



State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
Tennessee State Library and Archives

**Benjamin Troy Ammons Papers, 1934-1946**

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**COLLECTION SUMMARY**

**Creator:**

Ammons, Benjamin Troy, 1906-1989

**Inclusive Dates:**

1934-1946

**Scope & Content:**

Papers consist of correspondence, photographs, military commendations, military appointments, military artifacts, maps, and propaganda leaflets. The correspondence is primarily letters from Benjamin Ammons to Esther Ammons (née Randolph) detailing his experience in the Tennessee National Guard and United States Army as well as personal sentiments between the couple. Letters follow their courtship and continue after their marriage in April 1942 and the birth of their first child in November 1944. Many discuss his combat fatigue and the toll that the war has taken on him, including concern that he may not be himself when he returns home. His final letter is postmarked January 26, 1946, from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A newspaper clipping from the *Nashville Banner* lauds the 30th Division and its assistant commander, Gen. William K. Harrison, for their exceptional wartime service. A chronological index of the correspondence follows the container list. The correspondence summaries are written so as to capture the original flavor of Ammons's letters.

Three photographs taken in 1935 depict training exercises from the 117th Infantry Tennessee National Guard headquarters in Jackson, Tennessee, while another shows the same unit in between exercises at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. A photograph of Esther Randolph accompanies a 1936 letter from Ammons to Randolph. Two others portray Ammons wearing his National Guard uniform in 1937. A photograph of the newly married Benjamin and Esther Ammons supplements a January 1944 letter. World War II photographs depict Lt. Col.

Benjamin Ammons and his superior officers in Europe. A series of six photographs surveys the ruins of Magdeburg, Germany, following its capture by the Allies. A signed portrait of Neil Armstrong was given to members of the 30th Division at their 1980 reunion.

Ammons's commendations include a Bronze Star with three bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, a Silver Star with a bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, and battle honors awarded to Ammons's Company E, 117th Infantry, for outstanding performance on October 16, 1944, in the capture of Aachen, Germany. His appointments to second lieutenant, first lieutenant, and captain round out his military records. The military artifacts are:

Two silk maps Ammons used on the Western Front depict France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Five of the wartime propaganda leaflets were dropped by German planes and which Ammons gathered. These include efforts at demoralization and rampant antisemitism. The remaining one Americans dropped to coerce Germans to surrender by explaining the respectful treatment of German prisoners of war.

A program for a production of "The Lisbon Story," performed at the London Hippodrome, accompanies a May 1944 letter. A copy of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Great Crusade" speech, distributed to soldiers before D-Day, was included in an undated June 1944 letter, as well as similar letters from the commanders of the XIX Corps and 30th Division. Ammons mailed these publications home along with a five franc note.

**Physical Description/Extent:**

7.25 cubic feet

**Accession/Record Group Number:**

2013-018; 2013-046

**Language:**

English

**Permanent Location:**

V-D-4-5, M-6-13

**Repository:**

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

## **Administrative/Biographical History**

Benjamin Troy Ammons was born on May 3, 1906, to Troy and Maud Ammons in Jackson, Tennessee. In 1925, he joined the 117th Infantry, Tennessee National Guard. In 1936, he was promoted to 2nd lieutenant. In September 1940 the 117th Infantry was inducted into federal service as part of the 30th Division and traveled to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for training. Shortly thereafter, Ammons was promoted to 1st lieutenant. The following year, they participated in both the VII Corps Tennessee Maneuvers and Carolina Maneuvers. Before leaving for further training at Camp Blanding, Florida, Ammons was promoted to captain in February 1942. In April 1942, Ben married Esther Randolph while home on leave. In September 1942, the 117th Infantry underwent infantry training at Fort Benning, Georgia. In September 1943, the regiment participated in the Second Army Tennessee Maneuvers in Middle Tennessee. By the end of 1943, they moved to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, to finalize their training. The regiment departed from Boston on February 12, 1944, aboard the USS *John Ericsson* and landed in Liverpool, England, twelve days later.

The 117th landed on Omaha Beach four days after D-Day; however Maj. Ammons's correspondence indicated he didn't arrive until after June 14. On the morning of July 7, 1944, they attacked the Germans across the Vire River and repulsed a German counterattack that night. As they advanced on Saint-Lô, the 30th Division was hit by a friendly fire bombing that killed 88 and wounded over 500. The 30th captured Saint-Lô on July 26 and Troisgots on July 31. Major Ammons was awarded the Bronze Star for actions performed on August 1, 1944, during the Battle of Avranches, when he personally led his battalion in a flanking maneuver which routed the Germans. The 117th withstood a massive German counterattack from August 6 until August 8 and began advancing again on the 11th. On September 2, the 30th Division became the first American infantry unit to set foot in Belgium and on September 17, the 117th became the first Allied unit to enter the Netherlands. On September 20, 1944, the 117th began their assault on the Siegfried Line. Ammons was awarded the Silver Star for actions performed during this October 2-3 assault when he "remained with his front line troops leading many of the actual assaults, with utter disregard of the personal hazards involved." Company E of the 117th received battle honors from Brig. Gen. James Lewis for a diversionary maneuver in the October 16 encirclement of Aachen. Maj. Ammons was awarded a bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Silver Star for directing an attack from a forward position from November 16 to November 19, 1944. Ammons was among those from the 117th ordered to retake Stavelot, Belgium, from a German Panzer unit. Ammons was awarded a bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Bronze Star for actions performed commanding his 2nd Battalion that withstood six German assaults near Stavelot. By February 1945, the 117th entered Germany. Lieutenant Colonel Ammons was awarded a second bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Bronze Star for leading his battalion's attack across the Roer River from February 24 to 27. Ammons was awarded his third bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Bronze Star for planning and leading his battalion across the

Rhine River from March 22 to March 28, 1945. They captured Brensteinfurt, Germany, and with it many German soldiers. There they liberated their first group of Allied prisoners of war. On April 17, the 117th captured Magdeburg where they waited to rendezvous with the Soviet army. Following the German and Japanese surrenders, the 117th sailed from Southampton to New York City, then back to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. In November 1945, the 117th was inactivated from service.

Ammons returned home to his wife and child until he was ordered to report to Fort Bragg in January 1946. He remained in the army following World War II. He was promoted to colonel in July 1953. He retired from the Army on June 30, 1961. After retirement he lived in Clarksville with his wife and children. His son, Randolph (Randy), was born in November 1944. His second son, Christopher Ammons, born in 1948, served two tours in Vietnam. Timothy Ammons, the youngest of the three boys, was born sometime afterward. Benjamin died on November 29, 1989.

## **Organization/Arrangement of Materials**

Collection is arranged alphabetically by document type.

## **Conditions of Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access:**

No restrictions

### **Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:**

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## **Index Terms**

### **Personal Names:**

Armstrong, Neil, 1930-2012  
Ammons, Benjamin Troy, 1906-1989  
Hobbs, Leland S. (Leland Stanford), 1892-1966  
Johnson, Walter M., 1903-1997

**Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:**

Tennessee. National Guard  
United States. Army. Infantry Division, 30th  
United States. Army -- Military life  
United States. Army -- Officers

**Subjects:**

Courtship -- Tennessee -- 20th century  
Soldiers -- United States -- 20th century -- Biography -- Sources  
World War, 1939-1945 -- Europe

**Geographic Names:**

Belgium -- History -- 20th century -- Sources  
Camp Atterbury (Ind.) -- History -- 20<sup>th</sup> century -- Sources  
Cannes (France) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources  
Fort Benning (Ga.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources  
Fort Jackson (S.C.) -- History -- 20<sup>th</sup> century -- Sources  
France -- History -- 20th century -- Sources  
Germany -- History -- 20th century -- Sources  
Jackson (Tenn.) -- History -- 20<sup>th</sup> century -- Sources  
Magdeburg (Germany) -- History -- Bombardment, 1945  
Netherlands -- History -- 20th century -- Sources

**Document Types:**

Clippings (information artifacts)  
Correspondence  
Leaflets (printed works)  
Maps (documents)  
Military uniforms  
Orders (military records)  
Photographs  
Postcards  
Theater programs

**Acquisition and Appraisal****Provenance and Acquisition:**

The Benjamin Troy Ammons Papers were donated by Christopher Ammons in 2013.

## **Processing and Administrative Information**

### **Preferred Citation:**

Benjamin Troy Ammons Papers, 1934-1946, Tennessee State Library and Archives

### **Processing Information:**

Processing completed by Zachary Keith in August 2018.

### **Related Archival Materials:**

Christopher D. Ammons Papers, 1967-1970, Tennessee State Library and Archives

## DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

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### CONTAINER LIST

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Photographs -- Neil Armstrong	1980	3	16
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Military equipment -- Tank overalls	1941-1945	Oversize Box 1	
Military equipment -- Canvas haversack	1941-1945	Oversize Box 2	
Military equipment -- German P-38 holster and two canteens from haversack	1941-1945	Oversize Box 3	

## Index to Correspondence

Date: July 17, 1934

To: Mrs. Jack Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Condolence letter from Ammons to Mrs. Randolph (Esther's mother) on the death of her mother.

Date: July 17, 1934

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Condolence letter from Ammons to Esther on the death of her grandmother.

Date: July 19, 1934

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Another love letter from Ben to Esther. It is clear the distance and time apart is getting to the both of them but Ben continues to assure Esther of his love and devotion to her and her alone.

Date: July 22, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben expresses his hardship over writing good letters to Esther and says hers are always far more sweet than he could ever write himself. Ben tries to reassure Esther of everything and asks her to continue to write him often because her letters are the only thing that makes camp bearable.

Date: January 3, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph



From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing to Esther about working at the Armory building and recovering from a cold. He talks about wanting to see her the next day and that he was sorry he couldn't stay with her the night before because of his cold. Includes 2 pictures.

Date: July 15, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes Esther saying camp is easier this time around and that he is not homesick but he misses her terribly. Includes two pictures.

Date: July 15, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: A. U. Taylor

General Contents Description: Tongue-in-cheek memo from A. U. Taylor ordering Esther to write to Ben Ammons at the risk of Ammons's own life. Asks if she had another caller at her house and if she would like to further continue a relationship with Ammons.

Date: July 18, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben expresses his joy over receiving a letter from Esther. He says that he had been cross in camp but that after he received her letter he was so happy and spent 55 cents of Coca-Colas for all the boys.

Date: July 22, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Another love letter from Ben Ammons to Esther. He talks about how most of the other guys at camp had gone to Nashville but he had no interest in social activities because he missed her so much.

Date: July 23, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons and the boys at camp at about to leave for a 3-day maneuver to Happy Hollow. They will have to walk about 15 miles a day. He tells Esther how much he loves and misses her and apologizes if he doesn't write letters as sweet as hers.

Date: July 24, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is telling Esther how he sleeping out in the country under the stars and is thinking of her. Says he has no desire to go to war anymore. He will be home later on Sunday than he had planned but can't wait to see her

Date: July 25, 1935

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons and the other boys at camp have come back from their simulated war at Happy Hollow. This afternoon the second highest general in the army is visiting camp. Two days until he can see Esther.

Date: July 27, 1936

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons and his company have arrived at Camp Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. His convoy was the only one to arrive without incident and there were a few injuries, including by Sgt. Yarbrough's three broken ribs.

Date: July 27, 1936

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ammons has to work out in the South Carolina heat. He thanks Esther for the cake that she has sent to him, despite the fact that her grandmother has just passed away and she must care for her mother and all the visitors. Ben and Esther will get to see each other again on August 5. Includes one picture.

Date: July 31, 1936

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons has been appointed to a new job and is now in charge of getting all the supplies for the battalion on maneuvers. He apologizes to Esther for not writing more often, but he simply doesn't have much time to write.

Date: August 2, 1936

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is clear that Esther is having a hard time coping with the distance and the lack of letters from Ben. He apologizes over and over again and states his loyalty, love, and affection for her.

Date: January 26, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is assuring Esther that despite the flooding in the area, he is okay and asks her not to worry or believe all the rumors. He says the most serious

concerns are the cold weather and wet feet but so far everyone is fine. This is the first time he has been able to write since the waters began to rise, blocking trains and all forms of communication.

Date: February 4, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is apologizing to Esther for not being able to write every day. He gives a detailed outline of his daily schedule. Ben tells Esther to take her broken watch to get fixed. Includes one picture.

Date: February 22, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons writes Esther that even though he has been gone only 13 days, it seems like he has been gone 13 years. He misses her terribly. Note on envelope reads: Please limit your correspondences to one letter each 10 days, Post Office Dept. Includes one picture.

Date: July 19, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ammons has arrived in South Carolina again and describes setting up his living space to Esther. He was assigned the same hut that he was in the year before but had a hard time getting any sleep.

Date: July 22, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben hasn't heard from Esther since he arrived at camp. He expresses his disapproval of that and pleads with her to write him every chance she gets. It seems Ben is having a hard time and is a bit under the weather.

Date: July 23, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is discouraged from not hearing from Esther. His neck injury is bothering him tremendously. He looks at the moon and hopes that Esther is looking at the same moon and thinking of him.

Date: July 25, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben still hasn't received a letter from Esther and is growing more discouraged. There is an officer's dance at Forest Lake Country Club but

Ben says he can't go without his girl. He tells Esther about how many of the boys see camp as a vacation from their girls but his life is not complete unless she is with him.

Date: July 26, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The weather in South Carolina has been dreary and rainy but Ben doesn't mind because he has time to think about Esther. Alin (?) flew into camp and Ben says he can't help being jealous of him, even though he trusts Esther.

Date: July 27, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has finally received a letter from Esther. He went into town in a station wagon to buy homecoming gifts. He says "the jar of an automobile nearly breaks my neck in two or three pieces." He also tells Esther he got her a gift and hopes that her curiosity will keep her occupied while a certain someone is hanging around while Ben is gone.

Date: July 28, 1937

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has received a second letter from Esther and is in much better spirits. Most of the boys at camp are leaving for the "Big Battle" and will be gone for 3 days, leaving Ben and a few guards alone at camp.

Date: August 11, 1938

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing to Esther about a trip to Biloxi he made with some of the other soldiers. He says he isn't very impressed with the city overall, but the wealthy people's homes are spectacular.

Date: August 12, 1938

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing to Esther after the end of a 24-hour guard duty shift, describing his schedule for their upcoming visit together now that "camp" is over.

Date: August 12, 1938

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes Esther a letter from Forrest Hotel where he is meeting a fellow officer for a nice meal. While down in Mississippi, Ben met up with a

couple that knew his parents years and years ago. The couple are millionaires and Ben talks about how amazing their house was.

Date: November 1, 1940

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben describes to Esther his duties with the army and how he trains men on the machine guns and is responsible for everything that they do. He has been distracted with his work and thoughts of Esther that he just now realized that Greece was now in the war as well. Ben and the other men have read the latest Madison County draft list and know a lot of men. Mentions plans to visit her near Christmas.

Date: November 4, 1940

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Bennie is expressing his love to Miss Randolph and describing how he went to the Ringling Bros Circus but he is unable to have fun without her being there.

Date: January 2, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has arrived at Fort Jackson. He is very tired and they start drilling again in the morning.

Date: January 3, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben hopes that 1941 will be a great year and he can finally come home and marry the love of his life. He spent New Year's in Knoxville but was lonesome without Esther. Ben was told that Alin was at Fort Knox and was planning to marry a girl from Nashville. Ben hopes this news doesn't upset Esther. He assures her of his love and devotion to her.

Date: January 4, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a New Year's note from Esther that lifted his spirits. It has rained constantly for 2 days and he must work outside watching over the prisoners. He tells Esther how he feels sorry for the prisoners and is glad no boys from Jackson have been court martialed and sentenced to the guard house yet. He is happy that Esther is in love with him too and hopes this year they can get married and make all the heartache and waiting worth it.

Date: January 8, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben hasn't been able to write as often because they have been busy with school and march around 8 miles a day. It is very cold and his face is red from the cold bitter wind. He misses Esther tremendously but looks at his dog tags and ring and remembers her fondly.

Date: January 11, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is at the Jefferson Hotel in Columbia for a ceremony for a retiring general. The water is not working at camp and they have to bring in water from town to cook with. Ben is nothing short of lovesick for Esther and describes how he will one day be able to spoil her and call her his own.

Date: January 13, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It's Sunday night and Ben talks fondly of all the Sunday nights he and Esther spent together. It costs him \$1.05 to call her every Sunday but he wouldn't miss it for the world. He is now teaching NCO [Noncommissioned Officer] school on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday nights. Unfortunately he expects to be sent to Fort Benning soon for 3 months of schooling but promises he will come home first if that happens.

Date: January 14, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Esther's letters aren't arriving to Ben and he is growing frustrated with the mail service. He spent the day cleaning up camp and said the weather was almost hot. He lists all the little things he loves about Esther.

Date: January 15, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: After Esther's last letter, Ben is happy that she was honest with him about her feelings towards Alin. He says he doesn't mind being second choice as long as he is the final choice. Ben will be making \$180 a month and is thrilled to be able to start preparing for a life of them together. They both are happy about their future.

Date: January 17, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: A quarter of the new recruits are failing their physicals and Ben is frustrated with the lackluster draftees as of lately. Ben tells Esther that first sergeant John Maling and his family had just moved to Fort Jackson and after 2 days their house burned down. Ben says he feels like a failure because he doesn't have much money

and that is why he and Esther haven't been married yet. Most of his friends have been successful in business but a failure in love, so he still feels lucky to have found love with Esther.

Date: January 19, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has received a letter from Esther and another from her mother. Despite her trivializing her illness before, she is actually quite ill and Ben is very concerned. He tells her to not take any chances and to not go back to work until she is absolutely sure she is well again.

Date: January 23, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben called Esther and is now assured that she is feeling much better. He and the other officers have moved into the new officer quarters which he describes as quite nice. Ben and his friend Guy are planning to go see Jeanette MacDonald in town in February. His company is getting most of their supplies and trucks in. The machine gun guys get 23 trucks. They should be receiving the rest of his draftees on Saturday.

Date: January 27, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben's company, M Co., received 10 new selectees and he is impressed with the new farmer boys. They all came from Middle and West Tennessee and from many different towns and counties. In the next couple of days Ben and the rest of the regiment will go for a 20-mile hike to see how in shape they really are. He is worried. Ben enclosed an "inspiration" he had, a poem to Esther entitled "Our Night".

Date: January 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben wishes he could write Esther a longer letter but he is down to his last sheet of paper and can't get any more until the morning. He wonders if the separation of the two of them is punishment for his sins and says he feels especially lonely on Sunday nights, because it is their night to be together. He writes a poem about saying goodbye.

Date: January 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is happy that Esther has grown more comfortable about writing frankly about her love for him. It is quite the comfort to him. He's worried about her cold and is thinking of her always.

Date: February 3, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther that he is glad she went skating with friends and had fun but he wishes he had been there too. Their friend Joe wants to join the English aviation. Ben is becoming quite the homebody but doesn't feel like going out without Esther by his side. He hopes that by the end of the year he will be able to return home to be with her, as he doesn't like the officers in his regiment at Fort Jackson. He seems nostalgic about dancing with Esther and longs for the day when they can dance together again.

Date: February 6, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has received many letters from Esther over the past 10 days and is undoubtedly thrilled. He says the past month seems as if it has gone on forever and upcoming maneuvers and selectees coming in are making it hard for him to have any opportunity to come home. He says he hopes one side or the other wins the war so it will be over and he won't have to worry about having to be away from his angel. Ben is very lonesome.

Date: February 11, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has been assigned to M Co. for good now. He complains to Esther about Ab Taylor and Col. Bond, saying they are showmen and not soldiers and have ultimately wasted 2 months by not having any knowledge of what they should be doing. He says everyone is trying to transfer because of them. He has a hard week coming up, with 24-hour guard shifts followed by another 20-mile hike. He is going to request to go home for a visit in March but is afraid his request will be denied. Ben reframed his picture of Esther and falls asleep looking at it every night.

Date: February 14, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a cake from Esther and boasts about her ability to bake the best cakes. All the officers who had a piece were grateful. It's Valentine's Day but Ben has been unable to go to town and buy a card to send Esther, so he apologizes for his delay.

Date: February 16, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben's new job has put him in charge of the selectees of all Heavy Weapons Company of the 30<sup>th</sup> Division, which includes the 117<sup>th</sup>, 118<sup>th</sup>, 119<sup>th</sup>,



120<sup>th</sup>, 121<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments—a total of around 800 men. Tonight they are hosting a dinner for Guy and about 25 officers are coming in full dress. Ben asks Esther when her vacation is and starts to think about what they can do when she comes to visit. He insists that visiting Charleston is a must.

Date: February 18, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben was unable to get a hold of Esther last night and instead spoke with her mother. He was bitterly disappointed. Almost everyone at camp is out on a night maneuver but Ben's new job makes it so that he doesn't have to go on those anymore. It's very cold outside, so he is glad he is able to lay in bed and keep warm.

Date: February 23, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and Mason are finally getting over their colds and he is feeling much better. Ben is hoping to get his picture made soon so that he can send it to Esther. He believes he won't be sent to school again so that means they have a better chance of being able to see each other. He is getting anxious for her visit. Ben asks Esther why she picked him and hopes that she is happy and will not leave him.

Date: February 26, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The high command is forcing Ben and the other officers to train the selectees fast and he is concerned 2 weeks is not long enough to learn everything they need to know. He thinks it should be 2 months. On the 25<sup>th</sup> he had the honor of talking to the Secretary of War when he came to camp. Ben isn't sure he will be able to come home in March and tells Esther that maybe they shouldn't plan on it, that way they won't be too disappointed.

Date: March 5, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has just spoken with Esther and is feeling upset about not being able to see her. His regiment received 2 officers for its allotment and Ben was one of those picked. He tells Esther it is for the course he has always wanted to take— heavy weapons. He hopes to come home for a weekend but if he does then he is guaranteed to not be able to leave again for a few months.

Date: March 11, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes Esther a short letter telling her that he has made it to Columbus, GA, okay. Classes start tomorrow and he has to do a lot of paperwork.

Date: March 13, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is very busy with studying and work. Overall he likes the new camp and tells Esther there are about 4500 officers there too and the camp has every kind of equipment possible. He has a 4-hour class in the morning on Mess Management and another 4-hour class on Map Reading. Ben tells Esther how great it was to see her and how hard it was to say goodbye.

Date: March 19, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Esther has written Ben a letter saying she wants to marry him and has gotten her mother's approval. They plan to wed in 6 months and Ben is nothing short of elated. He promises to make her happy and to worship her forever. He knows that God will not let anything happen to prevent them from marrying one another after 7 years of courtship.

Date: March 21, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Esther has sent a cake to Ben and he tells her how good it is. Ben is planning on joining the officer's club. Esther is planning another visit and Ben is very pleased with that prospect. He has been told that school gets easier as it goes on and he should have more free time since he won't have to study as much.

Date: March 29, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has been very busy. They have been firing machine guns and it has been pouring down rain. He tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> place out of 600 men and was only beat by 1 point. Esther is planning to come visit over Ben's birthday and he tells her how impressed all the other boys are by her beauty. He also hopes that he will be able to come home for Easter but is still uncertain.

Date: March 30, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Today is Ben and Esther's 7-year anniversary. He asks her if she is certain she will be visiting May 2 because he will put in an application for her room. He went to the officer's club and watched a dance. They have dances every

Wednesday and Saturday and Ben hopes to be able to take Esther to one on her visit. He tells Esther that by May he will be done with weapon training and moved onto tactics, so there will be less studying.

Date: April 1, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and the other officers are going to be taken out into the country and dropped off with only a map and compass and must find their way back to the truck. They will be divided into groups of 2 or 3. Ben is confident he will have no troubles navigating his way back.

Date: April 5, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The uncertainties of their life together are beginning to wear on Esther, but Ben does his best to reassure her of everything. He doesn't think he will be able to get home before she visits at the beginning of May but will try his hardest to. He tells Esther that if she is unable to get a room at the officer's club then she will have to get a hotel in town and to not worry about expense.

Date: April 8, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben was unable to call Esther because he went with two brothers up to the Columbia for the weekend for Army Day. He was able to see most of his friends but unfortunately it was so busy that they weren't able to talk long. He doesn't think he will be able to come home for Easter and is clearly upset by this. He is counting the days until he is able to see her again.

Date: April 11, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is clear the distance is getting to Esther. Despite her loving Ben she is afraid she will have to give him up for good. Ben reassures her that happiness takes time and effort and things don't always go according to plan. He tells Esther all about their future together and how he will make a great husband and she will never regret the fact that she was tied down to him so early and never able to meet any other boys. He definitely will not be able to come home for Easter but is eagerly awaiting her arrival in May.

Date: April 16, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben was able to talk to Esther on the phone on Easter, which made his day not a complete failure. Esther has officially been reserved a room

from May 2 to 9 and Ben is so happy that she is able to stay that long. He hopes for longer. Ben is counting down the days until she arrives.

Date: April 17, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is halfway done with his classes so it is all downhill from here. He already plans to put in a request for a 10-day leave so he can go home and see Esther. He is anxiously awaiting her arrival in a couple of weeks.

Date: April 24, 1941

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a very sweet and complimentary letter from Esther and asks her to not put him on a pedestal because he is only an ordinary man. He is excited for her visit so they can finally be next to each other and talk about their future together.

Date: February 7, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: A quick letter to Esther that slightly scolds her for asking him if he will change his mind about getting married. He says he will not argue in letters over it. He also assures her that despite her concerns over age, he has never considered age to be a problem, whether she is 20 or 120.

Date: February 24, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Esther has recently visited Ben down in Columbia, South Carolina, and he tells her how wonderful it was to see her. Apparently her trip home was not very smooth and he asks for more details. Ben received 68 new men in his company and is getting ready to train them.

Date: February 26, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It has rained all night in Columbia and now it is actually snowing. Ben tells Esther how pretty camp looks with the snow on the tents. He is about to receive new recruits for training.

Date: March 2, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Esther's letter describing all the trials and tribulations of traveling home from her visit to South Carolina is quite amusing to Ben. He tells her that

everything always seems to happen to her. Ben tells Esther a "military secret" about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion being filled up with experienced men from other units and will leave at the end of the month and supposedly be gone for 8 weeks. He is unsure what this all means for him, and tells Esther that this just proves they can't delay being married any longer.

Date: March 10, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Anxiously awaiting marriage, Ben encourages Esther to set a date and he will do anything and everything to make it happen. He discusses that he has about \$200 a month to live off of and that he has seen plenty of couples and families live off less. He is back working with the company and was supposed to go on a ground duty tour, but that was canceled. It seems everything in the Army is uncertain during war. He closes the letter with "Remember Pearl Harbor."

Date: March 13, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther that life is short and that a lot of good men are losing their lives in the war. For that reason, getting married is imperative and the sooner the better. Ben agrees to Esther's request for Florida to be the location of their honeymoon, but no real details have been decided because they have to see how much time the Army will give Ben off.

Date: March 17, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Wedding planning has begun! Ben and Esther are considering going to Biloxi for their honeymoon but have to make sure he can get back to camp on time. He also suggests Florida. He tells her to go look for a suitable ring and asks her if she wants him to have one as well. Esther's mother and father have offered to allow Esther to stay with them while Ben is gone. The months following the wedding are very uncertain for Ben and the army.

Date: March 18, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: More wedding and honeymoon discussion. Finding a place to live is harder than Ben had expected but has everyone helping him look as well. He voices concern over the place they honeymoon but hasn't been able to get to town to check train schedules. Ben is now on Col. Bach's staff as Regimental Adjutant.

Date: March 23, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Wedding date has been set to April 10 but Ben will only be able to have 5 days leave, so the trip will have to be very short. He acknowledges how hard Esther is working to get everything in order for the wedding. A potential apartment didn't work out and Ben continues his search for a place to live.

Date: March 24, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther to go ahead and get the ring that she has found and to not worry about expense. She also bought a sewing machine and Ben gives her his approval of the purchase. Ben also tells Esther to go ahead and publish their wedding announcement with pictures in the newspaper.

Date: March 27, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben reminds Esther that he is now staff officer. His leave has been approved and train tickets have been bought. The wedding date has been changed to April 13 so that they have more days together.

Date: March 28, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben once again reassures Esther about the wedding and says Florida is definitely where they will spend their honeymoon but the exact location is a surprise. He lists people to send wedding invitations and announcements to and acknowledges all the hard work she must do preparing for the wedding.

Date: March 29, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther about how the government is building huts instead of tents at camp so he is bunking in the officer's club for now. Ben is growing impatient while waiting for the wedding day to arrive. He asks Esther to not work so hard before the wedding and says if she must make so many clothes she needs to quit her job at Rosenblooms. He can't wait to come to Jackson to be with her.

Date: March 31, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes Esther about how excited he is to see their wedding announcement in the Sunday newspaper. The rest of the letter just discusses his excitement and nervousness about their upcoming marriage.

Date: April 1, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has seen Esther's picture in the paper and describes how he fell in love all over again and has been showing every officer at camp her picture. The wedding is getting closer and he assures her that he will be the best husband she could ever ask for.

Date: April 2, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is describing their new apartment and tells her he has paid rent through May 5. The entire apartment will be furnished except for linens and silver and also includes an electric stove and refrigerator. Camp is busy and so is Ben, trying to get everything in order for his leave as well as new recruits and divisions.

Date: April 6, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It's Easter, and Ben is writing Esther about how he hates to be missing Easter church service with her. It is one week until they get married and Ben is bursting with happiness. Esther has expressed some fear over the upcoming wedding, but he assures her it will be a wonderful end to 8 years of courtship.

Date: April 7, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The wedding day draws closer and Esther is receiving presents from all of her friends for the wedding. Ben expresses his appreciation for a letter that Esther's mom has sent him. Ben tells Esther about how it was Army Day at camp and there were a lot of visitors. He has sent her some bloodwork laboratory reports and assures her that he no longer has low blood pressure and is only losing weight because he has been working so hard.

Date: April 9, 1942

To: Miss Esther Randolph

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: This is the last letter Ben is writing to Esther before he returns home to Jackson, TN, to be married. He once again professes his love and devotion to her and talks about how after they are married, his life will be complete. Ben tells Esther that he knows she is giving up more than he is but he hopes he can prove to her that it is worth it.

Date: No date given but presumably after April 13, 1942

To: Esther

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: A detailed list of travel plans from Jackson N.C.R.R. and go to Nashville then Atlanta and then Colombia to see Esther!

Date: February 22, 1943

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and Esther are separated again but he tells her how heavenly the past 10 months have been now that they are married. He tells her that things are uncertain as long as we are in this war but it will come to an end and they can be together. Includes blank check for Second National Bank with an address on the back.

Date: February 26, 1943

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has low morale and is feeling discouraged since he is away from Esther. His friend Mason is having a hard time because his regiment, the 119<sup>th</sup>, is working them to death. Ben hopes to get home before Esther even gets this letter.

Date: November 20, 1943

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is anxious to get back home to his wife and newborn baby. He expresses his concerns and anxiousness over being a new father and him not being able to be at home with her and their son. Ben thinks his body is starting to give out on him and that he will not be of much use to the army for much longer. The weather today was ideal. Ben had officer school last night for three hours which tired everyone out.

Date: November 24, 1943

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing his wife thanking her for sending him and the other commanders' candy. He also thanks her for sending him a radio, saying that it will help him escape his loneliness at night. He walked nine miles today so he and Col. Fuller ate and headed to bed early.

Date: December 1, 1943

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Western Union Telegram; reads "Wonderful and I'm very proud. Am still trying to get leave difficult because of range. I ring all my love—Ben"

Date: January 1, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther (Randolph) Ammons

From: Ben Ammons



General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing to his wife on New Years' night. He talks about how a lot of people have gone on leave for the holidays and he is lonely and misses his family. He also includes a quote about how the war should be worth the price that is being paid.

Date: January 3, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther (Randolph) Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing to his now wife, telling her how much he misses her and their new son. Includes 1 picture of the couple.

Date: January 17, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben Ammons is writing his wife about his battalion leaving soon and to not worry if she does not hear from him for a while. He writes that he went to Indianapolis and saw a show and also bought his wife some lapel pins that he was sending.

Date: February 5, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received four letters from Esther yesterday. He writes about Randy and asks how big he is. Esther has been sick recently so Ben asks how she is feeling.

Date: February 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) At sea. Ben misses Esther, their two-year anniversary is approaching. He says the trip has been nice so far, luckily they have not run into any "tin fish," presumably torpedoes or submarines.

Date: February 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: At sea. Ben is wondering about how his family is doing and what the future holds for them. One picture of Ben and Esther included.

Date: February 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) At sea. Ben is feeling a bit sea sick. However, he seems to be enjoying the trip, his quarters are nice, the food is wonderful. He doesn't know where they are or where they are going.

Date: February 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) At sea. They are nearing their destination and Ben is ready to admit that the "tin fish" will not interfere. He has been in the officers' lounge listening to the band. He jokes that the younger officers "are about ready to start jitter bugging with each other for lack of a suitable partner." He wishes he could dance with her again. He asks how Randy is.

Date: February 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) They have arrived in Liverpool, awaiting embarkation. He's hoping to tell her his location when he can. He tells her not to worry and requests a picture of both her and Randy.

Date: February 24, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben is finally on dry land again. He can't wait to receive his first letter from her. He tells her he is always thinking about her and how much she would enjoy the beautiful things he has seen.

Date: March 2, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben received his first letter in three weeks from Esther, dated February 4. He tells her they are in England and the *Nashville Tennessean* and *Jackson Sun* are incorrect in saying they are in Italy. He is still learning the English system of money. He tells Esther the English people have been through a lot but are determined. One of the men in his battalion was born only 4 miles from where they are stationed in England. He asks Esther to send him a watch with a luminous face.

Date: March 3, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben is anxious to receive another letter from Esther and still only has the one from early February. The English keep everything in tip top shape despite material shortages. Ben doesn't mind the dehydrated food so far. He asks how Randy is.

Date: March 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Address form from Ben.

Date: March 8, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben reminisces about Valentine's Days past. He misses Randy and wishes he could share the burden of raising him.

Date: March 14, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben just returned from training to three letters from Esther. He is glad everyone is enjoying Randy and worries about her taking care of him all by herself.

Date: March 17, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben has been training the past two days. Today, he received his trunk and bed roll. He has worn through two shirts washing them every night. He comments on their upcoming two-year anniversary.

Date: March 18, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) It is the weekend and Ben is hopeful that he can reread Esther's letters and answer them properly. He has been lying in bed at night thinking about his family. They are keeping busy.

Date: March 19, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Tomorrow Ben is assigned a jeep. Easter is approaching and Ben hopes to be home this time next year. He wishes he could be home to help raise Randy. He hopes to save enough money to buy her a few things while in England. He remarks that the British prefer American cigarettes.

Date: March 22, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben received four of Esther's letters today. He inquires about Randy. Col. Bowers just returned from Sicily and everyone is pleased to see him.

Date: March 25, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Telegram: "very happy to hear from you dearest, Love Ben Ammons."

Date: March 27, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is glad Esther finally received one of his letters. He wants her to start numbering her letters so he knows the order. Spring is finally starting but the nights are still cool. He hopes to go to London soon.

Date: March 29, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) He received two of Esther's letters today and is tickled by Randy's actions. Ben returned from London yesterday. He still hasn't been able to buy a watch, because there aren't any for sale.

Date: March 30, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is proud of Esther for saving up to buy a \$1000 war bond. He doesn't need money because there is very little to purchase in England other than his meals and cigarettes. It is almost Easter and he has been thinking about past Easters with Esther and how much he wants to be with her. He jokes that the Canadians and Americans have invaded England, because most of the people he meets aren't British, although most everyone is in uniform.

Date: April 1, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Col. Kelly threw a party for the locals the other night, who were overjoyed at the food selection. Lt. Flack, a magician, entertained. He visited Ed, about 30 miles away, and almost got lost on the way back due to the blackouts. He apologizes for rambling but the things he wants to talk about are "taboo." He recently discovered that the British won't eat squirrels, so the Americans requested all the "tree rats" that are killed. Col. Fuller assigned Ben to give a talk to a village club next week on America.

Date: April 1, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is Sunday, which brings sadness for Ben as he thinks about his family. He is glad he got to hold Randy before he left, but worried that he left too much responsibility on Esther to raise him. The weather has turned cold again. Ben has to deliver his speech tomorrow and is worried about his lack of American history

knowledge. The Germans launched their biggest raid yet the other night which kept him awake.

Date: April 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) He and the rest of Col. Fuller's staff are living in a town now. He is able to see movies, drink tea, and see people again. Esther's friend or relative Rosalie is engaged.

Date: April 7, 1944, continued

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben enjoys all the updates on Esther and Randy's comings and goings. Ben remarks that nearly everyone in England seems to have a baby, but he never sees any pregnant women. Easter is approaching and they are set to receive three days off. Easter makes Ben reminisce about the Easters spent with Esther. Their two year anniversary is nearing as well and Ben wishes he could be home to celebrate with Esther.

Date: April 8, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Esther shipped his birthday present, a new watch. Ben is concerned that his letters written at sea haven't arrived. He just received his first Reader's Digest.

Date: April 9, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is Easter Sunday and Ben reminisces about prior Easters with Esther and how different things seem now. He hopes to bring her and their children to Europe one day to show them all the things he has seen. His colonel just received a package of candy, Ben asks Esther to send him one if it isn't too much trouble. Their anniversary is only four days away and Ben reiterates his love for Esther and mentions having more children. "It's another beautiful moonlit night and I can hear the planes going on their way to give Hitler another smacking..."

Date: April 13, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben wants to write a long letter for their anniversary, but only has time for a short one. His watch came yesterday and he is very excited about it.

Date: April 14, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Telegram: "Watch arrived yesterday just what I needed."

Date: April 15, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: He received two more of Esther's letters the other day, which made him feel lonesome. Ben is still enjoying the watch Esther gifted him. He is once again in a hurry and apologizes for the short letter.

Date: April 15, 1944, evening

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben thanks Esther for another letter that included a tracing of Randy's hand. He dreams of the day they can be together again. Today was wet rainy, muddy, and foggy.

Date: April 16, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Telegram: Happy Anniversary.

Date: April 20, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben apologizes for not writing much recently, he's been busy training. He thanks her again for his watch, and writes it "is perfect."

Date: April 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben just received a 16-page letter from Esther, which included pictures of both Esther and Randy. He didn't get to give the talk he spoke about earlier because their unit was ordered to move suddenly. Spring has finally arrived to England. Flowers of all types populate the landscape. He dreams about the day they will live together once again in a big house, Esther cooking for him in a frilly apron, and sitting together on the couch.

Date: April 24, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben is dismayed to learn that Esther didn't receive flowers on their anniversary like he planned. He still rereads her letters and looks at her and Randy's photographs.

Date: April 25, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben trimmed and stored his pictures of Esther and Randy in his billfold so he carries them with him all the time. He received a letter from Jack who is stationed 80 miles away. He hopes Randy is allowing her to get some rest.

Date: April 27, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a letter from Esther yesterday. He located Tip Taylor, about 30 miles south of their location. He expects to go to London soon. Ben describes the English railroad system and freight cars and even draws a locomotive. There is a quality bus system and nearly every road is paved. He tells Esther that England drafts women too and puts them in any job they wish. Almost no one below 40 is out of uniform. He wishes he had a camera. He saw Windsor Castle and describes its magnificence. "A falling and exploding bomb makes more noise than I had expected and is not a cheering sound." He also visited a Roman theater and an old cathedral.

Date: April 29, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben replies to Esther's last letter about her going into town and visiting with her friend, Frances. Esther had apparently forgotten to put nail polish on one of her hands, which amused Ben. He reminisces of their last meeting, a hurried kiss as he hopped into a taxi. Ben recently purchased a gift for , he isn't sure of value anymore because of the high prices in England. He said it cost him 12 pounds, 10 shillings, almost a whole month's pay, which is 14 pounds. He warns her that at some point she won't receive letters from him as often because things are bound to start soon. He wishes he could tell her all about where he goes and what he sees but they are "military secrets." Includes one picture of Esther and Ben holding baby Randy.

Date: April 30, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben received two more letters today from Esther. He is amazed at how fast Randy is growing.

Date: May 5, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received two more letters today, complete with pictures. He is impressed with Randy's growth and thinks he resembles him now. Ben jokes that he will send Randy a spanking by mail if his temper doesn't improve. He has been extremely busy recently traveling lots. He recently visited Jack and saw Hugh as

well. Ben asks if any of his letters have been censored. He asks for more candy, by fast boat this time.

Date: May 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received two more letters today, one with a message from Randy that he particularly enjoyed. He reveals that his crossing of the Atlantic was smooth, even though it didn't feel that way to him, "water, water everywhere - and all rough." The weather is warm for a change and the trees are beginning to bloom. He went back to the store where he saw a pin he planned on purchasing for Esther but a bomb destroyed it before he returned. He blames Hitler for not allowing him to purchase the pair he wanted. Ben apologizes for not writing more. He asks if Randy is spoiled. The letter ends abruptly, the air raid siren blew, which means lights out!

Date: May 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben complains about the cold weather. Ben went to church this morning but accidentally went to a Church of England ("whatever that is") service rather than a Catholic one. The church itself was beautiful, over a thousand years old. Ben explains pubs to Esther: "A pub is a beer parlor where they sell beer and liquor when they have it, which is seldom. They are divided into two sections. One section for the upper class or "Gentry" and the other for the lower class or common folks." He says they are more like a club than a saloon. He describes picture shows or "cinemas" as the British call them. The price depends on where you sit, the cheapest are downstairs, the most expensive are in the "peanut roost." "Tea time is at 10 and 5 and believe me everybody stops work for tea." Ben sees few cars but plenty of bicycles. He admires their policemen, saying they don't carry guns, but are highly trained and "far superior to ours." "The English soldier is a crackerjack and disciplined within an inch of his life. The English are reserved, polite, and very quiet, and very intelligent and stubborn." He mentions seeing babies everywhere again and then asks about Randy. Two newspaper clippings from the *Stars and Stripes* accompany the letter.

Date: May 9, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben received another letter from Esther today, all about Randy. Those are his favorites. He's worried Randy will be walking and talking before he sees him again. Ben asks Esther to send him vitamin pills.

Date: May 14, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is worried. Randy is having an operation to remove an extra finger and Esther has to drive to Memphis to see the physician. Ben wishes he were



there to help. He caught a ride on a fighter plane and flew to visit Jack. Jack was switching from radio to photography the following day and excited about it. The next day he visited all the historic spots in London: Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, St Paul's Cathedral, and dozens of others. He also attended a production of "The Lisbon Story." He saw his first USO show a week ago. One of their relative's husbands, Johnny, is missing in action.

Date: May 14, 1944, evening

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes another letter on the 14th and is feeling better than in the morning. Ben ordered flowers for her today, Mother's Day. He just met General Omar Bradley and General Eisenhower and was thrilled to have met men who will be remembered by history. He asks for news about Guy Windrow, a friend. The weather is better, but still cool in the shade. Ben is feeling quite homesick again. Included is the program from "The Lisbon Story" performed at the London Hippodrome.

Date: May 17, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben had to make a trip away from his post. He is still worried about Randy's operation. He dreams about being back with her and of Randy running down the path to greet him upon his return home. He asks about Rosalie's wedding plans.

Date: May 18, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben just returned home from his trip to receive Esther's letter describing the operation. Ben is relieved that the operation was a success and proud of Randy and Esther for their bravery throughout. He received the box of candy she sent and is grateful. Ben is writing at 12:30 and can hardly really see so he must go.

Date: May 19, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has spent most of his day thinking about his family, since they are in Memphis for Randy's operation. Ben discovered that he has a few gray hairs. He is lonesome for home. "It is a cruel trick of fate that people who live in time of war or chaos can never know the peace and happiness of other generations who are fortunate enough to live in a normal peaceful life without being separated from their loved ones..." "The weather lately has been that average English May weather, which for the most part is terrible." It is rainy, cold, and dark, although Ben admits that it can be nice. "When I have reached the conclusion that it's the most wretched country on the globe, the sun comes out just long enough to prove it's the most beautiful." He closes the letter asking if Randy is teething yet.

Date: May 28, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben apologizes for not writing much recently, "because of various reasons that I can't mention." He is relieved that Randy's operation went well. He asks how the plans for Rosalie's wedding are coming along. Ben loves hearing about Randy and looking at pictures of him. He talks about the silversmiths' work in England but that the prices are "sky high." He tells Esther not to listen to his mother's "crabbiness" and that she is probably just lonely. He concludes the letter with how much he loves and misses Esther. Includes one picture of Esther and Randy.

Date: May 28, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Strangely, it has been hot today. Ben agrees with Esther that they should take a second honeymoon when he returns home. Ben professes his love for her: "I wouldn't particularly care what happened to me in future battles I must be in, if I didn't have my sweetheart and little son waiting for me back home." Ben promises to buy her a pair of earrings. Ben's postscript apologizes for his poor writing recently as he has lots on his mind.

Date: May 31, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is feeling very lonely. He is happy that Esther has Randy to keep her company. He jokes with her about the upcoming wedding she is attending, especially about catching the bouquet. He is proud of Randy's behavior in church. Ben just got a haircut so Esther needn't worry about English girls now. A clipping of school children is included.

Date: June 1944

To: Maj. Ben T. Ammons

From: Lt. Col. W. T. Bird

General Contents Description: While undated, Lt. Col. Bird responds to Ben's letter from the 7th. He tells Ben about life in Leavenworth, where he teaches at Command & General Staff School. He thinks Ben's unit will "be in the big game when it starts." He wishes him luck and says he will be following their activity.

Date: June 1, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben thanks Esther for his most recent package of candy and vitamin pills. He weighed himself at a drugstore the other day, 172 pounds, which he has a hard time believing. He discusses graduating from Leavenworth, which has helped

him more than he expected. He seems to notice babies and children more now that he's a father. Ben seems to be acclimating to life in England. He even includes monetary math to show Esther the difficulty of understanding English currency. He is sending her two pairs of earrings. He ends the letter abruptly, telling her he has night patrol.

Date: June 3, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben just wrapped Esther's package containing the earrings, a gold-plated brass bracelet, and a bead necklace made by a Polish soldier in Italy. He hasn't been able to find a suitable gift for Randy yet. He asks about Rosalie's upcoming wedding. He reiterates his love for her. His S-3, who was married one and a half years ago, was recently asked by his wife for a divorce. It is a beautiful day in England, and Ben went outside and picked poppies and other flowers.

Date: June 4, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and Col. Fuller went out tonight to see a movie, "Birth of the Blues" starring Bing Crosby, Mary Martin, and Rochester. Things have been quiet recently. He is pleased to hear that Randy's finger is recovering well. Ben thinks the mail is being held up because of the "impending operations" since Esther hasn't heard from him in a while.

Date: June 6, 1944, D-Day!

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: "Today is the one for which the whole world has waited." Ben is sentimental of his past with Esther and wishes he would have been better. He then explains the operations. "I am not in the initial assault troops although I am slightly jealous of those who are such as Capt. Chick and Col. Bowers. But very soon I do expect to enter the fight. I am not frightened, only a little curious so far. I well realize what can happen but feel that it won't if for no reason than that I love you so much. So I shall go into this big adventure with thoughts of you and Randy in my heart and with the hope that if I have not been completely successful in making you happy and providing you with security and peace of mind, that at least I have helped a little." Includes one news clipping.

Date: June 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received three letters from Esther today and apologizes that his have been held up for security reasons. He enjoys stories of Randy at the hospital and Esther's description of the wedding.

Date: June 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Undated. Ben wants to tell Esther much, but can't yet for security reasons. He hopes the mail has been released. He asks about Randy.

Date: June 12, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is still in England. He has been thinking about both Esther and Randy and desires to see them again. He has a pocketbook full of pictures of the two of them that he looks at often. He is not sure when he will be able to write again, perhaps the next will be from France.

Date: June 13, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben has lots of news but can't tell Esther yet. He can only express his love for her and Randy.

Date: June 14, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben says he expected to be in France by now but remains in England. He complains that it rains every day and is still cold enough for long underwear.

Date: June 20, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has finally arrived in France. He says his "feet have been wet ever since I waded ashore on the beach." He says he is living in a hole in the ground. "Not five minutes ago I saw a German plane shot down by four Spitfires. Capt. Chick made it through D-Day ok. He hopes Randy is behaving and tells them how much he loves them.

Date: June 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: "While our artillery and the German "88s" are busy pounding away at each other I'm sitting here in my "hole in the ground" minding my own business." The weather remains dreary and cold. "Some of the villages are flat and others hardly touched at all. The people still go about their lives as if nothing was happening." Ben was offered a glass of wine by one of the villagers and was much too strong for him. He wants to study his French dictionary to better communicate with the French people. "Four Spitfires and two German planes had the darnest fight this morning over us and the Germans lost. Nearby is a streamlined train the Allied bombers hit during the invasion,

and Ben thinks Esther's father would be upset at the state of it. "Transportation people are working night and day repairing the road and the engines." Ben lives for the day that he can be reunited with his family.

Date: June 24, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben jokingly refers to his living quarters as "Hotel Ammons, 2x6x6 - dirt lived, running water when it rains." He received four of Esther's letters last night and is overjoyed. He is pleased that his mail has been released and she is once again receiving his letters. He tells Esther her letters are a "big morale factor in his not very comfortable existence." He warns her that his letters won't come as often "because of necessary interruption to fight a war." "The front has been very quiet in our sector today..." He talks about Rosalie, Randy's finger, Esther's weight loss, and Esther's garden. He closes the letter quickly telling her that "the Jerry's are getting a little noisy so I'd better stop while I can."

Date: June 26, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: "It is raining again and everyone is busy trying to stay as dry as possible in their private foxholes." "Our part of the front remains comparatively quiet, but we still have to nose dive into a safe place when Jerry opens up with artillery." Ben is surprised at the few deaths, as most have only been wounded. Col. Fuller heard from his son who was in the assault. He was wounded and is already back to a hospital in England. "Funny what a man thinks of during danger. Through my mind always runs memories of our life together and the question of how Randy looks like now or how he will be when grown up."

Date: June 29, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben just received 5 more letters from Esther. He hopes they will now be back on their "regular ten-day delivery schedule." Now that he is in France he can reveal where in England he was stationed. The first month, he was in a camp just outside of Petworth in southern England. After that he was in Hemel Hempstead, near London. His friend Jack was in Colchester. He reveals that he was caught in a bombing raid before they ever reached camp.

Date: June 30, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Another letter arrived from Esther yesterday, with color pictures. He tells Esther how beautiful she looks in them and how big Randy has grown. He received her two boxes recently and already ate all the contents. Things are slow

today, the sun is out finally. One of his officers was decorated today, deservedly so. "He pulled off a terribly dangerous job and got back alive but wounded. Even killed 2 Germans in hand-to-hand after being wounded. I've lost several good friends, but that is to be expected I suppose."

Date: July 2, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is delighted because he is receiving her letters nearly every day now. He is happy that Esther took Randy to visit Ben's mother, who thought the world of Randy. Ben finally got the pictures of himself from Jack and is sending them to Esther. He has been studying his French dictionary and is "going to talk a Frenchman out of some eggs if it kills me." Apparently English children often approached American soldiers and asked, "Any gum, chum?" While French children approach with sacks and ask, "Cigarettes for papa?" "[The French] work in their gardens with artillery blasting all around them..."

Date: July 4, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: This will be Ben's last letter for some time as they are very busy. Ben is pleased that he finally came home with four delicious eggs yesterday. "Saw a pitiful sight yesterday," a mother cow and her calf "laying side by side both killed by the same shell burst - would break your heart to see them." The weather continues to be rainy.

Date: July 5, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received two wonderful letters last night from Esther, complete with pictures. The mail is back to its ten-day schedule, however papers are usually a month behind. Ben tells her not to worry if it is a while between letters, sometimes it is impossible to write.

Date: July 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) After a week's continuous fighting Ben finally has a chance to write. "Artillery has pounded us so much I don't think any too clearly. I'm not going to talk about the fighting - I prefer to forget it if possible." Chandler and Stapleton have been killed, Col. Fuller wounded. He thanks her for the recent letters and pictures.

Date: July 24, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) "I would be telling a lie if I pretended to be cheerful. War is as bad as anyone could describe it and only by the grace of God and a charmed life have I lived this long." "Any man who has lived through the hell of artillery barrage will never forget it to his last day on earth." "I have seen men die, good men who were my friends, I have seen others go to pieces and you look upon them with a mixture of pity and disgust that they are American. Even I may have that happen to me before it's over - it takes an iron nerve and a hard heart in war."

Date: August 4, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ammons is getting his first rest since July 7. He was able to sleep in a real bed, as headquarters was established in one of the few houses not destroyed by shelling. He tells Esther that her letters have been "a life saver in the mud." He tells her that his division (the 30th) has been in all the major battles on their front, St. Lo, Vire River crossing, and the Vire River breakthrough. He talks about being knocked down by shells. [The Army has censored the name of a wounded comrade.] Ammons describes the beauty and destruction of Saint-Lô, the quality of German soldiers, and the picture of their son Randy that Esther sent in their last letter.

Date: August 10, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has found time to write during "the fourth day of the toughest battle [they] have been in and it's still just as bad as ever." Mortar and artillery shells are landing 50 yards away. He promises to write more when they reach a rest area.

Date: August 16, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) They finally stopped advancing today and Ben was able to rest a little and read Esther's three most recent letters. "I came out of the battle of Mortain a little over a week ago and have been moving fast since then, not however, without opposition from the Germans who still seem to have plenty of steam left in the boiler in spite of our success." "Ernest Frankland had an experience that should gray his hair."

Date: August 17, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: He tells his wife how beautiful she is. He describes how beautiful Mortain was. They recently stayed at an unharmed chateau, and included a picture. The ladies that lived there fed them well and were overjoyed when Ammons gave them chocolate. He tells Esther he has lost a lot of weight. Three days prior, the jeep behind him blew up after hitting a land mine.

Date: August 18, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Another day of rest. Ben talks about the Kodak pictures of Randy. He tells Esther stories about the French townspeople. Snipers haven't been as bad lately, but the mines are worse. He worries about how much longer the war will go on and dreams of the day he returns to Esther and Randy.

Date: August 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ammons is happy to see France "without the little foot by foot fighting through the hedges." He has been able to sleep in real beds and treated like royalty by the French. He misses his family and hopes that the war won't leave a lasting effect on him. "The worst experience of all is just the accumulated blur and haunting vagueness of too long in the lines. The everlasting alertness. The noise and fear. The cell-by-cell exhaustion. The thinning of ranks around you as day follows nameless day. And the constant march into eternity of your own small quota of chance of survival. Those are the things that haunt and destroy."

Date: September 2, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The 117th has slowed down enough for him to relax and write Esther again. He is staying in a big French castle (Chateauform' le Grand Mello) owned by a count and countess. He says it is at the mouth of the Seine River, near a large city. He appreciates the package Esther sent with candy and chewing gum. He recently attended two USO shows with Edward G. Robinson and Dinah Shore. They marched 27 miles the other day and he remains "convinced the end is in in sight." He captured a surrendering German the other day and intends to bring his pistol home. The French are ecstatic as the Americans liberate their towns. He mentions that the French underground has helped them immensely. He describes the underground's treatment of collaborators: the men are arrested or shot when resisting and the women are marched into the public square and their heads "shaved to the skin."

Date: September 3, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: This is their third day in a little French village. He reminisces about spending Sundays with Esther back home. He mentions the horrors the



German army has committed in occupied France. "It's unbelievable that humans could be so ruthless and cruel. Hardly a family has not felt the iron hand of the German army. He wonders where all the middle-aged people are in France. "Working in Germany or in concentration camps or murdered without reason," he speculates. He worries that he will have to go to the Pacific.

Date: September 6, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and the 117th have arrived in Belgium but the Army censors have removed all mention of it. He describes the beauty of the landscape, fruit, and flowers. They have been capturing Germans who have no idea how close the Allies are. He mentions cooperation with the Belgian underground.

Date: September 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ammons is worried that he won't be home for Christmas. He hopes he can write more soon but they've been busy. He wants to buy Esther a present but there is nothing for sale. He hopes they will reach the Siegfried Line before the Germans have time to reinforce it.

Date: September 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: (Photostat) Ben is spending the night in a very nice house. He has a large box of grapes to snack on, a gift from a local Belgian count and countess.

Date: September 8, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben just finished walking 25 miles in the rain and cold. He says fighting is spotty as the Germans are racing to get behind the Siegfried Line. He worries that soon the townspeople will turn hostile as they enter Germany. They are now in Belgium. He dreams about being home with her and Randy.

Date: September 10, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: They are still in Belgium. Ben's feet are killing him from all the walking. They are still royally welcomed by the townspeople and gifted flowers at every turn.

Date: September 11, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ammons describes the house he and the colonel stayed in the previous night, with a large bed and a hot bath. He isn't sure where he is, but he tells Esther he saw Waterloo battlefield. He looks forward to settling down with her and Randy. He says the food has been better recently and has put on a bit of weight. He wishes he would have brought a camera with him.

Date: September 14, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben's battalion just single-handedly captured a Dutch city of 70,000. The citizens, overjoyed, mobbed their liberators telling them of their "life of slavery" under German occupation. He says the city is "not too badly shot up." They "killed plenty of Germans and captured hundreds more" He asks about Randy.

Date: September 15, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Typewritten letter from Holland. Ben has been staying at a hotel, playing the part of a tourist. He hopes to see some of the old Catholic churches around town.

Date: September 20, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: "No more do the people cheer madly, throw no flowers or fruit. We are in Hitler Land at last." Ben purchased Esther another scarf from the Netherlands. He misses Esther and Randy.

Date: September 21, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: He is staying in the apartment of a former German officer and his wife. He says the only flags flying now are white flags of surrender. He has two Nazi flags he hopes to bring home. Ben worries he will be a stranger when he comes home. He talks about Randy and how much he misses the two of them.

Date: September 22, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: He wishes he were still in Holland. He tells Esther a story of when a Dutch man, a former major in the Dutch Army, gave him a gold medal given to him by the Dutch queen. He talks about Tip Taylor (Andrew Tip Taylor) wearing three stars on his ribbon, while Ben has been in constant combat and only has one. He thinks

that only front line soldiers should be permitted to wear them. In the end he says he doesn't care about stars or ribbons, just to be home with his family.

Date: September 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Not much has happened recently. He has been thinking about their wedding day and "...hundreds of little things that make me love you." He wishes he could be home for Christmas.

Date: September 25, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is cold and rainy in Germany. Ben is sending some of his pictures home for safekeeping. "Your letters and pictures are the only bright spots in an otherwise insane world." He asks how she and Randy are doing. He says he brags about them all the time. He sends a hundred-million mark note home commenting that it is essentially worth nothing due to inflation.

Date: September 26, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is another cold, rainy day in Germany. Ben says he would rather be home with Esther and Randy. "What business does a guy like me have in a war anyway. I am too much in love to be a successful soldier. I have too much to live for and in order to be really a hot shot in combat you must have a large share of 'don't give a hoot' in your system." ... "But the war must be won and I suppose that it is being fought by lots of guys who feel just as I do. Every day is an eternity and each additional battle builds up that pressure in your mind that says, 'Well I'll be sure to get it this time.'"

Date: September 30, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: This is Ben's first letter in 4 days. He was decorated with the Bronze Star yesterday and is sending the citation home. Randy is teething again. Ben keeps thinking about being home with Esther and Randy.

Date: October 1, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben went to the rear of the column to bathe, somewhere in Holland. The unit was shown a movie, "Shine on Harvest Moon," which he enjoyed. While they haven't been fighting much recently, he can count the pill boxes on the Siegfried Line when looking through binoculars. He has been commanding his battalion again, as Col. Lockett was transferred. Ben asks how Randy is doing.

Date: October 11, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Short letter from Ben about Esther and Randy and how much he misses them. He has seen some fighting recently but doesn't expound.

Date: October 13, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben dreads the onset of winter. He misses Esther and Randy and daydreams about them while looking at pictures. "When this is all over I will either have a cast iron disposition or gray hair and the jitters. Personally I think I'll end up with the latter because the strain is really terrific." He tells Esther that his battalion is further into Germany than any other Allied unit. They were also the first into Belgium and Holland, and first to break the Siegfried Line. He says the German people seem to have been living well, good homes and lots of coal. The German Army has taken everything of value in its retreat.

Date: October 16, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Letter to Esther about how wonderful little Randy is. Ben jokes with Esther about the "Battle of the Top Button," referring to her weight struggles. He reassures her he loves her no matter what.

Date: October 18, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben comments that Randy is teething and how difficult that must be for Esther. As he writes, German planes fly overhead bombing and strafing.

Date: October 20, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes to Esther about the difficulty of raising Randy all by herself. He then discusses the struggles of combat. "No one, until he has been through it, can ever even understand just what combat is like. I fully expect to come out years older with grey hair and the jitters." He hopes the war is over by Christmas and sends his love. A news clipping is included.

Date: October 21, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben wonders how much he is missing, not being there while Randy grows up. He sends Esther a clipping and tells her the story is exactly like it was.

Date: October 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes to Esther about Randy and how he wishes he could be there watch him grow up. He tells her of his friend Ernest's (Lt. Col. Ernest Frankland) near escape from a shell. Ben is proud of her

Date: October 24, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben thanks Esther for a recent package. He comments on the constant artillery. He enjoys his comfortable 15-square-foot cellar. He has a whitewashed coal stove in the middle. Support posts contain telephones. In one corner is his single bed, in another is a table where he works on their maps, in a third is a leather divan. He is drinking a glass of German wine while he writes. The town they are in still has 1500 German civilians, some of which are killed occasionally by German artillery fire. Ammons suggests he has little sympathy for them

Date: October 26, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben bought some stationery at a large city in Holland. He tells Esther that Wallis was sent home because "he couldn't take it." He wants her to keep that a secret because "if this thing keeps up I might end up the same way--who knows!" He mentions that Randy is only four days away from being eleven months old. Ben tells Esther he is proud of her for saving money so that one day they can build a house together.

Date: October 27, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes an intimate letter to Esther.

Date: October 29, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther he was watching Allied anti-aircraft guns shoot at German planes when one of the shells didn't fire in the air and landed at his feet, luckily only scaring him. He has had trouble sleeping so the doctor gave him a sedative which he took too much of and slept for sixteen hours straight His friends thought it . hilarious. He has electricity in his cellar now so he is able to listen to the radio. He misses Esther and Randy.

Date: October 30, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is readying his Christmas package with something from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. He recounts listening the German broadcasts which say the Germans are winning.

Date: November 3 and November 7, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther about their rest area in the Netherlands. Warm houses and hot showers. He tells Esther "every doughboy should have a medal for what they go through." He talks about Randy quite a bit and the updates he has received. He hasn't been able to buy him anything but promises to give him the German flag he captured. He enclosed some German propaganda shot into their lines.

Date: November 11, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben, aware that it's Armistice Day, writes another love note to his wife, Esther. He dreams about being home with her and Randy.

Date: November 22, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben hears that this is the last big push in Germany and is hopeful that the war will be over by Christmas. He is proud of his battalion for the "first class job" they have done against heavy German resistance. His jeep was destroyed by a shell just days before. He tells her they recently captured 8 German officers including a battalion commander. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and he hopes to feed his men a good dinner. He does not yet know if he will be part of the occupation force or go to the South Pacific. "That's the trouble about war, everything is uncertain, even life. You never know if the next bullet, mine, or shell has your name on it or not."

Date: November 23, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Thanksgiving Day. They were allowed to go on reserve to eat in peace. They ate in a former German restaurant, set up a long table with a tablecloth, candles, and silverware. They ate turkey and everything that goes with it. Ben just received pictures of Esther and Randy and tells Esther how beautiful she looks. He tells her he's been commanding his battalion for 2/3 of the time in Europe and has been recommended for a promotion to Lt. Col. Ben wants Esther to keep this a secret until it is

official. He talks about Christmas and presents for Randy. Included is a photograph of Ben, Esther, and Randy upon Ben's return to the United States following the war.

Date: November 25, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben writes a love letter to Esther telling her how much he loves her and misses her.

Date: November 29, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther he has been decorated with the Silver Star. The rest camp they are at was an old boys school used to train Hitler Youth. He reminisces about times spent with Esther. He informs her that they are with the 9th Army now instead of the 1st. He recounts the battles he recently participated in: the capture of Abach, Alsdorf, and Wurselen.

Date: November 30, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is Randy's first birthday. Ben wishes him a happy birthday and that he could be there to celebrate. His unit recently watched "Greenwich Village" and he enjoyed the little break from reality. He just spoke with Ernest Frankland and Walter Johnson about a friend of theirs who returned home. He sees the merit in it because "every man has his own breaking point" but views those who think their lives are more valuable than others "with contempt."

Date: December 1, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a letter from a friend, Coy, who has been in England and France in "rear echelon." Coy claimed to want combat duty but Ben thinks it's because he doesn't "know what combat means, or [he] wouldn't say things like that." The Germans tried a daylight raid on their location with six planes, but the Allied fighters won the day. He hopes to be home for Christmas the following year so they can fix up the tree while Randy dreams of Santa Claus.

Date: December 4, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben just received three letters Esther sent in November. He discusses a news clipping his mother sent regarding an incident in Mariadorf. He also talks about a poem written by Col. McDowell, commander of the 3rd Battalion. He mentions various people he has run into recently. The house in which his command post

is situated has a piano. Capt. Wood is playing love songs, which causes Ben to long for Esther. To close, Ben asks if Randy is walking yet.

Date: December 6, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is eating chocolate candy while he writes. He tells Esther how much he misses her and Randy. Esther's birthday has just passed, and Ben wishes her a happy birthday while reassuring her of her loveliness and beauty. He is mailing his Silver Star tomorrow, and says he never received his Bronze Star. Ten officers and seven men from his battalion, each wounded at least twice, received a 30-day furlough for Christmas. Ben apologizes for the quality of his recent letters. "This business of planning and thinking of ways to kill other men is always before me and also the business of taking care of my own men weighs heavily upon my shoulders." Just remember, that I know one moment in your arms and one look at Randy will make me forget all the horrors I have been through..." He still isn't sure when the war will be over. He comments on the rosy picture painted by newspaper and radio accounts. "As long as machine guns and artillery are still shooting at you it makes no difference what the papers say. After all the last shell fired might be for you." He met with Bobby Griffin yesterday, who is doing well.

Date: December 10, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben asks Esther to stop worrying about him or she might have a breakdown. He reminds her that he has been transferred into the 9th Army from the 1st. The fighting has slowed since his last engagement which started on November 16 and lasted 5 days. Ben thinks his nerves are not going to be what they were and that there are a lot of things he saw or experienced that he wants to forget. He reassures her that his love for her is one thing that will never change.

Date: December 12, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Another cold, wet day. They just received a month's worth of newspapers. Ben enjoys reading the newspapers, especially about the battles, which he says get a lot wrong. He tells Esther to keep the postcard until he can tell the story behind it. "Censorship prevents that now." He recently visited Maastricht, which looked normal but was full of soldiers. He just ran into Raymond Fragin, who owned a laundry back home. He is eating the peanuts Esther mailed him. There has been no fighting recently. Ben tells Esther that his regiment and division are considered second to none in the Western Theater.

Date: December 24, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons



General Contents Description: Ben is writing Esther on Christmas Eve. The Germans have started a counterattack so he has very little time to write. He tells her not to worry about him, that her prayers will keep him safe.

Date: December 25, 1944

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It's a bright, moonlit Christmas night in Belgium. Ben received his Christmas packages last night at 10 p.m. Today, the Germans didn't attack, allowing his men to have a turkey dinner in their foxholes. He asks Esther about their Christmas and reveals he is more homesick than usual today.

Date: January 1, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben tells Esther how much he loves and misses both her and Randy. His favorite Christmas gift was a subscription to Reader's Digest, given to him by Esther. Bill Heinz stayed with him last night. He is currently "in the thick of the fighting to remedy the German breakthrough and are back in the army we started out with."

Date: January 4, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben expresses his love for both Esther and Randy. He comments on how much Randy has grown and how proud he is of him. He insists he remembered her birthday. He remarks on the war, "We are fighting in the snow and mountains." "I bet Hitler's 1st SS Panzer Division is really sick of us. It's their best outfit and the same one we met in the famous knock down and drag out at Mortain."

Date: January 7, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The day's fighting is over. "In spite of the difficulty of fighting in mountains and snow I must admit it is simply beautiful country." He says the snow is six to eight inches deep and covers every inch of ground. Ben admits that it gets very cold at night. He found out that Col. Lockett was captured by the Germans shortly after leaving their battalion.

Date: March 14, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It was a lovely spring day and Ben wonders if winter is gone for good. He tells Esther of some of the people he's run into lately. He talks about their third anniversary coming up and tells Esther he loves her more now than when they first married.

Date: March 16, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben finally received Esther's Christmas packages containing peanuts, candy, and stationery. He drove into town for a hot bath and remarks on how nice the European facilities are compared with those in America. Ben states that arrangements are being made for the most famous painter in Belgium to paint portraits of the officers that liberated Maastricht. He finally got his Bronze Star and is sending it home.

Date: March 19, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben talks about his stationery, Esther, and how big Randy has gotten. He tells Esther how proud he is of her for saving up \$7,000. The Rhineland country he is now in is beautiful. His command post is a modern farmhouse, complete with central heating and lighting. They are dining on fresh eggs and barbecued pork from the farm. "The farmers near the Rhine really lived like kings, especially with all the slave labor they needed." In addition to farmland, the countryside is full of factories. He angrily comments on how the Germans took all the livestock from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands back with them.

Date: March 21, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: No mail today. Ben ate fresh eggs for breakfast and turkey for dinner the previous night. The weather has been beautiful. Ben has been frequently flying over enemy lines to help plan their next attack. He misses Esther and Randy and wonders if he will be a stranger to them when he returns.

Date: March 30, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is exhausted from the day's fighting. They have been fighting day and night and have just crossed the Rhine. Following the push, Ben and some other officers were allowed seven days rest in the French Riviera. He is staying in a luxurious hotel.

Date: March 31, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is still in the Riviera. "It is just like a dream." He is visiting a monastery on an island across the bay (St. Honorat). "The war has not been here, shops, hotels, bars, theaters, clubs, are all open, the beach is filled with swimmers, the sea is as blue as a baby's eyes and the sun as bright as Randy's smile." They are near

Nice and Marseille. The only restriction is that they cannot visit Monte Carlo. Ben describes his lodgings and wishes he had a camera to document the beauty of his surroundings, but that he would trade it all for just one minute with Esther.

Date: April 1, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is spending Easter Sunday in Cannes. He just attended mass at a nearby cathedral and describes the church and service. He visited the monastery on St. Honorat yesterday. He also watched a production of "Junior Miss" which he enjoyed. Later in the afternoon he plans to either swim or visit Nice. He calls this rest "the nicest thing the Army ever did for me."

Date: April 2, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben went shopping this morning only to find them all closed for Easter. He met John Battle, from Jackson, in the hotel on leave from Italy. Ben almost flew to Naples today, but backed out at the last minute, afraid he wouldn't make it back in time. He talks about his hair being cut short for comfort. Ben finds it amusing that Esther was embarrassed about his "bold" letters. Tomorrow he is going on a motor boat ride and hopes he won't get sea sick. He is worried about her hectic life and anxious to return home.

Date: April 3, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben describes his day: he slept in, took a hot bath, breakfast in bed, viewed the war map in the lobby, sunned on the terrace until lunch, went shopping, toured a perfume factory, and dined on his porch by sunset. He bought Esther some perfume from the factory and a pair of Italian earrings. Ben once again worries at the thought of being shipped to the Pacific. He heard Lily Pons singing at mass and saw her again in the streets of Cannes. Ben is worried that Esther might have a nervous breakdown if she doesn't get some peace and quiet soon.

Date: April 4, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben spent most of the day on the beach, but did go into town to shop and see a movie. He and three officers managed to get a speed boat and drove it up and down the coast at full speed. It is hard for him to enjoy most of the scenery without her there with him. On Friday, he returns to the war which he is anxious about, but looks forward to reading her letters.

Date: April 3, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben heads back to the front tomorrow. "Tomorrow morning I catch a plane back to Germany and the diet, death, fear, shellfire and bullets." Today, Ben took a cable car to the top of a nearby mountain and enjoyed the views it offered. Ben pines for home. It is now a year and a half since he has seen Esther.

Date: April 12, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Happy Anniversary telegram from Ben to Esther.

Date: June 19, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It has been a few days since Ben was able to last write to Esther. He can't wait to come home to her so that they can have their own house with a white fence. Ben has heard that many men are being shipped directly to the South Pacific, but he is fairly certain he will be able to come home instead. He believes he will be back home in August.

Date: June 20, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a Father's Day greeting from his son, Randy. He tells Esther that the transfer of high point men is about to happen and everybody with 89 points or more have already been sent home. His tank destroyer platoon, which knocked out 28 German tanks, is staying in Europe as occupation troops. He describes how hard the women in Europe work on the fields and farms. Most of the horses have been eaten for food and sometimes cows are used to pull wagons. Ben is fairly certain that his group will not be staying in Europe to become occupation troops but will be coming home. Includes 6 pictures of destruction in Magdeburg, Germany.

Date: June 21, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben spends a majority of this letter describing how he can't wait to be a real father to Randy when he gets home. He tells Esther that after being involved in direct combat for 11 months with no injuries, for him to continue fighting would be asking for it. He hopes he will be done with combat forever but is willing to do a desk job if they allow Esther and Randy to be with him.

Date: June 22, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Randy is now teething and Ben sounds slightly upset about him not being around to see Randy grow up. He believes he will be home in August for at least 30 days unless he is discharged. He asks Esther if she wants to take a second honeymoon and if so, where would she like to go. Ben's company is moving and he is hoping to be out of Germany soon.

Date: June 24, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is in Germany, slowly making his way back towards home. He tells Esther about how his group has been there for every major battle but there was little publicity because they needed their location to be secret in order to keep them safe. All of his fighting has been with the 19<sup>th</sup> Corps but they were loaned to another Corps for the Rhine crossing and rejoined the 19<sup>th</sup> later on. They were members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army during France, Belgium, and Holland and changed to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army later on.

Date: June 25, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: 75 men of Ben's battalion are heading back to the States from Germany. He had so many men leaving because his battalion had fewer casualties than most. He has gone as far east as the eastern coast of Italy, but finally is now heading west and therefore home. He fears they will have to sleep in pup tents. Ben has been listening to a radio station that rebroadcasts all the good programs from the States, which has kept his mind occupied. He's ready to be home.

Date: June 27, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is in Germany. He writes Esther about the plans for the officers and divisions he is with. Men are being shipped off to other divisions to fight the Japs and other areas on the Pacific front. Some men are choosing to leave the regiment. Ben decides to stay in the regiment, but only because it means he will be able to come home to his wife and son, Randy, sooner. He also has such horrible eyesight that he is essentially guaranteed that he will no longer have to fight. He asks Esther what she wants to do when he is home in August for 30 days. They both need a vacation. Includes 1 picture.

Date: July 2, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and the other men in his battalion are moving west through Germany and are now near the Rhine near Frankfurt. Ben sent Esther some silk cloth that came from a German pilot's parachute that was shot down near his camp during the Battle of the Bulge. He plans to be back home the second week of August.

Date: July 15, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is finally out of Germany and is now in France. He tells Esther he forgot how far he was from a friendly nation. He was in Paris on Bastille Day and notes how different Paris looks now compared to year before. Ben says they took a Jeep and saw just about everything there was to see in Paris and the surrounding areas. They visited old battlegrounds of theirs and relived the past. He is anxious to get home to his wife and son and hopes to be home within a month. He hasn't seen them in over a year and a half.

Date: July 19, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben's boat back to the States has been delayed twice but he doesn't think that will keep him from being home by August 15. Ben and Esther plan to meet in Nashville and he asks her to set up a reservation for a room in the Andrew Jackson Hotel or the Hermitage Hotel. Ben is worried about how long it will take Randy to get to know him as his father, since he has been gone so long.

Date: July 22, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is in France awaiting a boat back to the States. His plans to come home keep getting delayed. Ben and Capt. Johnson have been touring the country and seeing some of the sights in much more pleasant circumstances. Ben asks Esther if she would like to go back to Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C. His mood and patience are deteriorating and he is ready to be home.

Date: July 23, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has heard that V-Mail is faster so is now using that as his form of correspondence with Esther. He asks her to make a hotel reservation for August 15 or 16 but certainly no earlier. He tells Esther to tell Randy he is coming home and he is proud of his son.

Date: July 26, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The redeployment program seems to not be working correctly and Ben has no idea when he will be able to get home. He knows it will be at least the late part of August. He surmises that it is an issue of lack of transportation that is causing all the delays.

Date: July 28, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: It is now looking like Ben will not be home until the latter half of August. The anticipation of seeing Esther and Randy is growing and he can hardly contain his excitement. He tells Esther that he hopes his return is published in the newspaper so she will have a little notice of when to be expecting a phone call or telegram from him.

Date: August 5, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has crossed the channel and is now in England waiting to board another boat back to the States. He is anxious to cross the Atlantic and get back to his family.

Date: August 7, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is still in England. He and Col. Johnson plan to go to London for 24 hours to sightsee and he tells Esther he will get her something. Ben can't believe how lucky he is to have such a wonderful wife and son.

Date: August 10, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is in England and tells Esther about how the day before he and Col. Johnson went and saw a show in London. He remarks on how different London looks from when he was there a year ago. He will be traveling home on the Queen Mary on August 17 and should arrive in New York on the 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup>. He believes he will finally make it to Nashville by the 26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup>.

Date: November 3, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben is at Fort Jackson again and tells Esther about his dental problems. He had x-rays done and one of his teeth is abscessed and must be pulled. He also tells Esther that he hopes her chronic headaches go away soon. He received a letter from Esther and Randy and Randy wrote, "Daddy why did you leave me just when I had got to know you?" It clearly upset Ben to read that. He includes a newspaper clipping about his battalions fighting in Germany and Normandy.

Date: November 20, 1945

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben has traveled to Gastonia, N.C. with Col. Fuller and met his wife. They had a lovely visit and went to church. Mrs. Fuller is noticeably still grieving for her son who was killed in the war, but she has 3 others to keep her company. Ben wishes he had taken his discharge so he could be with Esther and Randy but can't take it back now. He sends Esther some money because he was finally paid. Another letter to Ben from "Tommy" is included telling Ben about his experiences in Germany after he left Ben's battalion.

Date: January 5, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: After having spent the holiday season at home with his family, Ben is now stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C. Unfortunately he was misled about the quarters and overall impression of the place and is bitterly disappointed upon his arrival. He is having a hard time finding an affordable place to stay that is also near camp. He apologizes to Esther for his behavior while he was home and promises he will be the best husband he can be from now on. He misses Randy and Esther and looks forward to seeing them again.

Date: January 6, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben's living situation at Fort Bragg is still uncertain and the people he needs to talk to aren't working on a Sunday. This camp is very boring and Ben says he has mostly been sitting around feeling lonesome and sorry for himself. On the weekends there isn't much going on and he already hates the boredom. There is a lounge area set up for the officers, with magazines, games and a radio.

Date: January 7, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben and 12 other officers are searching for a place to live in Fayetteville, and more officers are expected to arrive within a few days. He had his first officer's meeting so the boys know what he expects. Ben has started to cut down on cigarettes and instead of trying to pick up smoking his pipe more often. He is having a very difficult time being separated from his family.

Date: January 9, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben finally received a letter from Esther although it was old and dated from December 17. He still has been unable to find a place to live and many of the other officers are having trouble as well. Ben apologizes for not being able to afford to get Esther her own place and says he knows she is unhappy.

Date: January 10, 1946



To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben talked with Gen. Robinson about his future after the battalion was deactivated and was told he would probably have to stay and do a desk job. Men are being shipped into Fort Bragg from all directions and Ben is very busy.

Date: January 12, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben finally received a recent letter from Esther and has a renewed sense of happiness. It has been rainy in Jackson and apparently Esther has been stranded at the house. Another officer's wife is helping Ben look for a place to live but admits that having a child complicates things. He thinks the apartments that are being built near the hospital on post may end up being their best bet. Ben passed his first inspection and is being looked upon favorably by the generals.

Date: January 13, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The weekends are dull and Ben is wishing Esther was there with him. He went into Fayetteville but had no luck finding a place to live. The weather has finally turned colder and it seems winter is arriving.

Date: January 15, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben received a package of letters from Esther that were delayed from all the rain and high water. He sends her a check and tells her to go to a store and buy herself anything she wants, because she deserves it. Ben asks her to figure out a way to get to Fayetteville but acknowledges there is poor transportation and he may have to meet her in Raleigh.

Date: January 16, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The housing situation is looking up and Ben believes the apartments being built in the old hospital will be done in a few days. Some of the rooms won't have their own cooking facilities though and he is continuing to look around town in case he is unable to secure an apartment. They rent for \$120 dollars.

Date: January 16, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Three letters to Ben from men he fought with in the war. They are all thanking him for his Christmas card and are catching him up on where they are now.

Date: January 17, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben describes the newly built quarters in the old hospital. They are tiny and crude but at least they will have a place to be together. The only furniture provided are folding chairs and tables so Ben says he will write the Red Cross and see if they have anything. He says it may be like camping but they will be together. He tells Esther to see if she can get a Pullman all the way down to Savannah, Ga. and then she can take one up to Charlotte.

Date: January 18, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben went and visited the apartments again. Although they are fairly lackluster he promises Esther that he will fix it up nice and reassures her of how great it will be to have a place of their own. He apologizes for how unhappy she has been the past 2 years and tries to be enthusiastic about their future. Midway through the letter the phone rings and he gets to talk to her on the phone. Esther and Randy sounded great. He expects them to be able to move in around the first of February.

Date: January 19, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Still no definitive word on the apartments but Ben is optimistic. He tells Esther how is he nervous about buying stuff for the apartment but doesn't want it to be too bare when she and Randy arrive. Ben gives Esther advice of traveling and says he can't wait for her to be there with him.

Date: January 20, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: The weekends are dull and Ben is anxiously awaiting Esther and Randy's arrival. He went to supper at a restaurant on post and ran into Col. Williamson and his wife. They are also hoping to get a place in the old hospital. Ben tells Esther he will check into having her luggage shipped so she doesn't have to travel with so much.

Date: January 21, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: Ben assures Esther that if she wants to change the china she should and not worry about expense. Travel plans to Fort Bragg are being discussed

and he tells her to pay for it and he will file a claim for reimbursement. Col. Williamson and his wife want the ward next to Ben and Esther's so they will have good neighbors. He is very excited for Esther and Randy to be there.

Date: January 23, 1946

To: Mrs. Esther Ammons

From: Ben Ammons

General Contents Description: This is the last letter Ben sends to Esther before she and Randy arrive at Fort Bragg. He gives her suggestions of a few things to bring and says they can get the rest when she gets here. He already got her commissary card so they can go grocery shopping. The stove isn't working quite yet but Ben is making arrangements to get it fixed as soon as possible. He writes that he hopes Randy is good on the trip to Fort Bragg and can't wait to see them.