

letter dated 2/25/41 to William Lucking Jr, 3114 Union Guardian Bldg, Detroit from Helen Burnett in Coachella

Hello darlingest,

How are you? And how was the trip? And everything? You've no idea how empty the Valley seems today. Actually grismal (a combination of grim and dismal). Though it has been lovely and warm and bright, despite the overpowering emptiness. But I'm glad it's been nice, for perhaps you'll remember it that way. I hope so. As you said, the old blue skies have more than a trifling effect on the "sperrits" - (not speaking of the bottled ones or "ha'nts.") By the way, we do have a "ha'nt" here - the poltergheist (sic) as we call him. He does prankish things about the place occasionally, like turning on water faucets in the middle of the night, clumping through the kitchen and out the back door, knocking books on the floor, and such things. Really a playful creature, though at times slightly disconcerting, whot, don't y'know. You should meet him sometime, honey, for you have the disconcerting quality in common - or rather, the quality of being disconcerting to unsuspecting young lasses.

Mother clipped Zeke this morning and he now looks as though he might really be a wire-haired terrier instead of a little fluff-puff. Actually, he's a pedigreed pup, but you'd hardly know it. You should see him now, though. He looks like a different animal. This noon I took him out and used up that last film on him. It should be a pretty cute picture if it turns out. Have decided that after all these years it's about time I learned to take decent pictures with the camera, so beginning now, shall try to become an artiste with the shutter. Good idea maybe, yes?

Oh, an awful thing happened this afternoon on the way home from town. I was just about at Sandy Corners and couldn't have been going more than thirty-five miles an hour, for I'd already slowed down for the turn, or was doing so, rather, when a dog darted out directly in front of me not ten feet away. I swerved partly off the highway and he saw me and went in the same direction. The brakes had been slammed on in the meantime, but even so when he hit the bumper with a terrific thud, my heart gave the same kind of thud, for I thought that surely I must have killed him. But he rolled over several times, and got up and scampered off perkily. I got out of the car and looked for him in the desert, but didn't find him, so I guess he must have been all right. I surely hope so. Golly, my knees were watery for at least an hour afterward.

Oh, darling, they're playing "Perfidia" now, and a minute ago it was "Let's Dream This One Out." You know, it's awfully hard to believe that you're gone.

Guess what - this noon I started knitting a pair of navy blue socks for someone I know... they're coming along very well. The sailor boy for whom they're intended shouldn't have to wait very long, I think. ...

Must now write in the old diary and then tuck in, for 'tis getting later every minute - strange? Mother is sound "asnooze," but were she here would send you her very best, I know. And as for me, darling, I send you my love.

Helen

letter dated 2/27/41 to William Lucking Jr, 3114 Union Guardian Bldg, Detroit from Helen Burnett

Morning, darling

How's my honey? Still sleepy? Gee whiz, Zeke is trying to attract attention and is growling so fiercely that I can hardly think. No remarks now, if you please, kind sir.

Went to see "Western Union" last night. Wow! Blood and thunder and whatnot. But some glorious photography, technicolor, and a superb pinto that one of the Indians was riding. Other yummy horses too, of course, but this black and white paint was one I noticed in particular. Saw Mr. Peck twice - once at the Hotel Indio where I was having dinner, and once at the Plaza just before the movie. You know, honey, this business of going out with other men is no fun at all. I'm afraid you've spoiled me badly. Shucks, it's awful. And this afternoon I'm going riding. But maybe I can cut loose and tear for a while and let off a bit of steam that way, d'you think? I reckon that as long as I don't break my neck it should be all right ... I'll be glad when Sunday comes and I leave the Valley. It's too darned easy to moon down here where everywhere I turn something reminds me of you. ...

Everyone is taking a siesta right now, except H.C.B. Mother, Tavie, even the animals. Whatta snoozey bunch - Frightful, what? Still, I feel as if I might cheerfully emulate them... it's such a quiet, drowsy noon.

Made a couple of apple pies yesterday. Good, too. D'you like them? And what about dill pickles? And raw carrots? And navy blue Australian wool socks? And so on -

From Sunday on until I let you know differently, or unless, my address will be c/o Yale Apartment Hotel, 975 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles. ..

Don't know whether or not you met Dal Woodhouse, but he took a picture of our exhibit which turned out very well, and as soon as I get a copy will send it along to you if you like.

And now it is time to dash off for the horseback ride, so will mail this on the way. There's a very busy couple of days ahead before going into L.A., so probably my next attempt to master the art of wielding the pen (in other words, letter) will be from there. In the meantime Mother's "saludos" (greetings, best wishes etc.) to you honey, and mine.

Lovingly, Helen

letter dated 2/28/41 to William Lucking Jr, 3114 Union Guardian Bldg, Detroit from Helen Burnett in Coachella

Bill honey,

Hello. It's late and I'm tired and I ought to be in bed, and if Mother knew I were not, she'd feel like spanking me, but it's raining hard, and so I had to write you ...

It was nice riding yesterday. I rode a little half-Welsh pony that really felt good. It was almost impossible to get him down to a walk, and all I needed to do was to loosen up on the reins a bit and he was off like a flash. Rode for about two hours, most of the time in the storm water ditch, and it was great. The stable master rode with us and he said something that tickled me no end. Said he, "You handle that horse mighty pretty, Miss." And what I know about handling a horse is exactly nil. None the less, his saying that pleased me. Must admit, though, that I'm just a wee bit stiff today. Just a softy, eh? Yes, love, we admit it.

As to those socks, gee whiz! They're finished! *Es posible?* I guess so. Anyway, will send them along to prove it. And I hope you like them, and that they fit all right.

You're a past master at description - that about the old gentleman with the heart of gold and the bakelite gums was most amoosin'....

You must be in Detroit by now - (I mean, at the time of writing this letter). How was the trip? It must have been very pleasant running into the Pensacola chap and his wife. And with things like bridgework at breakfast and Army-Marine scrambles with the Navy - being gentlemen - refereeing, it sounds quite lively for the first day out. Tell me mas (more).

All afternoon I've been packing furiously, trying to get things into some vague semblance of order preparatory to the pulling up of stakes Sunday morning. And then comes the tough part of it on Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and probably on and on and on. It's not that I'm lacking in confidence necessarily, otherwise I perhaps wouldn't be going in the first place, but it's just that people have told me a lot about that fair city and its terrors for the solitary unemployed-wishing-to-be-employed. Ah, me. Wish me luck, will you? I'm so tired this evening that my eyes are almost shut ...

In rummaging about today, I ran across a snapshot - H.C.B. in Comstock Court the spring of my last year. I seem to be clutching my elbows rather in it, but as I remember, 'twas an early spring day and c-o-o-old. ...

All my love, Helen.

By the way, the pin I'm wearing in the snap shot is my Smith pin. The rain seems so drowsy outside now, just like me. 'Night.

letter dated 3/2/41 to William Lucking Jr, V-7, USS Prairie State, New York City from Helen Burnett Box 213, Coachella

Bill darling,

You must forgive all these wingéd notes, but tonight I felt I just had to talk to you so here's another one. We're in L.A. at last. Mother and I left the Valley this morning shortly after 10 and arrived here sometime early in the afternoon. We seemed to have been driving in a charmed area that followed us all the way. For from about the time we passed Edom, there was always rain ahead and behind, but only through Banning and Beaumont did we get any of it. The sky seemed to clear up as we went on, while the rain close in behind us. And we arrived in Los Angeles with a bright warm sun bearing down upon us. Odd, what?

I'm not in the apartment I'll have later on. This one's a bit more expensive than the one I had in mind, but will have to wait for a vacancy. However, the one I will have is just the same except that it has only one exposure instead of being on a corner, and it will be at the back, I believe. Which I prefer, for 'tis a bit noisy right on the street. The apartment is a perfect honey, with a completely equipped little kitchen, ice box (refrigerator, rather) and a stove with an oven and everything. I went into ecstasies when I first came in. And promptly put everything away and arranged things so that now it looks quite nice. But Bill, it's sort of frightening, somehow; that is, being here - the Beeg City that I've joked about. And it's something like sink or swim. But I'll swim - that's not what I'm troubled about so much as - oh, I don't know

Yesterday morning we had a rousing thunderstorm in the Valley - the fist I've seen there - with cracking thunderclaps and lightning and a downpour. It was exciting - golly. And shortly after one I went over and joined your familia. Patsy and Sue (a friend of hers down for the

weekend) and I had fun washing and drying the luncheon dishes, after which we all went over to the other ranch. Your mother and I rode for a while, while Patsy was playing with Lucky - Sue decided to stay with Patsy. I rode Nellie, and bareback, and it's fun! Though it must have been rather funny to watch me trying to scramble on without a stirrup's aid. Still, maybe I'll be better next time. Here's hoping. The day in the meantime had brightened up a lot so that for a while it was actually almost hot. A grand ride. Then back. One in particular of the pictures your mother took last Monday turned out beautifully - the one of you and me standing in front of the palm. Has she sent you one yet? And by the way, as soon as I can get some prints of those on my camera, I'll send them to you if you want them. Thank you so much for the battleship scarf. No, I'll never let Patsy know I have it. You darling. About 4:30 your mother and I went over to watch them icing some spinach in the van (or whatever you call it). That was fun, but the most fun was when Mr. Peck, standing in the van, scooped up some of the powdered ice and threw it to each of us. We promptly threw it back and a regular snowball fight ensued, your mother and I coming out at the wrong end of it, with great chunks of ice caught in our shirts around our middles. It was a novel experience, a snowball fight in the desert, of all places. You should have been there. And just afterward Mr. and Mrs. Scribner from Pasadena arrived, and she, on learning that I was about to be a Los Angeles job-hunter, told me to call her up tomorrow morning and she'd see what she could do to help me, which left me practically speechless with glee; oh, honey, it would be so nice if I could get something worthwhile. I'm keeping my mental fingers crossed. But wasn't that nice of her? I thought so. You know, Bill, your mother is a very grand person; a swell fella, and all that...

You should see my apartment, Bill! It's so cute! And it's all mine - that is, it will be when I get that job and pay Mother back for it. And I'll get ze job, b'golly. Somehow. 'Cause it's worth it - that is, getting a job and proving that I'm worth something myself is worth any trouble it may take -... must stop now, honey - will continue later.

Next day -

H'lo, honey. Just went out and did some shopping so I could calm down enough to write a letter at least approaching intelligibility. Even so my writing seems to be rather erratic. Yesterday I mentioned having met Mrs. Scribner - well, this morning I 'phoned her and me to lunch with her, which we did, after we finally got streets, avenues, bridges, dams parkways and mountains straightened out. Well, she's a perfect peach, whether anything results for her kindness or not. But we talked for quite a long time and then she sprang the idea of going to work for the American Airlines - building up to working in the Public Relations end of it, which sounded exceedingly interesting to me. Then it developed that all the girls they hire have to take a month's training in New York, plane expenses paid plus \$80. Then you're sent to one of five different places in various part of the country, and since it's to the company's advantage to send you where you'll be happiest, you're generally sent to the place you prefer. And she 'phones a man at the Union Terminal here and asked him to see me and gave me a bit of a build-up, which I hope I can deserve, and I'm going to see him Wednesday morning after 10. Oh I hope something comes of it! It sounds so very interesting, and besides, New York is sometimes a delightful place between March and May!

Wednesday afternoon -

Presented myself at 10 this morning - don't know yet what the outcome will be, but I'm

hopeful. We had quite a conversation and while he said that he didn't outright hire his employees, he mentioned that his opinion counted. So I spoke briefly with another man and then the first one gave me an application blank which is now all filled in and needs only a front view and a profile passport photo, which I'll get this afternoon. And I'll know within a week, he said. Golly, how could I stand it! He said that if I'm accepted, I'll be sent to New York for between six and eight weeks' training. Then back out here. Oh, honey, I hope I get it! But as matters stand Mother and I will go back to the Valley tomorrow to await developments there. And if I don't get the job, I'll return to L.A. and scout around for something else. But somehow, I feel that I might get the A.A. job. I hope.

Last night I had a date with an Australian chap who came up on the ship with us - a badly crippled chap - standing about five feet tall with one shoulder terribly crooked and hunched. But exceptionally nice and good company. I really admire him; he goes ahead and does everything as if he were perfectly normal, even tennis, dancing, etc. Anyway, we went to the Earl Carrol place - rather an unusual set-up for a night club. It was fun, of course, but gee gosh - it's not the place that makes the good time, but the company. I'm not blasé or anything like that, honey - at all - but ... if you're with the right person or persons, it doesn't matter a blessed bit where you are; you still have a marvellous time. All of which has been said before, but I'll just hope it'll bear this one repetition.

You know what? My waistline has shrunk an inch and a half, which isn't so good, for the rest of me has shrunk too. Still, I'll try not to let it continue.

Now it's time to run out and get those pictures taken for the application blank. All this unforeseen excitement has rather mucked up my plans for having a picture taken for you, but I'll do it, or rather have it done, as soon as I possibly can. ...

'Bye for now, darlin'- how's New York? And what all are you doing, 'n' stuff? Until the next installment ...

Helen

letter dated 3/8/41 to William Lucking Jr, S.S. Prairie State, NY forwards to 3114 Union Guardian Bldg, Detroit from Helen Burnett in Coachella

Hi, Honey darlin -

How be ya? And how's the Navy been for the first couple of days of this stretch? Back here in the Valley, the Navy seems to be unceasingly in my thoughts, and this morning riding with your mother when a great mechanical silver bird flew over us far above, the first thing that popped into my mind was whether soon one of those silver birds might be carrying me off to New York. And of course, the Navy somehow figured in that thought too. In fact, everything seems to be connected, whether directly or indirectly, with you....

D'you know, honey, the evening following my interview with American Airlines, I had dinner on Olvera Street, Mexican food and chattered away in Spanish and all. But a fortune teller came by and we decided to succumb. She asked me my birth date, which she wrote down and then she took one look at me and said, "You have wings on your feet, shoulders and wrists! And I wish that every person whose fortune I told could have as happy a three years ahead as you -" and went on to say that I have a pretty nifty life ahead, which all sounded very nice, though I

can't say that I'd exactly run my life according to a fortune-teller's prophecy. But coincidence though it must have been, wasn't it surprising, not to say astonishing, that she should bring in "wings" as a figure of speech? Gee whiz! No, fortune tellers are great fun if you don't take them seriously, just like a drink occasionally as long as it doesn't become a habit. I tell fortunes myself, Beel - started it one afternoon when a bunch of us had gone up to a cabin someplace or other near Hamp for the day and no one seemed to know quite what to do with themselves and someone wished that there was someone to tell fortunes, and I volunteered, knowing nothing about it, and hastily gave arbitrary meanings to the cards and amused people for the rest of the afternoon. Fun.

The lupin has begun to bloom in the fields beyond the pass, and it's really lovely. Everything everywhere is so green and lush. Even the Valley hills seem to have taken on a tinge of green. It looks so different.

Oh, last night Mother and I went to see "The Thief of Bagdad" (or is there an "h" there someplace?) and it's one of the sweetest fantasies I've seen in ages. Parts of it wouldn't have been too good for an impressionable child, but most of it was just darling. I doubt that I'll ever grow up too much to love something like that. You should see it if you have the chance.

Three months - imagine - if that time should be broken up for us by the American Airlines! If (and when) it actually should turn out - the New York training, the job, and all - I think that along with the excitement and all, I'd have a rather peculiar feeling that things were sort of being taken out of my hands, or our hands, anyway, that something bigger than ourselves were working for us. I don't know. I only hope that it all unfolds. It's like a story book, really, except that it seems too unreal for even a story book. But I'll try not to count my chickens until I hear from Burbank and know the outcome. If it's yes, I'll let you know right away. If it's no - well, I reckon it'll be just one of those things and my address will again be on Wilshire. Ah, me. I'd much "disappreciate" though. (disapprove & don't appreciate = disappreciate)

You've probably gotten the socks by now, no? Are they right? I've started another pair, with reinforced heels and toes, which should be better. How's the *Prairie State* on socks, honey? Here's a sample of my Morse - ..//.-../--/...//.-/--/---..-//--./-.-./....//...//...//...-//---//....-//.-.-//...//.-.-./.../!!! Wheee

Today Mother was reading aloud to me one of the strangest books I've ever read. Neither of us considered it worth reading, except from the standpoint of trying to see the author through it. He must be a mental case in order to conceive such a thing, and socially and psychologically maladjusted. Heavens! Amazin'!

What does [square flag, divided into 4 square quarters, top left and bottom left white, the other two blue or otherwise dark] mean? We fear that with all our nautical training, I never learned any of the flags. Would'st teach, darlin'?

If this letter isn't so pretty good, please blame it on the fact that I don't feel so pretty good. Imagine me, almost disgustingly healthy, coming down with a jolly old cold, but may knock it yet before it gets a good start. You spoke of cancelling, and then said you were about cancelled yourself. Speaking in cold fact, this lass has cancelled herself nine pounds worth since the Fair, which is probably the reason for the sniffs. By the way, that "speaking in cold fact" above was not meant to be a pun! But don't worry, she'll be in the pink again tomorrow, b'golly - or else. (Chin stuck out grimly).

D'you by any chance remember the violet patch to the right of the back steps as you enter? Well, I planted it about six weeks ago, and today we plucked our first little *florequita* (flower to

you, mug)