

Folder 17: Ralph L. Minker, Sr., March – December 1943

Rev. Ralph L. Minker, Sr., superintendent of the Ferris Industrial School for Boys in Wilmington, Delaware, brought his eighteen-year-old son home from Dickinson College in late February, 1943. Ralph L. "Lee" Minker, Jr., had to report for basic training in Miami, Florida, the first step in pilot training with the Army Air Corps. Ralph Sr. provided active encouragement and advice to Lee throughout each phase of training and when he was in combat in England.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday evening March 3, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
The first letter from their son brings great relief. Dad recognizes how busy the first days are. Reports on a Red Cross drive for \$450,000. There will be a test blackout tomorrow night with the new siren [Ralph Sr. is the Civil Defense Warden for New Castle County]. Comments on Hitler. Sends words of tremendous support and respect to his son.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
March 8, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
The family is so appreciative of Lee's letters: they make the rounds of the entire family, including grandmothers, the dog Ginger and anyone who drops by. Sympathizes with the crowded conditions in Miami, encourages his son to work in the best spirit. Asks after Stan Wilson and Bill Hyde, who are with Lee in Miami. Will be sending Lee reports of the Blue Rocks. [Sports is a way father and son stay connected throughout the correspondence.]			
Names: Stan Wilson, Bill Hyde			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
March 19, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. gives advice to Lee on how to deal with the haphazard nature of his training. He inquires about Bill Hyde and how he's coping with training. He and Bill Hyde's father are exchanging notes. Sending lots of clippings and a box of cookies.			
Names: Bill Hyde			

Lee Minker was in the infirmary in Miami with a mysterious illness in late March.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
March 25, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. sympathizes with Lee and his sickness with [apparently] the measles. He is getting ready for the [Ferris] school's baseball team. Tells Lee to wire or phone if there is any urgency.			

Pvt. Lee Minker left basic training in Miami for a long train trip to Lincoln, Nebraska, in early April. A postcard to Bernice Minker dated April 10 states that they had arrived.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
[April 11,1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. writes after Lee has had a week in transit from Miami to Lincoln, NE. They have been concerned as mail was returned, the family has planned that he hear from one of them every two days. Sorry to have missed his call but Bernice had it typed up for them. Gives news of Bill Rogers and Walter Hall, African American Ferris student now in the army. He went to an A's and Philly's game with Governor Bacon, is hopeful sports will continue during the war. He is having to coach the baseball team himself due to lack of staff.			
Names: Bill Rogers, Walter Hall, Governor Walter W. Bacon			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Friday evening April 16, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. reports a classmate from Boston U. School of Theology, Ben Schwartz, is chancellor of the university [U. of Nebraska at Lincoln where Lee is stationed.] Lets Lee know how important his letters are to them, "you are everything to us." He is getting letters from Ferris boys Steve Paulik, Joe Hobbs, and Nick Caseta who are in the service. Arthur Stille was on the North Africa casualty list. They laughed over the heavy schedule he reported.			
Names: Steve Paulik, Joe Hobbs, Nick Caseta, Arthur Stille			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
April 24, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
They missed him at the Easter celebrations. Describes their dinner with family and friends; teases Lee about how much he could eat. Working on getting the swimming pool at the school into shape. He brings his son up to date with results of sport events. Dickinson [College] will have an abbreviated commencement. They are thankful for their son.			
Names: Howell Wilkins			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday eve May 1, [1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. reminds his son of home with description of a Minker Sunday dinner. He is pleased that Lee met the Chancellor [Schwartz]. He talks about the Boston University School of Theology and Dickinson. Praises the foundation received at Dickinson College. Closes with encouragement to his son.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
May 12, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Sorry that he missed Lee's call last night. He has a heavy schedule of meetings and speeches. He is pleased with Lee becoming suited to Air Force life. He bought 20 steers yesterday for the [Ferris] school. He talks about North Africa and the progress of the war in general. Expresses his love by saying he "moves in his direction" every hour of the day.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening [date unknown, 1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
The whole family went to church. He provides current sports updates and talks about the lack of staff at the school. Asks that Lee call home as there are not many letters. Good news on the war, hoping the "whole mess" will be over soon.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday evening, [May 29, 1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. congratulates Lee on his first flight [May 24]. The Army Engineers need a place to house 350 soldiers and were looking at the [Ferris] school for it. Wonders what would happen to the boys.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Tuesday morning June 1, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Anxious to hear about the next flights, they haven't heard from him. He mentions that Bill Hyde has not flown yet. A report on the Blue Rocks and their recent games. He is pleased with the work done on improving the swimming pool.			

On June 22, 1943, Lee Minker arrived at Santa Ana Army Air Corps Base, California for testing and classification.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
June 29, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
They were relieved to receive two letters from Lee. Minker Sr. is impressed with the amount of travel now that Lee is on the west coast. Dad realizes how strenuous the work must be to prepare for what is ahead. He gives a report on the Blue Rocks.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Monday morning July 19, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. congratulates Lee on being classified as a pilot and expresses his pride. Captain John Daunt from the Army talked to the boys at the [Ferris] school. In their continuing conversation about sports, dad tells Lee about the Blue Rocks' success. He writes about the current politics in the country and Delaware.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
July 29, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
They are interested in the routine Lee has to follow. Minker Sr. writes about current events at the school and the state of education. Reports that whenever they sit down together they pray for him.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
August 21, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
The new letterhead shows that he was able to get the name of the school changed at the last legislature. The grandmothers are taking care of him as mother and the girls have gone to Rehoboth. Enjoyed his letter about being in the [altitude] chamber. The Blue Rocks are a sorry lot just now.			

After successful classification as a pilot, Lee Minker was shipped to Phoenix, Arizona, for training in the Stearman at Thunderbird Field II. He arrived on Tuesday, August 31, 1943.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening September 12, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Have been waiting all day for a phone call from Lee. The telephone company cannot handle the load of calls. Asks him not to give up trying. Enjoyed his letter about flying the Stearman. He is keeping in touch with Lee's fraternity [Theta Chi].			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday Evening, [September ?, 1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Said goodbye to Lee's girlfriend, Julia [Taylor, who is leaving for Oberlin]. Praises mother [Edna Minker] for her dual role keeping the house and being his secretary. Gives news of Major Yost. He gave a talk for the African American teachers at State College in Dover. He is having dinner with a friend, Dr. Clinchy, secretary of the National Conference of Jews and Christians.			
Names: Major Yost, Dr. Everett Clinchy			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening October 3, [1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Writes about having to retrieve several runaways from the school, expresses concern about the conditions they come from. Minker Sr.'s pride in his son's progress is apparent as he congratulates Lee on his progress as a pilot and his hopes for Lee's future. He is hopeful that the war will be over by the fall. Another update on the Blue Rocks and their record, basketball is starting again, a report on the World Series.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
October 24, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. brings home to Lee by sharing the family dinner, asks about the food at Phoenix. Has fun describing their trip to Williamsport to surprise Shirley, glad to see her happy. He updates Lee on the Bombers team, is losing interest in games due to the war. Again, expresses how proud he is of Lee, hoping he will get leave.			

By early November 1943 Lee Minker was in El Paso, Texas, for advanced flying training in the BT-17.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
November 11, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. commends Lee on a job well done in the Air Force so far and his adventures. They went to see <i>Princess O' Rourke</i> , which he enjoyed and updates Lee on sports news. Many people are inquiring about Lee's well-being; today is Armistice Day.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday evening [November 27, 1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. thanked Lee for the birthday letter he sent and how great it is to have his three children. Comment on the army pulling out his [wisdom] teeth. He gives Lee some updates about sports teams as well as about the Bombers and Phillies.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday evening [December 4, 1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
Minker Sr. gives advice to Lee about finishing his training. He is going to see the Green Bay Packers play the Eagles [game was played on Dec. 5]. He expresses concern about Lee's fraternity and pledging under current conditions. Is pleased Shirley is settling in nicely at school.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
December 9, [1943]	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
<p>Recommends that Lee read <i>Thirty Seconds Over Tokio</i> if he has time. Everyone is asking for Lee and about flying. Comments on a staff person who has struggled with drinking. Minker Sr. talks about the church services, especially the one with Bishop [Arthur] McKinstry speaking. He inquires about Lee's letter on his uniform. He provides Lee with news about the Bombers and the <i>Echo</i> yearbook [A.I. du Pont High School]. He congratulates his son on making it to advanced flight school.</p>			
<p>Note: Letter is incorrectly dated 1944.</p>			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
December 14, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
<p>Minker Sr. reports that he has a bad case of the grippe. Wishes they could surprise him at Christmas. On the homefront, there are no boxes available for wrapping Christmas packages.</p>			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
December 21, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
<p>Minker Sr. sends Lee some contacts for him to meet a "substantial" family in El Paso. They are getting ready for Christmas at the [Ferris] school. Sending him wishes for the best Christmas "under the circumstances".</p>			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
December 23, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
<p>A telegram giving Lee times to call home and to call a Reverend Williams in El Paso. The telegram is in Ralph L. "Lee" Minker, Jr., October-December 1943 folder, because of his annotations on it.</p>			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
December 28, 1943	Ralph Minker Sr.	Lee Minker	Wilmington, DE
<p>Tells Lee about the scramble for the phone when he called home. The first Christmas apart, Minker Sr. describes their Christmas and hopes that Lee got the package they sent.</p>			