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All My Love and a Million Kussies: Letters from the Home Front 1941-1943

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Historiography and Background.....	4
Prologue: 1941.....	8
1942.....	12
1943.....	25
Conclusion.....	31
Annotated Bibliography.....	34

Abstract

During the American involvement during World War II, letters held great importance for soldiers abroad. These letters from loved ones not only boosted morale among the troops but told them of what life was like back on the home front, a life many soldiers could not wait to return to. From a historian's standpoint, these letters paint a picture of what society in America was like for citizens who were not fighting abroad. The following paper will provide insight into American society during World War II and how the life of a Milwaukee housewife, Elizabeth "Betty" Upham, compares to the rest American society through letters that she wrote to her husband, William "Bill" Upham who was a soldier in Europe. Through her letters, an understanding of society, the economy, and descriptions of everyday life were described to Bill and reminded him what life was like back on the home front.

Introduction

In 1941, Americans disagreed as to whether or not they should join the British and Soviet military in taking down the Nazi regime in a war that was quickly spreading throughout the world.¹ The United States at the time was assisting the British and Soviets through the Lend-Lease system in which President Roosevelt could provide weapons or other defense material like tanks or battleships to “the government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States.”² However, this was as far as many Americans wished to be involved in the war. People that followed this philosophy were deemed “Isolationists.” Seeing the destruction and turmoil caused by the First World War and not wanting to ruin the peace and prosperity that was at home, the people in this category were not interested in fighting another war in Europe. The other party that placed interest in the war was deemed the “Interventionalists,” which included President Roosevelt. These people wanted to protect Western ideals that were being attacked by the Nazis and other countries that had allied themselves with Germany.³

The divisions of the country hurriedly disappeared in December of 1941. On the morning of December 7th, Commander Mitsuo Fuchida gave the order to attack Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii. Shortly afterward thirty-two Japanese planes took to the skies and bombed the unsuspecting base. Although the attack was relatively short, the human casualties and severe damage to aircraft and ships in the harbor caused an outcry that spread like wildfire throughout the nation.⁴ Because of the time zone changes between Washington D.C. and Honolulu, Hawaii,

¹ Paul S. Burtness, and Warren U. Ober. 2013. "Communication Lapses Leading to the Pearl Harbor Disaster." *Historian* 75, no. 4: 740-759.

² Lend-Lease Bill, dated January 10, 1941. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, HR 77A-D13, Record Group 233, National Archives.

³ Burtness and Ober “Communication Lapses Leading to the Pearl Harbor Disaster.” P.740

⁴ *Ibid*, p.741

President Roosevelt found out about the attacks at 1:47 pm, about one hour after the attacks began.⁵ Before twenty-four hours had passed, Roosevelt had called Congress together in order to create a formal declaration of war. He stated, "...no matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through an absolute victory."⁶

Americans went to work to fulfill Roosevelt's statement. World War II was a total war, meaning that everyone was part of the war machine. As soldiers went to fight the battles "in the field," everyone on the "home front" back in America was in charge of doing their part to support the war. For the men who were eligible at home, this meant signing up for the compulsory draft or joining the army. For some United States citizens, supporting the war came from taking defense jobs building bullets, bombs, ships, and aircraft. Even women were allowed to take part in these jobs which was not allowed before this event. This is where the image of "Rosie the Riveter," was established which encouraged women to join the workforce.⁷ Others supported the war through buying war bonds, growing victory gardens, and through the rationing of goods like sugar, tires, and certain types of fabrics like silk.⁸

To support soldiers, the government urged citizens to write letters to their loved ones to keep morale up on the field and let the soldiers know that they were not forgotten at home. The contents of these letters ranged greatly, but in general, they gave the soldiers on the war front a glimpse of what society was like back home. Women talked about the new jobs they had

⁵Paul D. Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during World War II*, (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 2.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸John M. Blum. *Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 94.

acquired at home, the difficulty of living with the new rationing system, the joys of raising children, and the longing and love they held for their loved ones abroad.⁹

“All my adult life, I’ve read about the disillusionment of war; of men who went to the front and never were the same spiritually ever again. This time, I think, it will be different.

What makes this difference? Mail, for one thing. It keeps the boys in closer touch with the familiar. [Letters, V-mail, air mail—this] flood of information and endearment has kept the men feeling close to home, close to their civilian interests, close to their hometowns.”¹⁰

This quote from Sergeant Don Robinson, the editor of the *45th Division News*, outlines the importance of letter writing during wartime. Receiving letters from home kept the soldiers abroad sane and morale up as they remembered who they were fighting for and that they had support from friends and loved ones back home. Another man, Bill Mauldin, who was a postmaster and cartoonist on an army vessel during the war, understood the importance of mail as well. “The two most important necessities in a sailor’s life,” he stated, “are perhaps food and mail. I am not at all sure whether food should be given precedence, for many times I have seen chow neglected in favor of sweating out a mail line fifty men long.”¹¹ A study done by Annette Tapert found that a soldier’s mail was his means of staying in touch with his dreams and plans for the future back on the home front.¹² For soldiers who had not received any mail for a while, the results were disastrous. One soldier stated, “When we did not receive mail for long periods, our imaginations ran riot...we felt that our sweethearts and friends had deserted us.”¹³

⁹Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, eds. *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 9

¹⁰Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America’s Combat Experience in World War II*, (Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 302.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹² *Lines of Battle: Letters from American Servicemen, 1941-1945*, ed. by Annette Tapert (New York: Times Books, 1987), p. 3.

¹³ Linderman, *The World Within War: America’s Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 303.

In 1943, GIs on average were receiving fourteen pieces of mail each week. In these letters, the soldiers asked for one topic to be included in the content: descriptions of everyday life. These “little things” are what connected them to life back home and allowed them to escape the war.¹⁴ A sample of these letters comes from a couple living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the outbreak of World War II: Elizabeth and William Upham. Through these letters, Elizabeth Upham was able to convey the social and economic changes in American society to William Upham while providing him a glimpse of what his life was like in Milwaukee to keep his morale high.

Historiography and Background

In the history of letters during World War II, historians have approached the topic from the standpoint of the soldier writing to their families. Using this perspective, historians can begin to understand what life was like on the war front for the soldiers. However, there are few sources that describe the other perspective of the war, the perspective of the families of the soldiers who are living in a total war society during World War II. When letters from families or loved ones are used in sources, the letters are simply love letters and only describe feeling and emotion, not what events are occurring or changes that are happening in society.

One source that describes the history of letters during the war, *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front*, which was edited by Judy Litoff and David Smith, provides an introduction and conclusion chapters that describe the importance of letters sent to soldiers abroad. These letters provide a glance into the personal lives

¹⁴ Ibid.

of soldiers and families in the United States through letters that express love, hardship, and heartache. Through the sample of letters that are used in the source, Litoff and Smith show the influence that letters could have over a soldier. These letters were the difference between a good day and a bad day for someone fighting in the war but were powerful enough to send a soldier spiraling into depression if bad news was included.¹⁵

Gerald F. Linderman writes a similar tale in his book *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*. The chapters of the book describe the day to day lives of men fighting in the war illustrating how men would prepare for battle, the interactions between the men, beliefs about the enemy, and aftereffects of the war on the soldiers. One chapter in particular focuses on the growing threat of isolation soldiers felt from their lives at home. The chapter, titled "War Front and Home Front", creates an understanding of the importance of letters to the psychological well-being of soldiers. For several soldiers, these letters what they clung to while waiting for their term of service to finish or for their next leave of absence to arrive.¹⁶ The source uses secondary source material to describe life on the home front but only uses letters and primary source material from the soldiers. The perspective and interest of the book focuses on the lives of the soldiers, not of the lives of people at home. The primary source standpoint of the people living in the United States during World War II is left out of this book.

There were sources used for research that described the lives of people on the home front in depth. *V was for Victory*, by John Morton Blum, is one such secondary source. Through this book, a general overview of what life was like for an ordinary American citizen living in the United States during World War II. People worked hard, planted Victory Gardens, bought war

¹⁵ Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, eds. *Since You Went Away*, p. 9.

¹⁶Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 302.

bonds, and rationed their food all according to government standards and suggestions.¹⁷ Another source written by Paul Casdorff titled *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during World War II* provides a similar insight into the home front during the war. However, Casdorff explains in depth the methods and reasoning used by the government to create difference programs for rationing and entertainment and divides the larger scope of American society into regions of America. This provides more division between the people on the home front and the experiences they had.¹⁸

The source that begins to look in depth at quantifying the war for the American citizens living in the total war environment on the home front is *The U.S. Economy in World War II* by Harold Vatter. This source provides information on economic and social changes that occur in the United States during the war, including marriage and divorce rates, both rates which changed drastically during the war.¹⁹ Using this source along with the other secondary sources, a broad image of America during World War II is provided. By pairing these secondary sources with the letters written by Betty to Bill from 1941 to 1943, the full picture of American life of a military wife is described and the importance of letters during wartime is highlighted.

¹⁷Blum. *Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II*, p.94.

¹⁸Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during World War II*, p.80.

¹⁹Harold G. Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in World War II*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1985), p. 115.



Figure 1: A wedding photo of Elizabeth Anne Dentz, now Elizabeth Upham, and William Henry Upham in the Milwaukee Sentinel Saturday, September 11, 1937. Source: William H. and Elizabeth Ann Upham Papers, Box 1.

William H. “Bill” Upham, Jr. was born in Marshfield, Wisconsin in 1916 to the former governor of Wisconsin William H. Upham. Bill attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison to study history and was part of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program at the university. Through ROTC, Bill became a lieutenant and served in World War II as a lieutenant. In the early letters written in September of 1941, William, who had volunteered for the army, was at Camp Robinson in Arkansas. When the war began in December, however, he was stationed in Reykjavik, Iceland for two years of the war. Towards the end of the war, he was sent to England and later saw combat in France where he was wounded.

Elizabeth Ann “Betty” (Dentz) Upham grew up in Milwaukee Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison where she met Bill. At the university, she studied French and other European languages. The couple married in 1937, Bill graduated in 1938, and Elizabeth graduated in 1940. After she had graduated, Bill and Betty moved back to Milwaukee to live closer to her family. The letters included in this collection begin in September of 1941 and end in 1946. This paper will analyze the letters between 1941 and 1943, beginning with a letter about Betty visiting Chicago with her friend, Dinnie, on September 17, 1941.²⁰

Prologue: 1941- “I Really Don’t Know if this will reach you in the South.”²¹

In her letter written on September 17, Betty states that she and Dinnie are staying at the Red Star Inn in Chicago, Illinois. The correspondence is addressed to “Lt. William Upham, 10th Infantry 5th Division, Camp Robinson, Arkansas.” The letter discusses listening to the news of the war over the radio about the “Blue Army”, or the allied armies fighting on the Western front of Europe, and the “Red Army”, or the Soviet Army on the Eastern Front in Europe.²² Although the United States had not yet entered the war, citizens still listened intently to the news broadcasts of the war not only because it was exciting and romantic but because they waited to see the American response to news and reports from abroad. Any major battle or occurrence from the war front might drag the United States into the war. Military spending was already increased during the Lend-Lease program that had been established and President Roosevelt was looking for more ways to increase assistance to the British, and Soviets.²³ Written the next day at

²⁰ William H. and Elizabeth Ann Upham Papers, ca. 1934-1946, 1973-1974, Special Collections & Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, WI.

²¹ Betty to Bill-September 27, 1941.

²² Betty to Bill-September 17, 1941.

²³ Blum, *V was for Victory*, p. 7.

an art gallery, Betty writes that she again listened to the nightly broadcast which had stated that the “Blue’s have the upper hand” in Europe.

The first correspondence that is written from her house in Milwaukee on September 21, 1941, provides the first look into the draft on the home front. In her letter to Bill, Betty states that Allison Bond, one of her and Bill’s friends, was looking for a new job because he was unfit for the draft due to a permanently dislocated shoulder. Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, a draft had been instated for military service in September of 1940. Due to the growing tensions in the world and the need to possibly fulfill wartime manpower needs, the draft had been enacted to fulfill the needs of a standing military in the United States in case a war broke out. Roosevelt wanted an army of 1,200,000 troops and have 800,000 in reserve.²⁴ The Burke-Wadsworth Act made it necessary for all men in America ages 21 to 36 to sign up for the draft.²⁵ Of course, even men who were drafted, like Bond, had to follow the same health requirements for entering the military as those who were volunteering. If the draftees did not meet the requirements, they would not be allowed into the military.²⁶

Throughout her September 1941 letters, Betty describes buying several goods like \$208 of sterling silver, a new luminous and waterproof watch for Bill, multiple pairs of shoes for Bill, draperies, and several other items. She also mentions that she will be buying Christmas presents in her letter on September 27th, almost exactly three months before the holiday. The reasoning she gives behind this incredible rate of expenditure is that on the first of October, taxes, particularly sales taxes, will increase ten percent.²⁷ Congress increased military spending which

²⁴ Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in World War II*, p. 7.

²⁵ Selective Service System. "History And Records of the Selective Service." https://www.sss.gov/Old/Old_Site/hist.

²⁶ Timothy J. Perri, 2013. "The Evolution of Military Conscription in the United States." *Independent Review* 17, no. 3: 429-439.

²⁷Betty to Bill, September 27, 1941.

was at \$1.2 billion in 1939 to \$2.2 billion in 1940, and taxes were raised. 1940 was the eleventh year of the Great Depression, and although the economy was beginning to bounce back, it was at an extremely slow rate. In 1940, the Gross National Product (GNP) of the United States was only 12 percent higher than it had been at the lowest point of the Depression in 1937. To top it off, the unemployment rate nationwide in 1940 was 14.6 percent. It was not until 1941 that the economy began to turn around as it seemed that American involvement in the war was inevitable.

Businesses and industry leaders began to shift development from consumer and civilian goods to military goods. An illustration of this shift comes from the automobile industry at the time.

Labor leaders, like Walter Reuther, vice-president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), suggested that the excess spaces in factories where automobiles were manufactured should be converted to develop military aircraft. This would not only save space in creating military goods, but it would also conserve machine tools which were in short supply. Eventually, this idea was picked up nationally by General Motors and the conversion to a total war society had begun.²⁸

Understanding that the price of goods would increase and that shortages might occur based on the need to create new goods for the military, Betty stocked up on items she believed she and Bill would need or items that they had wanted but had been afraid to buy in the past.²⁹

The letters for 1941 in the correspondence end at the end of September, so there is no insight from these letters into Wisconsin society during important events that occurred. There was no letter telling about the reactions to Pearl Harbor or Roosevelt's speeches about the war to come in America. What can be seen through letters written both in September of 1941 and in the

²⁸Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in World War II*, p. 11-13.

²⁹ Betty to Bill-September 27, 1941.

earlier letters from April of 1942 is that William came home on leave. While on leave, the couple visited New York and Pennsylvania before Bill shipped off to his new station in Iceland.³⁰

March 5, 1943

Dear Bill -

I liked Barbara too, ^{no. 133} but the job is something else. I like the work

I got a wonderful letter from Russell Borchers yesterday telling me what a good job you are doing. He surely liked you and I know exactly how he feels. He assures me you haven't changed a bit (how did he know from what?) but I can gather you are still your enthusiastic energetic self. I'm glad you're keeping your nose to the grindstone - There will be plenty of ways to take the shine off of it when you come home - You are telling me and am I sweating you out

Your mother wrote a card and said the sweater you sent her was lovely - No fooling so you all have tickled you made her feel - Mother is sending me a dozen roses for my birthday - from you - as a surprise, she says. Seems as if she and you are always doing so many nice things for people. I do what I'm told but I never think up original things that will make people real happy - ^{Gramps + me} Fritz is scheduled to leave Marshfield soon and that will be a big help in our women's life after having him around for so long. Mother hates to see him go and so do I - but I know he is enjoying flying a bomber than he would the ski troops - in the long run - I think ^{1/2 a lotta}

You are right about Fred

The Red Cross drive is on in full swing and so far there are quite a few stickers blossoming in windows. You'd think it would really be 100% Club around town. Too Red takes a war to get people to appreciate the suffering of others. Betty Deslor gave two dollars yesterday - and Phil is only a back housewife. She is living with her cousins now, having left Hank and Betty Quaker to themselves after Hank's Naval Aviation idea fell through -

William is fine. He doesn't sit alone yet, but then he got a lot of time for that. Mrs. Kuhn's nephew is creeping and he is two days younger than cars. William seems very happy as he is. I suppose the figures he has no place to go so why orient him self - Very smart.

Gramps got a ticket for going through a red light. I guess he made a stop but he was pretty in dreamland and kept going after that. He went to court this morning and I'll have to see how he came out. No, I don't guess it. You guessed it. I'm at the beauty parlor again - My regular every two weeks venture to downtown. Going to buy some chrome polish for the car and do up the bugler work on the first warm day we have. If it's warm enough maybe William can sit up in the buggy and watch me. He likes to go but we've had only one day for being walking that amounted to anything - All our love, & work hard - Betty Ann

Figure 2: A sample handwritten letter from Betty to Bill March 5, 1943. The blue text is Betty's writing and the darker text is comments that Bill made on the letter before he sent the letter back to Milwaukee. Source: Betty to Bill- March 5, 1943.

³⁰ Betty to Bill-April 6, 1942.

1942-“DON’T SPEND [Your Money] ON FOOLISHNESS THAT YOU WILL...GET RID OF LATER ON.”³¹

War Timeline-War in the Pacific Intensifies

April 9th, Bataan falls and results in the largest surrender by the U.S. Military. 78,000 American and Filipino troops surrender and are subject to the Bataan Death March.

April 18th, the first American bombing raid reaches Japan hitting several cities including the capital city of Tokyo.

May 6th, the Philippines fell under Japanese control.

May 7th-8th, The Battle of Coral Seas, the first air-naval battle in history is fought in Papua New Guinea. This battle shifts American strategy in the Pacific from defensive to an offensive defensive mix.

June 4th-7th, The Battle of Midway is fought. The battle stopped the Japanese plot to take Hawaii and put the United States Army on the offensive.

August 7th, Americans land in Guadalcanal. After six months of battle, the Americans take the island and Japanese expansion in the Pacific is halted.

September-October, Japanese American internment begins.

September-November, The Battle for Stalingrad rages in Russia. On November 19, the Russian Army annihilates the German 6th Army.³²

Homefront

April 6th is the first surviving letter that Elizabeth writes in 1942. Although not much is stated in the letter, she does mention that she is writing him the day after he left.³³ April 22,

³¹ Betty to Bill-October 16, 1942. In the letter, Betty types this phrase in all capital letters to Bill. However, the quote can relate to Betty’s spending in America as well.

³² PBS. "Timeline of World War II." THE WAR. September 2007.

³³ Ibid.

1942, is the first letter that is written from Bill to Betty in this year. Bill, now stationed in Reykjavik, Iceland, describes his surroundings and beautiful and snowy.³⁴ As a stepping stone between Europe and America for fuel and supplies, Iceland was a crucial country to control. To stop Hitler and the Nazis from taking the country, the British forces, joined soon after by the Canadian Army, landed in Iceland May 10, 1940. An American force landed in Iceland in July 1941, five months before Pearl Harbor. The island country was of interest to the United States because due to recent losses against the Axis powers, the British and Canadians did not have enough power to protect the Iceland alone. America was also concerned about keeping the sea lanes, or transportation lanes, open for relatively unencumbered travel.³⁵ Bill wrote about loving the environment, but he “would rather be at home with [Betty], but that just can’t be.”³⁶ Bill stated that he would have to make due with her letters instead.³⁷

Two days after her April 6th letter on April 8th, Betty asked Bill if the letters that she sends and receives will be censored at all. Her friend Helen says that they will censor the letters going both ways because an enemy could intercept any letter that was written.³⁸ Correspondence between soldiers and their loved ones on the home front were censored for several reasons. The first reason for censorship was the idea of “Loose Lips Sink Ships,” which was a popular propaganda phrase during World War II. Letters would be edited if any information on the soldier’s location or the military force that accompanied him was stated within the letter which could possibly put the soldier and his unit at risk of attack. The other main reason for censorship was that officers would have the ability have a better understanding of the morale of their troops.

³⁴ Bill to Betty-April 22, 1942.

³⁵ Byron Fairchild. "Decision to Land United States Forces in Iceland, 1941." United States Forces in Iceland.

³⁶ Bill to Betty-April 22, 1942.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Betty to Bill-April 8, 1942.

They had the chance to see if the soldiers under their command were beginning to lose hope in the war or if they still had high morale for the future.³⁹ On May 26th of 1942, Betty comments that through censoring letters and crowded boats full of supplies and people heading to Europe, it is likely that her letters will take longer to reach Bill in Reykjavik, Iceland. Supplies and troops needed to be sent before letters to soldiers were sent.⁴⁰ Throughout the course of the correspondence, there are a few letters both from Bill and from Betty that have pieces cut out of them. It appears that the words that were cut out were either locations or ranks and names of officers that Bill worked with.⁴¹

In her next letter, Betty states that she went to church that day with her younger brother, Hank, and with her grandfather, whom she calls “Gramps.” Although she had stated in previous letters that she had gone to church, in this letter she stated that “she couldn’t sing thinking of him.” Her worry for him going into a combat zone, or at least a zone closer to combat made it difficult for her to sing and concentrate in church.

She, like other wives, missed her husband. To combat possible morale issue on the home front, statements like the one Betty taped to her April 15th, 1942 letter were released to the public. “Psychiatrists claim that the happier a woman has been in her married life, the better she is able to stand the prolonged absence of her husband,” stated the clipping. She follows this letter by saying, “Morale on the home front is very high,” and that it seems like everyone is doing their part to contribute to the war effort.⁴² Approval ratings for President Roosevelt were high. Over

³⁹ Myron Fox. "Censorship!" Interview by PBS. American Experience. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/warletters-censorship/>.

⁴⁰ Betty to Bill-May 26, 1942.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Betty to Bill-April 17, 1942.

65 percent approved of the job he was doing, and the initial excitement from Pearl Harbor still blanketed society.⁴³

On April 17th, Betty writes to “Bill Baby” telling him that this week marks their 236th week anniversary. It is also in this letter that she states that Bill’s younger brother, Fritz, is having a ring made that is a replica of his father’s West Point ring. Betty writes that she is excited for Fritz to have his ring and that Bill should have one too because he is proud that both he and his father were in the army. Another section of the letter shows that Betty has begun to notice shortages in town. In packages she sends to Bill, Bill’s mother generally includes jelly beans for him, and Betty includes any essential items he has requested or may need along with some of his favorite foods. This time, however, she is unable to find him any figs. Although figs were not known for being rationed during the war like sugar or coffee, it was difficult for citizens to find any of the items they were accustomed to.⁴⁴

The rations that were created during World War II were set in place by The Office of Price Administration (OPA). Established in April of 1941, the OPA was formed in order to control the prices of goods throughout the country. Learning from the mistake of not controlling prices during World War I which led to significantly increased inflation, price controls were found as the way to fight inflation during war time.⁴⁵ Under Leon Henderson, who was the first administrator of the OPA, all domestic rationing for World War II had begun.⁴⁶ It was the office that linked personal sacrifice with patriotism towards the war effort. Americans were called on to plant more “victory gardens” which would create more fruits and vegetables for families

⁴³ Matthew A. Baum, and Samuel Kernell. 2001. " Economic Class and Popular Support for Franklin Roosevelt in War and Peace." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65, no. 2: 198-229.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Meg Jacobs. "How About Some Meat?": The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946." *Journal Of American History* vol. 84, no. 3, 1997: 910-941.

⁴⁶ Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 15.

privately and individually. The OPA was in charge of rations and price control nationally and locally.⁴⁷

Rationing for the war began January 24, 1942, through the OPA.⁴⁸ Goods were distributed through “ration books,” which contained removable stamps for rationed goods like sugar, meat, canned goods, and other items. These were handed out in early March at local elementary schools. The rationing stations, run by local rationing boards, were created to involve citizens in making decisions locally about the home front.⁴⁹ Betty did mention in her April 17th letter that goods were hard to find, but her first encounter with the ration lines was on May 5th. “I went to the sugar rationing business yesterday afternoon,” she writes, “and had to wait in quite a long line.” Working at the elementary school rationing center was a woman, whom Betty was not fond of. The lines were long because people who had not signed up ahead of time for the ration books signed up on site and were holding up the line. When she eventually arrived at the front of the line, she, her mother, and her brother Hank all registered for sugar together. At this time, they received 15 pounds of sugar and Betty did not think they would need any rationing books for a while.⁵⁰ Later on May 12th, she writes that even toothpaste is being rationed. She asks Bill to send back any empty toothpaste containers he may have because she is required to turn in one empty tube for each tube she purchases.⁵¹

In her April 19th, 1942 letter, there is the first mention of buying a war bond. War bonds were a way the American public could help to finance the war. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. was responsible for convincing Americans to buy these bonds.⁵² Within a week

⁴⁷ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?", p. 919.

⁴⁸ Duke University. "Timeline: World War II." Duke Digital Collections.

⁴⁹ Linderman. *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*. p. 12-13.

⁵⁰ Betty to Bill-May 5, 1942.

⁵¹ Betty to Bill-May 12, 1942.

⁵² Blum, *V was for Victory*, p. 17.

after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, advertisements had begun for people to make regular investments in U.S. Defense Savings Bonds. At school, children could buy “savings stamps” to show they supported the war as well.⁵³ In a statement to the press, Morgenthau stated “There are millions of people...who say ‘What can we do to help?’ ...Right now, other than going to the Army or Navy or working in a munitions plant, there isn’t anything to do.” Congress created the bond program to give American citizens a purpose and to place the war in the front of the country’s mind.⁵⁴

The main motivator for selling the bonds was through basic human desires and demands. They were created using themes such as sex, envy, anxieties about the war in movies, concerts, and posters, which placed the relief of these themes on the bonds themselves. Hollywood was utilized to attract audiences through performances by the popular actors and performers of the time. Whether live performances of music and comedy or radio advertisements, the goal was to reach out to the society as a whole. These ads stated that the way to “put a bullet in the bellies of Hitler’s hoards” was by buying war bonds.⁵⁵ The buying of defense bonds becomes a common theme throughout Betty’s letters, and she mentions purchasing them frequently throughout the remainder of her letters.

Another common theme throughout her letters in 1942 is marriage. Marriages increased significantly during the early years of the war. Before the breakout of the war, the number of marriages peaked around 1920 at about 1,300,000 marriages and had fallen to about 1,000,000 marriages in 1932. By 1939, the number of marriages had reached 1,500,000 and in 1942, it hit

⁵³ Linderman. *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 17-18.

⁵⁴ Blum, *V was for Victory*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 19-20.

its peak during the war and had jumped to 1,800,000 marriages.⁵⁶ To place these numbers in another perspective, the rate of marriages before 1940 was stable at about 10 marriages per 1,000 people. By 1940, the marriage rate was 12.1 per 1,000 people. In 1941, which was the first year that the United States officially joined the war in December, the rate was 12.7 marriages per 1,000 people. By 1942, the rate of marriages had reached 13.2 marriages per 1,000 people.⁵⁷

With the declaration of war against Japan in 1941, men rushed to join the armed forces to avoid being placed in less desirable infantry positions through the draft. During the first few weeks of 1942, the marriage rate exceeded 150 percent of marriages nationwide from the previous year. In Milwaukee alone, where Betty lived, the marriage rate increased 100 percent from 1941 in January alone.⁵⁸ She states in her April 22nd letter that her brother Hank is planned on getting married in August. Because he was currently attending school to become an engineer and had scored high enough on his tests, he had a reprieve from the draft for a while until he graduated. Betty, writing on April 12th that she is pregnant, was due to have her baby in August but “certainly don’t want [Hank and his girlfriend, Millie] to wait for me, times being what they are.”⁵⁹ She understood the importance of marriage and the fear that surrounded marriage during the war period. There was no certainty in a boyfriend or husband living through the war. Only a few days later on May 4th, she commented on the quick wedding of her friend Mary Louise Weiner to a Naval Aviation ensign. She stated that although “it was a quick wedding...they are still together.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. "100 Years of Marriage and Divorce Statistics United States, 1867-1967." *National Vital Statistics System*, Ser. 21, no. 24 (December 1973): 10.

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_21/sr21_024.pdf.

⁵⁷Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in World War II*, p. 115.

⁵⁸ Linderman. *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 17.

⁵⁹Betty to Bill-April 22, 1942.

⁶⁰ Betty to Bill-May 4, 1942.

The fear of war in America did not only apply to soldiers abroad. During World War II, air raid drills were happening throughout America. These drills were more important for large, populated cities on the coasts like San Francisco, New York, and Miami that were likely targets by enemy soldiers and bombers. Raids were taken with varying amounts of seriousness. For those in California, the threat of an attack was quite plausible. Before December 1941, the Japanese attacked merchant vessels and other ships off the coasts of these cities, especially in San Francisco, at night. The lights from the cities allowed ships to see objects for miles on the water. Although these were not air attacks, there were a few bombings along the coastline as well. When the air raid sirens went off, the people in California quickly went to their assigned locations. In New York, it was a different situation. Because the people there were skeptical of an attack ever happening in New York, few took the raids seriously. When the sirens sounded, many continued on with their regular day and did not worry about an attack. They did not seek safety inside of buildings or shelters, and city lights would continue to glow.⁶¹

Milwaukee, being an important industrial center during the war, was subject to air raids. The first mention of these raids in Betty's letters came on July 2nd. Like New York, the citizens of Milwaukee were not concerned about an air attack because they lived in the "middle west," as Betty calls Wisconsin, and it would be difficult to bomb. However, she did understand the importance of the practice.⁶² Later that year on November 3rd, she wrote that the Air Warden for her area had found out that she had previously taken a first aid class and had asked her to be a first aid nurse during air raids. In the case of an attack, she would be one of the first responders to help anyone that was wounded. Although she did not have much faith in herself being able to

⁶¹ Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 8-12.

⁶² Betty to Bill-July 2, 1942.

do her duty like the warden expected, she agreed to the position. She, like other Americans at the time, looked for any way to aid in the war effort.⁶³

In March of 1942, the State Advisory Committee of Consumer Interests of Wisconsin provided ways for citizens to help support the war. They established and released a report that was titled “Suggestions to County Committees of Consumer Interests.”⁶⁴ The committees that the report was written to were the local committees that made decisions and created advertisements for rationing. Based on new national regulations that were about to be created for the war, the suggestions warned people of the upcoming changes to the economy and gave consumers tips for how to navigate the new regulations that would be instated. The document begins with the warning, “We cannot expect to consume at the same level as before if we hope to win this war.”

The first item provided in the list of tips was a general announcement that there would be a change in consumption. People were warned that they would either have to completely stop buying goods they are used to. The document also stated that “these shortages are to be expected and are necessary in order to carry on the war.” The second statement discouraged citizens against hoarding. Worried about a sudden influx of purchases, the board asked citizens to buy only as much as they would have bought before the shortages. Next, the document warned about more rationing to come in the future. With the March document, it was stated that for now only tires, retreads, and sugar would be rationed, but there would be more to come as the war progressed.

⁶³ Betty to Bill-November 3, 1942.

⁶⁴ "Suggestions to County Committees of Consumer Interests." (Wisconsin. State Council of Defense. State Advisory Committee of Consumer Interests, 1942, 1943), p. 1.

Because income taxes would be rising through 1941 and citizens will be purchasing defense bonds to assist in the war, Americans would have less money to spend on goods throughout the war. Prices on the goods being bought would rise as well, and the estimate in this document was that the price of living would be fifteen percent higher by 1942. It was suggested that consumers budget their money and that economists and people skilled in forming working budgets create classes, radio advertisements, and newspaper advertisements in order to assist consumers in making informed and reliable purchases.⁶⁵

Another suggestion that related to Betty was “Offering Your Neighbor a Ride.” For Betty, carpooling happened often whether it was going to sign up for rations at the elementary school, going to the movies with her mother or with a friend, or going to appointments with her doctor or dentist.⁶⁶ It asked that there be a “neighborhood use of private cars” and that people bring a full car into town when they go to work, the movies, or downtown.⁶⁷ It was recommended by the U.S. Council of Defense that each car hold four workers in order to conserve both gasoline and especially tires. Drive boards called the Car Sharing Club Exchange and Self-Dispatching System were also created which matched drivers and riders through a bulletin board at work. It was the job of factories and other companies to create and initiate these car-sharing clubs. Churches, homemakers, and parent-teacher organizations also created their own carpools to various gatherings they held.⁶⁸

The next few suggestions offered were about the preservation of food during the war. The first requests that all families that have access to land with suitable soil that is not being used for

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Betty to Bill-November 28, 1942.

⁶⁷ "Suggestions to County Committees of Consumer Interests." p. 4.

⁶⁸Nelson D. Chan and Susan A. Shaheen. 2012. "Ridesharing in North America: Past, Present, and Future." *Transport Reviews* 32, no. 1: 93-112.

another purpose be converted into a “Victory Garden.” This was not asking citizens to turn their entire lawn into a garden or destroy their flower gardens; it simply suggested that any extra available land be converted into a vegetable garden. The purpose of the garden was to offset the food that was being shipped to Europe and ensure that there was not a shortage at home. They also ensured that items which were required to grow and can vegetables commercially could be distributed, like metal for cans, and the transportation costs of the vegetables would be eliminated.⁶⁹ Community gardens were also created for use by a wider amount of people and community. In order to make certain that these gardens fulfilled their purpose, agricultural teachers, and other agents instructed people on how to grow their own food.⁷⁰

Like food rationing, rations of materials and resources necessary for automobiles were instituted. The rations placed on gasoline and rubber tires were another way that American citizens assisted the military in World War II. Beginning as early as February 10, 1942, the last new civilian car was made.⁷¹ New cars and trucks that were to be built for civilians were put on hold. Instead, the parts went into building jeeps, planes, tanks, and other vehicles necessary for the war. On the home front, car dealerships quickly struggled to find locations to store their vehicles for the duration of the war because even brand new already made cars could not be sold on the markets. Civilians were not allowed to purchase a car until after the war in 1946.⁷²

For those who already had cars in America, there were several guidelines that went into owning a car. Beginning in 1941, no driver was allowed to have more than 5 automobile tires, which would be enough to cover one vehicle and a spare tire. Citizens with cars were also

⁶⁹Char Miller. 2003. "In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice During WWII—Victory Gardens." *Journal Of American Culture* 26, no. 3: 395-409.

⁷⁰"Suggestions to County Committees of Consumer Interests." p. 4.

⁷¹Duke University. "Timeline: World War II." Duke Digital Collections.

⁷²Casdorph, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 16.

required to have frequent checks on their tires to ensure that they were fit for the road, and if they were not, they would be donated to the war effort. For all those looking to retread their tires, they needed to receive a special certificate from their local rationing boards much like the system for food rations.⁷³

The other automobile good that was heavily rationed in World War II was gasoline. First, in order to receive gasoline, each vehicle was labeled as either a 'List A' vehicle or as a 'List B' vehicle. List A vehicles were for cars that were deemed "essential services." These included health vehicles like ambulances, government service vehicles, vehicles that supplied crucial transportation for doctors, and farm and industrial vehicles. Although they did not receive unlimited amounts of gasoline, they were provided with a larger ration than those with a List B. List B rations were saved for all "nonessential vehicles."⁷⁴ Each user was then issued a sticker to place in their car. Those with vehicles that were labeled as 'List B' vehicles were given stickers that only allowed four gallons of fuel each week. By the end of 1942, over half of the vehicles in the United States were given this sticker. Vehicles classified as 'List A' were given to those whose jobs were essential to the war effort, like industrial workers. People that were given these stickers were allowed eight gallons a week to get to work and back each day. A 'C' sticker was given to physicians, ministers, mail carriers, and railroad workers. 'T' stickers were given to truckers, and those who were handling supplies for the general population were the only people allowed access to unlimited fuel during the war. The final sticker, the 'X' sticker, was given to members of Congress and other government officials.⁷⁵ This rationing of gas caused great changes around the country and a scare for those whose business revolved around gasoline.

⁷³Linderman. *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 14.

⁷⁴Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch. *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 24-25.

Service station operators whose job it was to pump gasoline quit their jobs, chauffeurs saw their jobs sputter and disappear, parking lot operators had almost no business as people stopped coming into town, and those that had to commute to work feared the worst. Although it was another way to help support the war abroad, it hindered all in society, some more than others.⁷⁶

In her letters, Betty writes about the need to sign up for the gasoline rations. On November 15, she writes to Bill saying, “Gramps and I went up to register for gas rationing. We received an A sticker for the car and Gramps did too until he can petition for a higher allotment because of his profession.”⁷⁷ Being a doctor, her grandfather felt that he needed a higher gasoline ration due to the fact that he was a physician and needed to make house calls to his clients. Although a higher amount than the nation as a whole received, the Upham family would receive fourteen gallons of gasoline each month for the two vehicles using their ‘A’ sticker and were required to have their tires inspected every two months.⁷⁸

After this letter, there appears to be some confusion with Gramps’s ration card. The November 23rd letter states that Betty’s grandpa received a C book, which would give him gasoline because he is a doctor.⁷⁹ However, just five days later on November 28th, Betty writes that Gramps was finally given a ‘B’ ration card for gasoline. Her reasoning behind this was that although Gramps was a physician, the rationing board must have seen that his patients were all local and quite close to where he lived and simply gave him a stamp for a lower gas ration. This must have also been the day when Betty went to go get her initial check on her tires because she wrote that it was important that her tires were not worn out or that the tires would not have too

⁷⁶Casdorph, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 46

⁷⁷ Betty to Bill-November 15, 1942.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Betty to Bill-November 23, 1942.

many miles on them because they could not be replaced after this point.⁸⁰ Betty and Gramps had to learn how to drive carefully in the snow through the rest of the year.

1943-“I Think I Will Only Write One Letter a Month, I Know You Don’t Care Much about Letters.”⁸¹

War Timeline: Gaining Strength in Europe

January 14-24, President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill release a statement at the Casablanca Conference that only an unconditional surrender from the Axis will be accepted.

January 31, the Germans surrender at Stalingrad.

February 14, Rommel’s Panzer tanks defeat U.S. forces in North Africa.

April 18, U.S. pilots shoot down the bomber carrying Japan’s most popular military leader, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, killing him.

May 12, North Africa is under Allied Control.

July 5, Soviet tanks defeat German tanks in the Battle of Kursk. The Soviets also defeat the German Luftwaffe in an air battle.

July 25, Benito Mussolini is taken out of power and arrested. Martial law is declared throughout Italy the next day.

September 8, after months of fighting in the Mediterranean, Italy surrenders to the Allies.

October 6, Italy declares war on Germany.

November 18, Battle of Berlin begins and continues until March 24, 1944.⁸²

⁸⁰ Betty to Bill-November 28, 1942.

⁸¹ Betty to Bill- April 1, 1943.

⁸² PBS. "Timeline of World War II." THE WAR. September 2007.

Homefront

The above quote about only writing one letter a month is an April Fool's joke from Betty's April 1st, 1943. She knows that these letters are incredibly important to Bill, especially after the letters she had received from Bill in 1942. However, Betty's joke may not be entirely untrue, especially considering the new conditions surrounding letters in 1943.⁸³ The first letter Betty writes to Bill in 1943 is V-Mail. Victory Mail, as opposed to regular mail and letters that citizens, like Betty, had previously typed on typewriter paper was a different process. First, the letters were typed or written on a normal 8 ½-by-11 inch piece of paper. They were then converted to a 16-millimeter film transmission for transportation and upon arrival were expanded to the final product of a 4-by-6 inch page.⁸⁴ Although the letters still held importance to both soldiers and the officers that were in charge of them, the letters that were being sent from the United States to bases abroad took up too much space in cargo holds that could be used for other items crucial to the war effort. With V-Mail, the same amount of letters could be sent abroad while saving space for weapons, vehicles, food, and other necessary goods being shipped out.

Sending V-Mail was a way to support the war effort by saving room for essential goods. However, some, including Betty, saw it as an attack against citizens. "First," she wrote in her January 9th letter, "they encourage everyone and his brother to write to servicemen and when they do it, we who really have a reason for writing get dinked," meaning that their regular letters would not be sent to Europe.⁸⁵ She worried that the new restrictions on letters would stop those

⁸³ Betty to Bill-April 1, 1943; Bill to Betty-April 22, 1942; Bill to Betty-November 23, 1942.

⁸⁴Linderman. *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 303.

⁸⁵ Betty to Bill-January 9, 1943.

that she is trying to send off to Bill. Again, the precious cargo space was needed for military supplies, not letters.

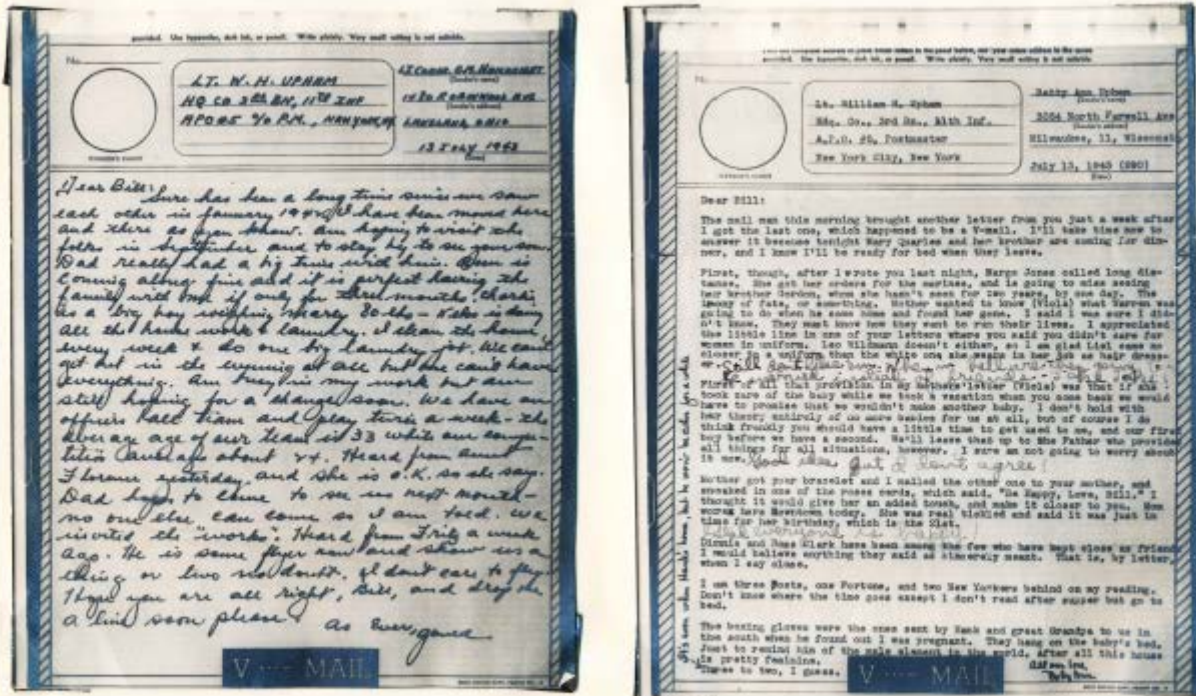


Figure 3: Examples of two V-Mail letters sent from Betty to Bill. The one on the left is a hand written letter while the one on the right is typed. To put the size in perspective, both of these letters were taped to the center of an 8 1/2 by 11 piece of paper. Source: Betty to Bill-July 13, 1943.

The end of January also brought new restrictions on sending packages to soldiers abroad. As seen in earlier letters, Betty often sends goods like clothes, food, vitamins, and toiletries like toothpaste and toothbrushes to Bill while he is abroad. He, in return, sends her goods back that he has received from abroad like jackets, pins, patches, and other trinkets he finds. With this new deadline, it will make it impossible to receive any packages without consent or specific request

of a good from the soldier's commanding officer. Although this would not affect the packages that are coming into the United States, soldiers will no longer be able to accept any packages unless they are deemed absolutely necessary. This placed stress on Betty who enjoys sending Bill packages to remind him of home.⁸⁶

On January 10, 1943, Betty makes a joke about gas rationing. Because Milwaukee got 10 inches of snow the day before, she claims that "we don't need gas rationing here in the Middle West. No one in their right mind is going to take his car out in this weather."⁸⁷ The weather, however, creates a real issue in the use of gas ration cards that have been given out. For the government, the snow is a good sign because people are driving less which not only saves gas but tires as well. Betty, however, voiced her annoyance with the snow because on January 20 she still had 7 gas coupons left she could use and the next day mentions the waste of gas coupons that were previously in short supply and high demand.⁸⁸

Rationing was a success in the United States for three reasons. The first was that service agencies that requested goods and the supply agencies that would give the goods to be rationed could request goods. This way, if there was an item a town did not need, the item would not be requested and waste was reduced. Second, rationing was a way for the U.S. Government to exploit patriotism and community spirit among American citizens. Unpaid volunteers would sign up to work volunteer boards and the local rationing boards because it was sold as their civic duty during the war to do so. These boards also allowed for some agency and local self-government throughout the country. Finally, there was good coordination between the local ration boards and the OPA officials that allowed the ration system to run smoothly.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Betty to Bill-January 10, 1943.

⁸⁸ Betty to Bill-January 20-21, 1943

⁸⁹ Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in World War II*, p. 90-91.

The gas rationing, like much other rationing policies, became stricter in 1943. In one of the letters that Bill wrote to Betty, he described his worry about her being attacked on the street for gas and that he wishes she would keep a gun in the car. She is appalled by this statement and states that by being pregnant and with gas rationing, she will not have to worry about being jumped. If they wanted to steal the car, they would not have gotten far because the thief would have needed more gas coupons to keep the car going.⁹⁰ However, Betty began to observe the toll it was taking on the public. In her June 15th letter, she writes that trains and buses are being over crowded with people trying to save gas and tires. She also included in this letter that visiting her friends was difficult because the gas ration she was given would not give her enough gas to visit her friends and return home.⁹¹ On July 12, in fact, Betty wrote that she filled up the car with twelve gallons of gas which used up her coupons for the rest of the month. She believed that she could make it to the end of the month and wait to see what her ration would be for the next month.⁹² The OPA did not keep consistent rations from month to month. The rations instead fluctuated.

However, it was this year that rationing was increased even further. In January of 1943, 25 percent of all food that was produced in the United States was sent overseas. Included in this was about half of all canned fruits and vegetables that were produced.⁹³ As Betty states, a “new ration sprung up on us this weekend. Now it’s butter.” Written on March 24th, she continues on in her letter saying that cheese, another dairy product, is also being rationed. The points system that Betty and other Americans used to receive their rationed food began in February of 1943.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Betty to Bill-May 25, 1943.

⁹¹ Betty to Bill-June 15, 1943.

⁹² Betty to Bill-July 12, 1943.

⁹³ Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 80.

⁹⁴ Betty to Bill-March 24, 1943; Duke University. "Timeline: World War II." Duke Digital Collections.

The ration book system works so that each book contains stamps that give the user a certain amount of points of food per month. For example, one month a user may be given 48 points to use on canned, dried, and frozen foods. Each food item is labeled a different amount of points. Canned goods may be labeled anywhere from 16 points for peas and 24 points for sliced pineapples. These were generally ranked quite high because the materials needed to make cans, specifically tin, were necessary for military use.⁹⁵ In fact, Claude Wickard, the Secretary of Agriculture for the United States in 1943 stated that everyone in the United States would be allotted 33 pounds of canned food for the year. This number was almost 13 pounds below the normal consumption rate of food for the average American.⁹⁶ However, by 1943, Victory Gardens were making 8 million tons of food from 20 million individual gardens, so canned goods were less important.⁹⁷

The points that Betty listed in her letter were pig feet, which were 3 points, and a whole ham, which was 10 points. Although they may be considered high compared to what they had been in the previous years of the war, they were still fewer points than canned goods.⁹⁸ Later in 1943, Betty stated that with her need to buy baby food for her son William “Bill” Upham III who was born on August 18 as well as tomato juice, her points for canned goods had actually run out.⁹⁹ Apparently, however, she was not worried about it at the time because, although it was not necessarily sanctioned by the OPA, people gave their friends, neighbors, and others in need their ration points if they did not need them.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education. "World War II on the Home Front: Rationing." Canned Goods and Ration Points. <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww2-rationing/5915>.

⁹⁶ Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll*, p. 81.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 82.

⁹⁸ Betty to Bill-March 24, 1943.

⁹⁹ Betty to Bill-October 20, 1943.

¹⁰⁰ Betty to Bill-October 17, 1943.

In 1943, the public's interest in entertainment increases. One of the movies that Betty wrote to Bill about was titled "Commandos Strike at Dawn." As a piece of propaganda, this movie is filled with blood and thunder, and generated a bad image for Germans. The antagonist in the movie is a Norwegian widower who leads a commando force against the Nazi forces that destroyed his village.¹⁰¹ In her May 8th letter, Betty states that the movie was filled with "dirty German devils," proof that the propaganda was working.¹⁰²

Another movie she mentions seeing is called "The Young Mr. Pitt." In the movie, William Pitt the Younger becomes the youngest Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on the platform of peace and prosperity. However, he becomes engulfed in the war with Napoleon and Revolutionary France.¹⁰³ Although the movie is about a British Prime Minister during the Napoleonic Wars, Betty described the movie as "seeming to do with Pearl Harbor."¹⁰⁴ Even in a movie about wars that happened over one hundred years before World War II, the director and writers formed the movie to relate to the current war. Again, as Betty stated above, these movies and other forms of entertainment were meant to raise morale and gather support for the war.

Conclusion

To expand from the letters Betty wrote, letters sent from families and friends during World War II were essential to the soldiers fighting in the war. The letters outlined a fluctuating society, a changing economy, propaganda entertainment, and above all the lives of the people writing the letters. Soldiers knew that their loved ones were safe, happy, and supported their

¹⁰¹ *Commandos Strike at Dawn*. Directed by John Farrow. Produced by Lester Cowan. By Irwin Shaw and C. S. Forester. Performed by Paul Muni, Anna Lee, and Lillian Gish. United States: Columbia, 1942.

¹⁰² Betty to Bill-May 8, 1943.

¹⁰³ *The Young Mr. Pitt*. Directed by Carol Reed. Performed by Robert Donat.

¹⁰⁴ Betty to Bill-Sept 2, 1943.

efforts during the war. These letters not only kept morale high through the knowledge that they had support, but that they were also given the reminder of America and their home.

“[My] own...letters are made up of lies.”¹⁰⁵ This quote comes from a man who wrote letters to his brother during World War II. Betty’s letters, although not necessarily lies, certainly did not include all of the hardships of her life. However, the correspondence from Betty to Bill certainly illustrated life in Milwaukee, Wisconsin during World War II. Betty wrote about the effects of the draft on her friends and family, censorship during the war, the increasing marriage rate, the rationing of food and gasoline, and entertainment that was used as propaganda. She also wrote about Bill’s grandparents, his brother, and his mother to provide Bill with information about his other family members. Using these letters, Bill could remember his life at home and better understand the life of Betty and American culture.

In 1943, Bill was transferred to a post in England. In his November 23, 1942, letter to Betty, he wrote that he wanted to be reassigned to England because it would be a better, higher paying job. With this money, he could better support little Bill and Betty during and after the war.¹⁰⁶ By July of 1943, Bill had been stationed in England. As part of his service while in England, he fought in France alongside the British Army and was wounded at St. Lo in 1944.¹⁰⁷ In his August 29, 1944, letter, he stated that he had been “hit by a bit of shrapnel that went in the small of my back and came out near the lower ribs on the front,” from a German 88 shell.¹⁰⁸ He received the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart medals to commemorate his service.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Linderman. *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, p. 319.

¹⁰⁶ Bill to Betty- November 23, 1942.

¹⁰⁷ William H. and Elizabeth Ann Upham Papers, Biography/History. ca. 1934-1946, 1973-1974, Special Collections & Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Bill to Betty- August 29, 1944.

¹⁰⁹ William H. and Elizabeth Ann Upham Papers, Biography/History. ca. 1934-1946, 1973-1974, Special Collections & Archives.

Of course, Betty worried about Bill's injury. He stayed in the field, however, and the couple continued to write to each other until Bill's service in the military ended in 1946. When he left the army, he moved back to Milwaukee where he continued his life with Betty.¹¹⁰ Instead of writing to Bill, she could share details from her life, jokes, and especially her love directly with Bill, and tell him in person:

“All my love and a million kussies,

Love, Betty”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Betty to Bill-September 21, 1941.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Commandos Strike at Dawn. Directed by John Farrow. Produced by Lester Cowan. By Irwin Shaw and C.S. Forester. Performed by Paul Muni, Anna Lee, and Lillian Gish. United States: Columbia, 1942.

The movie about a soldier during World War II provides an example of propaganda that was used during World War II. Betty was subject to this propaganda when she viewed the movie with her mother.

Lend-Lease Bill, dated January 10, 1941. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, HR 77A-D13, Record Group 233, National Archives.

As a primary document that described the Lend-Lease Act in detail, the source was used to assist in describing how America was involved in World War II before officially joining the war.

"Suggestions to County Committees of Consumer Interests." Wisconsin. State Council of Defense. State Advisory Committee of Consumer Interests, 1942, 1943.

The document is an essential part of understanding the connection between the rationing process and the role the government played in implementing and encouraging United States citizens to take part in this process.

William H. and Elizabeth Ann Upham Papers, ca. 1934-1946, 1973-1974, Special Collections & Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, WI. Boxes 1-6.

This source was the main primary source used in the capstone paper. It included scrapbook pictures from Elizabeth and William Upham's life, diary entries from Bill while he was in combat, and most importantly for the research purposes of this capstone, letters between Betty and Bill throughout the extent of World War II.

The Young Mr. Pitt. Directed by Carol Reed. Performed by Robert Donat.

Betty mentioned watching this movie in 1943. The movie, although about the Napoleonic Wars, provided war propaganda according to Betty. It is used as another example of propaganda footage from World War II.

Secondary Sources

Baum, Matthew A., and Samuel Kernell. 2001. "Economic Class and Popular Support for Franklin Roosevelt in War and Peace." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65, no. 2.

This article was used to understand the support Franklin D. Roosevelt had from the American people during the war. It was used for background information in the content of the paper.

Blum, John Morton. *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Blum's source allowed for background information on the lives of American citizens during World War II. This information was later compared to the life of Betty in Milwaukee. The source specifically highlighted rationing and other politics during the war.

Burtness, Paul S., and Warren U. Ober. 2013. "Communication Lapses Leading to the Pearl Harbor Disaster." *Historian* 75, no. 4.

The article was used as a source to help provide information about Pearl Harbor and America's involvement in World War II in the introduction paragraph.

Casdorph, Paul D. *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during World War II*. New York: Paragon House, 1989.

This source was used heavily in the paper to convey the lives of the American people through World War II. Casdorph's opinion in the book was that although America was in a total war situation there were certainly worries and concerns about attacks and soldiers abroad. However, America found ways to fight through these fears and were strong supporters of the war.

Chan, Nelson D., and Susan A. Shaheen. 2012. "Ridesharing in North America: Past, Present, and Future." *Transport Reviews* 32, no. 1.

Although not used much in the document, this source provided insight into the rideshare program that was established during World War II. It includes information on sharing cars and rides before and after World War II as well.

Duke University. "Timeline: World War II." Duke Digital Collections.

The timeline provided by Duke University details important dates and events that occurred both on the war front and on the home front during World War II. These events help to put Betty's experiences into perspective.

Erenberg, Lewis A., and Susan E. Hirsch. *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Erenberg's source describes how the sticker system worked in gas rationing. A better understanding of the gas rationing system, in general, can be provided through this source.

Fairchild, Byron. "Decision to Land United States Forces in Iceland, 1941." *United States Forces in Iceland*.

This source provides information about why the United States had forces in Iceland. For the purposes of this paper, the source will be used to explain why Bill was stationed in Iceland during the war.

Jacobs, Meg. 1997. "How About Some Meat?": The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946." *Journal of American History* 84, no. 3.

The source describes the Office of Price Administration and how it was formed as well as the reasoning behind the rationing policies that were established in America through World War II.

Linderman, Gerald F., *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*. Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 1999.

Linderman's book provides insight into the effect letters and events on the home front have on soldiers abroad. In his chapter about the home front, the importance of letters to the soldiers who are fighting is outlined and discussed in detail.

Lines of Battle: Letters from American Servicemen, 1941-1945, ed. by Annette Tapert. New York: Times Books, 1987.

The study that was conducted by Annette Tapert underlines the importance of letters to a soldier's morale and ability to fight on the home front. Because morale is an important part of the thesis to this capstone, the study is essential.

Litoff, Judy Barrett and David C. Smith, eds. *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

In *Since You Went Away*, covers various topics like long distance relationships, women getting jobs, and even letters about the loss of loved one fighting for America. The women that are writing these letters fully capture the changes happening in society at the time.

Miller, Char. 2003. "In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice during WWII—Victory Gardens." *Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 3.

This source was used to explain the importance of Victory Gardens to the war effort. The source also details how creating a Victory Garden was a source of patriotism during World War II.

PBS. "Timeline of World War II." THE WAR. September 2007.

The website provides a timeline of important events that occurred during World War II on the war front. It is essential to include these events in the paper to put home front events in perspective of events and changes that are happening in the war.

Perri, Timothy J., 2013. "The Evolution of Military Conscription in the United States." *Independent Review* 17, no. 3: 429-439.

Perri's article provides information on military conscription, the Selective Service, and the draft through history. A portion of the information from this article was utilized to understand the draft during World War II and the impact the draft had on society.

UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education. "World War II on the Home Front: Rationing." Canned Goods and Ration Points.

This article provided by UNC-Chapel Hill provides information on rationing during World War II. More specifically, it looks at the rationing of canned goods which were worth more points because the cans were made of tin, an essential military metal.

Vatter, Harold G., *The U.S. Economy in World War II*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1985.

Vatter's book uses information gathered from data in World War II and puts it into the context of the war. This information can be used to quantify the war and use different types of information to understand the home front during the war.