

Folder 7: Ralph L. "Lee" Minker, Jr., July – September 1944

Operational training with the crew at Gulfport Army Airfield, Gulfport, Mississippi

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Monday evening July 3, 1944	Lee Minker	Shirley Minker	Tampa, Fl
Received shipping orders for Gulfport, MS. Met co-pilot. Ants ate the contents of his birthday package. Send news of home.			
Names: Arthur D. Rohl [co-pilot who got sick and was replaced by Gordon Dodge.]			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening July 9, 1944	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Gulfport, MS
First pilot and commander of crew #156, his job to prepare for combat. Identifies the crew, navigator and bombardier to arrive later. Description of Gulfport Army Air Field. Recognizes responsibility of leadership. Well-equipped base with combat instructors. Plans for final staging. List of winter clothing they need to send. Questions about life at home.			
Names: Arthur D. Rohl, co-pilot; James E. Shannon, aerial engineer; Max G. Shepherd, assistant radio operator; Donald W. Miller, assistant aerial engineer; Roman Michalacean, assistant aerial gunner.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Thursday noon July 13, 1944	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Gulfport, MS
Relieved to be back at work, had to re-learn flying fundamentals. Will not be doing much night flying, crew members have to be checked out in their specialty, engineering ground school.			
Names: Lt. Dickey [flight instructor]			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Tuesday evening July 18, 1944	Lee Minker	Shirley Minker	Gulfport, MS
Happy to receive family letters and their news. Comments on Dorman and his coaching. Alternating a day of flying with ground school, pressure is increasing, had to make an emergency landing, which gave the crew more confidence in him. Will get rid of Michalacean for poor attitude.			
Names: Dutchy Dorman [manager of the Wilmington Blue Rocks]			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Tuesday noon July 25, 1944	Lee Minker	Bernice Minker	Gulfport, MS
Schedule is wearing them down, high altitude gunnery missions. Instrument training in the Link trainer. Requests copy of poem Bernice had published in high school newspaper. More questions about home.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Friday noon July 28,1944	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Gulfport, MS
Operational training has emphasis on long flights, P-40s make simulated attacks, B-26s tow targets to test gunnery accuracy. Suggests using German POWs to help at the Ferris School.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday evening August 2,1944	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Gulfport, MS
Had the last of the shots, amount of pay. Crew up to full strength. Asks for a radio.			
Names: John J. Rosiala, bombardier; Mack Pitts, navigator; John Trambley, tail gunner			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Friday evening August 4,1944	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Gulfport, MS
Worried about his dad being worn out with war bond drive, begs him to take a vacation. Discusses Shirley's options for school and voice lessons. Comments on future of Dickinson College. Training is on schedule, sending money home.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Monday evening August 7,1944	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Gulfport, MS
Hot weather and moisture are not good flying weather. Questions about events at home, behind in correspondence to others.			
Names: Dick Rhoads from Wilmington			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Thursday evening August 10,1944	Lee Minker	Shirley Minker	Gulfport, MS
Mid-way through operational training, rumors about departure. Questions about the family and the summer plans.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday evening August 16,1944	Lee Minker	Bernice Minker	Gulfport, MS
Sisters performing in Brandywiners. Unable to get film, wants copies of his old pictures. War moving in our favor, perhaps will not be sent to European Theatre. Training schedule.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Friday afternoon August 25,1944	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Gulfport, MS
Assures mother he is fine but busy. Long flights at night, crew required to log 150 - 195 hours. Thinks war in Europe will end this winter, curious about orders, eager to help win the war. Sent money orders home.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Tuesday noon August 29,1944	Lee Minker	Bernice Minker	Gulfport, MS
Practiced emergency procedures. Crew almost finished with requirements, 130 flying hours. Congratulations on winning scholarship to Tower Hill High School. Homesick for his dog, Ginger, and her pups. Questions about Blue Rocks and events at home.			
Names: Mike Zographone			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday noon September 6 1944	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Gulfport, MS
Reflective about last three years and what he has learned from the experiences. Army dentist replaced all his fillings. Suggests overhaul of the garden including a drawing. Sent a money order. Will take a picture with the crew soon.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday noon September 6 1944	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Gulfport, MS
Repeat of information in Sept. 6 letter to mother.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Monday evening September 11 1944	Lee Minker	Bernice Minker	Gulfport, MS
Picturing his sisters at home getting ready for college. Admonishes her to help mother and grandmother. Recommends movie <i>A Wing and a Prayer</i> . Life is uneventful.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday noon September 17 1944	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Gulfport, MS
Confusion in getting call through, plans to ship on Sept. 23 for final staging at Hunter Field. Will not know destination and will not be able to write. Talks about finances. Sending home letters and flying manuals. Requests they use V-mail, describes code he will use so that can tell where he is based. Plans to ask Julia [Taylor] to be his wife.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
September 29 1944	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Hunter Field, GA
Frets about delay in schedule. Describes journey from Gulfport to Hunter Field, leaving Sept. 23. Co-pilot Lt. Arthur D. Rohl became seriously ill and was replaced by Flight Officer Gordon B. Dodge—he will be a good replacement but losing Rohl was a blow. Gives first impression of Savannah. Tells his father that he must be careful with information now that he is going into combat. Hopes to “buzz home” on his way to embarkation at Bangor, Maine.			

2nd Lieutenant Ralph Lee Minker departed Hunter Field, Georgia, on Wednesday, October 4, 1944. With his crew they flew a B-17 to Wales, flying up the east coast of the U.S. and over Wilmington on their way to England. By telephone he was able to alert the family to his departure, see Edna Minker’s letter of October 7, 1944. They arrived at Rattlesden Army Air Force Base on October 13, 1944.

Lee Minker’s first letter from England was written on October 18.