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Short Letters from Eileen
June 1942 — November 1945

Church St.,
Ballynahinch,
23:6:’42

My darling Frank,

May God direct this brief note to you safely. No news of you since last letter (posted February 2nd). All are safe and well at Beechwood and Spring Villa. Your beautiful souvenirs, candlesticks and cheque reached me safely. Have purchased a beautiful 3 stone diamond ring and am wearing it constantly. Thank you darling for everything. My love for you is increasing with every moment we are parted – no matter how long the wait may be I shall be watching, waiting and praying for you.

God bless you, darling,
All my love,
Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Road,
Belfast.
Thursday, July 16th.

My darling Frank,

How are you and where are you these past five months? That you are alive I am convinced and it has been this thought, coupled with our joint prayers that has kept me from despairing since December 8th. I have carried on darling as you asked me to do. When exams commenced on June 12th the nuns allowed me to go home. Felix persuaded me to come to him for a change. From there I went with the family to Portstewart, from which we returned last night.

There has been no news of you darling since February 2. This letter telling me of your visit to the Little Sisters reached me safely. Your cheque arrived safely too. At Easter I purchased, as you wished, a beautiful engagement ring – gold with 3 diamonds set in platinum. It twinkles up at me now as I write and I love it dearly because it symbolizes a great love – a mutual love which will last forever. I wear the ring always. It cost £45. Do you think this very expensive, Frank? How I long to throw my arms around your neck and kiss you to show my gratitude to you for such a beautiful ring, for the lovely Malayan souvenirs, for the silver candlesticks, for Thomasheen James, for the magnificent collection of snaps, magazines & books but above all these for the love of a very loyal heart which I have sorely tried in the past. I love you too my own dear Frank. No matter how long the war may last or how much suffering it may and has brought to us both, my love for you will never, can never change. I shall be waiting for you when, God wills it, that our separation is ended.

Since December, dearest one, Holy Mass has been offered up at least once a week for your precious self, your safety and your early homecoming. I never forget you for a single moment any day and I know my prayers to God to bless our love and our marriage will be heard.

May God speed this letter to you, bearing the news that all your dear ones in Beechwood and Spring Villa are safe and well and eagerly await news of you, darling.

God bless you,
All my love,
Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
4:8:'42

My darling Frank,

This is my third letter to you since June. Lest you have not received the others, let me tell you that all your dear ones in Belfast are safe and well but longing with all our hearts to hear some news of you. Since your last letter dated February 2nd, we have had no news of you or about you. How have you been, my darling, all these weary months? You have never been out of my thoughts. All my prayers – and I am at Mass and Holy Communion every morning – are for you. May you have peace and happiness in your captivity. May our reunion come soon and meantime may our good God and His Blessed Mother bless our own love and each other – that love I know shall never die. I shall wait forever.

I made the Lough Derg Pilgrimage and who should be there but Gerry Magennis and Nan! Surely God will hear our joint prayers and penances for you. We sent you card together. I wonder will you ever receive it? Una also has written to you. The Senior results are out and all my pupils have passed, thank God. School reopens on September 1st.

God bless my own dearest Frank. May He bring me news of you very soon.

With this letter I send you all the love of heart – you have always had it.

Yours forever

Eileen.

Spring Villa,
Springfield Road,
Belfast.
Thursday, August 13th

My darling Frank,

Still no news of you after 6 months – a lifetime it seems – waiting. As each day dawns I offer up with my Mass and Holy Communion my longing to have news of you, for you, my dearest Frank, that God will bless our love and our marriage. Do not worry for me, as I am quite alright. School reopens on September 1st. Frances and Roland are to be married on August 31st. Hugh McNabb is seriously ill with pleurisy.

Philip is now a B.Sc. and your father is particularly proud of him. He is now working. Your father is allowing Anne to go for a year to the Sion Hill domestic college. Una was anxious to have her. All in Beechwood are very well. Some relation from the country is coming to housekeep during Anne's absence. I spent last Sunday with your dear ones at Beechwood. We went to devotions together and we did pray so hard for you, darling.

I wonder do you ever receive any of these brief letters? If you should receive even one, I shall be satisfied.

God bless you my own dear Frank.

All my love

Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
22:9:'42

My darling Frank,

Yesterday was an outstanding day in my life – yesterday morning a letter reached me from the War Office to say that a card written by you was now in transit to me from Lorenzo Marques, Portuguese East Africa. On the evidence of this card you have been recorded as a Prisoner of War. By the same post your father received a similar letter and darling when I cycled over to him immediately after my breakfast (during which he had rung me) I never found so happy and relieved a father. He looked 20 years younger. Although it was then only 11 a.m. he had notified both Maureen and Margaret & telephoned me. When I saw him he said “Was it really you I was speaking to 5 minutes ago?” I promised to go again today. You, dearest Frank, occupy so completely our thoughts that we two – your father & myself – find wonderful pleasure in each other’s company. Immediately after your father’s visit I went to see Gerry McGuinness and Frances. Everywhere the news was received with wonderful enthusiasm. You may not know it, but you are a very much talked of gentleman these days. I wrote letters all evening spreading my good news to the ends of Ireland and England. The information that you are now a prisoner of war and not missing as already posted has been published in last night’s Telegraph & this morning’s Irish News. I have the cuttings out and shall keep them for you to see. I wrote Una & Anne a long letter which they shall have today.

Can you appreciate darling how excited and thrilled I am – to hear that you, whom I love so much are safe and that a postcard written in your own dear handwriting is on its way to me. Thank God for His goodness to us both. He has never let us down and He never will, I know. May He speed this letter on its way to you, so that you may share in the rejoicings of all those who love you so much and especially

Your loving Eileen

God bless you, darling – *all* my love.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
1:10:'42

My darling Frank,

The date of the arrival of your card is drawing near – you have no conception of how I am longing to see it. By this time too, you must have received some of my letters and how pleased I am to think they shall bring to you the relief that your priceless precious card has brought to me. Honestly Frank, I feel as though I have just awakened from a horrible, terrifying nightmare – one upon which, even now, I dread to look back. Everyone around me is remarking the change in me in one week. The weighing machine registers 3lb more since the good news arrived.

I spent all last Wednesday evening with your father in Beechwood. He is so content now about you and he (also Gerry) have taken the particulars of how they shall write to you. We cannot send you any parcels until the official Japanese list of prisoners is published. There are still thousands of anxious relatives awaiting news of their dear ones in Singapore. Isn’t it a miracle that you, darling, got word to me? I am still receiving all kinds of congratulations. Did I tell you I had a nice letter from Mrs (Dr) McLoughlin. You know the lady you met in Rawalpindi. She is at home now with her two children but has had no word from her husband in Malaya.

I had almost forgotten again, to tell you that on the day my good news arrived a baby daughter was born to Felix & Mona – Sheila Mary, i.e. on September 21st. It is a darling baby. Although it is every inch an O’Kane!! There were 14 of us at the christening celebrations on Sunday last. Dr Frank Kennedy

(a relative of Daddie's) was there and you should have heard the praise he gave my precious Frank. I felt so proud of you, proud to love you as I do. Fr. Joe is saying 9.30 a.m. Mass in St. Brigid's for you tomorrow Oct. 3rd, feast of Little Flower. We are all going to it in thanksgiving.

God bless you darling.

All my love

Your loving Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
14:X:'42

My darling Frank,

I have put off writing this letter for a few days, hoping in the mean time to have received your precious postcard but alas, though the liner carrying the repatriated British nationals has been in Liverpool since Friday, no card has yet arrived.

You can well imagine how excited I am to get that card. The postman is watched daily but with each disappointment I take out one of your now on-year-old letters and read it making believe that it has just arrived. Sometimes I get so lonely for your dearest Frank that I could cry out, but I do not, because I feel so grateful to God for the wonderful blessings he has recently and always bestowed upon us both. He has preserved you from death and I have weathered the storm of the past 8 months. We still love one another and my love for you is infinitely stronger, better and more sincere than it was 8 months ago. We *will* not give up praying with *all* that we have got, until He has brought us together and then we shall spend the remainder of our lives thanking Him and fulfilling his wishes for us here on earth. I spent this morning dreaming of the happiness that lies ahead of us both.

I am going over to Beechwood this afternoon – Wednesday is a day set apart to spend with your father. Last time I brought him some homemade cakes which he ate and said he enjoyed. I have joined a 1st aid class (so that I can assist you in your practice) & hope to take the exam at Christmas. In next week's letter I hope to unfold to you some of my plans for the future – i.e. the time between now and your homecoming.

The bottom drawer has had a few recent additions and bought with your money too darling. There now reposes in safety in Killough a lovely dinner set (75 pieces). It was a miracle how I got it. Remind me to tell you the tale. When is my best boy going to write to me? You know it is 8 months since your last letter! but I am still smiling. God bless you, my own darling.

All my love

Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
22nd October '42

My darling Frank,

On Monday last, October 19th arrived your precious postcard giving me all the news that I have longed for these past 8 months – you told me in your own dear handwriting that you are a prisoner of war, that you are in good health and being treated very well. Nothing on that card escaped my hungry eye even that little kiss and all the love you sent with it. God bless you my own darling Frank. You know that all the love my heart can give is yours, has always been yours and shall always be yours. I long to see

you again and I know that we shall meet again in God's good time. All this waiting and suffering has only made me surer of my love for you.

Everyone is remarking the changed Eileen I am since your marvellous news came. My weight is beginning to increase and the colour coming back into my face. I know I have been looking like a scarecrow this past year. Now with a relieved heart and mind I can sleep the night through and eat as never before – in a word I am walking on air. Hasn't God been very good to us both? I know we have a special little corner in His heart.

I brought the card over to your father immediately it arrived. There is no need to tell you of the delight he felt as he read it – it brought the tears to my eyes. He loves you, Frank above all else in this world. From the shop I went to Margaret's school and there was pandemonium there while she, the nuns and children devoured the good news. After this wrote to Anne and Una. So now all are in possession of the good – the very wonderful news. Yes, I also called with Gerry and he has been up to see me since. He is a true friend Frank and they are few these days.

I have recommenced with renewed zest into the preparation of your bottom drawer. I am so happy now darling that I want to sing the day long. How are you? *All* my prayers are for you. Keep yourself well and strong. Do not work too hard but dream of our future together. Won't it be a wonderful life – to have each other for always? With God's help, all your dreams which you confided in me in your last letters, will come true. I have had those dreams too darling.

Francis and Roland are as happy as King and Queen. We see each other very often. They send you their love and that goes for all at home. Spring Villa is a changed home since that card arrived. I constantly visit Beechwood. Last time I had to mount the step-ladders to survey the newly slated outhouses.

God bless you, my own darling Frank

All my love

Your loving Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
October 29th 1942

My darling Frank,

I have just washed my hair and am drying it before a nice fire. This afternoon Daddie and I walked for miles, quite a new beat for me but for you, dearest, a very familiar one. Can you guess where? Now I am pleasantly tired and thinking of turning in earlier than usual.

Tomorrow we hope to entertain a party of friends – Felix & Mona, Frank & Mrs Martin, Fr Joe and the new curate of the Sacred Heart parish, Fr McConville. You remember I played quite a lot of golf with him last summer? Tomorrow morning the cooking must be done and as my first aid class claims my attention in the evening, my best boy must be written to tonight.

How are you darling? I just could not get over the yearning to see you today. I read another of your letters today and tried to make myself believe it had just arrived. It was written last Hallow'een – the one in which you spoke so beautifully of your mother, Charlie and Josie. May all their souls rest in peace. They are remembered each day in my prayers and this remembrance shall be increased in the month of November. I pray each day for every member of your family living and dead.

I spent Saturday afternoon with Margaret. She is truly a lovely character. She was most interested in my clothes and complimented me on my new tricky black hat. I showed her a group of snaps of Sheila's christening. The next day when I went to Beechwood, there was a parcel from Margaret for me including a beautiful handmade present for baby, for baby's daddie and for baby's mammie. Wasn't it awfully nice of her Frank?

Guess who was there when I arrived? Fr McCauley. I was introduced to him, but could not forget what you wrote to me of him once. Daddie and he were at St Malachy's school together. My

pleasant surprise of the evening was when your father took 3 large pieces of the apple tart I baked especially for him that morning. The surprise was due to the fact that when I asked him did he like apple cake he said "No"! After the 3rd piece he said "that's very nice apple cake". After tea we went together to devotions, to the shop where the cat and her kittens were duly fed and then back home to chat the night away. We walked over to the Oldpark Rd. together (the Springfield crowd) and he declared the night had just flown.

I had a nice letter from Anne. She says Una is walking on air since your card arrived. Already I am looking forward to your first letter. I am having another Mass offered in thanksgiving to God for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us both and to ask His continued protection.

Frances spent Monday last with me. We had a glorious walk to the mountain well and back – a favourite walk with Springfield Rd dwellers. After tea she rushed off to greet Roland home from his work. She and Roland are to spend Sunday week with us.

Is there any need for me to tell you that you are in my thoughts the day long. I love you Frank and still want to love you more. God bless you my darling and protect you. May He send you home soon to

Your ever loving,
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
18th Nov. '42

My darling Frank,

How are you? Can you imagine how I long to hear from you? I am still wondering have any of my letters reached you. All my prayers are for your peace of mind, your safety and your early homecoming. I pray too for God's blessing on our love and our marriage. Only recently Frances said to me – "Frank and your preparation for marriage has been such a hard one that your happiness together is assured." Do you believe this Frank? I do.

The year 1942 is coming to a close – a year neither of us shall ever forget. It has seen my love for you grow stronger and more sincere. I realise now just what you mean to me. I need you darling and without you and your love I am lost. Do take every precaution with your health.

For some time now I had been contemplating resigning from Omagh and taking some other job – other than teaching at home. Mother Teresa was a Headmistresses meeting last Friday in the Dominican Convent, Falls Rd. She asked me to meet her and made me promise not to resign but to take the year's rest at home and return to them in September, that is if you do not return in the meantime to claim me. You may wonder that I have not returned to work long ago. My main reason is that I want so much to be at home now. However there is another reason. My substitute whose home is in Omagh is more than delighted to be at home – she had been teaching in Wales – as her father is very ill and I am afraid from which illness he will not recover. She urges me not to let this affect my decision, but it has.

Strange to relate, your father too is anxious that I stay at home. I gave him my confidence and he is in agreement with what I am doing. Aren't the Omagh nuns very considerate for me, darling? Thus, should the war last much longer I am to rest at home – learning to housekeep – and return to harness September 1943. Won't you return to me before then?

Gerry Murphy, Felix's best man has started up for himself in Killough. Felix is delighted. Gerry is expected to become engaged soon to a nurse O'Doherty. She is from Ballyhoran quite near to Killough.

Anne was up for the weekend and I met Margaret and her at the Convent on Saturday. Margaret has just completed a beautiful picture for our home – dedicating it to the Sacred Heart. Your father is having it framed and presenting it to me as a Christmas present. They were both so kind and thoughtful that I am overwhelmed. When I say our home, darling I mean yours and mine. Aren't you pleased?

I spent Sunday evening at Beechwood. After tea your father took me up to Ardoyne for devotions and we heard a wonderful sermon, preached by Fr Hilary on the Holy Souls. You should have heard us both (father and me) singing the Tantum Ergo and the hymns. Afterwards we walked back to Beechwood together by some brickyard. It was a glorious evening. I want to write on forever but alas my limit is 2 pages.

God bless you my own dear Frank. Won't you write to me soon??

All my love, darling,
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd,
Belfast.
28th Nov. 1942.

My darling Frank,

Yesterday was the feast of the miraculous medal & tomorrow commences the novena to Our Lady Immaculate. How I am praying that Our Mother through her little miraculous medal may protect you from all dangers – I have sent both our names with a subscription round to Clonard so we shall receive the benefit of the 9 Masses.

Friday next, December 4th is your birthday darling. I have not forgotten it but alas I cannot even wish you a happy birthday. Fr Joe is going to say Mass all for you, dearest Frank and please God I shall attend that Mass in St. Brigids. How is your heart these times? Mine is ever in Japan but where I know not – Aren't you going to tell me where you keep it? Yes I do love you, Frank and only you. As each day passes I feel our reunion one day nearer. You must never be anxious about me. I am quite well and working away even though it is not teaching. Here is generally my day. I rise at 9 and go to 9.30 Mass in Clonard. After breakfast I prepare the dinner & thus give May an opportunity of getting on with the cleaning. When dinner is over I usually have a walk with Daddie, or Mammie or maybe only Tony our dog – Sometimes I visit or do the family messages in the town. Then there are the pictures. Nights I spend preparing things for our home or sometimes I go to the Group Theatre. I enjoy the plays there. My day does not appear to be too well occupied but in reality I am kept as busy as a bee – that is the way I want to be because then there is little time for worrying or thinking at all. Need I tell you, my own dearest one that you are never out of my thoughts. I have *never* regretted loving you and I know that I never shall.

Wednesday last I spent at Beechwood and was presented with a beautiful picture, worked by Margaret and framed by your father. It is for *our* home Frank but it is on loan to Spring Villa's kitchen. Here are the words :- "Christ, the head of the House, the Host at every meal, the Silent Listener at every conversation". Your father was in his usual good form and insisted on my having a nice fresh egg to my tea. He is really exceptionally good and kind to me.

Did I tell you that Jackie O'Kane has brought Dr Cavanagh's (R.I.P.) practice. John A. McAuley has bought Dr Kennedy's – you know the doctor who lives & works opposite the Royal Maternity Hospital. He died lately.

I have permission to let you into Frances' & Roland's secret. Their 1st baby is expected in June. Frances is very happy about it. We are going to prepare the baby's trousseau together. I was besieged by Omagh pupils now in St Mary's Training College. They saw me go in & pounced on me when I came out to give me all the news. I was really touched with all their friendliness. Won't you write me soon? God bless you darling. May Our Lady Immaculate give you all the help of which you stand in need.

All my love darling,
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd
Belfast
December 4th '42

My darling Frank,

A very, very happy birthday and many so much happier returns of the day! Just imagine wishing you this & you sound asleep in bed having already celebrated your 30th birthday! (8.30 p.m.)

Somehow today I felt you nearer than ever to me. I thought of you all day long, wondering where you were and what you were doing. I was all set for 8 a.m. Mass said by Fr Joe in St. Brigids all for your dear self when he informed me that "your" Mass was at 6.30 on account of this being the 1st Friday. So darling I went to Clonard instead but there I prayed harder than ever (and that was hard indeed) for you and you alone. As we were all up rather late last night we wished you a happy birthday before going to bed (1 a.m.). You would have been quite pleased had you heard our chorus of voices. You never even smiled from your photograph which stands on the sideboard of our living room – the only photo in the room?? Everyone in the house was at Mass & Holy Communion (this happens every day) and you were specially mentioned by each one. They all love you Frank & long for your homecoming. Need I say how much I wish away each day because it is one day nearer our happy reunion!

My letters seem to be rather dull these times but thank God I do not feel as dull as they sound. I have become Daddie's secretary!! His shop boy is ill so I pay all his bills, bank his spare cash & keep an account of his rents. He appreciates it so much. It means however that I can get little work of my own done. My tea cloth still lies unfinished not to mention a host of Christmas presents I am making. As a matter of fact I stayed away from my 1st Aid tonight so that I might spend the time with the one I love *best* in all the world – above father, mother, brothers & sisters. There could never be any other.

The lady in the Post Office told me today that she heard that the Red Cross has got parcels through to the prisoners in Shanghai. Your card darling is supposed to come from there so please God it is so. Don't worry about not writing to me for Xmas – or even my birthday. I can offer it all up to my – our account with the Good God. And withdraw later all the favours & blessings we shall both need in our life together.

Some time ago I did a good turn for a lady & her family. She writes "You will get the reward you deserve from God for what you have done for me, Eileen for He alone knows just how much it meant to us". You too Frank shall share this reward. I spent Wednesday last at Beechwood & never did I see your father in better form. Your cousin was up from Draperstown & she has invited me to Slieve Gallion's foot. Every one of your relatives is so nice to me. I love them all. Have you had a happy birthday?

All my love

Your ever loving Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
Sunday Dec. 13th

My darling Frank,

Our second Christmas 'together' is fast approaching but there is still no word from you since the postcard which reached here in October. It would be marvellous to have a few lines for the 25th but I must admit I am not banking on it. If this letter ever reaches you, it will be long after Christmas but you know so well darling, how happy I want your 1942 Christmas to be. I shall be praying for you, loving you, thinking of you and wanting you every moment of it. Indeed I wish it were well past because

I know I shall miss you more than ever during these holidays. Our two candles shall burn this year again ON Christmas Eve as you wish. Surely the good Lord will not allow 1943 to come & go without bringing us together. He understands how we each are suffering – no one here understands, they think only when a tear falls you are lonely – and He shall make it up to us in His own way which is the best way. If we are generous with Him, He will not be outdone in generosity. You must be suffering darling, even more than I am – How I long to soothe your anxious mind and make your captivity a little shorter, to tell you that I have always & shall always love you and only you. I need not tell you that I shall wait for you, no matter how long or how trying it may be.

We shall have a house full for Xmas. Auntie Carrie arrives home from England for a week. She is Mammie's youngest sister. We expect to have 15 – family & relatives combined – for dinner on the 25th. Why don't you take your place with me, Frank? You know you promised you would! Felix, Mona & Sheila will be here & Fr Joe. I should give up the whole day for only 5 minutes with you. Does that give a little idea of how much you mean to me? – Above father, mother, brothers, sisters & relatives you come. Nothing must happen to you, dear Frank.

A beautiful Christmas present arrived for us both on Friday – a picture hand painted in celtic design bearing the words of "Bless this House" from Mrs McGuigan my substitute in Omagh. She herself is the artist. It would thrill you to read those beautiful words. Perhaps you already know them? Isn't it strange that unknown to me two such pictures were presented to me this Christmas. It only proves that our home will be a reality, blessed well before we have entered it.

A little National School friend of mine is being married on Boxing Day. She was showing me her trousseau & presents this morning. You remember my telling you about being at her mother's deathbed and asking her to pray for us both (R.I.P.).

I am going over to Beechwood this afternoon. Did you ever get your father's letter? Gerry writes every week to you too. I was at the Christian Brothers play on Sunday last. Gerry did his part very well. I was speaking to him afterwards. Josephine's big dance is coming off on December 18th. Frances, Roland & a huge party are all going & are coaxing me to come too. It is a year since I danced. Fr Joe was saying that Dr McCaughan was speaking to him about you recently. Did you receive the money he sent you for some operation in which you assisted him?

All my love, darling.
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
20:XII:'42

My darling Frank,

My other weekly letters to you seem to hold very little news & so this week I'm going to squeeze in what I can.

Our first aid exam took place on Friday. We – May, Jo & Mairead – were examined by Dr McEntee. Are you interested in my questions? Well here goes :- Written question was "The femur is fractured and there is a haemorrhage from the femoral artery. How would you render 1st aid." The 3 orals were (i) Circulation of blood, (ii) Foreign body in the stomach, (iii) Epileptic fit. He (the doc.) said 'excellent' so often that I've decided I must have passed. The practical test was "to bandage a broken clavicle". We shall hear our results on December 30th. Please God, I shall commence my "Home Nursing" in the Mater in January. Would you mind, dear Dr Murray, losing some patients to your wife betimes? I'm afraid I failed badly when the doctor asked what I would do during a 'blitz' – I said "I'd make for the open spaces". He laughed heartily.

Since the Hospital Ball in Omagh on Dec. 2nd 1941 I have not been dancing. However, Josephine & a big party of her friends coaxed me to make my reappearance at a big civil service dance in Balmoral on Friday night. Frances, Roland & all the de Meulemeesters were to be there also. I went darling, but my heart was not in it. However everyone thinks that I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I wore my black frock & was complimented on all sides on how well I looked. I just said to Frances afterwards (she was ill & couldn't come) "Had Frank been there it would have made all the difference in the world to me". However I danced every dance, had lots of partners who complimented me on my dancing. One thing I heard that night from a doctor just come from Shanghai (he was one of the recent repatriated British Subjects) which was well worth going to a dance to hear "How well the prisoners were being treated in Shanghai". Are you in Shanghai darling? When am I going to hear from you? You know so well how I long for a letter. It is not your fault dearest. I am still most grateful to have your postcard. There were quite a few Queensmen at the dance, Jackie O'Kane, Paddy Bradley, Charlie Stuart, etc.

I shall write again on Christmas Day. We all hope to be at 6 o'clock Mass in Clonard. This happens every year. Though thousands of miles apart my Christmas will be spent entirely with my dearest Frank. There will be 15 at our Christmas dinner but by my side you *shall* sit. I shall be thinking of you all the time.

Daddie has booked seats for 5 of us at the Philanthropists Concert tonight. John Torney is singing. High, Fergus & Joe are expected on Wednesday. I have a bottle of whiskey as a Christmas gift for your father. I'm knitting Anne a pair of gloves. When they are finished I shall visit them and convey my greetings. I'm still adding to our bottom drawer – slowly but surely our collection is growing but more on this anon!

I cycled over to see Frances this morning. She is still in bed but in grand form. I told you of her good news in another letter. I popped into bed beside you & told her all about the dance. Gabrielle (Roland's sister) came up with scrumptious soup for the two invalids!!

Why can't I write a decent letter. Do you receive any of these letters? I write every week and hence have done so since June. I am still and always shall be very much in love with my Frank. God bless you and bring you all the happiness this Christmas time.

All my love darling,
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast
Christmas Day 1942

My darling Frank,

Midst a house full to overflowing I sit down (it is now 5.45 p.m.) to send you my love and best wishes for this our second Christmas together. You have been in my thoughts the day through, from 6 o'clock – but then you are always in my thoughts – Last night our burning candles were kindled in honour of Our Lady and Her Divine Son. We were all at Clonard's first Mass and before breakfast at 8.30 we heard at least 6 Masses.

Dinner is just over. Four years of war have made very little change on our Christmas fare. Hugh says if Frank should ask what we did on Christmas Day, tell him "We ate". Should he ask "And what then?" you answer "And ate, and ate". You have an idea how we are all feeling!! There were 14 of us for dinner. Daddie, Mammie, Auntie Carrie, Fr Joe, Mamma & Joe Murphy (Uncle Jim's children – he is dead), Felix, Mona (& Sheila peacefully asleep in bed), Josephine, Mairead, Hugh, Fergus, Joe, May and myself. May & I did the whole dinner. I took the soup & trifle and carved the turkey – she did the rest. Everything went off without a hitch. The crowd sent up 3 sheers for the cooks. Now please God, darling you will be with us all next year. Christmas would then be a perfect reunion of us all.

Never did I receive such a large mail as this year. All the Loreto children must have written. I also got some very acceptable little gifts :- Rosary beads (pearl) from Fr Joe; a beautiful little sanctuary lamp bearing the inscription "To dear Eileen & Frank". This gift gave me most pleasure – the glass is red & the stand oxidised silver. It will ever burn in our home in the Sacred Heart's Honour; a glass sugar duster with silver top to us both from Mairead & Josephine; a very sensible pair of kitchen scissors on little stand from Mammie; the life of St Gertrude from Hugh (he selected only Mairead & myself for his presents – after that he confessed he was broke); Auntie gave me 4 yds of very nice material to do some dressmaking upon; your father filled my case with all sorts of goodies and Margaret gave me the beautiful picture she herself painted. Then there was Miss McGuigan's picture which I described in a recent letter.

December 28th I had to wait until today before posting this letter. Tomorrow is the 29th, our anniversary!! Do you remember? This afternoon Mammie & I are going to visit Margaret in the Convent. Last night we were all at a party in O'Hara's & had to walk home – from Derryvolgie, but it was worth it. There is another 'do' there on the 6th. On Saturday night we went to St Paul's pantomime. Thank God the days are passing a little more quickly than usual. Who knows what the New Year may have in store for us both! May it be one filled to the brim with health, happiness and peace for you my dearest Frank and may it see our happy reunion. This is my prayer for you and for us both.

God bless you
All my love, darling
Your loving Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
January 1st 1943

My darling Frank,

At midnight last night I wished you with all my heart a very happy and peaceful New Year and now with the New Year – 1943 – 37 hours old I am writing it to you. As all the family rang out the old & rang in the New Year I asked God that, if it were His Will, that peace & our happy reunion would be accomplished in the year that has just dawned. The others are all at peace devotions in Clonard but I volunteered to entertain our guest – Sheila Mary O'Kane, who rudely enough is lying fast asleep in an easy chair!

You will be sad to hear that Mr Louis J. Walsh died on Dec. 26th (R.I.P.). I have kept the paper cutting of his funeral for you. Ireland has lost one of her finest sons & I, a very dear friend. I am proud to possess one of his books, autographed by himself.

Mammie & I went down to the Crumlin Rd. Convent to visit Margaret & Maureen. This was Mammie's first visit. Anne was the only representative of the Murray family she had met. We came away laden with beautiful pictures & the praise was high about my two sisters to be.

Frances spent yesterday afternoon with us. Ita, Peggie, Gabriell (Roland's sister), Frances, Josephine, Mairead & I are arranging to have a big day in town next week – pictures, then tea. My heart is not in most of the pleasures I appear to be having. I cannot really understand why I should feel like this because I know you are safe & that you will come safely home to me. Do you feel like this Frank? In the midst of so many, I feel so much alone.

This morning I had a very nice letter from Mrs Ray, my landlady in Omagh. She says, "We were very disappointed to hear of your decision not to come back this year & I can tell you from inside information that the children do not think it is for their own good, in fact the opposite". How I long to

have you here, Frank, just to talk things over with you. You would understand all my problems & solve all my difficulties.

Our bottom drawer got a few additions this Xmas. In my shopping prowls I unearthed a beautiful large light oak tray (17/6). Josephine & Mairead gave us a sugar duster & Fergus the little sanctuary lamp. Auntie presented me with a lovely aluminium kettle – these are priceless now, if procurable at all. Fr Joe gave me his own kitchen scales (he never – at least his housekeeper never uses them). My cooking necessitates accurate measurements of ingredients!

Here are some of the family wanting to wish you a happy New Year :-

I really don't know what to say, Frank, except that I wish you'd hurry home – we're all dying to meet you. Could you give me any suggestions as to what I should sing at our Ceilidhe in the Ard Scoil on Monday night. I've been asked to perform, s'help me! Love Mairead.

Frank, your photograph is sitting in a very prominent position in the living room here & you don't miss a thing that's going on. I've heard so much about you recently that I feel as if I've known you for years. Come home quickly – we're all as anxious to meet you & have you with us as Eileen is. All the best in 1943. [Irish].

They have left me no room but *all* my love must be squeezed in. You know you have it all, darling. Tom Smiley is reported a prisoner.

You loving
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
Sunday, Feast of Holy Trinity
January 10th, '42 [sic]

My darling Frank,

I heard two Masses today for our joint intentions. The sermon at 12 was on the Holy Trinity at Nazareth and I prayed to our good God to bless our love, our marriage. May He not only be a guest – our most honoured – at our wedding feast but also throughout our life together.

On our family New Year calendar there is a saying for every day in 1943 & guess what is my 'saying' for the 20th. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy". So now darling, our cruel separation and still more cruel stoppage of letters is all part of a great suffering before a great joy. Mollie O'Hare came in last night to tell me of a wonderful dream she had of us both. We were the guests of Mrs Kelly (Fr Mick Kelly's mother). Mollie was there & she said while you were rather quiet but very happy, I was radiant with joy and happiness. This is what your homecoming shall mean to me.

I saw in last week's paper where Stephen Campbell (R.A.M.C. – Malaya) is now a prisoner of war. News is beginning to trickle through unofficially, but alas there is still no complete list published. What are you doing about it over there? Just think it is almost 12 months since your last letter. Still what do letters mean when you are safe and well. This war cannot go on forever & then there will be happiness untold for us both. If you are in Korea, have you met Miss Cusack's (Omagh) brother Fr Tom Cusack of the Maynooth Mission to China? Have you visited any other Little Sister Convents? They are all over the East.

Tomorrow, Monday, I commence work in Belfast as a temporary civil servant. Everyone thinks the change of occupation & being at home will do me a world of good. You must know so well darling how worried & anxious I have been all these months but somehow though still without news I am beginning to feel my old self again. I have promised never to hide anything from you & I never shall.

With all my faults & failings you shall know *me*. This does not mean that I shall never return to Omagh. They want me back but I shall see how I like the new work.

Philip is back living in Beechwood and your father is overjoyed. I am going over for tea this afternoon to tell them all my news. Anne returns to Dublin on Wednesday. She will be a wonderful housekeeper when this course is finished in June.

Jo, Mairead & I were at a wonderful party in O'Hara's on Wednesday last. There were 23 guests including 7 priests, Frs Clenaghan, Madden, McEnery, McPhilips, Murphy, Binke (Newry) and Canon Small. It was more a musical evening than anything else. On Thursday I was at de Meulemeesters and on Friday at another party so life is not *too* dull at the moment.

Your beautiful ring is still twinkling up at me. I love it as I love its donor – with *all* my heart and self.

God bless you: my darling Frank,
Your loving Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast
17th January '43

My darling Frank,

Another week has come and gone and still there is no word from you. Thank God I can now tell you honestly that this past week has passed more quickly than any since 1942 dawned – my new work is very interesting and keeps me well occupied from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. so I have little time for thinking or worrying or ever doing anything else.

Guess who has commenced this work with me? Tote Heagney – you know the girl who is engaged to Billie McGinley. She has been through a terrible time as he has not been heard of since the capitulation of Singapore. We have a lot in common, although I have been more fortunate in getting a card from you, dearest. However I tell her – as we balance our worries – that she had Billie for 2 weeks as recently as November 1941. How long is it since I saw you Frank? Wasn't it in the Imperial Picture House?

I spent last Sunday evening at Beechwood with your father & Philip and thoroughly enjoyed myself. Philip showed me all his snaps & gave me a beauty of himself and yourself taken in the cement pathway in front of Beechwood. Do you remember it and one taken in tennis outfit? I made tea for us all & afterwards Philip walked over to Oldpark Rd. with me where the Springfield Road passes. Anne went back to Dublin last Wednesday. She was in grand form.

Mairead and Mammie are going to Killough for the week on Tuesday to give the house an airing.

I shall be thinking of you all day on the 20th. On such days I feel especially near. Mrs O'Hara has invited Jo and me over for tea – coming from work. I hope to manage a few lines to you that day. If someone were to ask me what birthday present I should like, then without hesitation I would say “a letter from Frank”. Sure I know you must be doing all in your power to get me a letter. The “Prisoner of War” magazine which your father receives every month gives us the latest details (very few) of Far East prisoners. I am keeping all copies for you.

Frances is away in Castlewellan for the week. Her 1st baby is expected in June. Ita is now a dentist and job hunting. Maurice McEnaney is in Bangor now. Fred Brean in Cairo.

Did I tell you I have a new black hat. It is very smart with a tiny pom of silver fox on the top. When you are allowed to receive enclosures I shall have a snap taken in it and send it to you. You haven't seen our ring yet. It is the admiration of all.

Are you receiving any of these letters? I have written every week since June 1942. Time only makes me love you more and more, Frank. If I only knew you were receiving these short letters it would make all the difference in the world to me. You can understand how it is. God bless you and may He bring me news of you soon. *All* my love darling.

Your ever loving, Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195, Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.

2nd Feb. Feast of the Purification

My darling Frank,

Does Feb. 2nd convey anything to you? Well, dearest it was this day one year ago that you wrote your last letter to me – at least the last one I received. It has been a long time but thank God I have weathered the storm and surely there will be a letter from you soon.

Again it was on this day 10 years ago that Mattie entered the Convent. We have had no direct communication with her since war was declared but indirectly we hear she is well and working away. I often wonder did she receive your letter?

Since I have recommenced work in the city, there is scarcely a free moment – I even work Sundays. Somehow work – the new type keeps me so busy that I have no time to worry and time now passes more quickly, thank God. The war will be over before I realise it!

My birthday proved to be a very uneventful one. Mammie & Mairead had gone to Killough for the few days (we had a high tea the day before they went off, in my honour). Mairead knit me a nice pair of mittens in fair isle pattern in red and blue. Josephine embroidered me 2 huckaback towels. Strangely enough these gifts were repeated in Mammie & Frances' gifts – gloves & towels respectively. Daddie gave me a 10/- with which I purchased a sports silk scarf – you know the type with horses heads? After work was done on the 20th Jo & I had tea out, bought some sweets & went to the pictures. Arriving in about 9 p.m. she made a lovely tea of rasher & egg while I had a lovely hot bath & came down in my gown & slippers to enjoy it – my idea of heaven!! I thought of you a lot that day because somehow I felt you were thinking about me. Weren't you?

Our bottom drawer is growing apace. I have a large notebook in which I keep all my purchases & where they were got and what they cost – if presents from whom. Like the miser gloating over his money (horrible simile!!) I love to look through my list especially at those articles which war makes hard to get. Josephine thinks I have a wonderful collection & says I can start up house anytime. Ain't you pleased Frank? Sure what does it matter, even if we haven't everything, we have each other & our health. These with our trust in God will pull us through any difficulty.

Yesterday I plunged into buying a really lovely pair of shoes – navy blue suede court shoes with insertions of red kid. When the lady (in McAfees) asked what colour of suit I wanted them to go with – I said “The suit (still in the realms of dreams) must be selected to suit the shoes. That reminds me of the joke about the beggar calling at a door to ask the lady for a shirt to sew his bottom (produced) on!! All at home are in love with the shoes but I won't wear them until you come home, so do hurry darling as I'm awfully keen to get a trick out of them.

Yesterday was my free day & Frances & I spent the afternoon in town & dined at the Grand Central! No, we didn't fall into a fortune. I think the pair of us almost disgraced ourselves we laughed so much over old times. Frances was full of the baby's trousseau and I was as interested as could be. She is looking remarkably well, thank God.

I am thinking of going over to Beechwood tomorrow. Philip being at home makes a wonderful difference to your father. He is no longer so lonely.

Our engagement ring had its first bath a few days ago and it twinkles nicer than ever. When am I going to be able to enclose a snap of it to you? If I were an artist then I could possibly draw it but then 1st impressions are sometimes lasting & I want you to love it as much as I do.

I had Mass said last week for our joint intentions. Though I may not always say it I am praying away every day and every night for you – you are mentioned by name in our family rosary.

Won't you write to me soon darling? Just a wee note to say how you are and where you are. Do not worry for me. I am, thank God feeling fit & well but always with an ache in my heart to hear from you but more especially to see you and *tell* you for the first time that "I love you and always shall".

God bless you and may Mary, on this her feast give you all the help you need.

Your loving Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
9/2/43

My darling Frank,

I went over to Beechwood on Sunday afternoon to welcome your father downstairs after a dose of 'flu'. The kitchen, scullery & pantry were newly painted in cream & brown & everything looked very bright and attractive. About 9 p.m. I made us both a cup of tea & toast but of course ended up with having more paint on my hands than on the walls!!

There are two subjects of which your father is constantly speaking. (i) Whether to sell the shop and premises or not. (ii) Whether to wait or make out his new will now. His indecision is due to the fact that you are not at home darling. In the first case, would you like to use the apartments above the shop as your surgery? If so he will hold on. In the 2nd case he wants you to be one of the executors of his will. Should this letter ever reach you then write your answers to him and give him the advice he seeks.

Terry Corr (Mrs Frank McLaughlin whom you met in India) has now got word that her husband is a prisoner of war in Malaya. She must be so relieved. I wrote her a note which also was to thank her for the nice letter she sent me when the news of your safety reached me. That was October '42 and since then there has not been a sound. This morning 2 letters which I sent to you in January 1942 were returned. In all there has been 4 letters returned. I could not even think of reading them. In one week's time February 15th, it will be one year since you became a prisoner of war. Oh, it has been such a long time! Surely it cannot last forever. These years are so precious to us – isn't it sad we are separated but then that must be God's will for us both. Ours truly has been a strange romance from the beginning. I do not regret any part of it. I love you now and I shall love you always. Your ring is ever on my finger, night and day to remind me – though there is no need – that I am yours and shall be for aye. If only you could get a letter through to me how contented I should feel!

We are now in the midst of the novena to Our Lady of Lourdes. I am making it earnestly for us both. May she bring me news of you soon.

Frances is very busy preparing baby's trousseau. I've been searching the town for wool and managed to get her 12 oz. It was like a £5 note to her. We have planned to spend Monday afternoon together – pictures & up to Mt. Charles for tea.

10/2/43

A lady friend arrived in last night with ½ dozen glass cloths for me so my letter writing had to cease. This is another addition to our home – I'll allow you dry the dishes some day, if you promise not to break any!! Miss McWilliams' firm is a linen one. Nowadays they go in quite a lot for white embroidery so I am

going to have Frances' wedding present to us both embroidered with a nice "M". You will surely say I *am* confident that you will return to me alive and well – well it is the truth. Already I am planning to embroider an "M" on some towels. Now what are you doing young man? From the mysterious lands of the East have you collected anything? Sure of course you have not!! Don't worry darling I'll work & collect for us both.

This morning five more of my letters to you were returned – in all 9. These letters were sent by air mail before the fall of Singapore. Some are filthy dirty. Isn't it heartrending that they did not reach you. I wonder are these "Red Cross" letters getting to you?

Tomorrow – my half day – I am playing golf with Jo Courtney. She was a famous hockey player in the Dominican years ago – the game is at Knock, which will be my first time on that course. Half & free days are very precious nowadays. I have my lunch at the canteen where I work so I am gone from home from 8.30 until 5.30 p.m. Mollie O'Hare & I are thinking of taking a few days in Dublin in March. I am looking forward to it.

The Sigerson Cup is being played in Belfast next weekend. Jo & Mairead are off to it and the Ceilidhe. I thought I saw your friend Gerry passing in a car today. It is an age since I was speaking to him. Your father tells me he (Gerry) is house-hunting in order to get married.

Now dearest Frank everybody is in grand form in both Beechwood and Spring Villa. They all send you their love and assure you of their constant prayers. Ned I tell you how lonely I feel for you or how hard I am praying for you. I love you, yes with all that I have and shall do so for aye.

God bless you.

Your loving Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast
16/2/43

My darling Frank,

Yesterday, February 15th was the 1st anniversary of our complete separation; it was then that all correspondence had to cease abruptly and here I am with some 9 of my own letters to you returned. One was lying open & the memoriam card of your dear mother was peeping out. The others I have not opened – they are yours and shall only be opened by you – I hate reading my own letters so darling never show me my boring & long-winded epistles.

Did you ever hear of a book called "Malayan Postscript" by Ian Morrison. The author was a professor of English in a Japanese university before the war. Later he became foreign correspondent to the Times in Malaya where he surveyed from the forward areas the whole Malayan campaign from December 8 1942 to February 15 1942. Seeing a criticism (favourable) of the book in the press I ordered a copy through the Linenhall Library & for the past week I have been delving through its gripping pages – I have come step by step with you through the whole campaign. The chapters are punctuated with excellent pictures and photographs. I think I shall buy a copy for you to peruse – perhaps darling you would prefer to forget about your experiences during those dreadful months.

You will be pleased to hear that Mammie is coming over to meet your father, with me on Sunday. He has been asking such a lot about her. I must go out now darling to visit a school friend of mine who was married lately. Yesterday afternoon I was free so Frances & I did an hour's shopping, had a snack and went to the pictures. Afterwards we went up to M. Charles where Gabriella had a lovely tea for us – it was all so pleased. Do you know what I bought – two frock lengths of material for my trousseau – now I won't tell you anything more because everything must be a secret until you see it on. All my love darling. Good night.

18/2/43 Today my half-day was a glorious one – the sky was blue and cloudless & the sun shone warmly. Mairead and Seamus McMahon, a friend of hers tried to persuade me to go cycling with them round Cavehill to the graveyard where Francis Joseph Biggar was buried but alas I had some shopping to do in the town. My golf jacket is being cleaned & was to be called for. Josephine was in bed with a touch of 'flu so when my messages were finished I invested in some flowers for her and came back. Was she thrilled? The poor fellow who sold them at the City Hall was a very charitable object. Nowadays old frocks must be renovated in order to save coupons for essentials so I bought a green collar & belt to brighten up an old frock – the collar is the special type that needs no starch – it is ironed wet & is quite still.

This day week, four of us have planned a golf foursome in Carnalea. We decided to lunch at the office & go straight down by train or bus. After the 1st nine holes we shall have tea at the clubhouse followed by a second nine. I hope the day is fine.

I ordered "Malayan Postscript" today for our library. You will read it to me some winter night while I sit doing the family mending & I can hear you interrupt the reading with your own personal experience in that same campaign. Your Sikh troops received high praise from the author. How I long for those days to come for it is only then this ache at my heart will cease. I shall not be happy until we meet again. These months are so long in passing. I wish I were a Rip Van Winkle & could go asleep to wake up when this awful conflict had ceased and our loved ones returned to us.

Holy Mass was offered up this week for our joint intentions. Now that I am working again I hope to have Mass said every week to thank God for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us both & for our individual & joint intentions. My letters are very boring these days because I do not even know whether you ever receive them. I have not got a single letter since February 2nd 1942 (posted) except the card telling me you are a prisoner. Oh why won't the Japanese ease our anxiety & send us your letters.

I am having some embroidery done on my linens – stamped with initial "M" – who said I had lost my confidence in prayer?

Why weren't you home to take me to the Mater Students Dance in the Carlton on Friday last? Felix & Mona were there but I cannot rouse up my old enthusiasm for dancing.

Your father's friend Mr McCarthy's son has gone abroad. He also is in the R.A.M.C. but had a long spell at home. When you read this terrible letter just remember that I only wanted to tell you that I love you still and always shall but please, oh please dearest Frank write to me, if you possibly can.

God bless you my dear one.

Your loving Eileen. *All my love.*

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
2/3/43

My darling Frank

This morning I had a letter from your father and in it was a letter from the Red Cross giving this new address and informing us that letters from Malayan prisoners started at the beginning of January 1943. This means, my dearest one, that a letter is actually on its way, hip hip hurrah! I hope our Japanese censor understands this expression of jubilation. I am so happy about all this – so really happy to know that you are alive, in Malaya & actually writing to me again. Our nightmare is drawing to a close. You know sweetheart that I am loving you more than ever during these long months of silence. It was only then I realised what you meant to me. I do love you darling and I shall never change. Perhaps this letter shall reach you before my others – I have written weekly since June 1942. I have received one postcard from you in October 1942 telling me you were a prisoner – never shall a postcard bring such relief & peace of mind to so many anxious friends. I consider receiving it a miracle. Its arrival caused a sensation in Belfast because it was the first of its kind to arrive. I have got our ring – a beauty, whose twinkle catches every eye and I never leave it off my finger (3rd L. hand). It is the symbol of the greatest

love the world has ever known – our love for one another. I called & gave the good news to Frances & Gerry. Both complimented me on how well improved I am. I'm off to Ballynahinch tomorrow after office until Friday (have Thursday free). Next week I'm off to Dublin & I'm spending the 17th holidays in Omagh. Now I can really enjoy myself. God bless you darling for everything.

All my love. Eileen X.

P.S. Your name was broadcast from Vatican Radio on February 19. Many letters of those listening reached me. Thank God for everything.

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
March 13th 1943

My darling Frank,

Last week I sent off a 25 word message to you through the Vatican by the kind offices of the Papal Nuncio at Dublin, Dr Paschal Robinson, and have received two very nice letters from him written personally. When this message reaches you dear one, then you shall send a similar reply.

I have been holidaying in Dublin from Thursday last until Saturday. Anne came in to the hotel each day from Sion Hill. Una had not been too well but is coming round nicely. I missed seeing her because of Lent. Gerry Magennis was down & met Anne in the lounge but I missed him. On Tuesday next I'm off to Omagh to complete my leave returning on Friday. This is an invitation from Miss McGuigan my substitute. You shall have all details in my next letter.

The shows in Dublin were poor. We went to the Abbey & saw "The O'Cuddy"; it was very ordinary. The second night the Theatre Royal & tried to win the £50 quiz.

Frances is ill with 'flu & the doctor with her. I bought her babe to be a little pink eiderdown & gave it from us both. She was thrilled about it & said it was & will be the nicest present she will get.

I have completed the 9 day novena of grace to St Francis Xavier (Masses & Holy Communion and all for our joint intentions). Now I am in the middle of one to Sts Patrick and Joseph.

How is your heart these times my own darling boy? When is your first letter going to come? It is now 13 months since your last letter. I am still reading your old letters and know them off by heart.

Our bottom drawer had a recent addition. Guess what? Clothes pegs!! I can almost see the family washing blowing in the wind – a sight I love to see. I had Mass said in thanksgiving last week. I am so grateful to God for his goodness to us both. May He continue to bestow His blessings upon us but especially may He bring us together soon, bless our love and bless our marriage. You have all my love dearest Frank.

God bless you.

Your loving Eileen.

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
N. Ireland
21.3.'43

My darling Frank,

Since I last wrote I have been away in Omagh on holidays – from the 16th to 19th. The weather was glorious and I have gone quite brown with Tyrone's sun. I stayed with Miss McGuigan who lives 3½ miles out in a quaint little bungalow. We went to mass in Knockmoyle on the 17th & celebrated

our national saint's feast day with an all Irish play in the convent in the afternoon followed by a concert and dance in Knockmoyle Hall which lasted until 3am & then home on bikes. We had a high supper with Fr McLaughlin the curate who came to visit us the following evening when I learnt the famous "25" card game.

The whole question was – was I returning to Omagh in September. Mrs Ray, my landlady says she will let her present boarder go (an officer) the moment I decide to return. I wish you were here darling to advise me what to do – office work or teaching. This is my problem at the moment.

Frances has had a bad dose of 'flu but thank God I have escaped all colds this winter & according to all in Omagh they never saw me look better – you see my dearest Frank I have now peace of mind. I *know* you – you who mean all to me – have been spared & now I must just await as patiently as I can your return. Yes dear Frank I love you and this love will last until I die. There never could be anyone else ever.

When are your letters going to arrive. I am still reading 1941 letters as if they had just arrived. How I thank you for all those wonderful letters. They have kept me alive in those long days of waiting.

Today – our day – is beautiful. Why aren't you here darling to take me away for a spin into the country? Jo & I are going to cycle to Ballynahinch in the afternoon & back for supper eh!

I have not been to Beechwood since Dublin, but please God I shall go over next week.

I have got a lovely new handbag which hangs from my shoulder – it is very useful on the bike. Did I tell you the latest edition to our bottom drawer – clothes pegs!!

God bless you my darling husband to be. You know you have all my love.

Your own Eileen.

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
30.3.'43

Frank my darling,

You must find this typed letter most uninteresting. For my part I cannot just get going in my usual racy way. What matter, if I convey to you that I love and shall wait for you forever, then I am satisfied.

All are out at the mission tonight but as I have a bit of a cold I am keeping house – alas, the sermon is on "marriage" but the other 4 ladies in our family have promised to give me all details.

I had word from Omagh this morning that Mother Teresa wants me to meet her in St. Dominic's on Saturday next. I shall soon have to decide between my present jog and returning to Omagh in September. What shall I do love?

On Wednesday last I went over to see Philip & your father. There were 2 Sundays passed since I was there (I was in Dublin then Omagh) & each Sunday your father had a little present for me, which Philip delightedly told me he enjoyed. The painters were in & the large front room bedroom & "your" room were being done up. Also all the windows were being recorded. Your father says nothing as he escorts me from room to room but of course I know it is all for your wonderful homecoming. I have begun to make my trousseau so now hurry home & do not let my handiwork become moth eaten! Never worry, dearest one, this enforced separation is being allowed by a creator who loves us individually.

As everything is very expensive I have bought few things for our home – I think the wisest course for us both now is to save all available money.

Are you interested in my new spring suit – well the coat is a two inch check in blue & faun – the hat to tone and a bag which swings from my shoulder. I am particularly in love with the latter.

I am playing golf next week with Fr Jack Courtney of Downpatrick who is a friend of your friend Dr Duff of Portaferry. I have a feeling I met this Dr Duff at a dance in Omagh years ago before he qualified. My niece, Sheila aged 6 months can now speak over the telephone. Aren't we a clever family!!

You must be often depressed in your captivity my darling. How can I help you? Is there anything I can send you? You have *all* the love of my heart.

Ever your own
Eileen

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast
6.4.'43

My own darling,

Here I am with you again still loving you and waiting eagerly for your first letter after a lapse of 14 long months. The Red Cross informs us that letters from Malayan prisoners were sent at beginning of January 1943 so the summer should see a letter – hurrah.

All your dear ones are well. Had a letter from Anne. She is making me some lovely things for my trousseau in her domestic science course at Sion Hill. I spent Sunday evening at Beechwood & while your father was at the mission I read in the drawing room. Your two photographs stand one on the piano (in uniform) & the other (your degree photo) on a small table in the corner. My photograph taking has been a washout but I may get enough courage to face the camera for your sake. I do want to carry out your wish & have the two photos side by side in Beechwood's drawing room.

The book which I ordered "Malayan Postscript" arrived last week. I promised to lend it to Gerry. He was away in Dublin so we shall probably be hearing wedding bells soon. I gave him your new address.

Did I tell you I have been appointed 1st aider in the room in which I work. Well last week I was called upon to render 1st aid to a married lady about 35 years old. Wish you had been there to help – it was only that she felt a trifle sick. I brought her to the rest room & put her to bed with 2 hot water bottles & some hot milk. She slept solidly for 4 hours & was better when she awoke. How am I doing?? I bet she had been on the razzle dazzle the previous night.

Tomorrow is the commencement of my spin to Killough. Today is windy or showery so I hope we don't have to go by train. Shall tell you all about it next week.

Mother Teresa sent me a note to meet her at the Dominican Convent on Saturday afternoon last. She wants me to return to them in September. I said I would, provided the girl substituting for me gets a job in the meantime. How I wish you would come home in the meantime but I must not complain because God had been so generous to us both. Mammie wants to say a few words so I shall finish with giving you all my love & asking God to watch over you constantly for your own loving Eileen.

Dearest Frank,

You are with us at all our meals and we never cease to pray for you that you will soon be here in reality. God bless you and keep you in his safe keeping.

Mother

P.S. It took about 1 hour to write this!! (E)

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast
14/4/43

Frank, my own darling,

I got quite a thrill this week when I received a very foreign looking letter from the Red Cross at Geneva telling me that Major F.J. Murray of the 11th Division (a fact I never knew before) was interned in Malaya – my first thought was that this was a letter from you but alas instead of being thrilled at the enclosure I was a little disappointed. There is still no news of Billy McGinley or Humphrey Thomson (believed killed) so in comparison I am a very, very lucky girl.

On Wednesday afternoon last Jo Courtney (she taught in Leicester for a number of years) & I set out by train with our bikes for Downpatrick – it was too stormy to ride. Here we had a nice tea with Fr Courtney & rode to Killough via Rossglass & ST. John's Point. On the following day we cycled back to down & I called to collect Eleanor Bell (Dr McSherry's niece) for a round of golf. Well both she, Mrs Bell & Mrs Collings both sisters of the Doc were very interested when I told them it was to "Maurice's Assistant" I was engaged. I gave them all the latest news about my darling & they were to ring Birmingham there & then. Mrs Collings (whom I believe you met) asked me to mention the names of two great friends of hers in Singapore, Ransom & Hetrick (this may be incorrectly spelt). Have you met either of these gentlemen? After a very enjoyable game we had lunch with the curates & then off by car to Newcastle (Fr Courtney had some duties to perform at the convent there). Before we all returned we did a long walk along the coast. After a lovely tea in Down we set sail on machines & sank into two cosy beds at St. Josephs at 10 p.m. with a merry little fire burning in our bedroom grate – lit by the caretaker of the house who cooked & washed up for us. Next day, again after Mass and Holy Communion (as always for our intentions) we cycled via Ballynahinch to Belfast.

Tomorrow 10 girls of us are off for a spin to Bangor via Newtownards. Do you remember dearest Frank the day we cycled over the motor course. I would scrap the whole 10 of them were you here to take me. But let me tell you it was I who suggested the route (for my own – our – sentimental reasons). We are having tea in Bangor where it is already ordered.

Last night we had a musical evening in Spring Villa. I am still reading your letters darling one – now so very old. I am loving you every minute of every day & longing to hear from you. God bless you darling.

Your own Eileen

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
23/4/43
Good Friday.

My own darling one,

This is my Easter letter to you. May you have a joyous one and may our risen Saviour hear our joint petitions for a just and speedy peace so that our cruel separation might end and our life together commence.

I had a beautiful letter from a nun in a Perpetual Adoration convent in Canada. She says, "God, it seems, is cementing the union of hearts in the fires of sacrifice and suffering, but it is a sign of future blessings". How true these words are, you & I know full well.

Sometimes I wonder how you are reacting to your imprisonment or perhaps you do not consider yourself a prisoner. Have you enough to eat, drink and wear? I have tried to imagine how you pass your time, you who love your work so much. How about games? When is your first letter going to arrive?

Frances spent last Tuesday with me. We had a short walk & after tea we went to see 2 religious pictures in the Broadway – Life of St. John Bosco and Picture on the Vatican. Roland came up for supper

and both went home together. They are expecting their first baby next month and both are very happy about it. I have given Frances your new address so you shall hear from her soon.

Wednesday night I spent at Beechwood. Philip, Anne & your father were there and we four chatted around the fire over our tea and chocolate biscuits while your old football boots burned merrily up the chimney!! They filled my mind with many Queensday memories. Why was I so foolish then and you later dearest Frank? Look at all the happy years we have allowed to pass us by. Why couldn't we have confided in one another & tried to understand. I blame myself and you blame yourself so our best friend stepped in and helped when our puny efforts failed. Thank God for everything – our joys *and* our sorrows.

Jo, Mairead and I are going to St. Josephs for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday so I hope the weather improves. Mammie & Daddy celebrated their 33 anniversary on April 20 & on the previous day Mammy had her 55th birthday. When we all presented our gifts & greetings poor Mammie burst out crying. The explanation was Mattie. We have not heard from her since October 1939. Mairead was received as a Dominican Tertiary the previous day & in the habit she reminded Mammie of Mattie.

You have all of me including all the love of my heart. Only you have ever had it. God bless and comfort you.

Ever your own

Loving Eileen

195 Springfield Road,
Belfast.
19.5.'43

My darling Frank,

Yesterday evening at 6 p.m. a son and heir was born to Roland and Frances. It was a premature baby (not expected until first week in June) weighing 5¼ lbs but healthy & well. It is fair, blue eyes, Frances' nose and chin but the whole face is like Roland. It is to be christened on Sunday by Fr Joe and the name is to be Arthur after Roland's father who will be a year dead next month. Frances looked wonderfully well and although no visitors were allowed she asked specially to see me & let me hold the baby – not yet 24 hours old. Roland came straight to S. Villa at 7 p.m. last night so that I might be the first to hear the good news> I did appreciate the thoughtfulness of them both. She is in the nursing home just opposite her home in Mt. Charles.

You have no idea darling just how happy I am for Frances. Roland has just rung up making final arrangements with me about the christening. All the McNabbs & de Meulemeesters will be present. Do you think our day shall ever come? You are a prisoner Frank. Well I was just thinking this afternoon that I am one also. My only happiness lies in being with you and yet this is impossible. I am no longer interested in people and places around me. Yet I know it would be foolish to sit at home and mope so with all the effort I can muster I go out, I play tennis, golf, cycle and hike. It may sound like the old "me" but it is not. I too am like the "rabort" you likened yourself to. My heart, my love, my all are with you in your captivity. I would join you if I could, but once this war ends, if you are detained in the East, then I shall take the first means of conveyance to you – we must not waste another valuable moment of our lives.

In the office a lady showed me a copy of the Indian Tatler – "The Outlooker". I searched in vain for some news of you or your friends.

I have planned my holidays this Summer to cycle through Wicklow – from July 25th–August 6th. The previous week I am attending the past pupils retreat in Kilkeel given by the Jesuit Fr Prendergast.

Last week I had Holy Mass said for your special intentions my dearest one. I had dreamed about you for a few nights previous and felt you might be in trouble.

We have a heat wave now so my annual tan has returned.

Ever your own

Loving Eileen

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
Sunday, 30.5.'43

My own darling Frank,

This is our day and what a heavenly day it is! I am writing this in the deck chair in the back garden and at the same time drying my shampooed locks. While I write I am trying to picture in what part of Malaya you are, what you are doing, are you happy, do you still love me, when will our day come when we shall be together for aye. I am trying to do as you said darling, to live in the past and in the future, not in the present. This past while I have been thinking how wonderful it would be to join you in India after peace is declared, to be married there – a simple quiet wedding and spend the time between then and your demobilisation in the East. It would be such a holiday for us both and we could save for our future life at home. These dreams of mine may never materialise but it is glorious to even dream of happy days in the sunny climes of the East together, bathing, picnicking, playing tennis, golf, walking and 101 other pleasures of our own making – to meet all your friends. Father O'Donoghue, Capt. Frank & his wife, Mary & Paul. What do you think of my dreams, Frank. I voiced them to your father and he thought it a grand idea for us both but he added plaintively "You *will* come back".

This afternoon your father & I are going for a walk round Hightown – because it was your favourite walk. Philip talks a lot about you to me and I love him for it – of the times you spent together in Beechwood and Birmingham. He told me of the time (after Ranafast) when you showed him a snap taken at Crolly station & pointed to it saying "That's my girl". Have you still that snap?

Jackie O'Kane was engaged to Terry Wilson (Broadway) at an engagement party in the Royal Ave. Hotel yesterday. They are to be married in September. He has bought the late Dr Cavanagh's practice on the Falls Road. John A. McCauley has bought Dr Kennedy's practice (opposite R.V.H.). Arthur Marie Joseph de Meulemeester was christened on Sunday last by Fr. Joe. Frances is well & in wonderful form. I spent a lovely day at Mt. Charles on Sunday, the only outsider midst the families of McNabb & de Meulemeester. Annie's little son Vincent Joseph Williams is a bruiser. Fair hair & blue eyes. His father (in the Navy) has never seen him. Tot Heagney got word from the Red Cross that Billie McGinley is a P.O.W. in Changi Camp, Singapore. She & I celebrated last night by having tea in the Royal Ave. Hotel & then on to the H.E. Group. I am spending my Whitsun holidays in Lough Derg. Sat., Sun. & Mon. There will be about 6 of us going from the office. This is the 4th time. 5 more to go so hurry up. Need I tell you what my intentions will be. Mammie & Daddie are just back from Dun Laoghaire. Mairead got 1st prize for singing again this year at the Belfast Feis. Did you know that Kevin Flynn was killed. Also that Dr McSherry's 2nd son is missing.

Thank God for all his blessings to us dearest Frank. Everyone prophesises that we shall be the happiest couple alive. I *do* love you and want to make you happy.

God bless you.

Your loving
Eileen.

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
7.6.'43

My own darling Frank,

Quite a number of people are now receiving word from prisoners in Japan. Perhaps I shall be amongst the lucky ones soon – one postcard in 18 months are my total love letters since February

2, 1942 – a shame I calls it, Major Murray. What girl would stand it, only one who is very much in love with you, who shall wait for you for ever. What plans I am making for our future. Things are difficult to get now but I am adding to our bottom drawer slowly but surely.

Last Sunday, your father and I walked round Hightown – your favourite walk, Frank. He is so sprightly on his feet! With all the years he has spent in the city, he is still a farmer at heart, so interested in the land, the crops & the livestock. I shall see him on Wednesday for another walk – he is to plan it meanwhile.

Next Saturday – Whit – a party of about ten of us are off to Lough Derg – my 4th consecutive attempt. I am calling at Omagh on the way back. You know dearest one that “our” intentions will come foremost among my prayers and penances.

The boys will be home in a fortnight. The family with the exception of Josephine, Daddy & myself are off to Portstewart for July. Our holidays come in August & we are cycling in Wicklow & finishing up in Bagenalstown with Auntie & Uncle (Mother’s sister).

The allowance you made to your father for your joint account has not been paid since March ’42. He had a letter from the War Office saying they had no instructions concerning an allowance and your salary was being credited to your own account.

I am keeping in touch with the Red Cross but they will not allow us send our own parcels. I am sure there are a million and one things you could be doing with.

Ita McNabb is now a dentist & working in Wigan. Hugh has been at death’s door all winter with pleurisy.

If I knew that these letters ever reached you Frank, they would be so different. If I could only get a letter from you, how helpful it would be.

When am I going to join you in India? What do you think of my dreams of going out. The novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour commences on Friday. I am sending a separate subscription round for each of us so be sure to have a talk with Our Lady & tell her what you want. All my love. May God bless you and keep you safe for your loving Eileen.

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
20.6.’43

My own darling,

Have you felt different after all my prayers for you on Lough Derg? Along with 600 other pilgrims, 10 of us – all girls – set sail from Belfast on Whit Saturday. The weather was frightful – wind, rain & cold – but we managed to survive. This is the 4th of my 9 consecutive visits. When are *you* coming to join me – you “schemer”? You, my own dearest one were foremost among my intentions. Today also finishes the 9 days novena of Masses & Holy Communions to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. We have this to our credit too sweetheart.

Our family are beginning to arrive home for holidays. Fergus came yesterday, Jo tomorrow & Hugh next week – the latter two are doing exams – Hugh his senior & Fergus his “Inter” as he calls it. Fergus now has glasses and he looks quite the scholar.

On Thursday we were all at a large (31 guests) house warming party. It was such a shock for my stomach after Lough Derg’s fast that I have been on starvation diet since. Tonight I am off to Beechwood. Anne is now home for good from Dublin.

Well dearest after all my prayers I am to return to Omagh in September. I can really register no feelings about this – the nuns want me back & the girl in my place has secured an excellent position elsewhere. The past year has been one of ups & downs and I cannot say I am sorry it is passed. Perhaps before September a letter from you may arrive. I should feel so infinitely better if your letters began to arrive.

Sometimes when I think of what you must suffer, separated as you are from home, homeland and friends, I feel I shall have to spend the remainder of my life spoiling you. We shall be so happy in our

castle darling, you its King and I your Queen. Never shall we have any unkind words or sullen silences. We shall have each other in joys and sorrows – together our world will be complete, apart as we are now, our world is awry.

You remember the linens Frances gave us as a wedding present. Well I had them hand embroidered with initial “M” and they look a treat. Josephine tells me I have the most marvellous bottom drawer she has ever seen, but then I have so much more time than so many others. I added some kitchen plates, scrubbing brushes and coke this last week. I got a lovely beaker for your mighty hocklicks!!! This is our day, Frank? When you return we shall always have Sunday exclusively our own. Be happy sweetheart, pray hard and do not worry about anything. The end of the road is surely in sight.

All my love, my dearest Frank.

God bless you – your own Eileen

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast,
N. Ireland.
3.7.'43

My darling,

Our waiting appears to be at an end. On the radio yesterday it was announced that thousands of letters and postcards from P.O.W. in Japanese hands had arrived in this country. Perhaps next week will see me pouring over your dear handwriting after an endless wait of 18 months! I feel as excited as if you were arriving home yourself next week – would to God, it were so. How I long to hear how you are and what has become of you this past 1½ years. I have loved you more & more each day until today my heart is just bursting with my love. I love you dearest one. There has never been anyone but you in my heart. There you, and you alone, shall remain, for aye. I have learnt, strangely enough to depend upon you as the air I breathe. When things go wrong I just say to myself “Well Frank loves me” and nothing else seems to count.

Tonight I ripped out an old surplice of Felix’s altar boy days. I have planned to have it (pure linen) embroidered with Irish lace to form a luncheon set. Linen is such a precious commodity these days I am very lucky to have these scraps.

I hear Dr Wynne, at foot of Springfield Rd. is selling his practice and going into the services. My holidays are now complete. On July 20th I go off to Kilkeel for a 3-day retreat. On Monday 26th I set out by train for Dublin with my bike. After 9 days cycling through Wicklow’s beauties I shall finish up in Bagenalstown for a few days with Auntie & Uncle. In September (1st I think) I return to Loreto. [censored] together my own darling – of our home, our happiness and if it is God’s will, our children and you shall never be lonely or downhearted. Plan for us both. Pray for us both. I am doing the same here. I am lonely for you and your love because you are dearer to me than all the world.

I spent last Tuesday with Felix & Mona going down after work on Monday and returning Wednesday. Sheila is the belle of all Ballynahinch. Felix hasn’t time to breathe. Gerry Murphy is doing very well in Killough.

I have got a very nice new coat – country life type – God bless you my own darling.

Blessed Oliver Blunkett pray for you.

Ever your own loving

Eileen X

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast,
22.7.43.

My darling Frank,

Although this letter leaves me written by hand it will reach you in typewritten form, due to the kindness of volunteer typewriters attached to the Red Cross in London. You see the Japanese ask that all letters to P.O.W. should be typed. Occasionally I shall send a letter in block capitals – I know you would prefer this but the risk of having it discarded is great. For the past number of months we were allowed to write weekly now it is fortnightly.

Last week it was announced that a plane carrying 30,000 letters from P.O.W. in Japan had crashed and only 2,000 letters were salvaged. Alas darling I fear that your letter must have been lost. There has been no news of you since February 1942 except one postcard (with no date and no postmark) which reached me in October 1942. Still that priceless card gave me all the information I needed – you are alive and you are well.

Have you received any of my letters? Do you know I am returning to Loreto on August 30th to resume teaching after 14 months at home? Do you know that since Easter 1942 I am wearing constantly your beautiful engagement ring purchased with the money you sent me – the remainder I am spending on articles for our future home – all my purchases I note in my book for you to see some day.

Did you know that Anne has passed her Domestic Science Exam in Sion Hill and is home in Beechwood once again and that all there are well and send you their love. Three weeks ago I went over with the dog for a walk – the family (O’Kane) were all away in Portstewart and I was setting out for Wicklow the following day. Well I never saw the dog again until last week when I visited Beechwood. Tory was there and had been there for three weeks and was very much in love with all the occupants especially Philip. He is still there!

Although practically all next of kin have received word of their dear ones in the Far East, there is no word of H. Thompson the poor Prof. was so sad when I visited him to show your card.

With this letter, I send you all the love of my heart. I am yours forever, I shall wait forever and join you when you wish it.

Ever your own loving
Eileen.

195 Springfield Road,
Belfast.
25.7.’43

My Darling,

Here I am back from my retreat at my alma mater and ready for anything. I enjoyed my 5 days immensely although we only spoke 1 hour each day. It was so peaceful, so beautiful. I could think of you and pray for you as never before. The grounds are wonderfully changed. The weather was ideal. I was so happy to be asked to sing in the choir as of old and being the 4th Senior of the set I had to say aloud my decade of the rosary in public – for you my own dearest Frank was that Rosary said in the Convent oratory as many girlish voices chimed responses.

I have promised the nuns that you must return with me and I shall show you all my old haunts – the alcove, where I slept, the classrooms where I studied, the oratory where I prayed (for you too), the camogie field & tennis courts. Fr Prendergast S.J. was a very practical priest – so essential in this sinful world. We have persuaded the nuns to make the retreat an annual affair – so you will have to “mind the house” in the happy years to come while your wife goes gallivanting!!

A little girl from Carlingford called Ruth Ryan told me about your friend the McMahan family of Malaya. Mrs McMahan is Finnegan of Carlington. Ruth knew all the children by name – they were

home about 4 year ago. Well Mrs McM. & the children escaped to Durban – the Doctor is a prisoner of war. I was so pleased at finding this small link with you my Frank.

On my return I heard the wonderful news that letters from Malaya Camps had reached this country. I have not received any yet but please God next week will bring me the news for which I have prayed so earnestly this past 18 months.

Jo & I leave with our bikes for Wicklow tomorrow morning. All the rest of the family are in Portstewart except Mairead & Daddy. Mairead has got a 2 months locum at the Mater. The weather is magnificent so here's hoping it keeps up.

I am going over to Beechwood today to see how are all before I leave. I prayed for every single of them in my retreat. Anne is making me a beautiful gift. You shall see it sometime – it is in black chiffon & is for my trousseau.

Here's Daddy for his dinner so I must away. All my love dearest & God bless you. Your ever loving Eileen.

Dear Frank, I seem to have known you all my life. Hope you are meeting (sorry I must print this) with kindness & are happy. H. O'Kane

195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
7.8.'43

My darling Frank,

It is now 2 weeks since I wrote. You see I have been away with my bike cycling in Wicklow. It has been an outstanding holiday. Four girls of us made the party, Edna McKenzie (a friend of Jo's), Nellie O'Farely from Virginia, Jo and myself. The weather was excellent. We did the trip as youth hostellers – our 1st attempt and were we thrilled! We bought and cooked our own eats. You would have loved it dearest, and all the beauty I saw I wanted you to see it also.

Here is a short summary of the trip. We went by train to Dublin on the 26th July. After lunch we cycled through Dundrum to Enniskerry and on to the hostel on the slopes of Glencree. Next day we did the famous demesne of Lord Powerscourt and saw the scene and some of the excitement of the shooting of Laurence Olivier's latest film "Battle of Agincourt" – the country is hiving with bearded men ever since. In the evening we pushed into Bray & back to Glencree. On Wednesday we set out for Glendalough & picnicked on the summit (almost) of the Sugar Loaf Mountain. The hostel – the best in Wicklow – was crowded with lads from Cork who made us push off to see the seven churches lakes etc. of the "Glen of the 2 Lakes". We sang all the way back. Next day we did all these beauties again & the old guide insisted on me climbing into St. Kevin's Bed. This was contrary to all your father's warnings to me so I wrote a card to him telling, even boasting of my courageous(?) crawl. After a topping lunch in the Glendalough Hotel (we actually sat at a table again) we went on to Avoca, calling at the famous Lavagh House with its swimming pool, golf course, tennis & croquet pitches. We had tea with cousins of Mammie's in Rathdrum – they want *us* to call as soon as you get home so hurry love. From Avoca we went to Arklow & got in the pictures and a hop. As it was the August Bank Holiday the town was alive. From here we went to Aughavannagh – away in the hills at the foot of the Lugnaguila. I forgot to say I bathed at Arklow. From Aughavannagh (this hostel is a castle – the home of John Redmond the Home Ruler) we cycled through Tullow to Bagenalstown and Auntie. Strange to relate the weather broke and we couldn't cross the door again. We got back home last night.

We shall do Wicklow together soon again. How happy we shall be then! Though a card and letter have arrived from Billie McGinley there is still nor word of you dear. Yes, I love you very, very dearly & shall never change.

All my love,
Your own Eileen X.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
4-9-'43

Darling Frank,

Am back in Loreto, and happy; also all our dear ones. No news since October 1942.
God bless you,
All my love,
Eileen.

Eileen O'Kane,
9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
N. Ireland
18-9-43

Darling Frank,

Gerry getting married. Father not too well – nerve in face. Everyone else well, praying
for you.
God bless you.
Forever your own loving
Eileen.

Eileen O'Kane,
9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
N. Ireland
2-10-'43

Darling Frank,

Mass offered for you. Got 1st & 2nd places Senior Geography Northern Ireland. All well.
God bless you,
All my love,
Your own Eileen.

“Mizpah”,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
30/10/43

Darling,

Merry Christmas ! Our candles shall burn Christmas Eve ! Frances has son, – Arthur ! A good friend types letters ! Still in Rays !

Abundant blessings !

Your loving Eileen.

“Mizpah”
9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
13-11-43

Darling,

Am well. Teaching daily. Keep heart up ! Hard preparation will make our marriage the happier, God guard you,

All my love.

Your own Eileen.

“Mizpah”
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
26/11/43

Darling,

Cheque received birthday 1942. Purchased ring. Read Hakodate Camp details in “Prisoner of War Post”.

All my love and prayers dearest.

Your own Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
Friday, December 3, 9 p.m.

Happy Birthday my darling Frank. Mass said for you. I attended it. Longing for your homecoming.

All my love and prayers,

Your very own,

Eileen.

Spring Villa,
Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
Christmas Day '43

A Merry Christmas my darling. Father received, yesterday your February card. Delighted. Mass offered for you tomorrow.

All my love, prayers,
Forever your own,
Eileen.

Lisowen,
Atlantic Circle,
Portstewart,
13.1.'44

Frank, my darling,

Holidaying here. Received December 31st your August card. All thrilled. Mass in thanksgiving. So happy dearest.

All my love,
Your own Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
30.1.'44

Darling,

Still reading wonderful reassuring postcard. New regulations – fortnightly typed letters. Planning cycle-tour Connemara, summer.

I love you now more than ever
Bless you,
Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone,
N. Ireland.
12/2/44

Darling Frank,

Mass said for you. McMahons reached Durban safely. Humphrey killed. Bottom drawer growing. All well.

Longing to be with you,
All my love.
Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
26.2.'44

Dearest darling,

Wearing your photograph in locket. Cycling Antrim coast 17th weekend. All in good health.

God bless you,
All my love,
Your own Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland
10-3-'44

Frank, my darling,

Lovely letter from your father. Gerry visited Holmview yesterday. Mrs Corrigan dead. Mass said for us.

God bless you,
Your loving Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
March 26th 1944

Darling,

Had marvellous cycle-tour Antrim coast. Playing table tennis. Frances tonsils operation. Mattie well but no letters. Shall wait forever, dearest.

All my love, prayers
Eileen.

Spring Villa,
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast
N. Ireland.
16.4.'44

Darling Frank,

Am taking snapshots of our families one each letter.
Visited everyone. All send love.
I am yours forever
All my love,
Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
29.4.'44

Darling Frank,

Making novena – 9 consecutive Thursdays to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour for our intentions.

Made successful mission.

Cycling Inishowen this weekend.

Love

Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
18.5.'44

Darling Frank,

Shall send different snap with every letter, of our dear ones.

Love.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
1.6.'44

My own precious darling is in my every thought. Holy Mass said for you. Visited Beechwood – painted. All send love.

You have *all* mine.

Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
15.6.'44

Darling Frank,

Superintending Methodist College. Have won Clanabogan Cup. In Patrick Cup Final. Feel our reunion not far off,

All my love, prayers

Your Eileen.

Spring Villa,
Springfield Rd.,
Belfast,
9.7.'44

Lough Derg tomorrow with Hugh. Intention – [censored]. Visited Beechwood. All well. Una holidaying Falls Rd.

Yours forever darling Frank,
All my love,
Your Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
Co. Tyrone
5.8.44

Darling,

Just received your last Singapore cable. Senior Geography – 16 distinctions. John A., Maura Kennedy married. Doctor Duff's wife seriously ill.

All my love, prayers
Eileen.

Spring Villa
195 Springfield Rd.,
Belfast.
11.8.'44

Darling mine,

Off to Connemara tomorrow. Visited Una, Falls Road. No word since January. Mattie well and safe.

All my love,
Ever your own Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
20.X.'44

Darling,

Just heard you can send cable – receiver can reply. Wonderful?
I love you now more than ever – eagerly await our reunion.

All my love,
Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh,
N. Ireland.
28.1.'45

Darling Frank,

My heart singing since your broadcast. Passed 3rd Red Cross examination 91%.
I am yours forever. Nothing can ever change me.
Love

Eileen.

Spring Villa
23.8.'45

My own darling Frank,

Now that I can at last write you a decent letter gives me such tremendous pleasure but not anything like the thought of seeing you and telling you, I love you very much – that you are the dearest human being in the world to me. These 3 years and 8 months have been an eternity but they have strengthened my love. Thank God and His Holy Mother that you have been spared to me. We can *never* be grateful enough. The remainder of our lives shall be spent in thanking God for this wonderful blessing He has bestowed on us, unworthy though we are.

I am eagerly awaiting the first up to date news of you, my darling. Seven cards reached me last week including one for Mammie the last dated April '45. On all, your spirits were high & your health good. Surely there will be no need to detain you for recuperation. I am so anxious to know what you are going to do. Until I hear I shall return to Omagh at the beginning of September. Should you arrive in England, I shall surely keep my promise to meet you – dare the nuns in Omagh object!! Already I have received many congratulatory letters. Everyone is so happy that our reunion is near.

September too, will witness the arrival of a second baby to Frances & Roland. She was delighted with the card from “Mr Collins”. There is so much news to tell you that I scarcely know where to begin. Philip is to be married in September. His fiancée is a very nice girl Anne Hyndman from Derry city. She is a grand Catholic & shall make an ideal wife for Philip. He is working at the aircraft factory but hopes to get a job in England where he will really use his degree qualifications. Last weekend he was called to London to be interviewed for this job. They too are making the Thursday novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. I was so happy to read that you had commenced it in far off Japan. You will be amazed at the thousands who throng Clonard for 6 different sessions each Thursday. Please God we will continue it together. I'm working like a nigger in making things for our home and I am so happy in this work. Everything will remain a secret until we meet. Your father recently sent some money to your account in Rawalpindi bank. The storage of bags etc. had used up what was already there. Shall write again, the moment I am allowed. Everyone sends their love & longs for your return. You always have had *all* my love.

Eileen.

9 Holmview,
Omagh.
Saturday September 29th

Darling Frank,

I have just experienced two terrifically exciting days! Yesterday at 10 a.m. the Convent phone rang for me & I was hurried across the passages to hear Mr James, of Cable & Wireless tell me that you were safe in Australian hands. It was more than decent of him to do this as normally cables are sent by registered post. He asked me for my 12 word message in return & I couldn't proceed further than the word "delighted" which I must have said 4 times. I gave it up & promised to ring back, so 10 minutes later off went my reply – the Convent was in an uproar – nuns & children were agog with excitement. All know about you & have been praying earnestly this past 4 years. During the past 3 weeks each day some nun would pop in her head to the staffroom & say "I've a hunch Eileen, the news will come today". When it did arrive she boldly declared herself psychic. Today I hurried home for lunch at 1 p.m. Dr Lagan (our nearest phone) had 10 minutes before rushed in excitedly to No.9 calling Miss O'Kane – a Mr Jones of Cable & Wireless is calling. I flew to the telephone & phoned, this time to receive the most wonderful cable in the world. I tried in the short space of 3 minutes to write it down & you should see my shorthand! I've been reading it over & over again the whole afternoon. It was from Manila. I suspect it was sent before yesterday's (from Melbourne) & also I realise yesterday's was a general message sent to all relatives.

I feel so happy to be rambling on telling you each little detail of my 2 wonderful days – so happy to be set free at last from those damned (excuse) 25 words. Darling how can I tell you all that I have been storing up in my mind & heart these 4 years! I have already gained permission from Convent to cross to England & meet your ship – I hope you decide to come by ship – it is so much safer than by air.

I have not been in Belfast since September 5. Mr Jones phoned Spring Villa (27780) & asked Mammie to bring your message direct to Beechwood. I asked him to do this. Today I phoned & the good news of 2 cables has reached your dear ones. I am writing your father tonight, also the others. We all have a pact to circulate any news immediately.

A few doors from here lives a simple Catholic family called Cunningham. One of the girls, Kathleen, has been in bed for 15 years. She is a Saint & has prayed for you unceasingly. Her brother Sgt. Tommy Cunningham (late of Hong Kong) R.A.M.C. is also in Melbourne. You may come across him. Do make your self known. He idolises Kathleen. He is a masseur.

My celebration (until you arrive dearest) is taking the form of a visit to Dublin with Mammie next Wednesday. Our girls go into retreat at Loreto on Oct. 3 until Oct. 6.

Preparations for our wedding are forging ahead. Just wait, my man, until you see *our* bottom drawer!! Frances' daughter arrived in mid-September. Both are well. I wrote her our news. Felix received "Christies" card & was delighted. I also received 3 last week. Have I told you yet I love you very much!! Gracious me I feel so excited these times I don't know who I am or what I'm doing!! Still I do know one thing – our marriage will be *the* happiest ever.

Ever your very own Eileen.

Shall write again in a day or two. E.

9 Holmview
Omagh
3.10.'45

Darling Frank,

Here I am with you again. The Convent girls go into retreat tomorrow evening so I'm off gallivanting. Actually I start with Dublin where I am meeting Mammie, Auntie Kathleen (Mrs O'Kelly), Auntie Meg (Mrs O'Regan) & Auntie Carrie Murphy. The four sisters often have these "rendezvous" so

the next generation is going to gatecrash. On Friday we all return to Spring Villa & then back to Omagh on Wednesday. I'll write again from home after I have seen all your dear folks. They, and particularly your father must be in a 7th heaven with delight. God bless him & spare him to us for many a long day. Today is Daddie's birthday & I sent him this same prayer & wish.

I am longing for your first letter – imagine in 4 years! You are a dreadful man but I love you very much. I'm simply worn out with excitement this past week. Two cables in two days was just too much for any girl to get & keep normal. Congratulations are pouring in on all sides by phone & letter not to mention the verbal well wishing. The news that you were able to travel by air has convinced me your health must truly be excellent. I never felt better myself, thank God.

The nuns have promised me that I can travel to England to meet you. I do so wish to see you before all the fuss & excitement of home & besides it was your wish too, darling, remember? However I will not promise to wear my divorce suit – it is too old now to meet my best and only boy. What shall I wear? Where shall I meet you and when – they are very big problems at the moment!!

You said in the wonderful cable from Manila that I was to arrange details for our wedding. The first snag is that I must give 3 months notice at the Convent. I have a teacher in view – a very good friend & pupil who will drop her present job in the middle of the school year & come to Omagh so that takes a load off my mind. The nuns had hope that I would stay until June but I said “That is entirely a matter for Frank”. How I am looking forward to your homecoming – to go walking, cycling, golfing, picturing together – it will be perfect heaven. God has surely blessed us in bringing us safely together again. We will show Him how we can appreciate His goodness. Though I have asked Anne & Philip & your father often to have the Christmas dinner with us, your father refused (much to the annoyance of Anne & Philip). He kept saying “Wait till Frank comes home”. Now he has no excuse & you must all come. Did you know that I have hoarded tin fruit – a product of British Malaya all these years for your homecoming! Darling Frank you have come through so much! God help me to make you happy. This has been my prayer for years. Mrs Ray & Lillie the maid cried as they kissed me when your 1st cable arrived.

All my love

Ever your own Eileen.

Spring Villa
Sunday Oct. 7th

Darling Frank,

This is our day! Where are you? I believe now that the Australian address given to us in the cable does not really mean that you are in Australia. I wonder will you return via America. The Redemptorist priests returning from the Philippines came by the States. Would that mean that you could land in Ireland? How wonderful that would be. Can you understand dearest how anxious I am to meet you before all our dear ones. It seems as though I have been buffeted about on the storms of fate for years & home is in sight at last – your arms sweetheart. When we meet I feel as if I don't want to speak just relax with my hand in yours & feel at peace for the first time in years – in my life.

Spring Villa is humming with happiness at the moment. Yesterday, arrived a delightful letter from Mattie. She is leaving La Tour & returning to Ireland for an indefinite time. In the letter were 4 snaps & oh, she has got so thin. There are 3 houses in Ireland, one in Cork, Waterford & 2 in Dublin. Roebuck castle outside Dublin (adjoining U.C.D. athletic grounds) was recently purchased & we are hoping Mattie will be sent there. So now darling, Christmas will be one grand reunion. She asks about you in her letter & says she is praying for us both constantly.

Fergus is in his last year at Limerick. He enters the noviciate in Dundalk in August 1946, please God. So this will be his last Christmas at home. He spends one month in the summer & then off for ever. It will be a very sad parting.

I wonder when your letters are going to arrive? Upon them depends when I will hand in my notice. I would really like to talk it over with you. I realise we will want lots of time together – to really get to know one another.

We have 3 visitors this weekend – Auntie Meg from Carlow, Auntie Carrie from Cleveleys, Blackpool & Mary Byrne a friend of mine from Killybegs. She taught 18 months in Omagh & is now appointed to Cambridge House, Ballymena. Mary leaves us tonight & then I am going to see your father & Anne. I would have called to see Margaret & Maureen today only they are on retreat the first Sunday of each month.

Here I am back to family news again. 3 cards sent by me to you have been returned so here is some news from them. Mairead got her exams in Electricity & Light & is now permanently appointed to the R.V.H. She waited a long time before returning to study after getting her massage exam & it took all our persuasion to get her back.

I'm writing this in the midst of chattering people so please forgive me if it is disjointed. I will write after I get back to Loreto. Do write me your lovely, long, interesting letters. I am *so* very interested in everything that concerns you.

The others are hurrying me out for a walk so I'll finish this off with all my love & prayers for your safe, speedy return.

Ever your own Eileen.

Dear Frank,

Please learn all you can about Physiotherapy. I'm trying to teach Felix – at least I have him interested. Wouldn't you be interested also? We take up when you say "I can do no more for you" in the case of stiff joints etc. Delighted to hear you are coming home. Praying constantly for you.

Mairead

9 Holmview,
Omagh
Wednesday Oct. 17

My own darling,

Your 3rd cable reached me by telephone (thanks to Mr Jones of Cable & Wireless who has been a positive gem) on Monday saying you were sailing October 9th. This was the day of the arrival of the typhoon on Okinawa & I was anxious. Now that Mass is being said for your safe journey home I feel happier. I have all the children praying in school & I have the utmost confidence in their prayers. I tell them to put their hearts & souls into the prayers & you should see those earnest little faces!

Today is the funeral of Cardinal McRory & we have a day free. The weather is glorious so I'm off to the links for 18 holes of golf. I must be able to beat you at this game at Christmas. Words cannot describe how I am longing for your homecoming. I have permit ready to sail to England so give me all the information you can about port of disembarkation & also of embarkation for Ireland. Should the authorities prevent relatives meeting the actual ship then I will meet you elsewhere – wherever you say. I have timed your arrival for early in November. Am I right?

Your letter from Yokohama dated Sept. 13 reached me yesterday – a week after your air mail cards from Manila & your wonderful diary. All letters up to now I have addressed to Melbourne (address on the stock cable) I am sending this to California in the hope that it will reach you on your arrival in the States.

Billy McGinley arrived in Belfast on Saturday morning. Tot was at mass in Newington & he was on the steps when she came out. He is only 8½ stone. They are being married right away as his job in Sheffield is waiting for him.

I feel so excited these days that I have got to keep reminding myself who I am, what I'm supposed to be doing, remind myself to eat & sleep. Can you believe? The nuns say this is the natural reaction after years of waiting – I didn't mind the waiting at all – my only worry was your safety. My love like

yours darling has grown & grown. There was a time when I was tired of marriage but no more. Hand in hand we can walk down life's highway with ne'er a fear strengthened by our love of God and our implicit faith in each other.

My heart is singing this day – the sun is shining & the river opposite my window is gurgling away with delight. Tonight I'm off with friends to a celebrity concert in the Town Hall. I love music, my darling. Pictures are so tame now for my hilarious mood – so boring.

Everybody in Omagh wants to meet you especially the nuns at the Convent. I have told them snatches from your diary & they are convinced you are the finest character they have ever known. How proud I am & always shall be of you dearest Frank. Should you not feel like visiting this metropolis darling never fail to say so. I just want you to do as you feel like – that will please me.

Tommy Cunningham is expected next week. A Mrs Bradley of Omagh got word 6 months ago that her son died in a Jap camp. I was wondering was he the Omagh man you attended. I called with her & she longs to meet you. My heart bled for her & I thought how good God was to us. My Christmas cards & St Patrick's Day card are positive works of art. You can give up doctoring any day! All my love dearest one & God grant you a safe journey to your own

Eileen

9 Holmview
Omagh
Co. Tyrone
13:XI:45

My own darling,

I do hope you will not be disappointed that I am not at Southampton to meet you. I had my permit secured and was all set to travel when a repatriated prisoner from Hong Kong – Cunningham from Omagh advised me in *your* interests not to cross. He too came by America & declared that the dockside scenes at Southampton where relatives could not locate their dear ones were pathetic. Your 2 days in camp were another bogey & furthermore travel for civilians in England is almost impossible. The magic words "repatriated P./W." gives you all kinds of privileges in travel and accommodation which would not receive had I been with you. Do you understand darling? I was prepared to sail without a berth and take a chance on hotel accommodation in London or Southampton but to spoil your homecoming and force you to queue for trains, tickets, and sit up all night on a cross-channel boat stomached me completely. I prayed for guidance and I believe I have done the right thing.

I have another suggestion. I shall leave Omagh on the 1.30 p.m. train on Saturday next & shall be at Spring Villa for the remainder of the day. Would you like to phone – say after 6 p.m. 27780.

Should you travel by Stranraer I will go to Larne to meet you. I have no less than 3 offers to motor me there: (and I wanted to go alone) Daddie, Fr Joe and your friend Gerry. The two former Good Samaritans suggested leaving us the car & they return by train. To this, your poor father nearly went up in smoke. "Neither of you would be in a fit condition to drive a car"!!! So what think you of that. I think *you* would like to see Gerry so his offer will have first preference so far. He is ringing me on Saturday night for any up-to-date news. If you have any wishes about your homecoming, then do let me hear them in your own dear voice.

I just simply cannot believe that our long, weary, anxious waiting is at an end and soon we shall be together never to be parted. I am so excited these days that teaching, eating, sleeping have become impossible. So hurry home or I shall starve! Yes, I do love you still with all my heart. I pray that it will grow stronger and stronger & that I shall never let you suffer another moment of unhappiness. 3½ years in a Jap prison camp is more than enough misery for any brave heart to bear.

God bless you and bring you safely on the last lap of your round-the-world trip to me.

Ever your own

Loving Eileen

Shall await call through Sunday except between 10 & 11 a.m. when I shall be at Mass.