

FOLDER 9: Ralph L. "Lee" Minker, Jr., January – May 1945

Rattlesden Army Air Force Base, England

Note: See the list of missions flown in January-February 1945 in support of the Battle of the Bulge to understand the context of these letters.

On January 1, 1945, Minker was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Thursday evening January 4, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
List of names and addresses of family of the crew, asks mother to contact them.			
Names: Mrs. Gordon B. Dodge, Mr & Mrs Wesley C. Pitts, Mr and Mrs John Rosiala, Mrs. Elizabeth Shannon, Mrs. Olaf Larsen, Mrs. Zehora Shepherd, Mrs. Paul Trambley, Mr & Mrs. J. McKay.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
January 20 1945 Western Union	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Due to number of missions during Battle of the Bulge, he has not written. Showing concern for their anxiety, Lee assures his parents that he is fine.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening January 21, 1945	Lee Minker	Shirley Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Shares information about the German counteroffensive and how pathfinder equipment assists in bombing through the clouds. Connects with his sister and home by asking lots of questions.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday evening January 24, 1945	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Describes bombing targets, role of pathfinder equipment. Comments on the progress of the war. Extensive political analysis of the future: unemployment, regulation of business, assimilation of servicemen after the war, future of the military, post-war problems and foreign policy. Sharing sports with his dad, comments on Blue Bombers and Blue Rocks. Frustrated with Army waste when 447 th "stood down" for inspection by a major general.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Tuesday evening January 30, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Expresses feelings about the war; not eager to face the enemy yet accepts the need to continue bombing to support troops on the western and eastern fronts. Went to London, saw several plays. Still trying to get 620 film, wants reprints of pictures he has sent home. Going to arrange a photo of the <i>Blue Hen Chick</i> [see scrapbook]. Letters received from home.			
Names: Mike Zagraphone, Bob Cassel			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday evening February 3, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Advice on the garden, welcomes the early spring weather at the base. Including news clippings of bombing, General [James] Doolittle visited the base. Officers of two new crews moved into the barracks. [Two crews had been shot down.]			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday evening February 12, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Went to see Cambridge on his last pass. Lists all the letters he has received and how important they are to him. Figures for 1944 income taxes, received a \$16 raise as a 1 st lieutenant, crew mentioned letters from Edna to their families.			
Names: Ed Lake, Howell Finn [Wilmington], & Ralph Lower [Dickinson College]			

On February 27, 1945, Minker completed his tour of 35 missions and was awarded membership in The Lucky Bastards Club (p. 57 of scrapbook). While his crew came home, Minker was signed on for a second tour to finish up the war in Europe.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening March 5, 1945	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Spent the day writing letters. The crew has completed combat duty of 35 missions, has decided to stay, plan to be home for July 4. Will be working in group operations. Finds it hard write and to concentrate. Bombardier John Rosiala was wounded. Visited friend from Dickinson College who is recovering from a wound.			
Names: Bob Cassel [Dickinson College, Theta Chi fraternity brother], Dick Brown [Dickinson College]			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening March 11, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Good news about the war, recognizes effort needed to overcome the Axis. Plans being made for Air Forces to participate in attack on Japan. Needs 620 film to take pictures of England in the spring. Movies he has seen. Pleased she has corresponded with family of his crew, hopes their friendship will continue after the war.			
Names: Howell Finn [Wilmington], Ken Mayo [Dickinson College]			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Monday evening March 19, 1945	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
This description of a "typical" mission opens with supper the evening before and goes on to detail what he does throughout the next 24 hours. Full of detail but not technical, the tone and poetic nature of the description progresses hour by hour to the skies over Germany and the grateful return home.			
Note: This is the longest letter from Lee in the collection.			

First Lieutenant Ralph L. Minker was on leave for 30 days after completing his first tour of 35 missions on February 26, 1945. He signed on for a second tour, then spent time touring the English countryside before returning to base. The crew of the *Blue Hen Chick* all returned to the U.S. The exact dates of the leave are not known; there are no letters between March 19 and April 25, 1945.

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday evening April 25, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Flying fatigue and spring fever kept him from writing. Feeling the excitement from all the recent change: death of the president, end of the war in Europe is near, the fury of war in the Far East. The base is now a training center. Refers to transition flying techniques which possibly were to prepare for the planned invasion of Japan. His return date of July 4 will probably be postponed.			

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
April 27 1945 Cablegram	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Letting the family know he is fine after not writing for a month.			

Date	Poor copy	Writer	Recipient	Place
Saturday evening	April 28, 1945	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Asks about Blue Rocks and Philly Blue Jays. [Lee and his dad shared a love of sports throughout their letters.] Problems of leadership at Dickinson College. Definitely wants to return to Dickinson College. Reflective about the start of the United Nations. Met a Wilmington boy in London.				
Names: Bill Ulrich of Wilmington and Grace Church.				

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place	
Tuesday evening	May 8, 1945	Lee Minker	Bernice Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
The unmitigated joy of VE Day, "At Last!." Recognizes how much he has missed as Bernice is now in the final days of her senior year of high school at Tower Hill. Training continues, critique of motion pictures he has seen and books read.				

Ralph Lee Minker was promoted to Captain on May 16, 1945

Date	Poor copy	Writer	Recipient	Place
Wednesday evening	May 16, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Wistful about spring at home as he discusses their garden. No news about redeployment, refresher training continues. Censorship is now lifted so he reports on his exact location. Pleased she talked with Bob Cassel and Olaf Larsen.				
Names: Olaf Larsen – radioman on the <i>Blue Hen Chick</i> .				

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place	
Thursday evening	May 24, 1945	Lee Minker	Ralph Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
Reports rather casually that he has been promoted to captain, lists the battles of Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Germany. The "special mission" he mentions is probably Operation Chowhound which dropped food over Holland in early May. Awarded Air medal and five oak leaf clusters. Lee tells his dad what he wants to do upon returning, which reflects simple aspects of civilian life and he wants to see his girl. Talks about reassignment as the war is not over yet.				
Names: Julia B. Taylor [girlfriend]				

Date	Writer	Recipient	Place
Sunday evening May 27, 1945	Lee Minker	Edna Minker	Rattlesden AAFB, England
<p>The spring in England reminds Lee of Wilmington as he focuses on plans to come home, but there are only rumors. He is sending home negatives of photos of London, crew, buddies. Report of a "Victory Tour" for ground personnel, low altitude view of bombing results. Lee's growing sensibilities about war are seen in his poetic description of how the war has ravaged Germany.</p>			