for David the farmer and for Martin too. I wish I could romp with them now, have them read to me, or me read to them, but that will all come soon.

You would be as comfortable in Mrs. B's barn this winter [as in the house]. I don't want the Benson place. I would almost say that if we must pay \$1000 that we will stay where we are.

... I would almost sooner work for \$40 a month as hired man than put in another 6 months up here and pile up another \$600 or \$1000. I know that sounds terrible but if a man were to send more than 9 months up here he wouldn't be able to earn his living in ordinary times. He would be so used to doing nothing at all that he would not be able to work as he should at an ordinary wage.

I had thought we might have \$1700 by Dec 1, but I fear it will not be possible now. I don't blame you sweet for I now you always get value for money spent but somehow it doesn't stack up very fast. With our taxes out we will probably have \$1200 instead of \$1700.

Again I say we don't (*underlined three times*) want the Benson place.

...

He relates that Microbe Hunters is one of his "Pocket Books." ... We must read it to the boys.

I've been wondering why you didn't go down to Michigan sooner.

They turned Seaman's cat into a bull dozer so I am supposed to be a cutter now. That's about the only job left to try.

Bill is worried that he will be a perfect stranger when I get there. We will have to get used to each other all over again... I don't suppose you and I will ever come to know each other perfectly but by God's grace we can live lovingly.

Your
Bill.

Straight through from now till next March should be good for another \$1200 in the bank or about \$1800. It would be hard to swallow though. Right now I wonder if I could appreciate the money if I stayed on.

**095 – Saturday, October 9, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City, Michigan**

Dearest Helen:

I ran across a new idea concerning religion. Did you ever happen to hear of Lloyd Douglas's "Magnificent Obsession"? ...

Bill relates some deep thoughts on Douglas's theory regarding what role investment of personality plays in the building of bonds with people and with Christ and with God, the Master Personality... I don't know what you think of this but to me it seems as though it might be the truth.

I can't help but wonder if something more than the condition of Helen's eye prompted her to take the boys to visit her parents in Michigan. Bill clearly seems upset by their relationship.

I wish to assure you again of my love, Helen. How I can fully express that love, I know not. I hope I can honestly say I feel like the young husband who failed in trying to loose his wife's foot from a rail and chose to die with her rather than live by taking the one step necessary for his own safety.

Have a safe trip home.

Love
Bill

**096 – Monday, October 11, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Dear Helen:

I wonder if Helen disagreed with Bill about the Benson place. After dismissing the place in his last mention of the place, he seems to show puzzlement. I hardly know what to say about this B. place, he says, and goes on to list the negatives about it. No manure has been applied, poor hay, no previous sales prospects, country schools were closed or closing, etc.

He is uncertain they will have enough to purchase a farm with any left over on which to live. I notice by a Minn. paper that FSA loans are available. Do you think we should try that method of financing again?

Irritation then seems to spill over. Or is it plain frustration that all his efforts will not yield enough? Our main problem is going to be either finance for land or finance for cattle. If we pay for the land and borrow for stock we will have a place to live but no means of making a living. If we pay for our stock, our means of living should be assured, but in either case they might take one to pay for the other. Nice easy thing to figure out.

He counsels making a list of must-have items, and then say "God, will you please furnish these many things?" If we believe, He is able and will do it. If we don't believe, we must revise our Christian experience.

It sounds simple and foolish on paper and yet he says, "Ask and it shall be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together and running over." I see no reason why we cannot expect an answer to such a request. I do know from past experience that the answer may not come when we expect it or in the manner expect it, nor perhaps in the place we expect it but we can reasonably feel that God will, in His own way and time give us that for which we ask.

...

Your
Bill husband.

Hello dear Sons:

Daddy is fine and is glad to get those nice letters and pictures. Perhaps Mamma told you that Daddy had broken the bone in his little finger. It is getting along nicely and by the time you read this, it will probably be quite all right again.

He mentions some birds he has seen. Now and then you can hear an old hoot owl just like you do there.

Love,
Daddy Bill.

097 - Thursday, October 14, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

(forwarded from Edgewater to Union City, October 22)

Sweetheart Helen:

Bill's mood is clearly softened from his last letter.

I do hope you had no trouble getting through to Union City. I wonder if I did my husbandly duty in remaining here during your affliction. Yet God still assures me that you will be all right. Somehow it seems queer that He dwells so near now. I can feel His presence by a mere thought of Him and His continual assertion that He is taking care of us. Perhaps those ideas contained in "Magnificent Obsession" have brought it about.

At last I hear from John S[hones]. Decidedly no sale. He wants \$3600 cash or \$4000 terms with \$1500 down. As far as I can see the only solution to our problem is God and his powers as I told you before.

Mail service from here is quite irregular now. The Boat runs but every 10th day from Skagway and for some time a landslide has delayed rail service. Every bus available has been pressed into use getting "termites" to Dawson Creek. One company has gone so far as to load quitters and baggage on open platform trucks letting them hang on as best they can for the 1000 mile journey.

It's bad weather to travel that way now. It snowed about 3 inches last night and to all appearances it will be well toward zero in the morning.

Things are on the move to the north now. The 40-mile bog that has been impassable since last spring is frozen and things are moving toward Fairbanks at a great rate.

I shall keep checks now until I come home ... it will be about 60 days until I see you unless the inevitable occurs.

With all my love
Bill.

Dear Boys:

I believe I told you that I saw a fox along the road once? I have heard that the soldiers fed that fox all summer and that it will eat out of your hand.

How are Uncle George's (*Helen's brother's*) cows?

Love
Daddy Bill.

098 – Sunday, October 17, 1943

Whitehorse to Edgewater

(forwarded from Edgewater to Union City, October 23)

Dearest Wife:

I'm glad for your letter of the 11th. You were wise to go Pullman, I imagine the boys slept even if you didn't. At least it must have been better than sitting up all night.

My finger isn't doing so good yet as it has not healed yet. The extra joint is still there. I'm going to see the Captain in the morning.

The railroad is open again and quite a few trains are running. With it freezing and snow instead of rain there shouldn't be much trouble that way any more.

A plane crashed in the lake (*Bennett*) at Carcross last night.* It had come from the W.H. field and had trouble with the motors. There is a small field at Carcross but they couldn't make it. Lit in about 40 feet of water. You may have seen it in the paper.

I think we are through with the flies now. At least none have bothered lately. The ground is frozen most of the time. So far it is much like fall in Wisconsin.

I can imagine what a time you had getting ready if you didn't decide to go till Friday and left Saturday.

Sweet, won't we be glad when I get home!!! The time grows shorter every hour. The way things are going now the job will surely close before Christmas. The man in charge of heavy equipment used to be super here. The one who took his place was let out and he doesn't like Chase who is in charge now, so we lose a piece of equipment every now and then even if we do need it. I believe he would close up this job now if he dared.

Good night my sweet.

Your
Bill.

* Plane crash into Lake Bennett. October 16, 1943.

Gordon Yardley's Bravery

A CKRW Yukon Nugget by Les McLaughlin, CBC announcer and author

They didn't give bravery awards to civilians back in the 1940s. If they did, three young men from Carcross would have been sure winners.

October 16, 1943. Gordon Yardley finished breakfast, kissed his wife goodbye and walked down the road to the new house he was building in Carcross on the shores of Lake Bennett. He was working on the roof when he saw a large military aircraft coming in low over the lake. He could tell the plane was in trouble. Suddenly, it dropped into the lake. He watched in disbelief as men began scrambling out of the sinking plane.

Gordon jumped off the roof and raced down the beach to get his boat. George Simmons was racing down the beach, too. Both men jumped into the boat and headed for the crash scene several hundreds of feet from shore. An RCMP boat was also on the way. The first man they came to was underwater about six feet, but holding his hand up. Gordon reached down into the icy water and grabbed his hand while George Simmons held on to Gordon's ankles. With one survivor in the boat, they raced to another thrashing in the water, pulled him into the boat, then headed for a third. Between the two boats, they pulled six American soldiers out of the icy waters.

Later the full story unfolded. A couple of officers had decided to test a Flying Fortress, one of the new four-engine B17 bombers that had undergone repairs in Whitehorse. Fifteen other military personnel went along for the ride. Flying over Lake Bennett, they ran into mechanical trouble and were attempting to land at the Carcross strip. Over the lake they feathered the plane's propellers too soon. The plane plunged into the lake, sinking in a matter of minutes. Some of the men who escaped the wreckage tried to swim to shore, but were overcome by the frigid waters. Eleven men drowned, but six were saved due to the heroic efforts of Gordon Yardley, George Simmons and RCMP constable Harold McDonald.

Later, Gordon supervised the salvage operation hauling the heavy plane out of seventy feet of water and up onto the sand beaches of Lake Bennett. The wings were taken off, and the wreckage was taken to Whitehorse, where it lay on the edge of the airfield for about six years before it was finally burned.

- Source: <http://www.houngengroup.com/yukon-history/yukon-nuggets/gordon-yardleys-bravery/>
- The pilot of the ditched plane was Irwin K. McWilliams.

099 – Wednesday, October 20, 1943 Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

No mail from you for some time now. Yours of the 11th(?) is the last. Well, maybe it isn't so many days but it has been a long time.

The weather had continued fair and cold, usually around zero in the morning. It doesn't get quite warm enough for all the frost to go out of the ground even in the open. A little of the last snow remains on the lowlands but the mountains are well covered with frosting down to the timber. Winter's effects are to be seen in the timber, too, as it has frozen in about an inch. This tends to make a problem of sawing lumber as well as cutting logs, for until it is completely frozen and remains so, it is almost impossible to fix a saw to cut good. The resulting lumber looks like a cross between a shingle and a pretzel.

There were six airplane accidents in this vicinity the past week but that one at Carcross was the worst.

The \$25 bonds for the boys came today. One each. The money should be useful to them about the time they are 15. I thought that if we were still farming that we could invest it for them in livestock or some such thing.

We have been cut to 10 hrs a day now, so that means a cut in checks again.

...

I've been thinking more now of Don's (McLean) and Mrs. B's places...

Your
Bill

100 – Friday, October 22, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

Hurrah! A letter dated Oct. 14th and am I glad. I am sorry to report that my finger is no better. I am going to the W.S.E.D. Hospital Saturday for another x-ray. I do not know what they will do if anything. I do know that army doctors give orders. I know that if it isn't going to heal I want that tip cut off. It's the little finger on my left hand and is broken at the base of the nail.

I am so glad you have a washer now. The next thing is to find a place with electricity so you can use it. By this time you should have heard about J.S.'s place and I think that you'll agree that the price is too steep.

If we were to live in U.C. (*Union City*) what would we use for furniture? I had thought of going to welding school when I get back and coming up next year as a welder.

I too think that God must have wanted you there (*in Union City*) for a reason. We will find out in time what that reason was. It seems that I see us leaving Wisconsin: why that should come to me I couldn't say...

I may stay in Edgewater, but then again, I might not even be there overnight. I want to see my family as soon as possible. If necessary I could stay a day or two.

...As far as I know I shall request termination on December 5. It should be about 2 weeks before I arrive after that. I have no contract yet, but if they give me one that terminates at the time my Okes contract should have, I shall be home just a little later perhaps. You are supposed to be home when your contract expires and under these circumstances it would be Dec 18. It takes longer to get out when you quit.

Good night sweet. I enjoyed this chat.

All my love
Bill

A check must have been enclosed because he says, The board is deducted. They say it costs \$150 per man per month for eats.

101 – Saturday, October 23, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dear Wife:

Things aren't so bad as I pictured I guess. They took another Xray of my finger and said it is healing slowly and that I should come back in about 3 weeks. Also that I should eat lots of fresh eggs and spinach and drink lots of fresh milk. I said "OK, I'll do it when I get home." Of course the nurse laughed when she told me for she knew such things are out of the question here.

According to what Chase, my super, says, my contract with this company should expire at the time my Okes contract would have expired. If so, I shall have my way paid home and about \$150 extra plus 40 hrs travel time at \$1.16 ½ plus about \$12 for meals which is quite a bit better.

They finally raised that airplane I told you of but there are so many conflicting stories concerning the passengers that I couldn't say how many died.

Flying weather was very good today and the WH airport was busy while I was there. The town will never be the same again what with sewers, and other improvements since the Americans arrived. New shops and a new store to replace one that burned are springing up. The bank is twice as big as when I arrived. Most of the shops sell sucker bait to men who have money they don't know what to do with, at prices which are 5 to 10 times what they should be.

I had a serious mishap tonight. I was darning socks and dropped my big needle through a crack in the floor...

I wonder what it will be like to be with you again. It will be great, to say the least.

Love

Your Willie

A brief postscript follows in which Bill again considers taking up arc welding. In that trade he believes he could make 75¢ per hour.

102 – Tuesday, October 26, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

No letters today but perhaps tomorrow. I felt rather blue about it but since I went to the show in Macrae I seem to have discovered that there are worse things than no mail.

It was a war picture, "Texas to Tokyo"* and had nothing to do with the bombing raid. Rather it was a picture of Texas A and M College with a few war pictures thrown in... The war part was very real as part of it was news reel released for that show by the army. The whole picture brought the war much closer and made me realize more what it's like.

Chase (*Bill's supervisor*) just said that 35 bags of mail came in last night, some dated as far back as the 12th. It's very likely that there is mail for me in what hasn't been sorted yet.

I understand that if I were to work at most jobs in B.C. I would be frozen for the duration. Of course, if we were to quit to go farming again, that would be something else. I can't say very much about it until I know more about what your idea is.

...I am glad this separation is drawing to a close...

Your
Bill.

Dear Sons:

You should see these lumberjack birds try to carry off food. The minute they think they have a chance they will dart down onto the lunch ground, snatch something and go. They like pie and meat and will pick up a whole slice of bread in their bill, fly away, drop the bread because it is too heavy and then catch it with their feet dropping it again when they light. They steal stuff the squirrels have carried off and stored too. Sometimes they will try to steal your dinner right out of your plate.

Love
Daddy Bill.

**"Texas to Tokyo" (1943), was also released as "We've Never Been Licked".*

**103 – Wednesday, October 27, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Sweetie:

I guess we are both feeling pretty much the same way, glad when this is over and hoping that it won't occur again.

I took the splint off my finger even though it is not yet healed. It was getting so stiff that I was afraid that the cure would be worse than the disease. The stiffness is almost gone from the finger and it hasn't bothered me as much as it did in a splint. That first joint is going to be larger than before when it finally knits together.

I rather think you might as well quit writing me about the 15th of November, not after the 20th for sure. From then on you can telegraph if anything important comes up.

Helen must have suggested they live in Michigan near her family. Again I say, I need to know more about your idea as to how we will be able to get along without our canned goods and furniture. It would take plenty of scratching to make our meals on points¹ alone...

I am glad about your eye being about healed. It's been a long siege hasn't it?

As yet I have not talked to the Personnel Mgr. about going home. I will do that soon so as to find out about whether I get my fare paid or not...

I don't know what to say about farms any more. Maybe that had better slide till we get together, too.

A cutter cuts down the trees. I don't know for sure what a "bucker" ² is. It is a western logger term.

...

Your husband
Bill.

¹ In early 1943, the Office of Price Administration introduced a system for rationing canned goods. Each person had 48 points worth of ration stamps per month for canned, dried, and frozen foods. See slides at: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww2-rationing/5910>

² A bucker, or buck sawyer, is one who cuts felled and de-limbed trees into lengths for various purposes. Source: Wikipedia.

104 – Friday, October 29(?), 1943

Whitehorse to Union City

Bill dated this letter Friday, October 22 but it seems he may have meant to write October 29, the following Friday. The contents of the letter and the postmark on the envelope seem to indicate it was actually written on October 29.

Dearest Helen:

A letter yesterday and another today. My, my, isn't that fine? I do hope though that the next one I get will say that your eye has healed completely.

I don't want to wait two more months before I see you but I must. I was wrong about what I told you concerning contracts. You must stay until the final date, I hear, but then you hear so many things. I can yet say that I shall do my best to be home at least by the twentieth of December.

...

The men here are ordering tailor made suits now. English cloth, \$55 to \$80. I did.

Darling, it's so hard to write concerning things when there is so little happening now. Sweet nothings are out of my line and intimate things are taboo in letters.

Bill wonders what Helen thinks of his ideas on the book, "Magnificent Obsession," previously mentioned in letters 95 and 97... love is the determining factor in our Christian standing and certainly one must necessarily love deeply to carry out those principles.

Your husband,
Bill.

I am sending a little story for the boys. I think they will enjoy it. *(See attachment to pdf for Reader's Digest article on porcupines)*

105 – Saturday, October 30, 1943

Whitehorse to Union City

Darling Helen:

The letter begins with some observations about Sacajawea's role in the Lewis and Clark expedition and thereafter, the topic stemming from his having read "Forward the Nation," (1943), an Armed Services Edition book by Donald Culross Peattie*

I'm trying to listen to Jim ____ and at the same time trying to write you. He's a jolly old Irish lumberjack who is chock full of Irish wit. He just told about a job of logging he had in Washington and said that you would have to be 16 inches between the eyes to drag some of the tools around.

Two more of Jim's stories (or tall tales) are related, including one where newspaper had been pasted to a log and a wily lumberjack was able to use his broadax to hew away the paper without spoiling the print. That's just a sample of what goes on up here to make life more bearable.

Had the flu yesterday but went to bed at 6 o'clock and, thanks to God, feel fairly good today...

Love
Bill.

**Armed Services Editions were small, compact, paperback books printed by the Council on Books in Wartime for distribution within the American military during World War II. Source: Wikipedia.*

106 – Monday, November 1, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Sweetheart Helen:

...So the eye is well; at least well enough to use and getting better. That's a relief to you as well as me. I wish I could say as much for my finger. It doesn't bother me much but that extra joint is there. I only hope I can play my violin with it.

Bill details some of the uncertainty, rumors and rigmarole he expects to surround his departure from Canada. I haven't seen any reason why they won't release me when my 9 months are finished but you can never tell about the army. Men are quitting and/or leaving at an increasing rate. Eight left today from this camp. Two are physically disabled and need the third to carry baggage, etc... These three will have easy going, as they have been released by the doctors. The others, together with the 300 in McCrae and 1,100 at Skagway will have plenty of trouble. It is possible that they may not be home for a month, as soldiers and those who have finished their contracts have first choice going south. The two boats carry but 600 passengers all told and make the trip every ten days. There are only a few buses and they do not carry more than 30 men each. Airplanes are booked for 6 weeks in advance. If you quit before your time is up without a very, very good excuse the W.M.C. will refuse you work for at least 60 days after you get to the states and after that you work where they tell you or it's in the army.*

It really isn't so bad as it might be though, for if you stay 9 months nothing's too good for you.

Bill does not want to move to Michigan. ...if it's at all possible I would prefer to start in on a farm of our own. There is, of course, the necessity of finding the money upon which to live this winter. But God will take care of that and of my coming home, at the proper time. You recall how he worked to get me up here and to help me stay. Things looked impossible to get permission from the draft board without consulting the War Manpower Commission, but it came and I'm here. Let us pray that I may return under His guidance.*

...word comes that Fairbanks has -20° and it's headed this way. It's down nearly to zero now. It will be good to have a cold snap as it will help working conditions and help us get rid of our colds.

...

And now the farm question. It seems to get ever clearer that our best buy would be the Benson place. I do not recall whether her price was \$3000 cash or on terms... I do think I had better take a day in Edgewater to look around before I come to Union C. God will surely supply our need since we have told Him what we thought we needed. Let's trust Him and look for His answer about Dec 20.

Are you sure \$4.50 per 100 is the proper figure for milk? Yet that's only 90¢ per pound of fat for 5% milk.

...

I do hope it isn't any longer than 48 days from today if I get home by Dec 18...

Love, Bill.

**The War Manpower Commission (WMC) was a World War II agency of the United States Government charged with planning to balance the labor needs of agriculture, industry and the armed forces. It was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Executive Order 9139 of April 18, 1942 and abolished on September 19, 1945. Source: Wikipedia*

**107 – Tuesday, November 2, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Dearest Helen:

...I was just in to find out about my contract, etc., and do not know whether I'll be home for Christmas or not. If I stay till February 22, as it seems at present, I get my way paid as far as Dawson Creek. If I quit December 1, I pay my own way to St Paul from Whitehorse, a difference of \$50, hardly enough to make a difference. The two months I spent with Okes does not count. So – I guess we had better pray that God will make it easy for me to get home by Dec. 18.

Another two months in addition would bring enough to get us going very nicely in the spring.

Wednesday, November 3

I just couldn't finish last night, for I must say, that so far as I can learn it will be hard to get home for Christmas unless God wills it.

About the B. place. The soil does seem to be heavier on the east side.

I have an awful, awful cold. Please pray concerning it. I thank God for David's prayer, and I am sure it will be answered. I hope the boys never lose that faith in God.

Bill goes off on the contractor he works for: This company...has no concern for its men's welfare, no one in authority knows what his job is about. Your most simple question is answered with a direct lie *to please the inquirer*, they pass the buck and you run around until you forget what you wanted to know.

I am glad though for God's exceeding goodness and your continued love. Through His grace we will be permitted to be together again.

Your
Bill.

Dear Son: I am sorry to hear that your jack-o'-lantern broke. Did you make it yourself?

Love
Daddy

108 – Saturday, November 6, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

I may have sounded rather forlorn in my last letter ... until the time comes that it is impossible to get home for Christmas I shall continue to believe that I shall be able to make it. Once more a word filters through that this camp will close the first of December.

Monday, November 8

...One plane from the south today, was the first I have heard since Saturday. A little mail came in today but none for me.

All men in my barracks have sleeping bags now. They are charged to us at the rate of \$58.00 each. You can buy the same thing in the states for \$30.00. Anyhow, they are the thing for up here. It makes no difference if the fire does go out at night you stay warm anyway. So far I have \$80 worth of government issue property: the bag, felts, arctics, pants, blankets and a pillow. All must be returned when I leave.

Bill enjoyed moose meat, courtesy of an Indian living nearby who had killed four. He compared it to good beef. Bill hopes to sample the wild sheep as well, hunted by the same Indian and his wife. He has four big dogs that he harnesses to a sled. They are considerably heavier than a police dog as they should weigh nearly 200 apiece yet they are not quite as big as St. Bernards.

We have 6 inches of snow now and expect sub-zero weather at any time.

I dream of you... May God end this exile shortly, but if not, then in his own good time.

Your husband
Bill

109 – Thursday, November 11, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Sweetheart Helen:

Well, I'm on a different job now. In fact I have, or am supposed to have, a slight raise to \$1.26 ½ as Carpenter helper. They needed 16 barracks right now so they moved 25 men in from [Camp] Robison. I doubt if we ever see that camp again even though we are to go back in two weeks.

...I do not know yet if I shall be able to get home for Christmas. *He raises the possibility of taking a 30-day home leave, returning to Canada about January 15, 1944, where he would be until March 30. He would have to pay his own travel expenses but would net around \$600. Later on, he wonders whether just quitting Canada and hiring out at home would not be better, where they can get ahead – together.*

You are right, being apart isn't living.

His broken finger still has what he calls an extra joint but doesn't bother him much. But neither is Helen's eye completely healed yet. He also still does not have a contract.

I hear a little about the war, for some of the fellows used to go to Charlie McConnell's to listen to the radio. Most of the papers we get are a month old. The army does put out a sheet they call the NewsCast.

If it is God's will we will buy the Benson place. It will be OK with me. *Once more he reviews the high and low points of that farm.*

I guess I'll have to quit, there are four drunks sitting on my bed and trying to sing...

Yours only
Bill

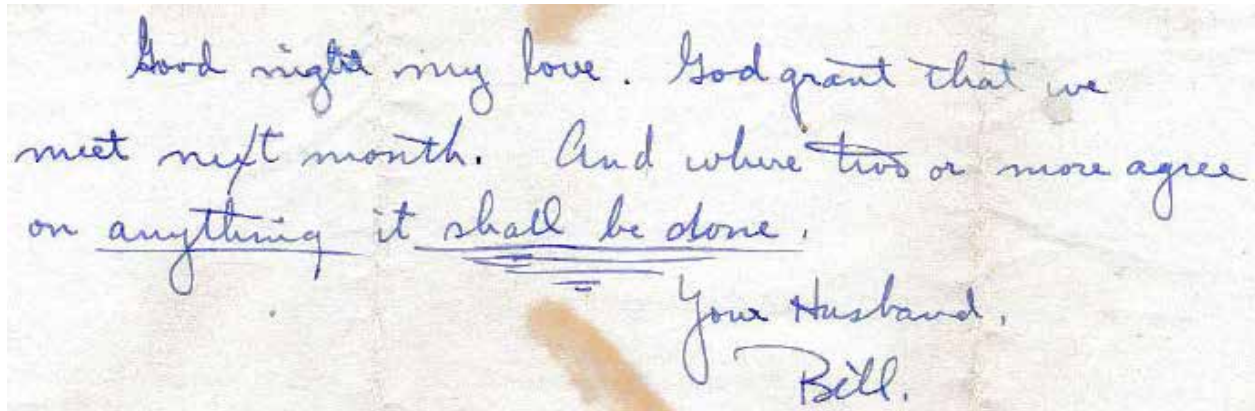
110 – Friday, November 12, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

I'm on the fence about quitting and staying. It is so nearly impossible to get out of here in time for Christmas that I wonder if I shall be able to make it. If I were not acquainted with the Power of God, I would give up the idea. Yet there remains a grain of confidence that we shall meet by Dec. 18, 1943.

I want to tell you now, that, if anything comes up which will make my coming imperative do not telegraph me get in touch with the nearest American Red Cross unit and have them telegraph. I can get out of here within two hours if such a message comes through. It depends upon the Colonel in charge of the area and he has been fooled so often that he will not act unless case is verified by Red Cross. Does this give you any ideas? It must be good but don't try it unless God so directs.

The squall I mentioned in last night's letter (*four drunks on his bed*) finally came to an end about 3 o'clock this morning and dwindled to two men by then. I hope there are no more such brawls. They grow worse as the men's time away from civilization increases.



Good night my love. God grant that we meet next month. And where two or more agree on anything it shall be done.

Your Husband,
Bill.

**111 – Sunday, November 14, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Sweetheart Helen:

... Will say that my finger is just the same. I go down for an xray Tuesday, and shall tell you what the Doc says then. I'm afraid that my violin playing may be over – for a while at least. I wouldn't worry too much about what David did to the violin. (*A connection may be possible between this comment about David and another on 109/1.*)

I shall have teeth trouble too before long. I've been loosing pieces of molar and chunks of filling. Shall see about it when I get home.

Personally, I rather think that we should leave Union City, or at least your parents, in about a week after I get there. I believe that I might be able to get a job on the railroad for a time but I hope we can do enough at home that such things won't be necessary. Pulpwood (*the source of most paper made in mills scattered around Wisconsin*) should pay enough to more than equal what we would make at B.C. If Mrs. B's place does have quite a stand of popple and there are quite a few trees on it, that would be enough to keep me busy for the winter. I don't see why it wouldn't be possible to sell a portion of the Benson place: there is more than we would want. We will forget about the welding. The field will be rather overdone when this is over.

I don't want to farm down there. I just thought you might like it better.

A meeting is planned for the next night where Bill hopes to learn more about his chances of getting home for Christmas.

He responds to the idea of his logging for a relatively well-to-do neighbor who raised Hereford cattle. I know that loggers are at a premium. They can get most anything up to \$12 a day at piece work. With pulpwood at \$16 a cord one should be able to get at least \$12 to \$14 clear per day.

By the end of this month I should have around \$700. I have over \$300 now and the next three checks should be more than \$300 more as I get over \$100 a week now at \$1.25 per hour.

You should see those barracks we are putting up. 3 ½ days and we have the roof on the first one and that means most of the paper too. They are called “Loxtave”* and put together something on the order of Martin’s [Lincoln] log blocks. *He details the method of assembly.*

...

Love,
Bill.

Dear Son David:

Thank you for your fine letter. It’s snowing up here. I haven’t seen any flowers for some time. How do you like your new Bible Story book? Does it have lots of pictures?

I hope to see you soon now son.

Love
Daddy.

*Images of a Loxtave house in Anchorage:



HABS No. AK-165-1



Source for photos: Library of Congress
(<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=Photograph:%20ak0397&fi=number&op=PHRASE&va=exact&co%20=hh&st=gallery&sg%20=%20true>)

**112 – Monday, November 15, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Dear Helen:

I shall see you about one month from today. I went to Whitehorse today and among other things I dropped in at the CP (*Canadian Pacific*) Airlines office to see if it was possible to get out by air. Somehow or other I left the office with a ticket to Edmonton in my pocket dated December 8. Allowing for bad flying weather I should be in St Paul by the 15th. I shall telegraph or telephone you from there.

Thank you for your letter of Nov. 9. It contains so much of confidence, solace, and love.

...

I think we have three fine boys and I have a very lovely wife also.

The Doc said that he hoped my finger healed but that because of the diet here it would be a case of waiting.

...

Your
Bill.

God does work things out.

**113 – Thursday, November 18, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Dearest Wife Helen:

I guess it's time to write another of the few letters I have left to write. There can't be many more, for there are but 30 days left. I know I shall be there by then.

I worked on a new job again today, running a jackhammer. It was one of those nice light 125 pound paving breakers. We had to have them to dig holes. The ground is as hard as rock down to about a foot. *The letter provides more details about the method of the Loxtave barracks construction. Three sections are formed into an H. The two parallels are each 120 feet long while the central cross connector is 48 feet in length.*

The jackhammer isn't bad on the way down, but when the chisel sticks you press the air and pull and that shakes you like an earthquake.

I would have quit today if I hadn't my ticket bought. We had a 20x48 footer to set pads for and had the wires all lined up and everything set to start when the engineers came and stopped us and reset the stakes at a right angle to the first position. We had the pads in on a 120 foot and they decided to move it across the street. I guess that is the way the army usually does things.

...

Love,
Bill.

Dear Sons:

You should have seen all the dogs the soldiers here have. Each barracks seems to have several pups. One little puppy grabbed another by the tail and pulled him down hill.

Love,
Daddy Bill.

114 – Saturday, November 20, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

My Helen:

If your letter of the 15th is a hasty one, I hope there are more like it ...you are my God anchor to earthward.

...

I still think I shall be with you Christmas...

The whole of the Camp Robison crew is in the barracks here with the exception of the kitchen help. There are about 35 men.

Our sleeping bags are made from eider down or goose and duck feathers. They are covered with a cotton cloth twill, I suppose, and mine has a zipper clear around, [an] L, that is, halfway, and a removable wool bag blanket affair on the inside. There are also snaps and an extension to cover your head in case you sleep out.

If our God will grant us the privilege, Helen, we shall never again be parted for such a length of time. When I come, if God so wills, we shall have a farm to run, the products of which shall be dedicated to God's service with a definite portion being used exclusively for His service. One product which I hope will flourish is love.

Good night dear one.

Your
Bill

Hello boys:

...I am bringing you each a pair of Indian moccasins and lots of kisses.

Your
Daddy Bill.

Bill enclosed a Reader's Digest article by Archibald Rutledge on animal behavior.

115 – Tuesday, November 23, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

Bill reacts to Helen's writing of fear and its meaning relative to God. ...as long as God is in his heaven all is right with this world ... Since man has learned to record his*

thoughts some have predicted that the world is going to the dogs, yet who can deny that the world is at least as well off as it was 5000 years ago. The people of Europe now are living in the same state men were in before we began to reach up. However, even in Europe, forces are at work to make Europe a better place to live.

Many will die and many have died but when has evil been stronger than good? ... Believe, live and love: this is all in this life that is worthwhile. With God's help we will do these three things. Let's not worry about the world but leave it to God.

I'm in the McCrae camp, the Suburban Heights addition. It's about half a mile from the main KCB camp. Everything here is to be in shape for the army to take over on the first. There are about 36 buildings altogether.

There are churches in Whitehorse, the Catholic and a Church of Christ, whatever that is. I shall try to go before I leave.

...I believe that God will grant our union for Christmas.

Love

Bill

**In his letter of December 6 (#119) Bill returns to the subject of fear of God when he says: I rather had the idea you didn't mean you actually feared God.*

**116 – Friday, November 26, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City**

Dearest Helen:

Just 4 more days this month and 8 next and I hope to be on my way south. On the 5th, or before, I shall ask to be terminated. That leaves just 8 or 9 days to work. Our pay period ends on Sunday.

I am so sorry to hear about little George getting burned. He sounds so sweet and loveable.

Helen is asked to refrain from sending any more packages since, if they come right before leaving Canada, he might have to find room to repack them to carry home.

...

Those barracks will all be done by Nov. 30 or soon after. There are but three more to start. We started pouring concrete for the mess hall floors today. The kitchen is all that is concreted a layer about 3 inches thick. There must be about 100 men working on them.

There seems to be a touch of sadness and longing in your letters sweet. I'm glad it is there and sorry too that it is necessary. I don't know myself what I mean to say. Just keep your chin up and we'll be all right in God's hands. He will take care of our living also. "Consider the lilies - are ye not better than one of these. Knock - Seek - Ask - Find."

Love to a lovely lady.

Bill.

117 – Tuesday, November 30, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

My Helen:

...We had a good Thanksgiving¹ dinner [yesterday]. Turkey, cranberry, dressing and all the rest with white grapes for dessert. We worked as usual.

Things are on the move here now and no telling what will happen. The army is moving into Suburban Heights and all civilians excepts us are moving out. Our bunch was told to move too, but the Super (Chase) said to stay until we heard from him so no one knows what is going to happen.

I'm going down to Personnel Thursday to see about getting home. I'll write the lurid details then.

...

I'm sorry, sweet, but it would be impossible to bring you up here. I can go into detail better when I see you.

...

I shall come G.T.² via B.C. (*Battle Creek, Michigan?*) and will see that you know the hour of my arrival there. A few minutes to ourselves at first would be very welcome.

Bill intends to look into work for the county highway department when he gets back home.

...we will soon be able to talk and won't that be something?

Your husband
Bill

¹ Thanksgiving was actually the previous Thursday, November 25, 1943.

² Here, he probably refers to the Grand Trunk Western Railroad. The western terminus of the Grand Trunk was Chicago's Dearborn Station, from where it ran to its headquarters in Detroit and on east to the north of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Battle Creek, Michigan, was a major stop on the way.

118 – Friday, December 3, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dear One:

I was in at Labor Relations today to see about coming home and was informed that I had been granted 30 days leave of absence. I had applied for leave or termination and they preferred to give me leave. I asked for it that way because it leaves a better

chance of returning if I do want to come and I know we shall need at least \$1500 more to pay for our farm. *He is not sure if circumstances will take him back to Canada or not.*

At present the airplanes to Edmonton are two flights behind schedule. That means I will be here at least until the 10th. If the weather is such by the 8th that flying will be delayed more and that I may not leave before the 12th I shall apply for transportation by motor convoy and cash my ticket.

*Indecision returns regarding the Benson place. ...*For a time we could get by with a log barn... We could chance on borrowing for our cows and other stock... We must pray though concerning this matter.

I'm out at Robison again. We would up in Macrae today. It gives me a chance to clean before I leave.

Good night dearest Helen.

Your lover
Bill.

119 – Monday, December 6, 1943
Whitehorse to Union City

Dearest Helen:

I'm writing from the Termite Camp tonight and hope I twill not be necessary to write again before I get to Edmonton. As far as I can tell, I may get out Wednesday morning by plane. If the time is slid along too far I shall try to make it by convoy truck.

The place is busy making out Alaska Travel permits. Those going that way must make out 5 copies printed by hand answering 16 questions. It keeps the boys busy for some time.

...

He urges Helen to stay in Michigan until he gets there rather than rush home to Wisconsin. ...it may be another three years before I get down that way...

I doubt if you will be able to recognize me soon after I get home. I shall have to get false teeth. Those I have are getting so bad that it is difficult to chew.

Let us continue praying that we shall locate where our God wishes us. I keep wondering where it will be and how we would pay for it, but I do not believe I doubt God's ability to help us settle this problem or any other.

Good night sweetheart,

Your
Bill.

Dear Son David:

First Martin has a birthday (*May 15-age 5*) and by now you have had one (*December 11-age 4*). Daddy is sorry that he was unable to send you a little something for your birthday, they just don't have anything that boys like here in Whitehorse. You just ask your mama to give you a great big birthday kiss from daddy and we will try to see what we can do about it when I come.

You tell brother Martin and little George that daddy loves them too.
With love
Daddy Bill.

A self-portrait pencil sketch is enclosed.

120 – Thursday, December 9, 1943
A postcard from the plane to Edmonton to the boys in Michigan

Dear Boys:

This is a picture of the plane Daddy is riding in. At the present time we are about 6000 feet up. I can look right down on the trees and lakes and some of the clouds. We left Whitehorse at 3:40 and are nearing Watson Lake. We are traveling 230 miles an hour. I'll be seeing you soon.

Love
Daddy Bill

Leave Calgary at 8:15 AM



121 – Friday, December 10, 1943
On the Way

Sweetheart Helen:

I am on the plains again and they are much like last spring, flat, dull and monotonous. ... Some farmers have a few cows, but most seem to have nothing but wheat.

What a trip. We stopped in St. John and Grand Prairie for gas (*for our plane*) and made Edmonton at 11.20 their time. At 11.55 I was on the train heading for Calgary. Were there from 7 until 8:15. We are now somewhere between Moose Jaw (*Saskatchewan*) and Portal (*on the U.S. border*). Have to stop there for customs inspection. Don't know how long it will take.

I doubt if I put in the other three months that are necessary to finish contract. They make it so impossibly difficult to get out even though you are finished with your contract. The word should have been unnecessarily difficult.

Soldiers, Soldiers everywhere. Except in town men predominate.

Another prairie town, mostly unpainted dwellings and grain elevators, usually 4 or 5 of the latter.

I see that it will be necessary to put away my woollens at least some of them for a while. It's much warmer down this way.

It won't be long now sweet. I may add a little to this or I may not get the chance. Anyhow the word is still - I love you.

Your
Bill.

**122 - Undated
Letter to Bill from Martin**

**123 - Tuesday, March 21, 1944
From Helen to Bill
Edgewater to Whitehorse**

(It was apparently decided that Bill should put in the additional three months in Canada)

Dear Bill,

I have good news. We have \$67.97 more toward our farm than we thought we had. This morning an official looking man came to the door, saying he was Deputy Collector of Internal Revenues. You had failed to use form W which is far more complete than that short form. He was here about 2 hrs. We went through everything and he concluded our tax to be \$141.30 instead of \$209.27... So now our bank balance is \$647.39, though my purse is almost empty... I felt thankful to God for providing more funds in an unexpected way. We must keep trusting him to provide every dollar we need.

Helen goes on to relate her meeting with the agent and their discussion of taxes on slot machines, taverns, roadhouses, etc. Those taxes are expected to increase 30%. ...that's really

going to close up many of the “Honky-Tonk” places, *he said*. ...There’s no “buying off” when *Uncle Same* steps in.

Evidently, Helen and Bill contributed generously to church causes, despite their straitened circumstances. ...he said that whenever folks write down as high as \$100 to church, he can nearly always place the person as either Church of God or Catholic. *The LaBars were Church of God.*

Then he told of different ones who worked in Canada or Alaska who had as high as \$6000 in the bank clear, and many were buying farms...

Postage on air mail letters becomes 8¢ starting March 26.

...

The (*seedling*) tomatoes are coming fine...

...

Dear Bill, I’ve never thought of your letters as sounding harsh... *She attempts to minimize things in their letters that could be construed as hurtful.*

When did you say your old contract would be complete? I had understood that all civilian companies were to be out this month. That must be wrong, for you say you might get a 6 mo contract with “one of these other companies.” Please set me straight. I’ll keep praying for God to provide work there for you, if possible. For Bill, I still think even if you have to take something at lower pay, so long as we can clear \$50 a week, that’s better than you can do here.

Just as soon as we have \$1400, I will ... see about the mortgage, etc.

I am sorry about your teeth. Do they feel all right now? Bill, keep track of all your expenditures, especially dental, Dr., church, etc., for the sake of the next income tax.

I’ll say Good-night, with

Lots of love,
Helen

Wed. P.M.

It was so springy yesterday but snowy to-day.

We still love you dearly and know you are under God’s care.

Your Helen

124 – Thursday, July 6, 1944

From Bill to Helen from Shipyards in Superior, Wisconsin

Darling Helen:

I am very sorry that I was unable to send you money. I kept out enough to buy me a pair of gloves and about \$1.50 besides and sent you the rest. Of that I bought 6 street car tokens which left me very little. I have 25¢ now. The check tonight should be more as I got three 14 hr days. Next check will be more than usual unless something unforeseen comes up.

Bill is still searching for something for baby George.

...

Must change now for work.

Love,
Bill

Will see you Saturday.