

Frank's Post-Freedom Letters
13th September 1945 – 27th October 1945

Yokohama,
Thursday, September 13th 1945

My own darling,

At last I am a free man after 3 ½ long years of captivity. My thoughts are naturally of you on this great day of my life – they have been with you every day. I have written to you daily during my captivity and soon I shall send this long letter to you. I can scarcely realise that the long weary days of waiting are over for us and that soon we shall be together again. We were flown down from Sapporo to here this afternoon. Tomorrow we fly to Okinawa and possibly to Manila if the weather is good. Today was my first trip on a plane and I loved it. I have no idea what will happen to me after my stay in Manila but I gather that we are to be sent home by the quickest route. So, my darling, do not dash off to the Far East until you are sure that I am to stay out here for some time.

And how have you been during these awful years of weary anxiety. Oh if I could only have told you not to worry about me and put your mind at rest. I sent a cable to father today as he is my next-of-kin. I shall cable you and write you at every available opportunity – from Okinawa, Manila, etc. Give my love to mammie, daddy, Felix, Mona, Fergus, Hugh, Mattie, Josephine, Mairead, Joe, May, Frances, Roland, Gerry and Nan – also Molly! Tell them that I shall be surely home for this Christmas.

My darling, please keep a light in the window for me, and you may be sure that I shall hurry home to you as fast as ever I can.

God bless you, Eileen,

All my love,

Forever yours,

Frank xxx

P.S. Darling, the Americans have been wonderful in getting us all away so quickly. They have treated us regally since the surrender of Japan. B29, and Navy planes have been dropping food and clothing on all our camps almost every day.

Frank.

Tuesday,
[18th] September 1945

My own darling,

I am growing weary of staying here – and little news about any move in the near future. I have heard that I *might* leave Manila next Friday on H.M.S. Indomitable – an aircraft carrier. This ship is due to reach Vancouver on October 17th. Then four days would be spent on the train across Canada, followed by the boat across the Atlantic. That should complete my trip around the world which began on January 9th 1940! Darling, I really should not complain about this delay in getting home to you because there are so many thousands of released men to be taken home. Besides we are being treated like kings by the Americans and Australians. We have good accommodation, excellent food, free beer, soft drinks, chocolate, two packets of Chesterfields, four cigars, tobacco,

shows, cinema, trips to Manila – all free, Eileen. They are doing their very best by us here. Oh, my darling, I am not ungrateful, but can you blame me for wanting to be back home quickly to you. If I had wings I would fly to you this moment.

I have been in Manila today for the first time and what an awful sight it presented. All the large buildings have been wrecked – mostly burned by the Japs. Yet the people seem to be happy enough. The men are not attractive but the women are very pretty, well dressed, and graceful. I visited the military hospital and saw some of the men I knew in Singapore. They are all longing to be home again.

Just a small thing about my prison life – I have carried with me day and night in my cigarette case your smiling self, your miraculous medal, a lock of your hair, *and* a four leafed shamrock! Not to mention a St. Francis medal. How could anything happen to me? And yet my darling, it could easily have been God's will that I should not return to you. Darling, I wanted so much and prayed that you would not suffer while I was in a prison camp. I have been lucky – I was not even beaten once while in Japanese hands, and not many could say that. Yet I was intensely anti-Jap and they knew it.

Give my congratulations to Frances and Roland on their new addition to the family. I know thy will be overjoyed. Give my love to *all* at Spring Villa, Felix and Mona, Mollie, and Gerry. Tell them I shall be home soon. I am still worried in case they are disappointed in me – the fact that you love me seems to be sufficient reason for them to love me too.

Adieu, my darling, and may God and His Holy Mother watch over you always for your
Ever loving Frank.

P.S. I have sent you 2 letters which took 3 1/2 years to write! There you will find reading material to last you until I come home. All my love, Frank.

Manila, P.I.,
Thursday, September 20th 1945

My own darling,

I arrived here in the early hours of this morning. I came by air from Okinawa in a four-engined American bomber (B24) and had a lovely trip. I have now travelled 2,000 miles by plane from Hokkaido and have enjoyed it. I am in very good health – you will be disappointed if you expect your long-lost lover to be a skeleton. Our camp in Hokkaido had no bombing; we had left Muroran before it was bombed and shelled.

Darling, this is an awful note but my feelings and my thoughts are in a terrible jumble. I cannot yet realise that I am a free man – I can only realise that I have loved you more and more each day of my POW life. I shall *never* be able to make up to you for all the worry and anxiety I have caused you, but, my darling, you shall have my *all* forever and ever.

I have met dozens and dozens of officers and men. They all want to shake me by the hand and be my friend. I have met many Americans in prison and I liked them best of all. They all have my address; they all want to visit us and meet my new wife! Darling, I made a point of making no distinction about the *colour* of my friends. You will meet George Reuneker, a Javanese; Krish Nair, an Indian; and Tan Chen Oon, a Chinese; Jimmy Hall, an American; Paddy McElligott, Irish.

I have so much to tell you, that more letters could never cope with it. I have written to you every day, so that now I have a letter of 250 pages awaiting dispatch to you. Darling, don't forget to meet me at Southampton. Please do what you can to speed up our marriage, so that we can be married as soon as possible after my return and go off on our honeymoon, Eileen; what do you think of a honeymoon in U.S.A. or the Far East; it will be cold at home. Your daddy told me of your horse-riding exploits. You have done too much praying for me, and I do not deserve it. You have been so loyal to me all these years – and in return you have had my poor loyalty too and all

my love. So many of the lads and officers in the prison camp have been let down by their wives and fiancées at home. You should hear what my friends say about you, Eileen; they say that you must be one girl in a million to keep loving me so faithfully all these weary years. Thank God we realise what a wonderful love is ours and what privileges God has bestowed upon us. We can never thank Him enough but we shall have a good try.

I shall be at Mass and Communion every morning since I came here. This morning was the first time since last Christmas and oh how I have missed it. I must start another card immediately. Give my love to everyone at Beechwood, Spring Villa, and all.

God bless you, Eileen,
All my love,
Forever yours, Frank.

Sunday,
September 23rd 1945

My own darling,

This part of the long letter was overlooked – I have so many papers around me!

One of our boys arrived from Okinawa last night states that my name is written up everywhere there; it was being shouted over the loud speaker. I wonder why I am in such urgent demand?

Still no signs of leaving here. Tell father I am writing him about finances etc.

All my love,

Ever yours,

Frank xxxxxx etc.

P.S. You could never have any idea of how generous the Americans have been to us. They have given us *every* thing you could think of. The Australians have been good too.

Your

Frank.

H.M.S. Glory
13th October 1945
At Sea

My own darling,

Here I am doing a Pacific cruise on an aircraft carrier (built in Belfast!). We are due at Pearl Harbour on 17th or 18th and I hope to have a chance of posting this note to you.

Well, my darling, at last I am under way and am speeding home to you at 20 knots per hour [sic]. I shall never forget that awful three weeks I had in Manila under canvas waiting for a boat. But thank God it is all passed and I am happy again. I sent you a vague telegram before leaving Manila – I had not enough cash to write “all my love”.

Eileen, how I wish you could share this pleasure cruise with me. The ship is new, everything is good – and of course the deck space is terrific. I spend my day in a deck chair, just *thinking* – of you, our future happiness,

my homecoming and what it means to us both. I promise you never to leave you again, Eileen, no matter what the future holds.

Darling, have you ever thought about my homecoming; what a back number I shall be in every way. I shall need much tuition from you to bring me up-to-date. I shall arrive home like a tramp – I have no clothes, Eileen. You will hardly recognise me when we meet again. I expect to reach Vancouver on 25th October(?), Halifax about 30th, and some English port about 8th of November. I shall cable you details of my arrival in England – date and place. Think you will have to wait in England for a couple of days while I am being “processed” by the Army. Then we shall return in triumph to our native land. Darling, have you any ideas about our honeymoon? I realise that travel is very difficult these days, but we shall manage somehow. We have so many places to go and so many things to do.

Give my love to all our loved ones at home and tell them not to forget the light in the window – because I shall be looking for it one of these nights soon.

I shall send you another note from Vancouver.

God bless you, darling,

All my love,

Ever your own Frank.



H.M.S. Glory was built by Harland & Wolff in Belfast and launched in November 1943.

H.M.S. Glory
24th October 1945
At Sea

My own darling,

I am still speeding across the blue Pacific and should reach Vancouver (Esquimalt to be exact) on the morning of Friday 26th. I feel like I never want to see the Pacific Ocean again as long as I live. However it is much cooler now that we are well in the Northern latitudes. Albatrosses have been following the ship for the last 1,000 miles! Darling, sometimes I think that I *shall never* reach home quickly enough. I am terribly impatient, because I love you so much and because I have been away for such an age. I still have no idea of the date of my arrival home. I shall let you know as soon as I reach the east coast of Canada. It appears we have a five day train journey

ahead of us; not to mention a few days in Vancouver, and a few at the other end + a few days in England! So cheer up my darling – I'll soon be home and we shall forget this eternal suspense and heart breaking waiting. All these years of preparation have not been in vain; we shall be all the more happy when we do meet again. Just one moment together and all the years of suffering and separation will be more than compensated for.

We reached Pearl Harbour on the morning of the 20th and spent 24 hours there. I had a lovely trip around the island (Oahu), through the mountains, along the beaches, and through Honolulu city. All the beaches except Waikiki appealed to me; and the city looked so clean and tidy after Manila – it was the first unbombed place I had seen. Hawaiian girls came on board in the evening and put on a show for us on the flight deck. They sang their haunting native songs and danced their graceful native dances, not in a vulgar way. The Hawaiians are very well educated but not so charming or pretty as the Filipinos.

My darling, if you have much difficulty in getting to England and back to Ireland when you propose to meet me, please do not bother, much as I would like you to meet the boat. I will have to spend a few days in a camp in England after my arrival, as I have already told you. However, if you find no difficulty in meeting me, then I want you to come more than anything in the world.

Darling, I have been wondering if you will continue teaching until the Christmas holidays? What will the nuns and children do when you leave them? What will happen to the Geography results? What will I do if you teach until Christmas? (selfish again!) I leave everything to you, Eileen; – our wedding day, our honeymoon. I have been thinking about Eire for the latter; or the South of England (Devon). We shall be happy no matter where we decide to go.

As I am on the move nowadays, I do not expect any mail from you. Please pray that I shall have more patience during the next couple of weeks travelling. You know that you have all of me forever and ever – only you can know how much I love you, Eileen.

Give my love to *all* at home.

God bless you, darling,

All my love,

Frank.

MPO 1103,
Victoria,
Canada,
27th October

My own darling,

I arrived here yesterday afternoon and oh what a wonderful place this is. We had a terrific reception as we came into the harbour – all the ships sirens sounded their welcome and the crowds cheered and waved for hours on end. I saw several glad reunions and it brought tears to my eyes to see wives and children greet their dear ones on the dock. It made me tremble at the thought of meeting you and what my emotions would be. But, Eileen, that moment is too wonderful to imagine as it draws nearer and nearer.

We are all in a beautiful camp here among the pines; it overlooks the sea and in the distance are very lovely snow-clad mountains. The air is so pure and invigorating after so many weeks in the heat of the tropics. There is a lovely officers' Mess here and the accommodation is wonderful. Darling, it is like a home from home and the Canadians are treating us even better than the Americans – and that's saying something. Last night we had a cinema show in the Mess. I met a very charming Major last evening – he was wearing an Irish kilt with a Tara Brooch on it and two harps on his lapels! He is in the Canadian Irish Regiment and hails from Toronto. He was in Dublin recently and said it is the best city in the world – he had a wonderful holiday there and intends going

back again. So, darling, I have first-hand information about conditions there. By the way, my Irish-Canadian friend had a cool reception in Scotland when he paraded in his Irish kilt! He has a very good Irish friend in Norfolk called Dr. Devlin (from the North).

Darling, I have some bad news – I shall be here at least *one week!* Our next stop will be Halifax and maybe New York. There is talk of us travelling across the Atlantic in the “Queen Mary”. I sent you a cable this morning. This is a busy day – medical examination, X-ray, clothing issue, and pay. I shall keep you informed of all developments. I am in good form and wallowing in the fresh air. I have a good friend in Pilot Officer Power from Kerry; we are both keen walkers.

God bless you, Eileen,

All my love,

Forever yours,

Frank.