FROM WRIGHT FIELD, OHIO,
TO HOKKAIDO, JAPAN

From Wright Field, Ohio, to Hokkaido, Japan

GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY'S LETTERS
TO HIS WIFE HELEN, 1941-1945

Benjamin Paul Hegi

EDITED BY

Alfred F. Hurley

WITH A FOREWORD BY

John K. Hurley

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FOREWORD

THIS EDITED VOLUME of the wartime letters of General Curtis LeMay is the final scholarly project of Alfred Francis Hurley, whose best-known previous work was *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Airpower*. First published in 1964 and republished in 1975, it was described by Robert H. Ferrell as “the best book—the most scholarly, the most judicial, the best written—about the intelligent, attractive, undiplomatic, quixotic Billy Mitchell, the legendary founder of today’s United States Air Force.” That Hurley’s final project focused on the equally complicated legacy of General Curtis LeMay seems very appropriate.

Dr. Hurley’s career was remarkable. After graduating summa cum laude from Saint John’s University in 1950, he enlisted in the Air Force, and over the next thirty years rose to the rank of brigadier general. He spent half of his military career flying as a navigator and the other half at the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he was chair of the Department of History from 1966 to 1980. After leaving the Air Force, he served for twenty years as the chancellor and president of the University of North Texas, where, among other achievements, he is credited with launching UNT’s very strong program in military history.

Crusader for Airpower was based on Dr. Hurley’s Ph.D. dissertation at Princeton University. As Ferrell indicates, the book offers a balanced portrait of Mitchell that is often at odds with his popular image as a visionary martyr, best typified in the movie *The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell*, directed by Otto Preminger and starring Gary Cooper. In his assessment of Mitchell, Hurley agreed with the “visionary” part but took issue with the idea that he was a martyr. As he told me years later, “Mitchell knew exactly what he was doing” when, to publicize his views on the importance of air-

power, he left his superiors in the Army with no choice but to court martial him. Hurley's willingness as a young captain to question the received wisdom about his service's most revered figure was a measure of his intellectual honesty and a model for officer scholars who followed him at the Academy.

The impetus for the current volume came more than three decades later, when Janie LeMay Lodge gave Dr. Hurley her father's wartime letters. He was excited by the project, believing that the collection would provide scholars with a rare window into a side of LeMay that contrasted sharply with his fierce public persona. Unfortunately, by the time he was able to begin work on the letters shortly after he had stepped down from his position at UNT, he was already in the early stages of a long fight with Alzheimer's disease that would take his life in 2013. He put the leadership of the project into the able hands of Ben Hegi, his former student, but continued to share his insights, editorial guidance, and mentorship. Those research and editing sessions with Hegi and Jana Dean, his longtime assistant at UNT, were a source of great satisfaction and enjoyment for Dr. Hurley, especially as the volume neared completion in the final months of his life. My father, our family, and future readers of this work are deeply indebted to them both for their scholarship, patience, and hard work.

John K. Hurley
June 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is important for many reasons, but chiefly because it is a partial fulfillment of Dr. Alfred F. Hurley's final ambition to revisit history's examination of the life and military career of General Curtis E. LeMay. *From Wright Field, Ohio, to Hokkaido, Japan*, would not exist without Dr. Hurley's thorough research, guidance, and involvement, which he pursued with dedication until his untimely passing. A big "thank you" is due to Janie LeMay Lodge for entrusting us with her father's letters. Staff members of the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency were particularly helpful in locating and relaying necessary documents to us. World War II veterans such as Jim Patillo, General T. R. Milton, and many others contributed critical information during the course of Dr. Hurley's early research, which was invaluable during the writing phase. A special thanks to John Hurley along with his brothers Al Jr. and Mark, who provided support and perspective throughout the entire project, and of course the indispensable Deborah Weinberger and Jana Dean, both of whom were crucial to the project's successful conclusion. Kevin Hawkins, director of library publishing at the University of North Texas, our editor Norman Ware, our indexer Mary Hashman, and our designers Paula Newcomb and Heidi Dailey also deserve thanks for making the book a reality and displaying an enviable measure of patience. Most importantly, to my intelligent, beautiful wife, DeAnn, and our amazing son, Jase, thank you for enriching my life beyond expression. I love you both unfailingly. To every individual, archive, and agency that was not named here and that aided us in our work, "Thank you."

CHAPTER 1

Introduction Helen and Curt

“I THINK I’LL TAKE THE FAT ONE,” remarked Helen Estelle Maitland to her friend, Helene Strong, one spring evening in 1931.¹ The pair was staring down upon a trio of young Air Corps pilots, including Second Lieutenant Herb Tellman, Strong’s fiancé, from the window of their dorm room as the young men were walking toward their building, Mosher Hall, located on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor.² “The fat one” was Second Lieutenant Curtis Emerson LeMay, who, along with another aviator, Louis Vaupre, had grudgingly agreed to join Tellman on a triple date with Strong and her two friends.

At twenty-five, Lieutenant LeMay had rarely pursued the young ladies. Although he was shy, ever-present responsibilities dominated his daily schedule; work, school, and supporting his siblings left little free time for social gatherings, but Helen Maitland commanded his full attention from the start.³ Their blind date sparked a relationship that spanned fifty-nine years and a marriage that lasted fifty-six years until LeMay’s death on October 1, 1990.⁴ Curtis and Helen spent the bulk of that time in service to the United States Air Force. As LeMay’s career flourished, Helen proved to be

1. Thomas M. Coffey, *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1986), 216–217.

2. Curtis E. LeMay and MacKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 79. The editors acknowledge that *Mission with LeMay* was, in part, written as a political piece; however, there are few better sources (excepting many of the air force oral histories he took part in) that reveal LeMay’s personal thoughts on his own life and career. This is why the editors chose to use it in this work.

3. Although LeMay was struck with Helen, he made the point that he had no intention of marrying anyone at that time in his life. Still, they started dating following this first meeting. *Ibid.*, 80.

4. Helen passed away a year and a half later on February 16, 1992. See “Helen E. LeMay,” Social Security Death Index, Social Security Administration, Baltimore, Maryland.

a crucial player in her husband's success, pursuing programs that created tangible, positive effects in the lives of air force servicemen, servicewomen, and their families. The sum of their efforts secured the couple's bright legacy in the history of the United States military.

Still, LeMay's personality, conservatism, and command style attracted critics throughout his postwar career, and to the present day.⁵ This volume presents another piece of General LeMay's history through the 344 letters he wrote to his wife from 1941 to 1945. The collection was acquired by Dr. Alfred Hurley from the LeMays' only child, Mrs. Jane LeMay Lodge, who graciously allowed the editors to introduce them to scholars and the general public. Unfortunately, Helen's responses were not retained by LeMay. The editors' wish is that this volume will further enhance the historiography of a key officer in the history of the United States Air Force.

Whatever opinion one holds of him, LeMay was a prominent figure in the history of the air force, whose rise personified the "American Dream." From humble beginnings, with little to no resources available to him, LeMay engineered his own success through hard work coupled with ideal timing. He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps during a period when its role in the American military was heavily influenced by the army, its paternal sponsor, as well as the navy, which fielded its own air arm. The possibility of an independent air force was in doubt; however, the air corps' officers' cadre led by men such as Frank M. Andrews, Robert "Bob" Olds, and Henry H. Arnold, among others, guided the service into a position that allowed it to achieve this end soon after the conclusion of World War II.

During World War II, the strategic bombing theories of William "Billy" Mitchell and his disciples developed during those primordial days of America's air force and took shape in the form of thousands of silvery B-29 *Superfortresses*, which brought fiery destruction down upon Japanese industry and played a large role in forcing that nation's surrender in August 1945. LeMay was the broker of that success through innovations tested in the skies above Europe in 1942 and 1943, where he revolutionized heavy bomber tactics. Based on these accomplishments, he was sent to Asia in the summer of 1944, first to India at the outset of the Allies' strategic bombing campaign against Japan and then to Guam in the winter of 1945, where he directed the XXI Bomber Command's operations against the Japanese

5. This period was highlighted by his time as chief of the Strategic Air Command (1948–1957), stints in the Pentagon as air force vice chief of staff (1957–1961) and air force chief of staff (1961–1965), and as the American Independent Party's vice presidential candidate in the presidential election of 1968.

home islands, culminating in the world's first and only employment of nuclear weapons in wartime.

LeMay's no-nonsense approach to command coupled with his blue-collar work ethic and high intelligence catapulted his career postwar to the top leadership positions in the air force, culminating in his appointment as chief of staff from 1961 to 1965. The keystone of LeMay's personality, and by extension command style, was his general unwillingness to compromise on those issues where his "ruthless sense of realism" made him confident that his view was correct.⁶ As a leader of bomb groups, divisions, and commands during the war, as well as his near decade-long tenure at the helm of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), LeMay was the ultimate authority, and he operated accordingly. For everyday operations and the long-term effectiveness of his units, his high degree of confidence in the correctness of his views enabled LeMay to be a decisive, highly effective commander. As air force vice chief and chief of staff, and as the American Independent Party's vice presidential candidate during the presidential election of 1968, it reinforced the worst suspicions of his critics.

As a "ruthless realist," Chief of Staff LeMay's uncompromising views were often at odds with politicians and peers who, necessarily, considered factors beyond military effectiveness alone during conflicts such as the Vietnam War and the Cuban Missile Crisis. LeMay advocated direct, swift action in these situations to secure American victory including the bombing of suspected nuclear sites in Cuba, followed by an invasion that would preempt future threats from the island. He also opposed civilian interference during the Vietnam War and advocated sustained bombing of North Vietnam rather than the "flexible response" policy of President John F. Kennedy and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.

In a 1972 oral history interview, LeMay outlined his position on flexible response, stating, "I never could condone spending lives, particularly the lives of our people, on such an operation over a long period of time without a policy of winning because I never could foresee a defensive action—and this is defensive action—winning anything. Never in history has a defensive action been the solution to military operations to settle your problems."⁷

6. Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2009), xi.

7. General Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Dr. Thomas G. Belden, Dr. Robert F. Futrell, General John P. McConnell, and Mrs. J. Van Staaveren, June 8, 1972, interview 592, transcript, U.S. Air Force Oral History Collection, Archives Branch, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 18. Hereafter cited as USAFOHC.

During World War II and in his eight years leading SAC, LeMay was a highly effective commander directly responsible for large operational forces. In the world of the joint chiefs and civilian politicians, he was just one of a number of advisers and found it difficult to be effective in this role. General T. R. Milton, a World War II veteran of both the European and Pacific Theaters, Cold War air force leader, and close confidant of LeMay, said: "I thought his zenith was creating SAC after World War II. . . . I didn't think he was a very good Chief of Staff."⁸ According to Milton, "[LeMay] didn't think he was a very good Chief of Staff, either. He didn't like what he had to do as Chief of Staff."⁹ Nor did LeMay succeed in his lone venture into politics.

During the presidential election of 1968, LeMay was very concerned about the potential election of Hubert H. Humphrey. His stated reason for opposing Humphrey was that Humphrey supported flexible response with respect to the bombing of North Vietnam. LeMay accepted Governor George C. Wallace's invitation to run as his vice presidential candidate a month before the election, allegedly to funnel votes away from Humphrey.¹⁰ Whatever his motivation, LeMay joined the wrong side of one of the most racially charged elections in the history of the United States. Wallace's controversial stance on race was the hallmark of the American Independent Party campaign. In the end, Richard M. Nixon was victorious, and LeMay's role as Wallace's running mate, coupled with his views on the bombing of North Vietnam and his association with the nuclear policy of mutual assured destruction, did long-term damage to his legacy.

LeMay's comments provided new ammunition for members of the antiwar movement and alienated a portion of America's military community. General P. K. Carlton, who served as LeMay's aide-de-camp at SAC and retired as a four-star air force general, stated that LeMay's poor handling of questions from the press concerning the bombardment of North Vietnam—the infamous "bomb them back to the stone age" controversy—caused major fallout among military leadership. "The repercussions that occurred after he got out of this thing [campaigning with Wallace] . . . the Air Force . . . nobody asked him to come up and make a statement to the press. They had already told it all. The Army was mad at him. . . . He was cold-shouldered by the rest of the Air Force generals—all that I talked to."¹¹ LeMay protested

8. General T. R. Milton, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, March 13, 2007, interview 1678, transcript, University of North Texas Oral History Collection, University of North Texas Archives, Denton, Texas, 19–20. Hereafter cited as UNTOHC.

9. Ibid.

10. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 391–393.

11. General P. K. Carlton, interview by Dr. Alfred Hurley, June 30, 2004, interview 1565, tran-

that his comments were taken out of context and explained this in detail privately to Carlton and other supporters after the campaign. They, in turn, attempted to repair the damage among the higher echelons of the air force but achieved meager results. Political maneuver or not, LeMay's vice presidential campaign was certainly the worst mistake of his career. In the words of LeMay's biographer, Thomas M. Coffey, the general, "simply was not a politician, never had been, and never would be."¹²

General Russell E. Dougherty, who served under LeMay during the general's tenure at the helm of SAC, recalled, "LeMay considered his judgments pretty absolute. He didn't necessarily want to negotiate them."¹³ This, in tandem with his black-and-white view of the world, made the general susceptible to criticism by politicians who were concerned that his direct approach would result in nuclear war. The media often portrayed LeMay, at best, as a relic of a bygone era, and at worst as a demented cold warrior. The latter view is probably best reflected by actor Sterling Hayden's portrayal of the insane air force general, Jack D. Ripper, in Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove*.¹⁴ Another character in the movie, General Buck Turgidson, also based on LeMay, recommends that the president authorize a full-scale nuclear strike against the Soviet Union in a memorable scene.¹⁵

But what of scholarship concerning the general and his legacy? Three biographies exclusively on LeMay have been published to date. In order of publication, they are: Coffey's *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay*; Barrett Tillman's *LeMay: A Biography*; and Warren Kozak's *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*. None of these incorporate fully the official records, and therefore a definitive biography has yet to be written.

Coffey was a popular historian whose bibliography is dominated by World War II topics. Himself a pilot and World War II veteran, Coffey's *Iron Eagle* was received with mixed reviews. The work was primarily based on LeMay's autobiography, *Mission with LeMay: My Story*, as well as interviews personally conducted by the author with the general, his family members, and his colleagues. *Iron Eagle* revealed little new information or fresh per-

script, UNTOHC, 117–121.

12. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 444–446.

13. General Russell E. Dougherty, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, May 24, 2004, interview 1558, transcript, UNTOHC.

14. See "Inside the Making of *Dr. Strangelove*," *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, special ed. DVD, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Culver City, CA: Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment, 2001). The film was originally released in 1964.

15. *Ibid.*

spective on LeMay's life or career beyond the quotations and stories mined from Coffey's interviews, and the author neglected to consult the official record in detail. Tillman, primarily a naval aviation historian, provided a synoptic survey of LeMay's career in *LeMay: A Biography* as part of Palgrave Macmillan's Great General Series, a collection of short, introductory biographies of famous American generals. As such, the book fulfilled its purpose, but it contains some factual errors and relies on limited sources. Both monographs are sympathetic to LeMay.

Kozak concentrated on LeMay "the man" in his work, bolstered by some of the letters the reader will find in the following pages, correspondence with Janie LeMay Lodge and other surviving family members, as well as interviews with LeMay's friends and colleagues. These sources, as in Coffey's work, are the primary value of the book, and, like Coffey and Tillman, Kozak neglects to thoroughly mine official sources. All three do, however, bring some balance to the more negative portraits of the general.

LeMay himself played an active role in his historiography through three books. The most important of this group was his autobiography, *Mission with LeMay: My Story*, published in 1965 and written collaboratively with journalist and Pulitzer prize-winning author MacKinlay Kantor.¹⁶ LeMay's prose defied his taciturn reputation while bolstering his notoriety for frankness. He disclosed the events of his trying childhood, his lifelong passion for flying, and his rise to prominence in the air force. The general also outlined the evolution of tactics he implemented as one of World War II's elite bomber commanders and key issues in the establishment and rise of SAC. LeMay's political views appeared fully in the second half of the book, where he describes his tenure as vice chief and chief of staff under the John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations.

The general published his second work, *America Is in Danger*, in 1968. LeMay enlisted the aid of air force general Dale O. Smith to complete this short book during that summer. Smith was also a bomber commander in World War II and active in air force and military history following the war. The tract was primarily a platform for LeMay to speak out publicly against flexible response and the Johnson/McNamara approach to the Vietnam War specifically, as well the liberalization of American society in general. It also provided springboard for the general's run at the vice presidency

16. LeMay and Kantor first met during World War II in England, where Kantor was based as a war correspondent. The reporter's work focused on the experience of American troops, and he even received training as a gunner after which he accompanied Eighth Air Force units on several bombing missions.

during the fall of the same year. In 1988, LeMay and popular history writer Bill Yenne presented the general's final work, *Superfortress: The Boeing B-29 and American Airpower in World War II*, which chronicled in detail the rise of the long-range bomber from the 1930s and through the war, culminating with its success against the Japanese home islands in 1945. The book also described the air force's struggle to attain equality with the army and navy.

The negative views of the general from members of the media, the military, and certain historians that focus on LeMay "the air force general and conservative politician" frequently overshadow the depictions of LeMay "the man" despite a number of accounts that present him in a human light by writers such as Coffey and Kozak. This alternative side to the general was well documented by his peers, subordinates, and close friends. Milton served under LeMay in Europe and had a close relationship with the general throughout his life and career. In a 2004 oral history interview, Milton remembered that LeMay "always understood" him. "He was such a basically decent man and a very thoughtful man. . . . [H]e was just a very honest, straightforward guy."¹⁷

General LeMay was a dedicated father and husband and widely described as a steadfast friend and comrade. His admirers viewed him as a brilliant leader who cared deeply for the well-being of the men under his command throughout his career. Every training regime, tactical innovation, and aircraft modification that he invented was intended to equip his subordinates with the resources necessary to complete their mission with as few casualties as possible. James V. Edmundson, a retired four-star air force general who served under LeMay as a B-29 group commander in both the XX and XI Bomber Commands, said: "He loved the guys that worked for him and flew for him. He suffered deeply when they didn't come back from missions. And he knew that incompetence is what killed people. And I think that is why he was so completely intolerant of incompetence at [*sic*] any kind, at any level."¹⁸

As commander of SAC, LeMay was committed to improving the lives of his subordinates through legislation such as the Wherry Housing Bill, which provided funds to build adequate accommodations for both officers

17. General T. R. Milton, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, May 13, 2007, interview 1678, transcript, UNTOHC, 17, 45.

18. "Lieutenant General James V. Edmundson on: Curtis LeMay," in Reference Interview Transcripts, *The American Experience: Race for the Superbomb*, PBS, January 1999, at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/filmmore/reference/interview/edmund02.html>, accessed March 20, 2013.

and enlisted men on air force bases across the United States.¹⁹ In the early 1950s, although short-lived, LeMay even hosted sports car races on SAC runways in collaboration with the Sports Car Club of America.²⁰ His efforts to enhance the quality of life of his subordinates during his career went beyond the fundamental concern that commanders are expected to display for their men. At the same time, LeMay's care, love, and focus turned to the two people who were most important to him: his wife, Helen Maitland LeMay, and his daughter, Ms. Patricia Jane "Janie" LeMay. General LeMay cherished these relationships, and that is evident in the correspondence he maintained with his wife and daughter during World War II.

When then-Colonel LeMay left for England in the fall of 1942, Janie was only three and a half years old.²¹ Helen and "Curt," as he signed all his letters, were a pair whose traits were complementary. Where Curt was quiet and reserved, Helen was outgoing, gregarious, and always ready to make a speech.

Helen was the bedrock upon which Curtis built his air force career. She understood him and knew what he needed. "She would try to have quiet dinners at home or to make sure that when he came home, everything was peaceful," Janie remembered, "He could relax. I think that is probably why, later in life, he really liked to be home."²² Mrs. LeMay was a gracious hostess, efficient manager, good cook, and a specialist in interior decoration. The general was so confident in her skill that he almost exclusively relied on her to plan and host dinners and gatherings for foreign dignitaries, politicians, and other VIPs. "She really was a good cook and really a wonderful hostess," Janie recalled. "I think, a lot of these people visiting this country for the first time really felt very relaxed and at home being invited to your own home and entertained that way."²³

From October 10, 1947, to October 15, 1948, the LeMays were based in Wiesbaden, Germany, where General LeMay commanded the United States

19. LeMay considered the cost and result of the bill inadequate but continued to work toward improving the housing that was constructed. See Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Robert M. Kipp and John T. Bohn, November 16, 1972, interview 1774, transcript, USAFOHC.

20. Melvin G. Deaile, "The SAC Mentality: The Origins of Organizational Culture in Strategic Air Command, 1946–1962" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2007), 231–233.

21. Janie LeMay was born on February 8, 1939. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 174.

22. Ibid.

23. Janie LeMay Lodge, interview by Barbara W. Sommer, September 10, 1998, transcript, Nebraskastudies.org, at http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0900/stories/0901_0122_01.html, accessed June 22, 2011. Hereafter cited as JLLOHI.

Air Force in Europe.²⁴ For this year, the family lived on the estate of Champagne Baron Adolph Henkle. Helen skillfully managed the property and its staff, and kept seventeen guest rooms prepared at all times for guests and other dignitaries.²⁵ When the general was given command of SAC, the family moved into their new quarters at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska, where Helen personally oversaw the decoration of SAC's main headquarters building.²⁶

Helen was a very supportive partner to Curtis and also a strong, able, and independent woman in her own right. Although LeMay was famous (in some circles, infamous) for his candor, Helen was no wallflower. Following their retirement, Mrs. LeMay requisitioned control of the microphone at an air force black tie dinner event attended by many prominent generals and several former chiefs of SAC. "Well, I'm not on the agenda tonight," she announced, "but let me tell you. As far as I'm concerned, there have only been two commanders of the Strategic Air Command worth a damn. One is my husband Curt, and the second is Jack Chain."²⁷ Perhaps she took a cue from one of her husband's staff meetings.

While General LeMay was overseas during World War II, at home, Helen played a leadership role and was active in local organizations that aided the war effort. She served as vice president for the National Aeronautics Association and the Wives and Mothers of American Aviation Forces. She also organized local schoolchildren to engage in Red Cross work.²⁸ In addition, Helen served weekly as a Red Cross "Gray Lady" at Crile General Hospital, a veterans' hospital in Cleveland, Ohio.²⁹ Her work with air force families, veterans, and retirees in the 1950s and 1960s, starting with the Dependents

24. "Statement of Service," Curtis E. LeMay, Military Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, Saint Louis, Missouri. Hereafter cited as CELMPR.

25. JLLOHI.

26. Winzola McLendon, "She'll Ring Change after Wedding," *Washington Herald*, May 24, 1961.

27. General John T. Chain achieved four-star status in 1985 and was awarded command of SAC in 1986, a post he held until his retirement in 1991. For the quotation, see General John T. Chain, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, May 10, 2004, interview 1552, transcript, UNTOHC, 23–24.

28. Polly Parsons, "Busy General LeMay Finds Time to Write His Wife and Daughter a Letter Every Day," Box C4, Curtis E. LeMay Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as CELPLOC.

29. Gray Ladies were so named for the gray dresses they wore while on duty. They generally provided nonmedical assistance to patients by reading to them and writing letters, among other such duties. Crile Hospital was a veterans' hospital built in June 1943 to serve injured veterans who were sent stateside. See "The American Red Cross Gray Lady Service," American Red Cross Museum, at <http://www.redcross.org/museum/history/grayladies.asp>, accessed April 23, 2012; "Crile General Hospital," Crile Archives and Center for History Education, at <http://www.crile-archives.org/crile-general-hospital.html>, accessed April 23, 2012; and Parsons, "Busy General," CELPLOC.

Assistance Program, was invaluable to the air force and established a tradition that is continued today through air force-sanctioned family support groups.

When LeMay took command of SAC, one of the primary problems was a lack of adequate support for airmen's families when airmen were sent on temporary duty. General LeMay entrusted Helen with the task of organizing their wives, while he concentrated on SAC itself. To this end, Helen established the Dependents Assistance Program and several other "wives' clubs" primarily purposed to pool the resources of air force family communities on each base to provide babysitting services, find housing, and even help with grocery shopping.³⁰ In addition, Helen toured air bases throughout the United States speaking to service organizations and air force wives.

Mrs. LeMay's activities were not limited to air force organizations alone. She was involved in the Soldiers', Sailors', Marines', Coast Guard, and Airmen's Club of New York, which provided subsidized lodging and club facilities to servicemen and their families of all ranks. Helen also served as president of the Junior Army-Navy Club Guild Organization (JANGO), which enlisted servicemen's family members, especially their teenage daughters, to serve at military hospitals as junior nurses' aides and at base canteens, where they served refreshments.³¹ In 1987, her work culminated in the establishment of the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation, an organization that provides financial support for widows of air force retirees regardless of rank.

LeMay and his bride formed quite the duo. Their daughter, Janie LeMay Lodge, has generously allowed the editors to scrutinize her father's World War II letters written to Helen from 1941 to 1945 and present them to the public for the first time. What is their significance? What do the editors hope to accomplish through this effort? Although the letters only cover a short span of the couple's life together, they were four critical years during the career of one of the air force's most influential airmen that draw our attention to his life through an intimate medium outside the standard types of records military historians primarily focus on when writing history. Be assured, the reader will find the usual sources throughout the footnotes, but LeMay's letters are the skeleton of this work. Here the reader will explore all facets of the LeMays' life, from household business and gossip concerning

30. See Deaile, "The SAC Mentality," 230.

31. McLendon, "She'll Ring Change after Wedding"; and "JANGOS: Officers' Teen-age Daughters Become Junior Nurses' Aides," *Life*, April 26, 1943, 37-39.

family and friends to the pride the general had in his job, his concern for his men, and his distress when they were killed. Perhaps the collection's most remarkable feature is the sarcastic and playful banter proffered by LeMay to Helen. Most importantly, *Curt and Helen* reveals the portrait of LeMay "the man" during the years that forged LeMay "the air force general" into the formidable cold warrior that he became.

The collection encompasses approximately 344 letters primarily written by General LeMay to Helen, although several are addressed to Janie. A primary flaw in this effort is the absence of Helen's letters. When the editors obtained LeMay's letters from Janie, she did not have those written by Helen. Likely, they were not kept by the general and are lost to history. We have included certain letters that are responses to or by superiors, to provide context where possible. The volume begins with a letter written in June 1941 from Wright Field, Ohio, where Major LeMay was training to fly as an air corps ferrying command pilot, and ends in Hokkaido, Japan, on September 18, 1945, the day before LeMay and Lieutenant General Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, Lieutenant General Barney M. Giles, and Brigadier General Emmett "Rosie" O'Donnell Jr. flew three specially outfitted B-29s nonstop from Japan to the United States for the first time in history.³²

Helen received the letters via air mail or v-mail, or both.³³ The general consistently remarks on the quality of both services, especially when correspondence was delayed for an inordinate amount of time. The letters were all handwritten by the general. Some weathered the past sixty years better than others, which, in tandem with LeMay's poor handwriting, made them difficult to transcribe at times; however, the originals were duplicated as accurately as possible and checked against the originals for accuracy by multiple people. To further preserve the general's style, the transcriber retained the paragraph structure of the original letters as best she could.

Mechanically and mathematically minded, English was by far LeMay's

32. General LeMay was promoted to chief of staff, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific (US-SAFP), on August 2; General Spaatz was the commanding general of the USSAFP, General Giles was his deputy commander, and General O'Donnell was the commanding general of the 73rd Bomb Wing, the first bomb wing to fly B-29s out of Guam against the Japanese home islands. The all-star group of airmen were the first to fly nonstop from Japan to Chicago (originally they planned to fly straight to Washington, D.C.), in an effort to demonstrate the power and range of the U.S. Air Forces to the Soviet Union and promote its ascension as an independent branch of the military.

33. V-mail (victory mail) was the primary mail method by which servicemen would correspond with family members in the United States while they were overseas. Letters written on special v-mail sheets were censored and microfilmed for logistical reasons. The microfilm was sent back to the United States, where each letter was enlarged and printed and then sent to the appropriate recipient.

worst academic subject, and it did not improve much with age. Coffey revealed that the general's English teacher considered LeMay, "the worst speller she ever had," and his marks for the required English course at the Ohio State University (Cs and Ds) reflected this shortcoming.³⁴ In an effort to maintain the authenticity of the letters, some of these mistakes remain, but it was necessary to make some changes. In these cases, corrections were executed without compromising LeMay's intent or the integrity of the collection.

Each letter presented in this book includes either the original heading written by LeMay himself, or the place and date as determined by the editors utilizing scholarly sources. The letters LeMay wrote while overseas, which represent the bulk of the collection, included headings denoting a P.O. box in New York City or San Francisco as the return address. During World War II, for security reasons, the bases from which troops wrote letters home were not included in the letters' return address; instead, each unit had a P.O. box number—usually New York for those in the European/Mediterranean/North African Theaters and San Francisco for the Pacific Theater—through which letters were routed. Consequently, it was necessary for the editors to discover the location from which LeMay wrote each of these letters and make the appropriate citation. Those letters that do not include a citation were correctly labeled by LeMay on the original.

Narrative essays are included among the letters in order to provide context and facilitate flow. In addition, where necessary, names, terms, and events are footnoted in order to further aid the reader's exploration of LeMay's letters. Every effort was made to present the collection in an authentic manner. It is the editors' hope that what follows will further reveal the human side of General Curtis LeMay, both good and bad, in an accurate and informative manner.

34. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 200.

CHAPTER 2

Childhood, Helen, and Early Career

CURTIS EMERSON LEMAY was born on November 15, 1906, to Erving and Arizona LeMay in Columbus, Ohio. Both of his parents came from subsistence-level farming families who resided in Meigs County, Ohio, where the couple met, courted, and were married on November 25, 1905.¹ Shortly afterward, the newlyweds moved to Columbus, where Erving secured a job with the railroad followed closely by the arrival of their firstborn son.²

Curtis's childhood was onerous. Erving LeMay had difficulty retaining employment; he obtained scores of positions in locations across the United States but never focused on a single career. Moreover, at key moments, the patriarch proved to be an unreliable provider for his family. As the oldest of seven children, even at a young age, Curtis felt obliged to bridge these gaps, reasoning, "if a job needed doing, it had better be done, and the sooner the better."³

For the first eight years of Curtis's life, Erving resisted his wanderlust, remaining in the Columbus area, where he labored at various construction jobs.⁴ This span of gainful employment lasted until sometime in 1914, when the elder LeMay, jobless, persuaded his brother-in-law to employ him as a ranch hand in Montana. This move was the first of many in the LeMay family's nomadic existence.⁵ The younger LeMay enjoyed the wilderness more

1. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 185.

2. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 15.

3. General LeMay's siblings in order of birth were: Lloyd, Velma, Methyl, Leonard, Charles (who died at birth), and the youngest, Patarica, who was twenty-two years LeMay's junior. *Ibid.*, 17–18, 30.

4. It is unclear why Erving lost this job. Curtis remarked that "something happened" but did not specify a cause. *Ibid.*, 19.

5. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 20.

than the comparatively crowded, metropolitan area around Columbus. "This Montana experience strengthened the abiding love I've always had for the out-of-doors," he said, "a desire to be in woods and immerse myself along with the wild things, take chances with them; and let them take their chances with me."⁶ Curtis would enjoy some time in Montana, but spent little of it on a ranch.

Erving's stint as a ranch hand was typically brief when he was fired for unknown reasons several months after starting the position. Fortuitously, he gained an appointment as manager of a fish hatchery located in the Nez Perce Lake Chain in Montana's mountainous southwest region for the summer and winter of 1914. Here, the LeMay family spent their first and last Montana winter. Reportedly, Curtis proved to be an indispensable player in his family's survival. Erving had trouble mastering the aquaculture business initially, but his son recognized the steps necessary to hatch and raise the fish. That brutal winter while his father was, inexplicably, wrapped up in a quilt near the stove in their small cabin, Curtis caught trout from one of the nearby lakes to feed his family because "there was only one way to transfer them to Mom's skillet."⁷

LeMay's memoirs certainly promote the general's role in his family's survival, even at this young age. To what extent this is accurate is difficult to ascertain, and LeMay's own accounts may be somewhat exaggerated. Still, LeMay's attitude and character suggest that Erving's sojourns across the country and brief periods of vagrancy had a lasting impact on his oldest son. "I felt he was—not exactly on the shiftless side [because] he was working all the time—but he was jumping around too much," the general told Thomas Coffey in one of their interviews. "He'd have done better to stay in one place."⁸ Politics was another divisive issue for LeMay and his father. Curtis was a staunch conservative owing to the nature of the political environment in which he grew up in Ohio.⁹ His father, on the other hand, was "an impecunious working man, [who] quite naturally espoused a more liberal, labor union point of view," which led to many evening arguments at dinnertime.¹⁰

Other quotations from Coffey's sessions with the general's family revealed a more positive opinion of Erving LeMay by his son: "He treated

6. Ibid., 21.

7. Ibid.

8. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 193.

9. Ibid., 207–208.

10. Ibid., 208–209.

mother well and he treated us kids well.”¹¹ Further, the historian claims that “[a]ll of the LeMay brothers and sisters seemed to have enjoyed warm feelings for their parents.”¹² Through Coffey, LeMay also conveyed the sense that his parents were hard workers and helped instill that quality in him, as well as his sense of morality.¹³ Curtis’s resulting character was a synthesis of his childhood experiences that reflected his aversion to instability and poverty through hard work, self reliance, determination, commitment, and responsibility.

In 1915, following another lead, Erving moved his family to Emeryville, California, in the Bay Area to accept a job sponsored by his older brother Oscar, but by the time the family arrived, “Oscar was gone. No house, no job, no anything else.”¹⁴ In this comment, some resentment does shine through, and with good reason. It was one more link to add to the chain of disappointment and uncertainty that marked LeMay’s early years. Erving pursued a job in a fish cannery nearby, however, and the move proved profitable for young Curtis.¹⁵ In Emeryville, he witnessed cutting-edge aircraft flown by their death-defying pilots at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, a World’s Fair organized to celebrate the Panama Canal, which was completed on August 15, 1914.

One of the spectacles was a daily show starring Lincoln Beachey, a famous flier who performed aerial tricks at events across the nation. He had “looped and rolled above Niagara Falls,” and he “was the first flier to circle the Nation’s Capitol in a heavier-than-air-machine.”¹⁶ LeMay and his peers idolized Beachey, who, tragically, was killed in an aerial accident several weeks later. These were, after all, the primordial stages in the development of the airplane, and flying was a dangerous business. Despite the risks, Beachey’s exploits further impressed Curtis. He remembered, “Thinking about it, and looking up again, and wondering, I wondered a little where he had gone; but mostly I wondered how he felt when he was alive and flying.”¹⁷

As usual, the LeMay family’s residence in California was cut short

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 192.

13. Ibid., 186. Notably, religion was not a priority for the family. Although Curtis always maintained a belief in a “Supreme Being,” he said: “[I do not] feel that I need some other character to advise me on how to conduct myself to please this Supreme Being.” Ibid., 227.

14. According to LeMay, while they were traveling to California from Montana, Oscar joined the army and was sent to the Philippines. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 212.

15. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 21–22.

16. Ibid., 23.

17. Ibid.

when Erving decided it was time to return East. With children in tow, the elder LeMay and his wife spent 1916 in New Brighton, Pennsylvania, 1917 in Wellsville, Ohio, and 1918 back in New Brighton.¹⁸ The family returned home to Columbus in 1919. It was the final stop for Curtis as a member of the Erving and Arizona LeMay household. At thirteen years old, LeMay found himself, once again, in Columbus where he remained until entering flight school in 1928. Fortunately, he was able to enjoy some normalcy in his teenage years that many boys experience as part of a stable household. He joined a local Boy Scout troop and continued delivering newspapers.¹⁹ When Curtis saved enough money to purchase a bike secondhand, he expanded his delivery activities, transporting telegrams, packages, and other items for local businesses. The influx of additional funds prompted the purchase of a single luxury item—a basic crystal radio kit, which Curtis enjoyed using at night to discover new stations.

From an early age, LeMay was very self-disciplined and responsible, traits ingrained in his personality by his mother, his life experiences, and his role in the family. In addition to examples discussed earlier, as a young teenager in Columbus, Curtis determined “to earn money for school, that’s all there was to it. I had to buy books and clothing; by this time I was in the seventh or eighth grade, and our family was feeling the pinch of so many children in school.”²⁰ Certainly life was hard for the general early on, but he was not shy in promoting his own actions in remedying this. “I was proud to buy my own clothes and school things, and pay all my own expenses otherwise,” he wrote in his memoirs. “Sometimes I was able to give money to Mom as well.”²¹ Indeed, LeMay’s recollections of his childhood paint the picture of a steadfast and loyal son who recurrently served as the LeMay family’s second father, often providing or caring for his siblings when Erving and Arizona were working or looking for work—a trend that continued well after he graduated from high school. There is some evidence to support this view from other family members. LeMay’s youngest sister, Patarica, reminisced, “I remember Methyl, my sister Methyl, saying that he was like an old mother hen covering over the brood; you know, watching after them.”²² Still, it is hard to believe that young Curtis did not harbor some

18. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 191–192.

19. LeMay embarked on his career as a paper boy in New Brighton. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 25.

20. *Ibid.*, 27.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Patarica LeMay Hauger, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, February 26, 2010, interview 1697, transcript, UNTOHC, 2.

resentment for his circumstances, and toward his patriarch, whose slack Curtis felt compelled to draw taut.

LeMay completed his middle and high school studies in Columbus, graduating from the “new” South High School in the spring of 1924, and began to pursue a career as a pilot.²³ In order to achieve this goal, Curtis discovered that “the only place to get into the flying business was through military schools.”²⁴ Unfortunately, he knew no politicians who had the necessary connections to sponsor his candidacy into the U.S. Military Academy at West Point; however, Curtis did have excellent grades in math and history—he had average grades in every other subject—and wanted to earn a civil engineering degree in addition to his pilot wings.²⁵ The Ohio State University was nearby, so he sought and was granted admittance into the school’s College of Engineering, saving enough money over the summer for the initial registration deposit.

LeMay began his academic career at OSU in the fall of 1924 and also joined the school’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program as a cadet. In his own words, “I could kill two birds with one stone here. Get a civil engineering degree and then get into the Army too and then get flying training.”²⁶ All that he required was transportation, living arrangements, and a full-time job to pay for it all as well as school.

During his first quarter as a university student, Curtis and a friend each contributed half of the \$25.00 necessary to purchase an old, mostly operational Model-T Ford from the parents of one of LeMay’s old high school classmates.²⁷ Several months later, LeMay was able to collect an additional \$12.50 and bought out his partner. LeMay’s mechanical ability kept the car running throughout his years at OSU, and in 1927, he even built a new car utilizing the old Model-T wheels and tires, the engine and frame of a newer Model-T, and the body of a Ford coupe.²⁸

Erving encouraged Curtis to live at home during his college years. Both parents relied on their eldest child to help raise his siblings and contribute to the household income, which he did until the family moved away in 1926

23. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 25–27. According to LeMay, South High School was moved to a new location after his junior year, and he graduated in the new building. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 31.

24. Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Dr. Edgar F. Puryear Jr., November 17, 1976, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 3–4.

25. *Ibid.*, 4.

26. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 4.

27. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 194–195.

28. *Ibid.*, 198–199.

on yet another of Erving's quests for employment. At that point, Curtis's membership in OSU's engineering fraternity, Theta Tau, gave him access to an affordable room at their fraternity house a few miles east of campus at 1060 Olmstead Avenue.²⁹ In 1928, he moved back into his parents' home when his family returned to Columbus following another failed vocational sojourn. Fortunately, Curtis enjoyed a lucrative full-time position during his time as a university student.

LeMay began college without a job, but shortly after starting classes he applied and was hired for a position with the Buckeye Steel Casting Company. His job was to set cores for railroad cars, Monday through Saturday, from 5:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., for the princely sum of \$35 a week.³⁰ It was enough money to support a small family comfortably. The funds allowed LeMay to attend classes and still help his parents financially. The physical strain, though, on his person was tremendous. These effects were especially evident in his 9:00 a.m. engineering class titled "Railroad Curves," during which he fell asleep every morning. In turn, the course's instructor, Professor Wall, failed him in two consecutive semesters.³¹ Overall, LeMay's grades throughout his college career were average. He routinely scored Cs and Ds in most courses, supplemented by a handful of As and Bs. He excelled in his ROTC courses, achieving As and Bs in all twelve quarters.³² LeMay was the consummate worker, and his college years prepared him to contend with the pressure cooker of high command in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

By the fall of 1928, Curtis lacked one quarter to fulfill the requirements of his degree. In the meantime, the American public's love affair with flight and the men and women who did it reached its full zenith. On May 20, 1927, Charles Lindbergh, a pilot with the U.S. Air Mail Service and Army Reserve Officer Corps, made his famous nonstop transatlantic flight from Roosevelt Field in New York to Le Bourget Field in Paris, where he arrived on May 21.³³ Approximately thirteen months later, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to make the journey. Both pilots grew in fame and inspired thousands of young men (and some young women) to follow in their footsteps. As summer drew to a close in 1928, more and more of them added their

29. "LeMay, Curtis E." *The Ohio State University Directory, 1926-1927* (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 1926), 185; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 34.

30. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 37.

31. *Ibid.*, 38.

32. Edith H. Cockins, Registrar, "Curtis Emerson LeMay, Official Transcript, College of Engineering," The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, August 5, 1929, CELMPR.

33. Dale Van Every and Morris DeHaven Tracy, *Charles Lindbergh: His Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927), 1-5.

names to the swelling pool of flight school applicants, shrinking LeMay's likelihood of gaining an appointment. It was the critical juncture in his life.

Curtis wanted to apply to flight school, but his status as a reserve officer dictated a lower position on the list of aspiring fliers. Displaying an astute grasp of military bureaucracy, LeMay resigned his commission in the reserves and joined the Ohio National Guard, whose members enjoyed a higher priority than reserve officers, dramatically increasing his chances of gaining one of the one hundred spots available for flying cadets in 1928.³⁴

LeMay was accepted into flying school on September 28, 1928, and reported to March Field in Riverside, California, on October 28 of the same year.³⁵ The air corps' flight school curriculum required cadets to complete eight months in basic training and basic flight training, and a final four in advanced flying school. If they passed both their courses and their flight tests, cadets achieved the designation of Airplane Pilot and earned their commission as second lieutenants in the air corps.

LeMay arrived at March Field on the back of the base's mail truck in late October. He longed to get behind the stick of a PT-3 but, like all cadets, was obligated to spend a month learning the basics ("drill, physical training, aerodynamics lectures—engines and fuel systems—all that sort of thing") before he would be allowed to fly.³⁶ Although Lieutenant LeMay displayed some natural affinity for aviation, his initial instructor, a flier named Pee-wee Wheeler, did little to develop this talent. At the end of the course, LeMay, like every cadet, had to pass a flight test in order to proceed to the next stage of training. If he failed to perform, he would be dropped from the program and sent back to his post with the National Guard. To make matters worse, LeMay's check pilot was Red MacKinnon, known by the neophytes and faculty at March Field as one of the base's toughest examiners. Despite a poor performance, LeMay showed just enough natural talent to pass the test despite MacKinnon's initial inclination to fail him. He was the only one of Wheeler's eight students to make it to the next stage.

LeMay began the next stage of his training in biplane fighters made famous in World War I—de Havillands—as well as the new o-2s, under an excellent new tutor by the name of Joe Dawson. Dawson was an ace fighter pilot in World War I; he guided LeMay until the lieutenant finished his ba-

34. Curtis E. LeMay, Oral History Interview 1450, USAFOHC, 3.

35. Curtis E. LeMay, "Application for Appointment and Statement of Preferences for Reserve Officers," August 9, 1929, CELMPR.

36. The PT-3 was one of the standard biplane trainer aircraft of the period. For the quotation, see LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 54.

sic flight training and was sent to advanced flying school at Kelly Field, San Antonio, in the summer of 1929.

On June 28, LeMay arrived at the hot Texas airfield to complete the final four months of his curriculum.³⁷ Here, the candidates were divided up according to their chosen field of specialty. LeMay was sent to Pursuit and put under the direction of Rus Keeler.³⁸ Fortunately for his students, Keeler had more in common with Joe Dawson than with Pee-wee Wheeler, and LeMay thrived under his tutelage, learning skills such as formation and night flying. In addition, the cadet aced the required examinations given to those, including himself, who did not hold college degrees.³⁹

LeMay graduated from flight school on October 12, 1929, and received the rank of second lieutenant. The newly minted pilot had found his calling, as evidenced by his performance both in the classroom and in the sky. In the final tally, the lowest grade earned by Lieutenant LeMay throughout his course of instruction was an 88 in an Observation Tactics class.⁴⁰ In fact, he only earned two Bs total, scoring As in the remainder of his courses, with a 98 in Attack Aviation recorded as his highest mark.⁴¹

Three days prior to graduation, LeMay received orders directing him to join the 27th Pursuit Squadron, 1st Pursuit Group, at Selfridge Field, Michigan, following a twenty-day leave.⁴² While he rested in Columbus, the stock market crashed on October 24, 1929, and the United States embarked upon one of the most difficult passages in its history. The air corps, too, struggled to develop its own identity.

Army and navy leaders pursued the potential of the airplane as a useful tool in war, but they did so in the context of traditional Clausewitzian doctrine; aircraft were to be deployed in support of soldiers and sailors in defeating the enemy's army and navy, rather than independently striking strategically important targets in the heart of their enemy's territory. In the

37. Curtis E. LeMay, "Application for Appointment and Statement of Preferences for Reserve Officers," CELMPR.

38. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 62. Pursuit units were composed of fighter aircraft and primarily tasked with protecting observation planes and bombers from enemy pursuit units.

39. LeMay was tested in only one subject of his choice from a list of options because he was so close to earning his bachelor's degree. He chose surveying and scored third highest in his class. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 66.

40. Arthur Thomas, First Lieutenant, Air Corps, Secretary, "Transcript, Flying Cadet Curtis Emerson LeMay," Army Air Corps Advanced Flying School, Kelly Field, Texas, October 12, 1929, CELMPR.

41. *Ibid.*

42. R. B. Lea, First Lieutenant, Air Corps, "Radiogram #259," Headquarters, Kelly Field, Texas, October 9, 1929, CELMPR.

late 1920s and early 1930s, air corps leaders were not given the authority, the manpower, or the funds necessary to transform the service's potential into the independent strategic force they envisioned.⁴³ The air corps was not even the only air force in the U.S. military. The navy, too, had its own aircraft and pilots to fly them.

Despite these challenges, there was a contingent of air corps officers, originally led by Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell, whose experiences in World War I convinced them that air power could be a decisive force in war if the air corps was permitted to mass and direct its own force of bombers that operated according to its strategic goals. LeMay, who served under Robert Olds, one of Mitchell's most important disciples, succinctly stated Mitchell's core philosophy: "Billy Mitchell believed in strategic air power, the idea that air power could be used to strike an enemy's heartland and destroy his means and willingness to wage war. The net effect would be costly in civilian casualties, but theoretically it would, in the long run, prevent even more casualties by ending a war without the carnage of the indecisive land battles of the First World War."⁴⁴

To the detriment of his cause, Mitchell publically criticized the U.S. military's air policy in 1921, which resulted in his court-martial trial and resignation from the Army Air Corps on February 1, 1926.⁴⁵ Despite their leader's *Downfall*, Mitchell's followers, including Henry "Hap" Arnold, Frank Andrews, Robert Olds, and many others, carried his torch throughout the interwar period and were instrumental in the rise and acceptance of the four-engine bomber by the end of the 1930s, when they had reached the upper echelons of the air corps' officer cadre. Curtis E. LeMay was destined to play a role in the success of strategic bombing as well, despite his inauguration into the air corps as a fighter pilot.

In late October 1929, Lieutenant LeMay arrived at Selfridge Field, Michigan, where he began his service as a pilot with the 27th Pursuit Squadron.

43. James Lea Cate and Wesley Frank Craven, "The Army Air Arm between Two Wars, 1919–1939," in *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, vol. 1 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 29.

44. Mitchell emphasized that strategic bombing campaigns should focus on an enemy's "means," i.e., industrial, oil, and transportation targets, more than on his "willingness to wage war" through the indiscriminate bombing of population centers purposed to destroy civilian morale. The latter doctrine was promoted by contemporary air power theorists such as the Italian general Giulio Douhet. For the quotation, see Curtis E. LeMay and Bill Yenne, *Superfortress: The Boeing B-29 and American Airpower in World War II* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 1988), 17–18.

45. Alfred F. Hurley, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Air Power* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 56–57, 107.

In addition to flying and practicing bombing and gunnery, LeMay held typical officer duties during his four years there, including assistant mess and mess officer, assistant operations officer, as well as communications and assistant communications officer.⁴⁶ During this period, the second lieutenant appears to have been a fairly typical, reliable air corps officer, as suggested in his second quarterly officer efficiency report recorded on June 30, 1930. First Lieutenant Marion L. Elliott, commanding officer of the 27th, declared LeMay to be “an officer of average ability,” and recorded “no unfavorable entries.”⁴⁷ “Satisfactory” and “average” are not words one usually sees applied to the air force career of Curtis E. LeMay. It was a rather inauspicious beginning for the man who would later head the world’s largest and deadliest strategic bombing command and personally advise presidents as air force chief of staff in the 1960s.

As time went on, however, LeMay’s grades as both an officer and a flier steadily improved from “Satisfactory” to “Excellent.” The change first became evident in his fall 1930 efficiency report recorded by the 27th’s new squadron leader, Captain R. C. W. Blessley. He judged LeMay to be a good pilot and mess officer. In addition, he rated the flier as “Excellent” in the categories of “Military bearing and neatness; Attention to duty; Initiative; and Force.”⁴⁸ Blessley’s comments encapsulate the qualities that served the young lieutenant so well as a commander, and reflect the attributes LeMay acquired and nurtured from an early age.

In the fall of 1930 into early 1931, the 27th took part in a series of flying demonstrations and other events to promote the air corps, highlighted by its participation in the 1930 National Air Races in Chicago.⁴⁹ For the first half of the 1930s, most air corps units were involved in these sort of activities along with promoting the air corps in general. “It was a matter of educating the people and the country to the potential of air power in order

46. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 73–74.

47. First Lieutenant Marion L. Elliott, Commanding Officer, “Officer Efficiency Report, Curtis E. LeMay, April 1–June 30 1930,” 27th Pursuit Squadron, 1st Pursuit Group, Selfridge Field, Michigan, June 30, 1930, CELMPR.

48. Captain R. C. W. Blessley, Commanding Officer, “Officer Efficiency Report, October 1–December 31, 1930,” 27th Pursuit Squadron, 1st Pursuit Group, Selfridge Field, Michigan, December 31, 1930, CELMPR. “Force” as defined in the efficiency report is “the faculty of carrying out with energy and resolution that which on examination is believed reasonable, right, or duty.”

49. The races were held annually and included both military and civilian participants in a number of distance and speed races. The 27th received a commendation from Major General J. E. Fechet, chief of the air corps, for its participation and performance in the 1930 races. See J. E. Fechet, Major General, Air Corps, Chief of the Air Corps, “Commendation,” War Department, Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, Washington, D.C., September 4, 1930, CELMPR.

to try to do something about the budget,” recalled LeMay. “That was practically the mission at the time: to educate the people. So we opened airports all over the place and flew demonstrations and things of that sort.”⁵⁰ LeMay enjoyed these activities but often reflected on his failure to earn the civil engineering degree he had begun at OSU. With degree in hand, the lieutenant would become the first member of his family to graduate from college, and it would also increase his chances for promotion in the air corps.⁵¹ In the spring of 1931, a new relationship successfully influenced him to finish college. Her name was Helen E. Maitland.

Helen was born to Jesse S. and Maud P. Maitland on April 4, 1908, in Ohio.⁵² The couple was married the year before their first daughter’s birth and had only one more child, a daughter, Faith, in November 1909. Helen grew up in Lakewood, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, and her father enjoyed a successful career as a corporate attorney and investigator for the Cleveland Railway Company.⁵³ Before that, he had also been a telegrapher and clerk for the U.S. Postal Service.⁵⁴

It is apparent that Helen’s family expected her to pursue an education and career. Both of her parents had attended college. Jesse Maitland studied at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago for four years before moving to Ohio at the turn of the twentieth century, and Maud Maitland

50. Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P. Harahan, eds., *Strategic Air Warfare: An Interview with Generals Curtis E. LeMay, Leon W. Johnson, David A. Burchinal, and Jack J. Catton* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, U.S. Air Force, 1988), 21.

51. During the interwar years, it was very difficult for an officer to obtain a promotion in any of the services because of the military’s reduced peacetime size and tight budget. Having one’s college degree was a means by which to distinguish oneself from other officers and thereby achieve a better chance to receive a promotion when one became available.

52. “Helen E. LeMay,” Social Security Death Index, Social Security Administration, Baltimore, Maryland.

53. U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Twelfth Census, 1900, Cleveland City, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, series T623, roll 1259, p. 31, s.v. “Jessie S. Maitland,” Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Thirteenth Census, 1910, Lakewood City, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, series T624, roll 1165, p. 75, s.v. “Jesse S. Maitland,” Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Fourteenth Census, 1920, Lakewood City, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, series T625, roll 1375, p. 190, s.v. “Jessie S. Maitland,” Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; and *Cleveland City Directory* (Cleveland: Cleveland City Directory Company, 1923), s.v. “Maitland, Jesse S.” The Cleveland Railway Company was the city’s primary public transit service from 1910 to 1942. See David Dirck Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski, eds., s.v. “The Cleveland Railway Company,” *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

54. Ibid.

trained for two years at Cleveland Normal School to become a schoolteacher.⁵⁵ Helen “said that her family had wanted her to be a doctor,” remembered Curtis, “and she wished to be one also, to start with.”⁵⁶ She excelled in grade school and high school, continuing her education afterward at nearby Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University), where she was a premed major. Helen never earned her M.D., but she did complete a degree in nursing and moved on to postgraduate work in dental hygiene at the University of Michigan, where she met Curtis LeMay.⁵⁷

It was on their blind date that Helen convinced him to finish his own degree by requesting a temporary transfer to an airfield nearby Columbus from his commander, Major George Howard Brett. Major Brett acquiesced to LeMay’s request and transferred the young lieutenant to Norton Field, a reserve base in Columbus, so that he could finish the few courses required to complete his degree. The airman arrived at Norton on October 1, 1931, and was allowed approximately six months to finish his coursework. By late March 1932, Lieutenant LeMay held a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering. All the while he stayed in touch with Helen, intrigued by the young nurse who was now employed as a dental hygienist in Akron, Ohio, and the couple began dating regularly.⁵⁸ In the second half of 1932 and the early part of 1933, LeMay continued to take part in flight demonstrations and training exercises, which became routine for the fliers in the 27th Pursuit Squadron.

In July 1933, LeMay spent approximately one month in command of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp near Brethren, Michigan.⁵⁹ By this time the nation was deep in the midst of the Great Depression. As the unemployment rate skyrocketed, thousands of young men attempting to enter the country’s labor pool competed directly with older, more experienced workers for the few jobs that were available. To help remedy this, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced the CCC as a constructive way to employ unmarried young men eighteen to twenty-five years old.⁶⁰ CCC camps were established throughout the United States, many in na-

55. Helen Maitland #29111, Records of Student Credentialing, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University Archives, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland.

56. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 78.

57. McLendon, “She’ll Ring Change after Wedding”; and Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 217.

58. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 99.

59. J. M. Graham, Colonel, General Staff, Chief of Staff, “Special Orders No. 136,” Headquarters, 6th Corps Area, Chicago, July 22, 1933, CELMPR. LeMay received orders directing him back to Selfridge on August 17, 1933.

60. The program served a dual purpose. Not only would it provide jobs to unemployed young men, but of the \$30 per month salary they received, \$25 was mandatorily sent back to their parents.

tional parks, where these men would work on conservation projects commanded by U.S. Army officers. LeMay was one of those chosen for this duty. It was challenging work for the young lieutenant, but the men under his command fell in line and responded well to his leadership. Still, he was not disappointed when, in August, he received orders directing him back to Selfridge.⁶¹

About a month later, LeMay was sent to Langley Field, Virginia, to complete a four-week course in navigation taught by Tasmanian flier Harold C. Gatty.⁶² Aerial navigation (“avigation”) techniques were still being developed by fliers during this period, and LeMay had little experience in the practice besides a short training flight he took part in on January 14–15 while at Selfridge Field.⁶³ Gatty’s unique course was groundbreaking for the field of military aviation in the United States and laid the foundation for basic principles that became fundamental to aviators. Chief among these were two key techniques—celestial navigation, which he adapted from the practice of sailing, and dead reckoning.⁶⁴ LeMay’s training at Langley provided him with a store of knowledge upon which he would build significantly when he transferred to bombers in 1937, eventually leading him to become one of the top navigators in the entire air corps on the eve of World War II.

Throughout the summer of 1933, LeMay continued to court Helen as part of his frequent cross-country trips from Selfridge to Akron. By now, the young flier often daydreamed of marrying his young girlfriend, but he did not have the extra funds he considered necessary to procure an engagement ring and begin the life of a married man. This was not a result of poor budgeting; rather, LeMay, always the loyal sibling, sent back a large portion of his monthly salary home to Columbus because “some of the younger LeMays were in high school and had to be provided for.”⁶⁵ In addition, at least according to LeMay, Helen was a “terrific flirt” and was constantly

61. J. M. Graham, Colonel, General Staff, Chief of Staff, “Special Orders No. 139,” Headquarters, 6th Corps Area, Chicago, August 17, 1933, CELMPR.

62. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 94–95.

63. Donald L. Putt, Second Lieutenant, Air Corps, Assistant Operations Officer, “Operations Orders No. 10,” Headquarters, Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Michigan, January 12, 1933, CELMPR.

64. “Order No. 353.9, Avigation Training, Langley,” October 20, 1933, CELMPR. Celestial navigation is accomplished by measuring the distance between heavenly bodies (the sun, moon, and certain stars or planets) and the horizon to determine one’s position and course. Dead reckoning is a navigation technique used to determine one’s present position or future estimated position by referencing a known position or “fix” and performing calculations in conjunction with present course, speed, and time elapsed.

65. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 99.

entertaining suitors.⁶⁶ While on leave in October 1933, LeMay made a visit to Helen during which she informed him of her engagement to a doctor presently working in Brazil but due to arrive back in the States within the year. At the end of their rendezvous, LeMay informed her that he would not be coming back, despite her protestations; however, several months later Helen persuaded him to join her for her sister's wedding, where she informed the flier that she had broken off all her engagements.⁶⁷ Satisfied, LeMay proposed, and the couple became engaged to be married.⁶⁸ Before their marriage occurred, however, Lieutenant LeMay participated in one of the most infamous debacles in air corps history, commonly known as the Air Mail Scandal of 1934.

In the winter of 1934, the air corps was requisitioned by President Roosevelt to replace private airlines that previously held air mail contracts with the federal government but were embroiled in a national scandal concerning their payouts. So, on February 13, 1934, LeMay and hundreds of other air corps pilots—many inexperienced fliers fresh out of flight school—were ordered to report to various airfields on the east coast to serve as air mail pilots. From February 13 to May 11, LeMay delivered the mail, servicing many different areas including Chandler Field, Atlanta; Bolling Field in Washington, D.C.; the municipal airport in Cleveland; and Wright Field near Dayton, Ohio.⁶⁹

Despite the enthusiastic fervor and confidence with which the air corps chief, Major General Benjamin Foulois, guided this effort, it was largely reckoned a disaster by the public at the time and, later, by historians.⁷⁰ Air corps pilots flew primarily open-cockpit biplanes during the day in good weather. In order to complete air mail deliveries, it was necessary for them to fly at night and use their aircrafts' instruments when visibility was poor. They began flying the routes during the winter of 1934, one of the harsh-

66. *Ibid.*, 99–100.

67. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 224.

68. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 99–100.

69. Bryant L. Boatner, Second Lieutenant, Air Corps Assistant Operations Officer, "Operations Orders No. 33," Headquarters, Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Michigan, February 13, 1934, CELMPR; U. G. Ent, First Lieutenant, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Orders No. 7," Headquarters, Eastern Zone, Army Air Corps Mailing Operations, Floyd Bennett Airport, Brooklyn, New York, February 17, 1934, CELMPR; Ent, "Special Orders No. 32," Headquarters, Eastern Zone, Army Air Corps Mail Operations, Mitchel Field, Hempstead, Long Island, New York, March 14, 1934, CELMPR; Ent, "Special Orders No. 48," March 30, 1934, CELMPR; Ent, "Special Orders No. 79," April 30, 1934, CELMPR; and Ent, "Special Orders No. 90," May 11, 1934, CELMPR.

70. John L. Frisbee, "Valor: AACMO—Fiasco or Victory?," *Air Force Magazine* 78, no. 3 (March 1995).

est on record, with aircraft that were not equipped with the correct instruments, pilots who had little to no experience flying on instruments or at night, and inadequate maintenance facilities available to them on the outlined routes, all deficiencies that their civilian counterparts had negotiated over a period of years following World War I when contracts were first awarded to private airlines.⁷¹

Years later, LeMay defended the air corps pilots' performance as mail carriers, arguing that they were underequipped and poorly trained for the job, a problem that was being remedied throughout the spring just before the civilian airlines resumed operations under new contracts in June.⁷² The operation cost the air corps a total of twelve pilots killed and sixty-six crashes.⁷³

Ironically, the Air Mail Scandal proved to be a crucial event in the progression of the air force toward independence, as it resulted in the creation of General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force.⁷⁴ This new command entity directly controlled combat units, versus the old system under which they were subordinate to the commanding officer of whichever army unit the air forces were attached to. The air corps remained in place as the training and support entity of the air forces with its current chief, Major General Oscar

71. Frisbee, "Valor: AACMO—Fiasco or Victory?"

72. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 105–109.

73. Cate and Craven, "The Army Air Arm between Two Wars," 28–31

74. On a practical level, it made air corps leaders realize that its pilots needed training in night flying and instrument flying to equip them with the practical ability to fly in almost any weather conditions. LeMay himself was ordered to one of the new "blind landing" schools located at Wright Field on March 30, where he remained from April 2 to April 30, when he resumed mail duty at Cleveland Municipal Airport. More importantly, coverage by the national media alerted the American public to the woefully underfunded state of the air corps, despite the passage of the Air Corps Act of 1926, which was meant to modernize America's air force. Consequently, public opinion boosted support, resulting in an increased budget for the branch (the Great Depression had stifled modernization efforts throughout the American military). In addition, the War Department's Baker Board, headed by General Hugh Drum, was formed to modernize the organization of the air corps. Rather than declaring it an independent arm, as many air corps leaders had hoped, the board decided to separate the branch into two entities, each with its own chief, who would both answer directly to the chief of staff of the army. The Office of the Chief of the Air Corps was responsible for training, organization, and operation of the General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force, which had control over all combat units and was divided into bombers, attack (tactical fighters), and pursuit (defensive fighters). By consolidating all combat units under one command, it was a first step toward the air force's independence, even if that command was still beholden to the army. The change went into effect on March 1, 1935; Major General Oscar Westover retained his duties as chief of the air corps, and Major General Frank M. Andrews was appointed as the first commander of GHQ Air Force. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 106–108; Cate and Craven, "The Army Air Arm between Two Wars," 28–31; Ent, "Special Orders No. 48," CELMPR; and Ent, "Special Orders No. 79," CELMPR.

M. Westover. Major General Frank M. Andrews was appointed as the first commander of GHQ Air Force.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, veterans of the air corps' foray into the air mail business returned to their original duty stations. LeMay was especially eager to return home in order to begin his next assignment—marriage.

On May 24, Second Lieutenant LeMay requested and received a ten-day leave of absence beginning on June 6.⁷⁶ This was the most important leave of his career, because on June 9, 1934, he married Helen in Cleveland. Electing to forgo the honeymoon to preserve funds for homemaking, the couple moved into one of the new married officers' quarters at Selfridge Field soon after the ceremony. Unfortunately, despite previous assurances to the contrary, on August 4 the War Department informed the young couple that LeMay was being transferred to the 6th Pursuit Squadron, Schofield Barracks, Wheeler Field, Hawaii.⁷⁷ So, several days after the scheduled departure date, August 13 (mechanical problems delayed the ship's departure), Second Lieutenant and Mrs. LeMay embarked on the *USS Republic*, an army transport, for their new home in Hawaii.⁷⁸

As was often the case, housing for married couples was scarce at Wheeler Field, and LeMay was not senior enough to procure quarters for himself and his bride. Consequently, they moved into a very modest one-bedroom cottage that was the embodiment of beachfront property. Literally located on the beach, their new home did not even have a hot water heater. As Helen went about transforming their new quarters into the semblance of a home, Lieutenant LeMay went to work at Wheeler. The airman held the same sorts of jobs he had had as an officer at Selfridge—assistant operations officer, communications officer, mess officer, and so on; however, his education in navigation made him one of the few fliers in the air corps to come equipped with the most current knowledge of the practice, a valuable commodity that his superiors soon put to use.

So began Lieutenant LeMay's new navigation school at Wheeler, which he directed in conjunction with Second Lieutenant John W. Egan, who was assigned to a composite unit of bombers and observers at nearby Luke

75. Cate and Craven, "The Army Air Arm between Two Wars," 28–31.

76. George S. Warren, Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Orders No. 123," Headquarters, Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Michigan, May 26, 1934, CELMPR.

77. Douglas MacArthur, General, Chief of Staff, "Special Orders No. 184," War Department, Washington, D.C., August 4, 1934, CELMPR.

78. John R. Holt, Captain, Quartermaster Corps, Assistant, "Transportation on Army Transport," War Department, Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington, D.C., August 22, 1934, CELMPR.

Field. The two pilots worked well together and had a shared history. Egan and LeMay had both graduated from flying school at Kelly Field in October 1929, and both had attended Gatty's navigation course, although at different times. Together, the duo overhauled the wing's old curriculum, which had previously allotted a mere hour of study a week per trainee, wholly inadequate for the task of learning navigation. Instead, the novice instructors laid out a full-time, three-month course highlighted by training in celestial navigation and dead reckoning.

The program was a success from the start and quite demanding for both teachers and their pupils. LeMay and Egan were required to work extra hours in the evening to prepare lessons, derive problems for their students to solve, and keep current on the material for their own benefit. For this task, Helen proved to be a willing assistant and their beach cottage a blessing; at night she would help her husband take readings of the stars on their sandy front porch for the next day's celestial navigation problem.⁷⁹

LeMay's efforts as an instructor were rewarded the following spring when he was promoted to first lieutenant. Soon after the flier took his oath of office on March 14, 1935, he was able to secure a three-bedroom home at Wheeler Field for himself and Helen due his new rank and increased standing.⁸⁰ Mrs. Lemay was not enthusiastic about their new home, and later in life the couple reflected on the time spent at the small beach cottage with nostalgia. Several months later, LeMay and Egan prepared a recommendation for permanent improvements and expansion of the navigation school. They forwarded this to their wing's commanding officer, Colonel Delos C. Emmons (18th Composite Wing), who, on June 27, 1935, fully endorsed the new curriculum and issued an order putting their plan into action.⁸¹

LeMay's command of navigation during this period is a case study in his approach to every job he held during his air force career. The experiences of his childhood and young adulthood forged his spirit in such a way that the lieutenant approached each task with the intent to master it from the ground up. LeMay was one of the first airmen to experiment with celestial navigation, and the knowledge he gained under Gatty in 1933 furthered his dedication to the art. As an instructor at Wheeler, when he was not teach-

79. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 115.

80. Horace F. Sykes, Colonel, Adjutant General Department, Hawaiian Division, "Oath of Office," Schofield Barracks, Territory of Hawaii, March 14, 1935, CELMPR.

81. Delos C. Emmons, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding, "Wing Navigation School," Headquarters, 18th Composite Wing, Air Corps, Office of the Wing Commander, Fort Shafter, Territory of Hawaii, June 27, 1935, CELMPR.

ing other airmen, he was practicing navigation techniques or learning new ones. His success is evidenced by glowing commendations offered by his group commander, Lieutenant Colonel John C. McDonnell (18th Pursuit Group), as well as Colonel Emmons at the end of his tour of duty at the school.⁸²

Throughout his time at Wheeler, LeMay pondered the future of the air force and his role in it. By now, it was apparent to the lieutenant that he needed to transfer to bombers. His expertise in navigation was wasted in fighters, and “even the most stupid people like me knew that bombers were more important in a first class war than fighters were.”⁸³ Fortunately, LeMay was scheduled to be transferred to a new unit at the end of 1936. In accordance with his new outlook, he requested reassignment to one of the elite bomber units of the Air Corps—the 2nd Bombardment Group, 2nd Bombardment Wing, at Langley Field, Virginia. On July 9, 1936, LeMay was granted his wish.⁸⁴ So, in late November, the LeMays packed their household belongings and boarded the USAT *St. Mihiel* back to the continental United States, where they spent a twenty-two-day leave with their families during the holidays before making their way to Virginia.⁸⁵ Thus ended the airman’s seven-year stint as a fighter pilot.

Working with bombers was clearly Lieutenant LeMay’s true calling. When he joined the 2nd, it was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bob Olds, who, along with Major General Frank Andrews, became one of the

82. Colonel Emmons stated, “Upon the completion of the Wing Navigation School, I desire to commend you for your untiring efforts and excellent work in the direction of this school. The thorough and efficient manner in which you have conducted this school has resulted in sound student instruction and safe operation. Your work has been well above the normal performance of duty and I am very appreciative of the interest you have shown in the welfare of the 18th Composite Wing.” Lieutenant Colonel McDonnell added, “It is desired to add to the commendation of the Wing Commander an expression of appreciation of the energy and initiative you have shown in overcoming many obstacles which were caused by equipment and adverse weather conditions.” See John C. McDonnell, Lieutenant Colonel, 18th Pursuit Group, Commanding, and Delos C. Emmons, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding, “Commendation: LeMay, Curtis E.,” Headquarters, 18th Composite Wing, Air Corps, Office of the Wing Commander, Fort Shafter, Territory of Hawaii, April 3, 1936, CELMPR.

83. Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Dr. Edgar F. Puryear Jr., November 17, 1976, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 18.

84. E.T. Conley, Major General, Adjutant General, “Special Orders No. 162,” War Department, Washington, D.C., July 9, 1936, CELMPR. Several months after LeMay’s arrival at Langley, Lieutenant Egan joined him and started a new navigation school for the 2nd Bombardment Wing.

85. James A. Gilruth, Captain, Quartermaster Corps, Adjutant, “Memorandum: AR-570 (St. Mihiel),” Headquarters, Fort Armstrong, Office of the Commanding Officer, Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, November 20, 1936, CELMPR.

most influential officers on his career.⁸⁶ General Andrews was an outspoken advocate of strategic bombing and the four-engine bomber as its ideal platform. He even had a specific plane in mind to fulfill this role—Boeing's B-17.⁸⁷ As early as 1935, Andrews contemplated filling his bomb units exclusively with the huge, silver aircraft, but he faced several obstacles to this effort.⁸⁸

Many leaders in the War Department and the army, and even some at GHQ, believed that two-engine and one-engine bombers would suffice for any purpose required by the army. Conversely, Andrews, Olds, and others reckoned that four-engine bombers were essential to the success of any strategic bombing campaign they engaged in in future wars, and for several important reasons.⁸⁹ Four-engine bombers were designed to fly farther and carry heavier bomb loads than the smaller planes advocated by their opponents. In addition, the B-17, specifically, bristled with .50-caliber machine guns, which made it into a veritable "Flying Fortress," as it was tagged by airmen who worked with it. The B-17 gave the air force its chance to prove the utility of strategic bombing. Additionally, if the B-17 was as successful as Andrews and his peers hoped, a positive performance would yield a stron-

86. Olds was certainly the more influential of the two. Air Force Colonel William Peck conducted an oral history interview with LeMay following the general's retirement in 1965 and posed this question directly. LeMay responded, "If I had to single out any one, I would say Robert Olds made the greatest impact on me." See Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Colonel William Peck, March 11, 1965, interview 785, transcript, USAFOHC, 1.

87. Air force leaders were intrigued with the B-17, hoping that it was the long-range bomber they were looking for. It overperformed during tests throughout its development in 1933–1935; however, before the final evaluation board met to review the aircraft, the prototype crashed during a test on October 30, 1935, prompting a full structural and mechanical investigation. The investigators did not find any fault with the bomber's design, but the War Department decided to reduce its order from sixty-five planes to thirteen, which would be sent to several bomb groups for field testing. See Cate and Craven, "The Army Air Arm between Two Wars," 66.

88. H. O. Malone, "The Influence of Frank Andrews," *Air Force Magazine* 85, no. 2 (2002): 84–88.

89. It is important to note that as the air corps aged, more and more airmen were promoted to key positions within its leadership. Previously, these posts were held by officers who came from the older segments of the army—cavalry, infantry, and artillery—who believed that the air corps should be used exclusively in a tactical or intelligence role. In the late 1930s, officers such as Frank Andrews who believed in the strategic offensive capability of bombers as outlined by Billy Mitchell, Hugh Trenchard, and other air theorists, held the positions in which they could push their own agenda and effect real change. Unfortunately, like Mitchell, Andrews was demoted to colonel in March 1939 after endorsing the Air Corps Reorganization Bill, which would have practically made the air corps a separate and equal service with the army and navy. The army's chief of staff, General Malin Craig, sent him to Kelly Field with the demotion as a result. Malone, "The Influence of Frank Andrews."

ger case for independence to the War Department. There was a lot riding on the aircraft.

General Andrews directed the 2nd Bomb Group to develop long-range bombing techniques to be used in the next war.⁹⁰ Under Colonel Olds's leadership, the 2nd propelled the ascendancy of the air force's long-range bomber program by successfully demonstrating the abilities of the B-17 to the public and government through several expeditions from 1937 to 1939. LeMay would play a crucial part in these events, but first, he needed to learn all of the skills associated with flying the new aircraft that would define this part of his career.

Olds's mentorship of LeMay and his example as a military commander proved beneficial to the young navigator's development as a leader himself. "I didn't know what it was all about, until I got to Langley, and began work under Bob Olds," LeMay remembered.⁹¹ As was his habit, LeMay spent his first few months at the base mastering his new aircraft by working with the Norden bombsight, going through bombardier training, and adapting his navigation skills to bombers. On May 7, LeMay reached an important milestone in his bomber training. As of that date, the flier had been rated an Airplane Pilot for seven years, had logged two thousand pilot hours, and had made ten landings as lead pilot in the B-17, which qualified him to be rated as an Airplane Commander.⁹² He was now fully certified to command a B-17.

Meanwhile, Helen settled in at Langley and was eager to start a family. Unfortunately, she would suffer through two stillbirths, and, in one of the cases, surgery was required to remove the deceased baby. It devastated Helen and deeply affected LeMay, who buried himself in his work to distract his worry over his wife.⁹³ Still, as always, they pressed on with life. LeMay took part in a string of operations purposed to prove the capability of the four-engine bomber for the strategic role its advocates wanted it to play. In opposition stood the army and navy, as both favored the use of the air force solely in a tactical role.

In the fall of 1937, General Andrews decided that it was necessary to prove the ability of the B-17 to provide coastal defense, and he contacted the navy to provide an "enemy" battleship as a target in a joint exercise. The navy believed that this action was encroaching upon one of its primary missions;

90. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 33.

91. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 131.

92. Caleb V. Haynes, Captain, Airplane Commander, and Robert Olds, Lieutenant Colonel, Commanding, "Lieutenant C. E. LeMay's Airplane Commander Certificate," 2nd Wing, 2nd Bomb Group, General Headquarters Air Force, May 7, 1937, CELMPR.

93. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 139.

however, in early August, naval leaders acquiesced to Andrews's request; the operation was called Coastal Frontier Defense Joint Exercise No. 4.⁹⁴ The exercise would take place off the west coast in August, when the fog was the thickest. Bob Olds commanded the expedition, and he chose Captain C. V. Haynes as his pilot and First Lieutenant Curtis LeMay as his lead navigator. The pair became mainstays on Olds's crews for the next few years.

The exercise officially began at noon on August 12 and was scheduled to last until noon on August 13. Naval reconnaissance aircraft were supposed to provide Olds's crew with the coordinates of the battleship when they located it, but they did not transmit the coordinates until the late afternoon (the airmen could not continue the operation after dark). Despite the navy's stalling tactics, and the fog, the small force of seven B-17s took off in a desperate effort to find the *USS Utah*, their target. The navy finally gave them a position, and LeMay plotted their course using dead reckoning. By nightfall they were unable to find the battleship, and an unhappy group of fliers landed at Sacramento Municipal Airport to spend the night.

The next morning, the fliers received word from the navy that their scouts had transmitted the wrong coordinates the previous afternoon, which meant that LeMay had actually plotted the correct course. Unfortunately, the fog prevented naval reconnaissance from giving them new coordinates. Again, the group took off from Sacramento without a fix on their target. Despite further difficulties and an erroneous longitude coordinate, the airmen located and successfully attacked the *Utah* with their harmless water bombs. It was LeMay's first great victory as a navigator and an important demonstration of both modern navigation techniques and the abilities of the new B-17. Andrews and Olds were elated with the results, but there was little publicity given to their success despite efforts within the air force to highlight the event.⁹⁵ Undeterred, the officers enlisted the aid of the air corps assistant chief of information, Colonel Ira C. Eaker, to plan a string of operations to win the B-17 publicity and bolster congressional support for the aircraft.⁹⁶

94. Ibid., 120.

95. The airmen did receive a commendation from the army's chief of staff, General Malin Craig, who stated that the reports of the exercise were "highly gratifying" and recognized that the airmen overcame "rather severe conditions" resulting in "convincing evidence of the high state of training and morale of the GHQ Air Force and of its dependability and efficiency when called upon to play its allotted role in coastal and frontier defense." See Malin Craig, General, Chief of Staff, Army, "Commendation," Office of the Chief of Staff, War Department, Washington, D.C., August 27, 1937, CELMPR.

96. See Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 240. Eaker, a dedicated Mitchell disciple, had served on Mitchell's defense team during the general's court martial.

The first of these operations took place on January 2, 1938, when Lieutenant Colonel Olds made national headlines by completing the first transcontinental B-17 flight from Langley Field, Virginia, to March Field, California.⁹⁷ Although LeMay was not part of this exercise, he played a key role in many of the remaining flights as Olds's lead navigator. In these missions, Olds's confidence in LeMay was well rewarded.⁹⁸

The first assignment took place on February 15, 1938, when Olds chose LeMay to chart the course of his squadron of B-17s for a flight to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in honor of the inauguration of that country's president elect, Roberto M. Ortiz.⁹⁹ The airmen made the flight in twenty-eight hours and won Olds's group, and the army air force, newspaper headlines worldwide as well as commendations from General Andrews, General Westover, and Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring.¹⁰⁰ Two months later, LeMay once again served as lead navigator in a highly publicized exercise conceived by Colonel Eaker in which the lieutenant located the Italian liner SS Rex, further demonstrating the long-range ability of the B-17 and the modern navigation techniques utilized by its fliers.¹⁰¹

In August 1938, Haynes and LeMay made another "goodwill flight" to Bogota, Colombia, this time in honor of its president, Eduardo Santos. Several more expeditions of this nature took place in 1938, all of which helped to validate the worth of the B-17s in the minds of the American public and the federal government. By the winter of 1938, Lieutenant LeMay was an important piece in the promotion of air force interests and the success of the B-17. The following year he would embark on an even more challenging journey: fatherhood.

Patricia Jane "Janie" LeMay was born on February 8, 1939, following a successful cesarean procedure.¹⁰² Helen and the baby were both in good health, and LeMay was a glowing father. "There were a lot of wonderful

97. Olds flew the 2,317 miles in approximately thirteen hours, making the same trip a week later in eleven hours, breaking his own record. See Scottie L. Zamzow, "Ambassador of American Airpower: Major General Robert Olds" (master's thesis, Air University, 2008), 42–43.

98. *Ibid.*, 42–45, 53, 57. Of course, like the *Utah* joint exercise and Lieutenant Colonel Olds's transcontinental flights, these new endeavors were proposed to get the B-17 and long-range ability of the air force in the headlines.

99. Curtis LeMay, Lieutenant, Air Corps, Operations Officer, "Plan for 2nd Bombardment Group Flight to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Return," Headquarters, 2nd Bomb Group, GHQ Air Force, Office of the Operations Officer, Langley Field, Virginia, February 11, 1938, CELMPR.

100. E. S. Adams, Major General, Adjutant General, "Commendation," War Department, the Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C., June 29, 1938, CELMPR.

101. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 241.

102. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 174.

years ahead, and maybe greater happiness with my daughter than I ever deserved," he remembered.¹⁰³ The couple finally had the child they had so fervently hoped for. As the LeMays negotiated the new challenges of parenthood, the airman strengthened his professional skill set by attending the famous Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field, Alabama, from May through September.¹⁰⁴ Here, LeMay was exposed to faculty members such as Haywood S. Hansell and Harold L. George, who promoted the ascendancy of precision strategic bombing tactical theory and later created the air force's war plans before assuming primary roles in *The Second World War*.

Following this course of study, LeMay returned to 2nd Bomb Group and resumed navigation duties for South American survey missions. In December, the trio of Olds, LeMay, and Haynes flew to Rio de Janeiro under command of now-Major General Emmons.¹⁰⁵ As in the past, the trip was officially a goodwill flight, but with war in Europe raging, the air force was preparing for the possibility of U.S. involvement in the conflict, which would require reliable flight routes from the Western Hemisphere to points in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

The United States had been rapidly rearming since the winter of 1938. In January 1939, President Roosevelt requested that Congress appropriate \$300 million for the purchase of new aircraft, many of which were for the additional bomb groups being formed.¹⁰⁶ Although national sentiment was avidly opposed to the country's involvement in another world war, FDR believed that the United States would be forced to join in the conflict at some point following Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. It would take billions of dollars and millions of men to transform the U.S. military from a small peacetime force relying on a depression-era budget into the powerful juggernaut that it became by war's end, to say nothing of the money and matériel in aid given to Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and other allies.¹⁰⁷

The efforts of Billy Mitchell's disciples such as Andrews, Olds, and Eaker during the interwar period ensured that bombers would play a role in

103. Ibid., 174–175.

104. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 243.

105. Zamzow, "Ambassador of American Airpower," 42–45, 53, 57.

106. James Lea Cate and E. Kathleen Williams, "The Air Corps Prepares for War, 1939–1941," *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, vol. 1 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, eds. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 104.

107. Ibid., 101–103.

war plans.¹⁰⁸ Their ability to promote the effectiveness of the long-range bomber as a potentially decisive weapon was a crucial step toward that end.

On January 18, 1940, First Lieutenant LeMay was promoted to captain.¹⁰⁹ His performance and involvement in the 2nd Bomb Group's B-17 operations in the previous year marked him as one of the rising stars in the air force's bomber corps. At this time, LeMay was transferred to the 41st Reconnaissance Squadron, still with the 2nd Bomb Group, and was appointed operations officer. Although relatively quiet compared to the previous three years, 1940 held one major event for LeMay, which occurred in April when he was involved in an expedition to Panama as part of now-Major C. V. Haynes's B-15 bomber crew. There, the crew practiced precision bombing and reconnaissance in a variety of weather conditions for a three-week period. As a result they received a commendation for their efforts by the chief of the air corps, Henry H. Arnold.

By 1940, GHQ Air Force was adding bomb groups as quickly as possible with increased funding in preparation for the nation's anticipated entrance into World War II. Because the 2nd Bomb Group was the preeminent bomber unit of the interwar period, its officer cadre was a vital resource for new air force expansion efforts. Consequently, officers were siphoned off from the unit to form the core of six new bomb groups—including the 34th—and one heavy reconnaissance squadron between January 1940 and January 1941.¹¹⁰ Soon, LeMay, too, would leave the 2nd for the new 34th Bomb Group in the early winter of 1941.

During his time under Olds, LeMay formed relationships that bolstered his rise during World War II, when he developed into one of the elite officers of the air force's bomber force. In addition, he had fully embraced the vision of Andrews and Olds, who saw the air force as an independent branch of the American military with strategic bombing as its primary mission. As a party to the goodwill flights and other operations during 1937–1940, LeMay

108. These two are, of course, not the only men responsible for the air force's success going into the war. An exhaustive list is beyond the scope of this book, but it includes many officers who would become famous during World War II including General Henry Arnold, General Ira C. Eaker, and General Carl Spaatz, to name a few.

109. W. S. Paul, General, Adjutant General, U.S. Army, "Promotion, Curtis E. LeMay," War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C., January 18, 1940, CELMPR.

110. The 41st Reconnaissance Squadron was activated on February 1, 1940, and attached to the 2nd Wing at Langley Field. Two bomb groups, the 25th and 29th, were activated on the same day at Langley. The final four bomb groups—the 12th, 34th, 41st, and 43rd—were all activated on January 15, 1941, at McChord Field, near Tacoma, Washington; Langley Field; March Field, California; and Langley Field, respectively. See Robert F. Amos, *Defenders of Liberty: 2nd Bombardment Group/Wing, 1918–1993* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing, 1996), 94.

played a critical role in promoting that future. At home, following several disappointing years that brought no children, LeMay and Helen finally had the child they had dreamed of. In January 1941, World War II was still eleven months away, and the year held several new challenges that would prepare the captain for his future as a bomb group commander.

CHAPTER 3

Ferry Duty Summer–December 7, 1941

The year 1941 brought a set of new challenges for Curtis E. LeMay that prepared him for his role as an air force officer in World War II, and also tested the stamina of his young family. The Japanese aerial bombardment of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, shook the core of the United States and triggered a series of events that deeply affected the lives of every American, and even more so the families and careers of each officer in the military. Major LeMay—he was promoted on March 22, 1941—was no exception.¹ Fortunately, he had gained valuable experience in several activities preceding December 1941 that would serve him well in 1942 and afterward, when his 305th Bomb Group began attacks against Fortress Europe. Meanwhile, as would become the standard procedure, Helen and Janie followed LeMay whenever they could, and stayed with Helen's parents in Lakewood, Ohio, when no quarters were available to them.

In January 1941, then-Captain LeMay was transferred from the 41st Reconnaissance Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group, to Lieutenant Colonel John W. Monahan's newly constituted 34th Bomb Group, where he was assigned as a squadron commander and the group's operations officer.² The 34th remained at Langley, Virginia, until it was transferred to Westover Field near Springfield, Massachusetts, on May 26.³ Rearmament in conjunction with the spec-

1. Thomas L. Mosley, Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Oath of Office, Regular Army," Langley Field, Virginia, March 22, 1941, CELMPR.

2. Amos, *Defenders of Liberty*, 94; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 197.

3. Warren S. Wheeler, Second Lieutenant, Air Corps, Acting Adjutant, "Memorandum: The following is a roster of Flying Cadets and Enlisted Men, of this organization, being transferred to Westover Field, Chicopee Falls, Mass., on May 26, 1941, showing mode of travel," Headquarters, 34th Bomb Group, General Headquarters, Army Air Force, Langley Field, Virginia, May 20, 1941, CELMPR.

ter of war greatly benefited the air force from 1938 to 1940 through monies appropriated by Congress and the president for their use.⁴ Many of these dollars were dedicated to the construction of new air bases and the improvement of current ones across the United States and beyond. Westover Field, a relatively new installation, was a beneficiary of the air force's expansion efforts, but it was still under construction when LeMay and the 34th arrived. The base's absent barracks was a particularly disheartening circumstance for the enlisted men and noncommissioned officers, who were forced to sleep in the station's hangars.⁵ Fortunately for Major LeMay, Helen and Janie located and secured a house near the base.⁶

While his wife and daughter settled into their new home, LeMay oversaw the installation of the 34th's aircraft and equipment at Westover. Days later, he was contacted by Lieutenant Colonel Haynes, now commanding officer of the 25th Bomb Group, for temporary duty with the newly established Army Air Corps Ferrying Command (ACFC) and the Canadian-sponsored Atlantic Ferrying Organization (ATFERO) to ferry diplomats and aircraft between North America and Great Britain.⁷

The Luftwaffe's terror bombing campaign against English urban and industrial areas during the fall of 1940 and in the spring of 1941 precluded ATFERO's use of Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) pilots, who were needed to challenge the German air force over the skies of Great Britain.⁸ Consequently, the organization turned to Canadian, Australian, British, and American bush pilots, airline pilots, and other civilian fliers to ferry American-made bombers across the Atlantic. The United States' neutral status also

4. Cate and Williams, "The Air Corps Prepares for War," 104.

5. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 197.

6. *Ibid.*, 198.

7. Combat pilots who participated in these shuttling missions, such as LeMay and Haynes, were temporarily transferred to the ACFC for the duration of their tour of duty with ATFERO. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 198–204; and John D. Carter, "The Early Development of Air Transport and Ferrying," in *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, vol. 1 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 316–317.

8. Adolf Hitler and Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring shifted their focus from destroying RAF bases and radar sites to terror bombing major English population centers, most notably London, in early September 1940. This campaign was called "the Blitz" by British civilians and was engineered to force the British government to sue for peace with Germany. By the spring of 1941, the Blitz had failed, but the RAF continued its own bombing raids as part of Churchill's strategy to bomb and blockade German-occupied Europe until the British and Americans could invade France. See Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 148–152.

presented a significant challenge to early ATFERO operations. Neutrality laws prevented American factory pilots from delivering completed planes to Canadian officials, so "American pilots taxied the aircraft to within inches of the Canadian border [where] a team of horses hauled the planes into Canada."⁹

After Germany's conquest of mainland Europe, culminating in the fall of France in June 1940, President Roosevelt and others in the federal government still preferred to avoid war with Germany if possible; however, they were dedicated to rendering aid to Great Britain.¹⁰ In March 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, inching the United States closer to a military alliance with the British and exiled European Allies in their fight against the Axis powers. Thus, it was imperative for the United States to get critically important combat aircraft delivered to their future allies posthaste. In addition, leaders and diplomats required consistent, reliable transportation between Britain and the United States.¹¹

There were several issues stemming from Lend-Lease that led to American intervention in ATFERO's ferrying enterprises, preempting the United States' previously restricted involvement. The Luftwaffe presented a clear threat to British air space, compelling a U.S. military presence during ferrying operations. The army air corps was well suited to this role, and its involvement allowed American pilots to acquire valuable training time in the new B-24 bombers that American industry was sending to the British.¹² Furthermore, FDR believed that ATFERO operations were undermanned, necessitating U.S. intervention, which occurred on May 28, 1941, when he ordered Secretary of War Henry Stimson to get the air corps involved.¹³ Soon after, Stimson authorized the creation of the ACFC, predecessor of the Air Transport Command, which was founded in June 1942.¹⁴

The ACFC was activated on May 29, 1941, and Colonel Robert Olds was chosen as its first commander.¹⁵ Olds's resume was impressive. For over a year, he had worked as a staff officer with the Plans Division of the air corps. As discussed earlier, Olds was directly responsible for many of the missions that successfully promoted the B-17 bomber. He had also flown the longest-range bomber flight to date and had more command experience than any officer in

9. Jeffrey Davis, "The Atlantic Ferry Organization," *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, no. 1 (1985): 75.

10. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 238–245.

11. Oliver La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1949), 10–14.

12. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

13. *Ibid.*, 11.

14. Carter, "The Early Development of Air Transport and Ferrying," 313.

15. *Ibid.*, 315–317.

the corps.¹⁶ Olds's staff was filled with subordinates from his days commanding the 2nd Bomb Group. Key among them was Lieutenant Colonel Haynes, whom Olds chose to head the North Atlantic shuttling operations. Haynes, too, relied on his former colleagues to fill out his own unit, and in June convinced LeMay to travel to ATFERO's headquarters in Montreal and join his former commander's handpicked band of pilots.¹⁷ Shortly afterward, Major LeMay, dressed in civilian clothing, left Westover for Wright Field near Dayton, Ohio.¹⁸ Here, Haynes and his fliers spent only a few days learning the basic operation of the new B-24 bomber, the ship that they would be using to ferry passengers across the Atlantic. The training was so hasty, in fact, that "[e]verybody got to make a landing . . . I got to make one," remembered LeMay. "Next time I saw one of the so-called Liberators, I had been ordered to fly it across the Atlantic Ocean."¹⁹

WRIGHT FIELD, OHIO, JUNE 1941

Dear Helen,

We arrived at 9:30 last night, practically melted. The car we rode in was not air conditioned, so we had the windows down and had coal dust all over us also.

C. V. and his crew, Monty and I, are leaving tomorrow. Cochrane is going with me and Wold, or someone else.²⁰ I'll call you before we leave.

I may have to go to Dayton before we go to get the radio checked again. Will you send me some calling cards? I may need them.

16. Most of these exploits are discussed in chapter 2. See also Zamzow, "Ambassador of American Airpower."

17. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 198. Pilots and navigators such as LeMay and Haynes were particularly desirable candidates because they had the most experience flying the four-engine bombers; fighter pilots, for example, were primarily practiced in one- or two-engine aircraft. See Carter, "The Early Development of Air Transport and Ferrying," 315.

18. LeMay's "official" orders were not issued until June 14, 1941. See William H. Tunner, Major, Air Corps, Personnel Officer, "Orders," Headquarters, Air Corps Ferrying Command, War Department, Washington, D.C., June 14, 1941, CELMPR. This is important to note, because LeMay and company were technically working directly for ATFERO until these orders arrived.

19. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 201. The B-24 was nicknamed "the Liberator."

20. Major Torgils G. Wold was a member of the 34th Bomb Group and served as squadron commander of the group's headquarters squadron as of October 23, 1941. On September 15, 1942, now a colonel, Wold led the 341st Bomb Group in the China, Burma, and India (CBI) Theater, where he remained until April 1944. See Ernest A. Sweet Jr., Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Orders No. 110," Headquarters, 34th Bomb Group, Westover Field, Massachusetts, November 25, 1941, CELMPR; and Maurer Maurer, ed., *Air Force Combat Units of World War II* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 220.

In spite of the inconvenience of the trip, I was glad to get home, even overnight. It doesn't look as though we will have to work very hard at this, so I'll probably get home for a few days after this detail. Take good care of yourself.

Love,
Curt

Over the next several months, LeMay flew the cross-Atlantic route from Bolling Field in Washington, D.C., to Montreal and finally Gander, Newfoundland, before delivering passengers to various locations in Great Britain (Prestwick, Scotland, was the "British terminus") and back.²¹ It was a dangerous exercise for LeMay and the other fliers despite their experience. Few pilots anywhere had logged even a hundred hours in the new B-24 bombers, and Haynes's crews were expected to safely deliver the human cargo stored in their bomb bays while flying in Arctic conditions with no traffic control. "Atlantic weather was notoriously unpredictable and forecasting was rudimentary," explained ATFERO historian Jeffrey Davis; "Radio reception was often non-existent." However, "[t]he worst enemy would be the extreme cold and ice."²² In addition, equipment failures, turbulence, and strong winds conspired to bring down the bombers throughout each trip.²³ At times, pilots necessarily flew their aircraft at high altitudes, which lowered available oxygen appreciably, potentially affecting passengers, who had no alternative source available to them. Realistically, any debilitating circumstances that struck the aircraft would probably result in the deaths of all hands on board in the icy Atlantic waters below.

BOLLING FIELD, WASHINGTON, D.C., JULY 4, 1941²⁴

Dear Helen,

Just a note before going down to dinner.

21. La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 22–32.

22. Davis, "The Atlantic Ferrying Organization," 76.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Officially the Air Corps Ferrying Command's headquarters was based in the Munitions Building in Washington, D.C. Pilots, however, operated out of nearby Bolling Field. See Davis, "The Atlantic Ferry Organization," 85–86; Carter, "The Early Development of Air Transport and Ferrying," 316–317; Zamzow, "Ambassador of American Airpower," 65–66; and William H. Turner, Major, Air Corps, Personnel Officer, "Orders to Major Curtis E. LeMay (0-17917), Air Corps, Westover Field, Massachusetts," Headquarters, Air Corps Ferrying Command, War Department, Washington, D.C., June 14, 1941, CELMPR.

It has been raining cats and dogs here all day. We have been running in and out all day between showers loading equipment etc., so we can leave in the morning. CV made the first trip with Monty,²⁵ and Rothrock²⁶ made it in 10 hours. Cochrane²⁷ and Kester²⁸ are going with me.

Felix du Pont of *the Du Ponts* is going to be operations [officer].²⁹ I'll have him send a wire when we arrive there and I'll write when we arrive here. It may be two or three days because we have to meet CV at the halfway mark and the weather may hold us up, etc.³⁰

Tony left for Westover last night.³¹ I think he did so much griping CV finally sent him home. You needn't mention it, but he wasn't doing much anyway, so I got Kester to take his place.

Cochrane had to go to Langley yesterday to take care of some business and took the train back from Richmond. When his train left at 10:00 PM, the station was full of people trying to get to Washington. They put two more trains on and he finally left at 1:00 AM. I suppose everyone was going away for the Fourth.

I didn't know whether Janie would go on the train or not. She looked kind of scared to me when the motor started up.

It's dinner time and I'll call you tonight.

Love,
Curt

25. First Lieutenant John B. Montgomery. See Edward J. Frack, First Lieutenant, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Order No. 176," Headquarters, Bolling Field, Washington, D.C., July 29, 1941, CELMPR. This document listed officers temporarily assigned to the Air Corps Ferrying Command for duty with ATFERO.

26. Captain James H. Rothrock. Ibid.

27. Captain Carlos J. Cochrane. Ibid.

28. First Lieutenant Edson Kester. Ibid.

29. Alexis Felix du Pont Jr., of the famous American entrepreneurial family, was added to the ACFC staff in June 1941. See La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 13.

30. Gander Field, Newfoundland. Until 1941, Gander Field was known as Newfoundland Airport. Gander was the air base where passengers ferried from Washington, D.C., were transferred from B-15s to B-24s, because B-15s were not designed to handle the distance or flying conditions of the North Atlantic. The base was also used to ferry bombers to England, house aircraft used in anti-German submarine patrols in the North Atlantic, and serve as a general hub for the U.S. and Allied military presence in Newfoundland. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 199–200; and E. Kathleen Williams, "Deployment of the AAF on the Eve of Hostilities," in *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, vol. 1 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 155–157.

31. The editors were unable to identify Tony.

Boeing's B-24 production capacity was initially overwhelmed by demand for them by U.S. and foreign sources, principally orders placed by the RAF. Consequently, the bulk of the ships being produced were ferried directly to England. For this reason, Lieutenant Colonel Haynes and his fliers had only one B-24 available to them to ferry passengers across the North Atlantic. These individuals traveled from Washington, D.C., and Canada, where they were flown into Gander on B-15s by LeMay and his peers. As befitted a good commander, Haynes personally led his unit's first voyage with Captain James H. Rothrock serving as copilot and First Lieutenant John B. Montgomery as navigator. The ten-hour journey was reportedly "horrid," and the weather was particularly bad as LeMay and the other novice ferriers soon learned from their commander.³²

GANDER FIELD, NEWFOUNDLAND, JULY 6, 1941³³

Dear Helen,

Jimmie Crabbe is sending a ship back to the states in the morning, so I will send this to be mailed in Washington.³⁴ We are held up here because CV hasn't arrived yet. We expect him tomorrow the 7th, so I probably will leave the 8th and be back in Washington about the 14th.

This place looks about like Westover; construction going on all over the place and rather dusty. Everything is being built by the Canadians and is much better than our temporary construction.

Elliott Roosevelt is here attached to Crabbe's Squadron.³⁵ He is surveying some airport sites north of here.³⁶

Crabbe has a Newfoundland dog as big as your head and he already

32. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 202.

33. Davis, "The Atlantic Ferry Organization," 85–86; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 199–200.

34. Then-Colonel Jarred Vincent "Jimmie" Crabb served as base commander for Gander Field during the operation of the ferrying command, May–August 1941. (LeMay misspells the name as "Crabbe.") See R. Manning Ancell and Christine M. Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II Generals and Flag Officers: U.S. Armed Forces* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 378–379.

35. The 14th Reconnaissance Squadron. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 378–379.

36. Elliott Roosevelt was the son of President Franklin Delano and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and served in the army air force from 1940 to 1946, retiring with the rank of brigadier general. During this period he was a prominent figure in the establishment of the Air Corps Ferrying Command. See Dennis Hevesi, "Elliott Roosevelt, General and Author, Dies at 80," *New York Times*, October 28, 1990; and La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 15.

takes Crabbe all over the place. When he grows up, there won't be any question on who will lead whom.

I went over to see the weatherman they have here and he is very good. In fact, he is the best there is for this route, so I don't anticipate any bad forecasts.

I'll have to tour the camp to find an envelope for this, and then I'm going to bed.

Love,
Curt

War was coming, and new bases and airfields were being built throughout North America. Construction at Gander Field was ongoing when ACFC pilots arrived in the summer. Colonel Olds tasked then-Captain Roosevelt to lead a survey mission of the area in an effort to chart a safer overland flying route for the ACFC. He also needed to discover likely sites for meteorological and communications bases in Hudson Bay, Greenland, and Iceland in the summer before winter weather made such a trip impossible.³⁷

GANDER FIELD, NEWFOUNDLAND, JULY 7, 1941³⁸

Dear Helen,

Just a note before going to bed. Weather delayed CV, so I will be delayed two or three more days.

Nothing doing here except eat & sleep and, very little of that, due to the six hours of darkness and everything on Greenwich Time, so you don't know when to go to bed.

You probably won't hear any more from me until I get back.

Love,
Curt

Major LeMay made his first journey across the North Atlantic on July 8. It is not clear if Helen ever knew just how perilous these missions were. She was a very intelligent woman and likely realized the threat of hazardous weather to her husband's life, but at least in these letters, LeMay never revealed the amount of danger he actually faced.

37. La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 15.

38. Davis, "The Atlantic Ferry Organization," 85–86.

BOLLING FIELD, WASHINGTON, D.C., JULY 1941³⁹

Dear Helen,

Your letter just came along with the picture. I think this one is much better than the other. You did not include Walsh's letter, which is all right.⁴⁰ He is no longer in London. He should be back at March Field by this time.⁴¹

I ran into a reserve officer from Ohio State at the War Department yesterday.⁴² He told me a lot of Theta Taus are on active duty in town: Alvin Mock, Ted Kauer, Bill Davis, etc. I don't know whether you remember any of them or not.⁴³ Anyway, we are all getting together for dinner tonight and will talk over old times.

CV has been delayed in San Antonio, so I doubt if we leave here before Saturday.⁴⁴ I'll call you before I leave. Let me know if you decide to go home with Dad and Mother, so I'll know where to call in case we are delayed later than Saturday.

Be careful of Janie if you go to Cleveland and don't let her get spinal meningitis; better boil her water, etc.⁴⁵

Love,
Curt

39. Tunner, "Orders to Major Curtis E. LeMay (0-17917), Air Corps, Westover Field, Massachusetts," CELMPR.

40. Technical Sergeant Joseph H. Walsh served as a radio operator on the transatlantic flights with the ferrying command. See La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 22.

41. March Field, California.

42. The Ohio State University.

43. Theta Tau is a professional engineering fraternity chapter founded in 1904 at the University of Minnesota. By 1929, there were nineteen active chapters nationwide. Ohio State's chapter was formed on November 29, 1924. LeMay was actively involved in Theta Tau during his time at the university. Alvin Mock was part of the class of 1927, Ted Kauer and Curtis LeMay, class of 1928, and Bill Davis, class of 1929. See the Ohio State University, *Makio 1927 Yearbook* (Columbus: Graduating Class of 1927, 1927), 380.

44. It is unclear why he was in San Antonio. He was probably located at Kelly Field on air corps business.

45. Janie's health is discussed several times in the 1941 and 1942 letters. LeMay was uneasy about her susceptibility to meningitis and polio, which were still virulent diseases during this period. LeMay and Helen were especially sensitive to Janie's health because of the difficulty Helen had carrying a child to term. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 139.

BOLLING FIELD, WASHINGTON, D.C., TUESDAY, JULY 1941⁴⁶

Dear Helen,

No news yet about the length of this job. I haven't had a chance to talk to Colonel Olds except over the telephone and he hasn't said anything more about us staying.⁴⁷

Montgomery left this morning on another trip that puts all our ships out. I imagine I will get away by the last of the week depending on when Rothrock gets in. I saw Colonel Ballard here today.⁴⁸ He is off on a two-month trip to select new air base sites. I also heard yesterday that several more people are being sent to the Philippines minus dependents. So, I guess we aren't so bad off, if I can get home every week or so.

Montgomery and Cochrane are celebrating because the 21st Squadron is being relieved and the 41st is going to relieve them in Newfoundland.⁴⁹

I changed my room today. We are living in a temporary barracks that has been divided into rooms. I finally have one on the second floor and on the breezy side, such as it is.

I saw Cowboy Winn in operations yesterday.⁵⁰ He wanted to know when you were coming down and also mentioned sending Sybil up to visit you.⁵¹ I told him about your folks coming down for a visit, but to send

46. Tunner, "Orders to Major Curtis E. LeMay (0-17917), Air Corps, Westover Field, Massachusetts," CELMPR.

47. Then-Colonel Robert Olds, commanding officer of the ACFC. See Zamzow, "Ambassador of American Air Power," 65–66.

48. Colonel A. B. Ballard. As a first lieutenant, Ballard served as adjutant for the 27th Pursuit Squadron, 1st Pursuit Group, in 1931 while LeMay was assigned to that unit. See A. B. Ballard, First Lieutenant, Adjutant, "Special Order No. 233," Headquarters, Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Michigan, September 17, 1931, CELMPR.

49. The air force sent the 21st Reconnaissance Squadron, First Air Force, Mitchel Field, New York, to Gander in May 1941 to join Canadian and British forces already in service there; however, they arrived with a paltry group of several hundred men equipped with six B-18 bombers and eleven transport planes. On August 15, eight B-17 bombers were sent to Gander, and the 41st Reconnaissance Squadron, also from the First Air Force, replaced the 21st. See Williams, "Deployment of the AAF," 155–157.

50. Then-Major Raymond L. "Cowboy" Winn was commanding officer of Headquarters Squadron, First Air Force, Mitchel Field, New York, a post he attained in May 1941 and would hold until April 1942. The LeMays and Winns probably met in Hawaii, where Winn served in the 26th Attack Squadron at Schofield Barracks while LeMay was with the 6th Pursuit Squadron, also stationed at Schofield. See U.S. Air Force, "Brigadier General Raymond L. Winn," Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7627>, accessed April 17, 2011.

51. Sybil Winn, wife of Major Raymond L. "Cowboy" Winn.

Sybil up, too, and we would start a hospital.⁵² I supposed you can get Ann to help all day if necessary.⁵³

Love,
Curt

BOLLING FIELD, WASHINGTON, D.C., AUGUST 1, 1941⁵⁴

Dear Helen,

Rothrock came in from his trip today, so I guess we will be going back about Monday morning.

Lois Kelley called me up last night.⁵⁵ She saw me as I was leaving the club. I had forgotten she was here. She suggested you come down here and stay a few days with her if I have to stay on this very long. It might be a good idea if I'm going to be on this job the rest of the summer. We might even find a furnished apartment or something and at least be together, regardless of cost, which is something these days.

Don't pay any attention to Fran—she is still talking too much.⁵⁶

It looks like it is definite that the 41st Squadron is going to Newfoundland the fifteenth of this month. One of the squadrons of pursuit that was at Langley and moved to Mitchel is in Iceland and there may be some more sent both places.⁵⁷

This is the first, so I suppose your Dad and Mother are there or about due. I'm certainly glad they are coming. It will help out a lot. Don't let them spoil Janie too much.

Love,
Curt

52. Jesse and Maud Maitland.

53. We were not able to identify Ann.

54. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 198. On July 20, 1941, the Royal Air Force Ferry Command took control of ATFERO from the Canadian Pacific Railway, which held the original contract setting up the ferry service from the British Ministry of Aircraft Production. See Davis, "The Atlantic Ferry Organization," 78–79.

55. Wife of Captain Archibald M. Kelley. Captain Kelley is listed among the officers who received a promotion to lieutenant colonel; see G. C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, "Special Orders No. 20," War Department, Washington, D.C., January 23, 1942, CELMPR.

56. Fran Koon, wife of Major Ralph E. "Zipper" Koon. LeMay also calls him "Zip" throughout the letters. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 209; and Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR.

57. The 33rd Pursuit Squadron, First Air Force, Mitchel Field, New York. It was sent in defense of Iceland by presidential order on July 25. See Williams, "Deployment of the AAF," 158.

In late August, LeMay was diverted from his ferrying duty by the chief of the air corps, Major General George Brett (newly appointed as of May 1941), to serve as the primary navigator for a survey mission from South America to the Middle East.⁵⁸ In addition to LeMay, several other ferriers, including Lieutenant Colonel Haynes and Captain Carlos J. Cochrane, were chosen to fill out the general's B-24 crew. The group left Washington, D.C., on August 31 and flew to Natal, Brazil, where they headed east, stopping at a total of fourteen airports along the way to Cairo, their final destination. They spent two weeks there in the company of local RAF officers, while General Brett and the rest of his survey crew flew to Basra, Iraq, and other points of interest. The trip lasted five weeks and covered twenty-six thousand miles with a total of 109 flying hours logged.⁵⁹

BOLLING FIELD, WASHINGTON, D.C., AUGUST 30, 1941⁶⁰

Dear Helen,

We finally have completed all arrangements for the trip and are leaving here at 7:00 in the morning and staying all night the first night at Miami.⁶¹ We still haven't any word on how long we will be away, but my guess is a month now. We have about three weeks flying and that leaves one week for the General to see what he wants to see; however, it may take longer.⁶² G2 is supposed to notify you where we are, but I wouldn't count on it because communications are poor, etc.⁶³

I saw Russ and Lucille last night and am going there for dinner

58. There were four important reasons that the RAF and the ACFC were exploring southern ferrying routes. First, as winter approached, it became apparent that the flying conditions of the North Atlantic would, at the least, slow down operations and, at worst, prevent them all together. Second, efforts to establish a route directly across the Atlantic through the Azores were blocked by Portugal, which claimed neutrality. Third, a southern route, although longer in distance, could be used year round due to relatively mild weather in comparison to the North Atlantic. Finally, a new South Atlantic route would facilitate delivery of Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union and British bases in North Africa that were engaged with German forces. See Carter, "The Early Development of Air Transport and Ferrying," 324–326; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 371.

59. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 204–207; and G. C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, "General Orders No. 5," War Department, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1942, CELMPR.

60. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 198.

61. The group flew to Miami after gathering General Brett's staff at Bolling. See Marshall, "General Orders No. 5," CELMPR.

62. General Brett.

63. Intelligence officer.

tonight.⁶⁴ Their apartment is small, but large enough for them and right near the field.

From all the information I can gather, we are going to be relieved after this trip and Kester's time will be up also. Tell Colonel Smith⁶⁵ he can expect Kester after his next trip which should be about September 15th—also, that the G3⁶⁶ of Combat Command knows nothing of any move for the 34th in the near future, unless another Blitz comes up.⁶⁷

Try not to get too lonesome until I get back, and if you leave to visit anyone, notify both Western Union and the telephone company where you can be reached to take any messages for G2.

Take good care of Janie.

Love,
Curt

The team returned home on October 7, and by November 20 the first sixteen B-24s took off from Bolling Field for delivery to Cairo based on the route they had pioneered.⁶⁸ Over the next four years, thousands of aircraft were delivered via the Southern Route. The weight of Brett's mission was demonstrated when he and his entire crew were awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses⁶⁹ for their efforts.⁷⁰ In addition, the untested warriors were exposed to combat for the first time by RAF officers in a memorable episode when their allies showed them a damaged plane stained with the blood of its unfortunate pilot. It "impressed the hell out of us," remembered LeMay, "the first blood we'd seen in the war."⁷¹

64. Major Russell A. Wilson and his wife, Lucille Wilson. Major Wilson was the assistant to the assistant chief of staff for intelligence at the Air Force Combat Command, predecessor of the VIII Bomber Command and Eighth Air Force. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 459.

65. Lieutenant Colonel Harold D. Smith, commanding officer of the 34th Bomb Group. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

66. Operations officer.

67. This is probably a reference to the Blitz terror-bombing campaign over London. Although it had failed by the spring of 1941, the possibility of another Blitz was always a concern to the British and their allies. See Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 148–152.

68. Carter, "The Early Development of Air Transport and Ferrying," 325–326.

69. The Distinguished Flying Cross was established by Congress on July 2, 1926, to recognize exceptional deeds of World War I pilots. Later it was designated as the highest medal awarded by the air force to its servicemen and women; Martin W. Bowman, *The USAAF Handbook: 1939–1945* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997), 247–248.

70. LeMay's was awarded to him the following spring. See George W. Hansen, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Executive Officer, "Presentation of Decoration," Air Base Headquarters, Office of the Commanding Officer, Pendleton Field, Oregon, March 17, 1942, CELMPR.

71. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 206–207.

Regrettably, it was not the only souvenir the crew left with; they all contracted dysentery, which gave Helen the opportunity to practice her dormant nursing skills on her errant husband when he arrived home. It took the combination of sulfaguanidine pills, brewer's yeast, and milk administered over a period of three months for LeMay to completely heal from his bout with the disease.⁷²

As the major was recovering in the late fall and early winter of 1941, he turned his attention to the 34th Bomb Group. As operations officer, LeMay believed that he was obligated to prepare his men and equipment for a war that was inevitable, in his opinion, and coming sooner rather than later.⁷³ When he returned to duty, the airman was struck by his command's inadequate training, as well as the poor condition and scarcity of equipment. Struck by these obstacles, and by his own inexperience in higher levels of command, the major harbored a "pale feeling of inadequacy" in his ability to bring the unit up to his high standards.⁷⁴ And then, on December 7, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid. LeMay would face this situation as executive officer of the 306th Bomb Group and commander of the 305th Bomb Group, as did scores of new lieutenant colonels and colonels who were placed in command of new groups in 1942. At the beginning of America's involvement in World War II, both air force enlisted men and flight crew personnel were rushed through basic training and specialty schools in order to fill the ranks of new bomb groups. Even so, there were rarely enough men available to meet quotas. The same was true with aircraft. The British had thousands of orders for heavy bombers in late 1941 and early 1942 that had not been filled by American factories, and the British orders were given priority over the needs of both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy. In addition, when the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany in June 1941, President Roosevelt further diverted new aircraft to that nation. See Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, foreword to *Men and Planes*, vol. 6 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), x–xxxviii; and Alfred Goldberg, "Allocation and Distribution of Aircraft," in *Men and Planes*, 398–423.

CHAPTER 4

Preparing for War January–October 22, 1942

War's pretty tough, you won't like it.¹

—BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANK ARMSTRONG

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 by Japanese carrier-based fighters and bombers stirred up a hornets' nest. Servicemen and women throughout the United States flocked to their respective units, and volunteers overflowed from the doors of army, navy, and marine corps recruitment stations. On January 5, 1942, scores of air force first lieutenants, captains, and majors, including Major Curtis E. LeMay, were made temporary lieutenant colonels to lead a planned total of 239 new groups.² Fifteen days later, the 34th Bomb Group was officially transferred to Pendleton Field, Ore-

1. Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Edgar F. Puryear Jr., November 17, 1976, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 65.

2. These officers were officially promoted in G. C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, "Special Orders No. 20," War Department, Washington, D.C., January 23, 1942, CELMPR. The air force required 239 bomb groups to accomplish its objectives in the eventuality of U.S. entry into World War II as outlined by AWPDP-1, the air force's master plan for the successful promulgation of an air war against Germany and Japan if the United States were to become involved. AWPDP-1 was written in September 1941 and revised several times; the final version, AWPDP-42, was drafted in August and September 1942 in response to President Roosevelt's direct request for an estimate of U.S. production needs "in order to have complete air ascendancy over the enemy." AWPDP-42 revised its numbers on the assumption that the Soviet Union would be eliminated by Germany and also reaffirmed the air force's "Germany First" policy. At its peak in 1945, the air force fielded 243 groups, fully equipped and combat ready. AWPDP-1 was authored by several young air force officers who became major players in World War II. They were Colonel Harold L. George, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth N. Walker, and Majors Laurence S. Kuter and Haywood S. Hansell. The AWPDP-42 staff was led by then-Brigadier General Hansell, who was recalled from England, where he had been serving with the VIII Bomber Command. See Craven and Cate, foreword to *Men and Planes*, xiv–xv; Cate and Williams, "The Air Corps Prepares for War," 147; and Arthur B. Ferguson, "The Casablanca Directive," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 277–280.

gon, to oppose an anticipated Japanese invasion of the west coast. At 2:00 p.m. on January 24, LeMay arrived at his new base behind the controls of an AL 598, one out of the group's total of five LB-30s.³ As soon as he touched down, however, he was issued orders directing him back to Wright Field to perform service tests on the B-24 bomber.⁴ Only five hours after arriving in Oregon, he was on an airliner headed for his home state.

WRIGHT FIELD, OHIO, JANUARY 26, 1942⁵

Dear Helen,

I'm waiting on you to get me a fountain pen fixed so I'll have to use pencil. We didn't have much of a stay at Pendleton.⁶ We landed there at 2 PM Saturday and left on an airliner at 7:00 that night to come here, so we didn't see much of the town. The field is just like Westover, except that they have no permanent construction at all.

There was quite a bit of snow on the ground and they had a warm day. It was above freezing for the first time this winter, I guess, so it was sloppy and muddy. I didn't get much chance to talk to anyone much, but there seems to be no place to live in town; however, the group is moving there now, so maybe we can find something then.

3. LB-30 (Land Bomber No. 30) was the British designation for the B-24. The air corps diverted several of these models from service in Great Britain to incorporate into new U.S. bomb groups. The 34th Bomb Group received some of them. The B-24 was one of the prevalent heavy bomber designs used in World War II and was modified to handle a myriad of functions. Models adapted for ferrying or transport service were some of its most common variants, and the LB-30 was one of these. It was also the same design that LeMay flew during his ferrying service with AFTERO and his survey mission to the Middle East in the fall of 1941. See George K. Geary, First Lieutenant, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Orders No. 17," Headquarters, Westover Field, Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, January 20, 1942, CELMPR.

4. LeMay was chosen based on his flying experience in the B-24, which few other available pilots could boast. Service tests were normally conducted on new aircraft after the first units came off the assembly line. Pilots flew them for hundreds of hours to reveal any major or minor mechanical design flaws before the aircraft was accepted into regular service. In the case of the B-24, however, few tests were conducted before AFTERO and ACFC pilots started ferrying the aircraft to England in the summer of 1941 because of England's urgent need for heavy bombers. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 208.

5. Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR; W. W. Wood, Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Oath of Office: Regular Army, Curtis E. LeMay, Lieutenant Colonel," Headquarters, Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, January 24, 1942, CELMPR; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 208–209.

6. Pendleton Field, Oregon. The 34th Bomb Group was transferred there on January 20, 1941, to patrol the west coast in anticipation of a Japanese invasion. See Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR.

I called Kathleen and asked her if you could stay there for a few days until you could find a place to stay.⁷ I don't think you should stay there for a month.

Tony and Virginia are supposed to be in town although I haven't seen him yet.⁸ I suppose Virginia is going to stay here while Tony is here.

It sure was a surprise about the DFC.⁹ I knew I had been recommended, but had given up hope of it going through.¹⁰

I'll call you up Wednesday night, then we can make some definite plans.

Love,
Curt

Tony just showed up this morning. Virginia is in Dayton and will stay here for a while, I guess.

Curtis LeMay, newly promoted as a lieutenant colonel, was sworn in on the same day he arrived at Wright Field and served as a B-24 test pilot from January 24 to February 15.¹¹ The work was easy, and it allowed him the opportunity to spend time with Janie and Helen, because the family was unable to find housing at Pendleton. Dayton, too, was overrun with air force personnel, and rooms to rent were scarce, as was the case at many airfields, army bases, and naval stations in the United States at this time. By chance, LeMay ran into an old friend, Doug Kilpatrick, who served as bombardier during the Utah exercise in 1937 and was now stationed nearby. Kilpatrick invited the LeMays to stay with his family for a few nights, which they did until LeMay was able to secure housing in neighboring Yellow Springs.¹²

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
FEBRUARY 15, 1942¹³

Dear Helen,

We finally arrived last night at midnight, so I haven't had much time to find out anything. However, here are a few facts that I have gathered.

7. The editors were unable to identify Kathleen.

8. The editors were unable to identify Tony or Virginia.

9. The Distinguished Flying Cross.

10. LeMay was awarded the DFC for his role in General George Brett's survey flight that took place from August 31 to October 7.

11. W. W. Wood, Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Oath of Office: Regular Army, Curtis E. LeMay, Lieutenant Colonel," CELMPR.

12. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 149, 209.

13. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

The 34th is still here and will evidently remain here as a training group.¹⁴ The cadre we left at Westover, plus some more men, went to Boise for three months' training before leaving.¹⁵ Ford, Jack Sutherland, Joe Thomas, Sweet, Thompson, etc., are with it, so I won't be able to talk to Priscilla about housing.¹⁶ From what I gather, the 34th will split every three months and the offspring will go to Boise for three months' training before moving out. Hunter was transferring to Geiger Field to a group moving out.¹⁷ There is left here: Zip, Higgins, myself, Landburg, O'Connor, Laycock, and some new second lieutenants.¹⁸

I talked to Herbie¹⁹ this morning, and he seemed to think it possible to find someplace to live now that the 17th Group is gone, but it won't be

14. The 34th was designated as a training group from May 1942 until December 1943, when it was assigned to combat duty. The group was transferred to England and stationed with the Eighth Air Force in April 1944, and it began making bombing runs against continental Europe in May. It is important to note that many of the 34th's officers were assigned to command new bomber groups during the winter-summer of 1942. The air force did not have a large contingent of experienced four-engine bomber pilots before the war and needed every one of them to take leadership positions in the planned fleet of ships. This is evident in the remarkable list of first lieutenants, captains, and majors who were promoted to lieutenant colonel, generally the lowest rank one could hold and command a bomb group, in "Special Orders No. 20" issued by the army chief of staff, General George C. Marshall, on January 23, 1942. This order was given soon after American and British leaders reaffirmed their "Germany First" policy, which meant sending a large American bomber force to Great Britain as quickly as possible to aid the British in their strategic bombing campaign against German targets. Despite these plans, the USAF initially lacked the air forces necessary to effectively achieve their goals; however, the bombing campaign did temporarily appease their Russian allies, who expected the British and Americans to reinstate western Europe in order to open a second front. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88; Marshall, "Special Orders No. 20," CELMPR; James Lea Cate, "Plans, Policies, and Organization," in *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, vol. 1 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 558–575; and Alfred Goldberg, "Establishment of the Eighth Air Force in the United Kingdom," in *Plans and Early Operations*, 616–617.

15. Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho.

16. Lieutenant Colonel Ford J. Lauer, Lieutenant Colonel John R. "Jack" Sutherland, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph A. "Joe" Thomas, Lieutenant Colonel Ernest A. Sweet Jr., and Lieutenant Colonel William O. Thompson. We were not able to identify Priscilla. See Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR; and Marshall, "Special Orders No. 20," CELMPR.

17. Lieutenant Colonel Frank P. Hunter Jr. Ibid.

18. Lieutenant Colonel Ralph E. "Zipper" Koon, Lieutenant Colonel Warren H. Higgins, First Lieutenant Allen Lindberg (LeMay misspelled his name as "Landburg"), First Lieutenant Everett J. O'Connor, and First Lieutenant Joseph T. H. Laycock. Ibid.; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 209.

19. First Lieutenant Herbert R. Volin. Lieutenant Volin was one of the pilots, along with LeMay, who flew the bomb group's aircraft from Westover to Pendleton. See Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR.

much, because there isn't much here.²⁰ As soon as I can get away from the field, I will see Enid and she can get me started looking.²¹ Zip is not going to move Fran,²² even though it looks as though he has a better chance to stay here awhile than the rest of us. So he doesn't think much of the situation.

The trip out wasn't so good. We arrived at Chicago at midnight and had to stay on until 8:45 a.m., so we went down to the Stevens Hotel. The weather was bad all the way to Salt Lake, but good here for a change. It's fairly warm here and all the snow is gone, but more chilly and barren looking than ever.

Civilian clothes are definitely out, so you might as well clean and seal them up.

I hope you got home OK and Janie is back to eating again.

I can't think of anything else, so I'll get this in the mail and get to work.

Love,

Curt

By the end of January, the specter of a west coast invasion by the Japanese began to fade, and the Second Air Force shifted its mission from defense to training new bomber groups.²³ Initially, the Second's groups had access to Pendleton Field, Gowen Field in Idaho, and the municipal airport at Salt Lake City; however, the air force was constantly identifying sites for new airfields and developing smaller existing bases. Consequently, the Second gained Davis-Monthan Field near Tucson, Arizona, at the end of January, and Wendover Field near Wendover, Utah, in March.²⁴

When Lieutenant Colonel LeMay arrived at Pendleton Field on February 14, he faced a waiting game. Every week, lieutenant colonels in the 34th Bomb Group's large officer cadre were being transferred to new groups, where they either took command or served as executives. During the 1930s, such opportunities for promotion were scarce, and those that existed were highly competi-

20. The 17th Bomb Group was transferred to the east coast on February 9, 1942, to become a member of the Eighth Air Force and was stationed at Lexington County Airport, South Carolina. During the buildup of the Eighth Air Force, the bomb group's B-25s patrolled the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coast for enemy submarines. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 61–62; and Goldberg, "Establishment of the Eighth Air Force," 613–614.

21. Enid Volin, wife of First Lieutenant Herbert Volin. LeMay mentions them in tandem in the letter dated February 15, 1942.

22. Fran Koon, wife of Major Ralph Koon.

23. The 34th Bomb Group was assigned to the Second Air Force.

24. Frank Futrell, "The Development of Base Facilities," in *Men and Planes*, 154.

tive due to the restricted size of the peacetime officer corps and the air corps' tight budget. As the United States prepared for war, these obstacles dissolved, and almost every capable officer had a chance at a group command. LeMay's progress as a career air force officer to this point marked him as a prime candidate to fill one of these positions.

On January 8, 1942, Colonel Henry Smith, still commanding the 34th, reported that LeMay "can be relied upon to carry out exceptionally well, any task assigned him"; he continued: "His present and future value to the service as a Squadron Commander or Group Commander, or Staff duty is considered to be of the highest."²⁵ LeMay would remain at Pendleton Field for approximately six weeks after returning from Wright Field before his new assignment came through. Quarters at or near Pendleton were still unavailable, which frustrated LeMay's attempts to reunite his small family. Helen and Janie returned to Lakewood, where they waited.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
FEBRUARY 15, 1942²⁶

Dear Helen,

Here is the second letter today. I went down to see Enid tonight to get her reaction on the housing situation and she seems to be more optimistic than others and seems to think it will be possible to find a place that will be at least livable. She is going to find out about a furnished house, which is quite large, and rents for \$100. I imagine it will be out because I gather it is too big for you to take care of. In these western towns, there is no help. I guess the women are *unspoiled* and do all their own work. Anyway, I'll look at it. Herbie is also getting the man that got their house busy to see what they can find. They have a small two bedroom furnished house, which seems OK, except it is heated by coal stove but seems to work OK.

Will you contact one of the passenger agents that your Dad knows and find out what the possibility of shipping the car is.²⁷ It seems to me that I

25. Harold D. Smith, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding Officer, "Officer Efficiency Report, LeMay, Curtis E., o-7917, Major, Air Corps, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 34th Bomb Group, October 23, 1941–January 8, 1942," Headquarters, 34th Bomb Group, Westover Field, Massachusetts, January 8, 1942, CELMPR.

26. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

27. Although LeMay was having trouble finding lodging for his family, his father-in-law was an important resource when it came time for them to move. Jessie Stanhope Maitland spent the majority of his career as a claims agent for the Cleveland Railway Company and had the connec-

remember the Railroad offering a reduced rate of some sort on cars when you buy a ticket also. Anyway, find out about it while I'm getting a line on a house and let me know by air mail.

Fran called Zip tonight. Zip said she hadn't received a letter for two weeks, so she just called up.

Enid and Herbie, the servants, etc., stayed at a tourist camp when they first got here that being the only place that had a bed for hire. You can get a *nice* little cabin for \$90 a month; \$120 for Herbie and his tribe. Have you heard from Priscilla yet?

I'm going to doctor my cold and get to bed.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
FEBRUARY 19, 1942²⁸

Dear Helen,

I have been in the hospital since Sunday with my cold. Still have it but managed to get out this morning. I went downtown today and canvassed all the real estate people about a house.²⁹ The only thing I could find was a house about the size of a garage down by the river in rather a dirty neighborhood. I wouldn't consider it but O'Connor put a deposit on it. I doubt if he will take it either after he thinks it over.

I don't know how I will come out in this shake up. We are supposed to form a new group every three months and Higgins is due to get the next one.³⁰ I may be assigned to that as executive officer. I hope not. I would rather have a group of my own. It's too early to tell yet what will happen.

tions to help his daughter and son-in-law move their household items expeditiously and frugally. See U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Fourteenth Census, 1920, Lakewood City, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, series T625, roll 1375, p. 190, s.v. "Jessie S. Maitland"; "Helen Maitland," #29111, Records of Student Credentialing, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University Archives, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 78.

28. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

29. The 17th Bomb Group was stationed at Pendleton in June 1941 and did not get reassigned until February 1942, so when 34th Bomb Group personnel began arriving in January 1942, most available housing was still occupied by 17th Bomb Group airmen and their families. *Ibid.*, 62.

30. Major Warren H. Higgins, 4th Bomb Squadron, 34th Bomb Group. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

I suppose you are on a diet now, if people think you are starting to bulge a little in the wrong spots.

I don't think much of your idea of moving in with Sybil.³¹ You might get along OK for a couple of weeks before you started pulling out each other's hair, but no longer. I think you would be much better off at home. But this is a long way in the future. It looks as though I will be in the states for at least six months yet, and a lot of things can happen in that length of time.

I hope Janie is back to eating again. I don't see how she existed on what she ate at Dayton. March 7th is her deadline on the chicken pox. That's twenty-one days from the last time she was at the Kilpatricks'.³²

Well nothing else to do but go to bed—don't wear out the tires when you can use the rental car. We *may* want to use them.

Love,
Curt

When the LeMays were living with the Kilpatricks in Dayton, Janie was exposed to the chicken pox via the three Kilpatrick children. She was last in contact with them on February 15. Once exposed, an individual who has never contracted the disease has a window of twenty-one days, hence Janie's "deadline," in which it is possible for that person to become infected.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
FEBRUARY 21, 1942³³

Dear Helen,

There isn't much to write about tonight. We just spent a hilarious Saturday night playing rummy. No sign of a house yet. Evidently, people here don't advertise or list their places with real estate people, because they can rent them without, so I have several people who know natives are looking. So we may hear of something within the next few days.

31. Sybil Winn, wife of Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. "Cowboy" Winn. Lieutenant Colonel Winn was one of the officers promoted in "Special Orders No. 20." At this time, Colonel Winn was still in command of the headquarters squadron, First Air Force, stationed at Mitchel Field, New York. See Marshall, "Special Orders No. 20," CELMPR; and U.S. Air Force, "Brigadier General Raymond L. Winn," Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7627>, accessed April 17, 2011.

32. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 149, 209.

33. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

I'm leaving tomorrow night to go to Seattle to get a new ship and take it to Spokane. We are going by rail, so may not get around to writing for a few days. After I get back, I'll investigate the automobile market and then we can decide about bringing the car out. If you can bring yourself to riding in a broken down Ford, maybe we can save on the transportation, and save the tires too. Well, bedtime 9:20.

Love,
Curt

Over the next few days, LeMay, Second Lieutenant Francis P. Smith, Sergeant Wilfred Trombley, and Sergeant Morton L. Howard (forming one crew), along with thirteen other bomber crews, traveled from Pendleton to the Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle to ferry fourteen new B-17 bombers to Geiger Field near Spokane, Washington.³⁴ The air force aimed to get its new bomber groups up to their full complement of aircraft as soon as they were available. Fortunately, factory output steadily increased as America's industrial base continued to mobilize.

MCCHORD FIELD, WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 24, 1942³⁵

Dear Helen,

We took delivery on the new ships at the factory but the weather was bad, so we came down here to get on per diem and have a place for the men to stay. The weather is still bad and I don't know whether we will get away tomorrow or not.

We were all routed out of bed last night and didn't get back in until after 4:00. I imagine Air Force HQ was all excited about the sub shelling the oil field at Los Angeles. Anyway, we were in an uproar here all night—sent some of our pilots out by auto, etc. We haven't heard anything else today, so I suppose the excitement has died down.

I hope one of my scouts has located a place to live by the time I get back. I'm beginning to miss you two gals in spite of your *bad* points.

Still no news about how long I'll be at Pendleton. Probably never will

34. Delavan H. Davis, Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Orders No. 52," Air Base Headquarters, Pendleton Field, Oregon, February 21, 1942, Folder 4, Service Documents, January 1942–December 1943, Box 2, CELMPR.

35. McChord Field, now McChord Air Force Base, is located near Tacoma, Washington, south of Seattle.

know until the orders come in for the move, so there is no use wondering about it.

How is Dad getting along? I imagine he is out by now, but don't let him overdo it.

Love,
Curt

On the evening of February 23, 1942, a Japanese submarine positioned off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, fired twenty artillery rounds at an oil refinery located nearby. The attack resulted in little damage but did highlight the vulnerability of the west coast. The United States had always enjoyed the natural defense offered by the thousands of miles of open ocean on both sides of the Western Hemisphere. The Japanese shelling shattered that complacency and exposed the weakness of U.S. mainland defenses. FDR himself highlighted this weakness in a radio address a week before the Japanese submarine attacked.³⁶ The fact that LeMay and his bomber crew were involved despite being temporarily assigned to ferrying duty, away from Pendleton and hundreds of miles away from the attack, highlights the anxious climate up and down the west coast and the weakness of its defense force.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
FEBRUARY 26, 1942³⁷

Dear Helen,

I just landed from Spokane, bathed and ready for bed to make up some of the lost sleep. Evidently, G2 was wrong again and nothing happened out here except a lot of sleep lost.³⁸

Poor Janie. I'll bet she is a problem to take care of.³⁹ I hope the worst is over by this time and she is all right again. I'll investigate my scouts again tomorrow and see if there is anything for rent in town. We surely were sent

36. Ronald H. Bailey, ed., *The Home Front: U.S.A.* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1978), 26.

37. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

38. In response to the real Japanese submarine attack that occurred near Los Angeles, some military bases along the west coast reported more incidents later discovered to be false alarms. This probably occurred at Pendleton or Spokane, which is what LeMay is referring to. See Bailey, *The Home Front*, 26.

39. By this time, Janie had contracted the chicken pox virus, and Helen was forced to nurse her sick child in Cleveland without her husband. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 209.

to the wrong place. I saw Hunter in Spokane and there are lots of places to live there and Boise too.

Will you send me the number of my Government life insurance policy. I want to change my permanent address to Lakewood and also ask about the last dividend check.

Tell Betty I'll do anything I can for Jack.⁴⁰ I've advised him to ask for the G2 school we hear is starting up. However, the general opinion out here is that people now qualified and in the tactical outfits will stay there. If we get called on for anyone to go to school, I'll get Zip to send Jack.⁴¹

I received a letter from Leonard today and he is going to the Engineers officer training school at Fort Belvoir, VA. [He] leaves about March 5. I think he will be able to get through OK.

Well, this is all the news, so I'll go to bed.

Love,
Curt

I cashed another check for \$20.

*Both of LeMay's brothers enlisted during World War II. Leonard, the youngest, was drafted soon after Pearl Harbor and served in the army as a combat engineer. He fought in North Africa, Italy, France, Belgium, and Germany. LeMay's other brother, Lloyd, enlisted with the air force and even served under General LeMay in 1944 with XX Bomber Command.*⁴²

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
FEBRUARY 27, 1942⁴³

Dear Helen,

While I was gone, one of my scouts found a house, but he did not know how long I would be gone, so couldn't hold it until I got back. I don't

40. The editors were unable to identify Jack or Betty.

41. Although we were unable to positively identify "Jack", LeMay's comments in this letter suggest that he was a member of the 34th Bomb Group at this time. Colonel Ralph Koon took over command of the 34th on February 12, a post he held until July 12. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

42. Theodore E. Beckemeier, Major, Air Corps, Aide to Major General Curtis LeMay, "22 September 1944," Resume of Events while Aide-de-Camp to Major General Curtis E. LeMay, June 25, 1943, to September 25, 1945, CELPLOC.

43. Ibid.

know whether it would have been suitable or not, but at least it's some encouragement.

The certificate for the DFC came today. I'll mail it to you as soon as I can find a mailing tube of some sort. The base CO said the cross itself would probably show up when the engraving was finished.

I still have my cold and ear trouble, so it looks as though I will have to stop flying until it clears up.

I certainly have a hard time writing a letter at this place—nothing ever happens. I haven't even been to a movie since we went to Holyoke.⁴⁴ That's how much happens here—just work, eat and sleep.

No letter today. I hope Janie's chicken pox aren't worse.

How do Angus and Happy get along and has he dug up all the rose bushes in the yard?⁴⁵

I think I will send out some laundry and see if anyone is interested in a rummy game.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 2, 1942⁴⁶

Dear Helen,

I'm battling with the medicine to stay out of the hospital. I still have the cold, plus a sore throat. It's better tonight but I didn't sleep much last night.

I've just about given up finding a place to live unless someone moves out. There just isn't any place in town for rent. I suppose we will have to wait until the Higgins leave and it gripes me to have to do it.

Janie's chicken pox must be also gone by now. I hope she doesn't have any after effects.⁴⁷

It's 8:30 and I can either go to bed, or walk across the street to the club and then go to bed, as there is never anyone over there after dinner.

44. Holyoke, Massachusetts, a town near Westover Field.

45. Angus was the LeMay's Scottish terrier. Happy was probably a Scottish terrier as well. LeMay's sister, Patarica LeMay Hauger, recalled that the family kept two Scottish terriers during this time period. See Hauger, UNTOHC, 17–21.

46. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

47. Chicken pox can leave scars on infected individuals after the disease passes.

Before you send the [illegible] out can you wrap it in cellophane? It's rather dusty and dirty here and it would be ruined in no time.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 4, 1942

Dear Helen,

I'm back in the hospital again cooped up in a 6 x 8 foot room with a Bengal lamp and sulfathiazole pills.⁴⁸ I think I'll stay until I really get well this time.

Do you remember my mentioning the big house that Herbie told me about that was rented by some woman who wanted to take in roomers? Well, it's for rent again. I went down and drove by this A.M. before going to the hospital. It has 10 rooms. I did not go in, but it is a big rambling place. The paint is rather dirty looking and it has a porch, two sides, oil, heat. Rent is \$100 furnished. But there is heat and lighting too. Also, as near as I can find there is no help to clean it. That is the only thing that has turned up so far and I don't like wishing that onto you without seeing what you think about it.

A nurse just came in and stuck a thermometer in my mouth. What a face! Almost bit it in two! If she stays on, I'll probably get well in a hurry.

Let me know what you think of this house. It will be available on the 15th. [Illegible sentence]. But there doesn't seem to be anything else available right now. But I guess I can hold out a while longer. Ugly nurses *still* look ugly.

Love,
Curt

Clearly LeMay had little to do besides work, wait for a new assignment, and try to find housing for his family during these few months. He did contract an illness of some sort, which kept him hospitalized for several days and was

48. Sulfa-based drugs, such as sulfathiazole, along with penicillin were the two most commonly used antibiotics during this period. See Dr. George V. LeRoy, "The Medical Service of the AAF," in *Services around the World*, vol. 7 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948-1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 399.

something of an epidemic among the personnel at Pendleton.⁴⁹ The illness did not seem to affect his mood. One of the most remarkable features of the letters is LeMay's dry, blunt, and sarcastic sense of humor, evident above and throughout the letters. Even in the most stressful situations, LeMay was able to fashion some quip or other device that seemed intended to bring a smile to Helen's face, whether it was about his situation, her child-rearing techniques, or her spending habits.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 6, 1942⁵⁰

Dear Helen,

Another day gone by and I'm making some improvement with the cold. It's definitely better and the sore throat is almost gone. Another day or so and I should be out.

There is going to be a dance at the club Saturday night. The club will put the nickels in our juke box.

The doc just came in. He wants another blood count and x-rays of my sinuses, although I think they are OK. The surgeon, Captain Myres, has been trying to talk me out of my tonsils, but I think I'll be able to hold onto them for a while yet.⁵¹

How are you coming along with Janie's discipline? I expect to see a lot of improvement when you get out here.

[I] just had the x-ray. They seem to have good equipment here—a whole room full of x-ray gadgets with the room lead lined too.

I don't think you had better go to New York. Your tastes are quite expensive enough for me without visiting in Park Avenue and acquiring any more.

I would have liked to have been around when you left to visit Fran. I'll bet the car was washed, diamonds polished, fur coat brushed and everything all set to make the *imprint*.

Well, I'll flag one of the aides and get this mailed.

Love,
Curt

49. See letter of March 13.

50. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

51. Major Harold A. Myers (LeMay misspells his name), senior flight surgeon, Station Hospital, Pendleton Field, Pendleton, Oregon. He lists himself as a major as of March 18, 1942. See Accident No. 42-3-15-8, B-17E 41-2559, Aircraft Accident Reports, Archives Branch, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as AAR.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 7, 1942⁵²

Dear Helen,

It's only 2 PM now, but if I start, I may get both pages covered by bed time. Nothing seems to happen around here to write about. Some red-headed wench came in yesterday, and in addition to a blood count, which they are doing every day, took a coagulation test, which probably means I'm going to have to do some loud talking to keep my tonsils. A new nurse came on duty this afternoon. She is a native of Pendleton, so I have enlisted her in my new scout squad looking for a house.

No mail today. It looks as though you are getting around to writing about every other day—after that lecture you gave up on writing too.

Tonight is the dance at the club. It's just across the street, so Jack is bringing me over a drink to celebrate on.

By the time you get this Janie will have had her first day of school.⁵³ How does she like it? I'll bet she thinks it's just another party.

I don't suppose you have any idea where my fly fishing stuff is; the rod in the aluminum tube, basket, etc. that was in the closet? If I had them, I might get a day of fishing in. There is supposed to be good trout fishing around here close by. The dentist here is a native of Washington State and knows all the salmon fishing spots, etc., around the countryside.

Well, this is about filled up, so [I] will put it in the mailbox.

Love,
Curt

Don't forget to let me know when the February paycheck was deposited.

LeMay took every opportunity he could to hunt or fish whether he was in the Pacific Northwest, the Scottish Highlands, or the jungles of India. He was an outdoorsman all his life and, although the war hindered his hunting trips, he was afforded the opportunity to track game in exotic locales. P. K. Carlton,⁵⁴

52. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

53. Janie was four years and one month old and most likely enrolled in kindergarten, as preschool was not widely attended at this time.

54. General P. K. Carlton served as a B-17 instructor in World War II before training in the new B-29 very long-range bomber. In 1944 and 1945, he flew B-29s for LeMay in both the XX and XXI Bomber Commands. After World War II, he had a long and successful air force career including a

*one of his key subordinates and a close friend, remarked, "He loved rifles and shotguns; he loved the big guns. . . . He liked to go bird shooting, and he 'aced out' at the One Shot Antelope Hunt [Lander, Wyoming]."*⁵⁵

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 8, 1942⁵⁶

Dear Helen,

I finally managed to get out of the hospital today. I think I'll be able to stay out this time. The weather is a little warmer and most of the people seem to have their colds cured.

The Negro infantry outfit came in yesterday, but you would never know they were here. So far they have stayed in their own area.⁵⁷

I went house hunting again today and looked at three places that were advertised in the paper. None of them were fit to live in. I didn't even bother to go inside. There just aren't any decent places in town.

I don't know how the Higgins' were so lucky to find what they have. It's beginning to look as though we will have to wait and take their house.

Things are rather dull here too; just eat, work and climb in a G.I. bed every day. However, we have a good menu at the club—women cooks and soldiers helping, so it could be worse.

The dance was a flop last night. The 2nd Air Force has a rule—no liquor after 10:00, which dampens any party.⁵⁸ Even all the bars on the West Coast are instructed not to sell liquor to soldiers, only from 6 to 10 PM. War sure is hell.

Love,
Curt

four-year stint as General LeMay's aide-de-camp while the general was commander of the Strategic Air Command (1948–1957). Carlton's career culminated in his promotion to four-star general and posting as commander and chief of the Military Airlift Command. See "General P. K. Carlton," Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=4925>, accessed October 12, 2011.

55. Carlton, UNTOHC, 40.

56. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

57. The editors were unable to identify this unit.

58. The Second Air Force was the primary training and replacement unit of the army air force during World War II; however, elements of the Second Air Force, including the 34th Bomb Group, were used for coastal defense in 1941 and early 1942. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 458.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 10, 1942⁵⁹

Dear Helen,

Will get your letter off before going to bed. I hope I'm going to stay out of the hospital this time. The throat is still red with a little cough, but otherwise am OK.

The medal finally came today by mistake.⁶⁰ I think because it was supposed to go through channels and General Martin said he was going to present it, so I'll have to write and tell him I already have it and see what he wants to do about it.⁶¹

I get all the news from Jack. Betty writes to him quite often. Tell her Jack is writing and asking to be sent to the intelligence school at the University of Maryland. I haven't found anything yet to change my opinion that Admin. Officers or any others for that matter will leave the group to go to school (that is, we won't be asked to furnish them). Jack may get sent by asking, especially if Colonel Smith works on the other end.⁶²

I did my spring house cleaning today. Mopped the floor and wiped the dust off the 2 x 4's on the wall etc. We are lucky to get the floor swept every 2 or 3 days with the orderly we have.

Well, bed time. I hope something happens, so I can get you out here before much longer.

Love,
Curt

The watch arrived OK. Cashed check for \$19.

59. Ibid., 88.

60. LeMay's Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded for his role in the survey flight from Brazil to Africa and the Middle East, September–October 1941.

61. General Frederick LeRoy Martin. General Martin was the commanding general of the Second Air Force at this time. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 419–420.

62. The editors were unable to positively identify "Colonel Smith"; LeMay is probably referring to Colonel Harold D. Smith, as LeMay would be very familiar with him as a resource, but we found no evidence to corroborate this.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 11, 1942⁶³

Dear Helen,

Mail service isn't so bad here. The letter you wrote Tuesday morning was postmarked 4:30 PM and was delivered at 3 PM today. Probably just made good connections all through.

There isn't any way to check up on the paycheck very quickly as the finance officer is at Vancouver Barracks and everything has to go back and forth by mail. I haven't even received the per diem check from the Dayton trip yet.

Have you heard anything from Virginia lately? I wonder if Tony has left yet?

One of our flight surgeons just got 10 days' leave and he is flying commercially back to N.Y. to drive his wife out. If and when we find a place to live, I might be able to do the same. What do you think of the idea? It would save some money at the expense of 2000 miles on the tires, especially if I could get someone to take me part way or all the way back.

Sounds to me like Janie will have a busy week. I hope she enjoys having someone to play with. Out here, she probably won't have anyone. There are two cases of infantile paralysis in town, and I was talking to one of the flight surgeons, and he says there is lots of it around here, and he wouldn't recommend letting the kids get out and mix much.

Well, 9:30 and bed time.

Love,
Curt

Local outbreaks of "infantile paralysis," more commonly known as polio, were worrisome for parents, including the LeMays, particularly in the summer when the number of reported cases increased.⁶⁴ The Roosevelt presidency generated greater awareness of the disease in the United States during the 1930s, resulting in the establishment of the March of Dimes in 1939.

63. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

64. "Infantile paralysis" was a term coined by German orthopedist Jakob Heine in the mid-nineteenth century to describe the viral disease later identified as poliomyelitis or simply "polio" by physicians. The disease is transferred through the stool of the host and can have varied effects upon infected individuals, from mild symptoms to paralysis or death. See Thomas M. Daniel and Frederick C. Robbins, "A History of Poliomyelitis," in *Polio*, ed. Thomas M. Daniel and Frederick C. Robbins (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1999), 1–15.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 12, 1942⁶⁵

Dear Helen,

In looking through the foot locker today, I found this pen, so I bought some ink and have finally graduated from the pencil.

What day did you mail the pictures? I haven't received them yet, and I think I should have by this time. Were they insured?

I had a letter from Leonard today. He is at the officers' candidate school at Fort Belvoir. He seems to be enthused about it, so I think he will get along alright.

I'm about to give up on finding a place to live. Every place I have looked at seems to be a dump. People here are even fixing up their basements and trying to rent them [and are] doing very little fixing too. I guess we will have to wait until Higgins leaves and take his house. Then there is a chance I may leave six weeks later for Boise, which will be OK or Wendover, which won't. It's 80 miles west of Salt Lake City in the desert with nothing there.

Just returned from the control tower. One of the boys in the 1st Reconnaissance couldn't get his wheels down, so Zip and I went up to talk to him.⁶⁶ He finally got them down, so we came back.

It's 10:30 and way, way, past bed time.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 13, 1942⁶⁷

Dear Helen,

While I think of it, write somewhere on a slip of paper and place it with the government insurance policy [for] the date Feb. 25, 1942. That's the date of the dividend check, so we can keep track of it. I can't remember when the last one came, can you?

The pictures still have not arrived, so better start checking at your end.

65. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

66. The 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, 34th Bomb Group.

67. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

I hope you insured them. I think you said you mailed them the 8th, so they should be here by now.

I have another sore throat again tonight, so I gargled with salt water. Maybe I can shake this one off. Everyone here either has a sore throat or a cold.

I heard today that I was going to Wendover as executive officer of a heavy group down there.⁶⁸ The nearest habitation there is 80 miles to Salt Lake, so if that's true, I guess you either live in a trailer alongside the road or stay in Salt Lake. I'll let you know as soon as I find out definitely.⁶⁹

I don't see why I couldn't have been lucky and gone to Salt Lake or Boise. Maybe I can at least get my throat well out on the desert.

Well, that's all the bad news I can think of tonight. However, if they change their mind about this just half as much as usual, I probably won't go.

Love,
Curt

*Lieutenant Colonel LeMay had been waiting approximately a month to discover the location of his next assignment, and when this first hint arrived, it was not necessarily welcome. Wendover Field was a new, underdeveloped substation of Fort Douglas located in northwestern Utah, roughly 130 miles west of Salt Lake City, and had a small civilian population numbering around a hundred persons.*⁷⁰

*LeMay and his family faced the prospect of living in a barren, desert wasteland at a remote airfield, if the transfer came through. The only clearly redeeming feature of Wendover was an important one: it was an ideal site for constructing a new airfield and training bomber groups. The terrain surrounding the air base was composed of long expanses of flat, packed earth, and the weather was consistently calm.*⁷¹ *The urban settings of Salt Lake City or Gowen Field near Boise, Idaho, would certainly have been more attractive for the young LeMay family, but their time at Wendover would prove memorable nonetheless.*

68. Wendover, Utah.

69. LeMay was officially ordered to join the 306th Bomb Group as executive officer on March 29, 1942. See Adjutant, "Lieutenant Colonel Curtis E. LeMay 0-17917," Headquarters, Second Air Force, Fort George Wright, Washington, March 29, 1942, Folder 4, Service Documents, January 1942–December 1943, Box 2, CELMPR.

70. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 209–210.

71. *Ibid.*

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 14, 1942⁷²

Dear Helen,

The pictures finally came today, so never mind trying to trace them. They are really good. I don't see how she can get the kids to look their best like she does. Incidentally, it's the best picture of you that we have.

Zip talked to the Air Force on the telephone today and found out that my assignment to Wendover is not definite as yet. One advantage of moving now is that I probably would get a group sooner.

There are now three cases of infantile paralysis in Pendleton (6,000 population). What do you think about bringing Janie out? Do you think it would be OK if she stayed away from the other kids, etc.?

Had a letter from Lloyd today. He is down in Tennessee and was promoted to 1st Lt. on February 1st.

Jack had a letter from Sweet and practically all the wives in Boise are coming out there that aren't already there.

Zip says the twins have to have their adenoids out, so Fran will have another job on her hands. It looks as though Zip will stay here for some time and so far he hasn't said anything about bringing Fran out. A house that would house them, and Fran could keep, just isn't to be had, so I imagine they will just stay put.

Well, gargle and to bed.

Love,
Curt

4TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 15, 1942⁷³

Dear Helen,

It's only 7:00, but I'm going to get your letter off and then get to bed. Tomorrow is my day off, so I think I'll spend it in bed and see if I can't lick this sore throat without going back to the hospital.

Overacker⁷⁴ called me up last night. He was in town en route from

72. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

73. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

74. Colonel Charles B. "Chip" Overacker. Colonel Overacker was the commanding officer of the 306th Bomb Group. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 180.

take it and the other stags and forms a new group.

Poor Jamie she certainly hasn't seen much of her old man for the last 8 months or so but I'm still hoping we can get together again before long.

Jack just called the girl present in Northampton and seems to be in a more cheerful frame of mind. There certainly isn't much to do around here after what he is used to.

I've spent an hour writing this much so - that's enough for tonight.

Love.

Lucy

Spokane to Salt Lake. He is supposed to command the Wendover group. He will be Salt Lake City for a month until they finish the building at Wendover. He says there is a nice hotel just off the field. He is going to investigate the possibilities of living there, and write me. I told him that as soon as he found out if I were definitely going, to get me down right away with him at Salt Lake City, then you could at least come out for a month or whatever time it takes to finish Wendover.

The plan now is for two Lt. Cols. to go with each group during its training period and then one of them takes it and the other stays and forms a new group.

Poor Janie. She certainly hasn't seen much of her old man for the last eight months or so, but I'm still hoping we can get together again before long.

Jack just called the gal friend in Northampton and seems to be in a more cheerful frame of mind. There certainly isn't much to do around here after what he is used to.

I've spent an hour writing this much, so that's enough for tonight.

Love,
Curt

The "nice hotel" referenced by Colonel Overacker was the State Line Hotel, so-called because it straddled the border between Utah and Nevada. The State Line was Wendover's central social hub and boasted not only a hotel but also the town's lone restaurant, bus stop, and gas station. The facility even housed a casino in its Nevada half. The LeMay family would occupy one of its rooms for the duration of their tour of duty with the 306th Bomb Group.⁷⁵

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 16, 1942⁷⁶

Dear Helen,

This was supposed to be my day off and I was going to stay in bed, but Zip was routed out at 3:00 A.M. and I went to work as usual. Two of our ships crashed last night. One three miles from the field at Boise and one 20 miles from here.⁷⁷ Higgins took a crew in by truck and [did] more to bring

75. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 210.

76. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

77. Gowen Field.

out the bodies, while I flew over head giving directions so they could find the wreck. They just came in and we have finished dinner, so I didn't get much rest today. Both pilots [were] just out of flying school a short time and with about 30 hours in the ship.⁷⁸ We will probably have more such things before we're through; however, 16 people in one day is too many.

I'm anxious to hear from Overacker to see what he has to say about Wendover.

Graff's wife just showed up with a new baby that he hasn't seen.⁷⁹ It was born shortly after we left Westover. They are staying in the local auto court, which is a nice place to take a two-month old baby.

I just talked to Jack. He went up in the mountains today skiing. Hope my throat heals up before I leave here. I would like to try it. The snow is 7 feet thick where they go, so you can't get hurt very bad even if you do spend most of the time on your fanny.

Well, bed time again.

Love,
Curt

Both crews belonged to the 34th, and their accidents made regional news the next day in the Oregonian, Oregon's premier newspaper based in Portland.⁸⁰ At 12:30 a.m., Second Lieutenant Lawler C. Neighbors, piloting B-17E 41-2559, was off course and navigating through a blizzard when he flew his bomber into a mountainside in the Blue Mountain Range near Pendleton.⁸¹ When rescuers arrived at the crash site, they discovered that the plane was "broken into large fragments and scattered over the mountain side."⁸² Tragically, the entire ten-man crew perished upon impact; however, rescuers, including Le-May, were able to recover all of their bodies. Several of the noncommissioned officers who were killed had been with the 34th Bomb Group since it was based at Westover.

Roughly two hours after the first accident, B-17E 41-2561 careened into the side of a wood-covered hill while circling Gowen Field, Idaho, killing four

78. Neighbors had logged only forty-three hours flying time in a Fortress, while Hosford had posted thirty-four before his last flight. See Accident No. 42-3-15-8, B-17E 41-2559, AAR; and Accident No. 42-3-16-1, B-17E 41-2561, AAR, respectively.

79. Second Lieutenant Hugh R. Graaf. See Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR.

80. "14 Killed as Army Planes Crash," *Oregonian*, March 17, 1942.

81. Accident No. 42-3-15-8, B-17E 41-2559, AAR.

82. Ibid.

crew members and seriously injuring two more.⁸³ Second Lieutenant Charles S. Hosford III, the pilot, was attempting to land at Gowen because he was diverted from Pendleton due to the storm that was active in that area. In this case, however, pilot error was the only factor leading to the accident.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, incidents such as these were to be expected as the air force trained new and inexperienced fliers. Night flights were especially dangerous, even for seasoned pilots.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 18, 1942⁸⁵

Dear Helen,

I thought I told you about the candy. It came OK, and, Jack, Zip and I ate it and all say thanks.

I think I'm rather unpopular around here tonight. The General⁸⁶ will be down Friday to present the medal,⁸⁷ so we had to practice today—also tomorrow, so everyone on the base stood and froze for an hour this afternoon.⁸⁸ Wish you were going to be here to see the show. The base has even produced a band from someplace.

I'm going to try and get a definite answer on my move from the General⁸⁹ Friday and if I'm going to Wendover, I'll try and get sent to Salt Lake with Overacker right away, so stand by to leave Cleveland about the 25th or so, if the transfer goes through. Otherwise, about April 15, because I think Higgins will leave then and we can get his house.

I still have the sore throat and Goldsmith⁹⁰ is giving me vitamin pills

83. Accident No. 42-3-16-1, B-17E 41-2561, AAR.

84. Hosford was reportedly fatigued from flying all day and was unfamiliar with the terrain surrounding Gowen Field. In addition, the two surviving crew members testified that Hosford was ill and very anxious, causing him to vomit into his oxygen mask at one point during the flight. See Accident No. 42-3-16-1, B-17E 41-2561, AAR.

85. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

86. General Martin.

87. The Distinguished Flying Cross.

88. Colonel Frank A. Wright, commanding officer of Pendleton Field, sent a memo concerning the ceremony to all the base's unit commanders on March 17. It was scheduled to take place at 11:00 a.m. "for the purpose of presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Colonel Curtis E. LeMay by the Commanding General, Second Air Force," and included orders for the practice reviews mentioned by LeMay here. See George W. Hansen, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Executive Officer, "Presentation of Decoration," Air Base Headquarters, Office of the Commanding Officer, Pendleton Field, Oregon, March 17, 1942, CELMPR.

89. General Martin.

90. Captain Solomon Goldsmith. Captain Goldsmith was a doctor with the medical corps assigned to the 34th Bomb Group Headquarters. See Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR.

now to build up my resistance. He says these should get me well. In fact, one-half bottle and I'll be going down town with a mattress over my shoulder! We'll see.

The hospital is full of 34th Group people with colds and sore throats although one of our officers went in at 1:00 and was operated on at 2:00 for appendix. He is doing OK. They used a spinal on him.

Jack and Zip came in and we have been talking for an hour and a half, so it's past bedtime.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 19, 1942⁹¹

Dear Helen,

No letter from you today, but your dad's came and he seems to be having his hands full with you gals and Angus.

Jack's letter came back from the Air Force stating that there were no vacancies in the intelligence school, but if any came up he would be considered. I doubt if the Second Air Force is called on to furnish anyone to go to school from now on, so Colonel Smith will probably have to work from his end. Jack is doing OK. He was promoted to 1st Lt. today and is very happy about it. Also, he has a Squadron CO now that lets him do all the adjutant's work, so I think he is a lot happier about his job than he was at Westover.

I haven't heard from Overacker yet, but I should in a day or so.

My sore throat is finally getting a little better. It should be completely well in a day or so. I had begun to think I was going to have it forever. Maybe I won't have to take all that bottle of pills after all.

How did your luncheon with Fran turn out? I hope Janie was on her good behavior and you didn't have to spend the afternoon keeping her out of mischief.

Well, I had better get busy and shine my brass for the formation tomorrow.

Love,
Curt

91. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 20, 1942⁹²

Dear Helen,

Well, the formation went off OK, so we can get back to work again.⁹³ I'll send you the medal when I get it wrapped, along with the newspapers of the event.

Zip and I just came back from a movie downtown—the first we have been to, so I'll be quick about this and get to bed. I didn't find out anything about the move except that nothing definite has been decided yet, and, probably won't be until around the first of the month. So you can get all set to come out here then. Because if I don't move, Higgins probably will, so we can get his house, and if I do, and even if there isn't any place to stay at this hotel at Wendover, you might as well come out to Salt Lake for a while because I'll probably be at Salt Lake until the 15th or later because I don't think Wendover will be ready until then. You might get some linens, etc. packed because there are no linens, dishes, kitchen utensils, etc. furnished out here.

I'm glad Janie didn't completely disgrace you at Fran's and that she is back to eating again.

I had better get to bed or I won't be able to get up in the morning.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 21, 1942⁹⁴

Dear Helen,

Well, another day gone by. In spite of the monotony, the time seems to be passing fairly rapidly, so it will soon be the 1st and then we can find out something about moving.

We had to cancel flying this afternoon and tonight because of a strong wind across our only runway, but the weather should be good again tomorrow.

92. Ibid.

93. The DFC medal presentation.

94. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

Zip had a letter from Fran and she sent him a card she got out of a \$.10 store scale with her fortune on the back. She had crossed out the weight with a pencil, so Zip crossed it to see what it was—150 lbs.

I have the medal packed and ready to go, but probably won't be able to mail it until Monday. The newspapers packed around it have the local write up of the review.⁹⁵ I have sent a couple home to the family also, so you can keep them.

The weather is beginning to warm up out here now. The nights are still cold, but it warms up in the daytime. The throat is almost well. If the weather stays warm, I think it will be OK soon.

Have you bought new license plates for the car yet? If you haven't, you might as well get them as soon as you can.

I received a check the other day from the fuel oil co. in Holyoke for \$15, which we had overpaid for oil. I could make a crack about your housekeeping.

Still haven't heard from Overacker, but should, any day now. I suppose he has plenty to keep him busy, but will get around to it sooner or later.

Well, I think I'll answer your dad's letter and go to bed.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 23, 1942⁹⁶

Dear Helen,

I didn't get a letter off last night because—hold your hat—I went to church. The chaplain had memorial services for the men we lost in the two crashes,⁹⁷ so Zip and I went and when we came back, we were enticed into a rummy game.

Jack and I are going to a movie tonight, so I had better write now before we leave. Zip talked to the Second Air Force today and still no information, but I'm afraid it will be either Wendover or stay here.

95. Paul Wells, a reporter with the Pendleton East *Oregonian*, wrote a lengthy article about the DFC ceremony and LeMay's role in the survey trip, complete with several insightful quotations by the lieutenant colonel about what he saw in Africa and the Middle East. See Paul Wells, "LeMay Tells about Pioneering Flight," Pendleton East *Oregonian*, March 21, 1942.

96. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

97. See letter of March 16.

Just returned from the movie. Saw James Cagney in *Captains of the Clouds*.⁹⁸ Saw those daring aviators flying the Atlantic.

I mailed the medal this morning, also, the certificate that came with it, and the newspapers are packed in the same box. Let me know when you get them.

Janie must be growing up fast. I hope you can tell her you are coming out by the end of the week.

Has Jack heard anything about being called to active duty? I suppose he will stay right where he is for the duration.

The clipping was in the Seattle paper. It's well past bed time, so I had better get to sleep. I still don't like to get up in the morning. Zip is my alarm clock.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 24, 1942⁹⁹

Dear Helen,

Some of the pictures of the review were finished today. I'll send them all in one package when they are finished.

I also mailed a couple of service bars for you to put ribbons on.

Zip and I are going down town tonight and see if we can find a bowling alley for something to do. Pendleton doesn't offer much, but there should be one.

Just came back from town. We found the bowling alleys OK, an enormous place—three alleys, so we had to go the movie instead. Saw *Hellzapoppin'*.¹⁰⁰ We weren't very impressed, so it must have been a better stage show than a movie.

Do you remember the radio operator by the name of Harris who

98. *Captains of the Clouds* was an aerial drama about Canadian pilots who get involved in both ATFERO and combat over England in the first few years of World War II. It was directed by Michael Curtiz and released by Warner Brothers on February 21, 1942. It would have been especially interesting to LeMay because of the time he spent with ATFERO and the ACFC. See "Captains of the Clouds," *Variety*, January 21, 1942.

99. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

100. *Hellzapoppin'* was a musical comedy based on the Broadway production (1938) of the same name. The movie was directed by H. C. Potter and produced by Universal Studios. It was released on December 26, 1941. See "Hellzapoppin'," *New York Times*, December 26, 1941.

lived on the beach near us in Hawaii? I had a letter from him today. He is in Portland and saw my picture in the paper so wrote a letter.¹⁰¹ They have two more kids now. He is still working for Gloke and expects to be transferred to Seattle.

Bed time.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 25, 1942¹⁰²

Dear Helen,

On the auto tags. You shouldn't have mentioned the fact that we are driving on VA tags. Because legally the car has no tags, since I didn't change our Packard tags to the Cadillac. So if you had said the car has no tags, you should have been able to get an Ohio title with the mass bill of sale. Since you stated you had VA tags for the car, it follows that you must have had a VA title in order to get them. The VA title and change of registration of our tags from the Packard to the Cadillac should come through OK for \$2.00. If they don't, try some other license clerk with the other story, that the car never has been registered for plates. However, the Virginia title should be in by the time this letter gets there.

I won't know about bringing the car until I look over the situation at Wendover and Salt Lake. If you don't hear from VA by that time, we can ship the car to Utah and get tags there. I'll see Ohio in hell before I'll pay \$45 for a title.

Bill Matheny is to be executive officer in the 34th for the time being.¹⁰³ I think he rather expected to go out and get a group, so I don't think he likes it very well. However, the orders aren't out yet and may be changed.

I still have Higgins's house if he goes and I don't.

You need all linens, blankets, kitchen utensils, dishes, etc. The only thing furnished is furniture—beds and mattress.

Love,
Curt

101. Paul Wells, "LeMay Tells about Pioneering Flight," *Pendleton East Oregonian*, March 21, 1942.

102. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

103. Lieutenant Colonel William A. Matheny. *Ibid.*, 182.

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 26, 1942¹⁰⁴

Dear Helen,

Air Force G3 came through today and told us that Higgins was going to Salt Lake and Ito Wendover, effective April 1. I'm sending a letter off to Overacker tonight to find out what the dope is on that hotel at Wendover. Do you think you could stand that? Probably we will be at Salt Lake until April 15th or maybe longer. In all probability, this group may move out in three months and I might take it. That being the case, I would like you and Janie to come out if possible. I'll give you what additional information I have as soon as I hear from Overacker.

We lost another ship today. All the crew was able to jump and landed safely. Johnson was flying it.¹⁰⁵ You remember him—he was at Westover.

That's all the news and I want to get this on the 2:00 pm mail plane.

Love,
Curt

34TH BOMB GROUP, PENDLETON FIELD, OREGON,
MARCH 29, 1942¹⁰⁶

Dear Helen,

The enclosed letter from Overacker will give you all the information about Wendover. While I haven't actually viewed the order, the wire just came in transferring me to Wendover (address Wendover Air Base, Wendover, Utah). It doesn't sound very inviting from your standpoint. But it looks as though this will be our last chance of being together again before moving out.

Of course, there is always a chance I may be transferred somewhere else, but it isn't likely. If you think you can stand it, find out about shipping the car, cost, length of time en route, etc. Maybe it would be cheaper and

104. Ibid., 88.

105. The *Oregonian* published an article about the accident the same day LeMay wrote this letter. Second Lieutenant Warren L. Johnson was the pilot. In this case, the B-17 developed engine trouble shortly after takeoff, and Johnson and his six-man crew were forced to bail out before the bomber crashed and exploded on the land of a local rancher six miles from Pendleton. See "Crew Escapes Bomber Crash," *Oregonian*, March 27, 1942.

106. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

quicker to ship to Salt Lake. I'll wire or call from Wendover in a couple days when I look the place over. Well, I can't think of any other news, so will get this in the mail.

Love,
Curt

Following is the letter from Colonel Overacker to LeMay.

SALT LAKE AIR BASE, UTAH, MARCH 23, 1942

Dear Curt,

Glad to hear from you and here's the dope. I am moving everything to Wendover this weekend. We will be somewhat crowded for awhile, but construction has begun and the camp should go up in a hurry. In the meantime the men will be under canvas but in floored and walled tents with Sibley stoves, so I think we'll make out OK.¹⁰⁷ Officers will be furnished quarters in the BOQ¹⁰⁸ with possibly an overflow into tents adjacent to the BOQ until more BOQ's are finished. The Officers' Club project is also being rushed.

Reason for moving the works to Wendover is because they jumped the gun on me and ordered about 600 enlisted men in at Wendover. Obviously I can't administer them nor get the group organized unless the headquarters is there. Anyway I'd rather have the whole works together. Wendover, incidentally, has just been designated as a separate Air Base. I talked to Nate¹⁰⁹ yesterday and told him to send you to Wendover about April 1st.

We will have, initially, nine experienced officers, including yourself; five communications officers, two bombsight maintenance officers, and

107. A Sibley stove is a cylindrical wood-burning stove with a conical top and hinged or sliding door. It was invented by Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley in 1861 and designed to be used in conjunction with his Sibley tent (invented in 1856). The stove's design was modified by the army over the years until it was overhauled and issued as the M-1941 in 1941 to allow for coal-burning. See Carol H. Quenzel, "General Henry Hopkins Sibley: Military Inventor," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 64, no. 2 (April 1956): 166–170.

108. Bachelor officers' quarters.

109. Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest III, great grandson of the famous Confederate general of the same name and executive officer of II Bomber Command, Second Air Force. The 306th and many of the other new bomber groups fell under jurisdiction. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 439.

about 40 trainee pilots, and about 600 enlisted men, mostly recruits. 105 are recent grads of the technical school, Ap and Eng. Mech. course.

We don't get the experienced cadre or the rest of our personnel until April 15th, so will have to worry along as best we can without them. We are taking out 4 B-18's, one or two B-17's and one A-17. Our initial job, between now and April 15th, will be to give B-18 transition to our trainees and B-17 transition to the experienced officers, none of whom, except you and I, are checked off. I have already sent them to the 4-engine school at Albuquerque¹¹⁰ for a 30 day course, so they will come back to us in pretty fair shape, I hope.

Now as to your family. You will be able to get a very nice hotel room in the State Line Hotel for about \$3.00 or \$3.50 per day, with one day per week free. I'm taking my family with me, and several others plan to do the same. There are *no* houses available, and motor courts are poor and crowded. Eating initially would have to be at the hotel until the Officers Messes are enlarged (I mean eating for your family). However, here's an out if you are interested. We have about 60 new deluxe trailers being sent out to be made available to officers, non-coms, etc. You could live in one of those, if you so desire, at a rental of \$6.00 per week. They will be installed in a trailer park with water and electrical connections, but of course a community latrine. The trailers are quite nice; new, two Daveno¹¹¹ beds in each, ice box, Coleman gasoline stove, sink, etc. Several of my officers are planning to live in them.

I think you'd be able to make out OK with your family there either in the hotel or in a trailer, and there will be several girls there, so they won't be too lonesome. Of course, there's absolutely *nothing* at Wendover to keep them busy. Some of the gals are going to try to work on the post. Your car would be useful mainly to get away to Salt Lake City or Elko¹¹² occasionally. The hotel is within 1/8 mile from the post, easy walking distance, and we will have our staff cars of course.

That's the story—you'll have to decide for yourself—I haven't pulled

110. Kirtland Field, Albuquerque. Kirtland was one of the largest training centers for B-17 bomber crews in the United States during World War II.

111. "Daveno" and "davenport" were interchangeable, generic terms for a sofa, futon, or sofa bed during this period. Both words were derived from the Davenport trademark, which originated in the A. H. Davenport Furniture Company of Massachusetts, a successful furniture company in the mid late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

112. Nevada.

any punches on it. It's a swell place to train a Bomb Group, but may be grim for the gals.

Looking forward to seeing you.

– Chip

P.S.—Get all dope on the cadre and experienced officers we are to get from the 34th, will you?

HE OVERLAND ROUTE, UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD,
APRIL 1, 1942

Dear Helen,

I'm writing this on the train, so I had better use pencil. Just before I left Pendleton yesterday, I saw Ford. He and Thompson stopped in for a little visit. They are expecting to move out very shortly.

When I left, Higgins had not received his orders yet and Bill Matheny is definitely going to stay in the 34th for a while yet which probably means he won't get a group as soon as we will. I imagine he is rather griped about it since we have a group too and will be promoted to Colonels.

We passed through some good hunting country last night. I saw more deer grazing along the tracks in five minutes than you see in a week's hunting in Michigan and the conductor was showing me all the places he had fished. There certainly won't be any fish at Wendover.

The train just stopped, so I'll try to finish this while I can write. I'll call or wire you from Wendover and give you the information on the housing situation.

Love,
Curt

Lieutenant Colonel LeMay found Wendover to be exactly as Colonel Overacker had described it and in even more disarray than he expected. In his own words, it was a case of "[t]he Boy Scouts attempting to build a fire without matches."¹¹³ The base was barely useable. It had only one runway in operation, only tents for the enlisted men to live in, and few of the buildings necessary for

113. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 2.

an airfield to function normally. There were personnel and equipment shortages, problems with payroll, inadequate lodging, and a shortage of available uniforms. In addition, the enlisted men and officers who arrived daily to fill out the group had received varying degrees of training and were poorly organized, but this was not a unique situation.

FDR and the Allies were mounting pressure on air force leadership to produce combat-ready groups to send overseas. At this time, however, basic training programs, technical school training programs, and flight school training programs were inadequate, lacked equipment and aircraft, and were overwhelmed by the number of enlistees who flooded their facilities.¹¹⁴ In addition, there were not enough instructors available to do the teaching, even when the air force hired civilians to bolster their numbers. Further complicating matters, the time that recruits did spend learning their craft was cut back drastically in order to fill the rosters.¹¹⁵

The poor state of the air force's training program affected both the performance of the men being siphoned into new units, and the ability of group commanders to make them into able, efficient airmen. These difficulties were bad enough, but Wendover, Utah, made the situation even worse. For LeMay, his men, and their families it was as if they had been sent to a dusty purgatory. "Where had we sinned along the line?" LeMay wondered. "[W]e must have sinned somewhere. Otherwise we wouldn't have been given a job like this, nor under such conditions."¹¹⁶

HEADQUARTERS, 306TH BOMB GROUP, WENDOVER AIR
BASE, UTAH, APRIL 2, 1942¹¹⁷

Dear Helen,

I think you had better plan on coming to Salt Lake City by train because there is only one train here daily, which is supposed to get here at

114. Arthur R. Kooker, "Basic Military Training and Classification of Personnel," in *Men and Planes*, vol. 6 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 528–536.

115. Thomas H. Greer, "Individual Training of Flying Personnel," in *Men and Planes*, vol. 6 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 565.

116. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 211.

117. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

2:00 a.m., but is always late and gets in at 3 or 4. I am very doubtful about the car being there waiting for us, but I can borrow a car and drive in to Salt Lake or you can come out on the bus—it only takes about 2½ hours and is quicker than the train and you avoid the night ride. Find out about the time it will take to get the car to Salt Lake. Even if it doesn't get there with you, I could fly up and get it. I have to know as soon as possible when you will be here, so I can make a reservation at the hotel, as far in advance as possible, because they are full now, but I can get in OK.

You won't need anything except old clothes out here and the nearest laundry is Salt Lake, so bring an iron if you have one unpacked.

If you still have that little electric stove, you could bring it to cook things for Janie.

Well, I'll have to get this in the mail. Wire me when you will arrive at Salt Lake as soon as you make the reservation.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 306TH BOMB GROUP, WENDOVER AIR
BASE, UTAH, APRIL 2, 1942¹¹⁸

Dear Helen,

I had better give you some more information on this place that I didn't mention on the phone. Wendover is just a place on the railroad where they put water in engines; population 100 or so. It's right on the state line. In fact, the hotel is in Nevada, so you can establish residence. The reason for the hotel is [that] Nevada has wide open gambling etc., and Utah hasn't. It isn't bad. The furniture is new and clean and the whole hotel is air conditioned, which will be a good thing this summer because it's really hot they say but usually cools down at night. There is nothing else here except a filling station, tourist cottages and crossroads store. Nothing to do and no place to go, so I wouldn't blame you if you didn't want to come out here. There are several wives here now in the hotel. I imagine that they will move into trailers as they are available because on 1st and 2nd Lt's pay, you can't afford a hotel.

118. Ibid.

I don't know about the car. We wouldn't need it except to go to Salt Lake or Elko, so I don't know what to say about it. What do you think?

Well, it's time to go to work.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 306TH BOMB GROUP, WENDOVER AIR
BASE, UTAH, APRIL 4, 1942¹¹⁹

Dear Helen,

The hotel situation is getting worse out here, so you had better get out here. I have a room reserved for the 10th, maybe, providing the people in it move and I believe they will. If not, you will have to stay in Salt Lake a day or so. You had better plan on coming out as soon as the title gets back from Virginia. Then when the car gets to Salt Lake, I'll go get it. Come to Salt Lake and I'll meet you there or if the hotel here is full, you can stay there for a day or so.

I just talked today to a captain back from Java after a new ship he said. Kester and Ragsdale were evacuating people out of Java and were shot down about 12 miles off shore and as far as he knows, only one Sgt. got to shore.¹²⁰

We are gradually getting the group into shape. Our cadre of experienced people haven't arrived yet, so we have to do the best we can. Some of our clerks should be in by Tuesday, which will relieve this load somewhat.

I'm rather glad I came here now because with the gunnery and bombing range right here, and the good flying weather, we will have I believe [a] group trained here [that] will be at least 30 percent better trained than the rest.

Time for bed. Come on out as soon as you can and wire me the minute you know when you will arrive. Come on the regular train that gets to Salt Lake at 9:30 a.m. and I'll meet you there, which is much better than getting in in the middle of the night.

Love,
Curt

Bring insurance slips on the cars. I haven't received them yet.

119. Ibid.

120. The editors were unable to identify Ragsdale.

For two months LeMay labored with Colonel Overacker to organize and train the 306th, while Janie endeared herself to the staff of the State Line Hotel, whom LeMay accused of “stuffing our infant with Cokes and cakes and candy every time she rolled her eyes at these items, which was constantly.”¹²¹ Helen, besides attempting to thwart the efforts of the hotel staff to spoil her daughter, tried to enjoy the time she had left with her husband before he was sent overseas. She knew he was training for combat, and the only question was if he would wind up in England or on an island in the Pacific Ocean. In either case, LeMay would face the nation’s enemies in command of his own group; on May 25, 1942, the lieutenant colonel received word that he was being placed in command of the 305th Bomb Group, and the next day General Olds sent him a note confirming the news. He would be the 305th’s new commanding officer and promoted to colonel, effective June 1 and June 17, respectively.¹²² Even better, the group was stationed at Salt Lake City Air Base. Finally, his family would be able to return to civilization.

Unfortunately, LeMay found the 305th to be just as unfit for combat as the 306th had been, with even less equipment and aircraft. Approximately a year after the 305th left the United States for England and accumulated an impressive combat record, Colonel LeMay remembered, “In addition to being short of airplanes and short of pilots, we were short of mechanics and other classifications necessary to make up an air force.”¹²³ Many of his pilots had only flown trainers and had never seen a combat aircraft up close, much less a B-17. Moreover, the colonel had a total of forty-eight pilots and only four B-17s to train them with. They would not receive their full complement of bombers until the day they took off for England.

Frustrated, LeMay would not even be able to attempt to remedy the state of his group in earnest until early July. As soon as he got to Salt Lake Air Base, he was ordered to take the 305th to Geiger Field in Spokane, Washington, to form the core of a coalition defense force composed of both B-17s and B-24s gathered from units throughout the Second Air Force.¹²⁴ Ever since Lieutenant

121. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 210.

122. Ray L. Owens, Colonel, Chief of Staff, “Memorandum to: Lieutenant Colonel Curtis E. LeMay, Wendover Field, Wendover, Utah,” Headquarters, Second Air Force, Office of the Commanding General, Fort George Wright, Washington, May 26, 1942, CELMPR; and Carey C. Harman, Major, Army Air Forces, Adjutant, “Oath of Office, Regular Army, Curtis Emerson LeMay, o-17917, Colonel (Temporary),” Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington, June 18, 1942, CELMPR.

123. Bruce C. Hopper, “Interview with Colonel Curtis LeMay,” Historical Section, Eighth Air Force, September 7, 1943, 4–5, Carl Spaatz Papers, Archival Manuscript Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

124. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 214–215.

Colonel James H. Doolittle had led his force of sixteen B-25s from the deck of the USS *Hornet* on April 18 against the Japanese home islands in defiance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, American civilian leaders on the west coast were afraid that the Japanese would retaliate somewhere along the U.S. coast. As Japanese forces continued their impressive spring offensive, they turned their sights on Midway and the Aleutian Islands, and American fears came to a head. The air force immediately responded by sending units from across the country to reinforce the west coast.¹²⁵ LeMay's reinforced 305th served as the Second Air Force's contribution to that effort and remained at Geiger for about a month.

When air force leaders were satisfied that the danger of a Japanese attack on the west coast had passed, underscored by the American victory at the Battle of Midway, the 305th was released and sent back to the desert, but not Utah's—rather, Muroc Field at Muroc Lake, California.¹²⁶ Ralph Nutter, a navigator, remembered: "As we approached the entrance to the base, we saw huge dry lakes, great flat expanses shimmering in the hot sun."¹²⁷ It was Wendover all over again, but, like Wendover, Muroc Field was an excellent place to train a bomber group. Fortunately for Helen and Janie, Santa Monica was nearby, and that's where they spent the duration of the group's time in California.¹²⁸

Meanwhile, LeMay attempted to take his understaffed, underequipped unit and make it battle ready, and he had about two months with which to accomplish the task.¹²⁹ In late August and early September, the 305th was transferred from the Second Air Force to the Eighth Air Force, and its ground echelons began moving to England while LeMay and his air crews—still without their full complement of B-17s—transferred to Tucson, Arizona, where they waited on the airplanes and continued to train.¹³⁰ Finally, in early October,

125. William A. Goss, "Air Defense of the Western Hemisphere," in *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, vol. 1 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 299.

126. Muroc Field, now Edwards Air Force Base, eventually became one of the largest air force bases in the United States.

127. Ralph H. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle: The Memoir of a Navigator's War over Germany and Japan* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2002), 5.

128. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 217.

129. The group remained at Muroc from June 31 until August 22. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–178.

130. *Ibid.*; and Curtis E. LeMay, Colonel, Commanding Officer, "Special Orders No. 70," Headquarters, 305th Bomb Group, Muroc, California, August 22, 1942, CELMPR.

LeMay and his group transferred to Syracuse, New York, where they received thirty-five B-17s but were forced to wait another couple of weeks for them to be modified before heading east.

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK, OCTOBER 22, 1942¹³¹

Dear Helen,

Saying goodbye the other night was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be, in spite of all the practice we have had in the past. But this is just another trip and we'll get the job done and be home soon.

We had to stay over a day here due to weather, but should get away OK tomorrow. The weather map looks pretty good the whole way right now.

Sault is wearing his new sweater.¹³² Kitty mailed it from Springfield and it arrived just before we left.¹³³

I hope you had no trouble getting home. I called the hotel at 7:30, but I guess you were already on the way.

I just came from the PX. Got some cigars for Smitty and 75 chocolate bars, which should hold me for a while.¹³⁴

Ivan L. Farman, who went through the flying school with me is stationed here.¹³⁵ Also Merryweather, who used to be in Washington.¹³⁶ The [illegible] were close friends of theirs are here so we are going over to [illegible] for dinner tonight, so I guess I had better shave and get ready.¹³⁷

Shortly after this letter was written, Colonel LeMay and the 305th made the familiar—to LeMay at least—trek across the North Atlantic to begin their tour of duty as part of the Eighth Air Force. It was the first time since LeMay's

131. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 27.

132. Captain William E. Sault. See Curtis E. LeMay, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding, "Special Orders No. 70," Headquarters, 305th Bomb Group, Army Air Base, Muroc, California, August 22, 1942, CELMPR.

133. Kitty Sault, wife of Captain William E. Sault.

134. The editors were unable to identify Smitty.

135. Ivan L. Farman and LeMay completed advanced flying school at Kelly Field near San Antonio on March 12, 1929; however, they were ordered to different stations after graduation—LeMay to Selfridge Field in Michigan and Farman to Rockwell Field near Coronado, California. See Robert McCleave, Colonel, General Staff, Chief of Staff, "Special Orders No. 250," Headquarters, Eighth Corps Area, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, October 12, 1929, CELMPR.

136. The editors were unable to identify Merryweather.

137. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 213–228.

survey trip to Egypt in September 1941 that he would be separated from Helen and Janie by an ocean, and it would be many months before they would see each other again. But this time Colonel LeMay was flying off to combat, and that made all the difference.

CHAPTER 5

The Group November 4, 1942–May 29, 1943

But the 305th—It was my 305th, our 305th.
You never get over anything like that. It was The Group.¹
—GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY

On August 29, Colonel LeMay received a note from his mentor, General Robert Olds, when the 305th was officially transferred from the Second Air Force to the Eighth Air Force in preparation for combat duty in England.² “I desire to express to you my appreciation for the energy and resourcefulness, initiative, and loyalty that you displayed in preparing your group for combat duty,” wrote Olds. “It is a source of gratification to me to know that you have overcome all obstacles and have developed an outstanding group under adverse conditions in an exceedingly limited time period.”³ It was quite a compliment coming from the man that LeMay revered as the greatest influence on his air force career; however, the young colonel was not nearly as confident in the state of his command as was his idol.⁴

While training the 305th at Muroc, LeMay held grave doubts about how his men would perform in combat. He was also uncertain about his own ability to face the flak from antiaircraft guns and squadrons of Luftwaffe fighters

1. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 281.

2. The 305th would join the other bomb groups under the VIII Bomber Command, the command entity that controlled the Eighth Air Force's strategic bombing units before the Eighth Air Force was itself redesignated as a strategic bombing unit later in the month. The 305th was composed of four bomb squadrons: the 364th, 365th, 366th, and 422nd. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 178.

3. Robert Olds, Brigadier General, Commanding General, “Message No. 1034,” Headquarters, Second Air Force, Fort George Wright, Washington, August 29, 1942, CELMPR.

4. General Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Colonel William Peck, March 1965, interview 785, transcript, USAFOHC, 1–2.

over Europe. In a moment of self-reflection, he pondered, "What do you know about how it feels to be in combat? Will you stand up? Will you have the nerve to ask them to stand up?"⁵ Even the 305th's flight from Syracuse to its new home in England at Grafton Underwood Airfield was a cause for concern, as none of his pilots had flown the North Atlantic route they would navigate.⁶

When his final bomber touched down at Grafton, LeMay scrutinized the state of his command. "We had practically no air-to-air gunnery; very little high-altitude bombing, no high-altitude formation; no group formation until we got in the concentration area, not having enough airplanes to make formations. The navigators had no long-range navigation. Each first pilot had about 100 hours in a B-17. The average total flying times among pilots was 400 hours. The bulk of the pilots were right out of flying schools; they learned to fly B-17's, and came over seas."⁷ General David A. Burchinal, who spent much of the war training bomb groups in the United States, called these pilots "ninety-day wonders" because his trainers "took those kids out of single-engine flying school, and ninety days later, . . . sent them in a four-engine bomber over to England."⁸ Before the war, a pilot required three thousand hours of flying time and fifteen years of experience to be authorized to fly a B-17.⁹

One of the first American veterans of the European air war, Colonel Frank Armstrong, added to LeMay's concerns when the two crossed paths in Prestwick, Scotland. Colonel Armstrong, who was on his way back to the United States, had served as operations officer to the VIII Bomber Command chief, General Ira C. Eaker.¹⁰ He had also been the commanding officer of the 97th Bomb Group, which he led on the Eighth Air Force's first bombing mission against the rail yards at Rouen, France, on August 17.¹¹ Armstrong's experiences were better than gold for the novice group commander and his officers. Fortunately for LeMay and company, the veteran commander agreed to spend a few moments relaying the knowledge he had gained; however, his words

5. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 216.

6. Fortunately, the group only lost two of its thirty-five B-17s during the journey, and even these casualties were restored a few days later when repairs had been made. See *Ibid.*, 227–228.

7. Bruce C. Hopper, "Interview with Colonel Curtis LeMay," Historical Section, Eighth Air Force, September 7, 1943, 7, Carl Spaatz Papers, Archival Manuscript Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

8. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 26.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Eaker was a close colleague and friend of air force chief Henry "Hap" Arnold, who personally chose him to command the VIII Bomber Command. Eaker arrived in England to begin collaboration with RAF officers and make preparations to receive his units on February 20, 1942. See Goldberg, "Establishment of the Eighth Air Force," 618.

11. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 166–167.

were disheartening. *The flak was terrific and dangerous, and a bombing run that lasted more than ten seconds would probably result in the approaching aircraft's destruction by one of the small black clouds.*¹²

While absorbing this new knowledge, LeMay wondered how the bombers were able to hit their targets employing such tactics. Still, Armstrong had the combat experience, little as it was, and LeMay did not. Furthermore, the young colonel's men still lacked basic training in formation flying, and Armstrong's stories heightened LeMay's insecurity about the state of his group. In a matter of weeks, if not days, they would face life-and-death situations, and every second spent practicing group formations, aerial gunnery, and other necessary skills might result in a life saved. Even the veteran units of the VIII Bomber Command were having little success in the air campaign thus far.

LeMay and the 305th joined the VIII Bomber Command soon after its inception. The Eighth Air Force had begun flying bombing missions the previous August, with a total of seven B-17 heavy bomber groups, two B-24 heavy bomber groups, and five fighter groups, a tiny force compared to the thousands of American aircraft that would blanket the skies of Europe in 1944 and 1945. Additionally, they were going through deadly growing pains by testing tactics that had been developed in the clear expanses of the southwestern United States during peacetime in the skies of France, where experienced German fighters and flak met them over each target.¹³ To make matters worse, in late October the VIII Bomber Command was stripped of two heavy bomb groups and four fighter groups, all of which were sent to the Twelfth Air Force in support of the Allied invasion of North Africa.¹⁴ Thus, General Eaker and his small band of five B-17 bomb groups and two B-24 bomb groups, plus one fighter group, were expected to prove the efficacy of daylight precision bombing and the self-sufficiency of four-engine bombers versus fighters, with underdeveloped tactics and undertrained airmen facing overwhelming odds. Things would get much worse before they started getting better, and the 305th was right in the middle of the action.

Back at home, Helen and Janie remained in Lakewood, where they would spend most of the war living with Helen's parents. Like the millions of other

12. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 230.

13. Arthur B. Ferguson, "The Daylight Bombing Experiment," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 235–237.

14. In addition, the Eighth was stripped of thousands of experienced officers, enlisted men, support equipment, and staff in support of Twelfth Air Force. *Ibid.*, 235.

wives who sent their husbands to fight overseas, Helen, too, tried to do her part by serving in various volunteer organizations, such as the Red Cross, throughout the conflict. Janie, like so many other children during the period, lost her father to the war for most of the next four years, but she always looked forward to receiving his letters.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, GRAFTON
UNDERWOOD AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, NOVEMBER 4, 1942¹⁵

Dear Helen,

I can see that I am going to have trouble writing letters. Nothing happens that isn't connected with work and, of course, you can't write about that. I haven't had time to go to town yet, although we do have an invitation to attend a dance that a nearby R.A.F. unit is giving. We are gradually getting our club in shape and will be able to give one of our own shortly. My face is gradually improving—the headaches are gone and all the soreness. The control isn't back yet, but will return, I suppose, in time. Chip Overacker, Del Wilson and Langford were over for a visit.¹⁶

Love,
Curt

In September or October of 1942 (LeMay claims October; his medical records state it was September), LeMay suffered from the onset of a condition called Bell's Palsy.¹⁷ The malady is characterized by the paralysis of facial muscles due to damage to the seventh cranial nerve, located just below and in front of the ear. Causation can be due to a number of factors, but in LeMay's case a viral infection was the most likely culprit. It affected the flier on the right

15. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

16. Colonel Overacker was still in command of the 306th Bomb Group at this time, and Delmar "Del" E. Wilson was a squadron commander under Colonel Overacker with the 306th. See U.S. Air Force, "Brigadier General Delmar E. Wilson," Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioid=7612>, accessed February 12, 2012. The editors were unable to identify Langford.

17. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 220–223; William Bierman, "Diagnosis and Treatment of Bell's Palsy," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 149, no. 3 (1952): 253–258; and Ralph C. Teall, Major, Medical Corps, "Physical Examination for Flying, Curtis E. LeMay, Major General, o-17917," Station Dispensary, Headquarters, Twentieth Air Force, San Francisco, August 9, 1945, CELMPR.

*side of his face and lasted for about a year, although he was never able to fully recover control of his facial muscles on that side.*¹⁸

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, GRAFTON
UNDERWOOD AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, NOVEMBER 21, 1942¹⁹

Dear Helen,

Your mail seems to be rather slow coming in. I have received one letter from you and one from my mother. I wonder how mine is getting there. I try to write twice a week, but it is rather hard to keep on schedule. Not much doing here except eat, sleep and work. I have been off the airdrome twice in the month I have been here. We are trying to plan some sort of entertainment in the near future. It's rather difficult because you are likely to have to work all night almost anytime and without warning.

Love,
Curt

The tone of this letter reflected that LeMay and the 305th were very busy from the moment they arrived at Grafton Underwood until November 17, when they were deployed on their first combat mission. The colonel was beginning a learning process that the six other group commanders operating in the VIII Bomber Command had been struggling with since American bombers began operations in August. Based on interwar strategic bombing theory developed at the Air Corps Tactical School, General Eaker wanted to practice daylight precision bombing utilizing the Norden bombsight against industrial, transportation, and military targets according to guidelines established by AWPD-1942.²⁰ The RAF, instead, practiced nighttime area bombing that targeted German industry and its workers, a product of the failure of the precision bombing they had attempted beginning in May 1940 at a terrible cost in men and planes.²¹ Thus, Eaker's group commanders were required to develop tac-

18. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 222.

19. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

20. Donald Miller, *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 73; Haywood S. Hansell Jr., *The Strategic Air War against Germany and Japan: A Memoir* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1986), 72–73.

21. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 68–70.

tics that would serve the dual purposes of accurate bombing and unit survivability.

LeMay shined in this role. Historian Donald Miller captured LeMay's entrance into, and impact upon, Europe's air war definitively: "A pure pragmatist, LeMay would do more than anyone else to give the dangerously deceptive ideas of Mitchell and Douhet, Hansell and Eaker a greatly needed grounding in reality. Distrustful of theory, combat was his school."²² LeMay considered his work during this period to be the highlight of his career. In a January 1965 oral history interview conducted a few weeks before his retirement, LeMay was asked to discuss his most significant contribution to the development of the air force. He responded, "Probably it was getting a bombardment program organized in World War II when everyone was learning. There was a need for standardization, and my system was adopted for formations, techniques of bombing, etc."²³

As soon as his plane touched down on a muddy runway at Grafton Underwood, LeMay pondered his discussion with Colonel Armstrong and studied all of the Eighth Air Force's intelligence photographs of the damage inflicted by its units against targets thus far. He derived two important conclusions from his investigation, which were borne out after the war in the air force's strategic bombing survey of the European Theater in World War II: (1) bombers were not hitting their targets; and, (2) present tactics employed by the Eighth were resulting in unnecessary losses of both men and machines and needed to be modified.²⁴

The colonel conceived three solutions to address these shortcomings. First, he developed the lead-high-low combat box formation.²⁵ "He had invented the formation that we were flying by then," remembered General T. R. Milton, then a pilot with the 351st Bomb Group: "You know—the high group, lead group, and low group. It was a very formidable defensive array."²⁶ Before this date, most of the bombers lost in combat were casualties due to loose formations that allowed German pilots to pick off individuals and exploit weak spots to make attack runs. LeMay formulated a tight but staggered defensive

22. *Ibid.*, 123.

23. General Curtis E. LeMay, interview by undisclosed, January 12, 26, and 27, 1965, interview 714, USAFOHC, 1.

24. General Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Colonel William Peck, March 1965, interview 785, transcript, USAFOHC, 3–4; and *United States Strategic Bombing Survey Summary Report (European War)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 5.

25. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 127; and Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 27, n. 13.

26. General T. R. Milton, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, October 11, 2006, interview 1678, transcript, UNTOHC, 36–37.

formation that maximized the Fortress's defensive armament. He set up his aircraft in such a way that every gun in the formation of between eighteen and twenty-one planes had a clear field of fire, eliminating all possible blind spots except head on. Furthermore, because they were staggered, it was still possible for each bombardier to drop his ordinance without hitting an ally's plane. As long as each aircraft remained in formation, LeMay's plan would be effective. If an individual drifted away from the main group, that would create a hole in the entire unit's defenses and also provide an easy target for hostile fighters.²⁷

LeMay scheduled a strict training regimen for the group's first three weeks in England, allowing none of his men leave, which, in their minds, reinforced the validity of his nickname, "Iron Ass LeMay," much to the commander's chagrin.²⁸ In his view, they did not understand what was at stake, and he had foreshadowed this decision when they were training at Muroc in the summer of 1942. At that time, he allowed each crew every other weekend off in Los Angeles. "Enjoy it," he warned them; "Don't think this is my combat policy. If you want to raise hell, get it out of your system now. Once we get overseas you'll be confined to base until I decide you can hold your own in combat. It may take a long time."²⁹ Under Olds, LeMay learned the important correlation between training and results, which was further amplified in a combat zone. His men may have missed out on a few pints at the local pub, but LeMay reckoned it was a fair trade for lower casualties and a higher percentage of bombs placed on their targets in future combat missions. The colonel's command strategy with the 305th was: (1) consider the task at hand; (2) realistically evaluate the ability of the unit to achieve that task effectively; and, (3) make changes, from the ground up if necessary, or conceive innovations to maximize the unit's potential for success. LeMay followed this blueprint in every command he received afterward throughout his career.

The group spent these early weeks learning the RAF's procedures, runway layouts, radio codes, and other practical information. English weather restricted them to only two sessions of formation flying before the group's first mission, an inadequate number but enough to introduce them to the new

27. The 305th had especially poor gunnery according to LeMay. In order to rectify this shortcoming, his gunners spent much of their time shooting skeet, a favorite and useful pastime of the colonel's, and taking part in other exercises meant to hone their skills. After all, a good defensive formation was useless without accurate gunners. See Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 25–26; and Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 24.

28. He was called "Iron Ass LeMay" by his men while training them in Muroc. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 218.

29. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 12.

formation.³⁰ LeMay guided each B-17 into place from the top gun turret of his own B-17 flying below the group. In the evenings, among other concerns, he considered the problem posed by flak to the execution of sustained bombing runs and formulated his second innovation.

From his experience in the Utah exercise and other operations, LeMay knew that his bombardiers' accuracy was dubious at best if they embraced the tactics advocated by Armstrong, which reflected those of the Eighth Air Force at large. Ten seconds was not nearly enough time for his aircraft to complete a proper bombing run with accurate results, especially while engaging in evasive maneuvers to avoid flak bursts, which LeMay suspected were not as much of a danger as his peers suggested. Initially his skepticism proved correct, at least theoretically. Using formulas obtained in ROTC artillery classes while at Ohio State in conjunction with current intelligence that allowed him to estimate the number of antiaircraft batteries the 305th was likely to encounter, LeMay was able to calculate the number of rounds necessary for a German 88-millimeter flak gun to hit a target the size of a B-17 given the standard air speed and altitude at which it flew. His calculations placed that number at 372 rounds, on average too many to effectively hit his aircraft during the time necessary to make a sustained bombing run.³¹ Thus, on paper, it appeared that flak did not represent the danger to bombers that was commonly assumed.

LeMay's final contribution was the lead crew concept.³² According to the standard training crews received before being assigned to a group, each individual crew was responsible for executing its own bomb run. This assumed that all bomb crews had equal skill in navigation, bombing, and piloting. In practice, this was not the case. LeMay recognized this problem while reviewing the results of practice bomb runs completed by his crews. He discovered that accuracy was erratic at best except in a few cases. Consequently, the colonel decided that it was necessary to identify the best crews and train them together in a lead crew school. At these schools, the group's elite bombardiers, navigators, and pilots meticulously studied intelligence photographs and maps of certain targets before each mission in order to facilitate accurate bombing. Different crews would memorize the terrain and locations of different targets and potential targets. Fully prepared, they would fly the lead B-17 during missions against their respective assignments, and all other bombardiers in the

30. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 31.

31. Based on the intelligence reports concerning German emplacements that he was able to reference. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 238.

32. Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Dr. Edgar F. Puryear Jr., November 17, 1976, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 73.

formation would drop their bombs concurrently on the signal of the lead bombardier. LeMay's approach maximized the potential for accuracy against targets his group might be assigned. He chose his group bombardier, Lieutenant Charles Malec; group navigator, Lieutenant Ralph Nutter; and 366th Bomb Squadron commander and pilot, Major Joe Preston, to lead the school.³³

LeMay hoped that this new training regimen and his improved tactics would result in high bombing accuracy and low casualties. Before he had the opportunity to test his ideas in combat, the 305th was ordered to fly its first few missions in a diversionary role on November 17, 18, and 22.³⁴ Strategically, the 305th had arrived during the Eighth's campaign against submarine pens located in France and the lowlands in an effort to relieve the pressure created by U-boat attacks on Allied supply lines to both Great Britain and Allied forces in North Africa.³⁵ On November 23, four B-17 groups, including the 305th, and one B-24 group made a concerted attack against the dry docks at Saint-Nazaire, France.³⁶

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, GRAFTON
UNDERWOOD AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, NOVEMBER 29, 1942³⁷

Dear Helen,

I'll try to get a full scale letter off for a change. I believe the V mail is a little faster. I have been getting your mail in about 20 days. I surely am kept busy. We are operating nearly along the British line. Here, in addition to the group, I command station services, anti-aircraft, some RAF ground troops, infantry, etc. besides doing the fighting, so I don't have spare moments. If you still have the newspaper, look over the articles of the 23rd. It certainly is a relief to see how the boys turned out. No matter how hard you work there is always some doubt until the acid test comes. I feel ready for now. Chip received the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] the other day. He had a little bad luck but all the boys are OK. I've seen Langford,

33. Lieutenant Nutter made a key contribution while leading the school by developing a procedure called "automatic flight control" in which the bombardier was given control of his airplane during the final minutes of a bomb run in order to provide as stable a platform from which to bomb as possible. See Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 32.

34. LeMay, Curtis E., Colonel, Army Air Force, Officer Biography, A.G.O. Form No. 66-1, August 1943, CELMPR.

35. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 89.

36. Roger A. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary* (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1990), 91–95; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 26.

37. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

J. W. and Dell Wilson—and also Coleman.³⁸ They were over to a dance last Friday. We had quite an affair. We invited the dukes (Glouster [*sic*] & Blegue or something) and neither danced, but we did have Sir Frederick Robinson, a countess, plus local dignitaries.³⁹ We sent out and brought in some local girls plus some from the base hospital about 20 miles from here. Everyone seemed to have fun, especially the towns' people because they don't seem to have much entertainment. So we were in solid with them which was the main point of the party. All of the local people are very hospitable.

I have been hunting (English pheasants) for about three hours before the phone rang. I'll try to get more in if I can find the time.

You might start sending me a box of cigars every month or so (Dutch Master or Robert Burns). They are scarce over here. Four cigars per week if you can, or I can go to London to get them, which I haven't been able to do. I'm going to try and get down to Bomb Command and see Smitty the first stretch of good weather we have. Get yourself a good big Christmas present and one for Janie also.

Lots of Love,
Curt

The 305th's trial by fire on November 23, 1942, tested LeMay's new tactics and his group's mettle. Before the mission, LeMay explained to his squadron leaders and bombardiers what he intended to do. They would make a sustained bombing run, in formation, for minutes versus seconds in order to score direct hits and obtain good intelligence photographs of their results. Their job, he explained, was to destroy targets. Targets could not be hit utilizing commonly prescribed tactics, necessitating further missions against the same objectives, which put all the groups in danger unnecessarily. LeMay understood that he would have to spend lives in order to destroy the German war machine, but he would not waste them.⁴⁰ According to First Lieutenant William Whitson, a command pilot in the 305th's 422nd Squadron, "LeMay took it that each one

38. Doug Coleman: see letter of December 25, 1942. The editors were unable to identify Langford or J. W.

39. Probably Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, who was chief liaison officer for the British army during World War II. See Chris Cunneen, "Gloucester, First Duke of (1900–1974)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gloucester-first-duke-of-10313/text18251>, accessed February 13, 2012. The editors were unable to identify Sir Frederick Robinson or the Duke of Blegue.

40. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 231.

of those airplanes was his. He didn't want to lose any of them or any of the crews."⁴¹

LeMay admitted that his men were, naturally, anxious about these changes that flew in the face of the Eighth Air Force's established tactics. "Everybody in our Group knew what I planned to do," he recalled, "and they were really howling. Say at the worst howling; and at the best regarding me with raised eyebrows."⁴² It helped ease some of their minds when LeMay informed them he would be flying the lead plane, one of the most dangerous positions in the formation. Still, not everyone was on board, suggested Nutter. "We [the 305th] led the wing with twenty [planes], but six crews did not make it to the target," he remembered. "There were inevitably mechanical problems. This time, however, I wondered if some of the abortions from our group were for good cause, or if the crews were trying to avoid complying with LeMay's geometry lesson."⁴³

The results justified LeMay's gamble. He lost none of his Fortresses to flak and only two to German fighters. Best of all, intelligence photographs revealed that his planes had placed twice as many bombs on the port as any other bomb group on the mission.⁴⁴ Soon the entire 1st Wing led by General Laurence Kuter, the Eighth's only bomb wing, would adopt LeMay's ideas, which became the foundation for all future tactical innovations developed by the VIII Bomber Command; however, "[t]he Eighth Air Force would never find a way to bomb with maximum precision and maximum protection," explained Donald Miller.⁴⁵ Despite positive results, the combat box threw a wrench into the prewar concept of precision bombing. By releasing their payload simultaneously, groups guaranteed that they would score some hits, but the practice "led irrevocably to carpet bombing with some bombs hitting the target and the rest spilling all over the place."⁴⁶ Milton recalled, "It was not very good for bombing accuracy."⁴⁷ Thus, American bombing tactics were not on the scale or of the same purpose as the nighttime area bombing approach of the RAF chief, Marshal Arthur "Bomber" Harris, nor was it the "pickle barrel" accuracy envisioned by prewar planners.

41. William D. Whitson, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, March 13, 2006, transcript, UNTOHC, 11–12.

42. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 241.

43. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 34–35.

44. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 245.

45. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 128.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Milton, interview 1745, UNTOHC, 36–37.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, DECEMBER 7, 1942⁴⁸

Dear Helen,

Sunday morning, but work as usual for us, so will get off your customary note. I'm having my first cold since arriving but it doesn't amount to much and I have it under control. The face is also improving, but very slowly. I can't notice it myself but the Doc says it's coming along but will take a couple months or so more. Dad's letter came today. I enjoyed hearing from him. I have a dinner engagement tonight I hope with Sir Frederick Robinson, who has been very nice to us since we arrived.⁴⁹

Love,
Curt

Between December 7 and 9, the 305th moved to its permanent base at Chelveston Airfield near Cambridge and Northampton. Grafton Underwood was always designated as a temporary home for the group. Its rudimentary runways often became bogs of thick mud in England's predominantly wet, cold, rainy fall weather. "The mud was atmosphere," remembered LeMay; "you breathed it in even if you didn't want to, it was under your nails, it was in grooves of your hands. We took off in it, flew in it, often had to abort because of it."⁵⁰ Chelveston was larger and had more aircraft hangars, better maintenance facilities, and longer runways made of concrete, but "there was also more mud," noted group navigator Ralph Nutter, and the "coal in the Quonset huts was hardly sufficient to keep us warm in the bone-chilling English dampness."⁵¹

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, DECEMBER 22, 1942⁵²

Dear Helen,

I have been too busy to write anything but V mail letters. They seem

48. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180; Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 39–40.

49. Sir Frederick Robinson was probably a local English aristocrat involved in helping the 305th settle in, as often occurred when new American bomb groups arrived at their bases in England. We were not able to identify Robinson.

50. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 247.

51. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 37.

52. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

to arrive better anyway. I have received two sets of football clippings but for some reason missed the clippings of the weekend of the Ohio State/Michigan game.⁵³ I *wonder* if that is due entirely to faulty mail service? I haven't received the latest pictures you took of Janie. She is probably growing fast and changing a lot now. Don't let her forget me like Angus did.⁵⁴ I have been able to get out hunting again and enjoyed it. It's surprising how much shooting is to be found here for such a densely populated country.⁵⁵ Tom Taylor is back from the hospital.⁵⁶ It wasn't TB.⁵⁷ Tell Dad I'll find time to answer his letter shortly. I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and that Janie likes her present.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, DECEMBER 25, 1942⁵⁸

Dear Helen,

It doesn't seem much like Christmas over here with no lights or decorations. However, we did have a holiday today. [Hot food] and sleeping until noon was the best Christmas we have received. I opened the pipes today and smoked both, and they are both going to be good. I hope you and Janie had a nice Christmas and you have some pictures for me to see when I get home. As you probably can tell from the newspapers, we haven't done much lately. We have got in a few good licks and would

53. The Ohio State Buckeyes football team beat their archrival that year, 21 to 7. See *The Ohio State University 2011 Football Information Guide*, 252.

54. Angus was the LeMay family's pet Scottish terrier.

55. Rabbits and various types of fowl were in abundance near Chelveston according to logs recorded by Theodore Beckemeier in LeMay's war diary created after the general was given command of the Fourth Bomb Wing in the summer of 1943. LeMay, his staff, and prominent local figures and British military officers would often go hunting together when they had the opportunity. In addition, in 1942–1943, the VIIIth did not have ready access to a wide variety of food because of German submarine warfare, which affected the availability of foodstuffs that were imported by England. Consequently, the airmen primarily ate local fare represented prominently by mutton and potatoes, and local game provided a necessary alternative to their diet. See Beckemeier, "August 27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

56. Captain Tom H. Taylor, commanding officer of the 384th Bombardment Squadron. See C. E. LeMay, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding, "Special Orders No. 70," Headquarters, 30th Bomb Group, Army Air Base, Muroc, California, August 22, 1942, CELMPR.

57. Tuberculosis.

58. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

do more if the weather ever opens up. I lost my first ship the other day.⁵⁹ Prentice is in [MIA].⁶⁰ His ship caught fire due to mechanical failure. [We weren't] sure because we hadn't recorded any anti-aircraft fire to amount to anything, and the fighters had not gotten to us yet. Two F.W. 190s⁶¹ attacked him after he left the formation. They shot one down and drove the other away but couldn't get the fire out and the ship exploded. [Prentice and] about half the crew jumped and will probably remain P.O.W.s up [until] after the war. Chip and Doug Coleman came over for the afternoon. They are only about five miles. . . .

Writing on the other side of the page strains my letter writing [illegible], so I'll try and finish this morning. Chelveston [illegible] had a party for about 200 4 and 15 year old war orphans.⁶² [illegible] for the combined areas. We had some entertainment perform for them. They certainly had a tough time. They can sing "Deep in the Heart of Texas" as good as any [Texan] when they learned the words. I don't know, I couldn't help but think of Janie and hope she never has to go to war at home on the range.

The face is very slow in improving. It doesn't [illegible] but it probably will be a long time before full control is back.

I'm about written out so will get this in the mail.

Love,

Curt

I'm going to cable some money January 1st when you get it cable me on one of the [illegible] and [illegible] mail letters in it.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, DECEMBER 29, 1942⁶³

Dear Helen,

I have been all day getting started on this letter. Will try and finish it

59. Officially, LeMay lost his first two bombers during the Saint-Nazaire raid on November 23. It is probable that Second Lieutenant Prentice's aircraft was one of the two lost as a result of German fighter attacks.

60. Second Lieutenant William A. Prentice, 422nd Bomb Squadron. See LeMay, "Special Orders No. 70," CELMPR.

61. Focke-Wulf 190s. Along with the Messerschmitt 109, the FW-190 was the workhorse fighter of the Luftwaffe and an effective and fierce opponent for the Allied pilots who faced it.

62. Presumably, LeMay meant that the party was for war orphans between the ages of four and fifteen.

63. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179–180.

during a lull. Your Christmas cable came in today. I hope delivery on mine was quicker. Just read in the newspaper where Thayer Olds was decorated by the French in North Africa.⁶⁴

The weather still continues to be bad which gave us rest on Christmas. We had an excellent dinner—turkey and most of the fixings. It has been taking 20 to 26 days for your letters to arrive which isn't so bad considering conditions. Just so they keep coming we will be happy. Don't forget to send the wire and V letter when I cable money.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 3, 1943⁶⁵

Dear Helen,

While I have a few moments to spare I'll try and get another letter off. We spent a very quiet holiday with the exception of a little raid between Christmas and New Year's. I lost Lt. Love.⁶⁶ I don't know whether you remember him or not. Also one of Chip's boys who was flying in my formation. However, we did some pretty good shooting of our own and I'm recommending a bucket full of medals to pass out to the boys. That's the first raid I've been on that I haven't written you a letter just before leaving and we ran into a hornet's nest, so I guess I had better not forget any more.

Sault had a letter from Kitty.⁶⁷ She had a narrow escape. The gas stove blew out and Solo woke her up just in time for her to get outside before collapsing.⁶⁸

I hope you can get retread for the car. I certainly wish I had it over here. I'm riding around in an English job—a Woolsley probably the

64. Colonel Thayer S. Olds was the commanding officer of the 14th Fighter Group, which was operating in North Africa with the Twelfth Air Force at this time. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Second Lieutenant Floyd E. Love, 366th Bomb Squadron. See LeMay, "Special Orders No. 70," CELMPR.

67. Captain William E. Sault was the executive officer of the 366th Bomb Squadron. Kitty was his wife. See LeMay, "Special Orders No. 70," CELMPR.

68. Solo was probably the Sault's family pet.

world's worst automobile.⁶⁹ I'm trying to get a Ford. Of course, some people don't like them, but they are spoiled. Compared to these English cars, they are the last word in automobiles.

I have to go back to work, so will get this in the mail.

Love,
Curt

Lieutenant Floyd E. Love was lost above the skies of Saint-Nazaire on this date. He was the 305th's first confirmed fatality. They had also lost a man on December 30.⁷⁰ Other airmen had been wounded by flak or cannon and machine gun fire from German fighters during missions. Several bombers were shot down by the Luftwaffe, but their crews were considered Missing in Action (MIA).

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 10, 1943⁷¹

Dear Helen,

I just received your letter complaining about the mail situation. I expect most of it is due to me not writing instead of poor mail service. I'll try to do better also send a cable each week. I have received notes from Rothrock and C. J. Cochrane. They are over here now also—also Jack Roberts.⁷² I haven't used my sleeping bag yet. I'm living in a brick building with a small coal stove in the room, but so far, I have been warm enough without it. The Michigan–Ohio State clippings finally came. I thought for awhile you had

69. Wolseley Motors (misspelled by LeMay) was a popular British automobile manufacturer founded in 1901 by Herbert Austin, an Englishman who managed the Wolseley Sheep Sheering Company from which he derived his auto company's name.

70. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 31.

71. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

72. Colonel Jack Roberts, commanding officer of the 361st Bombardment Squadron, originally arrived in Great Britain on November 10, 1942, to conduct antisubmarine patrols and escort convoys close to Great Britain and the Mediterranean. On November 23, the squadron was redesignated as the 1st Antisubmarine Squadron and was combined with the 2nd Antisubmarine Squadron to form the 480th Antisubmarine Group under the command of Colonel Roberts. See Maurer Maurer, ed., *Combat Squadrons of the Air Force: World War II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, Air University, 1969), 3; and Arthur B. Ferguson, "The Antisubmarine Command," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 382.

decided to ignore the game, but it was just the mail service. You mailed it on November 22 and I received it on the 8th of January. As soon as I can get to town, I'll cable you some money. Let me know when it arrives.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 13, 1943⁷³

Dear Helen,

Good weather has returned. We had some snow and a cold snap, but it seems like Spring this morning. Apparently, we are going to have a very mild winter over here which is alright with us, of course. You needn't worry about the housing. It's very adequate. I'm in a brick building and the Nissen huts are well built.⁷⁴ I will give you a description of them later. The magazines arrived yesterday. I'm very glad to get them. That number should last me six months unless I get more time for reading them than I have had in the past.

Love,
Curt

LeMay's strong tactical abilities and positive results brought him encouraging professional recognition from his superiors. General Haywood Hansell, the 1st Bomb Wing's commanding officer, was eager to witness LeMay's innovations firsthand and joined the colonel's crew during the wing's January 13 raid against armament plants located near the French city of Lille. Hansell flew as LeMay's copilot in the wing's lead bomber and experienced the blanket of flak and ferocity of enemy fighters that met the formation of sixty B-17s.⁷⁵ As a result of the mission, one B-17 was lost and ten more were damaged.⁷⁶ Hansell was impressed with the results of both the bomb run and the efficacy of LeMay's box formation. After surviving the aerial melee, he began instituting the colonel's ideas in every one of the Eighth's groups.

73. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

74. Nissen huts were prefabricated metal buildings invented during World War I and used primarily as cheap, portable housing for troops throughout World War II. They are very similar in design and construction to Quonset huts.

75. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 45–46.

76. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 33.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 17, 1943⁷⁷

Dear Helen,

I'll get off another note during a lull this morning. The pictures you sent of Janie on the pony finally arrived some six weeks after they were mailed. They must have come by rowboat. I hope you have received the money I wired by this time. Hereafter, I'll have to send it by money order. New regulations. Let me know by V mail and wire when it arrives. There isn't much to spend money for over here. In fact, my net resources are only \$20 less than when I arrived. Of course, a few poker games have helped out a little. Send me over your measurements and I'll send you a kilt or pair of bolts or whatever you call them to match Janie's. *Start sending me a pound of Half & Half each month.*⁷⁸

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 20, 1943⁷⁹

Dear Helen,

We have a nice rainy morning. A good time for me to get off a letter. I started this this morning but Harry Armstrong and Colonel Grow came in, then some Belgian officer, then Bernie Lay, so most of the day is gone.⁸⁰

77. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

78. Half and Half was an inexpensive tobacco used for both cigarette and pipe smoking.

79. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

80. Colonel Malcolm C. Grow was the Eighth Air Force's chief flight surgeon, and Lieutenant Colonel Harry G. Armstrong was the Eighth's assistant chief flight surgeon. They were both instrumental in advancing the field of aviation medicine, which they had pioneered in 1934 when they established the Aero Medical Research Laboratory at Wright Field. When they arrived in England, they set up their operation called the Central Medical Establishment (CME) near High Wycombe. Both doctors led the effort to develop equipment and perfect training in order to prevent casualties that occurred as a result of the unique conditions of flying at high altitudes with the threat of frostbite and anoxia. In addition, Lieutenant Colonel Armstrong established a psychiatric unit for the Eighth, which considered the psychological effect of air combat on crews and derived treatment options for affected fliers.

Major Beirne Lay Jr. was one of the first officers General Eaker picked to join his staff. He served as Eighth Air Force historian and commanding officer of the Eighth's film unit. Major Lay was a famous writer and air force reserve officer before the outbreak of hostilities. He returned to duty after Pearl Harbor and played a key role in preserving the history of the Eighth Air Force

One good point about this job is lack of boredom. There is something going on all the time. My main trouble is trying to find a little time to sleep. Your mail has been a little slow lately, but I suppose your trips to N.Y. account for it. Two letters from you just came in, so I'll stop again and read them. One dated December 27 and one dated January 10. Sorry you went a month without mail. V mail is most reliable. If one copy doesn't get through, they send another. I suppose Janie will have completely forgotten me by the time I get home. But don't you start forgetting or I'll have to refresh your memory by stopping your allotment or something.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY, 1943⁸¹

Dear Helen,

These British stoves are nothing to brag about, so I have set up one of our tent stoves in my bedroom. It works fine. Of course, we are rationed on coal, but no one has frozen to death yet.

How is Jack getting along? Is he out of the hospital yet?

I think I told you that I saw Walter Reuter, the dentist that used to be at Langley?⁸² He is the Eighth Air Force dental officer. Also Colonel Grow is Eighth Air Force surgeon and Harry Armstrong is there with him. They were all in the other day. Bernie Lay was in also. He is with the bomber

through the creation of documentary films and magazine and newspaper articles concerning the activities of the unit. Lay also served as a combat pilot and group commander (490th Bomb Group, February 1944). After the war he collaborated with fellow Eighth veteran Sy Bartlett to write the screenplay for the famous film *Twelve O'Clock High*, based on their novel of the same title, which followed the activities of the airmen of a fictional bomb group in the Eighth Air Force (based on the 306th Bomb Group) during the strategic bombing campaign against Germany. The film was released in 1949, and Lay continued to write screenplays for Hollywood for the rest of his life. For Grow and Armstrong, see Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 397; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 112–113. Information on Beirne Lay Jr. was retrieved from Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 91–95; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 20.

81. The original letter was not marked with a specific day or month. It simply stated "England, 1943," but its contents coincide with the context clues in the January 20 letter. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that LeMay was at Chelveston at this time and that this specific letter should reside among the other January 1943 letters. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

82. Langley Field, Virginia.

command.

I'm all written out, so will get this in the mail.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 27, 1943⁸³

Dear Helen,

Just a note before going to work. I haven't received a letter from you for some time now. I imagine you are too busy in New York! I just had a touch of the flu so I stayed in bed all day, which seemed to fix me up alright. I received your wire that you received the money. *How much!?* Know any I send in the future will have to come by postal money order so we will have to keep a record of it in case it doesn't get there. I haven't heard anything from Leonard since he left England. How is Jack?⁸⁴ Still in the hospital or back to duty? Get [illegible] on the [illegible] to make up for New York.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, JANUARY 30, 1943⁸⁵

Dear Helen,

I'm sorry if you aren't satisfied with the letters I write. Don't look for any improvement [as] they will probably get worse, if anything. I suppose

83. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

84. Jack Chandler, Helen's brother-in-law and Janie's uncle. At this point and throughout the remainder of the letters, General LeMay refers to Jack many times concerning his well-being and professional advancement in the military. The editors believe that this is Jack Chandler based on the following evidence. First, while discussing World War II, Janie notes that "Jack, my uncle, was in the military," in an oral history interview she did with Barbara W. Sommers. Second, Helen's sister, Faith Chandler, is referred to as a surviving Maitland family member in her father's obituary. In the March 15, 1945, entry in General LeMay's war diary, his aide records that a "Lt. Chandler" who was the general's brother-in-law came by their headquarters for dinner. Given this evidence, it is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the "Jack" mentioned by Janie as her uncle may be the same Jack discussed by Helen and General LeMay in his letters. See JLLOHI, Beckemeier, "March 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary; and "Jesse Stanhope Maitland," *Cleveland Press*, July 6, 1955.

85. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

you have seen the newspapers and found out we have made our first raid on Germany.⁸⁶ The field was overrun with newspaper men and Paramount men. So you can go and see me in the movies if the editors don't cut it out. The raid wasn't much. We swapped a little lead and shot down a few as well; however, it is a relief to drop bombs on the square German towns instead of the French. While at bomber command, I saw Goldenberg.⁸⁷ He is over with [illegible]. [I] also saw [illegible]. He is up in the 3rd Wing. [I] Talked to Smitty on the telephone. Those friends of his I met might have been interesting to him, but not to me.

Love,
Curt

On January 27, American bombers, including the 305th Bomb Group, made their first attack on Germany proper, targeting the port of Wilhelmshaven. Three days earlier, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Roosevelt, and representatives from other Allied nations met in Casablanca, Morocco, to formulate their strategy to win the war in Europe. In preparation for the eventual invasion of northern Europe, the Allies announced plans for a combined bomber offensive. The RAF would continue their nighttime area bombing, and the U.S. Army Air Forces would continue their daylight raids. Together they intended to destroy the Luftwaffe in the air and on the ground to achieve Allied air superiority over the skies of Europe, which was critical for a successful invasion.⁸⁸ Targets would also include industrial manufacturing plants, fuel depots and refineries, and transportation facilities that supported or contributed to the existence of the German Air Force; however, the Eighth was almost relegated to a subordinate role in support of British operations, potentially dooming the AAF's future as an independent service and certainly jeopardizing the continuance of daylight precision bombing.

Following the lackluster campaigns of the fall of 1942, the British, FDR, army chief General George C. Marshall, and navy chief Admiral Ernest King pressured General Arnold to order the Eighth to abandon daylight precision bombing raids and join the British in their nightly area bombing raids. Arnold and other upper-echelon air force officers, including Eaker, believed that they needed to demonstrate the ability of four-engine bombers to hit specific in-

86. The Ohio State University newspaper, the *Ohio State Lantern*, did a special article on the raid against Wilhelmshaven and LeMay's leadership role on January 28, 1943.

87. Major Carl T. Goldenberg.

88. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 129.

dustrial and military targets without the accompaniment of long-range escort fighters.⁸⁹ While evaluating potential four-engine bombers during the mid-1930s, General Andrews, Arnold, Eaker, and others had argued in favor of the B-17 because of this feature, and they did not want to be proven wrong.⁹⁰ In addition, they had given up on the design for the best American long-range fighter, the P-51, in favor of the P-47 Thunderbolt. On moral grounds, U.S. Air Force officers, especially General Hansell, did not believe in area bombing because it unnecessarily killed civilians, and terror bombing campaigns had not proven effective in breaking the will of the enemy, which was their purpose.⁹¹ Conversely, given an adequate bomber force, daylight precision bombing potentially afforded desired results without excessive civilian casualties. Ultimately, Arnold, Eaker, Hansell, and other upper-echelon AAF officers believed that the success of strategic bombing would ensure the service's rise to independence after the war.

Before the Casablanca Conference took place, Arnold knew which way the wind was blowing. So, in order to continue on their preferred path, he ordered Eaker to prepare a brief on the benefits of daylight precision bombing and present it to Churchill, one of the primary opponents of the strategy.⁹² Highly disappointed with the American bomber force's poor performance, the prime

89. Ferguson, "The Casablanca Directive," 295–297.

90. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 55–56, 126, 131. It must be pointed out that there was some controversy over this point. Certainly, combat commanders such as LeMay recognized early on the value of long-range fighter escorts. For LeMay, it was a supply problem. "All of the historians and writers now point out the fact it was a big surprise to us when we got over to Europe in the war and found that the bombers had to have fighter escort," he stated in a 1988 interview. "It was no surprise; we always expected to have fighter escorts. The only trouble was, we didn't have any fighters, and we had long since abolished the attack airplane, so we didn't have any of them either." Although he admitted that unescorted bombing could be done, "[s]peaking generally," he said, "I don't think many ever believed that was the way to do it. . . . [Y]ou paid a price for it." This explains why fighter escort production was ramped up from 1943 onward, but it would be difficult to argue that heavy bomber production was not always the priority, especially before 1943, which demonstrates the bomber mindset of air corps and air force leaders before and throughout the war. For quotations, see Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 22–23.

91. The Eighth Air Force was, in effect, practicing area bombing due to the formation requirements of the combat box and lead crew concepts, both of which General Hansell began implementing universally following the January 13 mission against Lille. The area affected by falling bombs was approximately 2,500 square feet, roughly the width of a combat box. Hansell was a planner and not a tactician, as he himself admitted, but he recognized that LeMay's ideas were necessary to maximize the survivability of his units despite the compromise in accuracy. The Eighth still operated according to the "precision" bombing doctrine, which Hansell was instrumental in developing, by targeting specific military, transportation, or industrial targets and attempting to limit collateral damage to other structures and the killing of noncombatants. See Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 126–127.

92. Ibid., 130.

minister was especially vexed with the Eighth's failure to plan missions against targets in the German Fatherland itself. "Not a single bomb had been dropped on Germany," he argued.⁹³ In response to the English Bulldog's opposition, Eaker "stated the case for the daylight Fortress bomber with forceful earnestness."⁹⁴ The general argued that the Eighth's daylight raids would subject the German people to round-the-clock bombing, giving them no rest and working against their morale. If the Eighth joined the RAF at night, said Eaker, it would be necessary to refit their bombers and retrain their crews, a process that would take months. The "skill and tenacity" with which Eaker reasoned convinced Churchill to drop his opposition to the daylight raids, although the prime minister placed a condition on his acquiescence: American bombers must begin attacking targets within Germany proper immediately.⁹⁵

The Eighth Air Force was in no condition to fulfill these expectations. It was undermanned and still working out the kinks in formation flying and tactics. With the demands of other theaters, the crews and bombers that trickled into England could, at best, replace those that had been lost. Part of this problem was due to Arnold's and others' overestimation of the Fortress's ability to protect itself against German fighters. American fighters that could escort bombers all the way to their target and back would be crucial to the success and survival of the Eighth Air Force. Unfortunately, it would take more than a year to convince their leaders of this, and it was not until 1944 when large groups of P-51s and modified P-38s and P-47s were available to escort bombers in force.

The Eighth's first mission against Germany caught the enemy by surprise. The 305th made a relatively easy bomb run, losing only two aircraft to German fighters and none to flak. The docks at Wilhelmshaven received some damage, but Hitler's pride took the larger hit. He was enraged that American bombers would attack Germany proper and as a result funneled fighters from the Eastern Front back home to teach the Americans a lesson. The shift was significant. According to historian Gerhard Weinberg, "In August 1942, 38 percent of Germany's fighters were on the Western Front and 43 percent in the East; by April of 1943, 45 percent were in the West and 28 percent were in the East."⁹⁶ As losses escalated in the winter and spring of 1943, the Eighth's morale fell to an all-time low.

93. Winston S. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, vol. 2 of *The Second World War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 609.

94. *Ibid.*, 608.

95. *Ibid.*, 609.

96. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 420.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 1, 1943⁹⁷

Dear Helen,

It's my turn to complain about the mail. It's been so long since I received a letter, I can't remember the date.

I'm enclosing some newspaper clippings from *Stars and Stripes*⁹⁸ about our activities. Tribbitt is in Preston's squadron.⁹⁹

At a meeting at Bomber Command the other day, General Eaker gave us an outline of activities in North Africa. He said that Thayer Olds and his group had done outstanding work and that he was the outstanding combat leader developed in that theatre.¹⁰⁰ He also stated that in this theatre, the 305th [Bomb] Group was outstanding. Also said that Chip's outfit was lousy. I imagine that was why he was relieved from command.¹⁰¹

The wing got a citation for destroying one of the targets we had

97. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

98. *Stars and Stripes* is an independent newspaper authorized by the Department of Defense and created to provide news and information to the U.S. military community and its affiliates. During World War II, it was the main source of written news for American servicemen within whichever theater they were operating. Eighth Air Force personnel had access to the European edition based in London. The clipping LeMay referred to in his February 4 letter was taken from the January 2 edition of the *Stars and Stripes* with the featured headline "U.S. Bombers Blast German Naval Base," which documented the Eighth's raid against Wilhelmshaven. The paper also included an article about the raid written by Andy Rooney titled "Germany Raid 'Hell of a Lot More Satisfying': Crews of Wilhelmshaven Attack Tell of Green Nazi Pilots." See Charles F. Kiley, "Attack in Daylight First American Blow on Germany Proper: Flying Fortresses Smash Wilhelmshaven, Surprise Nazi Warships; Liberators Hit Targets in Northwest"; and Andy Rooney, "Germany Raid 'Hell of a Lot More Satisfying': Crews of Wilhelmshaven Attack Tell of Green Nazi Pilots," *Stars and Stripes*, January 28, 1943, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1506, 138 rolls, Publications of the U.S. Government, Record Group 287, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter cited as NARA.

99. First Lieutenant Everett E. Tribbett (LeMay misspells his name), 366th Bomb Squadron. See LeMay, "Special Orders No. 70," CELMPR.

100. Colonel Thayer Olds was the commanding officer of the 14th Fighter Group, Twelfth Air Force during this period.

101. On January 1, 1943, General Eaker relieved Colonel Overacker of his command of the 306th Bomb Group. The 306th had, by far, the most casualties and worst performance record of all the Eighth's bomb groups. Reportedly, Overacker's command was lax, and discipline among his men was absent. Eaker replaced him with the VIII Bomber Command's operations officer, Colonel Frank Armstrong, the same Armstrong whom LeMay encountered in Prestwick, Scotland, in November 1942. Armstrong went on to turn the 306th into one of the finest bomb groups in the Eighth. The novel *Twelve O'Clock High*, written by Eighth veterans Beirne Lay and Sy Bartlett, was based on the incident and the rise of Colonel Armstrong. See Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 131; and Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 52.

assigned a while back.¹⁰² It was my bombs that did it. So I'm feeling very good these days. I hope it lasts.

I had a letter from Leonard written December 23. He doesn't like Africa either. He didn't have much to say except to put his initials on one of our bombs.

I haven't seen Smitty lately. He has promised to come up and spend the night, but I suppose he is too busy to get away.

I don't suppose you have heard from Fran? I wonder how Zip likes Australia?¹⁰³ The Air Force seems to be going strong down there. I wish we had some good weather like they have.

I hear rumor that Alkire¹⁰⁴ is coming over with a group; however, nothing is definite.

I have two Red Cross gals on the post now in addition to the two WAAFs.¹⁰⁵ They also would stop a clock at 40 paces.

I'll mail you some more money as soon as I can get to the post office. It will have to be \$100 money orders this time. Wire me when it arrives.

Love,
Curt

*On Wednesday, December 30, 1942, LeMay's 305th Bomb Group raided the Lorient U-boat yards along with the 91st, 303rd, and 306th Groups.*¹⁰⁶ Forty

102. The only unit citation officially recognized for the 1st Bomb Wing was awarded for its action during the January 11, 1944, raid against aircraft factories in the German cities of Oschersleben and Halberstadt. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 373–374.

103. Colonel Ralph E. "Zipper" Koon, the same "Zip" who served with LeMay in the 34th Bomb Group, commanded the 90th Bomb Group, a unit composed of B-24s, which operated in the southwestern Pacific as part of the Fifth Air Force. The unit was based in Iron Range, Australia, at this time. Fran, as mentioned in chapter 3, was his wife. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 155–156.

104. Colonel Darr H. Alkire was commanding officer of the 100th Bomb Group, which he brought over to England in May 1943 when the group joined the Eighth Air Force. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 171.

105. WAAF is the acronym for Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Created on June 28, 1939, by the British Air Ministry, the WAAF was the Royal Air Force's female contingent born out of an elder organization, the Women's Royal Air Force, which had been established commensurately with the RAF in April 1918. The WAAF was responsible for carrying out certain noncombat duties with the aim of enabling more men to assume combat roles. WAAFs, as they were known, served as orderlies, truck drivers, mess officers, cooks, and clerks, and maintained barrage balloons among other duties. See Beryl Escott, *The WAAF: A History of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force*, rev. ed. (2003; reprint., Oxford: Shire Publications, 2007), 4–5.

106. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 31.

of the seventy-seven B-17s dispatched made it to the target, and of these three were lost.¹⁰⁷ During the raid, several incidents occurred that made it to the pages of *Stars and Stripes* as noted by LeMay in the above letter. The main story followed an engineer, Technical Sergeant Clarence V. King, and an observer, Captain Alexander Bright, who flew their B-17 back to England after their pilot and copilot were injured by flak. The article highlighted other notable achievements during the raid including the cool response of one of LeMay's pilots, Captain Everett E. Tribbett, who managed to land his B-17 safely at Chelveston after it was badly damaged during its bombing run. LeMay's contributions to the Eighth Air Force were also briefly mentioned. "Colonel Curtis E. LeMay, commander of an Eighth Air Force Group, accompanied his men in the lead ship of his formation," it reported. "Colonel LeMay, whose theories on high and low altitude bombing are widely recognized, took his station in the top turret behind a .50 caliber machine-gun, a position usually occupied by a staff sergeant. Colonel LeMay, a veteran pilot, and experienced navigator, chose the top turret spot because of the advantage of visibility from that position, not only of the formation but of enemy aircraft and of the target."¹⁰⁸ In the bigger picture, from February to June 1943 the Eighth Air Force would continue to concentrate their attacks on German submarine pens and the infrastructure involved in producing and supporting their assault on Allied shipping, which was having a significant effect on the buildup of Allied supplies and equipment in Britain as well as the Allied efforts in North Africa.¹⁰⁹ The Eighth continued to take losses without the benefit of increased numbers because of attrition versus a much increased number of Luftwaffe fighters, as well as the enormous demand upon American industrial output of new bombers, which itself had not fully mobilized as of yet. This is to say nothing of the efforts of Second Air Force to train new crews, many of which became replacements for casualties instead of forming new units because of the attrition of bomber crews and time necessary to properly train new fliers. Until March, the Eighth could not even field more than a hundred bombers on any single mission.¹¹⁰

107. Ibid.

108. "Pilots Wounded, Fort Is Flown Home by Sergeant, Ex-Broker," *Stars and Stripes*, London Edition, January 1, 1943.

109. Arthur B. Ferguson, "The War against the Sub Pens," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 241.

110. Arthur B. Ferguson, "Over Germany," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 8, 1943¹¹¹

Dear Helen,

Today is Janie's birthday and I suppose she is having a party about this time. I hope she has a good time and the house isn't completely wrecked. I hope you enjoyed your trip to NY although I don't see how you could get tired sleeping until 9:30. Most nights, I get my sleep in four hour stretches or less and, then the telephone usually rings once or twice. I received the wire saying you had received the money I sent. In the next V mail letter, let me know how much it was, so I can tell how much the customs, bank club managers, etc. get before it arrived. It should have been \$1,000 and I just wired \$600 more today. Let me know when it arrives. Now that you are all *rested* from your trip, you might get down to some serious letter writing.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 18, 1943¹¹²

Dear Helen,

It has been so long since I have heard from you I'm thinking of stopping the allotment. I suppose the trip interrupts your writing schedule. There isn't much happening over here we can write about. I have only been away four months now, but it seems like a year. Anyway, long enough to wish I were home again. I finally caught the flu that everyone gets over here, but I am up again now although I still have a sore throat. Tell Janie we had another party for some boys and girls from a nearby town. You still haven't mentioned how Jack is getting along or if he is still in the hospital? I had a letter from home and Lloyd is now on his way overseas. Write and tell me about your trip.

Love,
Curt

Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 309.

111. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

112. *Ibid.*

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 20, 1943¹¹³

Dear Helen,

We haven't received much mail lately, but today two two and one-half ton truck loads came in; however, my share was only three letters. You should be able to do better than that. You probably have seen in the papers that General Andrews is now over here.¹¹⁴ He has visited my field. Rabbit is still in Panama.¹¹⁵ Chip and Robinson have left for home.¹¹⁶ They will spend some time on the west coast and then return here, I think. Bradley is over here now although I haven't been able to see him.¹¹⁷ I don't know how long he will stay. I saw Doug Coleman yesterday.¹¹⁸ He said Mrs. C had an apartment in N.Y. and hoped you got together while you were there.¹¹⁹ Both sets of pictures you sent of Janie came through. She is growing fast. I probably won't know her when I get home.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 22, 1943¹²⁰

Dear Helen,

I'll try and get off another letter although it is hard to find anything to write about because nothing much happens around here that isn't official business. I have mailed in a separate letter some newspaper clippings from the *Stars and Stripes* that pertains to the 305th. Something must have happened on that radio broadcast because I was never scheduled to make

113. Ibid.

114. Following the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews replaced Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower as commander of U.S. Military Forces in Europe. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 361–362.

115. The editors were unable to identify "Rabbit."

116. Colonel Charles "Chip" Overacker, who had been relieved from command of the 306th Bomb Group by Eaker. The editors were unable to identify Robinson.

117. Major General Follett Bradley was the air inspector for the U.S. Army Air Forces at this time. His duties included inspecting combat units overseas, which is why he was working in England. Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 369.

118. The editors were unable to identify Doug Coleman.

119. Mrs. Elinor Coleman. See letter of May 23, 1943.

120. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

one. However, they did take some newsreels out here after the first raid on Germany. They were shown in England, but I don't know whether they reached the United States or not.

I haven't received the cigars or tobacco yet and think it must be some tie up because we think that nothing can be sent that can be obtained over here and then it is necessary to get the approval of your immediate C.O. However, if you can get away with it, send over some and if the C.O. won't accept it, Dad can smoke it. I'm surprised the Bartons are expecting.¹²¹ It looked as though Joe must have weakened.

I saw Melcher yesterday who used to be in the 34th.¹²² He is in Ford Lauer's outfit who probably will arrive soon.¹²³ I don't know who has some of the other outfits. I hope some people I know. It's rather lonesome over here, but you can't fight at home or at least I hope we never have to. I guess we will have to hold up until we lick them before coming home. We are having a dance at the field on the 25th. It's getting to be a problem getting enough girls. We have been hauling them in G.I. trucks from nearby towns but are having to cut trips for recruitment purposes, so we may have to stop altogether or have a dance in town.

It's lunch time, so will get this in the mail.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 24, 1943¹²⁴

Dear Janie,

Your letter came today, so I will answer it right away. I'm glad you enjoyed your birthday party. I wish I had been there to eat a piece of your cake. I hope you received a lot of birthday presents.

Tell Mommie to buy you a new hat to wear with your new coat. When your pictures are finished, mail one to me. Be a good girl and don't start

121. The editors were unable to identify the Bartons.

122. On January 20, 1941, John N. Melcher was a second lieutenant with the 7th Bomb Squadron, 34th Bomb Group. See Geary, "Special Orders No. 17," CELMPR.

123. Colonel Ford J. Lauer commanded 2nd Bomb Group, which was originally scheduled to join the Eighth Air Force but was sent, instead, to the Twelfth Air Force in North Africa in March. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 25–27.

124. *Ibid.*, 177–179.

any more fires in the dining room. I'll try and come home as soon as I finish work.

Love,
Daddy

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MARCH 2, 1943¹²⁵

Dear Helen,

It seems quite a while since I've had any mail, but after checking, it is only last week. For some reason or other, it always seems a long time between letters from home. I suppose it's because we are all somewhat homesick. By the time you get this, Spring should be on the way at home. I imagine you will be glad when you can turn Janie and the dogs out in the backyard and forget about them. I still haven't heard from the last money I sent you, but it should be in the next mail. I'll wait until April 1st to send any more. I hope the two packages you mailed arrive, but doubt if they do. They will probably be returned to you. Glad to hear the news about the promotions. Let me know who they are as we don't receive that news over here.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MARCH 6, 1943¹²⁶

Dear Helen,

I just received a letter from you dated November 9th showing a slight delay somewhere. I have stopped using the cables. They don't seem to get there any better than the V mail.

I don't know about the polo coat. Maybe I can find one in London if I can find the coupons and get to London. I have only been in twice since we arrived.

I'm afraid leave is out of the question. We have something else to do with transportation besides take people back and forth to the states on

¹²⁵. Ibid.

¹²⁶. Ibid.

leave. There's nothing I would like better than to see you, but it is simply out of the question. I wish I could get a rest. I have slowed down a lot since I had the flu.

Apparently, we are doing alright financially. I have \$40 more than I came over here with and I have sent you all my pay plus \$250 uniform allowance. I could do better if I could find more time to play poker, but I can't so you will have to be satisfied with just the *pay*! Remember the income tax that is due three months after I get back. It will probably amount to no small sum. Have you heard anything from Virginia about Tony lately? The only news we get over here are occasional items in the *Stars and Stripes*. I saw where McGuire has transferred from Cairo to another theatre.¹²⁷ Didn't say where. Keep me posted on the new generals. I'm interested.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MARCH 12, 1943¹²⁸

Dear Helen,

Two V mail letters came in yesterday; one dated February 18th and one dated February 21st, so the mail is back on schedule—about 20 days—although we have received it in seven. I suppose Faith is back by this time and you have successfully withstood the siege of the three wild Indians.¹²⁹ I hope you are right about me being home soon, but I'm afraid you aren't. I don't see much chance of getting home before the war is over. But the Air Corps is still as uncertain as it ever was. I may be on the way back next week.

Had a letter from home also. They are in Ohio and my mother seems to be quite happy there close to my aunt, etc. My face is much better. I would say about 75 percent well. You can hardly notice it and I can smoke a cigar a lot better. Write as often as you can.

Love,
Curt

127. Colonel George F. McGuire commanded the 376th Bomb Group in North Africa from November 1942 until February 1943. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 264–265.

128. *Ibid.*, 177–179.

129. Faith Chandler, Helen's sister.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MARCH 16, 1943¹³⁰

Dear Helen,

You are too late on the tobacco. The only articles that can be shipped are those that are not available here and tobacco is, but it isn't Half & Half, but I'll have to struggle along without it. You waited too long before starting. The box of cigars came, but the tobacco hasn't. I had a letter from Mrs. Kinsey asking about Kinsey. He was with Davidson. . . . We are in a [better] league over here . . . a little different than fighting Japan . . . in between the quantity and quality . . . so you have to expect losses . . . leave he must be planning to return with an official mission. I talked to him on the . . . and he promised to come up . . . up yet.

. . . the newspaper clippings of . . . you see in the paper.¹³¹ I hear Ford Lauer and his outfit are going to Africa.

I think the war bonds are as good as any way to save our cash. I'll send you some more money about April 1st I imagine.

The pictures haven't arrived yet. I'm looking forward to seeing them. I'll bet Janie has grown a lot. It has only been five months since I left, but it certainly seems longer to me.

I don't think you have to worry about the clothes rationing. You could stop buying now and have enough to last for two wars. The food problem, of course, will never get as bad as it is over here. I had an egg the other day for the second time since we arrived. I certainly would enjoy a Sunday morning with nothing to do but sleep, eat bacon and eggs and read the funny papers.

I certainly am going to have a lot of things to appreciate when I get home.

I'm all written out, so will get this in the mail.

Love,
Curt

130. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

131. A substantial portion of this letter is missing starting after "Davidson" and ending at "I hear Ford . . ." It appears there was a piece of paper put over half of the text in the abovementioned portion on the original letter. The ellipses mark the missing portions.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MARCH 23, 1943¹³²

Dear Janie,

I will try and answer your letter while I have time. I hope you are still going to school and behaving properly. We have a large field of sheep near our quarters and last week they all had baby lambs. Most of them are white, but there are a few black ones too.

Tell Mommie that I am going to send some cloth to make you and her a polo coat. Have Grandma hold your hand so you can write me another letter.

Love,
Daddy

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MARCH 24, 1943¹³³

Dear Helen,

I have just written Janie a V mail letter so [I] will get a longer one off to you. I think I have located some camel hair cloth. The tailor is quite sure he can get some on his next month's ration allowance. If he does, I'll get enough for both you and Janie, if possible.

One of the men just brought in a clipping from the Spokane newspaper.¹³⁴ General Olds is being relieved from the Second Air Force and sent to a hospital in Miami. I guess his arthritis finally got him down.¹³⁵

Gladwin Hill is an A.P. representative.¹³⁶ He has been living here on

132. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

133. Ibid.

134. *The Spokesman-Review*.

135. Major General Robert Olds was commander of the Second Air Force at this time, a training command based at Davis-Monthan Field in Arizona. Olds had suffered a heart attack the previous spring, and his health began to fail him again in early 1943, compelling him to give up his command on February 25, 1943, and seek medical care. While hospitalized, he was diagnosed with pericardial disease and suffered a second heart attack followed by a bout of pneumonia in March 1943. He died from complications of these two diseases on April 28 of the same year. See Zamzow, "Ambassador of American Airpower," 85–86.

136. Gladwin Hill was part of a group of Associated Press writers who called themselves "*The Writing 69th*"; they were assigned to report on the operations of the Eighth Air Force. The group included eight AP writers: Homer Bigart, Walter Cronkite, Gladwin Hill, Paul Manning, Robert

the field with us for some time. We all like him and he seems to be a good newspaper man.

The rationing must be getting to be really strict if Janie has to eat Angus' dog food.

All the group C.O.s are being curtailed in their flying, so I won't be able to go on as many as I used to. Probably just once a month or so to keep abreast of what's going on. It's rather hard staying home and watching the rest of the boys go out, but I can't do anything about it. It looks like the boys in North Africa have finally started. I haven't heard from Leonard since Christmas. I suppose he is too busy to write much.

I just ordered a new uniform; something for Easter, you know. I hope the rationing doesn't handicap your Easter wardrobe too much. You are already the best dressed girl I know of, so you can't be hurt much.

I sent you a letter to mail the pictures over. If that fails, I think you can send them in a letter one at a time.

It's lunch time so will get this in the mail.

Happy Easter.

Love,

Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, APRIL 1, 1943¹³⁷

Dear Helen,

It's raining again this morning, so while there is lull in activity, I'll try and get off another letter. You will be glad to know that the officer who left that letter I sent you some time ago is back at the field. We were all certainly glad to see him back.

I am sending \$700 to you by cable. Let me know when it arrives.

It is too bad Elinor is leaving. I imagine you do get lonesome at times, but so do we all, so we will have to make the best of it until the war is over. I don't see much chance of getting home even for a visit until we finish the job. You never can tell though. I'm always hoping.

Post, Andy Rooney, Denton Scott, and William Wade. They were activated in February 1943. See Jim Hamilton, *The Writing 69th* (Marshfield, MA: Green Harbor Publications, 2005). On March 26, 1943, General LeMay received the Silver Star. See C. C. Chauncey, "General Order No. 35," Headquarters, Eighth Air Force, March 26, 1943, CELMPR.

137. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

I had dinner the other night with Captain Belvidedge, a retired British Army officer, who was wounded in World War I and retired. He has a typical big, rambling country house and has been living the life of an English country gentleman. He now has about 40 kids from London living with him for the duration.¹³⁸ His wife is a Belgian and they are both very charming.

I hope Janie enjoys her new hat. I suppose she still likes to dress up as much as ever.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, APRIL 6, 1943¹³⁹

Dear Helen,

I just cabled you some more money. It should be there by the time this arrives.

Joe Wheeler, who used to be in the 34th while we were at Westover has been here for the last two days. He is still in the Second Air Force and is over here on temporary duty. No, I didn't see Swede Larson while he was over here; however, I did see Goldenberg who came with him. I haven't seen Smitty for some time. He is being kept busy with his job and will probably be busier as time goes on. He has promised to come up for a visit, but hasn't been able to get away, I suppose. The pictures came yesterday and I certainly enjoyed them. Will write a letter tonight.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, APRIL 6, 1943¹⁴⁰

Dear Helen,

The pictures came and I was certainly glad to get them. Janie has grown and I would hardly know her. Yours is the best you have ever taken.

138. During World War II, English city children were often sent to country estates to avoid becoming bombing casualties of the Luftwaffe.

139. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

140. *Ibid.*

Of course, I wouldn't be rude and say it flatters you, but it certainly made me homesick.

I have your birthday present already except for the little matter of getting it to you. I got 4¼ yards of camels hair cloth, the same color as my polo coat. That is enough for a coat for you and Janie both. It may be a little heavy for Janie. . . . It's lonely . . .

I just received word from [illegible] to stand by to receive a British Distinguished Flying Cross from the King himself [and] also one of my gunners who lost a leg [will receive one].¹⁴¹ I will pick out a lot of people who deserve it more than I do. I went over to the base hospital last night to pin some medals on some of my boys. [I gave] one an Air Medal and two oak leaf clusters and he was in the G4 ward.¹⁴² Sometimes this job is enough to drive you nuts. Here is a man who goes out and fights like the devil himself and gets himself all [illegible] with medals yet is too careless to take a prophylaxis. What a life!

Well, I have to get back to work again.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, APRIL 23, 1943¹⁴³

Dear Helen,

I received three Air Mail letters and two V-mails yesterday after a lull of two weeks or so. Will try and get a longer letter off later today. I received a bill today from the Army Cooperative Fire Association, Ft. Leavenworth, for \$18.00.¹⁴⁴ I am mailing a check to them; however, you might check up in about three weeks to see if it has arrived. Also, you may have already paid it. Spring is beginning to arrive here. The leaves are coming out and everything is turning green. England is very beautiful in the spring, but

141. King George VI. LeMay received this award in May. See "LeMay, Curtis E., Major General, o-17917," CELMPR.

142. A hospital ward for patients being treated for or recovering from sexually transmitted diseases.

143. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

144. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

like most of the rest, I would trade it for Muroc right now.¹⁴⁵ Let me know when your birthday present arrives.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, APRIL 30, 1943¹⁴⁶

Dear Helen,

It's raining this morning, so I'll get off a letter while I have a few minutes to spare. We are digging out of the results of a party we had last night. Clark Gable came over for it and was practically swamped.¹⁴⁷ Cronkite was at the party last night also.¹⁴⁸

Freddy Castle, who used to be at Selfridge and resigned, has been here for a week or so. He is going home soon to get a group. I think he has been S4 of bomber command for a year and a half, so he is due to go back.¹⁴⁹ Bradley is over here also, but I haven't seen him yet. He is supposed to go home shortly also. I think he was just here for a visit.

Will get an Air Mail letter off this afternoon.

Love,
Curt

145. Muroc Army Air Base, California.

146. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 177–179.

147. Clark Gable, the famous MGM movie star, joined the air force in August 1942. After completing training as an aerial gunner followed by officer candidate school, he was assigned to the 351st Bomb Group, where, as a captain, he split time taking photos in support of air force publicity campaigns and leading a small crew of other Hollywood veterans, now airmen, in compiling more than fifty thousand feet of film of both combat and base life. He flew his first combat mission on May 4, 1943, and took part in a number of missions until the end of September. In November, Gable and his crew were taken off combat duty and sent to studios in Los Angeles to edit their work, which they transformed into a series of films, the most famous of which was *Combat America* (which Gable narrated), depicting the efforts of bomb crews, the experience of aerial combat over Europe, and life as an American airman in England. See Warren G. Harris, *Clark Gable: A Biography* (New York: Harmony Books, 2002), 264–270.

148. Walter Cronkite, a member of "The Writing 69th."

149. Colonel Frederick Walter Castle served as General Ira Eaker's supply officer with the Eighth Air Force before being assigned as commanding officer of the 94th Bomb Group in June 1943. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 163.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, APRIL 30, 1943¹⁵⁰

Dear Helen,

In case some of the letters were lost—the photographs came and I certainly enjoyed them. I think I have shown them to everyone in the outfit at least once.

We had a party at the club last night. We were quite a social success because Clark Gable was there. He is in one of my groups now.

Walter Cronkite was out also [and] said he had had lunch with [illegible] just before he came over here.

We have just taken over the base from the British while we [*sic*] RAF here to help us out. We have our flag at [illegible], which looks grand. I hear Alkire will be over with a group before long.¹⁵¹

You might enclose some Ronson lighter flints in the next letter you send. I am about out and you can't always find them.

Let me know when the [cloth] arrives. Also, check up on the [car] insurance. I mailed the cloth on April 13th so you should be getting it about now.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MAY 11, 1943¹⁵²

Dear Janie,

I received your letter written on Easter day. I hope the Easter bunny brought you a lot of eggs. We have some bunnies over here, but they don't seem to have many eggs. I have sent you my picture to put up in your room. The baby lambs are growing fast and are half as big as their mothers now.

Love,
Daddy

150. Ibid., 177–179.

151. Colonel Darr H. Alkire, commanding officer of the 449th Bomb Group. Ibid., 323–324.

152. Ibid., 177–179.

HEADQUARTERS, 305TH BOMB GROUP, CHELVESTON
AIRFIELD, ENGLAND, MAY 11, 1943¹⁵³

Dear Helen,

The mail seems to have slowed up again or maybe you have gone to visit Betty again. Anyway, no letters for some time. Wangeman is on his way home and I sent some snapshots I had enlarged for Janie.¹⁵⁴ I hope spring has finally arrived and you have some good weather for a change. I don't know whether I told you or not, but Aaron Kessler is over here with a group.¹⁵⁵ Polly and Pete are living in Sacramento. They have bought a house there. The cloth I sent for your birthday should have arrived by this time. Let me know when it comes.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 102ND PROVISIONAL COMBAT WING,
THURLEIGH, ENGLAND, MAY 22, 1943¹⁵⁶

Dear Helen,

We have been so busy lately I haven't had time to write. I'll get this note off before going to a conference. I imagine you are in New York now. I saw Doug the other day and he says he hopes you are able to see Elinor while you are there. I hope you are able to see everyone you know and have a good time. I am trying to get a few days at a rest camp. I'm about worn out myself. I hope you got the wire I sent on Mother's Day and also the cloth I sent for your birthday. If I doesn't show up soon, I'll have to trace it. I mailed it on April 13th, so it should be there.

Love,
Curt

153. Ibid.

154. Major Herbert O. Wangeman, squadron commander of the 365th Bomb Squadron in the 305th. See "305th Bomb Group Officers Roster," March 15, 1943, CELMPR.

155. Colonel Alfred "Aaron" Kessler Jr. was the commanding officer of the 95th Bomb Group when he got to Europe in April 1943 and was promoted to commanding officer of the 13th Bomb Wing in August of the same year. See Henry H. Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age: General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold's World War II Diaries*, vol. 1, ed. John W. Huston (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2002), 37, 58.

156. LeMay stayed at Thurleigh, England, for a few weeks before heading to Elveden Hall in Sussex to take command of the 4th Bomb Wing. See Robert P. Johnson Jr., Major, Air Corps, Adjutant, "General Orders No. 60," Headquarters, 1st Bomb Wing, May 18, 1943, CELMPR; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 285.

REST CAMP, SOUTHERN ENGLAND, MAY 29, 1943

Dear Helen,

I finally have a few days off at a rest camp in southern England.¹⁵⁷ It is an ideal place to rest. A typical English estate taken over intact with everything necessary for relaxing. Fishing and golf nearby, but what I enjoy most is just loafing out on the lawn. I saw Russ Wilson in London on the way down here. He had just arrived after two years on the General Staff in Washington. He and Lucille have been [illegible] but otherwise he seems the same and very happy to be out of Washington.¹⁵⁸ I suppose you are back from your trip to New York by this time? I hope you were able to find Elinor Coleman and all the rest you expected to see. I'm on the same base with Doug now.

Love,
Curt

*On May 18, 1943, General Eaker gave LeMay command of the 102nd Provisional Combat Wing, which was attached to the 1st Bomb Wing. As the 305th's head man, he led or oversaw a total of thirty-three combat missions from the raid on Saint-Nazaire on November 17, 1942, to their final mission under his watch against the Lorient U-boat pens on May 17, 1943.*¹⁵⁹

LeMay's tactical innovations improved both the defensive ability and bombing accuracy of the Eighth Air Force. Even with these advancements, the Eighth Air Force required numbers—bombers, air crews, and long-range fighters—to achieve their goal of mastery over the skies of Europe so they could proceed further with the strategic bombing campaign against German industry. Their ranks were bolstered by late 1943, but it would not be until the winter and spring of 1944 that the Eighth could truly field the numbers necessary to defeat the Luftwaffe.

LeMay's command of the 102nd Provisional Combat Wing was temporary. It was only a unit on paper and allowed him time to restore his energy reserves

157. Soon after the CME was established, its chief psychiatrist, Dr. Donald M. Hastings, was able to secure a network of English country estates where airmen suffering from "war-weariness" could recuperate when necessary. LeMay does not specify which estate he was resting at. See Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 143, 152.

158. Brigadier General Russell Wilson's B-17 would be shot down over Berlin while leading the first large air assault against the city carried out by the Eighth Air Force on March 6, 1944. He died in the crash. See "World Battlefronts: Carry On," *Time Magazine*, March 27, 1944.

159. Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 24–60.

at a rest camp in southern England. His true command waited for him at the famous Elveden Hall near the village of Thurleigh, where he would direct his new unit, the 4th Bomb Wing, and oversee its transformation into the 3rd Bomb Division. As LeMay settled into his role and assumed greater responsibilities, the Eighth Air Force faced its darkest days thus far as they approached the “Bloody Summer” of 1943.

CHAPTER 6

Rising Star June 19–December 1943

He was, no question about it, the rising star in the Eighth Air Force and everyone knew it.¹

—LIEUTENANT GENERAL T. R. MILTON

By the summer of 1943, the Eighth Air Force had made little progress toward achieving air supremacy over Europe, but its missions against industrial targets located in German cities distressed German civilians and incited Hitler to order a sizable force of German fighters from the Eastern Front and Mediterranean back home to oppose the armadas of bombers deployed against his nation by the RAF and USAAF.² In March, the Luftwaffe had approximately 250 fighters available for home defense.³ By mid-summer, that number rose to approximately 400.⁴

The shift of German forces to the West proved a boon for the Red Army. “This concentration on [German] home air defense and accompanying high losses among fighter aircraft,” stated Red Army historians David M. Glantz and Jonathan House, “were major causes of the loss of German air supremacy in the East.”⁵ It was RAF and American bomb crews who paid the price as they met more and more squadrons of Me-109s and FW-190s over their targets. Although B-17s were eliminating German fighters and their pilots, they were not achieving the bombing results air force leaders had forecast before the war.

The failure of American heavy bombers to fulfill prewar expectations defied the positive training results that had been achieved before the war and

1. T. R. Milton, interview 1775, UNTOHC, 37.

2. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 465–466.

3. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 221.

4. *Ibid.*

5. David M. Glantz and Jonathan House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 150.

also revealed the air force's hubristic expectations of the technological ability of the Fortress and skill of its crews to achieve precision bombing in actual combat conditions. Poor European weather, flak, and enemy fighters conspired to frustrate the efforts of American bombers in tandem with demands on the air force's available manpower and aircraft in other theaters, especially North Africa. Without the additional bombers, crews, support staff, and equipment originally promised to the Eighth, sorties sent against targets were too small to effectively destroy them. By the summer of 1943, General Eaker was finally beginning to receive the influx of units General Arnold had promised nearly a year earlier, which allowed Eaker to send out forces exceeding three hundred bombers.⁶ With the extra resources came Arnold's expectations for greater results, prompting Eaker to send his forces deeper into Germany against more important objectives, which were guarded by additional German fighters and thicker flak clouds.

In June, the Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO) finally went into effect. Codenamed Operation Pointblank, the campaign was engineered by British and Americans leaders during the Casablanca Conference in January with the ultimate goal of preparing for an Anglo-American invasion of the continent in 1944.⁷ Round-the-clock sorties would be sent against Germany's aircraft industry and airfields.⁸ The offensive was highlighted by "Blitz Week," the last week of July, during which weather allowed Allied forces to attack targets every day.⁹ This included incendiary raids against Hamburg from July 24 to July 26. The summer ended on August 17 with the largest and most costly American raid of the war to date, when both the 1st and 4th Bomb Wings were sent against ball bearing factories at Schweinfurt and a large Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg, respectively. The Eighth's losses thus far would pale in comparison to the casualties suffered during this "Bloody Summer," and the command's attrition during the autumn months was even worse. Colonel Curtis Lemay, now commanding officer of the 4th Bomb Wing and headquartered at Elveden Hall, would be right in the middle of the action.

6. Alfred B. Ferguson, "Over Germany," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 308–310.

7. Alfred B. Ferguson, "Pointblank," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, 665.

8. The USAAF and RAF continued their own bombing strategies—precision bombing and area bombing, respectively—but attempted to coordinate their efforts. *Ibid.*, 674.

9. Roger A. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History of the Units, Men, and Machines of the 8th Air Force* (London: Cassell and Company, 2000), 63–66.

At home, the LeMays were the subject of an article written by Susan Mahrer, a reporter for the Cleveland News, which was published on July 17.¹⁰ Titled "Flying Colonel Wins Decoration by King," it presented a picture of Helen seated on a couch with Janie peering over her shoulder as she read one of her husband's letters. Set in the photograph is a small oval headshot of the colonel himself. Mahrer delivered a short biography of his career and notable achievements. It was one of the first articles featuring LeMay in his career, but it was not the last, nor was it his last interaction with the press. If the new wing commander did not realize it before his promotion, he quickly discovered that his new duties required him to entertain newspaper correspondents from publications across the United States and Great Britain on a weekly basis. Both Helen and Janie were featured in future articles as the colonel's career progressed throughout the war. The connection that their correspondence provided was a consistent theme in these news stories. It was something that almost every American family could relate to, as the arrival of a letter from a loved one was the most cherished daily or weekly event for soldiers, marines, sailors, airmen, and their families back home.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 19, 1943¹¹

Dear Helen,

I'm sorry I haven't been able to write lately, but you will understand when I get a detailed letter off which will be tomorrow, I hope. If you were here, I think you wouldn't have any complaint about me being excited and enthused about this. I hope your letters don't get lost in the shuffle of this move. Staff conference due, so must finish this.

Love,
Curt

10. Susan Mahrer, "Flying Colonel Wins Decorations by King," *Cleveland News*, July 17, 1943.

11. LeMay took command of the 4th Bomb Wing on June 18, which consisted of eight bomb groups: the 94th, 95th, 96th, 100th, 385th, 388th, 390th, and 447th. The 4th was one of the Eighth's largest two heavy bomb wings that were active in the strategic bombing campaign at this time. The colonel had previously served in Eighth's original wing, the 1st, as commander of the 305th Bomb Group. The Eighth's other two bomb wings were the 2nd and 3rd. The 2nd was temporarily moved to the Mediterranean area in June and did not return to the Eighth until October. The 3rd Bomb Wing was a medium bomber wing comprising Martin B-26 Marauders that served briefly with the Eighth Air Force in the spring and early summer of 1943 before being transferred to the Ninth Air Force in October. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 203–204, 374–376, 464.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 20, 1943¹²

Dear Helen,

I finally have a moment free to write a letter. Things have been moving so fast I haven't had time to do much except move and work. I was relieved some time ago from the 305th and commanded a combat wing until three days ago when I was assigned up here to command this outfit.¹³ It's big now and will be bigger as our Air Force grows. I'll soon have a striking force of size and power that has never been equaled in military history. Needless to say, I am more than pleased to get the chance at such a job. It is probably the most important one I'll have in my lifetime, so you can be sure that I intend to do my best with it.

This is a little rich for my blood after the mud of field duty, but I'll try and bear up under it.

My headquarters is in a little place that was built for a political prisoner, a maharajah and his 100 or so wives to live.¹⁴ It's a wonderful place about 100 rooms, I imagine, with oak and walnut paneling in the rooms, marble fireplaces, oriental arches and carvings in the halls, etc. [It is] completely modern with baths and steam heat, which is something over here. The grounds are beautiful sunken gardens, tennis court, [and an] 18 hole golf course, which is planted in oats at the present time. Peacocks, mandarin ducks and pheasants roam the grounds which tempt me to oil up the shotgun. All the officers and most of my staff are in the main building. The rest are in the stable, former servant's quarters, which are just as palatial. So I am now really suffering all the horrors of war. Russ

12. Ibid.

13. As noted in chapter 4, LeMay commanded the 102nd Provisional Combat Wing before he was given command of the 4th Bomb Wing.

14. Elveden Hall had a long history before it was occupied by the Eighth Air Force for the duration of World War II. It was lent to the Americans by its owner, Rupert Edward Cecil Lee Guinness, Second Earl of Iveagh and member of the Guinness brewing family. The estate was acquired by Rupert Guinness's father, Edward Cecil Guinness, First Earl of Iveagh, in 1894 from the executors of the previous owner—Maharajah Duleep (also spelled Dalip) Singh—who died in 1893. Singh arrived in England in 1849 after being exiled from his home province of Punjab by British conquerors following the defeat and annexation of his family's Sikh empire at the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Sikh War. Singh acquired Elveden in 1863 and renovated the property to reflect both his Punjabi heritage and modern European style, as described in LeMay's letter. The Guinness family further modernized it in the early twentieth century. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 287; and Tony Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 87–92.

Wilson and Aaron Kessler will be two of my combat wing commanders.¹⁵ In fact, there are a lot of people here who rank me but we might get along okay. Aaron, as you remember, was my squadron CO at Selfridge.¹⁶

I saw Jesse Auton the other day.¹⁷ He is over here now in fighter command. He hasn't changed a bit except to lose a little more hair. [He's] still a bachelor and says it's too late now. The girls have quit asking him to marry them. If you haven't already done so, write the Collector of Internal Review and tell them I am overseas and will settle with them after I return, as prescribed in present regulations. I am grounded as far as combat is concerned with this job which will please you, I suppose. Maybe I can squeeze another mission or so in later. I don't know. I cabled some more money the first of the month. This job is going to increase my expenses. In fact, you may have to start taking in washing to keep me in the war, so stand by.

New address:
HQ 4th Bomb Wing
APO 634
New York, New York

Love,
Curt

Initially, LeMay was overwhelmed by his new role as a wing/division commander in several ways. Materially, the colonel went through an extreme change in living conditions. The opulent marbled halls of Elveden were in stark contrast to the "shacklike" Quonset huts he had occupied at Grafton Underwood and Chelveston.¹⁸ "It was primitive, it was raw, it was the field,"

15. Colonel Russell A. Wilson served as LeMay's executive officer for the 4th Bomb Wing until September 13, 1943, when he assumed command of the unit following LeMay's rise to chief of the 3rd Bomb Division. Colonel Alfred A. Kessler took command of the 13th Bomb Wing on the same date. The 3rd Division included the 4th, 13th, 45th, and 92nd Bomb Wings. The 93rd Bomb Wing joined the division in the spring of 1944. For Wilson, see Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 459; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376. For Kessler, see Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 382. For unit information, see Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 411, 434–435.

16. The 27th Pursuit Squadron, Selfridge Airfield, Michigan.

17. Colonel Jesse Auton was the commanding officer of the 65th Fighter Wing, Eighth Air Force. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 403.

18. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 286.

and it certainly contributed to his sense of camaraderie with his men.¹⁹ After all, they were working, eating, and sleeping in the same miserable conditions. Although he would later appreciate the exotic animals, exquisite architecture, and other features of Elveden as welcome distractions from the rigors of command, in the summer of 1943 the manor felt like a space incompatible with a war zone.

Principal among LeMay's worries was the sheer size of the 4th Bomb Wing. As commander of the 305th, the colonel was responsible for approximately 1,487 enlisted men and 293 officers.²⁰ The 4th Bomb Wing numbered roughly 5,948 enlisted men and 1,172 officers.²¹ The additional responsibility certainly intimidated LeMay. "I had a group, and I was still engaged in learning the Commerce and Industry there when I got fired upstairs," he remembered. "Next thing, they threw a Division at me. That was a major-general's job, and I knew damn well I wasn't qualified. I was still only a colonel, and there were a lot of people in that outfit who had seniority beyond my own."²² This group included a former squadron commander in Colonel Kessler, which enhanced LeMay's anxiety. At their initial meeting, the young commander "was trying to cover up a bad case of jitters inside," but Kessler buttressed LeMay's confidence, assuring the colonel that he was happy to serve under him and had great confidence in his abilities.²³ Kessler's "attitude was appreciated deeply by the nervous new boss of the Third Air Division," remembered the colonel.²⁴

Despite his successes, LeMay often expressed doubt in his letters home. In his memoirs, time and again, LeMay noted that he felt unprepared for the responsibility of each new position that he was awarded. Despite these misgivings, LeMay's superiors, peers, and subordinates described him as unwavering in his confidence.

19. *Ibid.*, 287.

20. These numbers were the standard total complement of men for a World War II-era American bomb group. See Bowman, *The USAAF Handbook*, 23.

21. This number continued to rise with the transformation of the 4th Wing into the 3rd Division, and LeMay would find himself in command of approximately 11,896 enlisted men and 2,344 officers.

22. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 286.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 27, 1943²⁵

Dear Janie,

The baby rabbits that used to live by my house have grown up and gone away, but there are dozens more around my new house. We also have lots of baby peacocks, partridge and pheasants. The mandarin duck has one little baby duck. He is so small he can hardly walk, but he can swim fine.

Has mommy made you a new coat out of the cloth I sent to you?

I received the butterfly you sent me and it was very pretty. I am keeping it on my dresser.

Love,
Daddy

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 27, 1943²⁶

Dear Helen,

The mail situation has become bad in the last two weeks. I don't know whether it is caused by the move I have made or whether you have just dismissed me for not writing as often as I should? I'll try and do better from now on. I'm beginning to get shaken down in the new job and hope to find time for a V mail anyway. I certainly was surprised the other day to get a call from Glenn. He and Joe Dennison are over here for something or other and will be out to see me shortly.²⁷ So, when you go down to visit them, you can get first hand information on my current establishment. It can't be as good as getting home, but it will be better than letters.

Love,
Curt

25. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

26. Ibid.

27. Brigadier General Glenn O. Barcus, commanding officer of the I Fighter Command, the First Air Force's primary fighter command. The First Air Force was primarily an antisubmarine and training command that operated in the United States and zones nearby. Colonel Joseph Dennison was on Barcus's staff, who, along with Colonel Thomas Du Bon, accompanied the general on his tour of combat units operating in England during this time. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 364; Beckemeier, "July 1, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 457.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 29, 1943²⁸

Dear Helen,

The only pen I have must be saved for signing papers. Pencils write much better on this thin paper anyway.

Glen hasn't arrived as yet, but I expect him any day and am looking forward to seeing him.

I am gradually becoming accustomed to living in luxury. I haven't been lost more than once or twice in our headquarters.

The game keeper of the estate here took me out pigeon shooting for an hour or so last night. Got fourteen but took twenty-nine shots, which proves I'm out of practice. I'm going to try and get an hour or so every two weeks if possible.

I have some more headaches coming. I'm due to have three WAAC officers and a couple hundred WAAC's in my headquarters, but I should be able to handle them considering the very excellent training I have had!²⁹

Here is a drawing of my quarters:

Oak paneling, halfway up the walls, oak shutters on inside of windows, they recess into the walls when opened.

28. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

29. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, later redesignated the Women's Army Corps (WAC), was the female contingent of the army. "WAACs," as they were commonly known, served as clerks, aides, radio operators, and other noncombat positions, thus freeing men to be assigned to combat positions. See Mattie E. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps, The United States Army in World War II, Special Studies*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1954).

I still haven't received any mail for some time, but I suppose it will catch up eventually.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 7, 1943³⁰

Dear Helen,

A wing CO doesn't seem to have much time to do any work. I have been interviewing newspaper men all morning and generals and visitors of all sorts coming and going. I have to wait until most everyone is in bed before I can get all the papers on my desk out of the "in" basket and out of it.

I now have Harding and John Gerhart as COs of two of my groups.³¹ I know I have neglected you badly as far as writing is concerned, but even when I find time to write, I find nothing to write about because I don't do anything except work and, of course, I can't say much about that. You will have to read the papers and when you see anything that the Eighth Air Force has done remember that I have had a part in planning and getting the job done. Janie seems to have been sick quite a bit this winter. I hope she is well again and it wasn't the mumps. Take good care of her.

Love,
Curt

Wing commanders were often inundated with visiting members of the press, dignitaries, and senior military commanders from across the Allied nations who toured American commands. Moreover, they were required to honorably represent the air force among local British civilians and VIPs by attending dinners and parties from time to time. As CO of the 4th Bomb Wing, one of the Eighth's two largest bomb wings in Britain, it was especially important for LeMay to promote the air force during this critical period of the Combined Bomber Offensive. Much of this was new for the colonel, who, as a group commander, was not required to be an air force "publicist" nearly as often.

The volume and diversity of LeMay's visitors was notable. For example, be-

30. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

31. Colonel Neil "Chick" Harding was the commander of the 100th Bomb Group, and Colonel John K. Gerhart was commanding officer of the 95th Bomb Group. *Ibid.*, 172.

tween July 6 and July 8, LeMay granted interviews to Peter Masefield, a “British writer and newspaperman”; Paul Patterson, publisher of the *Baltimore Sun*; Mark Watson, war correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun*; and Montague Lacey, war correspondent for the *London Daily Express*.³² He hosted Colonel H. B. Hull, a senior intelligence officer with Eighth Air Force; General Barcus, Colonel Dennison, and Colonel Thomas Du Bon (another one of General Barcus’s aides); Brigadier General Richard C. Coupland, chief ordinance officer of the army air force; Dr. Arthur A. Houck, president of the University of Maryland; and Dr. H. O. Gideonese, president of Brooklyn College.³³ This was not necessarily the daily volume of visitors LeMay received, but he was required to deal with such a quantity on a regular basis.

Given the Eighth’s increased casualties and LeMay’s new position, the influx of visitors surely irritated LeMay.³⁴ As a “doer,” he resented spending time on tasks not directly related to combat or the installation of his tactics. It was one of several drawbacks he associated with higher command, and this was probably exacerbated by his dislike of the press and terse communication style. With the 305th, LeMay put all his energy into running his unit, improving his men’s training, and leading combat missions. This, too, was taken from him soon after his promotion. Hansell and Eaker could not afford to lose LeMay during a combat mission or risk giving the Germans valuable intelligence, so they grounded him. One of the colonel’s best pilots from the 305th, then–First Lieutenant William Whitson, remembered: “After he [LeMay] flew ten of the first eleven missions he got word from the front office that he wasn’t supposed to fly anymore. In fact, the word was, ‘You have to have written permission from this office for you to fly another mission.’”³⁵ Flying allowed LeMay to

32. See Beckemeier, “July 6–8, 1943,” LeMay Daily Diary.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Plainly, LeMay sought to maximize the quality of his commands. A positive benefit of the new influx of visitors to his headquarters was the opportunity to speak with visiting Second Air Force (Training Command) personnel, whom he could influence to install better training regimes in gunnery, bombing, and navigation, thus improving the caliber of replacements and new units. Reportedly, LeMay seized a similar opportunity during his winter bond tour by speaking with instructors on bases. “I had to tell them what we really needed and how we weren’t getting it,” he remembered. In an oral history interview conducted by historians Richard Kohn and Joseph Harahan, LeMay remarked, “We established a combat crew replacement center in England where we gave the men a little more training; things were moving so fast that Training Command never caught up.” The benefit inherent in LeMay’s opportunity to positively influence the Second Air Force’s training regime would not pass him by. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 305; and Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 35.

35. William D. Whitson, interview by Dr. Alfred Hurley, August 13, 2006, transcript, UN-TOHC, 20.

personally witness and tweak problems his men encountered during missions. LeMay was "hands on." He wanted to lead his wing and experience the danger of combat with his men, which fused them together as a unit. Although he was allowed to lead missions in a few special cases, this was, in his mind, a drawback of his promotion.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 9, 1943³⁶

Dear Helen,

I hope Janie is well over the mumps by this time. She seems to have been sick a lot this winter. Are you sure you are taking good care of her? Glen came by yesterday to say goodbye. He is leaving for home shortly. I wish I were going along also. He is bringing some snapshots with him, which he will send to you. Also don't be surprised at a run on our bank account. I will explain. I'll send some money home shortly and you can build it up to the original level. NOTE CORRECT ADDRESS. I have written Davidson's mother all I know about him.³⁷ Not much change, I'm afraid.

Send me some lighter flints in your next Air Mail.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 13, 1943³⁸

Dear Helen,

I saw Bob Williams yesterday.³⁹ He is over here for duty now.⁴⁰ He will

36. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

37. The editors were unable to identify Davidson.

38. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

39. Brigadier General Robert B. Williams arrived at Eighth Air Force Headquarters in June and was preparing to take over command of the 1st Bomb Wing, which he did on August 1. He held various training commands in the United States before arriving in Europe. He continued his command of the 1st Bomb Wing when it was officially designated as the 1st Bomb Division on September 13. Ibid., 374, 431; John A. Samford, Colonel, GSC Chief of Staff, "General Orders No. 154," Headquarters, VIII Bomber Command, Office of the Commanding General, September 20, 1943, CELMPR; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 458–459.

40. LeMay spent July 12 through the morning of July 13 in meetings at VIII Bomber Command

probably spend a few days with me soon. Amy is living in New York, so you can look her up if you go down on another visit.⁴¹ I suppose Glen is on his way back by this time. I certainly would appreciate a visit home after this is over. You can do the traveling for the family. All I'll want to do is stay home and *sleep*. I hope your card party went off okay. I don't remember whether I told you or not, but I received the nuts at Easter. You might try sending some more. There are none available here. We could use some of your warm weather—it's always cold here.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 18, 1943⁴²

Dear Helen,

I wrote you a very nasty letter three days ago or, rather, started it and something interfered and being in a better humor today, I'm starting another. You probably feel that I could spend more time writing to you and maybe you are right. However, out of the last sixty hours, I have been able to sleep four.⁴³ It isn't always that bad, but the last time I had enough sleep was at the rest camp and before that I don't remember. Be a little patient with me. I have a big job. I command about half the heavy bombers in England and I can't do it on an eight hour a day basis. When

Headquarters, codenamed Pinetree, and housed at the former Wycombe Abbey School for Girls in the town of High Wycombe located just to the west of London. Pinetree offered the additional benefit of being stationed only four miles from Bomber Harris's headquarters in High Wycombe. See Beckemeier, "July 12–13, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 42, 71.

41. Amy Williams, General William's wife.

42. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

43. LeMay's activities during these sixty hours were as follows. On July 15, the colonel directed a wing critique of the unit's July 14 raid against the Le Bourget airfield and factory in Paris. He also entertained Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, as well as Oliver Keller, editor of the *Pittsburgh Post*. On July 16, LeMay attended a day-long meeting with all VIII Bomber Command wing commanders as well as the visiting Lieutenant General Delos C. Emmons, his former wing commander (18th Composite Wing) during his duty with the 6th Pursuit Squadron in Hawaii (1934–1937). In the meantime, the colonel was busy planning the wing's next raid, which was scheduled for July 17 against Hamburg. In addition, LeMay was preparing for the July 18 arrival of Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who was scheduled to tour the wing's command. LeMay also managed to sneak in an appearance at a group party and give an interview to Fred Graham, a correspondent with the *New York Times* on the seventeenth. See Beckemeier, "July 15–18," LeMay Daily Diary; and Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 76–77.

I do get a chance to write, yours comes first, always. If I can't write, I still think of you and Janie a thousand times a day and wish I were home.

I hope your eye is well by this time. Glen left me some cigars when he was here and, if you go down there for a visit, he can tell you all about my job. It's 18 times as big as the one I started with.

The dining room at my headquarters is about 50 by 150 [feet], completely oak paneled—even the ceiling, and excellent wood carving around doors and windows, etc. It has frames for three oil paintings about 15 by 30 feet in the walls (the paintings are in storage now, but there is one of blue sky and clouds in the center of the ceiling which is left). Russ says it doesn't look natural, we should paint some flak bursts in it.⁴⁴ I would like to have seen it when it was furnished.

Another interruption, but I'll mail this. Anyway, I still love you.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 20, 1943⁴⁵

Dear Helen,

Will try and get off a note before dinner. Bad weather yesterday so had some sleep last night for a change. I imagine your eye must be all right and maybe it was the liquor if they were having a party. The *Memphis Belle* was one of the crews we sent back for publicity purposes.⁴⁶ They finished their operational tour together and did a good job. Glen should be back by now.

44. Colonel Russell Wilson.

45. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

46. The *Memphis Belle* (91st Bomb Group) was perhaps the most famous individual B-17 to operate in the European Theater for the entire war. Piloted by Captain Robert Morgan, who named the plane after his sweetheart back home, the crew of the *Memphis Belle* as well as the plane itself were among the first to complete the twenty-five missions required by the air force to fulfill their tour of duty. Even more remarkable, they finished their tour with the original crew intact. During the spring of 1943, the *Memphis Belle* and Morgan's group were noticed by Academy Award-winning filmmaker William Wyler, who was personally recruited by General Carl Spaatz to make a film about the strategic bombing campaign in Europe. When Wyler saw the plane and met Captain Morgan, he knew he had his subject, and, following a crash course in gunnery school, he joined the crew on missions to get real footage at great personal risk. In 1944, the documentary, entitled *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*, was released in theaters in the United States and became one of the most well-known pieces of American propaganda to come out of World War II. Additionally, on June 9, 1943, following their twenty-fifth mission, the crew, along with their plane, were sent back to the United States to complete a bond tour. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 32, 50–51; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 134–136.

I sent a lot of snapshots back with him, so he will probably mail them up soon. See if you can send me a box of Webster cigars—154 size. Tell Dad I'll get around to writing him a letter soon, I hope.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 23, 1943⁴⁷

Dear Helen,

I just have time to get off a note. Janie's last letter came yesterday, so this will have to be for her. Tell her we have a whole family of rabbits about four inches long outside my office window. Just missed seeing Bob Springer by a few hours.⁴⁸ He is evidently flying the same route I did two summers ago. I did see two or three other people who were stationed at Selfridge when we were there. I haven't heard from Leonard lately, but I may see him in a day or so.⁴⁹ Will probably only have time to say hello and, then, go back to my old job.

Love,
Curt

As part of the CBO, the 1st Bomb Wing attacked military targets in Hamburg on July 25 and 26. On the night of July 24, RAF bombers brought a firestorm upon large areas of the city utilizing a combination of incendiary bombs and high explosives. It was the first time incendiaries had been used on this scale in the war. Although LeMay's units were not directly involved in the Hamburg missions, the colonel "was impressed by the magnitude of the destruction of military targets in Hamburg. He studied the strike photographs with Hansell.

47. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

48. Charles Robert Springer. Following his graduation from flight school at Brooks Field, San Antonio, Springer was assigned to the 27th Pursuit Squadron at Selfridge Field, Michigan, as a second lieutenant on March 13, 1933. LeMay was at Selfridge in the winter of 1929 and remained with the 27th until the fall of 1934, so the pair served together for a little over a year. The editors have not discovered where Springer was operating on the date this letter was written; however, LeMay suggests that he was flying the North Atlantic ferrying route from Canada to England for the Air Transport Command. See George S. Warren, Captain, Air Corps, Adjutant, "Special Orders No. 54," Headquarters, Selfridge Field, Mount Clemens, Michigan, March 13, 1933, CELMPR.

49. As noted in chapter 3, Leonard LeMay was serving as an army engineer at this time in North Africa. LeMay was preparing for a scouting trip to North Africa for an upcoming operation and was hoping for the opportunity to meet with him.

*The fires that gutted the city also destroyed submarine and aircraft plants and other production facilities vital to the German war effort.*⁵⁰ LeMay's introduction to incendiary weapons was an important event in his career, as well as in the future success of the air war against Japan, because it gave him knowledge of an alternative strategy to precision bombing, which failed to produce results against Japanese home island targets in 1944 and early 1945.

LeMay was especially interested in the new H2S radar that British bombardiers utilized to locate and bomb objectives. If the Eighth Air Force were to receive such a device, the colonel believed that navigation as well as identification and bombing of targets would vastly improve, perhaps eliminating the challenges of inclement weather. The air force had, in fact, been experimenting with their own "blind bombing" devices, specifically GEE and OBOE, since the fall of 1942, but neither had proved able to provide accurate bombing results during testing, and their range was severely limited.⁵¹ General Hansell among others refused to endorse a tool that he believed supplanted the air force's policy of visual identification of targets, enacted to prevent civilian casualties, but LeMay was able to add his chief navigator, Ralph Nutter, to the small group of Eighth Air Force navigators chosen to learn to use the H2S.⁵²

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JULY 30, 1943⁵³

Dear Helen,

I have just returned from my trip. I did not get to see Leonard. Apparently, he took a short boat trip. I did see Baccus and gave him a note for Leonard, as he said he might see him.⁵⁴ I saw Norstad⁵⁵ and Tom

50. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 99.

51. Both devices were installed in bombers to aid in navigation however. See Ferguson, "Point-blank," 689–690.

52. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 99.

53. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

54. The editors believe that this is a misspelling; LeMay is probably referring to then-Colonel Edward N. Backus, commanding officer of the 12th Bomb Group, which was based in Hergla, Tunisia, and served as part of the Twelfth Air Force/Northwest African Air Force (NAAF) at that time. Hergla is located just south of Tunis. There was a Colonel Donald Baccus, whose last name is spelled as LeMay wrote it in this letter, but this was unlikely the officer LeMay was referring to. Baccus was a fighter ace and later commander of the 356th Fighter Group, Eighth Air Force. He served as a flight instructor until October 1943, when he arrived with the 356th in England, so it is very unlikely that he was in North Africa at that time. *Ibid.*, 55–56, 238.

55. Brigadier General Lauris Norstad. Norstad was serving as assistant chief of staff for operations under Lieutenant General Carl Spaatz, who was in command of the NAAF/Twelfth Air Force at that time. See Ansell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 428–429.

Moseley.⁵⁶ He is still a colonel commanding a transport wing. He said Ford had been reduced to Captain and sent home.⁵⁷ I need some khaki shirts cotton or poplin size 16 x 33 or 34, the only kind I can find over here are the kind the QM sells and even to enlisted men.⁵⁸ See if you can find me some in Cleveland. As far as I know, J. W. is still in the hospital burned fairly badly about the hands.⁵⁹ Apparently he is going to be okay. What is going on at Nantucket? I didn't know you knew anyone there.

You and Janie are doing enough for the war effort by keeping me on the field and happy.

Love,
Curt

When the CBO commenced in June, General Eaker convened a committee of planners to designate specific targets in Germany that supported the Luftwaffe

56. Colonel Thomas L. Mosley (actual spelling) was the operations officer for then-Colonel Robert Olds's original Air Corps Ferrying Command staff. Following his tutelage under Olds, Mosley was appointed commander of the Air Transport Command's (ATC) Alaskan Wing in 1942 before being promoted to colonel and given command of ATC operations in North Africa in the late spring of 1943. See John D. Carter, "The Air Transport Command," in *Services around the World*, vol. 7 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 9; and Frank H. Heck, "The Northwest Air Route to Alaska," in *Services around the World*, 161.

57. This was the same Ford J. Lauer who served with LeMay in the 34th Bomb Group. Colonel Lauer was one of the first officers from the 34th to get a bomb group after Pearl Harbor, and he even briefly led the 34th from January 9 to February 12. Following this, he oversaw the training of the 303rd until May 29. He took over command of the 15th Bombardment Training Wing on June 23, until he was transferred again on September 24 to lead the 304th Bomb Group on submarine patrols along the east coast of the United States. Approximately a month later, on October 29, he was put in command of the 2nd Bomb Wing, which he led until the group arrived in North Africa in March 1943 to serve with the Twelfth Air Force. According to his son, Lauer was transferred to the headquarters of the Twelfth Air Force soon after arriving overseas in March 1943, which is commensurate with Maurer's timeline; however, his activities following this are unknown, until he shows up again on February 15, 1944, as a colonel in command of the 99th Bomb Group, which he led with distinction until January 1945. Then he was sent back to the United States to help develop the B-32 bomber. This information seems to correspond with LeMay's comments here. It appears that Lauer was disciplined around the date of this letter for some infraction and sent home before his resurgence as a notable commander with the 99th. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 27, 88, 171, 176–177, 384; and Ford J. Lauer III, "Biography of Colonel Ford J. Lauer," Commander Biographies, Thunder from the South: The 99th Bomb Group in World War II, 99th Bomb Group Historical Society, at <http://www.99bombgroup.org/lauer.html>, accessed May 7, 2012.

58. Quartermaster.

59. Probably the 305th's Captain J. W. Carter, who piloted the famous B-17 *Carter's Little Liver Pills*. The editors were unable to locate information concerning the incident referred to here by LeMay. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 32.

and fell under the category of bottleneck industries that planners in Washington, D.C., had identified.⁶⁰ Hansell was a brilliant strategist, and he was heavily involved in drafting the USAAF's war plans before the United States entered the conflict; he led the committee along with the VIII Bomber Command chief, General Fred Anderson, and others.⁶¹ One of the most important targets they identified was Germany's ball bearing manufacturing industry. Antifriction ball bearings were essential in almost every mechanized war machine the Germans produced, from tanks to fighters and bombers. Thus, destroying German factories that manufactured ball bearings would hamper the production of fighters, dealing a double blow to the Luftwaffe by destroying current defenders and future fighters that could not be constructed.

The largest complex of ball bearing factories in Germany was located in Schweinfurt, deep within the Reich. Along with the Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg, it was at the top of the Eighth's list of primary targets.⁶² Because of Schweinfurt's importance to German war-making capabilities, as well as its location, planners hoped that the operation would draw the Luftwaffe to a climactic air battle in which they could destroy many German fighters as well as cripple the industry that was vital for their replacement. It would also be the largest single raid attempted thus far by the VIII Bomber Command. Eaker scheduled it for August 17, the anniversary of the Eighth's first raid of the war.

Initially, Hansell and Anderson intended to send both the 1st and 4th Wings against Schweinfurt; however, they decided to inflict further damage by splitting their forces between two separate targets.⁶³ General Williams's 1st Bomb Wing, the larger force of 230 B-17s, was designated to attack Schweinfurt, while LeMay's 146 Fortresses would strike simultaneously against the largest Messerschmitt factory in Germany at Regensburg. In addition, LeMay planned to continue on to North Africa in the Eighth's first shuttle raid instead of returning to England.⁶⁴ Eaker and his staff hoped that this strategy would diminish casualties for both forces, because each wing stood to face the main

60. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 209.

61. General Eaker relieved Hansell of his command in early June, citing Hansell's stress and fatigue as the primary reasons. Brigadier General Frank Armstrong was raised in his place and officially took command of the 1st on June 15. Hansell was a brilliant planner and more confident and competent in that role, eventually being recalled back to the United States in October to serve on General Arnold's staff. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 399; and Arthur B. Ferguson, "The CBO Plan," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 365.

62. Ferguson, "Pointblank," 682.

63. *Ibid.*, 683.

64. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 89–90.

brunt of the *Luftwaffe* armada once. LeMay's unit would encounter German fighters on their way to Regensburg before heading to a base in North Africa, where supplies, mechanics, and medical facilities awaited them. Williams's bomb crews would fly their Fortresses back home to England and face German fighters on the return trip.

In accordance with these plans, LeMay left England via Prestwick, Scotland, on July 23 for the NAAF's headquarters in Tunis in order to confer with General Norstad to secure a supply and repair base for the 4th Wing's use following their raid against Regensburg.⁶⁵ Norstad directed him to Telergma Airfield, Algeria, located about 200 miles west of Tunis, which LeMay toured and deemed satisfactory for his needs. After visiting several other bases in the area, he returned to Prestwick on July 28.⁶⁶

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, AUGUST 2, 1943⁶⁷

Dear Helen,

North Africa isn't much better than the rest of it I have seen. Dirty and flat is the best description I can give of it. Saw something of Ancient Carthage or rather the ruins at Tunis. I still haven't seen anything I like better than home.

I haven't seen Smitty for a long time, but I hear he is excited about Jack coming over. He will probably be stationed fairly close to me.

I'm glad Zip is getting along OK.⁶⁸ He deserves it. Hope he doesn't have any more family when he gets home.

65. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 290; and Beckemeier, "July 23, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

66. Beckemeier, "July 28, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

67. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

68. Colonel Ralph E. "Zipper" Koon, as noted in chapter 4, commanded the 34th Bomb Group from February 12 to July 21, 1942. Following this assignment, he took command of the 90th Bomb Group on November 18, 1942, a B-24 unit that was assigned to the Fifth Air Force in the southwestern Pacific, where they initially flew out of Iron Range, Australia, against Japanese tactical and strategic targets as well as shipping in New Guinea and the surrounding areas. Koon was relieved by his executive officer, Colonel Arthur H. Rogers, on July 11, 1943, and sent back to the United States to train new bomb groups with the Second Air Force. See Wiley O. Woods Jr., *Legacy of the 90th Bombardment Group: "The Jolly Rogers"* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing, 1994), 67; and "Brigadier General Ralph E. Koon," Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6095>, accessed May 7, 2012.

Holt is down at bomber command.⁶⁹ I see him occasionally. He said that Jean was trying to get some of the gals together this summer.⁷⁰

If Glen hasn't already sent them, he has a lot of pictures that I sent home by him. Also, he spent some time at my headquarters and can tell you all about it. You probably can see him when you go to New York on the 10th. He can also explain the checks I wrote.

I am cabling \$1,200 home today. You can bring the bank account back up to par with some of it.

I'll have to get this in the mail and go out and look over one of my posts.⁷¹

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, AUGUST 7, 1943⁷²

Dear Helen,

You might see the fortune teller again and see if she can't cut that six months down a little. Your snapshots came and Janie is certainly getting bigger every day. Angus looks as though he wasn't enjoying the heat very much. Has Glen mailed you the pictures I sent back by him? If he hasn't, you can pick them up in New York when you are there. I just cabled you \$1,200—don't spend it all on the vacation.

Send me the shirts, papers, tobacco, etc., and if you can't get all of it in one package of regulation size, send two a week apart.

Love,
Curt

69. Harry L. Holt was one of the original members of the 305th Bomb Group before being promoted to lieutenant colonel and joining the VIII Bomber Command in the summer of 1943. As a second lieutenant, he flew as copilot in the 422nd Bomb Squadron under First Lieutenant William Whitson on the B-17 named *Old Bill* after the Bruce Bairnsfather cartoon character. See Phillip W. Haberman, Lieutenant Colonel, Army Air Force, "Statistics and History of the 1st Combat Bombardment Wing (H)," Unit Histories, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama; Curtis E. LeMay, Colonel, Commanding, "Officers Roster," Headquarters, 305th Bomb Group, Chelveston Airfield, England, March 15, 1943, CELMPR; and Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 48.

70. Jean Holt, wife of Lieutenant Colonel Holt.

71. LeMay made two inspection tours on this day. The first was at 10:00 a.m. at Great Ashfield, headquarters of the 385th Bomb Group, and the second was at Bury, where the Ninety-Fourth Bomb Group was stationed. See Beckemeier, "August 2, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

72. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, AUGUST 8, 1943⁷³

Dear Helen,

I suppose you are about to start on your vacation. Don't get too sunburned on the beach. I hear that Jack has arrived over here okay, but I haven't seen him yet. He is stationed not too far from here, so he will probably drop in as soon as he gets settled. I stopped by Smitty's station the other day, but he was gone and I couldn't wait until he came back. It seems to me Janie is rather young for boyfriends, but I suppose she is taking after her mother.⁷⁴ Enjoy yourself on the vacation and let me know when the money I wired comes in.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, AUGUST 14, 1943⁷⁵

Dear Helen,

I suppose you are on your vacation by this time. I wish I could be with you. I certainly would appreciate a week or so with nothing to do except lie around in the sun. We are right in the midst of the harvest over here. Some of the men have taken a pass and are helping cut rye, etc. If I can get an hour off this afternoon, I think I'll try and get a few rabbits as they come out from the combines. Partridge season opens September 1st and I'm going to try and get some real shooting then, even if we have to stop the war. There are so many birds around here they will hardly get out of your way. Enjoy your vacation and don't let Janie get bitten by a lobster.

Love,
Curt

73. Ibid.

74. According to Thomas Coffey, who also had access to this letter, LeMay told the historian that this line referenced the reported flirtations of his daughter with one of their neighbor's young sons. See Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 80.

75. Ibid.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, AUGUST 16, 1943⁷⁶

Dear Helen,

I have been thinking of you on your vacation and wishing I were along. We haven't had a real vacation together unless you count the last eight years as being vacation and it has been compared to the last year. I'll bet Janie is having fun on the beach. Have you heard from the Barton's lately? It seems to me you said they were expecting in July. I hope you had no trouble traveling. We hear over here it is next to impossible to get reservations unless you are a stockholder or something. Don't forget to let me know when you receive the last check I cabled. Tell Janie to be good.

Love,
Curt

On the morning of August 17, 1943, LeMay led the 4th Bomb Wing from the lead plane of the lead group, the 96th, against the Messerschmitt fighter factories located in Regensburg.⁷⁷ Nearly the entire VIII Bomber Command participated. LeMay's force of 146 bombers was outfitted with special fuel tanks that allowed them to make the unprecedented flight to North Africa following their bomb run. Initially, poor weather over England delayed their departure, but LeMay's crews were trained to take off using instruments, which proved necessary. Pilots in the 1st Wing had not learned this skill and were postponed for two hours, which undermined the timing of the mission.

This setback forced both wings to contend with German fighters on both legs of their missions, and the Luftwaffe took full advantage. In the ensuing battles, the VIII Bomber Command permanently lost approximately 20 percent of their total force, and 20 percent more was put out of action for several weeks or longer.⁷⁸ In opposition, LeMay encountered about 150 fighters, and the 1st Wing faced twice as many—the bulk of the entire defensive fighter force of Germany.⁷⁹ Although American claims of 288 German fighters destroyed were exaggerated, American bombers were able to inflict substantial casualties. It was the largest air raid conducted by American forces to that date.

The bombing of the factories at Regensburg temporarily halted all produc-

76. Ibid.

77. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 293.

78. Ferguson, "Pointblank," 683.

79. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 223.

tion there; however, a few months after the attack many were again fully operational. The raid did prompt the Reich's war production chief, Albert Speer, to construct a chain of smaller factories in order to prevent the possibility of another complete halt in production, which further affected the long-term productivity of the Messerschmitt factories.⁸⁰ Bombing results at Schweinfurt were less impressive, but the ball bearing plants' effectiveness was reduced, and several factories were put out of commission temporarily.⁸¹ At great cost in American bombers and lives, additional missions against the city took place over the next several months.

TELERGMA, ALGERIA, AUGUST 23, 1943⁸²

Dear Helen,

It has been a week since I have been able to get a letter off. I am down in Leonard's neck of the woods again but probably won't get to see him this time either. I paid a call on the stomping grounds of your ex-boyfriend.⁸³ I don't imagine he was there so, we just left cards! I hope you and Janie are rested up from your vacation by this time. I saw Flint Beronson and Monahan the other day.⁸⁴ I hope I get home in time for the hunting season by the 1st of the month.

Love,
Curt

Even with the extra fuel tanks, the survivors of Regensburg who made it to North Africa arrived on fumes. Those who were not as lucky were forced to ditch in the Mediterranean Sea, where they awaited rescue. Forty-four For-tresses were forced to land at the air base at the coastal city of Bône, Algeria, approximately eighty miles northeast of Telergma.⁸⁵ They found none of the liaison officers or support staff that were promised by Norstad. Additionally, instead of B-17 parts and the five hundred mechanics that were promised, in-

80. Ibid., 224.

81. Notably, the raid prompted Speer to turn to Switzerland and Sweden for a greater portion Germany's required ball bearings. Both countries had a large stake in the ball bearing industry and sold them freely to the Reich for the rest of the war. See Ferguson, "Pointblank," 686.

82. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

83. The editors were unable to identify this individual.

84. The editors were unable to identify Flint Borenson or Monahan.

85. "Minutes of the Group Commanders' Meeting: REGENSBURG (17-8-1943)," Office of the Commanding Officer, Headquarters, 4th Bomb Wing, August 28, 1943, CELPLOC.

coming 4th Bomb Wing units were met by a few enlisted men and no parts.⁸⁶ Over the next few days, LeMay was forced to piece together his salvageable bombers utilizing parts from critically damaged ones without his ground crews or any other mechanics except the crew engineers who survived the raid. The colonel served as chief mechanic, going from plane to plane to lend aid. They ate the emergency rations LeMay had insisted they pack beforehand, and "deluxe accommodations were a cot [and] a blanket. Normal accommodations were slit trenches."⁸⁷

General Eaker was humbled by the sight of the 4th Wing when he flew to Telergma to check on his men. Eaker told LeMay that the survivors of the 4th did not have to participate in the planned return mission against German airfields at Bordeaux. They had been through enough. Despite this, the colonel, not wanting to waste an opportunity to bomb German targets, put together a force of sixty operational bombers, secured a supply of bombs, and made the attack, returning to England on the evening August 24. Because of the difficulties LeMay encountered, few other shuttle missions were attempted, and none of them were particularly successful.⁸⁸ The 4th Bomb Wing finally touched down at Snetterton Heath Airfield (home of the 96th Bomb Group) on August 24 following a "satisfactory" bombing mission against the GAF airfield at Bordeaux.⁸⁹ Despite the hardships they had endured during the shuttle mission and its aftermath, the survivors arrived home in good spirits. According to LeMay's aide, during the ensuing debriefing, crew members exhibited African souvenirs they had acquired, including "knives, Italian, German, and French hats, watermelons and other types of fruits and even a donkey colt."⁹⁰ LeMay and his staff followed this by sharing a bottle of Bordeaux wine to mark the return raid and "turned in early . . . tired and exhausted."⁹¹

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL, ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 2, 1943⁹²

Dear Helen,

I spent the 30th and 31st in Scotland grouse shooting.⁹³ I enjoyed it,

86. Ibid.

87. They did receive some food and other supplies a few days after landing. Ibid.

88. Ferguson, "Pointblank," 687.

89. Beckemeier, "August 24, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

93. LeMay reportedly "bagged about 30 grouse." See Beckemeier, "August 31, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

but those damn Scotsmen almost killed me. We went up on a Fell (hill to you) and tromped around in heather, knee high with swamp underneath. I found out in ten minutes that my physical condition wasn't what it should be and at the end of a couple hours I was ready for the hospital. How I pulled through two days I don't know. We shot a few grouse though. Yesterday, I shot partridge on the estate of Sir Ashley Dodd, which was fun, but I'm back at the war today.

I still haven't seen Jack, but it isn't surprising. I know how busy he is having gone through getting started over here.

Travis is over here now but isn't in my wing.⁹⁴ He is under Bob Williams. Butch is here also with fighter command.⁹⁵ I haven't been able to see him either. Jess Auton was up and spent a couple days with me.⁹⁶ He took a ride with one of my outfits to see how it was done.

I suppose you are home by this time resting up from your vacation. I hope you were able to see Glen, as he could tell you a lot about what I'm doing, etc.

Love,
Curt

The heather is some I trampled around in for two days.

94. Colonel Robert Travis, who arrived in England as part of General Arnold's party to tour the Eighth Air Force. Travis requested, and was granted, a combat command—the 41st Bomb Wing—under Brigadier General Bob Williams in the 1st Bomb Division and remained overseas in that capacity until October 1944. He led several missions in place of Williams in the fall that ended in disaster, including a raid on aircraft and ball bearing factories around Stuttgart on September 6 in spite of poor weather. Consequently, twenty-seven of his B-17s were shot down. There is no doubt that Travis was a brave commander, but his efforts to prove his worth led to unnecessary casualties. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 106; Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 450; and Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 117–119.

95. Colonel Francis H. "Butch" Griswold began his air force career as one of LeMay's closest friends and a fellow flying cadet when they entered flight school together in October 1928. They completed their course of study at Kelly Field a year later, but Griswold stuck with fighters for the long haul. He arrived in England in July 1943 as chief of staff of the VIII Fighter Command, a post he held until he succeeded Major General William E. Kepner as commander of the unit on August 3, 1944. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 397; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 446. Unless otherwise noted, from this point on when LeMay discusses Butch the reader should assume that he is referring to General Griswold.

96. Brigadier General Jesse Auton took command of the 65th Fighter Wing, VIII Fighter Command, on September 6. He arrived at Elveden on August 25 and remained there until August 27 to "spend a few days studying the operations of a bombardment wing." See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 402–403; and Beckemeier, "August 25–27, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 8, 1943⁹⁷

Dear Helen,

The two boxes of shirts came yesterday, so I can now go around without a frayed collar. I haven't received the pictures as yet. Also, I still don't know whether you received the last cable for \$1200. I still haven't received those \$.25 Webster cigars I asked for either. I have plenty of Half & Half and tobacco, so don't send any more of that. I hope you saved the picture from the car last winter. I understand you can't get it this year. I hope Glen was able to give you a good idea of what is going on over here. I saw Bob Travis the other day. He is under Bob Williams in the First Wing.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BOMB WING, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 11, 1943⁹⁸

Dear Helen,

Too bad you have eaten yourself out of your new figure. I'm afraid I'm not much better off sitting behind a desk and a study but not conducive to a slim figure. You seem to have a hard time keeping . . .⁹⁹

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 14, 1943¹⁰⁰

Dear Helen,

I'm glad Dinger has heard from Lee.¹⁰¹ He probably isn't enjoying

97. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

98. Ibid.

99. The rest of this letter was missing.

100. As the Eighth Air Force received more *Men and Planes* over the spring and summer of 1943, the 1st and 4th Bomb Wings became the two largest entities under the VIII Bomber Command. During the summer, Eaker and his staff decided that it was necessary to reorganize them into divisions with three to five bomb wings each. Consequently, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Bomb Divisions were created on August 30 and became active on September 13. Brigadier General Bob Williams and Colonel Curtis LeMay took command of the 1st and 3rd, respectively. LeMay became a brigadier general himself on September 28. Brigadier General James P. Hodges received command of the 2nd Division. See Beckemeier, "September 13, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary; Samford, "General Orders No. 154," CELMPR; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 431-434.

101. The editors were unable to identify Dinger or Lee.

himself too much as a guest of the Japanese. Note the change in address. I'm still at the same place—we have just changed our name. I talked to Butch on the phone the other day. He is coming out for a visit the first of the week. He is going to be Chief of Staff for Kepner.¹⁰² The shirts arrived, also the newspaper pictures, but no \$.25 Webster cigars. I would like a box a month. I have enough Half & Half, so that isn't necessary.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 14, 1943¹⁰³

Dear Helen,

The two packages with the pajamas arrived yesterday, but I haven't seen anything of those Webster cigars I started asking for three months ago. Peck just arrived and spent a day visiting here. Pheasant season opens the 1st. I hope I have time to get a few of them. I see about a hundred every time I go out. The football schedule came in. I wish I could see a couple of games. It seems a long time since we had a normal existence. But we can't complain yet. I saw in a London paper that people in the service who had five years Foreign Service were going to get more leave. I hope we don't come to that.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 30, 1943¹⁰⁴

Dear Helen,

I finally have the information about the last money I sent home, but the cable never did arrive. V mail is just as quick and more reliable. If you can find one, you can send me one of those new Parker fountain pens for Christmas. I see Bob Williams about once a week at the division COs meeting at bomber command, but I haven't seen Smitty for months. I

102. Major General William E. Kepner was the commanding general of the VIII Fighter Command at this time. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 410.

103. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

104. Ibid.

haven't seen Jack yet either, but I suppose he will come wandering in before long. I have enough shirts to last now for a while. It is beginning to get cold and rainy over here now. We will follow the British regulations and not start the heat until November 1st, but we could use a little right now.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, OCTOBER 7, 1943¹⁰⁵

Dear Helen,

The mail situation seems to have deteriorated slightly due probably to bad flying weather. I haven't had a V mail for a week now. I did get your cable on the promotions which isn't here yet. Evidently, you probably saw the list submitted to the Senate for approval. It should come through in a few days though it has been in the mill since last February, so a few more delays won't make much difference.

Leonard seems to still be in Africa. I expected him to be in Italy. He says he is tired of the place and I can surely believe it. I think you are a little optimistic about my being home by Christmas. We are beginning to move all right, but the main fight is yet to come. Don't expect miracles, although one could happen.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, OCTOBER 8, 1943¹⁰⁶

Dear Helen,

I'm glad you still can get enough gas for an occasional ride. Sorry the pooch was run over.¹⁰⁷ I remember how fast the cars travel down that street. I hope you are keeping Janie and Angus behind bars. The promotion came through today; however, your salary isn't raised.¹⁰⁸ The

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

107. Possibly their other dog, Happy.

108. At 3:45 p.m. on this date, General Anderson called to inform LeMay that he could officially

collector of Internal Revenue will get most of it and my side manages to spend the full increase, so there isn't much left for you, in fact you may be taking in washing to keep me in the war. My work did not finish yesterday. I'm in bed today trying to get the best of a cold I picked up somewhere. Has Corrine been able to get to Cleveland for her visit yet? I saw Smitty the other day at bomber command; the first time in months. He promised again to come up for a visit.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, OCTOBER 16, 1943¹⁰⁹

Dear Helen,

Will try and get a note off before going to bed. The tin boxes of candy and nuts came a little early for Christmas, but maybe they will last. I'll try and not eat too much of them. With the lack of exercise and starchy diet we have, candy and nuts are just what I don't need if I want to keep my waistline down. You might send me a new razor strap for Christmas. Get one at a barber supply house—the kind the barbers use.

I'm enclosing some pictures taken the night my promotion came through. The mess sergeant baked a cake for me.

Bed time.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, OCTOBER 17, 1943¹¹⁰

Dear Helen,

It's just a year ago today since I left. It seems much longer than that to me. I hope the bulk of my stretch is over.¹¹¹

wear his stars as the newest and youngest brigadier general in the U.S. Army. Lieutenant Beckemeier was also promoted to captain. See Beckemeier, "October 8, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

109. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

110. Ibid.

111. LeMay's homesickness was, perhaps, heightened by an incident that occurred near his

I can't send you a picture of the establishment I'm in. It's too well known and to disclose it might lead to a few bombs being dropped around here. I did send some picture postcards of the place though.

I have just had some photographs made and will mail them out as soon as they are finished. They aren't too bad. Much better, in fact, than those I usually take.

I still haven't received any Webster cigars. Send me a box every month. Some of them should get through. I don't need any heavy P.J.s.¹¹² We can get all the clothing we need through the QM without any trouble.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, OCTOBER 25, 1943¹¹³

Dear Helen,

Aaron is temporarily gone for a while.¹¹⁴ I'll send Polly's address when he returns.¹¹⁵ The box of \$.25 Webster's arrived. The 3 for 50 are what I want. I suppose you think they are too rich for me [illegible]. I have my cold in hand and should be okay in a day or so. Jack is too high ranking for an aide and besides I already have one. I don't remember [illegible]. Are you sure it wasn't glass? I remember a [illegible]. I have written to Jack and he should have received it by now. I haven't seen anything of Jack yet. I imagine he is too busy to get away much and I'm sure I can't. You should be in the midst of your white elephant sale now. I hope it turns out all right.

Love,
Curt

headquarters on this date. Major Lynne Mokler, previously of the 305th Bomb Group when LeMay was its commander, was killed following a plane crash. Mokler, the pilot of the craft, was serving as a controller for the 3rd Division and was a popular officer among the general's staff. Beckemeier notes that Mokler's "death was a great blow to the general." See Beckemeier, "October 17, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary.

112. Pajamas.

113. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

114. Colonel Alfred Kessler.

115. Polly Kessler, Colonel Kessler's wife.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, NOVEMBER 7, 1943¹¹⁶

Dear Helen,

I am getting the football clippings all right. Ohio State doesn't seem to be doing very well which surprises me.¹¹⁷ Usually, when I'm 3,000 miles away, they are on the top of the heap.

I hope your white elephant sale has been concluded satisfactorily and that you have made piles of money. Aaron isn't back yet. I'll try and get Polly's address out of the files.

How is Jack getting along with his transfer? He should be able to transfer to the Air Corps as a communications officer. The last box of Webster cigars were the ones I wanted. I think I have received all the boxes you have sent except the one with the pen.

Love,
Curt

Despite propaganda that promoted Schweinfurt-Regensburg as a smashing success against the German aircraft industry, the operation put the future of the daylight precision raids in doubt. In conjunction with disastrous autumn raids against Stuttgart and Oschersleben, the strategy painfully revealed the cost that American heavy bomber forces would be required to pay to take the fight to the Fatherland. In addition, it encouraged both American and British leaders to question the success of the Combined Bomber Offensive and explore new avenues for the strategic bombing campaign, chiefly the creation of a new strategic bombing force based in southern Italy that could reach key targets in Germany, Romania, and other parts of German-held Europe that were beyond the Eighth's range.¹¹⁸ Concurrently, the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff ratcheted up pressure upon General Arnold to produce the results that he had promised them when the strategic bombing campaign had started a year earlier. This prompted Arnold to visit the Eighth Air Force personally, which he did, arriving on September 1 to confer with Eaker and Hansell as well as

116. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

117. The Ohio State Buckeyes football team had a 3-6 record that year including a 7 to 45 blowout loss to archrival Michigan in the season finale. See The Ohio State University 2011 Football Information Guide (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2011), 252.

118. Ferguson, "The Autumn Crisis," 724.

then-Colonel Curtis LeMay, whose performance at Regensburg, despite the obstacles, had been remarkable.¹¹⁹

Along with his innovations in tactics, LeMay advocated the adoption of radar bombing, which potentially solved many of the problems that weather presented to bombardiers and navigators.¹²⁰ His forethought was in line with that of Spaatz and Arnold, who both desired to use radar bombing to negotiate the treacherous winter months in Europe that made visual bombing impossible. Indeed, atrocious weather in the late fall and early winter months prevented most deep raids into Germany, but by November and December pathfinding B-17s of the new 482nd Bomb Group equipped with H2X radar domes routinely led raids over the Reich.¹²¹

Arnold's tour of the Eighth Air Force was a positive experience for both himself and LeMay, evidenced by LeMay's promotion to brigadier general in October, which Arnold originally rejected when Eaker proposed it earlier in the summer.¹²² Impressed with the Eighth's top commanders, especially Williams and LeMay, and their frank evaluation of the Eighth's performance, Arnold pushed harder to get them the long-range fighters they required when he returned home.¹²³ According to historian John Huston, editor of Arnold's wartime diary, the air force chief cabled army chief of staff, General George Marshall, on his second day in England, stating: "Operations over Germany conducted here during the past several weeks indicate definitely that we must provide long-range fighters to accompany daylight bombardment missions."¹²⁴ By the winter and spring of 1944, the "Mustangs" as well as modified P-38s and P-47s began accompanying their larger brothers, and they turned the air war in the Allies' favor.

As an extension of Arnold's meeting with LeMay, Arnold and Eaker chose the

119. Arnold met with LeMay and General Williams among others on September 3. See Beckemeier, "September 3, 1943," LeMay Daily Diary; and Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, 36–37.

120. The general was first introduced to the new device on August 16 when a communications officer from the VIII Bomber Command, Edward D. Gray, arrived at Elveden to introduce him to radar and its application in bombing. See Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 81–82.

121. The H2X was the American version of the H2S developed by scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The 482nd, with its specially trained navigators, arrived in England in late August and took part in its first raid against Wilhelmshaven on September 27. Bombing results resembled those of the RAF night raids. The primary downside of radar was its inaccuracy. It was impossible for American bombers to achieve precision bombing, but de facto area bombing during poor weather was a compromise that Spaatz and Arnold were willing to make in order to continue aerial raids during the winter months. See *Ibid.*, 261–262.

122. Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 58.

123. *Ibid.*; and Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*.

124. Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 45.

general to go on a war bond tour of air force bases with several other air force officers. The group would bolster morale and collaborate with instructors who were training the men designated to be replacements for lost crews and new ones.¹²⁵ After over a year away from home, LeMay finally got to see Helen and Janie and be home for Christmas and the new year.¹²⁶

125. Two “delegates” accompanied LeMay and represented the other two major combat components of the Eighth Air Force. Colonel Glenn C. Nye came on behalf of medium bombers. He was the commanding officer of the 322nd Bomb Group, a B-26 unit. Representing fighters was ace Colonel Hubert A. Zemke, who commanded the 56th Fighter Group, one of the first P-47 units to arrive in England and considered the best in the VIII Fighter Command by the fall of 1943. In addition, the group was joined by several Eighth Air Force staff officers, Colonels Martinstein and Ordway, and an RAF representative, Wing Commander Robinson. Sy Bartlett, a staff officer of General Eaker at the time, was sent with the group and wrote LeMay’s speeches for the tour. The officers imparted their combat experience to fellow airmen and spoke to civilian workers at ten air force training facilities and several aircraft manufacturing plants in the United States. In addition, LeMay received his Distinguished Flying Cross and Distinguished Service Cross for Regensburg on December 16 back in Washington. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 202–203; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 41; Beckemeier, “November 23, 1943,” LeMay Daily Diary; Major General J. A. Ulio, AG-201 LeMay, Curtis E., Distinguished Service Cross, the U.S. War Department, December 16, 1943, CELMPR; and Brigadier General David G. Barr, General Order No. 94, Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, December 8, 1943, CELMPR.

126. He spent Thanksgiving as a passenger aboard the famous British liner and converted troopship *Queen Elizabeth* as part of a five-day journey across the Atlantic back to the United States. LeMay biographers Thomas Coffey and Warren Kozak contend that LeMay was “back in England before Christmas.” LeMay himself does not give a precise date for his return. According to his aide, however, the general did not arrive back in England until January 19. On January 20, 1944, he states: “At 1645 hours, General LeMay returned to headquarters having driven down from Wide-wing [Eighth Air Force Headquarters]. He flew from the States and arrived in Prestwick, Scotland, yesterday morning. He appeared to be in excellent health and indicated he had a most successful trip but was very happy to be back in the ETO.” It is likely, therefore, that LeMay was actually in the United States for approximately two months. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 301; Kozak, LeMay, 127; Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 106; and Beckemeier, “January 20, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

CHAPTER 7

The Luftwaffe Defeated January–June 15, 1944

We had conquered our individual and collective fears and
given a creditable performance under enemy fire.¹

—MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY

“All well and safe. Please don’t worry,” read a telegram sent to Mrs. Helen LeMay on January 18, 1944.² Dispatched the day before her husband returned to Great Britain, General LeMay’s note renewed the couple’s chain of correspondence that was briefly interrupted by his whirlwind bond tour in the United States. The trip was a temporary, but welcome, reprieve from the rigors of command and allowed LeMay to visit his family after more than a year apart from them. Moreover, the bond tour introduced the general to the factories and workers across the country that produced his bombers, as well as the new fliers who were being trained at bases across the United States.³ In addition, LeMay’s meeting with General Henry Arnold’s staff likely furthered the general’s inclination to give LeMay a combat command in the forthcoming B-29 Superfortress fleet slated to begin the strategic bombing campaign against Japan in June 1944.⁴

1. Curtis E. LeMay, “Some Lessons of World War II,” Kenyon College, June 23, 1946, CELPLOC.

2. Curtis E. LeMay, “Postal Telegraph to Mrs. C. E. LeMay,” January 18, 1944, CELMPR.

3. LeMay reportedly got some satisfaction out of the tour, despite his aversion to speechmaking, because he believed that the presentations offered by himself and his comrades to factory workers would inspire “a whole-souled devotion to the job which they were doing,” although it is notable that he believed it “strange” that they needed this encouragement to provide “the mechanical equipment with which we warred.” The tour allowed him to impart advice to instructors and trainees who were preparing for duty overseas, especially regarding aerial gunnery. “I did everything I could to step up gunnery proficiency,” he remembered. “People were quizzing me, and once again I had to tell them what we really needed and how we weren’t getting it.” See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 303, 305.

4. The first B-29 raid against the home islands occurred from forward bases in China on June 16. See Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 168.

Despite this diversion, General LeMay was ready to get back to the 3rd Bomb Division and continue the Allies' campaign against the Luftwaffe. When the airman returned to England on January 19, he was introduced to both new leaders and a revised command structure of the USAAF in Europe.⁵ Further, during the course of the winter and spring of 1944, LeMay and the rest of the VIII Bomber Command would finally receive the numbers of long-range fighter escorts they had been calling for since the fall of 1942.

As the final months of 1943 ticked away, Roosevelt, Churchill, and the combined chiefs of staff (CCS) exerted greater pressure on the Eighth Air Force to destroy Germany's defensive fighter fleet and thereby achieve air superiority over Europe allowing the planned May invasion of France to commence unhindered by enemy interceptors. The results of the slugfest that occurred between the German Air Force (GAF; the Luftwaffe) and the USAAF during the summer and autumn of 1943 suggested that this goal was still out of reach. Although American forces were destroying German fighters and eliminating experienced pilots, they too, were suffering heavy casualties.⁶ This trend was expected to continue unless the Eighth's leadership could devise new tactics and/or introduce technology that would allow them to increase the Luftwaffe's losses while reducing their own. Both were forthcoming.⁷

The USAAF developed the technological solution to this problem—a true

5. See Beckemeier, "January 20, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

6. "From the strategic, though not the human, point of view, we could regularly replace our losses," recalled General Arnold; "the Germans, who also suffered heavily in these major air battles, could do so only sporadically." Allied air forces would eventually win this war of attrition but at great cost in men and aircraft, as well as the postponement of Operation Overlord from May 1 to June 6. See General Henry H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 487.

7. The air corps' prewar expectations, based on the precision strategic bombing theory conceived at the Air Corps Tactical School, identified the long-range bomber as the air force's most essential tool in future wars. Therefore, most of the scant resources allocated to the air corps' research and development division during the 1930s was used to generate a four-engine bomber and an accurate bombsight, the end products being, primarily, the Norden bombsight and the B-17, B-24, and later B-29 bombers. The Norden bombsight, it was believed, would enable precision bombing of targets, and the bombers themselves could achieve airspeeds that matched or exceeded those of contemporary fighter aircraft. In addition, air corps leaders expected that "the defensive armament of the large plane was more than a match for the small plane." Consequently, "[t]he big bomber, it was assumed, could take care of itself, and thus no need even existed for developing a fighter of sufficient range to serve as an escort plane." See Alfred Goldberg, "AAF Aircraft of World War II," in *Men and Planes*, vol. 6 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 212.

long-range fighter—early in the war, but struggled to bring it to fruition.⁸ In early 1943, Arnold revisited the project and assigned his deputy, General Barney Giles, to “[g]et a fighter to protect our bombers. Whether you use an existing type or have to start from scratch is your problem.”⁹ Giles collaborated with North American Aviation president J. H. “Dutch” Kindelberger to resolve the engine issues that prevented the company’s P-51 Mustang long-range fighter prototype from being completed.¹⁰ Arnold’s seven-day inspection of the Eighth in September 1943 to “find out for myself what they needed in the way of equipment and personnel” encouraged further investment in the Mustang, and he escalated the fighter’s production schedule and enlarged the air force’s previous order.¹¹

The P-51, a hybrid of American design and British power, took to the skies at the end of the year and, in combination with a change in tactics, subjugated the German fighter force in western Europe by the summer, facilitating the Allied invasion of northern France on June 6, 1944.¹² The initial supply of P-51s arrived in England in November 1943, and on December 11 of the same year forty-four Mustangs, the first group to join the VIII Fighter Command, escorted 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Division bombers on a mission against industrial targets

8. Arnold ordered more than two thousand P-51s in 1942 when British sources, who had requested the original P-51 design as a tactical fighter, suggested that the aircraft could be an excellent long-range interceptor if modified with the British Rolls Royce Merlin engine. The development of the new hybrid aircraft stalled in early 1943 because of problems with the Packard V-1650 engine—the licensed American copy of the Merlin. Giles, working directly with North American Aviation president J. H. “Dutch” Kindelberger, kick-started the program and ensured that the P-51 would eventually become the primary long-range fighter employed by the AAF. See Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 45; and Goldberg, “AAF Aircraft of World War II,” 218–220.

9. Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 45.

10. Goldberg, “AAF Aircraft of World War II,” 218–220.

11. Arnold, *Global Mission*, 444; and Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 27.

12. Before the entrance of the P-51, Republic Aviation’s P-47 Thunderbolt and Lockheed’s twin-engine P-38 Lightning were the primary fighters employed by the USAAF in Europe for escort duties. Although both the P-38 and P-47 reportedly performed effectively versus Germany’s workhorse fighters, the Me-109 and FW-190, their inability to escort bombers to the deepest German targets was a prohibitive shortcoming. Arnold, Eaker, and other air force leaders pursued modifications of these fighters to address their deficiency, primarily with the addition of drop tanks that extended the maximum range of both fighters. Although helpful, the Luftwaffe soon identified the new reach of the American fighters and adjusted accordingly, holding their own interceptors back until the bomber escorts were forced to return to England, leaving the B-17s and B-24s vulnerable to attack. The P-51 changed all that. Requiring roughly half the amount of gasoline necessary to travel the same distance as its older brothers, by the time both internal (added internal fuel tanks) and external modifications (drop tanks) had been added, the Mustang could fly approximately two thousand miles. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 92; Bowman, *The USAAF Handbook*, 99–101; and Goldberg, “AAF Aircraft of World War II,” 214–216.

in Emden, Germany.¹³ The Eighth's Mustang force would grow exponentially by June. On D-Day, the VIII Fighter Command dispatched nearly a thousand P-51s in support of the invasion.¹⁴

The USAAF's strategic bomber fleet was also growing. The Fifteenth Air Force was created on November 1, 1943, and continued to accumulate men and aircraft through the end of the year and the beginning of 1944.¹⁵ With the size of the Eighth Air Force also on the rise, in order to efficiently coordinate the strategic bombing campaign, it became necessary to reorganize the air force's command structure in Europe to synchronize units located in the Mediterranean and Great Britain.¹⁶ The Allies' scheduled May 1 invasion of France left only three months for the American and British air forces to achieve their goal of eliminating the German aerial threat. The resulting organization was titled the U.S. Strategic and Tactical Air Forces in Europe (USSTAF) and was led by Lieutenant General Carl "Tooey" Spaatz.

On January 6, 1944, General Spaatz arrived in London to assume command of the USSTAF.¹⁷ As CO, he directed both the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces. He elevated the former VIII Bomber Command head, Major General Frederick Anderson, to his chief of staff for operations. Arnold, meanwhile, promoted Lieutenant General Ira Eaker to command the newly minted Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (MAAF), including both the Twelfth and Fifteenth

13. The first P-51s to operate in Europe began duty with the Ninth Air Force in November. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 95; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 149; and Bowman, *The USAAF Handbook*, 99.

14. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 259.

15. The Fifteenth Air Force was the American strategic bombing air force based in the Mediterranean and headquartered at Bari, Italy, following Operation Avalanche, in which American and British forces invaded and conquered southern Italy from German forces in September and October 1943. It began operations under Major General James "Jimmy" Doolittle. On January 6, command of the Fifteenth was passed on to Lieutenant General Nathan Twining with Doolittle's transfer to England. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 470.

16. The conquest of southern Italy by Allied ground forces in early October allowed General Spaatz, then in command of the NAAF, to acquire Foggia and its surrounding area, which housed a series of extensive airfields constructed by the Royal Italian Air Force and also utilized by Nazi forces prior to the Allied invasion. Both Arnold and Spaatz envisioned the Foggia complex as the primary base from which the forthcoming Fifteenth Air Force could strike Luftwaffe, transportation, and oil industry targets that Eighth Air Force bombers could not reach in central, southern, and southeastern Europe. See Arnold, *Global Mission*, 476; Albert F. Simpson, "The Fifteenth Air Force, in Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 546; and David R. Mets, *Master of Airpower: General Carl A. Spaatz* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), 184.

17. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 472.

*Air Forces, although Spaatz had ultimate authority over the Fifteenth as well as RAF strategic bombing units operating in the area.*¹⁸

General Eaker's transfer was a bitter pill for the patriarch of the Eighth Air Force, who was finally receiving the number of units necessary to dispatch armadas of bombers against German targets on the scale that Arnold and British leaders required. The fact was noted by his successor, Major General Jimmy Doolittle, who remarked, "Eaker had come heartbreakingly close to his goal when I took over command."¹⁹ Eaker's diplomatic expertise had undoubtedly saved the daylight precision bombing campaign several times, most notably in his meeting with Churchill before the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, but Arnold believed that overall Eaker had underperformed in his role as Eighth Air Force CO.²⁰ The air force's chief, attempting to soften the blow, "told [Eaker] his new assignment was a promotion, but in his mind, he had been sacked, and by Hap Arnold, his longtime friend, mentor, and co-author."²¹

There was another major outside factor that contributed to the general's transfer. As the Allies were preparing for the invasion of France, an American, Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was placed in command of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). He would be responsible for coordinating British and American ground, air, and naval forces, and executing the invasion itself, as well as picking his subordinates for the various arms. Ike's success in North Africa and Italy was built upon his strong relationships with able commanders. General Spaatz, as CO of the NAAF and

18. The creation of the USSTAF was agreed upon after much deliberation between the CCS, as well as Churchill, Arnold, and Roosevelt at the Tehran Conference in December 1943. Roosevelt and Arnold probably agreed on naming Spaatz as USSTAF commander following the pair's meeting with Spaatz two days before the Cairo Conference that took place on November 22–26. The MAAF was also established during these meetings. It incorporated the RAF Mediterranean Air Command with Spaatz's previous unit, the North African Air Forces (NAAF). It did not include RAF units operating out of England, which remained under the control of RAF marshal Arthur Harris. See Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 103; Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, foreword to *Europe: Argument to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945*, vol. 3 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), vi; and James Parton, "Air Force Spoken Here": *General Ira Eaker and the Command of the Air* (Bethesda, MD: Adler and Adler, 1986), 351.

19. General James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle and Carroll V. Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again* (New York: Bantam Books, 2001), 341.

20. Although Eaker considered his transfer to the MAAF a demotion in prestige, it was a promotion in terms of size. The organization encompassed a total (RAF, French, and American forces) of 321,429 men and 12,598 aircraft. *Ibid.*, 271; and Parton, "Air Force Spoken Here," 351.

21. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 270.

*Twelfth Air Force, worked closely with Eisenhower in North Africa and Italy and was, therefore, a natural selection. According to Spaatz's biographer David Mets, Eisenhower's preference for Spaatz was "cemented . . . under trial in the Mediterranean battles that solidified the relationship and influenced Eisenhower to take Spaatz with him to England when he returned to take command of Overlord."*²²

When General Spaatz took command of the USSTAF, he retained one of his closest deputies, Major General Jimmy Doolittle (CO of the Fifteenth Air Force), to replace Eaker at the helm of the Eighth Air Force. Described by General Eisenhower as "a dynamic personality and a bundle of energy," Doolittle was a fiery commander and well liked among his subordinates.²³ Another of the early American aerial pioneers, Doolittle started his career as a pilot for the Signal Corps during World War I and became a key figure in the development of flight in the United States.²⁴ He is perhaps most famous for his command of the B-25 raid of the Japanese home islands executed from the flight deck of the USS Hornet on April 18, 1942.²⁵ Apart from that celebrated action, Doolittle spent the bulk of the war in the Mediterranean Theater and commanded both the Twelfth Air Force and the Northwest African Strategic Air Force before being assigned to lead the fledgling Fifteenth at its birth in November 1943.²⁶

As CO, Doolittle bolstered the progress of the Eighth Air Force toward its goal of aerial superiority. Soon after taking command, the general ordered the VIII Fighter Command, led by General William Kepner, to take the offensive. Under Eaker, "[t]he mission of the escorts was unequivocal . . . pro-

22. Mets, *Master of Airpower*, 181.

23. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 122.

24. Before World War I, Doolittle pursued his education at the University of California, Berkeley, in military aeronautics and went on to earn both a master of science and a Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after the war. His brilliant mind and thirst for adventure fueled his many exploits during the interwar period, benefiting the air corps and the American aeronautical industry in general. These accomplishments were highlighted by his cross-country flight, the first of its kind, in a DH-4 on September 4, 1922, as well as the first successful "blind" or "instrument" takeoff, flight, and landing in dense fog on September 24, 1929. He officially retired on February 15, 1930, and joined the Air Corps Reserves in order to work for the Shell Oil Company's aviation division. Throughout the next decade, Doolittle continued to serve as an adviser to the Army Air Corps as well as private companies until he came back to active duty on July 1, 1940, and helped the air force prepare for World War II. See Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 80–82, 147, 157, 201.

25. *Ibid.*, 14.

26. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 470.

test bombers and [do] not leave them.”²⁷ Indeed, the VIII Fighter Command’s motto reflected this attitude: “The first duty of the Eighth Air Force Fighters is to bring the bombers back alive.”²⁸ Upon seeing the directive on the wall of Kepner’s office, Doolittle ordered it to be replaced with: “The first duty of the Eighth Air Force is to destroy German Fighters.”²⁹ Now American interceptors would hunt down their German counterparts before they reached targeted American bombers, both in the air and on the ground.³⁰ Doolittle, as a former fighter pilot, believed that fighters were inherently an offensive weapon and the men who flew them “pugnacious individuals by nature . . . trained to be aggressive in the air.”³¹ In reaction to Doolittle’s charge, “tears came to Bill’s eyes,” remembered Doolittle, and he “confirmed later that he was ‘overjoyed’ at my decision and said he could now use his fighters as he knew he should.”³² Bomber crews as well were heartened by Doolittle’s arrival. “I must say that Doolittle, from our standpoint, was a big improvement [over Eaker],” recalled General T. R. Milton, then a lieutenant colonel with the 351st Bomb Group.³³ “Suddenly we felt much more in tune or in touch with the Eighth Air Force,” he recalled. Doolittle “promptly let us do some things that we wanted to do,” such as assembling at a rendezvous point after climbing to altitude individually to prevent collisions and save fuel.³⁴

Because of the changes in leadership and tactics, as well as the influx of the P-51s, German fighter forces would be “crushed through the intervention of long-range fighters in early 1944—on top of the steady attrition suffered by the German air force in prior years.”³⁵ It forced the Luftwaffe “into the thankless role of trying to get back into the struggle for control of the air with masses of inexperienced and inadequately trained pilots.”³⁶ LeMay and the rest of the bomber commanders were anxious about this change in tactics initially but would praise Doolittle’s decision as bomber losses fell precipitously by the end of the spring.³⁷

27. Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 345.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. It is important to note that Doolittle directed Kepner to still assign some fighters to escort bombers, but the bulk of the force was expected to “go hunting for Jerries.” According to Doolittle, his revision of the Eighth’s fighter tactics “was the most important and far-reaching military decision I made during the war.” *Ibid.*, 345–346.

31. *Ibid.*, 274.

32. *Ibid.*, 345.

33. Milton, interview 1775, UNTOHC, 28.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 750.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 346.

UNKNOWN, JANUARY 17, 1944³⁸

Dear Helen,

I suppose you are disappointed in the change in plans. A wire came in today from Spaatz complaining about my transfer, so General Arnold gave up. However, I wouldn't be surprised if I came back in three months or so. I'm just as well satisfied because the headaches have mostly been solved in my job over there while they would just be starting in the new one. As long as I couldn't be with you and Janie anyway, I might as well be overseas.

Use your own judgment about going to see Sybil.³⁹ I imagine you are tired of staying at home, I hope that sooner or later we will be able to lead a normal existence again. If you leave I would fill the gas tank and have Faith start the car every few days and run it for a few minutes to keep the battery up.⁴⁰ Take good care of Janie so she doesn't get any more colds this winter.

I'll try and do better writing even if it means losing a little more sleep. I'm glad I got home even for a short time. It's better than a lot of people have had.

Love,
Curt

In Mission with LeMay, the general professed that he “knew practically nothing” about the B-29 program, beyond rumors, before he took over the XX Bomber Command in June 1944.⁴¹ In Superfortress, he recalled: “The B-29 project was top secret, and I knew nothing of it until I got orders to go over to India in July 1944 to take command of the XX Bomber Command of the new Twentieth Air Force.”⁴² LeMay was not part of Arnold's inner circle, and

38. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

39. Sybil Winn, wife of Colonel Raymond “Cowboy” Winn. Sybil was a close friend of Helen's and was living in Montgomery, Alabama, at this time near Gunter Field, a training depot assigned to the AAF Eastern Flying Training Command, where her husband was stationed as its CO. See U.S. Air Force, “Brigadier General Raymond L. Winn,” Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7627>, accessed April 17, 2011.

40. Faith Chandler, Helen's sister.

41. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 321.

42. The Twentieth Air Force was established as the command entity of all B-29 bomber forces operating in the Pacific Theater. The Twentieth was directly controlled by the joint chiefs of staff with Arnold acting as its executive. The XX Bomber Command existed under this umbrella entity; it began operations in June 1944 out of India and China, along with the XXI Bomber Command, which was established on Guam in late summer 1944 following the invasion and capture of the

it was unlikely that he had much detailed information about the B-29 project, but he probably gained some knowledge of it during his meeting with Hansell and the rest of Arnold's staff when he arrived in Washington in late November 1943.⁴³ As the spring wore on, he gleaned facts about the program's progress and displayed an interest in becoming involved with it.

Operation Matterhorn, the planned strategic bombing campaign against the Japanese based in the China, Burma, and India Theater, was scheduled to begin on April 15, and General Arnold intended to get LeMay involved; indeed, he had a position in mind for him.⁴⁴ As evidenced in the above letter, General Spaatz required LeMay to remain 3rd Bomb Division commander during the critical transition period surrounding the creation of the USSTAF. This tug-of-war was evidenced in a telephone conversation between two key members of Arnold's staff—General Giles, then in London, and Brigadier General Laurence Kuter (assistant chief of the air staff) back in Washington—on January 10, 1944.⁴⁵ While discussing interstaff transfers, General Giles stated, "Reference the assignment of LeMay to B-29 Project, it is strongly recommended by Spaatz and Doolittle that LeMay continue his assignment here [in England] for at least 3 more months since Bomber Commands are inactivated

Mariana Islands by American marine and army units. General Kenneth B. Wolfe was the first air force officer to directly command the B-29s. Arnold placed him in charge of the B-29 project at its inception in 1939 and allowed him to lead the first combat unit, the 58th Bombardment Wing, XX Bomber Command, which arrived at its first headquarters at Chakulia, India, on April 2, 1944. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 399. For the quotation, see LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 80.

43. LeMay likely did not meet with Arnold during this visit. LeMay biographer Warren Kozak argued that he did as soon as LeMay arrived in Washington, approximately November 30. LeMay embarked on the *Queen Elizabeth* on November 24 and spent five days at sea before arriving in New York and flying down to the Pentagon. Regardless of the specific day LeMay disembarked, Arnold had left Washington accompanied by FDR and the other members of the JCS on November 11 to attend the Sextant and Eureka conferences. He did not return to the capital until December 15, most likely after LeMay and the other Eighth Air Force officers began their bond tour. Further, in a 1965 oral history interview, LeMay stated, "I think the first time I ever saw him [Arnold] was [when] he was Chief of Staff when I came back on the way from England on the way to India to stop into Headquarters and he gave me a decoration. I think that was the first time I ever met him personally." Arnold claimed to have met LeMay for the first time during his September 1943 tour of the Eighth Air Force. If Arnold and LeMay did meet in person between then and the summer of 1944, it was within the span of December 15 to January 18, the day LeMay flew back to England. See Kozak, *LeMay*, 126; Beckemeier, "November 23, 1943," *LeMay Daily Diary*; Beckemeier, "January 19, 1944," *LeMay Daily Diary*; LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 301; and Arnold, *American Air Power Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 67. For the quotation, see General Curtis E. LeMay, interview by undisclosed, January 12, 26, and 27, 1965, interview 714, USAFOHC, 52.

44. Matterhorn was agreed upon at Sextant in November, to the delight of Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek. See LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 73–74.

45. Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 413.

and a great deal of responsibility placed on Air Division Commanders. I recommend that LeMay be returned here for 3 months . . . [and] also recommend that General Armstrong be selected to take the job set up for LeMay.”⁴⁶ Kuter responded, “Three more months would eliminate LeMay from the B-29 picture. [I] believe General Arnold would not accept Armstrong as a substitute.”⁴⁷ LeMay was not awarded a B-29 command at this time, but, counter to Kuter’s prediction, he was assigned the XX Bomber Command in the summer. Since this conversation took place in early January, it is reasonable to assume that Arnold began considering LeMay for a position in the B-29 program during the Cairo Conference in November or the Tehran Conference in December, when he, along with Spaatz and others, was working on the new command structure of the USSTAF in Europe.

Throughout the spring, LeMay learned more about the B-29s and met officers personally involved with the new bomber. On March 1, Colonels Lewis R. Parker and Alva L. Harvey, both group commanders in the project, arrived at Elveden to “spend ten days or so in the division, getting some practical combat experience.”⁴⁸ Evidently, they passed on some news to the general as well. In his letter to Helen that day, LeMay remarked, “It’s beginning to look as though I will be home again in April,” and he then went on to discuss two officers, presumably Parker and Harvey, who had arrived at his headquarters and were “both in the business.” On March 11, he wrote a letter to General Eaker thanking him for the recommendation he had sent to Arnold concerning LeMay’s involvement with the B-29 program: “I believe I am returning to the States next month to take part in the B-29 program.”⁴⁹ Nineteen days later he wrote to Helen, “The job I almost had while at home still looms on the horizon,” a

46. “Telephone Conversation between General Giles in London and General Kuter in Washington,” January 10, 1944, CELMPR.

47. Ibid.

48. Parker was commanding officer of the 40th Bomb Group, and he took command of the B-29 unit in July 1943. He was sent to the 3rd Division along with Colonel Harvey to “study tactical problems and techniques of air operations in the European Theater.” Harvey was the commanding officer of the 444th Bomb Group, another B-29 unit slated to transfer to the CBI Theater in April. Harvey had also served as a B-29 test pilot during its developmental phase. Both officers took part in a number of combat missions as well. Colonel Parker, however, was shot down on March 6 during a mission near Bremen, Germany, and was held as a prisoner of war by German forces until the end of the war. See Beckemeier, “March 1–6, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary; Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 96–97, 318; Turner Publishing, *40th Bombardment Group* (VH) History (New York: Turner Publishing, 1988), 15; Nigel Moll, “Aurora’s Secret,” *Flying Magazine* 120, no. 3 (March 1993): 100–102; and U.S. Air Force, “Major General Lewis R. Parker,” Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6684>, accessed August 3, 2012.

49. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 107.

prospect that was further encouraged by the arrival of an experimental B-29 to his headquarters on May 23, where it remained for several days.⁵⁰

By March 25, LeMay had received definite news that he was not going to be transferred. "It looks as though the job I almost had while at home has definitely fallen through and I'll keep this one, but you never can tell what is coming up next." Despite this, LeMay was still hopeful. On April 27, he replied to an April 13 letter addressed to him by General Kuter in which he congratulated LeMay on his recent promotion to major general. LeMay returned the courtesy and also inquired, "I'm curious to know what happened to the B-29 plan now that I am remaining here. I hope it doesn't mean too radical a change. We all have high hopes for them and I expect we will hear big things from them soon."⁵¹ By this time, LeMay was one of the major figures in the AAF and certainly one of the organization's top combat commanders. His organizational talents and tactical prowess would help progress the fledgling B-29 units in the CBI.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JANUARY 21, 1944

Dear Helen,

Just a note to let you know I arrived at the old stand. I wired you this morning, but this may beat it back. Write my mother also. I have time for only one letter today and this is it. Seems good to be back. I'll write details later.

Love,
Curt

50. Piloted by Colonel Frank Cook, the B-29 was sent to England from the United States to test its long-range flight capability as well as provide a bluff to distract Japanese suspicion from the XX Bomber Command, which was establishing itself at bases in India and China. See Beckemeier, "March 23, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and James Lea Cate, "Matterhorn Logistics," in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki*, June 1944 to August 1945, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948-1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 78.

51. Notably, General Kuter forwarded their correspondence to General Hansell, remarking, "Note Curt LeMay's interest in B-29's." A full transcription of the letter is located in the Appendix. See Major General L. S. Kuter to Major General Curtis LeMay, April 13, 1944, CELMPR; and Major General Curtis LeMay to Major General L. S. Kuter, April 27, 1944, CELMPR.

*General LeMay arrived back in Great Britain on January 19, landing in Prestwick, Scotland, then traveling to London to confer with Generals Spaatz and Doolittle at USSTAF before flying back to Elveden on January 20.*⁵²

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JANUARY 23, 1944⁵³

Dear Helen,

I'm beginning to be able to see over the pile of work on my desk. You probably won't appreciate it, but getting back here was a little like coming home. Chick Harding was in today.⁵⁴ They just had a boy on December 23. I had a very nice trip over—twenty hours from start to finish, good weather all the way. Will you send two copies of the pictures we took to my mother? She will probably want to send one to Leonard.⁵⁵ I am mailing some Irish linen handkerchiefs to you and Janie; birthday and Valentine's presents. I hope they get there in time. I suppose it will take me a month or so to get over not being home.

Love,
Curt

52. Beckemeier, "January 20, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

53. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

54. Colonel Neal B. "Chick" Harding was four-year letterman for the West Point football team (1924–1927) and the commanding officer of the 100th Bomb Group. Harding, although brave, was tolerant of unruly behavior among his men during down time. According to the 100th's public relations officer and historian, John R. Nilsson, Colonel Harding "seemed oblivious of the raucous bedlam in the officers' club, for there were brawls, bicycle races inside the club, glasses smashed," and other activities. This was not atypical for men exposed to the amount of stress experienced by the airmen, especially considering that, during the war, the 100th sustained some of the worst casualty rates of any group in the entire Eighth Air Force, which led to their nickname, "the Bloody Hundredth." It was, however, behavior that was frowned upon by some general officers, including LeMay. In an interview with historian Thomas Coffey, the general admitted, "We had been together at Selfridge Field [in the early thirties]. He [Harding] wasn't doing very well [with the 100th]. I knew I had to fire him but I just couldn't. I thought he'd snap out of it." Despite his shortcomings, Colonel Harding was almost universally well liked by his peers. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 464; *Army Football 2011 Media Guide* (West Point, NY: U.S. Military Academy, 2011), 200; John R. Nilsson, *The Story of the Century* (N.p.: n.p., 1946), 10; and Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 100.

55. Leonard LeMay.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JANUARY 28, 1944⁵⁶

Dear Helen,

No letters yet, but the calendar says it's only ten days since I left, so it's a little early to expect any mail. In a way, it seems as though I have been back for ages. I have been busy getting caught up with all the things that have happened since I left. I should be back on a normal routine in a day or so. I supposed you have already left for Sybil's by this time? I don't have her address, so I'll keep sending mail home until I hear from you.

I think I am still suffering from the after-effects of the trip home. It was kind of hard to leave after being home, but I suppose I will outgrow it eventually.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 1, 1944⁵⁷

Dear Helen,

Two V mail letters today, so I guess I won't have to stop your allotment. I won't be able to get Janie another tam.⁵⁸ We can only buy clothes for our own personal use now; however, I am trying to find a radio for her but I don't know whether I can get one or not.

I don't know whether I told you or not Butch came out for a visit and finally spent the night, etc.⁵⁹ Joe Preston, who came over with me, is going home to attend the Army and Navy War College.⁶⁰ Russ Wilson is on leave

56. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Tam is shorthand for tam-o'-shanter, a Scottish woolen hat usually made with a tassel in the center.

59. Then-Colonel Francis H. "Butch" Griswold, LeMay's oldest air force friend. Griswold accompanied General LeMay and Colonel Wilson back to Elveden Hall from a division commanders' meeting that took place at Pinetree on January 21. That night, according to Beckemeier, they all enjoyed "about one dozen T-bone steaks," which LeMay's assistant chief of staff for operations, Colonel Joseph J. Preston, had procured during a trip to Ireland. See chapter 6, note 95, for biographical information on Colonel Griswold. See Beckemeier, "January 21, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary, for quotation.

60. Colonel Joseph J. Preston served as a squadron leader and operations officer for LeMay in the 305th Bomb Group before accompanying the general during his rise to chief of the 4th Bomb Wing/3rd Bomb Division, where Preston assumed the duties of LeMay's assistant chief of staff for

for a week.⁶¹ He looked tired when I came back. I have wired \$1,495 to Montgomery.⁶² Let me know when it gets there.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 5, 1944⁶³

Dear Helen,

The mail is coming through alright now; two or three letters at a time. I just wired you \$1,495.00. Be sure and let me know when it arrives.

What kind of a job did Jack get and did Doubleday help him any?⁶⁴ How does he like what he is doing? The bomber division still has quite a way to go to reach the quarter million necessary.

I hope that Janie enjoyed her party and that the place wasn't wrecked. Aaron is off again—same place he went before.⁶⁵ He shouldn't be gone too long though.

We have been rather busy lately and haven't had much sleep, but the

operations (A-3). Preston left England for the United States on January 30 and was replaced by Colonel John K. Gerhart, previously commanding officer of the 95th Bomb Group. See Beckemeier, "January 30, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 165.

61. Brigadier General Russell Wilson, commanding general of the 4th Bomb Wing. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 376.

62. Montgomery, Alabama.

63. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434. This was the first letter addressed to 25 Allendale Road, Montgomery, Alabama, where Helen and Janie were staying with the Winns. All previous letters were addressed to Lakewood, Ohio.

64. It is not clear which "Jack" LeMay is referencing here.

65. Colonel Alfred "Aaron" Kessler Jr., was the commanding officer of the 95th Bomb Group when he arrived in England in April 1943 and was promoted to commanding officer of the 13th Bomb Wing in August of the same year. Early in 1944, Doolittle proposed the resumption of shuttle-bombing missions based on the experience and intelligence gathered from General LeMay's mission against Regensburg in August 1943, with one twist. This time, American bombers would fly to airfields in the Soviet Union rather than North Africa at the end of their missions. Soviet gains in the east made it practicable for the Americans to use bases in Ukraine as service depots for this purpose. Spaatz agreed to look into the possibility of such an enterprise and sent Kessler to work with the Soviets to establish new bases or secure the use of Russian ones. In February 1944, the colonel set up his headquarters at Poltava, Ukraine, and in June Spaatz launched Operation Frantic, a series of shuttle missions flown by both the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces. They were reckoned largely unsuccessful and ended by late September. As a result, Kessler returned to England in October 1944 and resumed command of the 13th Bomb Wing. See Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 37, 58; Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 344, 372; and U.S. Air Force, "Major General Alfred A. Kessler Jr.," U.S. Air Force Biographies, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6049>, accessed April 17, 2011.

harder we work, the sooner we will be home. I don't remember whether I told you or not, Jack came down and had dinner the other night and picked up the things I brought for him.⁶⁶

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 10, 1944⁶⁷

Dear Helen,

I suppose you have arrived at Sybil's by this time? I have been sending mail through for some time. The radio for Janie looks promising although it will be a mixture of old radio junk and what new parts I can buy, which isn't much here. It will work though and that is all that matters. Russ is in the hospital with a combination of flu and chest congestion but should be out in a few days. I hope Janie enjoyed her birthday party. I wish I could have been there for it. I suppose the pooches kicked up the customary roar with all the kids there.

Love,
Curt

Sometime at the beginning of February, Helen and Janie traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, to stay with Colonel Raymond and Sybil Winn, friends from LeMay's tour with the 6th Pursuit Squadron in Hawaii.⁶⁸ It is unclear why Helen decided to make this trip. In his January 17 letter, LeMay suggests that she simply wanted to get away for a while. "Use your own judgment about going to see Sybil," he advised; "I imagine you are tired of staying at home." However, in a 1998 oral history interview, Janie revealed another possible motive for their journey. Asked by Nebraska historian Barbara Sommers if she remembered "the kidnapping attempt or other situations against your father," Janie replied, "I think there was one when I was . . . during the war. We had to go to Montgomery, Alabama, and we lived there for a while. I can't remember how long. We lived with another

66. Jack Chandler, LeMay's brother-in-law.

67. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

68. We do not know exactly which day Helen and Janie arrived in Montgomery or when they left at the end of the spring. We do know from the headings of the original copies of LeMay's letters that the first letter sent to the Winns' address was postdated on February 5, and the final one was postdated on May 28.

military . . . some friends.”⁶⁹ It is plausible that a kidnapping plot existed. On February 27, LeMay warned Helen, “Keep a close watch on Janie and stay out of the public eye. There isn’t any use in taking chances with those crack pots.”

Another possibility is that Helen required the companionship of old air force friends to counter the loneliness caused by LeMay’s return to England. He, too, was experiencing some angst because of his separation from Helen and Janie. “I hope that sooner or later we will be able to lead a normal existence again,” he wrote on January 17. On January 28, he confided to Helen, “I think I am still suffering from the after-effects of the trip home. It was kind of hard to leave after being home, but I suppose I will outgrow it eventually.” While LeMay’s winter trip reunited the general with Janie and Helen, it also reminded the couple that a return to normalcy might be long in coming. The bond tour was just a temporary respite, as long as the Germans and Japanese remained viable enemies. These feelings were likely compounded by the unfulfilled hope that the general would be transferred to the B-29 program in early 1944, necessitating, at least briefly, an extended stay in the United States, because the first B-29 units were not scheduled to begin operations in Asia until the spring.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 14, 1944⁷⁰

Dear Helen,

Just a note before I start for London. I’m going to a dinner party tonight given by Lord Trenchard.⁷¹ You probably remember me mentioning him while I was home?

Who should come in to one of our mission critiques the other day but Benny Webster.⁷² He is executive officer of one of the fighter wings and

69. JLOHI.

70. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

71. Lord Hugh Trenchard. He was one of Britain’s foremost air force advocates, and the most prominent early British air theorist who influenced American air theorist General “Billy” Mitchell during World War I, when Mitchell was with Trenchard as a military observer. Trenchard served as chief of the air staff during that conflict and again during the interwar years, as well as marshal of the Royal Air Force. He was well respected by both British and American air force officers and was the unofficial inspector general of the RAF during World War II. See Gavin Lyall, “Marshal of the Royal Air Force: The Viscount Trenchard,” in *The War Lords: Military Commanders of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Field Marshal Sir Michael Carver (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 176–187.

72. Colonel Benjamin J. Webster, executive officer of the 67th Fighter Wing. See U.S. Air Force, “Lieutenant General Benjamin J. Webster,” U.S. Air Force Biographies, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7536>, accessed April 17, 2011.

is stationed near here. He is married and has an heir. He has spent about four years at West Point.

Hope you received the Valentine cable.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 17, 1944⁷³

Dear Helen,

I hope your colds were cured by the time you left Cleveland. Janie is probably enough trouble on the train without a cold to complicate things. Bill is almost finished with his operational tour.⁷⁴ I don't know whether he will go home or not. If I were in his place, I wouldn't.

My letters have probably caught up by this time. V-mail takes a little longer to get back from here than it does to come over, but the pipe line should be full by this time.

The dinner with Lord Trenchard was a success. I've never seen so many generals in one spot in all my life. Hope you are able to get a suntan while you are away.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 20, 1944⁷⁵

Dear Helen,

I think I am doing rather well with my correspondence since I returned. I hope you aren't complaining too much. I had a letter from Doc Ryan.⁷⁶ I missed seeing him in Washington. He was out on a trip

73. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

74. The editors were unable to identify Bill.

75. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

76. Probably Brigadier General Llewellyn O. "Doc" Ryan. Ryan entered flight school at the same time as LeMay and also served with him in the 1st Pursuit Group at Selfridge Field, Michigan. Ryan and LeMay joined each other again in the 6th Pursuit Group at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii

someplace. I hope you are enjoying some sunshine. It has been cold and dreary here for the last two weeks. You still haven't mentioned what Jack is doing and if he is with Doubleday. Be careful who you have take care of Janie. They have a very high rate in Montgomery.⁷⁷ I haven't seen Smitty since I came back. There is a little reorganization going on in his department. I don't know what the final outcome will be.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 24, 1944⁷⁸

Dear Helen,

I have two letters from you today mailed the 9th and 12th, so evidently the V-mail has slowed down considerably. I certainly have been starting one every two or three days, which is excellent for me. The weather is clear practically every place in this section of the world today and we are taking advantage of it. I'm glad you are enjoying your stay at Sybil's; however, it will not be necessary for you to acquire any admiration. Russ is still on sick leave. Should be back this weekend. I still haven't heard if you received the last check for \$1,495 I sent February 2. Must answer your dad's letter. Don't get so busy you forget to take care of Janie.

Love,
Curt

starting in the summer of 1934 (Ryan arrived in July, LeMay in August), so they would have been longtime acquaintances by this time. In February 1944, General Ryan was serving as chief of staff for operations of the Air Corps Technical Training Command at Knollwood Field, North Carolina, although he was promoted to chief of the Technical Training Division, Army Air Corps headquarters, in Washington, D.C., the next month. See U.S. Air Force, "Brigadier General Llewellyn O. Ryan," U.S. Air Force Biographies, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7006>, accessed July 18, 2012; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 21–22.

77. The editors could not determine what illness LeMay is referring to here. Most likely, Montgomery was the site of an outbreak of polio or meningitis, which young children were especially susceptible to and parents were apt to be sensitive of, as evidenced by the general's fears regarding Janie's exposure to spinal meningitis during July 1941 as well as his hesitancy to bring Helen and Janie out to Pendleton, Oregon, in March 1942 when that town was battling several cases of polio. See chapters 3 and 4 above.

78. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 21–22.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 27, 1944⁷⁹

Dear Helen,

The picture came today and I need bad weather to have some copies made here. Yes, I noticed the attrition for a short time after I left, and I have also noticed the increasing interval between letters, especially since you went to Montgomery. You had better show a sudden burst of energy or I'll be issuing orders transferring you back to Lakewood.⁸⁰ I'm going to get 12 hours sleep tonight, I hope. We haven't had much this week. I suppose you have seen in the newspapers that we visited our friend "Johann's" town again with very good effect including the hospital this time.⁸¹ I wonder how she likes it? Jerry Williams is here now with a group.⁸² Keep a close watch on Janie and stay out of the public eye. There isn't any use in taking chances with those crack pots.

Love,
Curt

The second half of this letter is obviously quite fragmented, and there are several aberrations that merit discussion. "I suppose you have seen in the newspapers that we visited our friend 'Johann's' town again with very good effect including the hospital this time. I wonder how she likes it? Jerry Williams is here now with a group. Keep a close watch on Janie and stay out of the public eye. There isn't any use in taking chances with those crackpots." Although other letters in this collection are disjointed, February 27's is particularly so. In addition to the garbled monograph, LeMay's badgering of Helen, while sometimes sarcastic, is here sharper than normal. His reference to damage caused to Leipzig's hospital was the only time to this date that he specifically mentioned a civilian structure that was affected by the Eighth's bombing cam-

79. Ibid.

80. Lakewood, Ohio, Helen LeMay's hometown.

81. "Johann's" town is probably a reference to the city of Leipzig, located roughly 119 miles southwest of Berlin. Leipzig was where composer Johann Sebastian Bach spent the bulk of his career and where he was buried following his death in 1750. During the war, the city was a large center for German fighter production and the first target to be hit by both British and American forces at the beginning of Big Week. RAF bombers opened Operation Argument on the evening of February 19 with an assault on the city, followed by 417 B-17s from the Eighth Air Force's 1st Bomb Division the next day, Sunday, February 20. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 182–183.

82. Colonel Gerald E. Williams, commanding officer of the 391st Bomb Group. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 279.

paign. As far as we know, LeMay was not ill, and the general himself did not highlight this period in an abnormal way in his autobiography or elsewhere in the record. The question, then, is, why was this letter different?

There are several possible explanations for this deviation. First, LeMay may have been suffering from exhaustion. He composed this note two days after the final raid of Big Week (February 20–25), which, up to that point, was the most intense series of missions the Eighth had yet engaged in during the war. The 3rd Division's cumulative losses from these actions were thirty-three bombers destroyed and 304 crewmen lost.⁸³ The greatest casualties sustained by the 3rd before Big Week occurred the previous year on October 10, 1943, when LeMay lost thirty bombers and 297 men in one day.⁸⁴ Consider, however, that the preparations for Big Week required the coordination of a larger overall organization than LeMay had commanded at any time in 1943 against a wider variety of targets over the course of a week. In addition, LeMay's war diary revealed that the commander was still engaged in unit tours and attended social/political events at the same time.⁸⁵ Consequently, it is plausible that stress was affecting the general's mind.

The second, and most probable, explanation is that the odd phrases are just extreme examples of LeMay's terse diction aggravated somewhat by stress. Given LeMay's curt manner of speaking, it is reasonable that this style of communication was evident in his letter writing as well. LeMay often composed letters as if he were answering specific questions or making direct comments in response to an issue addressed by Helen. Consequently, some letters resembled one half of a conversation without the benefit of contextual dialogue.

Finally, LeMay's almost casual remark about the bombing of "the hospital" was an unusual comment considering the Eighth Air Force's official policy forbidding the intentional destruction of civilian targets. LeMay's note could simply be an acknowledgment that bombers had hit the hospital as an unfortunate effect of collateral damage, or perhaps it was a heartless statement of fact.

Whatever factors influenced the tone of LeMay's February 27 letter, he likely needed at least twelve hours of sleep to recuperate from the events of the week of February 20. January and early February had been much less taxing. When the USSTAF began operations on January 16, Generals Spaatz and Doolittle faced the same weather problems Eaker battled during Euro-

83. See the appendix.

84. *Ibid.*

85. See Beckemeier, "February 20–27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

pean winters, which precluded them from launching the number of missions that Arnold and others desired.⁸⁶ While breakthroughs in radar technology allowed American forces to schedule more missions than had been possible the previous year, the damage to German aircraft factories was negligible.⁸⁷

Conversely, late February proved to be a pivotal moment in the Allies' air war against the Luftwaffe. Operation Argument, a joint venture by the RAF and USSTAF that targeted German fighter air frame and aircraft production factories, was the linchpin of this effort.⁸⁸ Eaker and Fred Anderson devised the plan in October 1943, and USSTAF leaders resurrected and modified it at the beginning of the new year to include the Ninth Air Force and Fifteenth Air Force in addition to the RAF Bomber Command and Eighth Air Force.⁸⁹ "The aim of Operation Argument," contended historian Donald Miller, "was nothing less than the annihilation of the Luftwaffe. Send in the bombers—the bait—to destroy the aircraft factories and then massacre the planes and pilots that came up to defend them."⁹⁰ P-51s, a huge force of improved P-47s, Doolittle's revision of fighter tactics, and the USSTAF's larger bomber fleet made Anderson's plan feasible in February 1944.⁹¹ Opposing this armada was a buttressed force of German fighters that spent the winter preparing to meet the

86. In fact, Doolittle was forced to call off several raids due to bad weather. Initially, this prompted Spaatz to question the general's aggressiveness and led to tension between the two; however, this changed one January day when Doolittle joined Spaatz for an inspection tour of Eighth Air Force units throughout England. After spending the night at one base and being assured that "the weather was okay for more visits," they ventured outside "into a heavy drizzle with minimum visibility." They attempted to visit two more bases until a sudden fog forced their experienced pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Kimmel, to make an emergency landing in a farmer's field. This experience demonstrated the unpredictability of long-range forecasting and the danger of relying exclusively on such reports, which could affect raiding units caught in abrupt weather changes. The European winter of 1943–1944 was reportedly one of the worst on record. Storms and ice were such a problem that, even with the aid of radar, before February 20 the USSTAF was only able to dispatch a total of twenty-one raids. For quotations, see Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 349. Also see Mets, *Master of Airpower*, 198–199.

87. Radar bombing raids did have the beneficial effect of drawing out German fighters, who lost as many pilots and aircraft to the icy weather conditions as they did in actual combat. In fact, Luftwaffe fighter casualties for the month of January in western Europe totaled approximately 1,050. See Ferguson, "Winter Bombing," 20; and Arthur Ferguson, "Big Week," in *Europe: Argument to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945*, vol. 3 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 47.

88. Ferguson, "Winter Bombing," 28.

89. Craven and Cate, foreword to *Europe: Argument to V-E Day*, xi–xii.

90. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 282.

91. Four months earlier, the Fifteenth Air Force had been in its infancy, and the Eighth Air Force had lacked both an adequate bomber force as well as effective long-range fighter support to make the campaign a success. *Ibid.*, 283–284.

inevitable sorties of American and British bombers that would come for their factories once the weather improved. What followed was a series of air battles that ranked among the largest in history up to that date.

Commonly known as Big Week, the campaign was initiated by the RAF with a raid against Leipzig on the night of February 19.⁹² The first American strike occurred the next morning when 314 B-17s from LeMay's 3rd Bomb Division struck Focke-Wulf and Heinkel factories near the German cities of Tutow and Rostock, respectively. The Eighth Air Force dispatched a total of 1,003 B-17 and B-24 bombers and 835 P-38, P-47, and P-51 fighters against targets throughout Germany, the largest force sent by the Americans since the war began.⁹³ Bomber groups from the Fifteenth Air Force were scheduled to accompany their peers from the Eighth, but tactical requirements of Allied forces engaged in the invasion of Anzio, taking place simultaneously with Argument, received precedence.⁹⁴ In addition, poor weather over targets in southern France, which had been assigned to the Ninth Air Force's medium bomber force, compelled the majority of those forces to abort their missions soon after takeoff.⁹⁵

Over the next four days, LeMay's 3rd Bomb Division played a key role in the advancement of Argument. On February 21, the general sent 281 B-17s against factories in the German cities of Diepholz, Brunswick, Hanover, Alhorn, and Verden.⁹⁶ The 3rd was scheduled to attack targets near Schweinfurt the next day, but weather forced LeMay to recall all 333 B-17s dispatched.⁹⁷ February 23 saw the entire Eighth Air Force grounded because of poor weather causing inadequate visibility for the visual sighting of targets. On the twenty-fourth,

92. RAF Bomber Command executed a raid every night for the five-day campaign. Ferguson, "Big Week," 43.

93. Notably, P-47s made up the bulk of the fighter force, committing 668 aircraft. By this time, many of the Thunderbolts were retrofitted with larger belly tanks (150 gallon capacity), which provided enough fuel for the fighters to accompany bombers for much further distances than previously achieved. The P-47s, led by ace Colonel Hubert Zemke, provided the body of Eighth Air Force's fighter support for the duration of Big Week, although the "legs" of P-51s were required to escort bombers to the furthest targets. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 183–184; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 287.

94. By the end of the week, the Fifteenth had joined the Eighth in several important missions, including a joint venture against Regensburg on the twenty-fifth. See Ferguson, "Big Week," 31–32; and Kit C. Carter and Robert Mueller, eds., *U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II Combat Chronology: 1941–1945* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1991), 317.

95. Only 35 of the total force of 135 B-26s made it to their assigned target. Some of the Ninth's fighters participated in escort duty of Eighth Air Force bombers. See Ferguson, "Big Week," 32–35; and Carter and Mueller, *U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II*, 313.

96. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 184.

97. *Ibid.*, 185.

LeMay sent his forces against Rostock once again, and on the final day the 3rd revisited the town that had made its commander famous on August 17, 1943. This time, however, LeMay sent 290 aircraft—nearly twice the number he had led the previous autumn—in a joint effort with 176 B-17s from the Fifteenth Air Force against the Messerschmitt factories surrounding Regensburg, with good results.⁹⁸

By the end of the week, Doolittle had committed a total of 3,300 bomber sorties against German targets. In merely five days, this force dropped approximately the same amount of bombs on enemy installations as the Eighth had during its entire first year of operation.⁹⁹ Argument cost American bombers approximately 6 percent of their total force, a drastic decline from casualties suffered during the summer and fall of 1943. In the February 25 raid against Regensburg alone, LeMay's force only suffered 4 percent casualties, versus 17 percent lost in the first attack against the town on August 17, 1943.¹⁰⁰ Fighters fared even better, losing only twenty-eight aircraft during the entire campaign. It was a costly operation for the Germans, who suffered approximately 450 fighters lost, escalating their total monthly casualties (in the western European Theater) from 1,050 in January to 1,501 in February, a trend that increased further in March to 1,591.¹⁰¹

Operation Argument was the beginning of the end for the Luftwaffe's fighter force, although initially it appeared to be a mere stumbling block. Despite the USSTAF's efforts to cripple Germany's fighter production, that nation's output actually increased over the next year; however, "[t]he seeming paradox of the attack on the aircraft plants is that, although production recovered quickly, the German air force after the attacks was not again a serious threat to Allied air superiority."¹⁰² Operation Argument proved the validity of General Doolittle's alteration of fighter tactics as well as the success of new modifications to the P-47 and the application of larger forces of P-51s. "As a result, German fighter losses mounted sharply," stated the summary report of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey of the European Theater. "The losses in planes were accompanied by losses in experienced pilots and disorganization and loss of the combat strength of squadrons and groups. By the spring of 1944

98. Ibid., 186, 188; and Ferguson, "Big Week," 41.

99. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 101.

100. See appendix. LeMay's force of 147 B-17s lost 25 aircraft and 204 airmen in the original Regensburg mission, compared to 13 aircraft and 114 airmen out of 290 airplanes on February 25, 1944.

101. Ferguson, "Big Week," 47.

102. *United States Strategic Bombing Survey Summary Report: European War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 7.

opposition of the Luftwaffe had ceased to be effective.”¹⁰³ General Doolittle phrased it more succinctly: “Germany was low in two essentials at a critical point: aircraft and pilots.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the destruction wrought to the German fighter industry at that particular time was fortuitous for the Allies. Although German fighter production increased by late spring, as was noted earlier, Operation Argument stalled this effort long enough for American air forces to gain the upper hand during the critical period directly preceding the Allied invasion in June.¹⁰⁵

By April, the USSTAF held air superiority over western Europe. Luftwaffe fighter forces continued to oppose the raiders but “now refused to commit . . . to a policy of full-scale opposition to the daylight bombing campaign.”¹⁰⁶ Instead, they retreated to bases further inland from the French coast and were more selective of the Allied operations that they opposed in force.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, the Luftwaffe’s “policy was one of conservation of strength and it conceded to the Allies the vital point of air superiority,” even while P-38s, P-47s, and P-51s continued to seek out and engage their enemies, both in the air and on the ground, when they did appear.¹⁰⁸ LeMay’s 3rd Division played a crucial part in this effort and reportedly performed well. The day after Argument’s final raid, the general awarded “over 30 DFCs . . . to officers and enlisted men of various groups in the 3d Bomb Division.”¹⁰⁹ On February 27, Colonel August Kissner, LeMay’s chief of staff, issued another sixty DFCs to members of the

103. This point was somewhat overstated as American bombers continued to take heavy casualties into April. By May, however, these losses were greatly reduced. *Ibid.*

104. Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 361.

105. As noted by historian Alfred Ferguson, “[t]he fact that the Germans suffered only a temporary setback in their overall program of aircraft production is less important than that they lost a significant number of planes at a critical point in the air war and that, at the same critical juncture, they were forced to reorganize and disperse the entire industry.” See Ferguson, “Big Week,” 45.

106. *Ibid.*, 47.

107. Often, German interceptors attacked bomber formations during brief periods when American and British fighters relieved each other of escort duty over the course of a mission. For example, British escorts could only accompany B-17s and B-24s to France, where it was necessary for longer-range American escorts to take over their duty. If miscommunication or delay occurred during this process, the unprotected bombers presented attractive and vulnerable targets for Luftwaffe fighters.

108. It is necessary to point out that USSTAF bomber forces still suffered grave casualties throughout March and April, when Spaatz and Doolittle continued to use their bombers as bait to bring Luftwaffe fighters to battle. The Eighth lost 409 bombers in April alone, greatly affecting the morale of crews throughout the command. By May, these casualties fell precipitously as the Luftwaffe lost a large portion of its experienced pilots and the USSTAF interceptor force received more P-51s. Ferguson, “Big Week,” 45; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 306–317.

109. Beckemeier, “February 26, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

3rd.¹¹⁰ *The campaign cost them a total of thirty-three B-17s destroyed and 304 men killed or missing in action.*¹¹¹

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MARCH 1, 1944¹¹²

Dear Helen,

No mail for quite some time, so you must be having a good time in Montgomery. A little more attention to business please. It's beginning to look as though I will be home again in April; however, that is so far away that anything can happen before then. All [illegible] and [illegible] are here on a . . .¹¹³ They are both in the business. I was going [illegible] when I was home before.

Love,
Curt

*After a week of rest and minor operations, the USSTAF turned its attention to Berlin for the first time on March 4. The city was an important target both industrially and psychologically, and the 3rd Bomb Division led the Eighth's raid against the German capital, although only thirty bombers made it to their target because of poor weather.*¹¹⁴ *It was only the first of four raids against the city that took place within a week's time. On March 6, which came to be known as "Bloody Monday," Eighth Air Force bombers encountered the heaviest German fighter resistance of the war—a total of four hundred interceptors were dispatched—and by the end of the day the Americans forfeited 69 out of 730 total bombers.*¹¹⁵ *This number included Chopstick, an H2X-equipped B-17 carrying newly promoted Brigadier General Russell Wilson, LeMay's executive officer and CO of the 4th Bomb Wing, who was killed while leading that*

110. Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 412; and Beckemeier, "February 27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

111. See Appendix.

112. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

113. Half of the sentence is illegible.

114. Raids against Berlin focused on German industrial targets near the city, primarily the Erkner ball bearing factory, but were principally purposed to coax German fighters to battle to continue the attrition of Luftwaffe pilots and aircraft. See Ferguson, "Big Week," 48.

115. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 195; and Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 300–302.

day's mission along with seven other crewmen when the aircraft was critically damaged by flak before crashing near the city.¹¹⁶ These actions were followed by two more raids on March 8 and 9, before inclement weather forced Eighth Air Force aircraft back to radar bombing targets.¹¹⁷ On March 9, no German fighters met the large American bomber stream because of the losses they had sustained on the sixth and the eighth.¹¹⁸

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MARCH 14, 1944¹¹⁹

Dear Helen,

I'm glad you are getting a little sunshine in Montgomery. I wish we had some of it over here. Tell Janie her radio won't be white. It will be sky blue with her name on it in orange. She will have to wait until after the war for a white one. No word on Russ yet.¹²⁰ Of course, it takes two or three months sometimes. Moe Spicer is in the same position, but his prospects are a little brighter.¹²¹ I went to fighter command for dinner the other night and Butch, Auton,¹²² Ed Anderson¹²³ and Woodbury¹²⁴ had their stars

116. To the credit of General Wilson and his crew, they were able to drop their payload before crashing. Wilson was reported missing in action the same day. See A. W. Kissner, Brigadier General, Chief of Staff, "APO 559," Headquarters, 3rd Bombardment Division, March 15, 1944, CELMPR; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 114–115; and Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 195.

117. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 194–197.

118. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 305.

119. *Ibid.*

120. At this time, LeMay did not know that General Wilson had been killed in action, and authorities assumed that Wilson and his crew were only missing, most likely captured and imprisoned by German forces.

121. Colonel Henry R. "Moe" Spicer was commanding officer of the 357th Fighter Group and was shot down over the English Channel on March 3, 1944. He survived the crash and was taken prisoner by German forces two days later. Spicer was then transferred to a prisoner of war camp, Stalag Luft 1, in Barth, Germany, where he spent the remainder of the war until the camp was liberated by Soviet forces on April 30, 1945. See C. V. Glines, "A Speech Worth Dying For," *Air Force Magazine* 78, no. 10 (October 1995): 72–74.

122. Brigadier General Jesse Auton, commanding general of the 65th Fighter Wing. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 403.

123. Brigadier General Edward W. Anderson, commanding general of the 67th Fighter Wing. *Ibid.*, 404.

124. Brigadier General Murray C. Woodbury, commanding general of the 66th Fighter Wing during this time. *Ibid.*, 403.

pinned on.¹²⁵ I had a little trouble interpreting Janie's Arabic. You should teach her to make some letters.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MARCH 20, 1944¹²⁶

Dear Helen,

The pictures of Janie arrived. Also the wig. Not many details on the promotion. I was surprised on getting back over here that General Eaker had recommended it before he left, and it seems to have gone through.¹²⁷ The unit I command now calls for a major general, so no transfer is necessary. However, the job I almost had while at home still looms on the horizon. I am not looking forward to taking over the War Department in the immediate future, so relax. Just had a letter from Leonard. He is in Corsica now which is a change of scenery for him anyway.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MARCH 25, 1944¹²⁸

Dear Helen,

You seem to be having a good time at Sybil's. I wish I were along to help enjoy it.

Anderson¹²⁹ got his second star some time ago and I understand that

125. LeMay attended this dinner on March 11 at Bushey Hall, England, headquarters of the VIII Fighter Commander, where the named officers were promoted to brigadier general giving them the authority to wear one star on each shoulder denoting that rank. See Beckemeier, "March 11, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

126. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

127. LeMay's promotion to major general.

128. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

129. General Frederick L. Anderson, USSTAF chief of staff for operations. He was promoted to major general in November 1943. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 361.

Bob¹³⁰ and Hodges¹³¹ are on the next list. It looks as though the job I almost had while at home has definitely fallen through and I'll keep this one, but you never can tell what is coming up next. I saw Smitty the other day. He had just returned from the hospital—bronchitis or something. Anyway, they had shoved a bronchoscope down him and it almost choked him to drink and broke some blood vessels in his eyes. Anyway, the whites were all red and he was a horrible sight. I guess he's getting along alright.

Try to write a little oftener even if you have to take time off from your exercise. I don't object to a few curves if they are in the right places.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MARCH 28, 1944¹³²

Dear Helen,

No mail for the last few days. You must be having too good a time. I have some tweed for your birthday present, which I will try and get to you eventually. There isn't much selection now, in fact you are lucky if you can find a piece at all. These patterns may not suit you, but would make nice suits for *me*. Janie's radio is progressing slowly. Parts are hard to find, but we expect to finish it soon. Otto Peck stopped in for a half hour today on his way back home.¹³³ The leaves should be out on the trees soon then I intend to take a lot of color pictures for slides with the Leica.

Love,
Curt

130. Brigadier General Robert "Bob" Williams, commanding officer of the 1st Bomb Division. He was promoted to major general in May 1944. *Ibid.*, 458–459.

131. Brigadier General James P. Hodges, commanding officer of the 2nd Bomb Division. He was also promoted to major general in May 1944. *Ibid.*, 375.

132. Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 434.

133. Most likely Brigadier General Walter R. Peck. Beckemeier lists him as "General A. Peck" in LeMay's diary, but that is probably a typographical error. General Peck was the commanding officer of the 96th Bomb Group at this time. See Beckemeier, "March 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 413.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MARCH 30, 1944¹³⁴

Dear Helen,

Just received a notice from the Army Co-op Insurance Company, Fort Leavenworth¹³⁵ that the insurance, \$18.00, is due April 1st; policy number 13523. I'm glad you enjoyed your trip to New Orleans. When and if we get a leave again I hope you have done enough tracking around to be satisfied to stay home and lock the door. I know I will be. What is a [illegible] that you brought back from [illegible]. Angus just [illegible] his [illegible] from Janie and was thrilled about it. I think that was an [illegible] you saw on the [illegible] Missing in Action. I have been feeling [illegible] dying this week. I guess I dwell too much on being with you again. I have thrown away Lucille's address as I can't write to her.¹³⁶ Will you pass on what information I gave you about Russ? . . .¹³⁷

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 5, 1944¹³⁸

Dear Helen,

I just received a letter from Lucille wanting information on Russ. I hope you have passed on what information I gave you. Her new address is 1218 26th Road, Arlington, Virginia. The weather has been awful for the past week or so. I guess the burst of spring we had ten days ago was a little premature. Gerhart's wife sent him a new backgammon set, so we have been playing it when we can find time.¹³⁹ I am one pound up so far. Gerhart has told his wife to ignore any more requests that he may make.

Love,
Curt

134. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

135. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

136. Mrs. Lucille Wilson, General Russell Wilson's wife.

137. The last sentence of the original letter was illegible.

138. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

139. Colonel John K. Gerhart, LeMay's assistant chief of staff and commander of the 95th Bomb Group until April 28, when he took command of the 93rd Bomb Wing. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 245; and August W. Kissner, Colonel, Chief of Staff, "Roster of Officers, This Headquarters," Headquarters, 3rd Bombardment Division, March 1, 1944, CELMPR.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 9, 1944¹⁴⁰

Dear Helen,

I'm doing my best to write often and I'm sure I haven't gone for two weeks without writing a letter. A letter or two will probably show up eventually. [illegible] and [illegible] have shown up [illegible] to me. [illegible] was in my [illegible] and [illegible] has been on . . . that you have met him. I went into town and saw Butch the other evening.¹⁴¹ They are in a lot nearer to town than we are and Butch and [illegible] have an apartment. We found some [illegible] and Kepner, Butch, Auton, Anderson, and I went in and [illegible]. It's the first time I have been away since I got back here. It certainly was nice to sleep late in the morning. [illegible] is okay with nothing to do but play poker he will probably be rich if the war lasts long enough.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 12, 1944¹⁴²

Dear Helen,

Poor Janie is having more than her share of trouble with her teeth. I hope I don't wind up with two toothless girls on my hands. I have written Lucille about Russ. She may hear from him before we do. If so, I would like to know about it. I have had the camera fixed. There was some sort of fungus growth in the lens cement. I hope you have received the letter telling you about the house insurance being due. It looks as though the termites will get the furniture before a fire if I don't get home soon.

Love,
Curt

140. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

141. General LeMay traveled to Bushey Hall on April 8 to "observe today's mission from the fighters' point of view." This included raids against six German airfields and four other targets by 664 Eighth Air Force bombers and 780 fighters. At this point, the USSTAF was wrapping up its own campaign in preparation for its transfer to the direct control of Eisenhower and his deputy, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, who would direct the bombers against transportation targets in preparation for the June 6 invasion of France. See Beckemeier, "April 8, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 214.

142. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

The loss of General Wilson concerned LeMay, as evidenced in the preceding letters. Wilson was officially declared MIA on March 6.¹⁴³ Through LeMay's correspondence with Helen from March 14 to this point, it is clear that the general entertained hope that Wilson had survived the crash. As a realist, it is likely that LeMay intuited his executive's true fate. On March 14 he wrote, "No word on Russ yet. Of course, it takes two or three months sometimes. Moe Spicer is in the same position, but his prospects are a little brighter." By April, LeMay still speculated that Wilson might be a POW, as reflected in his April 12 letter: "I have written Lucille about Russ. She may hear from him before we do. If so, I would like to know about it." He had both a professional and a personal connection with the Wilsons—General Wilson was a longtime friend as well as his executive officer, and Helen and Lucille were close, too. LeMay had lost many colleagues in the war by this point and undoubtedly felt each death keenly, but General Wilson's fate prompted some introspection as evidenced in his March 30 letter: "I guess I dwell too much on being with you again. I have thrown away Lucille's address as I can't write to her. Will you pass on what information I gave you about Russ?"

The mental strain endured by LeMay during this period must have been tremendous. From February to April, his 3rd Bomb Division took part in the largest, fiercest air battles of the war up to that point, accentuated by Big Week and March's Berlin raids, which resulted in the deaths of many of his peers. Although LeMay did not actually fly any missions at this time, he oversaw the planning of each one for his division, toured his groups, and conferred with other division commanders and USSTAF headquarters among myriad other duties. All of this required time and travel and left few hours for sleep.¹⁴⁴ As a "doer," the general desired to be in the sky with his men. He wanted to direct these missions himself, so that he would be able to manage any problems that might occur. Paradoxically, his grounded status likely added a degree of stress that was not present when he was in command of the 305th.

143. Kissner, "APO 559," CELMPR.

144. LeMay was grounded by Eaker soon after taking over the 4th Bomb Wing, except for the Regensburg mission on August 17, 1943.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 14, 1944¹⁴⁵

Dear Helen,

Butch spent the night with me last night. We were both tired out and went to bed at 10:00 p.m. having a night of rest for a change. Bob Williams and Hodge haven't received their promotion although with luck it should be along most any time now. I went out to dinner the other night with a British family and we had pheasant shot last year. It was supposed to have been in cold storage but they like their birds well hung. This business of hanging them up by the necks and eating them when they fall off is no joke. I had quite a time being polite but managed to get it down and apparently have suffered no ill effects so far.¹⁴⁶

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 15, 1944¹⁴⁷

Dear Helen,

I'm sorry you haven't received as many letters as you would have liked. I'm doing the best I can; however, *my* primary job is putting bombs on Germany and yours is being as understanding and helpful as possible under the circumstances. I suppose it is impossible to expect anyone 3,000 miles away from the fighting to understand war. I have just had a letter from one of our relatives or rather, yours, a nurse who has met your dad.¹⁴⁸ She is now at a hospital in Scotland. I must send the letter on to your dad. She said she wants to be in the navy but old age put her ashore. Chick Harding

145. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

146. "Hanging" birds, wild game, pigs, and cattle is an old tradition developed to both store meat and enhance its flavor. The practice was widespread among the landed gentry and aristocracy of Europe. It was especially prevalent in temperate climates, where hunters built meat cellars that naturally maintained the cool temperatures necessary for the hanging process. In such rooms, carcasses were often hung where they could be safely stored for a matter of weeks, months, or years. Typically, the longer a carcass hung, the more "gamey" it tasted when consumed, hence the term "well hung."

147. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

148. The editors were unable to identify this relative.

is coming home to Walter Reed.¹⁴⁹ He has jaundice and gallstones and will have to be operated on. He didn't look as good when he left here.¹⁵⁰

Love,
Curt

In this letter, LeMay expressed an unusual amount of frustration with Helen. "I'm sorry you haven't received as many letters as you would have liked. I'm doing the best I can; however, my primary job is putting bombs on Germany and yours is being as understanding and helpful as possible under the circumstances. I suppose it is impossible to expect anyone 3,000 miles away from the fighting to understand war." LeMay used no playful banter or sarcasm here. His prose suggests that he had reached a degree of stress that disrupted his usual composure.

In his autobiography, LeMay described the winter and spring of 1944: "There was a lot of strain and misery, and danger," he said, "with heartbreak included, and often the bitterness of complete frustration in the end."¹⁵¹ Consider that the 3rd Bomb Division had seen a clear rise in casualties since the end of February, highlighted by the first Berlin raids (March 4, 6, 8–9) and the "baiting" campaign (April 8–13).¹⁵² "After the first Berlin raids, morale plummeted at the bomber stations," recorded historian Donald Miller; "[a]gain, fatigue and rising losses were precipitants, but crewman began questioning the military value of the targets they were recently attacking—cloud-covered cities, particularly Berlin, where the bombing seemed to be without clear plan or purpose."¹⁵³ There was a purpose and a plan. It became apparent to both Generals Doolittle and Spaatz that heavy bombers could be used to lure German fighters to battle, and they engaged in this tactic at every opportunity after February. It worked to great effect, especially as the Eighth's fighter force continued to increase, but these gains were achieved at the expense of B-17s, B-24s, and their crews.

149. Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C.

150. Colonel Harding was relieved his command on April 5 and temporarily replaced by Colonel Charles B. Dougher, who led the 100th until Colonel Robert H. Kelly took over on April 19. Meanwhile, Colonel Harding was sent to the United States, and he recovered from his gallstone attack at Walter Reed before finishing the war as chief of staff to General Joseph Atkinson, commanding officer of the III Bomber Command, a training command with the Third Air Force based at MacDill Airfield in Florida. See Beckemeier, "April 5, 1944," *LeMay Daily Diary*; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 162, 173.

151. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 310.

152. See appendix.

153. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 307.

By the end of February, the 3rd Division had dispatched a total of 3,097 sorties at a cost of 103 aircraft destroyed and 880 crewmen KIA or MIA.¹⁵⁴ At March's end, although the 3rd had sent 20 fewer sorties, they had suffered 135 aircraft destroyed and 1,260 crewmen KIA or MIA.¹⁵⁵ From April 8 to 13, directly preceding the previous letter, favorable weather allowed Eighth Air Force bombers to conduct a series of consecutive missions. Over the course of these six days, the 3rd dispatched a total of 1,154 sorties against dozens of targets resulting in 76 aircraft destroyed and 692 crewmen KIA or MIA.¹⁵⁶ The last time the division had suffered such steep casualties was during the first Berlin raids: 78 bombers destroyed and 704 airmen MIA or KIA.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, the day before he wrote this letter, General LeMay held a critique with his wing commanders reviewing these six missions.¹⁵⁸

LeMay knew that his bombers were targets for the Luftwaffe. He also knew that Spaatz and Doolittle used them for this purpose. Ironically, the second half of the letter was a return to the usual news often recorded in other letters, which highlighted the sharpness of LeMay's first series of statements. In his next letter, on April 17, LeMay said that he had regained his composure and returned to his usual demeanor by joking with Helen concerning the birth of the daughter of the 3rd Division air inspector, and their longtime friend, Colonel Donald K. Fargo.¹⁵⁹ When Fargo received the letter revealing the news from his wife, "[h]e maintains it's a mistake in numbers," remarked LeMay, "but a few of us have more confidence in the cable people, or so we tell him. Wouldn't it be fun if we had no women or would it? We have had a stretch of bad weather, so I have been able to catch up on sleep and begin to feel more like a human again."

Speaking years later, General Russell Dougherty, who served with LeMay,

154. See appendix.

155. The increase in casualties was, in part, a result of the new attrition campaign, but it was also due to more concentrated German fighter attacks as well as miscommunication between American and British fighter escorts, which sometimes left large, strung-out bomber formations susceptible to Luftwaffe interceptors, which were well coordinated by radar. For example, during the Eighth's assault on Brunswick, Germany, on March 23, 3rd Division bombers flew without escort because of miscommunication for five minutes, resulting in a total of 17 aircraft destroyed and 161 crewmen MIA or KIA. See appendix.

156. Ibid.

157. Ibid.

158. Beckemeier, "April 14, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

159. Colonel Donald K. Fargo, 3rd Bombardment Division air inspector. Before joining LeMay's staff, Fargo succeeded the general as CO of the 305th Bomb Group in May 1943 and served in that role until November 1943. See Kissner, "Roster of Officers," CELMPR; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 179.

stated, "LeMay was a great 'take care of the troops' guy, and the troops knew that. He was really on their side."¹⁶⁰ Although LeMay usually maintained a calm and collected persona, combat and command responsibilities affected him emotionally. He repeated this throughout his autobiography, especially when reminiscing about the anxiety and fear that accompanied him during combat with the 305th. Likely, it weighed upon his mind in tandem with the ever-increasing command responsibilities that followed him as CO of the 4th Bomb Wing/3rd Bomb Division as well.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 17, 1944¹⁶¹

Dear Helen,

I can tell by the tone of your last letter that the cable I sent you on your birthday and the tweed haven't arrived. I hope they have arrived by this time and your conscious properly bothers you. Fargo got a cable from his wife stating, "Thanks for the letter. Daughter born." He maintains it's a mistake in numbers, but a few of us have more confidence in the cable people, or so we tell him. Wouldn't it be fun if we had no women or would it? We have had a stretch of bad weather, so I have been able to catch up on sleep and begin to feel more like a human again. Did I tell you Chick is on his way to Walter Reed for a gallstone operation? He didn't look so well; lost 20 pounds and was as yellow as a chick.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 19, 1944¹⁶²

Dear Helen,

Spring must be love. The peacocks are starting to swalk again and wave their tails around. They certainly make an [illegible] noise. The only other way we can tell is we are out of coal [illegible]. The weather is just as cold as ever. Note new APO number. I'll get mail quicker if you use it.

160. General Russell E. Dougherty, interview by Dr. Alfred Hurley, May 24, 2004, interview 1558, transcript, UNTOHC, 24.

161. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

162. *Ibid.*

I'm sending a pencil sketch of me I had one of the men make from a picture taken while I was in Africa. I think it is pretty good. The others not the picture. One of my officers is taking it with him so you should receive it by the 5th of May I think.¹⁶³

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 20, 1944¹⁶⁴

Dear Helen,

Apparently you aren't getting all my letters as I wrote you that I expected to come home by April 15 and I also wrote when the plan was changed. Also our APO was changed over a month ago and evidently you haven't received that yet. It certainly would be fun to get a nice, cheery letter from home for a change. Dad wrote today that your cloth had arrived. Olsen must have made a quick trip home.¹⁶⁵ We are still working on Janie's radio. Parts are hard to buy over here, but it should be ready in a week or so.

I sure love you in spite of your griping.

Love,
Curt

"I sure love you in spite of your griping." Evidently, LeMay's lecture on April 15 failed to silence Helen's protestations concerning his lack of letter writing or other complaints. On April 17, the general noted, "I can tell by the tone of your last letter that the cable I sent you on your birthday and the tweed haven't arrived." And then on April 20, he commented, "It certainly would be fun to get a nice, cheery letter from home for a change." Among his men, LeMay's word was law. He did not have to yell, relay extensive instructions, or repeat himself to get satisfactory results. The general's relationship with Helen was different. Rather than immediately bend to her husband's will, she stood firm in her disapproval.

163. Beckemeier does not record who this officer was in LeMay's diary on the nineteenth or surrounding dates, and the editors were unable to locate any other documents that reveal his identity.

164. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

165. Probably Major Oscar C. Olson, the 3rd Division's flight surgeon. See Kissner, "Roster of Officers," CELMPR.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 22, 1944¹⁶⁶

Dear Helen,

We have had a breathing spell and in the last few days a [illegible], which gave me a little more time to write; however, don't get spoiled and expect it to continue because sooner or later we will have another blitz and things will be back to normal.¹⁶⁷ Today is a nice sunny day without a cloud in the sky, so bright that we are all running around with a squint like a bunch of night owls in daylight for the first time. I'm mad at the finance officer again. He wants \$109 back. I [illegible] for [illegible] between [illegible] and [illegible]. Do you remember if checks were deposited for you from [illegible] to Cleveland? They should have been deposited about December to February 1943.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 24, 1944¹⁶⁸

Dear Helen,

I'm sorry you haven't been feeling well, but no wonder all the darting around you are doing. Why don't you relax for a while and rest up? I hope it wasn't too much of a disappointment to you that I didn't come home. I'm afraid that we will probably have to wait until after the war to be together again. Jobs for major generals in the states are few and far between. I have started negotiations for your Mother's Day present already. I doubt if it arrives in time though. Yes, I know [illegible]. I see him every ten days or so at commanders' meeting. The outfit is just about due back so I'll have to get to work.

Love,
Curt

166. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

167. The 3rd Division took part in several "milk runs" (easy missions) on April 19 and 20, attacking the Lippstadt and Werl Airfields, and the Pas-de-Calais and Cherbourg V-weapons sites, respectively. On April 21 there was no mission. See appendix. LeMay's comment about "another blitz" might have been a reference to a series of "baby blitzes" executed by Luftwaffe bombers around this period in retaliation for American and British raids against Berlin. See Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 304.

168. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 26, 1944¹⁶⁹

Dear Helen,

It gets hot in Montgomery all night and the heat can start anytime now. Remember how we went to the tactical school [illegible] problems with towels around our necks? Today is another nice day so I got some flying in. I have a P-47 assigned to [illegible] headquarters now and it's a lot of fun to fly after bombers.¹⁷⁰ Too bad we didn't have this plane ten years ago when I was a second lieutenant. I might have had some fun out of the war. The horse wandering in was a piece of bad luck. Janie will probably want to keep it. Well, back to work.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 28, 1944¹⁷¹

Dear Helen,

I haven't heard anything about Dave and didn't know Randle was in that category.¹⁷² Bob Kelly is in the same status as Russ.¹⁷³ I haven't heard anything about another British decoration. I think your spies are mixed up with the Russian one.¹⁷⁴ I haven't heard officially about that yet. Just saw it in the paper. I don't know whether I can do anything about Jack or not.¹⁷⁵ In any case, he will have to start it. I'm glad to hear that Glenn is coming

169. Ibid.

170. General LeMay reportedly used this plane to check his units' formations and to visit air bases. On this day, he flew it to Mendlesham, where the 93rd Combat Wing's headquarters were located. See Beckemeier, "April 26, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

171. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

172. The editors were unable to identify Dave or Randle.

173. Colonel Robert H. Kelly was the commanding officer of the 100th Bomb Group. His B-17 was shot down during a raid against the V-weapons site at Stottvest, Germany, on this day. He was killed in the crash but was initially categorized as MIA. Ibid., 172; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 136; and Beckemeier, "April 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

174. The Russian Order of the Patriotic War, First Degree. It was awarded to General LeMay for his role in the strategic bombing of Germany. See "Awards, Decorations, Commendations," CELMPR.

175. The editors did not determine if LeMay is referring to Jack Chandler, his brother-in-law, or the other Jack who is often mentioned by LeMay but has not been identified.

over.¹⁷⁶ It was beginning to look like he would spend the rest of the war at home. I received another letter from your relative in Scotland who is back that I probably won't have time to read. I'll try and see him sometime.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 2, 1944¹⁷⁷

Dear Helen,

Since you will be home in a week I will start sending your letters through after this one.

You haven't mentioned if the sketch arrived or how you liked the double chin. Butch and Burns are coming out to spend the night tonight.¹⁷⁸ Karl is still here, so we will have a small reunion.¹⁷⁹ I heard a rumor that Swede Larson is going where Aaron went.¹⁸⁰ I haven't heard anything of Glenn yet although he could be here and I wouldn't know about it. I'll bet Corrine doesn't care much about spending the summer in Alabama but there are warm places.¹⁸¹

Love,
Curt

176. Then-Brigadier General Glenn O. Barcus took command of the 64th Fighter Wing on April 30, 1944. The unit was based at Frattamaggiore near Naples and assigned to the Twelfth Air Force. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 402; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 364.

177. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

178. General Robert Whitney Burns, assistant chief of staff for operations, VIII Fighter Command. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 371.

179. Colonel Karl Truesdell Jr., who officially took command of the 95th Bomb Group on May 10. He previously served with the 6th Pursuit Squadron in Hawaii at the same time that General LeMay was assigned there. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 165; and U.S. Air Force, "Major General Karl Truesdell Jr.," Biographies, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7428>, accessed September 11, 2012.

180. The editors were unable to identify Swede Larson. LeMay is probably alluding to the Soviet air bases established in Ukraine by Colonel Kessler, which were used by American bombers for Operation Frantic. See note 65 above.

181. Probably Corrine Barcus, General Barcus's wife, but the editors were unable to confirm this through official sources.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 8, 1944¹⁸²

Dear Helen,

Since you are going to stay in Montgomery until the end of the month, I'll write to Montgomery a little while longer. I'll see what I can find out about Moore.¹⁸³ He is in Hodges's outfit. Butch was here and spent the night last night. We managed to get in an hour of poker between spells of working. I hope your wounds from the [illegible] accident are all healed without complications. The bulk of our [illegible] over here are from [illegible]. The [illegible] don't seem to be able to handle their English contraptions. My surgeon is beginning to get back to normal again.¹⁸⁴ We got him married to a nurse—can't work.¹⁸⁵

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 10, 1944¹⁸⁶

Dear Helen,

I'll get a note off this afternoon before taking a nap to make up for some lost sleep.

It's your own fault if you get scolded. You shouldn't complain so much when I'm doing the best I can to keep you happy. The leaves are fairly well out over here now, so I am going to get some Kodachrome and take

182. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

183. Probably Major Howard W. Moore, CO of the 67th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, 14th Bomb Wing, 2nd Bomb Division. General Hodges, CO of the 2nd Division, often rode in Major Moore's B-24, the Suzy Q, to observe missions. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 36–38.

184. Major Samuel H. Haigler, who was originally the 3rd Division assistant flight surgeon. Haigler replaced Major Oscar C. Olson, the division's head flight surgeon, when, in late April, Olson returned to the United States for an unknown reason. Unfortunately, Beckemeier did not note Olson's departure on any date during the month. See letter of April 20; and Kissner, "Roster of Officers," CELMPR.

185. On April 29, Major Haigler married "Miss Margaret Malloy, a U.S. Army nurse whom he met over here a year and a half ago." LeMay did not attend the wedding but it was observed by Beckemeier, the division's assistant adjutant general; Captain John P. Thomas; and the division's chaplain, Major Randolph L. Gregory. Ibid.; and Beckemeier, "April 29, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

186. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

some pictures, although I don't know when I can get them developed. I just had a letter from Dinger and Bill.¹⁸⁷ No news from Lee, but I don't suppose they expect any. Will you write Lois and tell her Bob's status is approximately the same as Russ—possibly a slightly less chance for him. I can't do it myself anymore. Her address is Lois C. Kelly, 124 Hesketh Street, Chevy Chase, MD.

Love,
Curt

From April 14 until D-Day, the 3rd Bomb Division was engaged in a series of raids that paved the way for the June 6 invasion directed by the SHAEF chief, General Dwight Eisenhower, and his deputy, Sir Arthur Tedder.¹⁸⁸ Tedder was directly responsible for coordinating and supervising the strategic bombing operations of all Allied air forces in Europe according to the "Transportation Plan," which he and Eisenhower had endorsed in January. The plan, outlined by a British strategist, Solly Zuckerman, argued that Allied strategic bombing for Overlord should concentrate on rail lines and marshalling yards servicing the French rail system in order to prevent German reinforcements from reaching Allied beachheads once the invasion commenced.¹⁸⁹ These missions were added to the Eighth Air Force's spring workload, which included the attrition campaign against Germany's fighter force as well as the politically necessary Operation Crossbow, which targeted V-weapons sites in France, Belgium, and Germany.¹⁹⁰

April was a costly month for the 3rd Division. In total, LeMay lost 142 bombers and 1,358 crewmen in 3,803 sorties. Fortunately, May's casualties would decline although the number of missions and targets increased with the Transportation Plan in full swing. The 3rd Division attacked Berlin on May 7, followed by a return to Berlin and assaults against Brunswick, Magdeburg,

187. The editors were unable to identify to identify Dinger or Bill, although LeMay mentions Dinger and Lee in his letter of September 14, 1943: "I'm glad Dinger has heard from Lee. He probably isn't enjoying himself as a guest of the Japanese."

188. John E. Fagg, "Pre-Invasion Plans," in *Europe: Argument to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945*, vol. 3 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 81.

189. Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 318.

190. V-weapons—self-propelled, unmanned rockets—were the first ballistic missiles invented by German scientists at the behest of Hitler to launch against Great Britain in retaliation for the strategic bombing campaign against Germany.

and Brandenburg, as well as multiple V-weapons sites and marshalling yards in France and Belgium, on May 8 and 9.¹⁹¹ In the above letter, it is clear that work was, again, wearing on the general: “I’ll get a note off this afternoon before taking a nap to make up for some lost sleep.” Following this, he protested, once more, about Helen’s complaints and suggested that he could not bring himself to write Lois Kelly about her husband’s status. In less than a month, he had witnessed the departures of two commanders of the 100th Bomb Group—Colonel Chick Harding to illness and Colonel Robert “Bob” Kelly to enemy fire over a German V-weapons site near Stottvest, Germany. It had been four months since LeMay’s last break, and work and casualties were taking their toll on his stamina.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 12, 1944¹⁹²

Dear Helen,

Your last letter came in eight days. That is a week. Lately they have been taking two weeks. The blitz has been on again for some time, which means not much sleep for anyone.¹⁹³ Glad to have the news about me being home in June. I hope you aren’t putting too much faith in it. Karl has Chick’s old outfit. Chick is apparently recovering okay from his operation—gall bladder and part of an intestine. Karl is fat as ever and hasn’t changed much. Gilger got out and we had to transfer him to air force headquarters.¹⁹⁴ I’m glad you liked the cloth. I would like to get some more but it is hard to find now and I haven’t time to look.

Happy Mother’s Day.

Love,
Curt

191. See appendix.

192. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

193. In January 1944, the Luftwaffe resumed bombing raids against southern England and London in retaliation for RAF strikes against German cities, although these attacks were not on the same scale as those of the first Blitz that took place in 1940 and 1941, when the Luftwaffe was still a formidable air force. Thus, Londoners began referring to it as the “Baby Blitz.” See Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 304.

194. Colonel Chester P. Gilger commanded the 95th Bomb Group before Colonel Karl Truesdell Jr. took his place on May 10, 1944. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 165.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 15, 1944¹⁹⁵

Dear Helen,

Bad weather today, so I got a chance to catch up on some sleep last night.¹⁹⁶ I wonder if there will ever come a time when I'll get all the sleep I can use. I am still waiting for that box of cigars and can of Half and Half I asked for. Remember? I gave the camera a workout the other day and it is okay, so I will take a few pictures occasionally and have them printed when I get home. General Yount¹⁹⁷ was through a few days ago and mentioned seeing you at Maxwell.¹⁹⁸ The outfit I was in at Westover is now here and assigned to me.¹⁹⁹ Very few of the same people, however.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 24, 1944²⁰⁰

Dear Helen,

Your wire came today telling me you were going back to Cleveland after the v letter telling me you were staying. I had already started writing to Cleveland make up your mind. Early D., who lived next door to us in Hawaii, is here visiting.²⁰¹ I think he is going to Scotland. He says Glenn is in India.²⁰² My mother's birthday is June 13. Will you send something to

195. Ibid., 434.

196. Poor weather prevented the 3rd from taking part in missions until May 19.

197. Lieutenant General Kyle Barton Yount was commanding general of army air force's Flying Training Command from March 1942 to the end of the war. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 461.

198. Maxwell Army Airfield, Montgomery, Alabama.

199. The Thirty-Fourth Bomb Group was based at Westover from May 1941 to January 1942. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 88.

200. Ibid., 434.

201. Brigadier General Early Edward Walters Duncan. General Duncan served as base commander for Lincoln Air Base in Lincoln, Nebraska, April 1942–May 1944, before being appointed commanding general of the 24th Composite Wing based in Iceland from May to December 1944. The 24th was Iceland's air defense force. See Beckemeier, "May 23, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 384.

202. This is not General Glenn Barcus whom LeMay mentions in chapter 6, as General Barcus spent the whole war commanding fighters in Europe. There was a Major Glenn E. Bras listed as a member of General LeMay's staff on the XX Bomber Command's November 30, 1944, roster. LeMay

her for me? Janie's radio is about finished. I'll try and get it home some way. I have been putting off getting my teeth cleaned and checked. I guess I'll finally have to do it tomorrow or maybe this afternoon, if I can find time.

I haven't received that Half and Half yet.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 27, 1944²⁰³

Dear Helen,

Business first. Have you received the money I cabled the first of May? Have cigars been sent? Also Half and Half Tobacco and send some [illegible] hair shampoo and Aqua Velva Shaving Lotion. We hear Chick is having a bad time in the hospital. Still full of [illegible] and weighs 114 pounds. Hope he gets alright. We have a British printer working out of our headquarters now. He gave me a copy of print that I have mailed home. They aren't bad. Did you meet any LeMays in Birmingham?²⁰⁴ There are supposed to be some there. I haven't been getting much sleep lately, and you having breakfast in bed sounds good.

Love,
Curt.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, MAY 28, 1944²⁰⁵

Dear Helen,

For a change we have nice sunny weather and it is really warm.²⁰⁶

assumed command of the XXth in August, and the unit was based in Kharagpur, India. Major Bras served in the operation, plans, and training section of the XXth. This is, at best, an educated guess concerning "Glenn's" identity. See Leon I. Herman, Colonel, Air Corps, Acting Adjutant General, "Officers Monthly Roster," Headquarters, XX Bomber Command, November 30, 1944, CELMPR.

203. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

204. Birmingham, Alabama.

205. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434. This was the last letter addressed to Montgomery. LeMay's next letter was sent to Helen at her parent's home in Lakewood, Ohio.

206. Apparently the weather was very notable. Beckemeier remarked, "Today was one of the prettiest days we have experienced in England in very nearly two years." See Beckemeier, "May 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

The British are all complaining about getting sunburns, but I'm not particularly worried about it.

[illegible] is in the 3rd. I'll look him up the next time I get out to their station.

I think if I start writing to Lakewood now, the timing will be about right. So, this is the last letter to Montgomery. I haven't seen Freddie yet.²⁰⁷ He probably never gets out of London. We aren't getting much sleep these days as you can tell from the papers, but we can take it I guess.²⁰⁸ I hope Janie hasn't collapsed from the heat yet.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN FIELD,
ENGLAND, MAY 30, 1944²⁰⁹

Dear Helen,

Imagine my surprise when one of the boys from the 305th arrived yesterday with this. The attacks are the ones we made while I had the group up to May, so when I assumed command of a combat wing.²¹⁰

This is not an invitation to buy another tea set to put on the tray.

Love,
Curt

207. This is possibly Major General Frederick Anderson, who was assistant chief of staff for operations, USSTAF, at this time, although General Anderson had served in various commands since he arrived in England in February 1943 and took command of the VIII Bomber Command until his appointment with the USSTAF in January 1944. This is an unlikely explanation, however, given the context of the letter. LeMay states, "I haven't seen Freddie yet. He probably never gets out of London." Of course, at this time in the war General LeMay would have seen General Anderson many times whenever he was summoned to Eighth Air Force headquarters, but it is clear that whoever he was, Freddie was stationed at USSTAF or Eighth Air Force headquarters. Regrettably, the editors have not identified another likely candidate at this time. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 361.

208. Starting on May 19, the 3rd Division began the most constant stream of missions it had participated in thus far in the war. From May 19 until LeMay's final day in Europe, June 15, the 3rd conducted operations every day except for five, for a total of twenty-three missions completed in a span of twenty-eight days. See appendix.

209. This note was written on May 30 but actually sent on June 2 as indicated by General LeMay in the June 2 letter recorded above. It was included with the silver platter. The platter was presented to General LeMay on May 29 by Captain H. A. Fox, public relations officer of the 305th. See Scrapbook, CELPLOC; and Beckemeier, "May 29, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

210. First the 102nd Provisional Bomb Wing and then the 4th Bomb Wing, which grew into the 3rd Bomb Division.

Sterling antique silver platter engraved with dates and missions of the 305th and presented to us from the 305th.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 2, 1944²¹¹

Dear Helen,

No letters for several days, but three came in today to make up for it. I have just sent the platter and Janie's radio home. They should be there by the time you get this. I hope you like them. You both are very lucky girls. Surprised to hear about Priscilla.²¹² She must have used some new bust developer. I hope you don't find it too dull at home after Montgomery; however, you need the rest. You should stow up some surplus energy and if a miracle happens and I get home soon you won't develop those dark circles so soon.

Love,
Curt

ENGLAND, JUNE 1944²¹³

Dear Janie,

I am "Janie," your new radio for you to play with and have fun with. The soldier boys who made me enjoyed their work especially when they heard I belonged to a sweet little girl like you. Take good care of me and I will play many nice tunes for you.

Signed,
Janie Radio

Blue and gold radio given to Janie and made by radiomen in England.

211. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

212. The editors were unable to identify Priscilla; however, LeMay mentioned her in both February 15, 1942, letters as a resource to identify housing for himself, Helen, and Janie while the general was stationed at Pendleton Field. Priscilla was obviously a family friend and likely married to one of LeMay's peers.

213. This note was not included with the original letters received from Mrs. Janie LeMay Lodge but was found in General LeMay's papers housed in the Library of Congress. See Scrapbook, CELP-LOC.

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 2, 1944²¹⁴

Dear Helen,

I'll get another note off while I have a minute to spare. No information on Moore.²¹⁵ He just left the formation and wasn't seen again; maybe forced landed, maybe not.

Jack just called up to say goodbye.²¹⁶ He is going home to the Command and General staff school at Leavenworth.²¹⁷ I hope Janie's radio works alright. We had a hard time finding the parts of it. All the radios (British) have 220 volt current, so we had to make a battery set and then [illegible] for 110 volts. If anything goes wrong, I think most any radio man can fix it. You might write a note to Captain H. A. Fox, 305th Bomb Group, Apo 634, and thank the 305th for the tray. I certainly don't need anything to help me remember that six months, but it will help.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 7, 1944²¹⁸

Dear Helen,

I suppose you have forgotten all about today as usual; however, for once I haven't, but there isn't much I can do about it. You know by now what happened on the 6th.²¹⁹ We have been going all out for a week doing our part and we have a breathing spell today due to bad weather, so we can catch up on our sleep and I'll get off this note. We will be going strong again as soon as the weather clears, so don't be surprised if the mail is a little irregular. I still haven't received any of the things I asked for. Half &

214. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

215. See note 183 above.

216. Probably Jack Chandler, LeMay's brother-in-law, who was in the air force and serving in England at this time.

217. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

218. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

219. The Allies' invasion of France. Reportedly, LeMay "was up all night working on the planning in connection with the air support for this great operation, and spent the entire day between the War Room and Operations Room." See Beckemeier, "June 6, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

Half Cigars, shampoo, etc. I hope Janie's radio has arrived by the time you get home.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 12, 1944²²⁰

Dear Helen,

I think the mail has started flowing again. All mail leaving England was stopped just prior to the landings in France. Everything should be back to normal by this time.

I am just about to go upstairs and change clothes for a baseball game. Will probably have to stop in the middle of it and do some work, but we will start anyway.

I suppose Jack F. has arrived home by this time? Have you heard from Corinne lately? Is Glenn in India? That is the latest rumor here.

Time to change.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 14, 1944²²¹

Dear Helen,

Will you buy a copy of *Jeeps and Jests* by Bruce Bairnsfather—G. P. Putnam and Sons, New York, and send it to me?²²² A little speed on this request, please. I really would like to have it before I am forced to retire for age. Still no news from Russ. I'm beginning to feel pessimistic about him. I think Aaron Kessler's, Bob William's and Hodges's promotions are finally coming through. Nothing definite yet, though. I am writing a forward to Bairnsfather's new book to be published in New York. I'll let you know

220. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

221. Ibid.

222. Bruce Bairnsfather, *Jeeps and Jests* (New York: Putnam, 1943).

what the title is later.²²³ Nothing new happening here. Same old grind. I hope to get a day off this summer sometime and go to London to buy a new pair of shoes.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, 3RD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, JUNE 15, 1944²²⁴

Dear Helen,

I hope you are getting a good rest at home. You are going to need it. The rumors are flying again and I may have a new job after all. Also, don't send those things I asked for until I find out for sure. I wouldn't get to [illegible], though you probably won't see too much of me. Keep your [illegible].

Love,
Curt

On June 17, General LeMay was ordered to return to High Wycombe, where he met his replacement, Major General Earle E. Partridge.²²⁵ It was just one day shy of a full year since LeMay took the reins of the then-4th Bomb Wing, a unit composed of eight bomb groups. By June 1944, the 3rd Division had grown by six with a total of nine B-17 groups and five B-24 groups organized into five bomb wings. In the Eighth Air Force, only the 1st Bomb Division was larger. Now officially attached to Eighth Air Force Headquarters, General LeMay, assisted by his aide, then-Captain Theodore Beckemeier, spent the next week familiarizing General Partridge and his staff with the operations of the 3rd Bomb Division.

On June 24, LeMay received his marching orders. He, along with eight others, including Captain Beckemeier, were ordered to travel back to the United States on board B-17 aircraft number 42-3263 from the First Strategic Airfield located at Honington in southeastern England.²²⁶ On the same day, he

223. This was most likely Bruce Bairnsfather, *No Kidding!* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945), as it was the last book he published.

224. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 434.

225. "Special Orders No. 163," Headquarters, Eighth Air Force, June 17, 1944, CELMPR; and Beckemeier, "June 18-19, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

226. Edwin M. Dahill Jr., Captain, Air Corps, "D-65338," Pinetree, June 24, 1944, CELMPR.

requested the loan of a P-47 from the VIII Fighter Command chief, General William Kepner, so he could conduct a survey of the Normandy beaches. LeMay had contributed nearly a year and a half of his life to the Allies' defeat of Germany, and the airman intended to examine the first fruits of that effort. General Kepner agreed and even accompanied General LeMay in his own fighter.²²⁷ The two senior officers touched down on a newly constructed runway and decided to explore the area surrounding the beachhead.

There, they encountered Brigadier General James W. McCauley, CO of the 70th Fighter Wing, who offered to drive them wherever they desired to go.²²⁸ LeMay and his two companions had quite an adventure that day. As they traveled closer to the front lines, they inspected dead German soldiers, saw a group of captured German officers being escorted by American GIs, and were even subjected to a barrage by German artillery, which motivated the trio to return to the safety of the beach.²²⁹ "On the whole I felt disappointed," remembered LeMay; "I'd expected to see more in the way of actual fighting."²³⁰

The next day, safely back at Pinetree, General LeMay received orders directly from the Pentagon. He was transferred to the Twentieth Air Force and told to report to Lieutenant General Arnold for duty.²³¹ The assignment he had been waiting for since January was finally his. So, following a farewell party hosted by his staff and a dinner with General Spaatz, General LeMay and Captain Beckemeier boarded their B-17 and left England for the last time on the morning of June 27, 1944.²³² LeMay's tour in Europe was finally over. From November 1942 to June 1944, he had faced challenges that had molded him into one of the elite air force officers in the service. Where others were unable to overcome the tremendous pressures of war and command, LeMay succeeded, although not unscathed. He saw old comrades take off and not return. He had lost thousands of his own airmen to the war and experienced the frustra-

227. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 314.

228. The 70th Fighter Wing was a tactical unit with the Ninth Air Force. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 421.

229. During this last incident, the generals were attempting to salvage a nearly new Opel, a German car, from a bomb crater for McCauley's use as a command vehicle. A small group of American combat engineers had checked it for booby traps before the generals arrived, and had found none. They were attempting to help LeMay and company extract the car when the shelling started. LeMay recalled "the giggling of the GIs, who for some mysterious reason found something awfully funny in the idea that they were lying in a ditch with a brigadier-general and two major-generals." See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 317.

230. *Ibid.*, 317–318.

231. F. E. Lankston, Captain, Assistant Adjutant General, "WAR 5533," War Department, June 25, 1944, CELMPR.

232. Beckemeier, "June 26, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

tion of having too few resources to direct against overwhelming odds. In fact, by the end of the war, the Eighth Air Force had recorded highest casualty rate (approximately seventy-eight thousand men) and second highest fatality rate (approximately twenty-eight thousand men) of any unit in any branch of the American armed forces that participated in World War II.²³³ During these times, he turned to Helen to negotiate the psychological effects dealt by the pressure cooker he was operating in.

General LeMay's correspondence with Helen allowed him to escape back to Ohio and be with her and Janie for a handful of minutes every day. Her letters, like the hundreds of thousands of letters from sweethearts and wives written to American servicemen across the globe during the war, provided a respite from combat that no other source offered. They were gateways out of the cold, wet English countryside and tense interrogation rooms filled with exhausted airmen. Reciprocally, his own letters provided a valve with which he could vent enough pressure to continue doing his job, and presented him with an avenue to share his frustrations, even when his wife became a source of annoyance herself. In addition, this correspondence allowed the general to maintain a vital connection with his young daughter. Throughout the remainder of 1944 and most of 1945, LeMay faced a whole new set of problems and a brand new enemy in a strange new world, but he would have the support of the two persons he loved most and a new weapon to help him meet the upcoming challenges: Mrs. Helen LeMay, Ms. Janie LeMay, and the B-29 Superfortress.

233. According to Miller, only the American Pacific submarine force had a higher percentage of fatalities. See Miller, *Masters of the Air*, 471.

CHAPTER 8

“An Ungodly Situation”: China, Burma, and India August 27, 1944–January 15, 1945

It is hot here; there is no doubt about it.¹

—MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY

Major General Curtis LeMay and Captain Theodore Beckemeier left Lagens Field in the Azores on the morning of June 28, 1944, and arrived at Presque Isle, Maine, at 9:10 that night.² The long and uneventful fourteen-hour flight ended in celebration. Following debarkation from their B-17, the group of fliers “went immediately to the hotel on the field,” remembered Beckemeier, “where the General set us all up to a good American steak dinner, including fresh milk and butter with ice cream for dessert. After nearly two years in England, this was the grandest tasting meal any of us could remember.”³ Following this welcomed repast, the airmen sought out telephones to contact mothers, fathers, wives, sons, and daughters, a rare treat in an age that lacked computers and mobile communication devices. Although his reprieve from the world war was temporary, LeMay used his short leave to focus solely on his duties as a husband and father before proceeding to his new assignment. Accordingly, from June 30 to July 8 he spent ten days at home with Helen, Janie, and the rest of his family in Ohio.⁴

1. Letter from Major General Curtis E. LeMay to Mrs. Helen LeMay, August 30, 1944.

2. Beckemeier, “June 28, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary. “Lagens” was the anglicized name for Lajes Airfield, built by the Portuguese on the Azorean island of Terceira. It was one of several airfields in the Portuguese Azores that were loaned to the British and Americans during World War II. See John D. Carter, “North Africa and the Mediterranean,” in *Services around the World*, vol. 7 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 87.

3. Beckemeier, “June 28, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

4. Beckemeier, “August 4, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

Meanwhile, Brigadier General Kenneth B. Wolfe, current chief of the XX Bomber Command, pondered the myriad issues hindering the success of B-29 operations in the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI), codenamed Operation Matterhorn. Officially, Matterhorn “was a military-political plan at the most, but its objectives were political: to keep [Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang) leader] Chiang Kai-shek in the war, to initiate B-29 operations against the Japanese Home Islands, and to avoid committing the B-29s to areas from which they might not be reddiverted to the strategic air offensive against Japan.”⁵ Arnold and his staff considered it “a shakedown operation, one which would remove the kinks from the B-29 and its command organization before intensive operations were launched from the Marianas.”⁶ And there were some attractive targets, principally coke ovens at six factories located in Manchuria, Kyushu, and Korea that produced 66 percent of the coke required by Japan’s steel industry and were within range of the proposed Chinese air bases.⁷ They knew that bases located in the Mariana Islands in the Central Pacific, a chain much closer to the Japanese home islands, would be required to fully wage a strategic campaign against Japan. Matterhorn was a transitional operation “to introduce into the Japanese war the objectives and techniques of the Combined Bomber Offensive in Europe: so to batter the industrial fabric of an enemy nation by long-range bombardment that armed resistance would be enfeebled.”⁸

Directing Matterhorn and all future B-29 campaigns was the Twentieth Air Force staff led by General Arnold, who acted as the executive for the joint chiefs of staff that were the Twentieth’s governing board. Brigadier General Haywood Hansell served as Arnold’s chief of staff and “would run the show” until August 1944, when Brigadier General Lauris Norstad succeeded him

5. Completion of the B-29 continually pressed through deadlines and was, because of the political reasons addressed in the preceding quotation, sped through production so that the first planes arrived in India in April. Consequently, the *Superfortress* was not put through the same quality control testing that most new aircraft received and was deployed with numerous unresolved mechanical issues. For the quotation, see LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 73.

6. James Lea Cate, “XX Bomber Command against Japan,” in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki*, June 1944 to August 1945, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 94.

7. Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999), 49–50.

8. James Lea Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki*, June 1944 to August 1945, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 58.

following Hansell's appointment as CO of the XXI Bomber Command.⁹ The Twentieth Air Force's charter was endorsed by the JCS on April 10, 1944.¹⁰ At that time it encompassed two bomber commands, the XXth and XXIst, and four bomb wings, the 58th, 73rd, 313th, and 315th.¹¹ The only combat-ready command was the XXth, which was composed of one bomb wing, the 58th, and four bomb groups, the 40th, 444th, 462nd, and 468th.¹² Although Arnold held executive control, the charter did contain a provision that allowed local or theater commanders to petition the JCS for temporary control of Twentieth units in the event of a strategic or tactical emergency.¹³ In addition, it put the responsibility of providing bases and supplies on local theater commanders.¹⁴

As the lone Allied strategic bombing entity in the Pacific, it was crucial, in Arnold's mind, that the Twentieth Air Force avoid competing interests represented by the primary commanders in that theater: General Douglas MacArthur in the southwest Pacific area, General Joseph Stilwell in the CBI, and Admiral Chester Nimitz in the central Pacific area. Arnold reportedly anticipated these command issues as early as 1942 when touring the Pacific commands, which led to his decision to pursue the Twentieth's unique command structure when he "could find no one out there who wanted unity of command, seemingly, unless he himself was made Supreme Commander."¹⁵

This experience was likely confirmed by that of the Eighth Air Force, Fifteenth Air Force, and USSTAF in the European theater. Specifically, command

9. *Ibid.*, 39.

10. James Lea Cate, "The Twentieth Air Force," in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 38–39.

11. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 452–453.

12. *Ibid.*, 399.

13. Cate, "The Twentieth Air Force," 38–39.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Arnold claimed that he did not desire the responsibility of a specific command but saw no other option. James Lea Cate, among others, questioned that assertion, because staff planning in 1943 revealed that Arnold envisioned incorporating the B-29s into the USAAF's existing command structure in Europe if they were sent to that theater upon completion. Even in consideration of the Pacific during that summer, "when it seemed probably that the earliest VHB units would be deployed in the CBI, plans emanating from that theater and from AAF Headquarters carried no hint of an unusual arrangement for control." It was only when Arnold's staff envisioned bases across the theater that they advocated the central command structure because "[t]he simultaneous use of widely scattered bases would demand careful coordination of attacks." Cate also suggested that Arnold desired a combat command because he had never held one. For the Arnold quotation, see Arnold, *Global Mission*, 348. For the other two quotations, see Cate, "The Twentieth Air Force," 36. Also see Herman S. Wolk, *Cataclysm: General Hap Arnold and the Defeat of Japan* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2010), 66.

and control issues in the conventional command hierarchy (theater commanders had overall control) often played at odds with strategic goals outlined by air force headquarters as well as the air force's own commanders.¹⁶ "The problems indeed were inherent in the very nature of strategic bombardment," noted air force historian James Lea Cate. "Its mission might be relatively detached from the current campaign on the ground; diversion of forces to help that campaign would interfere with the mission. Strategic operations were usually at long range and theater boundaries and might cramp the flexibility necessary for such a program."¹⁷ Applied to the CBI, "[General Arnold] used the argument that this airplane had the range to fly over three theaters [and] therefore he ought to operate under the Joint Chiefs of Staff," said LeMay. "So for operations, I was under the Joint Chiefs of Staff but for administration and supply I was under the theater."¹⁸

In command, Arnold knew that he could achieve the "economy and maximum effectiveness" for which the B-29 was designed.¹⁹ He "was determined to show, according to AAF strategic air doctrine, that a sustained bombing offensive could drive a modern, industrialized nation out of the war," stated senior air force historian Herman Wolk. "The creation of the Twentieth Air Force fit nicely into his vision of a 'global air fleet,' directly under the Joint Chiefs, with executive direction by the Commanding General, Army Air Forces."²⁰ Ultimately, success would buttress the air force's bid to become an independent branch of the postwar American military.

General Arnold sponsored the original concept of a very long range bomber during the late 1930s as chief of the air corps.²¹ It was one of the last among the varied weapon system requirements anticipated by air corps leaders in prewar plans.²² They believed that it was necessary to field a very long range four-engine bomber capable of outdistancing existing long range bombers, pri-

16. One example of this was Eisenhower's appropriation of USSTAF bombers in May 1944, which were diverted to Overlord targets instead of the German oil industry targets that Spaatz preferred.

17. Cate, "The Twentieth Air Force," 34.

18. Curtis E. LeMay, interview by Edgar F. Puryear Jr., November 17, 1976, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 81.

19. Arnold, *Global Mission*, 347.

20. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 30, 92.

21. USAF historiography is populated by many works that explore the evolution and deployment of the B-29 in World War II, prominently in Wolk's *Cataclysm* but also LeMay's second work, *Superfortress*, coauthored with aviation historian Bill Yenne, which addressed the general's role in greater detail than did *Mission with LeMay*. A detailed discussion of this topic is outside the scope of this narrative, and thus a brief overview is offered here.

22. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 78.

marily the B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator.²³ If Great Britain and/or China fell to the Axis powers, target distances from other likely bases would exceed the range of the B-17 or B-24. As a result, on November 9, 1939, Arnold requested and received permission from the War Department to initiate contact with major American aircraft manufacturers to develop a very long range bomber.²⁴

The final product was heralded by air force leaders as one of the greatest technological developments of the war, but it did not actually enter combat for four years following a long, arduous development process.²⁵ It was a behemoth, with a wingspan of 141 feet, 3 inches; a length of 99 feet; and an overall height of 27 feet, 9 inches, powered by four turbosupercharged Wright R-3350-23 engines.²⁶ The propellers alone measured 16 feet, 7 inches from tip to tip.²⁷ The plane could carry a four-ton bomb load and it had a range of 4,400 miles without bombs and 3,500 miles fully loaded, and a maximum ceiling of 38,000 feet, for which it sported a pressurized cabin, the first active pressurized combat aircraft in existence.²⁸ It bristled with defensive armament composed of twelve remote controlled .50 caliber machine guns and one twenty-millimeter cannon in its tail.²⁹ The aircraft was so complex that Boeing could not manage the project or provide the necessary parts alone, requiring the company to subcontract work to other American manufacturers who funneled components to Boeing's factories in Kansas, where the B-29s were assembled.³⁰ In the end, the project required direct AAF oversight to accomplish its desired production schedules.

General Arnold assigned Wolfe to the B-29 project in November 1939, to be chief of the production engineering section at Wright Field.³¹ Wolfe remained a key player throughout the advancement of both the aircraft and its first

23. Ibid.

24. James Lea Cate, "The VLR Project," in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 7.

25. Ibid., 7–9.

26. Ibid., 8.

27. Ibid.

28. Cate, "The VLR Project," 8. The first pressurized aircraft was another military plane, the Lockheed XC-35, which began flight tests in July 1937. See Richard P. Hallion, "Airplanes That Transformed Aviation: Sixteen Historic Designs That Changed the Game," *Air and Space Magazine* (May 2008).

29. Cate, "The VLR Project," 7–9.

30. Ibid.

31. Ansell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 459.

combat unit, the 58th Bomb Wing. Moreover, along with the American CBI Theater chief, Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell, and his air deputy, Major General George E. Stratemeyer, Wolfe concocted the core plans for the deployment of B-29 units in the CBI, a strategy that developed into Operation Matterhorn.³² As a graduate of the Air Corps Engineering School, the Air Corps Tactical School, and the Command General Staff School, he had years of experience as an engineering and staff officer, which directly benefited the program's advancement. However, Wolfe took command of the XXth with no combat experience.

While his precombat leadership of the B-29 program impressed Arnold, Wolfe's guidance of the XXth in the CBI did not. Neither were all of Wolfe's subordinates confident in their CO's leadership as a combat commander. Then-Lieutenant Colonel James V. Edmundson, a squadron commander in the 468th Bomb Group, stated: "K. B. Wolfe didn't know anything about going to war. . . . He was an AMC [Air Materiel Command] project guy."³³ Following a major night raid against the Imperial Iron and Steel Works in Yawata, Japan, on June 15 that taxed both the supplies and available aircraft of the XXth, Arnold ordered Wolfe to schedule several small raids against the Japanese home islands anchored by two large raids against Anshan and oil industry targets in Indonesia by mid-August.³⁴ After Wolfe sent Arnold his mission plans, which promised to include only half the requested number of B-29s, Arnold ordered him back to Washington on July 4, where he was relieved of his command.³⁵

For General Wolfe, it was a welcome homecoming. The demands of the XXth in tandem with technological challenges were overwhelming for him. "The [B-29s'] engines continued to overheat; there were repeated oil leaks and fuel problems; the pressurization system was not reliable; and the crews simply weren't ready to fly in formation at high altitude on daylight missions," Wolfe told Hansell during his debriefing: "[c]onditions in China were impossible."³⁶ Arnold valued Wolfe's expertise as a technician, and his field experience with the B-29s was an attractive resource for future improvements to the aircraft. Consequently, Wolfe was promoted to major general and reassigned to Wright Field, where he took over Air Materiel Command to guide necessary changes to future generations of Superfortresses.³⁷

32. Cate, "The VLR Program," 20–22.

33. James V. Edmundson, interview by Edgar F. Puryear Jr., July 9, 1978, interview 1411, transcript, USAFOHC, 28.

34. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 99–103.

35. Ibid.

36. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 172.

37. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 104.

Arnold's expectations for the XXth's performance early on were unrealistic, given the technological and supply problems.³⁸ He had a track record of pushing his commanders to the brink and beyond, and he was also feeling pressure from President Roosevelt, Allied leadership, and the American public to produce results with the new bomber.³⁹ Wolfe was out of his element, and it was his inexperience rather than incompetence that led to his reassignment. Despite the obstacles, substantive changes in several areas could be made by a veteran combat leader. LeMay's performance in Europe under similar circumstances coupled with endorsements from both General Eaker and General Hansell convinced the air force chief to give LeMay the opportunity to develop the XXth.⁴⁰

When LeMay returned to the Pentagon on July 9, he expected General Arnold to deliver an extensive briefing on the B-29 program. Instead, Arnold awarded LeMay his second Distinguished Flying Cross and ordered him to travel to India as soon as possible to replace General Wolfe as CO of the XX Bomber Command.⁴¹ "I didn't get much detailed guidance from General Arnold," LeMay remembered, "but I sure got the message about what he expected to do with the B-29s in the Far East. For all the developmental effort that had already gone into the B-29 program, the aircraft had only been in combat for a month and the USAAF was still getting only minimal results. That wasn't enough for Arnold. He made it clear that we finally had a chance to prove something with strategic air power."⁴² Arnold's track record for patience with delayed action was not good. Still, LeMay insisted that he needed to learn everything about the Superfortress, or at least get checked out as a B-29 pilot, before going back overseas. Consequently, Arnold and his staff set up a special course for the major general at a B-29 school near Grand Island, Nebraska. He got little more direction than that. Fortunately, this brief diversion allowed LeMay to spend time with Helen and Janie before he left the United States.

As at many other stops in his career, there was very limited available housing at Grand Island. Fortunately, Sy Bartlett, LeMay's speechwriter during his

38. In summary, "Wolfe might have been able to approximate his original design. But he worked always with an impracticable target date, and delays originating in the United States became cumulative in the CBI—delays in the arrival of troops, equipment, and aircraft, in the preparation of fields and installations. Tactical emergencies in the CBI interfered too with stockpiling for the first missions, so that the initial strike against Japan was repeatedly postponed, and when finally launched, its weight was well below earlier plans." *Ibid.*, 84.

39. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 19.

40. In his 1976 oral history interview with Dr. Edgar Puryear, LeMay credited Eaker with having "some fingers in the pie . . . for me being picked to go to India to take command of the B-29." See LeMay, interview 1450, USAFOHC, 90.

41. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 109.

42. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 80–81.

war bond tour in the winter of 1943–1944, was stationed there as an intelligence officer and offered to allow the LeMays to stay with him at his cottage near a lake on the Platte River.⁴³ “So they did, much to Janie’s delight,” recorded historian Thomas Coffey; “[f]or many years thereafter she remembered with pleasure the happy summer days she had spent on the shore of this vast lake.”⁴⁴ From July 9 to August 3, LeMay endeavored to learn the ins and outs of the B-29 bomber, also “becoming acquainted with the B-29 program, [and] visiting factories, airfields, and other elements connected with this program.”⁴⁵ Just as he had with the B-17, LeMay needed to master the new aircraft that was to be his chief tool in the air war against Japan, and interrogate the men who had worked with it since its inception.

On August 4, LeMay returned to Twentieth Air Force Headquarters at the Pentagon, where he began making final preparations for his trip to India. He also spent August 8–9 at a radar school at Langley Field, Virginia, where he furthered his education on the B-29’s advanced radar system.⁴⁶ In the meantime, the XX Bomber Command was led by former West Point football coach Brigadier General Laverne “Blondie” Saunders, CO of the 58th Bomb Wing and Wolfe’s executive officer.⁴⁷ Final preparations made, on August 19 LeMay and Beckemeier flew with several other officers from Wright Field to Herington, Kansas, where they expected to take possession of a specially outfitted Superfortress in which they would make their journey.⁴⁸ Modifications were still incomplete six days later, so LeMay, anxious to get to work, secured passage on a C-54, which departed from New York City the next morning.⁴⁹

EN ROUTE TO KHARAGPUR, INDIA, AUGUST 27, 1944⁵⁰

Dear Helen,

We are still in the air [and] have just stopped for gas. All the way I surely could use a bed, but I did manage to get a bath and shave at one

43. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 110.

44. According to Coffey, when Janie visited the lake later as an adult, she “found it to be a long sandbar, with a bit of water out toward the middle of it.” *Ibid.*

45. Beckemeier, “July 20, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

46. Beckemeier, “August 7, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

47. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 399; and Beckemeier, “August 9, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

48. Beckemeier, “August 20, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

49. Beckemeier, “August 25, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

50. Beckemeier, “August 27, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

stop.⁵¹ Our next stop is the place I had dysentery before.⁵² I hope I escape this time. Allen is playing his accordion.⁵³ There are only four of us in a twenty-eight passenger ship, so we have plenty of room. Beckemeier and I just finished playing some gin rummy at which I won some \$22.00. [I'm] out of ink. We will have about six hours layover at the next stop while some work is being done on the ship and then we start out again. Even at 200 plus miles per hour, this is a long trip and I will be glad when it is over.

I will write V-mail, air mail, regular mail, and wire when we arrive at the destination.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, AUGUST 30, 1944⁵⁴

Dear Helen,

We arrived yesterday, but I was so tired I went right to bed instead of writing you a letter. It was the first sleep in a horizontal position we had been able to get since leaving Washington. No matter how you do it, traveling half way around the world is a long way. It is hot here; there is no doubt about it. I have a fan in the quarters and office. It helps, but not enough.

The cable is out. Everyone says that they take much longer than a letter, so I will have Norstad call you and tell you I have arrived.⁵⁵ I'll write

51. Casablanca, Morocco. At this stop, Colonel Allen and Sergeant Collinet, two other passengers of the four LeMay mentions, left the C-54 they were traveling on. General LeMay and Captain Beckemeier were the only passengers for the remainder of the trip to India. See Beckemeier, "August 25–27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

52. In August 1941, LeMay contracted dysentery in Cairo while serving as navigator for Major General George Brett's survey mission contrived to discover a southern ferrying route for Allied aircraft and matériel. See chapter 3.

53. Colonel Forrest G. Allen. To this date, Allen worked with the JCS before being assigned to a temporary thirty-day tour of duty with LeMay in order to observe the operation of LeMay's unit, "preparatory to his assignment as Chief of Staff of the XXII Bomber Command." See Beckemeier, "August 19, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

54. Beckemeier, "August 30, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

55. General Lauris Norstad replaced Hansell as chief of staff of the Twentieth Air Force when Hansell took control of the XXI Bomber Command on August 28. See Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 167.

a V-mail tonight also and get both in tomorrow's mail, the 31st. I sure wish I could spend nice, cool fall weather with you.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, AUGUST 30, 1944⁵⁶

Dear Helen,

A continuation of the air mail written same date, so you can tell which is faster. I think it will be "V" mail as it was in England. I am not too bad off for quarters here. Nothing like the last place, but good enough.⁵⁷ The plumbing is even more primitive than the British. In fact, it has a pail on it. We have a conglomeration of servants to sweep the floor, do the laundry, and various other jobs. These castes⁵⁸ over here are worse than the C.I.O.⁵⁹ I have a "Bearer" also to take care of my personal needs. I don't think he will take care of me as well as you do, but he shows a lot more respect!!

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 1, 1944⁶⁰

Dear Helen,

I unpacked most of my baggage today and, of course, left several

56. Beckemeier, "August 30, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

57. The Collectorate remained XXth's headquarters under LeMay.

58. The Indian caste system originated as a system of social stratification first established by Aryan invaders in 1500 BCE and enhanced by Indian religious communities afterward. It defines the social position of all Indians, who are ranked based on a number of factors including occupation, religion, point of origin, and even diet. Accordingly, the lowest members of society perform the "dirtiest" jobs and are considered "untouchables," often ostracized by mainstream Indian society as a result of this status. See "Caste System," in *Encyclopedia of World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 122.

59. Probably a reference to the large labor union called the Congress of Industrial Organizations formed by John L. Lewis in 1935 in Chicago to organize unskilled and semiskilled labor in the United States. The membership was dominated by steel, auto, packinghouse, and farm equipment workers, none of whom were represented by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the nation's largest labor union of skilled workers. See Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 11–26.

60. Beckemeier, "September 2, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

things. Did you find my pistol? It should be in a parachute bag. Never mind sending it, just let me know if it is at home. Don't send any candy or similar articles over either because it is so hot that everything ends up in one big gooey mess. Everything should be in tins or glass.

From what I have seen of India, it is another one of those places that I am *not* going to visit again after the war.⁶¹ The list is rapidly growing, isn't it? Your V-mail and air mail letters both arrived on the same day, ten days elapsed time, which isn't too bad.

Love,
Curt

General LeMay arrived at Kharagpur in the middle of India's monsoon season, which begins in June and ends in October, and he was subjected to the full effect of the stifling tropical climate.⁶² To combat the heat, he had "a fan in the quarters and office," he wrote Helen; "[i]t helps, but not enough." The environment also affected the food. Meals included a host of the standard canned ration items such as corn beef, fruit cocktail, green beans, etc., but the lack of refrigeration in combination with the heat and humidity, which promoted the spread of disease, especially dysentery, limited the availability of fresh offerings and complicated the use of perishables, and even caused clothes and shoes to mold and mildew.⁶³ His command was able to get some fruits and vegetables such as oranges, bananas, cabbages, onions, and even tomatoes, but these were not always available. Then-Sergeant Frank Reilly, one of the 468th Bomb Group's first cooks and its mess sergeant, listed some of the more unsavory foodstuffs including water buffalo, "pink" ice (when available),

61. General LeMay toured several locations on this date, including Army Air Force China, Burma, and India Central Headquarters in Calcutta, accompanied by General Saunders. He also visited two units under his command, the 444th Bomb Group at Dudhkundi and the 1st Air Transport Squadron at Kalaikunda. Ibid.

62. The monsoon season in India normally begins in June and ends in October. It is marked by three-digit temperatures (Fahrenheit), with brief but intense daily downpours resulting in a consistently high level of air humidity. This combination often made conditions untenable for mechanics, who did required maintenance or repairs by 10:00 a.m., stopping work at that time and resuming again at approximately 3:00 p.m. See Yates C. Smith, "Kharagpur Flight Line and Operations," in *Diaries of a Bombardier*, 468th Bombardment Group, 5, at <http://www.468thbombgroup.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=DGciTso%2fsn8%3d&tabid=105&mid=555>, accessed March 29, 2013.

63. According to one airman serving with the 468th Bomb Group housed a few miles from XX Bomber Command headquarters, "Most of us at one time or another had amoebic dysentery. It would just make you wish you were dead. . . . It was not unusual to lose 25 to 30 pounds when you had amoebic dysentery." See Yates C. Smith, "India-Base Living Quarters," in *Diaries of a Bombardier*, 468th Bombardment Group, 11, at <http://www.468thbombgroup.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KIkHm4rqf%2bo%3d&tabid=105&mid=555> accessed March 29, 2013.

weevil-infested bread, and specially treated butter that “had the consistency of Cosmoline” to keep it from melting.⁶⁴

“Kharagpur was like nothing I’d ever seen before,” remembered LeMay, who was struck by the vast crowds of people there and its distinctly foreign feel.⁶⁵ It was an impression of India echoed by Louis F. Mountney Jr., a cryptographer and message center clerk with the 40th Bomb Group stationed at Chakulia. India “was the poorest place I have ever seen,” he remembered. “Kids are begging on the streets continuously. . . . They had thatched roofs and there was no plumbing or things like that. The cities were terrible.”⁶⁶ Kharagpur, approximately sixty-five miles west of Calcutta in western Bengal, was an obvious choice for General Wolfe because it was an important junction point on “the main-line Bengal-Nagpur railway . . . with a branch line that served most of the other proposed air base sites.”⁶⁷ The compound where XX Bomber Command staff operated was anchored by a large government building called “the Collectorate,” located in the nearby village of Hijili.⁶⁸ The British built it in the early 1930s to serve as a political prison for Indian revolutionaries.⁶⁹ Rumors indicated that Mahatma Gandhi was among its inmates until it was closed in 1942.⁷⁰ Wolfe and his staff reoccupied the facility in January 1944.⁷¹

The Collectorate more closely resembled field conditions than LeMay’s previous lodgings. Indian laborers constructed the compound’s buildings in “typical Indian style: basha huts, with thatched straw roofs and so on.”⁷² Then-First Lieutenant Yates C. Smith, a bombardier-navigator with the 468th, described them more thoroughly in his memoirs. “All the buildings had walls made with wooden poles with split bamboo between the poles,” he remembered; “[i]t was then mortared to give a wall about 2 inches thick.”⁷³ Floors were composed of a concrete slab or simply “hard earth,” and the walls featured open windows.⁷⁴

64. Cosmoline was a special grease used to store firearms. *Ibid.*, 5.

65. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 324.

66. Louis F. Mountney Jr., interview by Shaun Illingworth, Brendan Finely, and Daniel Leary, December 3, 2004, transcript, Rutgers Oral History Archive, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 11. Hereafter cited as ROHA.

67. Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” 60. When LeMay arrived, there were four of the original five airfields in use by the XXth: Dudhkundi, Piardoba, Kalaikunda/Kharagpur, and Chakulia. The other field, Charra, was used by the 444th Bomb Group until that unit moved to Dudhkundi in July 1944. See *ibid.*; and LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 84.

68. Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” 61.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Smith, “Kharagpur Flight Line and Operations,” 4.

71. Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” 61.

72. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 324.

73. Smith, “India-Base Living Quarters,” 3.

74. *Ibid.*; and Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” 65.

Each barracks had a long porch that ran its length.⁷⁵ According Cate, “[a]dministrative and technical buildings included basha, U.S. plywood prefabs, Nissens borrowed from the British, and some ex-Italian prefabs imported from Eritrea, bullet-marked and somewhat shopworn.”⁷⁶

The compound itself was surrounded by a large wall, but LeMay lived “in what was supposed to be the warden’s house, outside the walls.”⁷⁷ The tenacious population of mosquitoes and other insects was obstructed by large wooden frames covered with mosquito netting and placed over charpoy beds.⁷⁸ Servicemen were also issued insecticide in the form of aerosol bombs that contained DDT.⁷⁹ “Bearers,” as LeMay noted, also improved living conditions. First Lieutenant Smith described them in detail: “Our Bearers’ job consisted of making our beds, shining our shoes, lining up shoes under the edge of the bed, periodically washing our mosquito netting, taking out laundry, bringing it back, and putting it up. We had 2 Bearers for 30 people. . . . For all of that we paid them 10 rupees a week, about \$3 each.”⁸⁰ It was the same for enlisted men: “We all shared one bearer,” remembered Mountney. “[H]e’d make the beds in the morning. . . . Also, anything you needed you’d ask him to get for you. It was nice that way, he kept the place clean and you didn’t have to pay him too much.”⁸¹ In addition to bearers, sweepers, one caste lower than bearers, were employed to keep the floors dust free.⁸²

The sweltering environment of western Bengal was as intense as the CBI supply situation was bleak. At LeMay’s former headquarters, “the Eighth’s bases had been built by the British—of materials, by methods, and to standards comparable to those of the AAF. Supply and maintenance depots were large and lavishly equipped. Supply routes, both within the British Isles and from the United States, were as highly developed as any in the world.”⁸³ Conversely,

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 324.

78. These were the standard-issue beds in India and were composed of “4” by 4” wooden beams with ropes crisscrossing between the frames to act as mattress and springs.” Many servicemen added cotton mattresses, which they acquired locally, and/or an air mattress, which was part of their kit. See Smith, “India-Base Living Quarters,” 4.

79. DDT, short for dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, is an insecticide that was developed in the late 1930s and used extensively during World War II to protect human populations in tropical climates. Its use was expanded worldwide after the war until environmental and health concerns in the 1960s persuaded lawmakers to ban it in most applications.

80. This was a raise of eight rupees (approximately \$2.40) over what British troops had been paying bearers, which caused quite an uproar among Her Majesty’s forces. Ibid.

81. Mountney, ROHA, 11.

82. Smith, “India-Base Living Quarters,” 5.

83. Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” 58.

Indian resources were not adequate and had to be supplemented by American materials shipped over a much longer distance with poor lines of communication.⁸⁴ Logistically, the CBI was a low-priority theater, which further delayed these necessities and put maintenance companies in chronic shortages. Particularly frustrating, LeMay observed, was that the cylinders in the engines of the XX Bomber Command's B-29s "were literally melting" because they "were not designed to operate at ground temperatures above 115° F," which constantly taxed their store of replacement parts.⁸⁵

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 3, 1944⁸⁶

Dear Helen,

Rosie Grubbs came in this noon and hosted lunch with me.⁸⁷ He hasn't changed a bit, except to grow a mustache and lose a little hair on his head. He is stationed a couple hundred miles from where I am, so will see him occasionally, I suppose. Aubry Moore⁸⁸ is over in this section also, but haven't seen Smith⁸⁹ yet. I'll look for a star sapphire for you although everyone says they are priced out of all reason. I'll also try and find the handbags as soon as I can get to town. I did wake Janie up and say goodbye before I left, but she probably doesn't remember it.

Love,
Curt

84. Ibid.

85. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 77.

86. Beckemeier, "September 3, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

87. Colonel Sydney D. "Rosie" Grubbs Jr. was a personal friend of General LeMay's and executive officer of the 80th Fighter Group, Tenth Air Force. Its squadrons were based at various airfields located in the northeastern Indian state of Assam and at Tingkaw Sakan and Myitkyina in Burma in support of (Frank) Merrill's Marauders and British forces during the Allies' counteroffensive there. Grubbs took command of the 80th on February 1, 1945. Ibid.; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 146. Colonel Grubbs's nickname is spelled "Rosey" by Beckemeier and several different ways by General LeMay throughout the remainder of the letters.

88. Colonel Aubry Lee Moore, assistant chief of staff, Tenth Air Force, October 1943–January 1944. See U.S. Air Force, "Brigadier General Aubry L. Moore," Biographies, U.S. Air Force, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6513>, accessed October 31, 2012.

89. Most likely Major General Cyrus Rowlett Smith, deputy commander of the Air Transport Command. Smith was formerly president of American Airlines, to which he returned in June 1945 after helping establish and run the Air Transport Command. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 442; and Chris Pieper, "Smith, Cyrus Rowlett," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, at <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fsm94>, accessed May 6, 2013.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 5, 1944⁹⁰

Dear Helen,

I'm keeping up a fairly good schedule on the letters; one at least every other day. So far, just the two letters from you written August 20th. The mosquitoes aren't too bad over here although we do have some malaria. I have a wooden frame about ten foot square like a small room over my bed with net over it. It is much cooler that way and a lot more convenient. The food isn't what I am used to. I'm trying to do something about it, but I won't be able to help it much. I'll probably be hungry by the time I get home. Have seen Sutton⁹¹ and Stratemeyer so far and will call on Stilwell and Mountbatten as soon as I can. Saw big Armstrong [illegible] in Stratemeyer's HQ.⁹² Also, see if you can find my leather jacket in the same bag with the pistol.

Love,
Curt

The Allied command structure in the CBI was complicated, and its commanders were often divided. The theater was established in late December 1941, with Major General Archibald Wavell in command of India and Burma for the British and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in command of China.⁹³ Lieutenant General Joseph Warren Stilwell, who arrived on March 3, 1942, oversaw American forces throughout the theater among a host of other duties.⁹⁴ In August 1943, the Southeast Asian Command (SEAC) was established by the combined chiefs of staff to better coordinate Allied efforts. SEAC unified Allied land, sea, and air forces in the theater under one Allied commander.⁹⁵ In addition, its authority was expanded beyond India and Burma to include Ceylon, Malaya, Sumatra, Thailand, and French Indochina. Still, lines of responsibility between commands were often blurred, which caused friction and

90. Beckemeier, "September 5, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

91. This is likely a misspelling of "Sultan," given the context clues. Lieutenant General Daniel Isom Sultan was General Stilwell's deputy commander. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 312.

92. Located in Calcutta. The editors were unable to identify "big Armstrong."

93. Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, The United States Army in World War II, China-Burma-India Theater, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1987), 61–62.

94. Wesley M. Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance: America's Relations with China in World War II* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 28.

95. Cate, "The Twentieth Air Force," 42–44.

confusion, and LeMay, like Wolfe before him, was required to negotiate these troubled relationships.

India, a colony of the British since the eighteenth century, was the Allies' main base of operations in the theater, and, located to the southeast of that country, the small, neighboring island of Ceylon was the headquarters of SEAC's supreme commander, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, a British officer.⁹⁶ Stilwell was Mountbatten's deputy commander and chief of staff to Generalissimo Chiang.⁹⁷ Another British officer, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, served as SEAC's senior air officer, with the AAF's senior commander, Major General Stratemeyer, as his deputy.⁹⁸ In addition, Stratemeyer was the commander in chief of the Eastern Air Command, an integrated force of AAF and RAF units including the Tenth Air Force based in India, and the British Bengal Air Command.⁹⁹ To further complicate matters, Stratemeyer served as Stilwell's chief air adviser, coordinated the Air Transport Command's India-China wing, and oversaw the supply and maintenance of the Fourteenth Air Force, commanded by Major General Claire Chennault, who also served as CO of the Chinese Air Force under Generalissimo Chiang.¹⁰⁰

Chiang was a tall hurdle in these command relationships. Before the Japanese Army forced the issue in the spring of 1944, he was unwilling to commit the bulk of his forces to an offensive in northern Burma that would open up China's only viable overland supply route from India. He expected the ceasefire with the Chinese Red Army under Mao Zedong, based in north-central China, to expire as soon as the Japanese were defeated.¹⁰¹ Chiang's tenuous authority over his own army, partially composed of former warlords who had "simply switched sides to retain control of their provinces," was another limiting factor.¹⁰² From Chiang's point of view, his alliance with the United States "might assure ultimate victory but it brought China few immediate benefits. Instead, China soon lost the Burma Road[,] her last freight artery to the outside world. Also, the Chinese quickly discovered that America's leaders were primarily interested in the European theater."¹⁰³ From the British perspective, Chiang's armies should have been required to do the bulk of the fighting in

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Mao's headquarters was located at the city of Yan'an in Shaanxi Province. See Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance*, 19, 55.

102. Ibid., 59–60.

103. Ibid., 27.

northern Burma, since the operation was directly for their benefit. Moreover, their experience with the Kuomintang leader suggested that he was not a reliable ally, and their efforts would be better spent regaining territory in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁴ Political unrest in India did little to encourage London to authorize a new offensive east with their force that included a large contingent of Indian troops.¹⁰⁵ The resulting stalemate lasted until Japanese ground forces mounted an invasion of India in the spring of 1944.

Stuck in between these uncooperative allies was General Stilwell, a talented field commander who, by the summer of 1944, was frustrated by and exasperated with both sides, especially Generalissimo Chiang. Like LeMay, Stilwell was pragmatic to the core and “sought to subordinate everything to the single aim of winning the war,” wrote historian Wesley Bagby, “and to brush aside anything that interfered with that goal. He considered it unworthy to allow political considerations to obstruct the war.”¹⁰⁶ Despite his preferences, Stilwell’s assignment was, perhaps, the most politicized combat command in World War II. Fluent in Chinese, with ten years of experience operating in the Middle Kingdom during the interwar period, he was originally sent to the Kuomintang capital of Chungking to “keep China in the war as an active ally and as a potential base for future large-scale operations against the Japanese homeland. This involved equipping, supplying, and training the Chinese army rather than committing a large U.S. combat force.”¹⁰⁷ It was a job he took out of his sense of duty.¹⁰⁸ Personally, Stilwell “despised” Chiang, distrusted the British, and “had a fundamental difference of opinion with” Chennault, his chief subordinate.¹⁰⁹ “Mountbatten was perhaps the sole exception to Stilwell’s poor relations with Allied leaders,” wrote historian Gerhard Weinberg.¹¹⁰

By the fall of 1944, Roosevelt and other Allied leaders had largely written

104. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell’s Mission to China*, 359.

105. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 382.

106. Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance*, 60.

107. *Ibid.*, 28–29. For the quotation, see Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, 382.

108. When offered the post by the army chief of staff, General George Marshall, Stilwell replied, “I will go where I am sent.” See Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell’s Mission to China*, 73.

109. Principally, this consisted of the classic disagreement over the role of the air force. Stilwell believed that Chennault’s air forces should support a ground offensive, while Chennault believed that an air campaign against the Japanese was a better option. See Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 638; and Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance*, 72.

110. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 638.

off the Nationalist Chinese as an active force in the defeat of Japan.¹¹¹ Kuomintang forces were decimated by the Japanese offensive, Operation Ichi-Go, which began on April 14, 1944, shortly after the first B-29s arrived in India.¹¹² Ichi-Go, a direct response to Chennault's air offensive against Japanese targets from bases in southern and eastern China, crushed the poorly trained and equipped Chinese forces that were assigned to protect Fourteenth Air Force bases.¹¹³ In Burma, however, SEAC forces including the combined British-Indian Fourteenth Army, a small elite force of American soldiers nicknamed Merrill's Marauders, and several American-trained Chinese divisions under General Stilwell successfully recaptured the north and were in the process of consolidating their position to reestablish the overland supply route to China.¹¹⁴

The Ledo Road, a new land route being built by the Allies to reconnect the Burma Road in China through northern Burma to Ledo, Assam, was not immediately available for Allied use. Consequently, "the Hump," a treacherous air route that traversed a long stretch of the Himalayan Mountains, was the primary artery through which supplies reached the four B-29 air bases in northern China surrounding the city of Chengtu in Szechuan Province. Although China's role in future Allied ventures against Japan was diminished, Operation Matterhorn still presented an opportunity to strike a blow at Japan proper.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 6, 1944¹¹⁵

Dear Helen,

I spent about an hour this afternoon shooting crows. There are dozens of them squeaking their heads off around the headquarters. We also made some ice cream last night. It wouldn't freeze, so we had to put it in the ice

111. It is important to note that FDR believed this was not China's only value as an ally. He also recognized that the Kuomintang army's existence perpetually occupied Japanese ground troops who might otherwise be used against American forces in the Pacific. In addition, China's status as a major ally challenged Japanese propaganda efforts to rally other Asian nations against the West based on the ideology of race. Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance*, 27; and Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 640.

112. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 640.

113. Ibid; and Bagby, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance*, 74.

114. Merrill's Marauders were named after their commander, Brigadier General Frank Merrill. See Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 859.

115. Beckemeier, "September 6, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

box. After it finally froze, it wasn't too bad. I don't know whether I told you or not, I ran into Sullivan¹¹⁶ who used to be at Langley (married the skating champ).¹¹⁷ He is executive of one of the groups over here. I expect to leave in the morning for a trip over the hump to see how things look on the other side. May not be back for a few days, so there will be a lull in the mail. Janie should be starting to school by now. Does she like it?

Love,
Curt

FORWARD BASE, XX BOMBER COMMAND, CHENG TU,
CHINA, SEPTEMBER 7, 1944¹¹⁸

Dear Helen,

I am now up in China and have another place that I don't intend to visit after the war. I'm looking over the place.¹¹⁹ I ran into Morley Slaght¹²⁰ who used to be at Selfridge¹²¹ and Ernie Williams,¹²² who used to be with Glenn at Langley.¹²³ The Chinese run hostels and feed us up here. The food tastes and smells just like that stuff Maurine and King tried to sell us in Honolulu.¹²⁴ I suppose you get used to it after a while or evidently you get hungry enough to eat anything after a while. Will write more details when I get back to HQ.

Love,
Curt

116. Lieutenant Colonel Henry E. Sullivan, executive officer, Fortieth Bomb Group. See Turner Publishing, *40th Bombardment Group*, 25.

117. Langley Army Airfield, Virginia. The editors were unable to identify "the skating champ."

118. Beckemeier, "September 7, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

119. General LeMay took his first trip over the Hump in a B-24 with General Saunders on this date. Ibid.

120. Colonel Morley F. Slaght. Colonel Slaght served as commanding officer of the 53rd Fighter Group, a replacement unit based in New York, before being transferred to the CBI in late 1943. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 116.

121. Selfridge Army Airfield, Michigan.

122. The editors were unable to identify Ernie Williams.

123. Brigadier General Edgar Eugene Glenn, chief of staff of the Fourteenth Air Force. He was a staff officer for the 2nd Wing at Langley Field from 1937 to 1940. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 395.

124. General LeMay was transferred to the 18th Pursuit Group, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in 1934 as a second lieutenant, where he remained until he was made the operations and intelligence officer, 49th Bomb Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group, Langley Field, Virginia, in 1937. See chapter 2.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 10, 1944¹²⁵

Dear Helen,

I just returned from China late last night, so will get this off first thing this morning. I finally got a personal crack at the Japs as you probably have found out from the newspapers.¹²⁶ I hope it isn't the last, but probably will be because I had permission for that mission only.¹²⁷ If all the Jap opposition is like what we ran up against, this war is going to be a lot easier than the one I just left. Not that I haven't plenty of headaches over here, but the Japs aren't one of them. I found four V-mails from you. I'll try and keep up my end. The mess has improved or maybe looks better compared to Chinese cooking. Anyway, I'm not hungry today. Will write an air mail with more details of the trip.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 10, 1944¹²⁸

Dear Helen,

Some more about the China trip. The flight up there is no mean achievement. You have to go to northern India and cross over the southern spur of the Himalayas into southern China. Some of it is pretty rugged country. There are spots where the natives are supposed to be rather wild, but no one knows for sure because no one has even been in there.¹²⁹ Sullivan had to jump out of that country but fell into the hands of friendly natives, so got out in two weeks or so. China is just as dirty as

125. Beckemeier, "September 10, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

126. On September 8, General LeMay observed the XXth's raid against the Showa Steel Works in Anshan, Manchuria, on board the lead B-29 in the lead group. See Beckemeier, "September 9, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

127. "When I was sent to the Far East, General Arnold had expressly forbidden me to fly any more combat missions," LeMay remembered in *Superfortress*; "I presented all my arguments and finally got permission to fly one mission." See LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 92.

128. Beckemeier, "September 10, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

129. This is probably a reference to the so-called Lolos or Yi people, an ethnic minority in China who populated the rural parts of western and northwestern Szechuan. According to LeMay, Chiang Kai-shek's people "feared them as wild and uncivilized." See LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 91.

you would imagine it would be. You do see some strange sights—water buffalo, carts, wheel barrows with everything from hogs to humans riding in them, rickshaws, and sedan chairs and above all, a seething mass of almost humanity. It looks queer from the air every inch of land cultivated and all the towns walled, etc. Interesting, but don't count on me taking you there for a visit. You shouldn't need affectionate letters to let you know I love you. I think about you enough that you should pick up *some* of the thought waves. I even took time out during the scrap over Anshan to do some.

Love,
Curt

*LeMay's first and only live mission in the CBI took place on September 8, when he accompanied his force of 108 B-29s against the Showa Imperial Iron and Steel works at Anshan, Manchuria.*¹³⁰ *The mission itself had been planned by General Saunders before LeMay's arrival, and was his last as temporary commander of the XXth, which allowed LeMay to focus on his evaluation of the XXth's combat performance.*¹³¹ *Saunders, a friend and classmate of LeMay's from advanced flight training at Kelly Field in 1929, had scheduled this second strike against Anshan for earlier in the month, but delayed it for various supply and other reasons.*¹³²

*On September 7, LeMay and Saunders departed together in a B-24 from Salua Airfield, an airstrip close to XXth headquarters, to make the trip to forward bases at Chengtu.*¹³³ *As noted by LeMay in his September 10 letter, this five- to six-hour flight was an adventure in itself, and "no mean achievement."*¹³⁴ *In addition to the XX Bomber Command, Air Transport Command and the Fourteenth Air Force routinely made the hump trip. Consequently, Air Transport Command personnel maintained and assigned the handful of airways in order to prevent heavy traffic and accidents along individual routes, as well as to accommodate the abilities of various aircraft.*¹³⁵ *Part of a typical route crossed wild jungle, almost uninhabited territory, and included*

130. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 115.

131. Ibid.

132. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 326.

133. Beckemeier, "September 7, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

134. The total distance was approximately 1,200 miles. It took transport aircraft such as the C-54s and C-109s used by Air Transport Command six to eight hours fully loaded. See Cate, "MATTERHORN Logistics," 81.

135. Jim Patillo, email message to Dr. Alfred Hurley, May 24, 2008.

the southern reaches of the Himalayan Mountains thousands of feet high from which "the Hump" derived its name.

Navigation and weather were the two biggest obstacles on these missions. "Thunderstorms were sudden," remembered Air Transport Command pilot Tom Peays. "Maybe we could see them build up, but especially at night we couldn't tell. They were killers. They did things to airplanes that airplanes were not built to withstand. There was hail and wind and up-and-down drafts. It was unexplainable as to how it happened. The storms would take that airplane up so many feet per second, and then they would drop it just as fast."¹³⁶ They also faced freezing temperatures at altitudes higher than twenty thousand feet that could overload aircraft with ice.¹³⁷ Furthermore, navigational aids and radio communications were necessary to keep aircraft on a safe course.¹³⁸ These could be interrupted by the weather or magnetic fields created by minerals in the surrounding mountains, which added another degree of danger to the trip.¹³⁹

When weather, navigational problems, or combat caused a Superfortress to crash either along the Hump routes or in China itself, the vast territory involved in Matterhorn operations proved a significant obstacle to rescuing survivors. Those who fell over Kuomintang territory were rescued by the Fourteenth Air Force along with Chiang's people and brought back to friendly bases. Crews lost in the Himalayan Mountains or Japanese-held territory were rarely found or returned. Communist territory in the North and Lolo territory to the west of Szechuan were also dubious areas, initially. Although Mao Zedong's government was not officially recognized by the United States, a group of U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and State Department officials led by Colonel David D. Barrett was sent to Yan'an in June 1944 under the auspices of the "Dixie Mission," an American effort to make political inroads and secure cooperation from the Communist Chinese.¹⁴⁰ Soon after LeMay arrived in India, he sent his own intelligence officer, First Lieutenant Louis M. Jones, to Yan'an to join the Dixie Mission as the XX Bomber Command representative.¹⁴¹ Jones's

136. Tom Peays, interview by William Alexander, February 6, 1999, interview 1400, transcript, UNTOHC, 21–22.

137. La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 110.

138. *Ibid.*, 111–112.

139. Peays, UNTOHC, 21–22.

140. Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, The United States Army in World War II, China-Burma-India Theater, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1987), 376.

141. Louis Jones, "The 'Dixie Mission' to the Communist Chinese," *Memories*, 40th Bomb Group Association, no. 14 (March 1987): 1.

goal, specifically, was “to act as liaison between the communists and the XX Bomber Command” and determine “to what extent they could be of assistance in recovering B-29 crews that may be down in areas they controlled.”¹⁴² Mao promised to rescue downed fliers and allowed LeMay to build a radio station at his base.¹⁴³ At the end of the year, LeMay brought Jones back to Kharagpur before sending him back to Yan'an in a C-46 with “a plane load of medical supplies to show our appreciation for the rescue help they had given the XX Bomber Command.”¹⁴⁴ LeMay also stated that he sent intelligence officers to the Lolo tribes, generally considered wild and lawless by both the Nationalists and the Communists, and exchanged opium (which they requested) for their aid in rescuing crews.¹⁴⁵

B-29 crews that made it through the Hump to Chengtu were struck by the landscape of the valley that surrounded the city. Then-Captain George E. Lowry, a command pilot with the 40th Bomb Group, recalled “dark green steep and high mountains” with “rows and rows of terraced land on steep mountainsides” before approaching his landing strip at Hsinching Airfield, “which was covered by thousands and thousands of people.”¹⁴⁶ Chengtu, two hundred miles northwest of Chungking and four hundred miles from the Hump terminus at Kunming, was located in a flat, fertile valley with high mountains to the north and west and reasonably reliable flying weather.¹⁴⁷ The area had a “teeming population,” part of which was displaced by the construction of airfields where many Chinese farmers used to cultivate rice and other crops.¹⁴⁸ LeMay's forward base HQ was near the main road that led to Chengtu and consistently featured long streams of peasants carting items back and forth on noisy wagons.¹⁴⁹ Surrounding Chengtu were four airfields, one for each of the XXth's bomb groups. The 40th, based out of Chakulia, India, was housed at Hsinching; the 444th, from Dudhkundi, was located at Kwanghan; the 462nd, based at Piardoba, was staged at Kiunglai; and the 468th, located near LeMay's headquarters at Kharagpur, was housed at Pengshan.¹⁵⁰ These were de-

142. Ibid.

143. Jones further claimed that LeMay gave him a crew and his personal B-25 to aid rescue attempts based from Shensi. Ibid., 3.

144. Ibid., 5; and LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 89.

145. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 90.

146. George E. Lowry, “The Hump: Rocks in Those Clouds!” *Memories*, 40th Bomb Group Association, no. 12 (November 1986): 3–5.

147. Cate, “MATTERHORN Logistics,” 65–66.

148. Ibid.

149. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 88.

150. Ibid., 87.

fended by Fourteenth Air Force fighters from small forces of Japanese bombers that engaged in retaliatory strikes against the B-29 bases following missions from September through December.¹⁵¹

The four Chinese airfields were manually constructed and maintained by an estimated three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Chinese farmers and laborers conscripted by the government from villages surrounding Chengtu to do the work for between twenty-five cents and forty cents a day.¹⁵² "There were just thousands of people with small hammers breaking up the rocks to fill in the runway," one B-29 navigator remembered. "It looked like an ant farm when you flew over it."¹⁵³ Workers used river stones of various sizes to construct the runways and stands, and covered these with a slurry of clay and tung oil, which was then leveled with huge stone rollers six feet high and enclosed in wooden frames with hemp ropes attached and pulled by hand.¹⁵⁴ Many peasants died in this process, but work rarely halted for the unfortunate worker who was caught underneath the giant stone wheels.¹⁵⁵

In China, living conditions for airmen and workers alike were as primitive as they were in India, and further exasperated by the supply rationing that limited what items could be flown in by the XXth or Air Transport Command. LeMay was particularly displeased with the food supplied by Chinese cooks, which "tastes and smells just like that stuff Maurine and King tried to sell us in Honolulu."¹⁵⁶ Captain Lowry enjoyed a more pleasant experience, finding the cabbage, chicken, pork fat, and white rice they were served "very tasty, but greasy."¹⁵⁷ He was less impressed with the tea that accompanied every meal.¹⁵⁸ Showers for the airmen were available via hand-filled buckets, and the toilet

151. Each raid included only a handful of enemy planes at night guided to the airstrips by Japanese agents with small fires. From Anshan II to December 19, "only forty-three enemy planes were counted and the damage done was more annoying than serious." See Cate, "XXth Bomber Command against Japan," 118.

152. Cate, "MATTERHORN Logistics," 68; and Yates C. Smith, "Missions from India and China," in *Diaries of a Bombardier*, 468th Bombardment Group, 3, at <http://www.468thbombgroup.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Z9BLUNsiLW0%3d&tabid=105&mid=555>, accessed March 29, 2013.

153. Smith, "Missions from India and China," 4.

154. Ibid.; and LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 88.

155. Smith, "Missions from India and China," 4.

156. See letter of September 7.

157. Lowry, "The Hump: Rocks in Those Clouds!," 4. Lowry also noted that they received fresh eggs for breakfast. First Lieutenant Smith reported a similar menu at his mess with the 468th at Pengshan. "Surprisingly enough, we did not get much rice to eat as far as I can remember," he wrote; "[i]t seemed all of the rice went to the 'Coolies' [Chinese laborers]. What we did get to eat was fat pork, cabbage soup and fresh eggs . . . that was about all we got to eat when we were in China." See Smith, "Missions from India and China," 9.

158. Lowry, "The Hump: Rocks in Those Clouds!," 4.

was a hole in the ground. Some fields had barracks like those in India with dirt instead of concrete floors, while others, like Pengshan, had four-man, British-made tents that were double insulated to protect occupants from the harsh winters.¹⁵⁹

Following their first night of Chinese hospitality, LeMay's bomber force loaded their ordnance, fueled up, and took off for Manchuria at 5:40 a.m.¹⁶⁰ LeMay was aboard the mission's lead plane, B-29 number 503 nicknamed the *Nippon Nipper II* (44th Bomb Squadron, 40th Bomb Group), piloted by squadron commander Lieutenant Colonel James Ira Cornett.¹⁶¹ The general spent the mission in a folding chair in the forward cabin that had been provided by his staff because there were no extra seats available on the plane itself.¹⁶² After an uneventful flight to the target, during which LeMay "spent considerable time with the navigator [Captain Donald G. Starkey] comparing terrain features with map portrayal," Cornett's plane made its bomb run suffering some flak damage, and General LeMay rendered aid to several crew members who reported that they had been wounded.¹⁶³ Japanese fighters were also in the area but spent most of their time posturing until after the B-29s were on their way back to their Chinese bases. Even then, the few attacks they did make against the bomber force were unproductive, as the fighters were unwilling to risk getting too close to the Superfortresses' guns. In addition, their fighters were designed to operate at a lower altitude than the American bombers, which were flying at approximately thirty-two thousand feet during this phase.¹⁶⁴

LeMay was not impressed with the performances of either the American or the Japanese forces, but bombing results were encouraging. Reconnaissance photos taken on September 9 revealed that this attack together with the first strike against Anshan on June 15 cost the steel works 35.2 percent of its total coking output.¹⁶⁵ Still, as a perfectionist, LeMay's survey of the XXth's effort was highlighted by training gaps in his crews. "The status of training wasn't as bad as it had been when we went overseas to Europe in 1942," he

159. Smith, "Missions from India and China," 6.

160. James Ira Cornett, "LeMay Flies to Anshan with Cornett, September 8, 1944," *Memories*, 40th Bomb Group Association, no. 1 (1984): 2.

161. *Ibid.*, 1.

162. *Ibid.*

163. Twice during the bomb run LeMay went to check on reported wounds to the radio operator, Technical Sergeant Otis M. Cox, and the central fire control gunner, Sergeant R. C. Curtiss. Both injuries were minor. *Ibid.*

164. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 53–54.

165. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 115–116.

noted, "but it was bad enough."¹⁶⁶ The official air force history of the operation highlighted a list of deficiencies: "The late delivery of B-29's to the 58th Wing in its Salina period had left serious gaps in its training program for which no amount of gas-trucking would substitute: notably in high-altitude formation flying, rendezvous, gunnery, and bombing, visual and radar."¹⁶⁷ On the positive side, new pilots had been through a better training program and came in with more flight hours, and there were also some heavy bomber veterans taken from European outfits to add experience to B-29 crews, "but not very many of them."¹⁶⁸ LeMay identified three primary shortcomings. First, crews were undergoing on-the-job training. Before arriving in the CBI, they had little to no formation flying because training outfits in the United States lacked B-29s to train with. In fact, many pilots flew a B-29 for the first time on their trip to the CBI. Second, there was little to no gunnery training with the advanced remote gunnery system, which was the first of its kind. Finally, the ability of bombardiers to bomb with their radar was poor, a critical weakness due to the predominantly overcast weather that often precluded visual bombing.¹⁶⁹

The weather in China and Japan proved even more problematic for American bomber crews than Europe's. "Every time you would fly a mission out of China to Japan, you encountered weather," LeMay told air force historian Richard Kohn; "the weather was worse there than it was in Europe. During the best months of the year there was an average of only seven days that would permit visual bombing from altitude; the worst month of the year there was only one day."¹⁷⁰ Complicating matters further, there was not an adequate Chinese or American infrastructure available to accurately predict the weather over such a large area, especially over Japan, and Soviet weather stations were unwilling to contribute their information.¹⁷¹ LeMay had only one American weather station available to him, and it was manned by the navy in the Gobi Desert.¹⁷² LeMay explained, "Our only solution was to send airplanes up to Japan to look at the weather and report back what they had observed. From

166. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 84.

167. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 94–95.

168. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 84. These included some officers taken directly from LeMay's 3rd Bomb Division staff. One example is Lieutenant Colonel Frank L. Scott, who was LeMay's assistant intelligence officer in England and was transferred to the same position in the XXth on September 15. See Beckemeier, "September 15, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

169. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 55.

170. *Ibid.*

171. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 91.

172. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 55.

this meager information, our weather people would try to draw a weather map and make a forecast.”¹⁷³

Poor training and weather forecasting were not the only issues. Mechanical flaws and logistics were also troublesome. The B-29 had a handful of critical mechanical problems among the dozens that appeared when it began combat service.¹⁷⁴ First, the elevated ground temperatures melted the magnesium-based metal that some of the Wright engine parts were made of, which in turn damaged or destroyed them.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the engines lacked the power to support the maximum bomb tonnage the Superfortress was capable of carrying.¹⁷⁶ Further, because of supply, primarily fuel demands, they were required to carry tonnage over the planes’ maximum recommended weight, which meant that any problems encountered on the runway might prevent the Superfortresses from taking off, resulting in a crash.¹⁷⁷ These design issues were relayed back to Boeing, whose engineers were constantly modifying the design of the new bombers and sending kits to the CBI to replace the faulty parts in aircraft already in service there.¹⁷⁸ As the number of required modifications increased, they often just exchanged new planes for the old ones, sending those back to the United States to be overhauled by Boeing.¹⁷⁹

Logistics had been, was, and would always be an issue for the XXth in the CBI. Early on, it was identified as Matterhorn’s primary weakness.¹⁸⁰ Allied forces lacked adequate amounts of every essential item necessary for the prosecution of the war in that theater. The issue was addressed to a degree when Major General Hansell brought it up at a Twentieth Air Force staff meeting, and his supply officer, Colonel Sol Rosenblatt, was inspired to fix the problem.

173. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 92.

174. “There were fifty-four major modifications that had to be made to every B-29 that came off the line in 1944” noted LeMay and Yenne. “The areas affected included the electric system, fire control system, the propeller-feathering system, the tires, and of course, the engines, the most complex parts of an incredibly complex aircraft.” *Ibid.*, 76.

175. Magnesium-based metal was used to construct engine parts in order to make the aircraft lighter, but it also made them more vulnerable to extreme heat. LeMay described the problem in detail: “A valve would burn, then the head would go off and chew up one of the engine’s eighteen cylinders. Sometimes the cylinder would, in turn, fly off and chew up the whole engine.” Furthermore, the high altitudes flown by B-29 crews increased the consumption rate of fuel and wear on engines, further subjecting them to possible failure. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 323; LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 83; and Jim Patillo, email message to Dr. Alfred Hurley, May 24, 2008.

176. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 100.

177. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 83.

178. *Ibid.*, 84.

179. *Ibid.*

180. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 144–146.

"He used not only my meager name and authority to churn the brew," remembered Hansell, "but he used General Arnold's name and authority as well."¹⁸¹ LeMay saw results soon after when Colonel Rosenblatt arrived in Kharagpur on September 26 on a sixty-day tour to "lend assistance to our supply and maintenance people in an effort to iron out any existing kinks and help them solve any problems they have."¹⁸² Although Rosenblatt's aid improved the availability of resources, poor lines of communication between India and China prevented their efficient delivery. According to plans originally laid out for Matterhorn, the XXth would provide all its own supplies to its Chinese bases by hauling them over the hump itself. This proved inadequate, and eventually the Air Transport Command became involved and helped haul supplies with its fleet of Douglas cargo planes and C-109s.¹⁸³ Even then, the XXth's bombers hauled their own fuel and bombs to China. It took seven trips across the hump to supply one combat mission, so they were only bombing targets once a week.¹⁸⁴

In order to improve the XXth, LeMay enacted a series of changes, some before the September 8 raid. The changes, many of which duplicated those he had made in England and several of which were additional innovations, delayed the command's next combat mission until September 26. First, he installed his battle-tested twelve-plane formation to replace the four-plane diamond formation the XXth used before his arrival and standardized daylight precision bombing procedures.¹⁸⁵ Prior to August, "[o]ur force didn't have standard tactics," LeMay remembered; teams "had gone on some missions at night and some in daytime, individually, and in formation, but nothing much standard."¹⁸⁶ By September 12, LeMay had set up a lead crew school at Dudhkundi taught by veteran navigators, pilots, and bombardiers from his staff. At 7:00 a.m. that day, he visited the airfield and "addressed a collection of lead crews of all four Groups on his policy concerning lead crew training and the importance to be stressed on lead crews in an effort to obtain better bombing results from formations."¹⁸⁷ Nicknamed Dudhkundi Tech by its students, the course lasted approximately eleven days and drilled six crews from each bomb group. As in England, bombardiers and navigators were expected to study

181. *Ibid.*, 163.

182. Beckemeier, "September 26, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

183. Cate, "MATTERHORN Logistics," 83.

184. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 87.

185. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 332.

186. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 55.

187. Beckemeier, "September 12, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

*intelligence photographs of various potential targets assigned to them, so that they could lead a mission when their target was chosen in the future.*¹⁸⁸ Every other bombardier on such a mission would release his bombs at the signal of the lead crew. Training also included LeMay's new "synchronous bombing" doctrine, which dictated that control of the aircraft during a bomb run would fall to the radar operator or bombardier, depending on visibility above the target.¹⁸⁹

*LeMay's innovations and organizational and policy changes through November were designed to form the XXth into a cohesive team of men whose success against Japan would mirror that of the Eighth Air Force. Missions "were designed to teach some of the tactics that had been successful in Europe, such as the idea of massing large numbers of bombers against a target," and efforts were centered on fully mastering the Superfortress to maximize its potential destructive power against Japan's air force and industry.*¹⁹⁰ *"These were training missions more than anything else," said LeMay, "but as long as we were running missions, if we could drop some bombs on the Japanese at the same time, we'd do it."*¹⁹¹

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 11, 1944¹⁹²

Dear Helen,

It surely is hot tonight and every night for that matter. We change clothes completely two or three times a day and keep the washing machine going full blast so we do have clean clothes that aren't laundered in a mud puddle. Rosy was over again today with a couple of his British friends. He is in a command composed of half British and half American. I took them out and showed them a B-29 and they were duly impressed. I'm afraid Cowboy wouldn't be able to stand it out here.¹⁹³ The food is bad and if he had an attack, there isn't any milk or anything else he could eat except K

188. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 116; and LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 83–85.

189. *Ibid.*

190. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 83–85.

191. *Ibid.*, 86.

192. Beckemeier, "September 11, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

193. Mostly likely Captain Owen D. "Cowboy" Roane, a pilot under LeMay when he was in command of the 3rd Air Division. See Owen D. Roane, *A Year in the Life of a Cowboy: With the Bloody 100th* (The Woodlands, TX: Mackenzie Curtis, 1995).

rations.¹⁹⁴ I had a letter from Aaron.¹⁹⁵ He is still in Russia and wants to come down also. We are going to have a movie 16 mm on the back porch of my quarters tonight. Big celebration.

Love,
Curt

*"Movie night" was the primary entertainment source for the command staff at the Collectorate as well as the other personnel of the XXth at their respective group bases. The 468th "had an outdoor theater which had only a screen and a small projection table. The seats were in a raised amphitheater arrangement" and "made of burlap sacks filled with sand. They would show movies 2 or 3 times a week. We would go to the theater at night, whether we had seen the movie or not" because "there was nothing to do at the barracks but sit in the dark."*¹⁹⁶

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 13, 1944¹⁹⁷

Dear Helen,

Last night the command had a reception for Blondie Saunders and me.¹⁹⁸ Quite an affair for these parts. The official big wigs were the British

194. K rations were one of five basic type of rations available to U.S. Army personnel during World War II, the others being A, B, C, and D rations. K rations were characterized by having three individual meal packages for breakfast, lunch, and dinner: "Breakfast contained a fruit bar, Nescafe drink powder, crackers, and a can of ham and eggs; lunch and dinner contained a can of potted meat or cheese, crackers, orange or lemon drink powder, sugar, chocolate or other dessert, and chewing gum." See Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, *World War II: America at War, 1941-1945* (New York: Random House, 1991), 680.

195. Colonel Alfred "Aaron" Kessler Jr. Colonel Kessler was running shuttle missions for the USSTAF at this time from his headquarters at Poltava, Ukraine, as part of Operation Frantic, a series of shuttle missions flown by both the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces initiated by General Spaatz in June 1944. They were reckoned largely unsuccessful and ended by late September. As a result, Kessler returned to England in October 1944 and resumed command of the 13th Bomb Wing. See Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 37, 58; Doolittle and Glines, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*, 344, 372; and U.S. Air Force, "Major General Alfred A. Kessler Jr.," U.S. Air Force Biographies, at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6049>, accessed April 17, 2011. See also chapter 7, n. 66.

196. Smith, "India-Base Living Quarters," 5.

197. Beckemeier, "September 13, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

198. This was the official reception to welcome General LeMay as the new commander of XX Bomber Command and send off General Saunders, who had remained for several weeks to help LeMay transition into his new position. Ibid.

Brigadier commanding this district.¹⁹⁹ The British police inspector commanding this district of civil police and a few staff officers from the various HQs in the neighborhood.²⁰⁰ The feminine contingent consisted of the inspector's wife, four nurses, three Red Cross gals and a slightly yellow wench, an entertainer from Calcutta.

I'm glad you have changed your mind on the sapphires because the prices out here are just as high, if not actually higher, than the prices at home. That is true of most other things also.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 15, 1944²⁰¹

Dear Helen,

I'm sorry you don't like the picture, but it is entirely possible that my wife and my soldiers see me in a different light. However, I understand that in some circles it is thought that I definitely don't have an affectionate side to my character.

I envy you the cool weather. It really bears down over here although this is supposed to be the start of the cool season. I have a couple of ceiling fans in the office which make life bearable in the mornings, but don't do much good in the afternoons. I just bought a two gallon crank it yourself model ice cream freezer for \$30, which means I'll have to eat a lot of ice cream to pay for it. Send me some receipts for it, will you?

Love,
Curt

199. Brigadier Barlow, commanding officer of the British 351st Sub Area, E.L.C. See Beckemeier, "September 5, 1944," and "September 12, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

200. The other guests listed specifically in General LeMay's diary were "Colonel Crain and other persons from the SOS office in Calcutta . . . Lt. Colonel and Mrs. Springfield (British), and Squadron Leader Young-James (British)." Ibid. "SOS" in this case is probably the abbreviation for Services of Supply, which was renamed Army Service Forces in 1942. It was a subcommand of the U.S. Army that was one of three, the Army Ground Forces and Army Air Forces being the other two. The Army Service Forces included seven branches that provided services and supply for both the Army Ground Forces and Army Air Forces. These were the Ordnance Department, Corps of Engineers, Signal Corps, Quartermaster Corps, Medical Corps, Chemical Corps, and Transportation Corps. See John D. Millet, *The Organization and Role of the Army Service Forces, The United States Army in World War II: The Army Service Forces*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1998), 38.

201. Beckemeier, "September 15, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 17, 1944²⁰²

Dear Helen,

I missed writing a letter yesterday as I had to take another trip to China to see Chennault.²⁰³ As you know, Glenn who used to be on Second Wing staff at Langley is his chief of staff. A round trip over the hump in one day is quite a day's work, so I got back too late and too tired to write.²⁰⁴ Would you be interested in some jade? There is a reliable source in China; however, it is very expensive. A piece for a setting in a ring about one half inch by one quarter inch costs about \$50. To show you how expensive everything is—wood in China to burn to keep warm is \$2.50 a pound. You can get almost as much heat by just burning the money. I am becoming more and more convinced that our travel after the war will be a trip to Niagara Falls.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 17, 1944²⁰⁵

Dear Helen,

I went out to Lloyd's company last night and had dinner with him. He had gone out and shot some ducks. They were a little tough, but not bad. He has a good mess—one of the best around. [I] also saw a picture of his daughter. She is 11 and really a good looking girl. We are going to have a movie on the porch tonight, *Gildasleeve's Ghost*, or something like that.²⁰⁶ We are still getting a bottle of beer a day, Pabst or Schlitz, and it really tastes good in this heat. The P-X supplies are alright and we can get

202. Beckemeier, "September 17, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

203. LeMay traveled to the Fourteenth Air Force Headquarters in Kunming, China, and met with General Chennault for approximately two hours. See Beckemeier, "September 16, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

204. In fact, the general and Major Beckemeier left Kharagpur at 4:30 a.m. and did not return to India until 7:00 p.m. Ibid.

205. See Beckemeier, "September 17, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

206. *Gildersleeve's Ghost*, misspelled by LeMay, was directed by Gordon Douglas and released in June 1944 by RKO Radio Pictures. See *Variety*, June 21, 1944, 12.

practically anything we want, except home cooking and *etc.*, but I suppose we can't expect that.²⁰⁷

Love,
Curt

*At this time, one of General LeMay's brothers, Captain Lloyd LeMay, was serving with the Ordnance Medium Maintenance Company, part of the Ordnance Department of the Army Service Forces.*²⁰⁸ His unit was stationed at Kalaikunda, India, a short distance to the west of Kharagpur and headquarters of the 1st Air Transport Squadron, one of the Air Transport Command's units, comprising C-46s and C-87s, which was attached to the XX Bomber Command on May 19, 1944, to help fly fuel and supplies to B-29 bases in China.²⁰⁹ Lloyd was the third LeMay son to begin a military career, enlisting as a private soon after Pearl Harbor.²¹⁰ Like his two brothers, who were both commissioned officers, Lloyd was successful in his military career, advancing to the rank of captain by this time and major before he left the theater, ultimately progressing to colonel when he remained in the service after the war.²¹¹

Curtis and Lloyd had other traits in common. They both enjoyed hunting ducks, as evidenced by General LeMay's well-documented sportsman's background and his comments in his September 17 letter. Thomas Coffey's interviews with their younger brothers and sisters suggested that both men were mechanically minded and hard working.²¹² There is some evidence that this was the case even when they were children; in the 1920 census, Lloyd, age eleven, and Curtis, age thirteen, were both listed as "newspaper boy."²¹³ Despite these similarities, they had a strained relationship for most of their lives. "He and his brother Lloyd didn't really fight with each other, but they didn't exactly get along either," Methyl, their younger sister, told Coffey in an inter-

207. PX is the abbreviation for Post Exchange. Each military base usually had one available. They were basically general stores that could be utilized by airmen and officers to buy luxury goods, clothes, and necessities not provided directly by the quartermaster.

208. Beckemeier, "September 22, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Millet, *The Organization and Role of the Army Service Forces*, 38.

209. Beckemeier, "September 22, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Cate, "MATTERHORN Logistics," 86.

210. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 192.

211. *Ibid.*; and Hauger, UNTOHC, 16.

212. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 196.

213. U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Fourteenth Census, 1920, Columbus Ward 9, Franklin, Ohio, series T625, roll 1381, p. 1A, s.v. "Erving LeMay," Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

view. *"They argued about silly little things. I think Lloyd resented Curtis all his life."*²¹⁴ This tension was seemingly focused on General LeMay's dominant role in their relationship. *"If we played horse and wagon, I always had to be the horse,"* noted Lloyd.²¹⁵ General LeMay put it more bluntly, reflecting on his past as a father figure. *"We never got along,"* he remembered. *"I tried to guide him. I didn't think he had a sense of responsibility."*²¹⁶ This impression was likely established when Lloyd dropped out of high school at the age of sixteen, *"much to the disgust of Curtis, who was then a freshman in college."*²¹⁷ Despite his older brother's disappointment Lloyd was successful in his own right, gaining a lucrative job while Curtis was still in college.²¹⁸

This history was reflected in Lemay's letters to Helen as well. LeMay mentioned Lloyd to Helen for the first time on September 17 and did so seven more times in 1944 and twice in 1945. He was one of only a few family members LeMay consistently discussed with Helen in their correspondence, along with his mother, father, and brother Leonard. LeMay's close proximity to Lloyd during the summer, fall, and winter of 1944 likely fueled this interaction. The brothers' distance was evidenced by LeMay's comments to Helen about a photograph Lloyd showed him of his younger daughter during their initial meeting. *"She is 11 and a really good looking girl,"* he told Helen.²¹⁹ LeMay's early disapproval of his brother's sense of responsibility was buttressed by Lloyd's relationship problems, mentioned by LeMay in his November 15 letter to Helen. *"I don't care to butt into anyone's business, however, I'll have a talk with Lloyd the next time I see him,"* he promised. *"I don't expect the leopard to lose his spots after the conversation though."* Helen's intention to help Lloyd's companion elicited further comment from her husband: *"I don't care what you do with our money,"* said LeMay; *"I don't need much of it and if you want to spend it that way, it's OK with me but I won't start a practice of supporting Lloyd's women—there are too many of them and it's his job. I have all I can do to keep my own wife happy and at home out of trouble without taking on any others so go easy—you can't solve all the ills of the world."* Two days later, LeMay went further: *"I think we had better stay clear out of Lloyd's business until I can see him,"* he said.

214. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 192.

215. *Ibid.*

216. *Ibid.*

217. *Ibid.*, 196.

218. *Ibid.*

219. Lloyd had an older daughter, Phyllis, whom LeMay mentioned in his April 23, 1945, letter as graduating from high school in the forthcoming June.

Despite Lloyd's alleged personal problems, LeMay found his work to be satisfactory, writing Helen on December 15: "I saw his boss, General Cheves," commander of the Army Service Forces in China, "and he seems to like him quite well and thinks he is doing a good job."²²⁰ The brothers' relationship was evidently a mixed bag. Clearly LeMay enjoyed seeing him and catching up, and Lloyd was also open to this reunion. They had dinner again on September 22, when Lloyd "dropped in to say good-bye," and LeMay tried to visit him in Kunming when he flew to Chengtu.²²¹ Still, his disapproval of Lloyd's personal life was plain and in line with the discord that historically characterized their relationship. General LeMay and Lloyd were open about their disagreements, which were well known to other family members as well. In LeMay's letters, one can sense that friction existed.

Early in the morning after the brothers had their reunion dinner, a tragic event took place when a B-25 piloted by General Saunders, who was accompanied by an army nurse, "Lieutenant Hoffstetter," and two staff sergeants crashed a short distance from the runway at Piardoba.²²² The group had departed from the 462nd Bomb Group airfield at 12:15 a.m. after General Saunders had said some final goodbyes to associates before his scheduled return to Washington for reassignment.²²³ The crash mortally wounded everyone on board except for General Saunders, who was severely wounded.²²⁴ When Saunders did not report in by 5:00 a.m. later that morning, General LeMay responded immediately by piloting a B-25 and leading four others along with the 462nd's commander, Colonel Alfred F. Kalberer, over an area from Salua to Piardoba to search for the missing plane and crew.²²⁵ The small squadron

220. Major General Gilbert Xavier Cheves, commander of the Army Service Forces, also known as the Services of Supply (SOS) for China. He was appointed to the position and headquartered at Kunming, China, on November 10, 1944, by Lieutenant General Albert Coady Wedemeyer, who had replaced Stilwell as commander of U.S. forces in the CBI on October 27. Before this, Cheves had served as commander of Base Section Number 2 in Calcutta, a post he had held since January 23, 1943. See Captain Crosby Maynard, "The War Warmed Over: China Command," *CBI Roundup* 3, no. 10 (November 16, 1944); Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 52; and Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in the CBI, The United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater*, ed. (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1999), 24, 292.

221. See letter of September 23, 1944; and Beckemeier, "September 22, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary. LeMay mentioned trying to see Lloyd or actually visiting him at Kunming on October 6, October 9, December 12, and December 15.

222. Beckemeier, "September 18, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

223. *Ibid.*; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 326–327.

224. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 125.

225. Beckemeier, "September 18, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 326.

*discovered the crash site approximately three miles north of Piardoba in dense jungle and went in by foot with medical personnel to render aid. One of the B-25s' engines had pinned General Saunders's right leg, severely fracturing it. The other passengers died shortly after being discovered.*²²⁶

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 20, 1944²²⁷

Dear Helen,

No mail for several days. Either you have forgotten me or there is a holdup in the system someplace—probably the latter as no one else seems to be getting any mail either. It is only 8:00 in the morning and it is dripping hot. Already it is midnight *last* night in Cleveland, so I hope you are in bed at home. I'm beginning to sweat out Janie's tonsils. I suppose they will be coming out any day now. I hope she doesn't have any trouble. It looks as though the fracas in Europe will be over shortly and then we can really go to work on the Japs. There isn't much to write about. I haven't been to town yet. As soon as I do, I'll tell you about it.

Love,
Curt

LeMay's perception that Germany was near defeat was mirrored by other commanders and leaders in the fall of 1944. The successful invasion of France by Allied amphibious forces in June and effective summer offensives by the Red Army seemingly doomed the Fatherland's chances for victory. Most of Hitler's allies had been conquered or driven out of the war.²²⁸ His strongest remaining friend, Japan, was in no position to render aid. Allied forces quickly established a beachhead on the shores of Normandy and by September had reconquered France and Belgium. Ukraine, breadbasket of the Soviet Union and a key territory for Hitler's plans, had been lost in the East to the Red Army. In addition to territory lost, Germany's military had suffered millions of casualties and lost tens of thousands of war machines and a huge amount of vital resources.²²⁹ The Allied air forces dominated the skies of Europe, and Allied navies controlled the seas surrounding the continent.²³⁰ In late July, a

226. Ibid.

227. Beckemeier, "September 20, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

228. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 750–751.

229. Ibid.

230. Ibid.

*contingent of Hitler's own officers attempted to assassinate him hoping to sue for peace and end the war before the invasion Germany proper.*²³¹ *"This sense of approaching victory, at least in Europe and surely before too long in the Pacific, also had its effect on the home fronts of the major belligerents," wrote Gerhard Weinberg. "In the United States, there was now a somewhat unrealistic expectation that the war in Europe had been practically won."*²³² *Such an outcome would allow the Allies to apply their full weight against Japan's waning military strength, bolstering the efforts of servicemen currently fighting in the Pacific, including the XX Bomber Command.*

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 21, 1944²³³

Dear Helen,

We had rain all night last night, so it was cool. I mean a little cooler than normal, so I slept a little better. In fact, I overslept this morning. Still no mail. I imagine all the airplanes are doing something else, but will get back on the job eventually. I am going over to Stratemeyer's headquarters again today. The mess has improved considerably, but it is still composed mostly of C rations.²³⁴ But I find you can get hungry enough to eat most anything and like it. It's about time for us to crank up another batch of ice cream. Don't forget and send all the receipts you can find.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 22, 1944²³⁵

Dear Helen,

I finally have received a letter. It looks as though it takes as long for V-mail as Air Mail and regular mail. I received a regular letter from your

231. Ibid., 753–754.

232. Ibid., 752.

233. Beckemeier, "September 21, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

234. C rations were one of five basic ration kits. C rations offered the most complete meal kits, containing canned items such as "chicken and vegetables; frankfurters and beans; ham, eggs, and potatoes; meat and noodles; pork and beans; meat and rice; meat and vegetable stew; and meat and spaghetti," as well as drink and dessert items. See Polmar and Allen, *World War II*, 680.

235. Beckemeier, "September 22, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

Dad and a V-mail from you written the same day, the 6th of September. That is about 16 days. I have a dinner engagement with the British police inspector sometime next week.²³⁶ I hope he will be able to get some hunting fixed up. It takes quite a party to hunt tigers, bears, elephants, etc. Would you like to have a tiger skin rug for our bedroom floor? Or would you prefer bear skin. There are a lot of bears in this area also. I should lose some weight over here in the heat and we are hungry some of the time, or at least I am. The food is not prepared very well.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 23, 1944²³⁷

Dear Helen,

I'm glad Janie likes her school. She should do well. She is smart enough, or am I bragging? I saw Holcomb at Calcutta the other day.²³⁸ He is in the service command and has one of their fields. He had the concentration command detachment when we went through Syracuse, if you remember. Lloyd has been ordered to China. [He] will be assistant ordinance officer on the S.O.S. staff up there.²³⁹ It may mean a promotion for him, but otherwise it isn't too attractive. The malaria and living conditions are even worse there. He was over for dinner last night and we have him all fixed up for the trip. I'm getting just a little tired of this war and wish we were back in a decent house again. You would probably have trouble prying me out, even to go to a movie.

Love,
Curt

236. Beckemeier does not name this inspector in LeMay's diary.

237. Beckemeier, "September 23, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

238. This is likely Brigadier General William H. Holcombe, who was with the commander of the SOS post at Camp Ramgarh, a training center for Chinese troops, in the state of Bihar, India. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 154; and Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 217.

239. Lloyd arrived in China on September 26.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 1944²⁴⁰

Dear Janie,

I suppose you have started to school by this time? How do you like it? Soon you will be able to write me a letter. I have a nice house over here made of stone with high ceilings and a fan in the ceiling. I have three lizards that stay on the walls and eat all of the mosquitoes that get in. All the children over here are very dirty. They don't take enough baths and they run around without any clothes. They don't have shoes and dresses like you have. They don't mind because it is very warm. In China, they wear clothes, a pair of long-legged pants and a shirt. The pants have no seat in them apparently to facilitate going to the potty. The Chinese children don't get into trouble. They sit out in the yard on little stools and watch their father and mother work in the rice patty [*sic*] or sometimes ride on their mother's back.

Be good.

Love,
Daddy

General LeMay left Salua Airfield for Chengtu in a B-24 at 6:00 a.m. on September 24 to oversee his first official operation as CO of the XX Bomber Command.²⁴¹ After weeks of training and a full eighteen days since their last mission, his four bomb groups had the chance to display their skill against a live target and test their ability to execute the new formation.²⁴² The operation, commonly known as Anshan III, was planned to finish the destruction of the coke ovens at Anshan begun by Wolfe and Saunders, before engaging Japanese air industry targets in the home islands.²⁴³ The group of 109 B-29s departed Chengtu fields early on the twenty-sixth and flew in loose formation to their target, because they were rarely engaged by enemy fighters during the trip across China.²⁴⁴ The crews then flew in their new twelve-plane high-low-lead formation shortly before they reached the target and returned again in a loose formation to Chinese

240. General LeMay did not date this letter; however, it was written between September 23 and September 28. This letter was probably written on September 23 along with his letter to Helen, as he notes in his September 28 letter that he does not write letters when in China. Beckemeier, "September 23–27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

241. Beckemeier, "September 24, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

242. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 117.

243. Ibid.

244. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 88.

bases. Poor weather played havoc with their efforts, however, and only eighty-eight planes made it to Anshan, with seventy-three of those able to attempt to bomb the Showa works by radar with no damage recorded by photo reconnaissance planes.²⁴⁵ Still, General Arnold recognized the command's progress in greater bomb loads, perhaps his chief concern with the B-29s to that point, and fewer operational losses, in a letter he wrote to LeMay on September 29:

*By this time there has been enough detailed information to get a pretty clear picture of your last operation, and it looks to me as if your efforts are beginning to be rewarded. I was very glad to note that there were no operational losses on the mission—that in itself is a major victory. It shows the results of careful attention to detail and of a better knowledge on the part of the mechanics. The next point of note is the fact that you carry on each airplane eight 500 lb. bombs. There has always been some doubt as to the exact weight they could carry when taking off from their bases and it was generally accepted that it was difficult to carry more than 2000 lb.*²⁴⁶

These improvements did not directly result in better bombing results for that mission but represented the progress Arnold was looking for on a practical level. LeMay was building the XXth into the efficient organization it needed to be in every facet of its operations from logistics to tactics. "Anshan III marked the end of the first phase of MATTERHORN operations," noted Cate. "That fact is clearer in retrospect than it was in late September 1944, but even then there were indications of impending changes," he continued. "The command had learned much, as the operational mission (as opposed to strategic results) of the later missions had shown. The shakedown was over, and with a revamped organization the XX Bomber Command would in succeeding months more nearly approximate the weight of its strikes to the expectations of the original MATTERHORN planners."²⁴⁷

The night after Anshan III, the Japanese also made a change when they sent a small force of fighters and bombers against the Chengtu fields, although

245. Ibid.

246. Arnold wrote another letter to LeMay a week before September 29, specifically addressing the bomb load. "One of the questions which has been of deep concern to me is the limited weight of bombs that we have been able to carry in the B-29s and drop on Japan," he said. "It is my desire that you give the bomb load problem a great deal of thought and that you utilize every means available to you to increase to the maximum the bomb load carried on each mission." See Lieutenant General H. H. Arnold, letter to Major General Curtis E. LeMay, September 22, 1944, CELMPR. For the quotation, see Lieutenant General H. H. Arnold, letter to Major General Curtis E. LeMay, September 29, 1944, CELMPR.

247. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 118.

*they met little success. It was the first time they attempted such an attack against the Superfortress airfields, but they would continue to do so on a similarly small scale until December 19.*²⁴⁸ *In fact, their whole campaign encompassed merely ten raids and a total of forty-three aircraft.*²⁴⁹ *LeMay remembered, "The party usually was not big, just half a dozen enemy airplanes at the most."*²⁵⁰ *Notably, the Japanese paid Chinese agents to light fires around the airfields to help the Japanese aircraft locate their targets.*²⁵¹ *Investigations rarely exposed these spies, and the raids were a nuisance to base operations but did virtually no damage.*

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 28, 1944²⁵²

Dear Helen,

I'm trying to write every day. I am home, but I go to China occasionally and there may be a gap in the mail. There isn't any use writing up there because I would beat the mail out. I have found the pistol. It was in the foot locker that just arrived on my airplane.²⁵³ I think I have enough cigars and tobacco to last the rest of the war. Anyway, don't send anymore until I call for it. I received the air mail with the clipping about the broadcast in the superfort but there must be a letter missing as I didn't get the whole story. I have to get this in the mail or miss a day. More tomorrow.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 29, 1944²⁵⁴

Dear Helen,

I have been digging my way out from under the pile of work that

248. Ibid.

249. Ibid.

250. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 93.

251. Ibid.

252. Beckemeier, "September 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

253. This was B-29 number 208, the *Superfortress* originally assigned to be flown by LeMay and his staff to India when they left in late August. It arrived on September 25 and included "the rest of our office equipment and our clothing." See Beckemeier, "September 25, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

254. Beckemeier, "September 29, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

was waiting for me when I came back from China. I should be on top by tonight. A private in HQ. squadron brought in a clipping on your radio performance.²⁵⁵ He is from Lakewood.²⁵⁶ I'll find out his name and see if you know him. I had a letter yesterday from Dinger and Bill. Jim was home on a furlough and just about to start his combat crew training.²⁵⁷ We are supposed to be getting some cool weather before long, but it isn't here yet. In fact, it is hotter than ever. I hope Janie is still enjoying her school. Do you think you and mother will derive any benefit by taking the first grade over with her?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, SEPTEMBER 30, 1944²⁵⁸

Dear Helen,

No mail for several days. It seems to come in spurts. It is a little cooler today. It rained all last night and all day today, but as soon as there is a break in the clouds things will begin to steam.

The Indians just had a holiday that roughly corresponds to our Christmas.²⁵⁹ There are so many tribes and sects that I don't know how many were involved. Anyway, there was a big celebration of some sort and we couldn't get anyone to work.

I have a movie camera now and will take some movies of life in general over here to help convince you that you don't want to travel after the war.

255. The editors were unable to identify this airman.

256. Lakewood, Ohio.

257. The editors were unable to identify Jim.

258. Beckemeier, "September 30, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

259. This was likely the Hindu holiday of Durga Puja, a ten-day festival celebrating the victory of the benevolent "Mother Goddess" Durga over an evil buffalo demon named Mahishasura. The annual date of the holiday fluctuates from year to year because it is based on the Bengali calendar, but occurs in either September or October. It is considered the largest and most important annual celebration in Bengal, where it originated, and is enjoyed by Hindus and non-Hindus alike with festivals, feasts, gift giving, and elaborate idols of Durga set up on pandals along the streets to honor the goddess. Durga Puja's trappings approximate the secular traditions of Christmas as LeMay's comments suggest. See Jyotirmoyee Sarma, "Puja Associations in West Bengal," *Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 3 (May 1969): 579-594; and S. P. Sharma and Seema Gupta, *Fairs and Festivals of India* (New Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 2006), 36-40.

I wish I could photograph the smell that goes with the scenery, free of charge. Tell dad I will get around to answering his letter shortly.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 3, 1944²⁶⁰

Dear Helen,

Before I left home I gave you one roll of 16 mm movie film *color*. There was another roll due back from being developed. Did it ever arrive? Also, there was a roll of color (slides) 35 mm that I took with the Leica due. Did it arrive? The next time you send a package, leave out tobacco and cigars. We can get enough here to get along on, but send some coffee. We get a local product, which is terrible. Not as bad as some *you* have made for me, but bad enough. Also some starch. The laundry we set up uses rice starch and you smell like a dead fish—not that it makes much difference as everyone smells the same, but I could get along without it. We had a storm last night and loads of rain and wind and much cooler. Reminds me of fall. I wonder if you and Janie have galoshes for this winter? I think I left a pair upstairs that your Dad might use, or I'm sure mine could be on the farm. Let me know when the check arrives I mailed yesterday. Football season again. I wish I were back so we could take in a few games. I think I could *almost* enjoy getting beaten by Michigan.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 4, 1944²⁶¹

Dear Helen,

Air mail can be slow too. I just received one that took 22 days, so I'll write about half and half, so you will get one anyway.²⁶² I don't have to be shot at to think about you and I *don't* make any new resolutions. *My*

260. Beckemeier, "October 3, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

261. Beckemeier, "October 4, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

262. Half air mail and half v-mail.

conscious is clear; when perfection is reached you shouldn't expect any further improvement. The mail schedule over here is definitely not as good as it was in England. You may get a letter in 10 days or three weeks, so that mixes up the conversation. We had another big rain and everything is flooded, but it is very much cooler. I had dinner with the inspector of police last night and they thought it was cold, but they have been out here 22 years which makes a slight difference.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 5, 1944²⁶³

Dear Helen,

In case you miss the other letter, I have the pistol and leather jacket. They came in the foot locker which just arrived. I can sympathize with Janie not wanting to get up in the morning. You will have to put her to bed earlier so she gets plenty of sleep.

Our mess is improving somewhat, or I am getting less discriminating. I have actually enjoyed a meal or two lately. At the police inspector's dinner, we had roast goose and it was very good. I'm learning a lot about the Indian problem and it is a mess. If you think we have a problem with the Negroes, you should see this. These people really aren't capable of governing themselves and if the British give them independence, they will be in trouble. Al Harvey²⁶⁴ is opening up a new club with suitable ceremonies, which I will attend.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 6, 1944²⁶⁵

Dear Helen,

Not a thing has happened since the last letter, except I went to a movie

263. Beckemeier, "October 5, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

264. Colonel Alva L. Harvey, commanding officer of the 444th Bomb Group, August 1943–April 1945. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 318.

265. Beckemeier, "October 6, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

last night, a fairly good one for a change. I'm going to town today and am going to take both cameras and see if I can get some good pictures or at least pictures to show you why you don't want to visit India. I think I will get a pair of mosquito boots while I am there.

I had a letter from Lloyd in China. He isn't complaining too much. I haven't heard from Leonard since the landings in southern France. I hope you and Janie enjoyed the weekend at [illegible] and that Janie didn't ride the horse to death.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 8, 1944²⁶⁶

Dear Helen,

I have been away and swamped in the last two days so haven't been able to write; however, I think my average is still good. Those HOTELS mentioned by my mother are not. They are HOSTELS. GI versus run by chinks. *Don't* send any ice cream mix. We can get it over here. We can get eggs once in a while too, so with canned and powdered milk, maybe we can make a satisfactory product. I hope you enjoy your trip to Philadelphia, but don't think you should handicap Janie by taking her out of school. She will lose another week when she has her tonsils out. I'm glad to hear the news about Kathleen.²⁶⁷ Fulkrod arrived yesterday. He was my engineering officer in England and will be a big help here.

Love,
Curt

From October 9 to 18, LeMay was directing XX Bomber Command operations from Chengtu against Japanese air industry targets at Okayama and Einan-sho on Formosa—modern-day Taiwan.²⁶⁸ In the course of four days, October 14–17, he sent more than two hundred sorties on three separate missions, a first for the command, which reflected its improved organization and logistics.²⁶⁹ The army's official newspaper in the CBI, the CBI Roundup, heralded

266. Beckemeier, "October 8, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

267. The editors were unable to identify Kathleen.

268. Beckemeier, "October 10–18, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

269. Ibid.

the combined aerial attack against Formosa by LeMay's B-29s and approximately one thousand fighters and fighter bombers from American carriers in Admiral Mark Mitscher's Task Force 58 as "unparalleled in the Pacific War."²⁷⁰ It was one of a string of missions that complemented operations in the southwestern Pacific by the U.S. Navy and other Allied offensives known as PAC-AID.²⁷¹ LeMay's decision to reprioritize Japanese Air Force targets, along with the blessing of the COA, mirrored the strategy employed by the Eighth Air Force against the Luftwaffe before they moved on to Germany's industry and transportation network.²⁷² The distance from Chengtu to preferred targets presented a problem for the COA and LeMay, because they were often only able to hit the best targets within their range instead of the primary objectives on their list.²⁷³ For the rest of LeMay's tenure, as often occurred to the Eighth Air Force in Europe, his Superfortresses were sometimes diverted from their strategic mission to instead engage in action against secondary, tertiary, and tactical targets in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in support of other Allied operations.

Several key staff additions and organizational changes occurred during mid-October that benefited the XX Bomber Command. First, two officers arrived to bolster LeMay's training efforts. Colonel Benjamin F. Fulkrod, who was LeMay's head engineering officer in the 3rd Division and was also one of the first veterans to join LeMay's staff when he was given the 305th, arrived on October 7 to take the senior engineering position of the command's supply and maintenance section.²⁷⁴ In his memoirs, LeMay described Fulkrod as "a practical engineering officer to the point of genius" and credited him as one of the primary reasons the bomb group was successful.²⁷⁵ Five days later, Colonel Joseph J. Preston rejoined his old comrades as deputy chief of staff for operations.²⁷⁶ He was also assigned to the training staff and no doubt had a hand in training lead crews at Dudhkundi, a job he had pioneered under LeMay as a squadron commander with the 305th.²⁷⁷

270. "B-29's, Navy Blast Formosa," *CBI Roundup* 3, no. 6 (October 19, 1944).

271. Besides Chinese targets, these included missions against objectives in Southeast Asia in support of General Douglas MacArthur's campaign to retake the Philippines and Mountbatten's efforts in Burma and elsewhere. They were highlighted by the incendiary attack against the vital Japanese Army supply docks at Hankow, China, on December 18, 1944. See Cate, "Exit MATTER-HORN," 131–132.

272. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 117.

273. Plans in general emphasized future operations based on larger forces conducting missions from the Marianas anyway. *Ibid.*

274. Beckemeier, "October 7, 1944," *LeMay Daily Diary*.

275. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 218.

276. Beckemeier, "October 10–18, 1944," *LeMay Daily Diary*.

277. Leo I. Herman, Colonel, Air Corps, Acting Adjutant General, "Officers Monthly Roster,"

At the same time, LeMay advanced the reorganization of the XXth that was initiated by Twentieth Air Force Headquarters during the previous summer.²⁷⁸ On October 10, with the aid of Colonel Rosenblatt, he instituted a new supply and maintenance system that put his group commanders in command of their air bases to facilitate collective repair and stockpiling of supplies.²⁷⁹ Under the old model, squadron supply officers often hoarded parts, and maintenance teams were only responsible for repairing their own aircraft. Consequently, work was overwhelming for those mechanics whose squadrons had been hard hit during a mission while mechanics whose squadrons' bombers had suffered little or no damage were idle. Moreover, necessary parts for repairs might or might not be available to those who required them. By centralizing supply and maintenance for a whole group, LeMay saw that mechanics, ground crews, and specialists worked "on a production-line maintenance program for the whole base." This helped to ensure that "[e]veryone worked on the plane that needed to be worked on."²⁸⁰ These changes continued to improve the efficiency of the XXth.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 19, 1944²⁸¹

Dear Helen,

I suppose you will be hopping mad by the time this reaches you, but if you look over the old newspaper from October 14th to 19th, you will see what we have been doing. I have been gone for 10 days and it doesn't do much good to write from China as you almost always beat the letters out. I took some movies of native life while I was away. I hope they turn out OK. I stopped to see Chennault yesterday and while there stopped to say hello to Lloyd, who is only a half mile away. I hope you enjoyed your visit to Philadelphia. Tell Dinger we did our first work for Lee this past week.²⁸²

Love,
Curt

Headquarters, XX Bomber Command, Kharagpur, India, November 30, 1944, CELMPR.

278. Cate, "XX Bomber Command against Japan," 119.

279. *Ibid.*, 123–124.

280. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 85–86.

281. Beckemeier, "October 19, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

282. Attacks against Formosa.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 20, 1944²⁸³

Dear Helen,

I will try and get a note of some sort off every day to make up for those lapses you are going to have when I am gone to China. Stilwell came up during our last mission. He is a fine old gentleman and deserves a better bunch than having mostly chinks to command. I'm glad you sent the Aqua Velva. I can use it but don't send any more cigars or tobacco. I have so much now I'm afraid it will mold before I can use it. I hope Janie didn't miss too much school so she is behind. It is hard for them to catch up if they do. I don't get much fan mail. I guess all the gals think generals are too old; however, it won't do you any harm to think you have some competition.

If worse comes to worse [*sic*], a China air force commander has offered me all the concubines I can use, but they don't look white enough for me yet!

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 21, 1944²⁸⁴

Dear Helen,

The boxes you sent were in good shape. The candy had suffered a little from the heat, but was still edible. I'll try the ice cream recipe you sent. We have powdered and canned milk and can get fresh eggs most of the time. They are small and a funny looking color due no doubt to their age, but they are eggs. I would buy some bonds, say a \$100 one each month on average and put the rest in the savings account. The printing is OK on the V-mail. Hearing Janie has a cold, I guess you will have to stop running around with her. It looks as though she gets sick every time she takes a trip.

I have been having a little trouble with the camera, but the last batch of pictures taken in China was OK, and I have some movies being developed now.

Love,
Curt

283. Beckemeier, "October 20, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

284. Beckemeier, "October 21, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 27, 1944²⁸⁵

Dear Helen,

Back in India again.²⁸⁶ I didn't stay so long this time. I hope you are not too irritated at the spasmodic letter writing, but it is impossible to get anything off in China, as I would beat it out in most cases. I just heard that Bob Williams is taking over the Second Air Force, so he must be getting back from England.²⁸⁷ That makes all new division commanders in U.K. I think I told you not to send anymore ice cream mix as we can get it over here. I haven't received the film back of the pictures I had taken. I hope they turn out well, so well in fact that you will lose your urge for travel. I wish there was some way of photographing the smell which keeps you sick at your stomach for the first month or so.

If you go to [illegible] for the football game, be careful. You know what happened to you the last time you were there.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, OCTOBER 28, 1944²⁸⁸

Dear Helen,

You seem to be dragging Janie downtown quite a bit, which may not do her any harm, but I'm sure it doesn't help her. If she is cramping your style why don't you get a maid to take care of her? I just had a letter from Doc Reid. He is a lieutenant colonel on active duty with the Director of Flying Safety at Winston-Salem, N.C. He and Virginia have three kids now—two boys 5½ and 4½ and a girl nine months. I'll drop a line to Eastman about the slides.²⁸⁹ They should be there by this time. I hope Janie is over the tonsil episode by the time this arrives. If not, be sure and get her rested up a couple of days in advance. I haven't seen Roy for some

285. Beckemeier, "October 27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

286. LeMay was at Chengtu directing a mission against aircraft factories at Omura, Japan, from October 23 to 26. See Beckemeier, "October 23–26, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

287. General Robert B. Williams took over command of the Second Air Force on October 28, 1944. The Second Air Force was a training command primarily used to organize new B-29 units and replace personnel lost in combat. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 458.

288. Beckemeier, "October 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

289. LeMay is referring to Eastman Kodak, the photographic film company.

time, but he is still over here.²⁹⁰ I wish I were home for a birthday cake, or at least a chocolate pie.²⁹¹

Love,
Curt

On October 29 LeMay, accompanied by Major Beckemeier, Brigadier General Laurence Cardee Craigie (newly appointed deputy chief of engineering at Wright-Patterson), Colonel Rosenblatt, and a Lieutenant Cobb, made a sightseeing tour of Bangalore, India, before proceeding to SEAC headquarters at Kandy, Ceylon.²⁹² The next morning, the group went sightseeing again, before meeting with Mountbatten and Brigadier General George Schulgen (USAAF), one of Mountbatten's staff officers, concerning upcoming missions against rail targets in the Burmese capital of Rangoon and the vital dry dock in Singapore, and other official business.²⁹³ The resulting mission against the Malagan railroad yards in Rangoon, which took place on November 3, decimated the yards and resulted in no operational losses of aircraft or crew.²⁹⁴ Two days later, sixty-four Superfortresses attacked the King George VI dry dock at Singapore, the largest and most important in the area, and put it out of operation for at least three months.²⁹⁵

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 1, 1944²⁹⁶

Dear Helen,

Two letters today, so maybe you are writing a few. I hope you liked the broadcast.²⁹⁷ We loaded it upon a record here one day and sent it home. It was nice of General Arnold to wire you about it. I hope you wrote him a letter and thanked him for it. I wish I were home to go to the Michigan game with you. I'll bet you have fun and it seems a long time since we have

290. The editors were unable to identify Roy.

291. LeMay's birthday was upcoming on November 15.

292. Beckemeier, "October 29, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 379.

293. Beckemeier, "October 30, 1944"; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 441.

294. Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 154.

295. *Ibid.*, 155.

296. Beckemeier, "November 1, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

297. The editors were unable to identify this broadcast. It was likely on *Army Hour*, a radio variety show used for propaganda purposes.

done anything like that. I hope Janie's tonsils are all well by the time this gets home. I bought you and Janie a Chop in China that is a stamp made out of stone with your name in Chinese and English engraved on it so you dip it in ink and stamp your name on it. I also have a bundle of Chinese money which I will stamp Merry Christmas on and you can send it out for Christmas cards. The money is cheaper than the cards.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX Bomber Command, Kharagpur,
India, November 2, 1944²⁹⁸

Dear Helen,

I'm rather stupid today and can't think of anything to write. I was up until 3:00 this morning trying to get communications in with Washington. It seems as though I can't get enough sleep out here. How I used to get along on three to five hours I don't know because eight doesn't seem to be enough here. I hear that A. Y. Smith is a [illegible].²⁹⁹ I read in the Army newspaper about the fire in Cleveland. How would you like to have that or worse every day or so? This is what bombing is like. Haven't heard anything about Moore coming out yet.³⁰⁰ There are other forces around

298. Beckemeier, "November 2, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

299. Colonel Archibald Y. Smith. From the old guard of early army air corps days, Smith was one of the first B-17 command pilots, piloting aircraft number 82, 49th Bomb Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group, during the Rex exercise in 1938 (LeMay was the lead navigator for the mission on aircraft number 80). On June 2, 1941, as a lieutenant colonel, Smith took command of the 41st Bomb Group, a medium bomber outfit, for a short period. On July 24, 1944, he was awarded command of the 452nd Bomb Group, a B-17 unit, but was shot down four days later during a mission against oil industry targets near Merseburg, Germany. Although he survived the crash, Colonel Smith was interned at Stalag Luft 13d and later Stalag Luft 7a before being liberated by Allied forces at the end of the war. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 185; Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 97–98; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 305; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 258; and "Archibald Y. Smith," in World War II Prisoners of War Data File, Records of World War II Prisoners of War, 1942–1947, Records of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, RG 389, NARA.

300. It is unclear who Moore is. It is possibly Colonel Charles K. Moore, who is mentioned by Major Beckemeier on October 24 and 28 and December 10 as accompanying him and General LeMay. Colonel Moore served as the assistant chief of staff of maintenance and supply for XX Bomber Command. This seems unlikely, however, as Colonel Moore was in India before this letter was written. The most likely candidate is Major Phillip G. Moore, who was a personnel staff officer with the XXth. This assumption is based on evidence taken from this letter in tandem with LeMay's December 13 letter, in which he stated, "I had a little trouble locating more [illegible]. His name is Philip, not Paul. He is here at headquarters and I have just sent for him." As noted with that letter,

besides me, so he may not be coming to me. I'm enclosing a cartoon out of Yank to illustrate how bad off we are out here.

Love,
Curt

During Friday afternoon, October 20, an East Ohio Gas Company surface tank containing approximately ninety million cubic feet of liquefied natural gas exploded and began a fire that was reckoned the worst in Cleveland history.³⁰¹ The subsequent "tidal wave of fire" washed over approximately one square mile of East Cleveland residences and businesses.³⁰² The suburb of Lakewood, where Helen, Janie, and her parents lived, was located just a few miles to the west of the affected area. General LeMay read about the incident in two articles published by the Stars and Stripes the following Monday (October 23), which reported that an estimated two hundred people had been killed by the blast, eighty-three of those confirmed, and that the resulting fire had left hundreds more injured and had forced "at least 10,000 Clevelanders" to evacuate their East Side homes.³⁰³ Witnesses claimed that the explosion "cascaded flames thousands of feet in the air" and "rocked the entire east side. . . . Debris was blown hundreds of feet high, while the entire neighborhood was showered with flaming liquid, setting off hundreds of street fires."³⁰⁴ Fires continued through Saturday afternoon. The final count revealed a total of 130 dead, two factories and seventy-nine homes destroyed, and millions of dollars in property damage. It was recorded as the worst fire in Cleveland history.³⁰⁵

The tragedy was likely educational for Helen to help her understand the reality of the work her husband was engaged in, a point he struck home: "How

"more [illegible]" was possibly written as "Moore." LeMay's handwriting was particularly difficult to transcribe in that letter. Major Phillip (spelled "Philip" by LeMay) G. Moore is noted in the XXth's November 30 Officers Roster, but the editors could not determine when he actually arrived in the CBI Theater. See Herman, "Officers Monthly Roster," CELMPR; Beckemeier, "October 24 and 28, and December 10, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and "Establishes Design Criteria for U.S. Planes" *Superfort: News Publication of XX Bomber Command* 1, no. 7 (April 13, 1945).

301. David Dirck Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski, eds., s.v. "East Ohio Gas Co. Explosion and Fire," *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

302. "'200 Dead,' 10,000 Homeless as Fire Sweeps Cleveland," *Stars and Stripes*, London Edition, October 23, 1944, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NARA.

303. "'200 Dead,' 10,000 Homeless as Fire Sweeps Cleveland"; and "83 Die as Fire Destroys Vast Cleveland Area," *Stars and Stripes*, London Edition, October 23, 1944, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NARA.

304. *Ibid.*

305. Van Tassel and Grabowski, "East Ohio Gas Co. Explosion and Fire."

would you like to have that or worse every day or so? This is what bombing is like.” Six months later General LeMay would engineer a series of incendiary raids against Japanese cities that yielded B-29 crew and Japanese civilian accounts that were similar to those given by Cleveland residents in late-October 1944.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 3, 1944³⁰⁶

Dear Helen,

I went to the boxing match we had in town last night with the British troops. We got licked six matches to three. Our boys don't have time to train and work too while the British in the area just sit and do things of that nature. In general, the fights were terrible and I couldn't help but think of the good boxing we had in Hawaii. [Illegible] to you wasn't in the [illegible] and anyway that would have been like writing a letter since we mailed the record back to the states to be recorded there. It looks as though Ohio State is going to do alright in football this year. Your second clipping of scores just came in. I surely wish I could see the beating they are going to give Michigan.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 4, 1944³⁰⁷

Dear Helen,

The two packages came yesterday, Aqua Velva, ice cream mix, linen starch, etc. What do you mean the pears will ripen if I put them in the sun? They were already *well* decomposed; however, I salvaged part of one, which wasn't too bad. It tasted good anyway. The starch had broken open and was well distributed through the package. Everything else was OK. I think I have enough olives, cheese, etc. to have a cocktail party on my birthday. Tell Dad the coin was in good shape also. Don't feel bad about

306. Beckemeier, "November 3, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

307. Beckemeier, "November 4, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

the packages. I can use everything except the pears and appreciate your sending them. Sorry to hear about Ent.³⁰⁸ I hope he comes out OK.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 5, 1944³⁰⁹

Dear Helen,

I haven't had a chance to try the ice cream mix you sent over, but will as soon as I can get to the commissary and get some milk. I just had a letter from Leonard. He is commanding a company of combat engineers in Italy now. We have been having some fairly decent weather lately—about like the heat wave in Cleveland, but the nights are cool enough to sleep under a sheet after midnight. I have some prints of the Leica pictures I took in Ceylon, but no movies yet. In case you missed the other letter, the packages came OK. The starch was open, the pears in bad shape, but everything else was OK. Also the coin arrived. We have a lot of jackals around here and they surely make a nuisance out of themselves with their squalling at night.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 6, 1944³¹⁰

Dear Helen,

You seem to be very busy with all your work.³¹¹ Don't try to do too

308. Major General Uzal Girard Ent was commanding officer of the Second Air Force at this time. In October 1944, his spine was severed when his B-25 crashed shortly after takeoff from Fort Worth Army Airfield. Though he survived the accident, his injury left him paralyzed from the waist down. See "Crippled Major Plans Vets' Aid," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, July 28, 1946, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NARA; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 387.

309. Beckemeier, "November 5, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

310. Beckemeier, "November 6, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

311. Helen was actively involved in several home front civilian organizations. She served in the administration of the local Junior Red Cross organization, of which Janie was a member, and also served as a Red Cross "Gray Lady" at Cleveland's Crile General Hospital. See Polly Parsons, "Busy General LeMay Finds Time to Write His Wife and Daughter a Letter Every Day," CELPLOC.

much. I don't want to find an old worn out hag when I get back. I have handshake cramps today. I went to one of those outfits and passed out about 300 medals which represent all they have been awarded since the outfit was formed.³¹² We have had a little trouble getting authority to award them, so this is the reason for so many at one time. I enjoy giving them out, but not so many at one time. I am going to try out some of the ice cream you sent this afternoon. I hope it turns out alright.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 8, 1944³¹³

Dear Helen,

Your mail shouldn't be too bad. I write every day when I am in India, but not at all in China, as I would be back usually before it would, so I wait until I get back to India. There will be lapses in mail, so you must have been in a lapse when you did your complaining. I just had a wire from Walter Cronkite congratulating me on our job in Formosa.³¹⁴ He is in Holland, apparently.³¹⁵ Tokyo Rose is a radio announcer on Radio Tokyo, however, I don't remember mentioning her.³¹⁶ Their program is lousy. To hear them talk, they are shooting us down like flies when the truth is we haven't lost a single ship to fighter attack.

Love,
Curt

312. This was an awards ceremony at Chakulia for members of the 40th Bomb Group. The medals given were the aggregate earned by the unit since it arrived in the CBI in April 1944. See Beckemeier, "November 6, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

313. Beckemeier, "November 8, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

314. Walter Cronkite was part of the so-called Writing 69th, a group of Associated Press writers who closely followed the activities of the Eighth Air Force and even trained with some of the units. They begin covering the Eighth's activities in 1943, when LeMay was still CO of the 305th Bomb Group. See Hamilton, *The Writing 69th*.

315. Cronkite was likely following the Allied offensive occurring in the Netherlands, which was where the northern front line of the Allied forces in Europe was at this time. See Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 760–765.

316. Tokyo Rose was the nickname for a series of female announcers who broadcast Japanese propaganda to American troops fighting in the Pacific in order to affect their morale. They included Japanese-American, Filipino, and Australian women. See I. C. B. Dear and M. R. D. Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1119.

From November 9 to the morning of November 12, General LeMay was at Chengtu directing a force of ninety-six B-29s against aircraft factories at Omura, Japan.³¹⁷ PAC-AID missions in October consumed much of LeMay's stockpiled resources, so this was one of only three remaining missions conducted in November. It was largely assessed as a failure primarily due to poor weather, which prevented the bulk of the force from attacking the primary target at Omura.³¹⁸ Bombing results revealed in photographs taken several days later showed little to no damage inflicted on any targets.³¹⁹

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 14, 1944³²⁰

Dear Helen,

I just bought your Christmas present last night—now to get it home. I have been wondering what I would get you as there really isn't much over here to buy and what there is [is] poor quality and all out of reason on price. Anyway, I have this and I think you will like it. *Again*, I'm really too good to you. I'm working now on a means of getting it back. I hope I can make it by Christmas. While I am on the subject, will you take care of the Christmas presents to the family? I just haven't the time to go out and pass through the junk they have here. You do a better job of shopping than I do anyway.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 15, 1944³²¹

Dear Helen,

Your Christmas present is leaving today on the ship taking Blondie Saunders home. One package is coming through the mail; you can open that now, but the box that comes express is your Christmas present and you can't open it until then.

317. Beckemeier, "November 9–12, 1944"; and Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 140.

318. These forces were diverted to secondary targets including Nanking, China. *Ibid.*

319. *Ibid.*

320. Beckemeier, "November 14, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

321. Beckemeier, "November 15, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

I don't care to butt into anyone's business, however, I'll have a talk with Lloyd the next time I see him. I don't expect the leopard to lose his spots after the conversation though. I don't care what you do with our money. I don't need much of it and if you want to spend it that way, it's OK with me *but* I won't start a practice of supporting Lloyd's women—there are too many of them and it's his job. I have all I can do to keep my own wife happy and at home out of trouble without taking on any others so go easy—you can't solve all the ills of the world. I'm having a few of the staff here in for a cocktail tonight in the way of a birthday party. Wish you were here too.

Love,
Curt

*Saunders, described by LeMay as a "powerful vigorous guy," was in critical condition following his rescue on the morning of September 18, due both to the severity of his wounds and the ensuing infection that set in during the eight hours he spent trapped in the wreckage of his plane awaiting rescue.³²² After approximately a month at medical facilities in Piardoba, air force doctors stabilized him and defeated the infection, allowing them to send him on to Washington for further treatment in a specially outfitted C-54 "hospital ship."³²³ Saunders's plane left India on November 15, also LeMay's thirty-eighth birthday, arriving at Walter Reed Medical Center "in a near record time of 57 hours," noted the *Stars and Stripes* on December 1, accompanied by several Christmas presents bound for Helen and Janie.³²⁴ Saunders spent approximately two and a half years in the hospital recovering from severe compound fractures in both legs, one heel, and his right arm.³²⁵ Despite this care, he lost a portion of his right leg in the fall of 1945 and retired from the Army Air Force in 1947, opening an automobile dealership in his hometown of Aberdeen, South Dakota.³²⁶*

322. For the quotation see LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 326. Also see Beckemeier, "November 14, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and "Saunders' Mercy Flight Disclosed," *CBI Roundup* 3, no. 12 (November 30, 1944).

323. Beckemeier, "November 14, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

324. Beckemeier, "November 14, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and "Injured Gen. Flown to U.S.," *Stars and Stripes*, Middle East Edition, December 1, 1944, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NARA.

325. *Ibid.*

326. "Rosie Comes Home to Keep Solitary Rendezvous," *Stars and Stripes*, Middle East Edition, December 4, 1945, M1624, 166 rolls, RG 287, NARA; Bob Considine, "The Sports Fare," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, December 28, 1949, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NARA; and Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 118–119.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 16, 1944³²⁷

Dear Helen,

Last night I had about twenty-five of the staff over for a drink before dinner and then we had a movie on the back porch.³²⁸ The mess sergeant baked a cake two feet in diameter, which was really good. So passed the birthday very quietly. In case you miss yesterday's letter, your Christmas present is on the way home and will be expressed from Washington by Lieutenant Thompson. There is another package coming by mail you can open, but the one that comes by express you open at Christmas.

Have you ever paid Sybil for that Parker 51 she got for me when I was home?³²⁹ Just had a letter from Higgs who used to be with us at Wheeler.³³⁰ He is in Calcutta.³³¹

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 17, 1944³³²

Dear Helen,

On reconsidering the matter, I think we had better stay clear out of Lloyd's business until I can see him. I just received a Jap officer's sword

327. Beckemeier, "November 16, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

328. Party guests named specifically by Beckemeier were Lieutenant Colonel Springfield, a British officer; and Ms. Riley, Ms. Meaney, and Ms. Stoke, American Red Cross representatives. The party followed several other notable activities that took place during the day including an awards ceremony for the 444th Bomb Group at its base at Dudhkundi, a dedication of the American Red Cross Club at Dudhkundi, and an accompanying baseball game, topped off with LeMay's birthday cocktail party, dinner, and a movie. See Beckemeier, "November 15, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

329. The Parker 51 was a popular fountain pen from the 1940s. The item was named "51" because it was released in the fifty-first year of the Parker Pen Company's existence. It was manufactured by the Parker Pen Company and touted as one of the greatest fountain pens ever made. See David Shepherd and Mark Shepherd, *Parker "51"* (Brighton, Suffolk, England: Surrenden Pens Limited, 2004).

330. Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii.

331. General LeMay handed out 150 medals on this date to airmen and officers of the 468th Bomb Group at their headquarters at Salua. See Beckemeier, "November 16, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

332. Beckemeier, "November 17, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

from a Chinese General—Chu-Teh.³³³ He used to have many wives and concubines and smoke opium in the traditional Chinese manner, but has now reformed and is one of the mainstays of the north Chinese government. His present wife is an ex-brigade commander and is very handy with a pistol I hear.³³⁴ Maybe she ran the competition off. I'm glad Janie is getting over the tonsil episode without any trouble. I had another letter from Dinger and Bill—they promise to keep you “in line” at the game and I hope the score is 40–0. Also, Jim is going to get married on his next leave. I'm beginning to feel my age more every day.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 18, 1944³³⁵

Dear Helen,

I received two letters from you yesterday dated November 3rd and 6th. I *hope* the 4th and 5th are on the way. The first two rolls of movie film came in today. We will show them tonight before the movie. I hope they turn out alright, so I can show you where I have been at least. The two boxes I sent should arrive in the states today so you should get one through the mail, which you can open now and one express which is your Christmas present. Let me know when they arrive. What do you hear f

333. General Chu Teh (Zhu De) was the commanding officer and founder of the Eighth Route Army, the primary Chinese Communist army from 1937 to 1945. He played a prominent role in the Chinese military and politics throughout the rest of his life. See James F. Dunningan and Albert A. Nofi, s.v. “Eighth Route Army,” *The Pacific War Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (New York: Facts on File, 1998), 161.

334. Kang Keqing. She was one of many Chinese women to serve in the People's Army, and she had also served with Communist guerrillas as a teenager against Chinese Nationalists before taking command of her battalion when its commander was killed in 1934, guiding them throughout the Long March, the retreat from Chiang's forces that lasted over a year. Like her husband, she was a key figure in China's political arena long after World War II. She was a member of the Communist Party's Women's Federation, serving as chairwoman as late as the 1980s, as well as a key member of other party organizations throughout her life. See David S. G. Goodman, “Revolutionary Women and Women in the Revolution: The Chinese Communist Party and Women in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937–1945,” *China Quarterly*, no. 164 (December 2000): 928; and “Kang Keqing: Communist Participated in Historic March,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1992.

335. Beckemeier, “November 18, 1944,” LeMay Daily Diary.

rom Betty Smith? Has Jack gone back to England and is Smitty still there? Kepner has replaced Hodges, so Jack should like him fine.³³⁶

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 23, 1944³³⁷

Dear Helen,

Back again.³³⁸ You bruise too easily darling. All I meant was that every time we took Janie with us she seemed to tire herself out and get bitten by a bug of some sort, so don't be too rough on her. I had a letter from General Arnold today. Said he had seen you in Cleveland. He said you were in good spirits and health and sent your love, etc. I hope your boxes arrived in good condition. We are getting soft out here. I now have *hot* water in my quarters and by main [illegible] and [illegible] we are improving the mess. No doubt you will be impressed to know that I am now an honorary member of the International Mark Twain Society.³³⁹ I never heard of them, but they say they are very elite. Received a letter from Travis yesterday.³⁴⁰ Very breezy.

Love,
Curt

336. Major General William E. Kepner replaced Major General James P. Hodges as commanding officer of the 2nd Bomb Division, Eighth Air Force, on August 1, 1944. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 433.

337. Beckemeier, "November 23, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

338. General LeMay was at his forward base in Chengtu conducting operations against the aircraft factory at Omura, Japan, from November 19 to 21. See Beckemeier, "November 19–22," LeMay Daily Diary.

339. The International Mark Twain Society was founded by Cyril Coniston Clemens, cousin of Samuel Clemens, in 1923. It was purposed to recognize notable individuals by awarding them honors in the society, lifetime memberships, and a Mark Twain Gold Medal. Other notable members included Rudyard Kipling, Robert Frost, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Roosevelt. See J. R. LeMaster and James D. Wilson, eds., *The Mark Twain Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 149–150.

340. General Robert "Bob" Falligant Travis was a contemporary of General LeMay during his time with the Eighth Air Force. Travis commanded the 29th Bomb Group (1941–1942), the 15th Bomb Wing (1942–1943), I Bomber Command, and the 41st Combat Wing (1943–1944) before being transferred back to the United States to head the 17th Bomber Operational Training Wing from 1944 until the end of the war. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 450.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 24, 1944³⁴¹

Dear Helen,

I seem to be particularly devoid of news today. Nothing much happens here you can write about. The first two reels of movies came back and were no good at all. I don't know why because I used the light meter on all the shots. Maybe I'll have better luck on some of the following rolls. By this time you should have the other roll of 35 mm color slides. Beckemeier left it at home and his wife had it developed and is sending it on to you. Let me know when it arrives and if it is any good. I hope Janie didn't get too far behind in her school work while she was laid up with the tonsils.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 25, 1944³⁴²

Dear Helen,

Today is the football game and how I wish I were there! I hope you have fun but not too much. I just received a letter from Mrs. Marbury of Birmingham who says her son is in the outfit. Do you know her? Tell Dad the dues card arrived OK, but the cookies haven't as yet. I hope Janie's part in making them was purely advisory. I haven't any plans for getting Jack out here in the immediate future. There are too many other people I need worse and I am concentrating on them first, after that we will see.

I hear P. D. Ent had a piece of a prop sever his spine and no one else was hurt. He is recovering OK, but is, of course, paralyzed in the lower half of his body. Did you ever pay Cowboy for the pen he got me?

Love,
Curt

341. Beckemeier, "November 24, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

342. Beckemeier, "November 25, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 26, 1944³⁴³

Dear Helen,

It is now 2 am Sunday morning and I hope you are in bed by this time and that you enjoyed all the festivities except the score. I haven't heard what it is yet. Will try and get something on the radio tonight. We had the local inspector of police down to dinner last night. Also the district inspector from Calcutta, who was out making an inspection.

I am going to try and take a day off to go duck hunting in a week or so and hope to get a tiger hunt in this winter sometime. The weather continues to be good here: cool nights and warm days. I hope it lasts. I had a letter from Wriston the other day.³⁴⁴ He wants Rod sent home because he isn't being promoted fast enough over here.³⁴⁵ You know what my reaction is. Let me know when the packages arrive.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 27, 1944³⁴⁶

Dear Helen,

I still haven't found out what the score of the game was and I have a bet on with the Chief of Staff, which I am sure I have won but cannot collect.³⁴⁷ It's getting cool enough now that we can think of taking a little

343. Beckemeier, "November 26, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

344. Likely Colonel Roscoe C. Wriston, CO of XXII Bomber Command, January–February 1945. The XXIIInd was a training command with the Second Air Force at Peterson Field, Colorado. This makes sense in the context of the letter. His son "Rod" was Lieutenant Roderick T. Wriston, a B-29 pilot in the 40th Bomb Group. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 454; and "Rod Wriston's Crew Flies the Tokyo Mission of May 25–26," *Memories*, 40th Bomb Group Association, no. 61 (February 1997): 1.

345. See n. 344.

346. This was the last November mission for the XXth, a training operation against the rail yards at Bangkok executed from their Indian bases. See Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 141; and Beckemeier, "November 27, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

347. Brigadier General John Edwin Upston, LeMay's operations officer until 1944, when he became his chief of staff. See Herman, "Officers' Monthly Roster," CELMPR; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 452.

exercise. We have a tennis court and are putting up a badminton court, so if we can find time to get out there the waistline should go down. I haven't seen Rosey for some time, but I guess he is still over here. We have a Silex³⁴⁸ going for coffee now, so that is a help. Also have an electric hot plate in the quarters, but haven't used it yet.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 28, 1944³⁴⁹

Dear Helen,

I have just heard the score was 18 to 14. It must have been a good game, but I expected we would win by a larger margin since I am farther away than usual; however, it's enough to win 10 rupees from Upston and you will be very quiet for 12 months. I hope you suffered no serious injuries by trying to cheer from the OSU³⁵⁰ section.

Billy Southworth just sent me an enlargement of a snapshot he took of Janie and me at Grand Island.³⁵¹ Did he send you one too? Write and tell me about the trip to Columbus, so I can have some fun second hand anyway. I suppose Janie is back in school by this time. Did she seem to be behind any?

Love,
Curt

348. Silex was the trademark for a series of popular vacuum coffee makers.

349. Beckemeier, "November 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

350. Ohio State University.

351. William Brooks "Billy" Southworth Jr. grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and attended Ohio State University. He played baseball for several years professionally before joining the army air corps, where he became a distinguished B-17 pilot, flying twenty-five missions with the 303rd Bomb Group in 1942–1943. After completing his tour of duty, Major Southworth spent several years as a B-29 flight instructor in Grand Island, Nebraska, before dying in a B-29 accident on February 14, 1945, near LaGuardia Field in Flushing, New York. See David Finoli, *For the Good of the Country: World War II Baseball in the Major and Minor Leagues* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), 224, 311.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 29, 1944³⁵²

Dear Helen,

The mail has slowed down to a stop during the last few days, but I suppose I'll get a whole handful of mail when it does come.

While I think of it, you might check the Zenith radio I left you and see if the batteries are deteriorating. Sometimes they swell up and generally make a mess of the set. If they are, throw them away, but save the terminals. Will you buy me some Ronson lighter flints and send them out in a letter? I think you can get a small bottle of them for \$.75. They should keep me for the duration plus. The cigars and other supplies are holding out fine. You might check and see if Bruce Bairnsfather's new book of drawings has been published yet.³⁵³ I wrote the forward [*sic*] for it and would like to have a copy.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, NOVEMBER 30, 1944³⁵⁴

Dear Helen,

I believe the quartermaster believes today to be Thanksgiving, so will issue the carved turkey. I hope it is good. I went out to one of my fields last night to open up a Red Cross club and to award some decorations and we had some canned chicken, which was much better than the local variety.³⁵⁵ They are skinny and tough—more like fighting cocks. We are getting some tangerines and bananas now that aren't good, but better than none. I have been out here three months today and already it seems as though I have been out here forever when I have only just arrived

352. Beckemeier, "November 29, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

353. Bairnsfather, *No Kiddin'*

354. Beckemeier, "November 30, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

355. General LeMay carried out these ceremonies at the airfield at Piardoba, India, headquarters of the 462nd Bomb Group. He awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and two hundred Air Medals total. *Ibid.*

compared to my stay in England. I hope this trip isn't that long. Have a meeting to get to.³⁵⁶

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 8, 1944³⁵⁷

Dear Helen,

I thought I never would get back to letter writing this time. I think this is the longest lapse, but you know the reason. The box arrived in good shape with the candy, cookies, and Janie's table decoration. I'm glad the box came with your Christmas present. Has one come through the mail yet with the Chinese money, etc.? Janie will be disappointed when she finds there is nothing in the big box for her. I haven't found her a Christmas present yet. There isn't anything here to buy. If I don't get something there by air mail by Christmas you will have to do some more work with me getting the credit. The Turner who took the 1st Division, Bob Williams's outfit, is Slim Turner, Yes, I know him.³⁵⁸ Will write air mail tonight.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 9, 1944³⁵⁹

Dear Helen,

Work surely piles up when you are gone for a few days. The football

356. From December 2 to 8, General LeMay was at Chengtu directing 108 *Superfortresses* against the Manchuria Airplane Manufacturing Company at Mukden, Manchuria. Damage to the target was moderate, and Japanese fighters were quite aggressive, employing air-to-air bombing against the B-29s with phosphorus, destroying seven *Superfortresses* in all. See Cate, "Exit MAT-TERHORN," 141–142.

357. Beckemeier, "December 8, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

358. Major General Howard M. Turner took command of the 1st Bomb Division on October 22, 1944. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 431.

359. Beckemeier, "December 9, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

trip sounded fine and I hope you enjoyed it and were able to fight off the local wolves. Blondie Saunders is getting on OK in Walter Reed but it's still a toss up whether he will lose his leg or not. I think I told you Ent had his spine cut but apparently is recovering as far as possible but is, of course, paralyzed.

The weather continues good here in India just like California, and after such a long stay in China the food even tastes good here or at least better.

I eat at the officers' mess but we have an icebox and electric hotplate here in the house so we can have beer and cheese, etc., and coffee if we want it. Right now I can't complain about the physical comforts but soon the heat starts.

I have a conference, so will have to stop.

Love,
Curt

Of the five total missions flown by the XXth in December, LeMay's incendiary attack against the largest Japanese supply base in China at Hankow was by far the most significant, and perhaps the most important of his time in India.³⁶⁰ Hankow was the key supply dump for a planned Japanese offensive, which threatened to destroy the Fourteenth Air Force Headquarters at Kunming. Perhaps more importantly, Kunming also served as the terminus point for Allied Hump supplies in China.³⁶¹ Both Arnold and LeMay balked at this request, since Hankow was in range of Fourteenth Air Force bases and it further diverted B-29s from their strategic mission.³⁶² In response, Wedemeyer and Chennault invoked the emergency clause in the Twentieth Air Force's charter and petitioned the joint chiefs of staff for operational control of Twentieth units, which they supported.³⁶³ Under this pressure, LeMay spent December 10–11 with General Chennault and General Wedemeyer in their headquarters in Kunming and Chungking, respectively, in order to plan the raid.³⁶⁴

360. One of these was a training mission against Bangkok and the other three were strategic operations against aircraft factories at Mukden and Omura. See "Mission List, 58th Bombardment Wing, CBI Campaign," *American Aviation Historical Society Journal* 7, no. 3 (1962): 224.

361. Beckemeier, "December 10–11, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 57.

362. Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 142–143.

363. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 210–211.

364. Beckemeier, "December 10–11, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 12, 1944³⁶⁵

Dear Helen,

A stack of mail came in today that must have been delayed en route. Some letters dated November 13. Just returned from another trip, but not so long this time. I mailed some silver bracelets to Janie for her Christmas present the other day. I sent them air mail so they should arrive in time. Blondie is getting along OK. It looks like the doctors can save his leg alright. I haven't had a chance to do any shooting yet, but expect to get out before long. I tried to see Lloyd up in China the other day but he was down in the sticks on a job, however, his boss said he was doing a good job for him and getting along fine. I had a check from the Lodge for a Christmas present. I'll mail it to you because it is hard to cash here.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 13, 1944³⁶⁶

Dear Helen,

I had a little trouble locating more [illegible].³⁶⁷ His name is Philip, not Paul. He is here at headquarters and I have just sent for him.³⁶⁸ I just received word that I have received the Distinguished Service Medal for work in England. I'm surprised that your gestapo has fallen down on the job and you haven't heard about it before me. As soon as it arrives, I'll send it home for your file. I'm glad you aren't falling apart. I would hate to have to trade you in on a new model when I get home. You will have to do a little on me though. I'm afraid we get too much starch in our diet to keep my weight down. Maybe I'll lose some when it gets hot again.

Love,
Curt

365. Beckemeier, "December 12, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

366. Beckemeier, "December 13, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

367. LeMay possibly wrote "Moore" here instead of "more [illegible]" that was transcribed.

368. Likely Major Phillip G. Moore, personnel staff officer, Personnel Section, XX Bomber Command. There was also a Major Paul G. Moore attached to the intelligence section of XX Bomber Command, which may have caused LeMay some confusion. See Herman, "Officers' Monthly Roster," CELMPR.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 14, 1944³⁶⁹

Dear Helen,

Keep the copy of *The First of Many* and I'll read it when I get home.³⁷⁰ Bairnsfather has a new book out. See if you can get a copy of it. Apparently, Rosenblatt can afford to live at the Mayflower.³⁷¹ He used to be attorney for the Democrats National Committee [Democratic National Committee] before he got in the Army and still maintains law offices in New York. Just had a visitor today who commanded Lockburne Field³⁷² at Columbus and saw the Michigan/OSU game.³⁷³ He told me all about it and said the town was really taken apart Saturday night after the game. I am getting together the movies I have taken over here and after censoring and [illegible] them will try and send them home. Some of them turned out very good.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 16, 1944³⁷⁴

Dear Helen,

Last night we had nothing to do and had not missed enough sleep lately to go to bed early, so we had a poker game—the first in a long time. It was a good night for the house. I won 300 rupees and Beckemeier, who really had a stretch of luck won 650 rupees. We really had the boys hanging on the ropes. I am mailing you some still pictures as soon as I get them through the censor. It must be a cold winter at home if you are

369. Beckemeier, "December 14, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

370. John Reagan McCray and David E. Scherman, *First of Many: A Journal of Action with the Men of the Eighth Air Force* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944).

371. The Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

372. Spelled "Lockbourne"; Lockbourne Army Airfield near the town of Lockbourne, Ohio, in the Columbus area. The facility provided basic flight training during World War II for four-engine bombers. See Frank Futrell, "The Development of Base Facilities," in *Men and Planes*, vol. 6 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1984), 142, 150.

373. The visitor was not named by Beckemeier in LeMay's war diary and was not otherwise positively identified.

374. Beckemeier, "December 16, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

pulling Janie around on her sled. Usually there isn't any snow until after Christmas. It is a little cold in China now—down about freezing, but damp and penetrating like England. This should arrive after Christmas. I hope you liked your presents and had a happy Christmas.

Love,
Curt

From December 16 to 22, General LeMay directed operations against Hankow from his forward base at Chengtu.³⁷⁵ On December 18, he deployed 94 Superfortresses against the Japanese Army's docks and storage areas near the Yangtze River on the southeastern side of the city, and Chennault's forces attacked Japanese airfields in the surrounding area with 33 B-24s and 149 fighters from the Fourteenth Air Force.³⁷⁶ Eighty-four of the original force of B-29s decimated Hankow with approximately five hundred tons of incendiary bombs in full daylight, bombing from nineteen thousand feet.³⁷⁷ First Lieutenant Willard Wayne Holderby, a lead crew navigator with the 793rd Bomb Squadron, 468th Bomb Group, described the effect on the city in his diary: "The fire was miles across and the smoke was miles high."³⁷⁸ Approximately 40–50 percent of the city was destroyed, including many Chinese residences, due to the smoke and debris that obscured bombardiers' bombsights and miscommunication between some units in the 40th Bomb Group.³⁷⁹ The resulting inferno burned for three days, a "precursor of the massive urban incendiary attacks against Japanese cities," predicted General Chennault, who had encouraged LeMay to utilize incendiaries during the mission's planning stages.³⁸⁰

General LeMay was initially exposed to these weapons while commanding the 4th Bomb Wing in the summer of 1943 when the British firebombed Hamburg on July 24 and 26 during Blitz Week, although incendiaries did not realize their full potential against Germany's stone-and-mortar structures.³⁸¹ Conversely, the resulting inferno in Hankow suggested that incendiaries were

375. Beckemeier, "December 16–22, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

376. Ibid.; Futrell, "The Development of Base Facilities," 143–144; and LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 95.

377. Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 144.

378. Willard Wayne Holderby, "Gateway of India: The WWII War Diary of Willard Wayne Holderby," *Diary of a Navigator*, 468th Bombardment Group, at <http://www.468thbombgroup.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=eMFq5ZkFRAM%3d&tabid=36&mid=467>, accessed April 24, 2013.

379. Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 143–144.

380. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 211.

381. This raid was discussed in detail in chapter 6.

significantly more effective than high explosives when used against the combustible wood-and-paper structures of China and Japan.

This detail was not lost on the Twentieth Air Force. In fact, the notion was rooted in prewar planning, which had identified the structural composition of Asian cities as a potential weakness to exploit with incendiaries.³⁸² A small incendiary raid was conducted against Nagasaki in August with promising results, which piqued the interest of both Arnold and his staff.³⁸³ The possibility was explored, too, by LeMay and his staff when he arrived in the theater, "and in November both LeMay's staff and Arnold's had drawn up operational plans for such an attack on Nagasaki"; however, "PAC-AID and the early withdrawal from China negated these plans."³⁸⁴ Despite LeMay's objections to the Hankow mission, it did provide a laboratory for the Twentieth Air Force to test incendiary attacks on the scale they envisioned, and doubtless confirmed that it was not only a viable but indeed a highly effective strategy to employ against the Japanese in the future if conventional means failed.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 23, 1944³⁸⁵

Dear Helen,

This trip just completed and it's beginning to get cold up here. Had tea and Jing Bao juice³⁸⁶ with an ex war lord and now a marshal in the Chinese army.³⁸⁷ We had quite an interesting conversation through interpreters, and when I left he gave me a dozen bottles of his Jing Bao juice. Two drinks of it and you will pick a fight with anyone. I hope your fortune teller is right, but I don't see any signs from this end. I'm glad Smitty is coming home although Betty doesn't seem overjoyed, but maybe I expect too much. I have a lacquer desk set and a couple silk bed spreads or table

382. Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 144.

383. Ibid.

384. Ibid.

385. Beckemeier, "December 23, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

386. A strong Chinese rice wine. It was described as "a colorless rice wine, otherwise known as *jingbao* (air raid) juice, which looks and smells like potato vodka and tastes like an industrial chemical." See Lou Stoumen, "What It's Like for China GIs," *Yank: The Army Weekly* 3, no. 18 (October 20, 1944): 5.

387. The editors were unable to identify this Chinese marshal.

cloths or something of the sort. Christmas presents from the Chinese. I'll send them home as soon as I get a chance.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 24, 1944³⁸⁸

Dear Helen,

It certainly doesn't seem like Christmas Eve. In fact, it doesn't even seem like Sunday as we are working as usual. I have heard all about the Piccadilly Commandos.³⁸⁹ I only went through Piccadilly Circus once while I was in England and wasn't attacked once. Things like that never seem to happen to me, dammit. Will you make an accurate drawing, in color if possible, of the Order of the Patriotic War, so I can have a miniature of it made over here. Note where the enamel is—what is metal. Also measure the width of the miniature ribbon, so I can have some of it made. Also measure the size of the miniatures I have, so I'll know how big to have it made. I wish I were home decorating the Christmas tree tonight.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 25, 1944³⁹⁰

Dear Helen,

The heading is as far as I got on the 25th and I have been in bed for two

388. Beckemeier, "December 24, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

389. Piccadilly Commandos was the nickname servicemen gave to prostitutes who worked the popular London shopping area and intersection of Piccadilly Circus. See Robert Morris and Ian Hawkins, *The Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond: The 95th Bomb Group in War and Peace* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012), 141–142.

390. As the general suggested, this letter was actually likely written on December 27, as he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) on December 26 "for outstanding and meritorious achievement while participating in operational and combat flights in India and China from September 1944–November 1944." See Beckemeier, "December 26, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary; and "Awards, Decorations, Commendations," CELMPR.

days with the best headache I have ever had. Had a fever for first hour and 96–97 since then. My blood smear shows no malaria, so I guess we will ignore the headache and see if it leaves. I am enclosing the check from the Lodge, which you can deposit. Too bad Smitty interfered with your plans. I wonder if I will when I come home. I feel sorry for Smitty. He probably wishes he had stayed in England. What a welcome after almost three years at war. We had the presentation of the DSM the other day. I'll mail it to you as soon as I can get it packed. I am planning a big open house on New Year's Day with all the staff and local dignitaries from round about. I hope I'm out of bed in time for it.

I'm anxious to get your comments on the silverware I sent and hope Janie's bracelets arrived in time for Christmas.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 28, 1944³⁹¹

Dear Helen,

I went over to the hospital this morning and the doctors couldn't find anything wrong; however, I left them a bucket of blood for testing and had x-rays of my head and teeth. Report tomorrow. The headache is practically gone today, but I still don't feel alright yet. I guess I'll have to start getting some exercise. I still haven't heard whether you received check no. 9,526,706 for \$1,288.17 yet? I mailed it the first of the month and your last letter was dated December 16, so you should have received it by now.

I suppose you are just getting the wreckage from Christmas cleaned up. I wish I had been around to help dirty the place up. Just had a letter from Blondie. He is improving and seems to be in good spirits.

Love,
Curt

391. Beckemeier, "December 28, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, DECEMBER 30, 1944³⁹²

Dear Helen,

The headache is about gone, just a little stiff neck left. Still don't know what caused it, but I am taking some B1 just to be doing something, I guess. Ray Clark was here this morning.³⁹³ He is Strat's³⁹⁴ inspector, a B. G.³⁹⁵ Florence is in San Antonio.³⁹⁶ They have sold their house at Patterson.³⁹⁷ Ray's pilot, a Lieutenant Simmons, is from Lakewood and says his mother knows you. Tell Dad the clippings arrived and thanks. You had not mentioned losing your bracelet at the [illegible]. It must have been quite a brawl. I'm sorry your mail is slow. I write every day I am in India, but sometimes I am a week in China. I don't think a letter a day is too good, so don't break your arm. What do Dinger and Bill think of the Philippine campaign? I'll bet they are jumping up and down by this time.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, JANUARY 1, 1945³⁹⁸

Happy New Year Darling,

I reverted back to our old custom last night and was in bed by 9:30. We are all ready for the party this afternoon; have the house decorated, etc., and we are going to have eggnog. We had to go 800 miles after the cream but we have it and it is the non [illegible] variety. We will have about 300 people, so I hope we don't run out. Tell Janie I used her decorations she made for me and they looked very nice on the table. The Christmas rush

392. Beckemeier, "December 30, 1944," LeMay Daily Diary.

393. General Ray Henry Clark was the air inspector for all army air bases in the China-Burma-India Theater from October 1943 to the end of the war. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 377.

394. General Stratemeyer.

395. Brigadier General.

396. The editors were unable to identify Florence.

397. Patterson Army Airfield near Dayton, Ohio.

398. Beckemeier, "January 1, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

should be over in a few days and mail should start moving faster again. It has been taking a little over two weeks to get letters out here.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, JANUARY 2, 1945³⁹⁹

Dear Helen,

The party yesterday was a great success. We drank up 40 gallons of eggnog which wasn't a bad effort in our weakened condition. I'll try and find another copy of *Super-Fort* and send it.⁴⁰⁰ I think that I have already sent you a copy of my picture that was in it.

I have that stuff the Chinese gave me for Christmas and will send it too, so I'll put it all together.⁴⁰¹ I don't know where that cigar outfit got the idea I was coming home, but I'll accept the cigars. That's a change anyway. All I have been getting is requests for autographs or images of the 20th Air Force from various collectors.

Well, I have to get back to work.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, JANUARY 3, 1945⁴⁰²

Dear Helen,

In case you missed the other letter I sent, I want to have a miniature made of the Russian decoration.⁴⁰³ Will you make a detailed drawing of it in color if possible, so I can have it made over here. Also measure the

399. Beckemeier, "January 2, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

400. *Super-Fort* was the official newspaper of the XX Bomber Command published semi-monthly by the Information-Education branch of the Personnel and Special Service Sections of the XX Bomber Command.

401. A lacquer desk set and silk linens. See letter of December 23, 1944.

402. Beckemeier, "January 3, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

403. Russian Order of the Patriotic War, First Degree. It was awarded to General LeMay for his role in the strategic bombing of Germany. See "Awards, Decorations, Commendations," CELMPR.

other miniatures I have so it will be the same size and measure the width of the ribbon on the miniature. Maybe it would be better to have a picture taken of the decoration also. The headache is mostly gone, but I still have a sore neck. The doctor thinks it may be infected tooth or something but isn't sure. I had a very nice letter from Mr. Tainter. We didn't have much Christmas spirit around here either, although we drank up our jungle ration and tried to make merry. It felt kind of flat. Still haven't heard from you about the check I mailed the first of December.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, JANUARY 5, 1945⁴⁰⁴

Dear Helen,

No mail in the last few days. The last letter I received was written 18 days ago. Looks like we are losing ground. PM. The letter you wrote Christmas Eve just came in. I'm glad you liked the silver.⁴⁰⁵ There are a couple spots on the big lid I think that need refinishing. You didn't say how it matched the rest of the silver. As I remember, it is fairly close, if not the exact pattern. I don't know whether there is any other silver around here for sale or not, probably not. Anyway, how are you going to keep polished what you have already? I'm glad you and Janie had a nice Christmas, even if I couldn't be home. Maybe we will have better luck next year. I had some more teeth x-rays taken today. The doctors still think one of the dead teeth is causing the stiff neck.

Love,
Curt

404. Beckemeier, "January 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

405. See letter of December 25, 1944.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JANUARY 11, 1945⁴⁰⁶

Dear Helen,

Just back from another trip on which I saw and talked to Larry.⁴⁰⁷ He will probably have called you and told you about it by the time this arrives. I also sent back by him some loot the Chinese gave me for Christmas. Let me know when it arrives. Also, I have a new post office number (HQ. 21st Bomber Command APO 234, % Postmaster, San Francisco, California). More details later.

The box with the presents for Moore and I was here when I returned. It took a little longer to get over than the others, but very welcome. Roger Ramey is here with me now.⁴⁰⁸ I don't know whether you have met him or not. I'm glad you and Janie enjoyed your Christmas.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XX BOMBER COMMAND, KHARAGPUR,
INDIA, JANUARY 15, 1945⁴⁰⁹

Dear Helen,

Lily Pons and her husband are here giving a concert at each of my bases and are staying in my guest house while they are here.⁴¹⁰ Apparently, they are getting quite a reception. I didn't think the normal G.I. would appreciate that kind of music.

406. Beckemeier, "January 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

407. General Lauris Norstad, chief of staff, Twentieth Air Force. Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 428–429.

408. Brigadier General Roger Maxwell Ramey replaced General LeMay as commanding general of the XX Bomber Command when LeMay was assigned to the XXI Bomber Command in January 1945. See Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 156.

409. Beckemeier, "January 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

410. Lily Pons, an opera singer with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, arrived in the CBI on December 17, 1944, with her orchestra director and husband, André Kostelanetz, as part of a USO show tour that began in North Africa fifteen weeks earlier and ended in China in February 1945. They gave their first concert in Calcutta on December 23 and arrived at Kharagpur on January 11, where they stayed at a guesthouse near the Collectorate. They gave their main performance at Piardoba, which LeMay attended, on January 15 before moving on to China. See James A. Drake and Kristin Beall Ludecke, eds., *Lily Pons: A Centennial Portrait* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1999), 143–144; and Beckemeier, "January 13–15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I would like to be home and see some of the snow, although I would probably require a very good bed warmer for that 6 below temperature. With that much snow I suppose Angus has a lot of tunnels dug in the back yard.

I tried to see Lloyd the other day, but he was out on a trip. I saw his boss, General Cheves and he seems to like him quite well and thinks he is doing a good job.

Hope the packages I sent by Larry arrive OK. I think you will like some of the stuff.

Love,
Curt

On January 8, 1945, LeMay and Beckemeier left Kharagpur bound for Guam, headquarters of the XXI Bomber Command, to confer with General Hansell, his staff, and General Norstad.⁴¹¹ Arnold had decided at the beginning of the year to replace Hansell with LeMay because of the XXIs's poor performance.⁴¹² LeMay spent four days in the Marianas with Norstad and Hansell, who familiarized him with the command.⁴¹³ Hansell's chief of staff, Brigadier General Roger M. Ramey, was LeMay's replacement and accompanied him back to Kharagpur on January 13.⁴¹⁴ LeMay spent the next four days touring the XXth with Ramey and instructing him on its operation before gathering several key staff officers, including Fulkrod and Preston, and taking command of the XXIs on Guam on January 18.⁴¹⁵

LeMay's experience in India was markedly different from his previous two years in England. He had been expected to whip the XXth into combat shape, but Europe was still the Allies' primary focus and consumed the bulk of the attention of the world as well. In addition, LeMay's forces did not face the same deadly foe in the Japanese Air Force or Japanese air defenses that the Germans presented. The Allies' Germany First policy meant that American strategic air forces were sent to Europe instead of Asia when the United States entered the conflict in late 1941. Without this threat, the Japanese did not fully develop tactics or extensive anti-aircraft defenses in China or the home islands. LeMay considered this a primary reason for Japanese ineffectiveness in the CBI. "The

411. Beckemeier, "January 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

412. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 1450, USAFOHC, 45–46.

413. Beckemeier, "January 9–12," LeMay Daily Diary.

414. Beckemeier, "January 13, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

415. Beckemeier, "January 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

main difference, I think, was that we could fool the Japanese once in a while with diversions and such," he stated, "but we never fooled the Germans. I think the Germans had a better radar net and a better defense setup, and we had virtually trained them for a period of time with our piddling raids early in the war. The Japanese didn't have that training."⁴¹⁶ In the 1,617 sorties LeMay deployed as XXth CO, he only suffered forty-three losses to Japanese fighters and flak, but at the same time the XXth inflicted only limited damage on the Japanese.⁴¹⁷

In the final tally, the Matterhorn experiment yielded few material results in the strategic bombing campaign against Japan, but air force leaders never really expected it to. "Despite some modest successes and the lessons learned from the Hankow raid," LeMay admitted, "we really didn't accomplish as much in China as we had hoped."⁴¹⁸ The official air force history of World War II stated it more bluntly: "The planners did not expect to win the war by strikes from Chengtu," as starkly evidenced by the diversion of new Superfortress units and the 73rd Wing (originally slated for the XX Bomber Command) to the Mariana Islands in late summer and early fall.⁴¹⁹ LeMay's discussions with Twentieth Air Force Headquarters in September reflected similar conclusions. When "asked in an exploratory fashion if he could use more B-29 units in India . . . he flatly declined the implied offer on logistical grounds, observing that his whole operating scheme was 'basically unsound' and justified only by the lack of other bases."⁴²⁰ In a November 13 letter, Arnold confirmed this assessment after telling LeMay of his "great satisfaction with the work that you [LeMay] are doing. I want to emphasize that fact to you and to the members of your Command." Arnold also praised the XXth's commander for his cooperation and excellent performance in the PAC-AID missions but alluded to his desire to move LeMay's command.⁴²¹ "One of our major interests continues to be to get you out of China," Arnold stated; "I cannot at this time tell you where you will go or when your bases will be ready," he continued, "[but] you will have to operate under your present conditions for a matter of months. I want

416. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 53.

417. See "Mission List: 58th Bombardment Wing, CBI Campaign," *American Aviation Historical Society Journal*, 224.

418. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 95.

419. Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 169; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 406-407.

420. For the quotation, see Cate, "Exit MATTERHORN," 150. Also see Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 58.

421. Lieutenant General H. H. Arnold, letter to Major General Curtis LeMay, November 13, 1944, CELMPR.

to assure you, however, that this matter is being pressed.”⁴²²

Logistics and distances blocked real progress in the CBI. The XXth “expended about one-seventh of its flying hours in attacks against the enemy and absorbed the other six-sevenths in furnishing its own logistics, that is, transporting gasoline and bombs over the Hump from India to the forward bases in China.”⁴²³ Equally impeding, “[t]he China-based B-29s could not reach the most vital targets in Japan.”⁴²⁴ It was simple math: “The distance from Chengtu to Tokyo was about 2,000 miles,” as Arnold recalled. “This made a refueling stop essential either on the outgoing or on the return trip, which in turn meant supplemental bases in advance of the Chengtu area. Otherwise the B-29’s would have to carry a reduced bomb load.”⁴²⁵ The Marianas, however, were approximately 1,400–1,500 miles from Tokyo.⁴²⁶ The Japanese still retained control of the islands in the spring of 1944, so Arnold was forced to wait until U.S. marines and soldiers were able to recapture them in June and July.⁴²⁷ It was October before Hansell and the XXI Bomber Command arrived to begin preparing their bases for active missions.⁴²⁸

Wedemeyer and Chennault had advocated that the XXth be removed from Chengtu bases since early December, in the midst of a successful Japanese offensive against Chinese forces, in whom Wedemeyer had no confidence.⁴²⁹ The XXth’s share of Hump supplies was desperately needed by the Chinese and the Fourteenth Air Force to stave off the attack.⁴³⁰ Taken with the logistical hurdles, this sequence of events convinced Arnold to order the command removed from Chengtu fields on January 15, 1945.⁴³¹ By the end of the month, the B-29s had abandoned Chinese fields to focus on supporting PAC-AID from India.⁴³² In April, even these units were moved to the Mariana Islands to join the XXI Bomber Command.⁴³³

Despite unavoidable challenges, Arnold expected the XXth to progress under its commander and develop a template of tactics, training, and orga-

422. Ibid.

423. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 209.

424. Ibid.

425. Arnold, *Global Mission*, 477.

426. Ibid.

427. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 87–88.

428. Ibid. Some units, such as the 73rd Bomb Wing, began arriving in late summer, and Hansell took official command on August 28.

429. Cate, “Exit MATTERHORN,” 151.

430. Ibid.

431. Ibid.

432. Ibid., 131–132.

433. Ibid.

nization that could be mirrored by any succeeding B-29 units, especially the XXI Bomber Command. Wolfe had failed in this effort, while LeMay satisfied Arnold's expectations.⁴³⁴ In terms of bombs dropped on Japanese targets, Arnold himself highlighted the XXth's improvement under LeMay's watch in his memoirs, noting that the monthly tonnage had increased from two hundred tons in the summer of 1944 to approximately two thousand tons in January–February 1945.⁴³⁵ He expected LeMay to continue these gains as commander of the XXIst based in Guam. Guam was LeMay's third headquarters in as many years, and his work there would secure his status as one of the top air force generals of World War II from any nation. For many, Guam would define LeMay's greatest contribution to the war effort. It would also spawn years of debate among historians about the ethics of practicing total war and its effect on civilian populations.

434. Cate, "XX Bomber Command," 104.

435. Arnold, *Global Mission*, 254.

CHAPTER 9

The “Operator” January 20–September 18, 1945

LeMay is an operator, the rest of us are planners. That’s all there is to it.

—BRIGADIER GENERAL LAURIS NORSTAD¹

For the American public, General LeMay’s operations as CO of the XXI Bomber Command in the spring and summer of 1945 came to define his contribution to the Allies’ victory in World War II and were instrumental in helping the air force achieve independence in 1947. This success was realized by his decision to abandon ineffective daylight precision bombing raids in favor of low-level incendiary night raids against Japan’s cities in order to negotiate the significant obstacles frustrating efforts to destroy Japanese industry. The campaign introduced one of the war’s greatest tactical innovations but also became a source of controversy among historians and the public in the late twentieth century, when critics labeled LeMay’s efforts as indiscriminate terror bombing driven by racism. The Twentieth Air Force’s deployment of atomic weapons against Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, further drove this controversy.

Much of the debate arose in the 1980s and 1990s and was triggered by several works that examined the cultural and psychological factors that drove belligerents’ actions in World War II, particularly between the Japanese Empire and United States. Revisionist historians including John Dower, Craig Cameron, and Michael Sherry, among others, argued that culturally pandemic race hate entrenched in both the United States and Japan fueled the “kill or be killed” nature of the Pacific War, partly exemplified by the American strategic bombing campaign in the Pacific and the use of nuclear weapons.² Dower

1. St. Clair McKelway, “A Reporter with the B-29s II: The Doldrums, Guam, and Something Coming Up,” *New Yorker*, June 16, 1945, 32.

2. For quoted term, see Craig Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth and Imagination in the Con-*

pointed to American colonialism, racist anti-Japanese propaganda, and the American government's wholesale internment of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans after December 1941, asserting that such "dehumanization of the Other contributed immeasurably to the psychological distancing that facilitates killing, not only on the battlefield but also in plans adopted by strategists far removed from the actual scene of combat. Such dehumanization, for example, surely facilitated the decisions to make civilian populations the targets of concentrated attack, whether by conventional or nuclear weapons."³ According to Sherry, racism "guided bombing in Asia as much as operational considerations."⁴ Furthermore, he suggested that justification for incendiary attacks, which rested on American strategists' assumptions about the Japanese cottage industrial network, was based on dated information that the air force may have known about by the spring of 1945 when LeMay started his incendiary raids.⁵ For Sherry, the atomic bombings were the culmination of the combination of the "technological fanaticism" driven by interwar air power theory and H. G. Wellsian fantasy as well as racism.⁶

Postrevisionists, among them John Shy, Richard Frank, and Conrad Crane, have argued that racism was part of the experience of war but did not actuate "exterminationist policies" or "revenge-minded" decisions by key American leaders" such as the incendiary raids or atomic bombing, as contended by Dower, Cameron, and others.⁷ Shy, speaking broadly about the cultural approach that had arisen in military historiography during the 1980s, specifically addressing Dower's *War without Mercy*, warned of the danger of "posing questions about wartime peculiarity prematurely and too sharply, and then attacking those questions in ways that lead the inquiry to answers that

duct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170.

3. John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 11.

4. Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 285. Two other works, Ronald Schaefer's *Wings of Judgment: American Bombing in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), were published just before Sherry submitted his manuscript for publication. Neither was as influential in the historiography as Sherry's *The Rise of American Air Power*, but both helped initiate the debate over the influence of culture and the role of morality in American strategic bombing in World War II. Sherry gives Schaefer and Boyer credit for helping drive the conversation and influencing his own work. See Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power*, xii.

5. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power*, 285.

6. *Ibid.*, 316–330.

7. Benjamin P. Hegi, "Extermination Warfare? The Conduct of the Second Marine Division at Saipan" (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 2008), 23.

reduce explanation to some aspect of culture.”⁸ In the case of the Pacific strategic bombing campaign, Frank and Crane argued that despite the horror and seeming disregard for civilian lives, the nature of Japanese cottage industry made residential areas surrounding factories legitimate strategic targets for the Twentieth Air Force.⁹ Moreover, they pointed to Japanese-language flyers that LeMay ordered dropped on cities before raids identifying future targets to allow workers and civilians to flee before the bombing occurred.¹⁰

Strategically, according to Crane, “LeMay and his superiors saw the area incendiary attacks as the best method for ending the war quickly, saving American lives, demonstrating a true victory through airpower, and securing a strong position to bargain for postwar status as an independent service.”¹¹ Frank buttressed this argument, claiming that “[r]ace might have eased the switch in tactics [from precision bombing], but it did not cause it. Strategic bombing in the Pacific, including the atomic bombs, marked the culmination of strategic thinking, not an abrupt departure.”¹² The debate continues to this day, and further discussion is beyond the scope of this narrative, but the reader should be aware that the debate has played a role in shaping LeMay’s public image.

Before LeMay took the reins of the XXIst, General Hansell led the command’s initial operations from Isley Field on Saipan until December 31, when he moved XXIst headquarters to its permanent home near Depot Field on Guam.¹³ When Hansell was appointed CO of the fledgling very heavy bomber force on August 29, 1944, “Arnold and Norstad made it clear . . . that expectations were extraordinarily high. In Arnold’s mind, the performance of the B-29s in the Pacific was linked directly to the future creation of an independent air force.”¹⁴ Accordingly, Hansell promised Arnold and the JCS that “[s]

8. See John Shy, “The Cultural Approach to the History of War,” *Journal of Military History* 57, no. 5 (October 1993): 25.

9. James Lea Cate and James C. Olson, “Urban Area Attacks,” in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 610; and Frank, *Downfall*, 333–337.

10. Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower and Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 134; and Frank, *Downfall*, 153.

11. Frank, *Downfall*, 161.

12. *Ibid.*, 336. Frank argued further that “[o]nce it became acceptable to bomb a wide expanse of land surrounding a target in Europe, it was no great leap to inflict vast destruction on many square miles of urban area in Japan containing latticework of factories and supporting cottage industries. Moreover, if German cities had possessed such marked vulnerability to fire, or if the intelligence on the German industrial system had been as abysmal as was the knowledge of Japan’s war-production facilities, it is extremely doubtful that the Army Air Forces would have eschewed use of incendiaries in Europe.”

13. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 96–97.

14. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 105.

ustained B-29 operations against the aircraft industry of Japan from bases in the Marianas will commence on or about 1 November 1944. Within three months thereafter, the effects of these attacks will begin to be felt.”¹⁵ Hansell, piloting the first B-29 to arrive in the Marianas, Joltin’ Josey, the Pacific Pioneer, touched down at Isley Field on October 12, but he did not launch a mission until November 24, twenty-three days after his initial estimate.¹⁶

Five weeks after this raid, “bombing results of XXI Bomber command remained dismal and abort rates high,” and a December 27 press release authored by Hansell and his press officer, New Yorker magazine reporter St. Clair McKelway, was the “last straw for Arnold,” who was particularly sensitive to the public’s perception of the air force.¹⁷ Following a summary of the command’s operations, Hansell’s honesty doomed him. “We have not put all our bombs exactly where we wanted to put them,” he said, “and therefore we are by no means satisfied with what we have done so far. We have much to learn and many operational and technical problems to solve.”¹⁸ By the end of January, he was back in the United States and in command of the 38th Flying Training Wing at Williams Field, Arizona.¹⁹ Like generals Eaker and Wolfe before him, Hansell, too, was partly a victim of Arnold’s unreasonable expectations, according to Kenneth P. Werrell in his book, *Blankets of Fire: U.S. Bombers over Japan during World War II*. “In view of the experience of the AAF strategic air forces in Europe and that of XX Bomber Command,” he argued, “outstanding success should not have been expected of Hansell’s unit, certainly not initially and surely not quickly.”²⁰ Myriad factors—some similar to those encountered by Wolfe and LeMay such as maintenance and mechanical issues, and some out of Hansell’s control such as delays in base and air field construction—affected his ability to field an effective force early on.²¹

Weather was another factor. Heavy clouds obscured targets most of the

15. *Ibid.*, 100.

16. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 174; and James Lea Cate and James C. Olson, “The Precision Bombardment Campaign,” in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 546.

17. For the first quotation, see Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, 129; and for the second quotation, see Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 216.

18. “Damage to Japan Listed,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1944.

19. Robert P. Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers, 1917–1952*, vol. 1, A–K (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, 1953), 742.

20. Kenneth P. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire: U.S. Bombers over Japan during World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 137. Herman Wolk points to the relief of Wolfe and Eaker as other examples of Arnold’s impatience. See Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 105.

21. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 106; and Cate and Olson, “The Precision Bombardment Campaign,” 556.

time, especially above Tokyo, where a clear sky was a rare phenomenon.²² In tandem with the jet stream above Japan that produced wind speeds “exceeding 230 knots at bombing altitude” and “550-knot ground speeds that tailwinds produced,” at its worst from December to February, these conditions undermined the Norden bombsight and the bombardiers’ best efforts, rendering precision bombing from thirty thousand feet virtually impossible.²³ “The bombsight couldn’t handle it [the jet stream],” recalled then-Major David A. Burchinal, a pilot with the 313th Bomb Wing, which joined the XXIst in December. “It would spin, and it couldn’t handle that speed.”²⁴

In addition, Hansell was working through difficulties with army and navy officials over base facility construction and defense on Saipan and Guam, two of the three islands in the Marianas on which B-29s were based.²⁵ Construction of these bases was one of the chief reasons proffered by American planners to acquire the island chain as part of the Navy’s offensive in the Central Pacific. Despite this, actual construction priorities were determined by the commander in chief, Pacific Ocean Areas (CINCPOA), who was also responsible for providing supplies for the XXIst. Consequently, CINCPOA headquarters set construction priorities, and B-29 bases and runways were placed after “naval base installations, harbor facilities, and staging requirements for ground troops.”²⁶ Actual base commanders carried out these plans, and Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, CO of the Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, and deputy commander of the Twentieth Air Force expedited the process, but operations were still delayed.²⁷ Two of the air force’s senior commanders, General Harmon and Major General Willis H. Hale, commander of land-based air units in the Marianas, challenged Hansell over jurisdictional issues with the XXIst (in the case of Harmon) and the use of airfields on Saipan and Guam (in the case of Hale).²⁸ Brigadier General Emmett “Rosie” O’Donnell Jr., CO of the XXIst’s lone bomb wing, the 73rd, also challenged Hansell’s plans.

O’Donnell arrived on October 20, but delays prevented him from accruing

22. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 129–130.

23. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, 129; and Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 111.

24. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 54.

25. James Taylor, “Preparation for Combat,” in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 510–515.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 207–208.

his full complement of 180 B-29s until much later.²⁹ By November 4 he had only 37, and he was still 62 aircraft short on November 24 when he led the wing's first bombing mission against Tokyo.³⁰ The same training difficulties that had plagued the 58th Bomb Wing also affected O'Donnell's 73rd during the spring and summer prior to their arrival in theater. Issues such as personnel shortages, scarcity of flyable B-29s stateside, poor gunnery training/facilities/equipment, and ineffective radar training primarily because of a shortage of qualified instructors and relevant equipment, delayed any possible effective operations.³¹ Tactically, the flight training they did receive was at fifteen thousand feet, a much lower altitude than the thirty thousand feet they would be expected to attain over Japan.³² Furthermore, O'Donnell, like Saunders with the 58th Bomb Wing, drilled his units in single-file, night area bombing attacks due to a shortage of B-29s, which prevented necessary numbers of aircraft from practicing formation flying and daylight precision bombing.³³ By Hansell's own admission years later, "It was quite true that until the time for takeoff of San Antonio I [a November 24 Tokyo raid], the XXI Bomber Command had never flown a formation as large as a squadron, a distance as far as Tokyo and back, and had not flown against any enemy opposition."³⁴

From O'Donnell's arrival to the wing's first mission, the unit conducted six practice missions against the islands of Truk and Iwo Jima with the planes they had on hand.³⁵ Neither target was anywhere near the distance that crews would have to travel to get to Japan.³⁶ Hansell, perhaps the most acute disciple of high-altitude daylight precision bombing in the air force, used these missions to begin instilling both formation flying and daylight precision bombing tactics into his force despite O'Donnell's wishes to continue with night missions until the wing was at full strength.³⁷ Throughout Hansell's tenure, this difference of opinion was a source of tension between the two, and reportedly

29. Cate and Olson, "The Precision Bombardment Campaign," 547–548.

30. *Ibid.*, 548.

31. "The bulk of the wing's operators had been trained on 'sea search' radar, which is quite different from the APQ-13 [the B-29s' radar]." See Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 123.

32. *Ibid.*, 124.

33. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 172–173. According to Crane, "XX Bomber Command was thought to be too small to fight its way through Japanese defenses in daylight," and thus both the 58th and the 73rd were drilled in night radar attacks. The 73rd was originally slated to join XX Bomber Command in India before being used to form the core of XXI Bomber Command. See Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, 128.

34. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 184.

35. *Ibid.*, 178; and Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 193–194.

36. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 193–194.

37. *Ibid.*, 194–195.

Hansell believed that O'Donnell was hindering his efforts to apply new tactics as time went on.³⁸ The disagreement went further than O'Donnell. Arnold, Kuter, and Norstad all actively and explicitly encouraged Hansell to explore other tactics, especially the use of incendiaries, which had proven effective against test structures in the spring of 1944 and on actual missions by the XX Bomber Command in the fall and winter of 1944.³⁹ "The major problem for Hansell," asserted air force historian Herman Wolk, "was his insistence on running high altitude daylight precision operations," both because he believed in the doctrine of precision bombing and because he believed that area bombing, of which he had been a fierce critic since observing British area bombing raids from England, was immoral.⁴⁰ The XXIst's chief navigator, Ralph Nutter, whom Hansell had hand selected before leaving for the Pacific, went further in his memoirs, citing Hansell's refusal to conduct incendiary raids against civilians and also his almost obsessive "devotion to the doctrine he had been teaching and planning for so many years."⁴¹

For all these reasons, fair or not, by early 1945 Hansell had run out of time, and Arnold was ready to make a change. If the CBI was the Twentieth Air Force's dress rehearsal, then the campaign from the Marianas was its prime-time show. The air staff and Arnold expected a grand finale. Strategic air power had not proven decisive in Europe, and the Japanese home islands, isolated and virtually untouched by anything but the XX Bomber Command and some naval air raids, offered the ideal setting to prove that strategic bombing could bring a nation to its knees without sacrificing soldiers or marines on the ground in a costly amphibious invasion and subsequent ground campaign.⁴²

In addition, the JCS and President Roosevelt ratcheted up pressure on Arnold and the air force.⁴³ Where were the results they had promised while the nation had poured billions of dollars into the B-29 project for more than four years? Army and navy commanders in the Pacific were searching for a way to gain control over the Superfortresses for their own tactical use and were

38. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 184–185; and Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 196–197.

39. Hansell did comply on a limited scale. He sponsored one incendiary attack at the urging of Norstad following LeMay's successful effort against Hankow on December 18, 1944. Hansell sent seventy-eight B-29s against Nagoya on December 22. The factory was completely obscured by clouds, and radar bombing did virtually no damage. See Cate and Olson, "The Precision Bombardment Campaign," 564; and Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, 126–127.

40. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 108.

41. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 189, 201.

42. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 112.

43. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 136–139.

already planning for a fall amphibious invasion of Japan.⁴⁴ Arnold's media blitz throughout the war aimed to bolster public support for an independent air force after the war, but he required definitive proof that independence was warranted, and he only had a matter of months to provide it. His need was exponentially more urgent than it had been in the summer of 1944 when he replaced Wolfe, and LeMay's success in the CBI was a harbinger.

On paper, the XXth's efforts measured by targets destroyed was poor, but as an organization it had steadily put more bombers in the air, reduced mission aborts, and delivered more tonnage on targets once LeMay took command.⁴⁵ In fact, a statistical analyst for the air force, Lieutenant Colonel Robert S. McNamara, future secretary of defense under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, released a report in early 1945 noting: "The highest figure for heavy-bomber operations overseas in any month . . . rested at eighty-one hours per airplane; LeMay had achieve ninety-two hours per Superfortress in China, with immature aircraft at the end of an appalling logistical pipeline."⁴⁶ In addition, Arnold believed that LeMay was willing to experiment with tactics even if his innovations countermanded conventional precision bombing, and that he was, fundamentally, the air force's best combat commander.⁴⁷ From January 7 to 9, LeMay, Norstad, and Hansell conferred on Guam.⁴⁸ LeMay, reportedly unaware of the planned change, as was Hansell, was informed by Norstad that he would take over XXI Bomber Command operations.⁴⁹ Norstad told Hansell that he could stay on as LeMay's vice commander, but Hansell declined the offer, requesting to be transferred back to a B-29 training command in the United States.⁵⁰ LeMay, accompanied by Brigadier General Roger Ramey, Hansell's chief of staff who was given command of the XXth, returned to India for approximately ten days, where LeMay familiarized him with its operations.⁵¹

Fourteen hours after leaving India at 1:55 p.m. on January 18, 1945, LeMay and a handful of staff officers landed at their home for the rest of the war, Depot Field, Guam, XXI Bomber Command headquarters in the Mariana

44. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 112–113.

45. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 256.

46. Frank, *Downfall*, 57.

47. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 117.

48. Beckemeier, "January 7–10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

49. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 108–109.

50. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 213–214; and Cate and Olson, "The Precision Bombardment Campaign," 567.

51. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 109.

Islands.⁵² It was the longest nonstop B-29 flight accomplished to that date at a total of 4,100 miles.⁵³ Of the five total wings that would eventually compose the command, the 73rd was still the only fully operational unit, but two more had begun arriving; the 313th under then-Colonel John H. Davies at North Field, Tinian, on December 24, 1944, and the 314th under then-Colonel Thomas S. Power at North Field, Guam, on January 16, 1945.⁵⁴ Neither unit was up to full strength by the time LeMay took command, however.

LeMay's headquarters building was a Quonset hut; "We are living in tents but the climate is delightful," reported Major Beckemeier, "and after India, this place seems like a paradise."⁵⁵ The Mariana archipelago is composed of fifteen islands and is located 1,565 miles south/southeast of the Japanese home islands.⁵⁶ Only four of the chain's islands, Rota, Guam, Tinian, and Saipan, are inhabited. Originally a Spanish colony, the islands of Guam and Saipan are the principals of the group and inhabited by a native population, the Chamorro people, who are the result of mixing between Spanish settlers and indigenous islanders in the seventeenth century.⁵⁷ The United States took control of Guam following the Spanish-American War in 1898, establishing a naval base there, while the other islands were sold to Germany by Spain in 1899 and then awarded to Japan, which had fought on the side of the Allies during World War I, following the conclusion of that conflict. On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces invaded and captured Guam concurrently while the Japanese fleet conducted its attack on Pearl Harbor. The islands became forward bases for Japanese naval forces during the war and had a lucrative trade in sugarcane, which dominated especially Tinian's landscape.

Guam and Saipan were unique in the Micronesian region because of the presence of dense forests, swamps, and abundant flora and fauna, although both islands also had expanses of flat land used for sugarcane cultivation. During the summer, temperatures rarely rose to triple digits as they did in India. Common tropical diseases, primarily dysentery, typhoid, paratyphoid,

52. Beckemeier, "January 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

53. Ibid.

54. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 421–422.

55. Ibid.

56. Basic information about these islands as they were in the spring and summer of 1945 was obtained from Joint Intelligence Center: Pacific Ocean Areas, "Information Bulletin: Saipan, Tinian, Rota, Bulletin No. 34–44, March 10, 1944," Alfred M. Grey Research Center and Archives, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia.

57. Henry I. Shaw Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, vol. 3 of *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966), 237–238.

and dengue fever, were a problem in the islands and were “exacerbated by the large insect population of the island[s], high temperatures (between 80–95 degrees in June and July), rainfall (4.3 inches on average [per month] from December to June and 13 inches on average per month from July to October), and humidity (averaging 84 percent during the summer months).”⁵⁸ Other Micronesian islands such as Tarawa and Kwajalein were dominated by flat terrain with volcanic rock, white-sand beaches, and tremendous heat. Saipan and Guam both had mountain ranges as well, and limited independent freshwater sources, which had proven a small advantage for defending Japanese forces in opposition to Operation Forager, the joint U.S. Army/Marine Corps amphibious invasion of the islands, which commenced against Saipan on June 15, 1944.⁵⁹ By August, Guam, Saipan, and Tinian, the three targets marked for conquest by Forager’s planners, were declared secure, and navy Seabees began improving Japanese facilities and constructing new ones for the air force and navy.⁶⁰

Guam, once again placed under naval control, was declared the CINCPAC’s advance base.⁶¹ Throughout the rest of the war soldiers, sailors, and marines had to be wary of Japanese troops, remnants of the islands’ defenders, who often came out of the jungle and/or mountains to acquire supplies or sabotage facilities.⁶² Tinian, the smallest of the three islands, was relatively flat and sparse and had been almost completely turned over to the farming of sugarcane, which made construction of airfields there an easier task. When LeMay arrived, facilities were still being built and would be a problem.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 20, 1945⁶³

Dear Helen,

By the time you get this you will have read in the newspapers what has been happening to me in the last few days. Anyway, I am now commanding the 21st Bomber Command in the Marianas. If you will look

58. Hegi, “Extermination Warfare?” 43.

59. Joseph Alexander, *Storm Landings: Epic Amphibious Battles in the Central Pacific* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 65–66.

60. Japanese forces on Rota, also part of the southern island group, were bypassed but proved excellent targets for training B-29 bombardiers. See Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 187.

61. Taylor, “Preparation for Combat,” 515.

62. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 127.

63. Beckemeier, “January 20, 1945,” LeMay Daily Diary.

on the map you will see that the group consists of Guam, Rota, Tinian, Saipan and a couple of others.

The weather here is just about like Hawaii. While as yet we don't have the conveniences of a permanent establishment, we are rapidly getting settled and eventually will have quite a nice setup. J. B. Montgomery⁶⁴ is here and I expect to have Augie Kissner⁶⁵ here also very shortly. Rosy O'Donnell⁶⁶, Stud Wright⁶⁷ and Jim Davies⁶⁸ are here now and Frank Armstrong⁶⁹ will be in before long. He and Sy⁷⁰ are here on a visit now. I'm pretty happy about the change, but, of course, I have all the work of getting a new outfit running like I want it which is no easy chore. I hope I have one better job in me before I collapse.

I brought Beckemeier along with me and in spite of what you think, he isn't a Jew and he is loyal and does the job I want very well.

64. Colonel John Beverly Montgomery and LeMay first worked together under C. V. Haynes as members of the ACFC in the summer of 1941. When LeMay went to combat after war broke out, Montgomery served on various bombardment training staffs with the Second Air Force from December 1941 to March 26, 1944, when he was appointed deputy chief of staff for operations for the XXI Bomber Command, a post he held until the end of the war. See Robert P. Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers, 1917-1952*, vol. 2, L-Z (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, 1953), 129–130.

65. Brigadier General August Kissner had previously served as LeMay's chief of staff for the 3rd Bomb Division from 1943 to 1944. He was appointed to the USSTAF's planning staff in September 1944 before joining LeMay at Guam on February 18, 1945. See chapter 7; Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 412; and Beckemeier, "February 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

66. Brigadier General Emmett "Rosie" O'Donnell, CO of the 73rd Bomb Wing, XXI Bomber Command. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 407.

67. Colonel Stuart Phillips Wright, CO of the 497th Bomb Group, 73rd Bomb Wing, XXI Bomber Command. *Ibid.*, 364.

68. Brigadier General James H. Davies, CO of the 313th Bomb Wing, XXI Bomber Command. Maurer mislabels his first name as "John." Fogerty initially made the same mistake before crossing it out and replacing it with "James," which was the general's actual first name. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 421; and Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 1, 432.

69. Brigadier General Frank A. Armstrong, the same Armstrong who, as CO of the 1st Bomb Wing in England, crossed paths with then-Colonel LeMay at Prestwick, Scotland, as he was bringing the 305th over for duty with the Eighth Air Force. This time it was General Armstrong, now CO of the 315th Bomb Wing, XXI Bomber Command, who was receiving directions from LeMay.

70. Lieutenant Colonel Sy Bartlett, Eighth Air Force veteran, Hollywood screenwriter, and future author of *12 O'Clock High* was General Armstrong's chief intelligence officer and served with him in this capacity for the rest of the war.

I hope there wasn't too big a gap in the mail. I missed writing two days, but couldn't help it. I was just too busy. Will try and keep up from now on.

HQ. 21st Bomb Command
APO 234
San Francisco, California

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 21, 1945⁷¹

Dear Helen,

I'll mention the checks again in case the other letters don't get through; one for \$242.10 and one for \$847.35, mailed from India on January 18. Let me know in two letters at least when they arrive.

I had a long day yesterday and same today. It certainly is a job getting an outfit this size going and I'm getting tired. I wish I had about three months to just sit and look stupid.

There certainly isn't much to write about here. The islands are small and there isn't anything happening except military operations which you can't talk about. The site has been graded for my new quarters. It will be about five rooms, all open and screened in tropical style with a big, long screened porch overlooking the ocean. I understand there is some furniture coming in for it also, so if I can get some plumbing in it, I should be quite comfortable.

I suppose Dinger and Bill are happy that the campaign on Luzon is underway.⁷² It shouldn't be too long before Lee is on his way home.⁷³ I saw

71. Beckemeier, "January 21, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

72. The invasion of Luzon by Allied forces under Lieutenant General Douglas MacArthur began on January 9, 1945. Luzon is the largest island in the Philippines and home to the nation's (then a U.S. territory) capital of Manila. See Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, The United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1993), 73–74.

73. The editors were unable to positively identify Lee, but there are a few clear facts concerning his identity. Based on this letter and others from previous chapters and later in this one we know that "Lee," "Dinger," and "Bill" were related. We know that Lee was a civilian and over forty years old, according to LeMay in his April 17 and 22 letters, respectively. On May 13, 1945, LeMay mentions going by the "St. Tomas camp" where Lee "spent the last three years." This is almost certainly a reference to the Santo Tomas civilian internment camp on the campus of the University of Santo

the Wing C.O. of the Air Transport outfit that will be in that area the other day and arranged for him to look up Lee and arrange air transportation for him.⁷⁴ There are so many ifs connected with it that I don't expect it to work out, but it's about all I can do from here.

I hope Larry gave you my new APO number before I moved over here so your letters start coming in here without too much delay.⁷⁵

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 22, 1944⁷⁶

Dear Helen,

I'm all out of V mail blanks, but if I can find one today I'll send it out

Tomas in Manila. The site was chosen in January 1942, and approximately four thousand enemy alien civilians, primarily British and Americans, spent the war there until the camp was liberated on February 3, 1945, by the U.S. Army's 8th Cavalry Regiment, sent ahead of the main force specifically to rescue them. According to the National Archive's list of World War II POWs, 1941–1946, there were four American civilians named Lee who were liberated (and documented) at Santo Tomas: Lee Allen, Lee E. Blinzler, Lee R. Hobbs, and Lee Rogers. It is possible that he was sent to another civilian POW camp, Los Baños, located on the campus of the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture approximately thirty-seven miles southeast of Manila along with some eight hundred men who were transferred there from Santo Tomas in May 1943 due to overcrowding, but records reveal no internees at Los Baños named Lee. Unfortunately, these lists do not include biographical information for each individual, and further investigation proved fruitless in isolating one of these men as the individual in question, or the identities of Dinger and Bill and their relationship to him. See Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, The United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1993), 237; Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 251; and Records of World War II Prisoners of War, 1942–1947, Record Group 289: Records of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, NARA, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter cited as NACP.

74. Brigadier General Edward Harrison Alexander, CO of the Southwest Pacific Division Air Transport Command. He previously worked on General Olds's original Army Air Corps Ferrying Command as his executive and led the first Air Transport Command in the CBI in various command positions from December 24, 1941, to September 30, 1943. He then returned to the United States and was CO of the Caribbean Air Transport Command from October 1, 1943, to August 1, 1944, when he was given command of the Southwest Pacific Wing of the ATC. See Carter, "The Air Transport Command," 9; Frank H. Heck, "Airline to China," in *Services around the World*, vol. 7 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 116; and Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 1, 16.

75. General Lauris Norstad.

76. Beckemeier, "January 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

too so you can tell how the two services compare as to speed. I gather that it takes about the same length of time to get mail out here as it did in India.

I hope the makeshift dry closets I have work. You remember how everything used to mold in Hawaii. It is just as damp here all the time so will have the same trouble probably.

Did I tell you Twitchell is my surgeon?⁷⁷ Si and Armstrong are here on a visit.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 22, 1944⁷⁸

Dear Helen,

I'm mailing this letter the same time as an airmail so you can tell which is the fastest.

Do you know whether King is still in Hawaii or not? I may possibly go over to see him sometime. I haven't had any word on Kissner except that he has left England. I hope he hurries up and gets out here. I need him.

Monty has a fishing pal along with him. Sometime we expect to get a day off and see what we can catch.

The food here is about like it was in India. All canned although we expect some fresh meat in shortly.

Love,
Curt

For the first few months in Guam, LeMay, like the rest of his command, subsisted primarily on canned rations. In stark contrast, according to LeMay, stood Admiral Nimitz and other key naval officers, the former residing in "a splendid house, way up on the very highest peak of the island."⁷⁹ The dinner he

77. Colonel Harold Hanson Twitchell. From July 7, 1936, to January 13, 1939, he served as chief surgeon at Langley Field concurrently with LeMay when he was with the 2nd Bomb Group. For most of World War II, Twitchell was the air base surgeon at Everett Army Air Base (later changed to Paine Field) in Washington State before being appointed staff surgeon with the Second Air Force on July 1, 1942. He was assigned to the XXI Bomber Command as staff surgeon on June 3, 1944, a post he held for the rest of the war. See Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 2, 421.

78. Beckemeier, "January 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

79. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission With LeMay*, 341–342.

hosted to welcome LeMay included “cocktails and highballs and hors d’oeuvres such as you might find at an embassy in Washington,” followed by “a gorgeous dinner: soup, fish course, then the roast and vegetables and salad, and a perfectly swell dessert, and demitasses, and brandy cigars,” all served by a “retinue of Filipino [mess] boys.”⁸⁰ Following two other dinners, LeMay hosted one of his own at his tent, “because we didn’t have any quarters yet,” and he “took special pains to serve up the best flight-rations available.”⁸¹ Doubtless these dinners made the transition from India more pleasant, but there was a lot of work ahead of him.

To correct the XXIst’s deficiencies, as usual, he identified key weaknesses and fixed them or placed someone in command that could, but this time he knew the B-29 well and knew what it could and could not do. He expanded Hansell’s lead crew schools and put his own men in charge led by Colonel Preston and including other notable emeritus faculty from previous schools such as Ralph Nutter, J. B. Montgomery, and a handful of others.⁸² LeMay approved and expedited deputy chief of staff Colonel Clarence S. Irvine’s plans to overhaul the command’s maintenance section to mirror the one LeMay pioneered in India, and this proved to be his most effective change early on raising “our flying time per aircraft to 120 hours as opposed to a planned 30 to 40 hours.”⁸³ Moreover, he made his men practice, and practice some more. Then-Major Jack J. Catton, a pilot with the 73rd who later served on LeMay’s operations staff, was present through both Hansell’s and LeMay’s commands and specifically highlighted this contrast. “I do want to underline the fact that we had achieved some success before General LeMay got there,” he remarked, “but after General LeMay arrived, we really put our nose to the stone in terms of training, doctrine and **air discipline** [sic]. It really paid off for the daylight visual missions.”⁸⁴ As he had in skies above Europe, China, and India, LeMay joined them in formation practice runs, personally adjusting each aircraft to the correct position and replacing struggling leaders with more competent

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Preston and several others were sent back to the United States to set up and guide the B-29 lead crew school at Muroc Lake, California, in May, to incorporate this crucial training into the regimen of new aircrews as the final stage before their deployment to the Marianas. LeMay personally inspected the school and conferred with Colonel Preston on their trip back from Washington on June 30. See Futrell, “The Development of Base Facilities,” 164; and Beckemeier, “June 16–July 4, 1945,” LeMay Daily Diary.

83. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 714, transcript, USAFOHC, 2. Mechanics were organized into assembly lines by specialty at the group level instead of by squadron, which improved efficiency and available operational aircraft across the board. See Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 146.

84. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 62.

individuals. He made the gunners practice shooting and brought in a radar specialist from MIT to teach even the least capable of his radar bombardiers to use their instruments competently.

Fundamentally, too, LeMay continued Hansell's daylight precision bombing. "There were deviations," noted the air force's official history of the campaign, "more strikes at Iwo Jima's airfields, a night area attack on Tokyo, experimental raids on urban areas at Tokyo, Nagoya, and Kobe—but until 9 March the command was concerned primarily with daylight, high-altitude, precision attacks delivered against aircraft factories in Japan according to orthodox AAF doctrines."⁸⁵ During this period, LeMay executed a total of eight missions, excluding practice runs, and benefited from an ever increasing force at his disposal as the 313th and 314th Bomb Wings came online in February.⁸⁶ He reinforced Hansell's basic instruction but tweaked tactics and formations and experimented with slightly lower altitudes (25,000–27,000 feet versus 30,000–35,000).⁸⁷ This short period is often overshadowed by the famous low-level nighttime incendiary raids of March 9–10. LeMay was willing to experiment, but he believed in, taught, and practiced daylight precision bombing in every command before he took over the XXIst. He did start incorporating some incendiary bombs into payloads as suggested by Twentieth Air Force headquarters, but the tonnage dropped was still dominated by high-explosive ordnance and aimed at specific targets from a high altitude.⁸⁸ LeMay had a history of being able to make it work, and experience taught him that it was a matter of poor training, inadequate resources, and/or poor tactics that impeded success.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 26, 1945⁸⁹

Dear Helen,

I haven't written the last two days. I just haven't had a minute to spare. I have my legs worn down to my knees from running around and the more I saw the more work I found to do. I have a brand new staff, new base, new units, and I'm new. Nothing is shaken down yet. There is so much work to be done that it looks as though it will never be accomplished.

85. Cate and Olson, "The Precision Bombardment Campaign," 560.

86. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 140, 147.

87. *Ibid.*, 144–146.

88. Cate and Olson, "The Precision Bombardment Campaign," 568–569.

89. Beckemeier, "January 26, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

It seems a long time since I had a letter, but I suppose they will start again in a few days. The anti-aircraft guns are practicing again and setting up a [illegible] racket and shaking the building.⁹⁰ Frank and Si have gone back home, so I am without visitors for the time being.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 27, 1945⁹¹

Dear Helen,

Last night I had dinner on one of the navy boats with Admiral Hoover.⁹² I wish we had the refrigeration system to keep food that they have on all their vessels.

Progress on my new house is slow. The stakes have been driven for the foundation so far. It probably will be three weeks or a month before it is finished.

Still no mail from you, so apparently Larry did not tell you the new address right away. It probably will be some time before the mail you sent to India after January 5 gets over here, so if there is anything in the letters important, you better repeat it.

There isn't much to write about here. Even the weather is about the same every day.

Have Janie's bracelets arrived yet?

Love,
Curt

90. When the XXI Bomber Command began operations in November, according to both Hansell and Ralph Nutter, Isley Field was subjected to consistent small-scale Japanese bomber and fighter raids, including some kamikaze attacks from Iwo Jima that destroyed a small number of parked B-29s, which prompted Hansell to demand more fighter cover and antiaircraft guns to defend the airfields. By the time LeMay arrived, defenses had been improved, and the American amphibious assault on Iwo Jima on February 19 halted the raids completely. See Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 190.

91. Beckemeier, "January 27, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

92. Vice Admiral J. H. Hoover. He was the commander of the forward area, responsible for approved base development and directly responsible to Admiral Nimitz. See Taylor, "Preparation for Combat," 514.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 29, 1945⁹³

Dear Helen,

I have been on the move for the last two days and missed writing again yesterday.⁹⁴ I'm afraid you won't get a letter every day until I get this mess straightened out. I'll do my best though. This job here is even tougher than the one in India, if that is possible, and I get discouraged at times. I hope everything turns out alright, but it will take time.

From the news reports, you must be having a hard winter at home. Winter certainly seems a long ways away from this muggy heat we have out here.

I hope Janie's vitamins have kept her from catching colds this winter. Still no mail since I left India, but it should start coming in anytime now.

Love,
Curt

LeMay's comments on January 29 reflected a frank admission of frustration with his work. "This job here is even tougher than the one in India, if that is possible," he wrote, "and I get discouraged at times. I hope everything turns out alright, but it will take time." There were tangible reasons for this sentiment; constant pressure from Washington and Arnold via Norstad, as well as the state of the XXI Bomber Command and its facilities and airfields, which was discussed earlier.⁹⁵ These difficulties were compounded by the results of LeMay's inaugural raids, which purportedly featured two of the fiercest air battles of the entire Pacific strategic bombing campaign.⁹⁶ The first occurred on January 23 against a Mitsubishi airframe and engine plant at Nagoya, Japan, during which LeMay's bomber force endured a reported total of 691 attacks by

93. Beckemeier, "January 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

94. LeMay attended a conference of Pacific Ocean Areas commanders on Ulithi in the Caroline Islands, roughly 360 miles southwest of Guam, on January 28. See Beckemeier, "January 28, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

95. Arnold suffered another of several major heart attacks on January 17, 1945, and was in convalescence in Miami until late March. The air force chief stayed informed and continued to give some orders, but Norstad, as the Twentieth's chief of staff and Arnold's mouthpiece, did much of the practical work involved with running the Twentieth during this time and enjoyed "practically no interference [from Arnold]," according to an oral history interview Norstad did with air force historians later. See Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 117.

96. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 141.

*Japanese fighters and did little to no damage to the target.*⁹⁷ The next mission occurred four days later against a Nakajima factory in Tokyo and “was considered the most savage of the war for the B-29s as it received the highest number of attacks, experienced perhaps the highest number of bombers downed by Japanese fighters on one mission, and claimed the second greatest number of Japanese fighters downed,” recorded historian Kenneth P. Werrell.⁹⁸ In all, B-29 gunners claimed sixty Japanese fighters destroyed against a loss of nine Superfortresses in 984 attacks.⁹⁹ Weather was bad in both actions. During both raids, and in most of the missions LeMay oversaw, his crews were operating at slightly lower altitudes, approximately twenty-seven thousand feet, which allowed Japanese fighters to engage them.¹⁰⁰ “Certainly a comparison of the high-altitude missions flown in late January reveals that more Japanese aircraft operated from above the bombers in the latter case, more coordinated attacks were observed, and the percentage of bombers damaged almost doubled,” wrote Werrell.¹⁰¹ These large-scale fighter attacks were unlike anything American strategic bomber units had seen thus far in the Pacific air war and prompted LeMay, as Hansell had before him, to push for long-range fighter escorts to mitigate the threat.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 30, 1945¹⁰²

Dear Helen,

Your first letter and airmail arrived today. I couldn't tell whether it was mailed the 16th or 18th. Anyway, it looks like two weeks for airmail; maybe v mail will be quicker. No, you did not mention Gable.¹⁰³ Small oversight on your part, no doubt. I think I told you the box came before I left India

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid., 145.

101. Ibid.

102. Beckemeier, “January 30, 1945,” LeMay Daily Diary.

103. Likely Clark Gable. Gable, then a major, decided to leave active duty on June 12, 1944, and was discharged by the future president Captain Ronald Reagan, who was the air force personnel officer at Hal Roach Studios in Culver City, California (nicknamed “Fort Roach”), where the army's training and propaganda films were produced. By January 1945, Gable was back in Hollywood and a reserve officer but not making films, vowing to forgo moviemaking until the Allied victory in Europe was ensured. See Harris, *Clark Gable*, 272–275, 278–279.

and I gave Moore his things.¹⁰⁴ He may be over here after a while. He did a good job in India and I can use him for a while doing the same thing here.

I'm glad you liked the Chinese stuff. There isn't much left over there and you have to be in the know to find it. Those things came from people who had the inside track, so they should be the best available.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, JANUARY 31, 1945¹⁰⁵

Dear Helen,

Still raining and everything is [illegible]. It does look as though it may clear up later in the day, but probably won't. Seems as though we are getting one rain storm right after another. I wish it would stop for a day anyway, so we could get some concrete poured, including the floor and foundation of my new house.

Two or three boxes of furniture came in today, so the rest of it must be around someplace and will show up sooner or later. It looks as though MacArthur is getting closer to Mindanao.¹⁰⁶ I'll bet Dinger and Bill are on pins and needles waiting to hear some word from Lee.

Tell Janie the toads over here are as big as dinner plates, so she probably would have trouble playing with them.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 1, 1945¹⁰⁷

Dear Helen,

The air mail letter I received the other day must have been a flash in

104. Likely Major Phillip G. Moore, who was a personnel staff officer with the XXth. See chapter 8, n. 303.

105. Beckemeier, "January 31, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

106. The Philippines' second-largest island, south of Luzon. Elements of the U.S. Eighth Army under Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger began the invasion of Mindanao on March 10. See Robert W. Coakley, "World War II: The War against Japan," in *American Military History*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1989), 519–520.

107. Beckemeier, "February 1, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

the pan because I haven't received anything since. The rain has finally stopped, so maybe we can dig out again.

Sid Nelson stopped by to see me today. He was in my class at the flying school and took the job with Ford that I almost took just after going to Selfridge.¹⁰⁸ He has been flying for United Airlines ever since. He is now flying the Pacific Run from here to Frisco.¹⁰⁹

I'm still having headaches although they are slight and don't bother much. I guess I'm getting old and wearing out because they usually happen when I'm worried about something or tired.

Another conference so will have to stop.¹¹⁰

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 2, 1945¹¹¹

Dear Helen,

Three letters today, so I guess the pipeline is finally full and they will be coming regularly from now on. The V mail letter took four days longer, but you didn't have a complete address on it so that may account for the delay.

108. In the late 1920s, Ford designed and manufactured a civilian transport aircraft called the Trimotor and recruited pilots to pair with each plane they made. According to LeMay, after he had graduated from flight school on October 12, 1929, Ford offered him one of the available positions. "I still hadn't finally made up my mind to stay in the service," he remembered. "That came a little bit later when we got up to Selfridge. I actually went down and got a job with Ford. Ford was making the old ten deuce tri-motor then and . . . the procedure [for a pilot] was to run them through the factory for about three or four months to be thoroughly familiar with the airplane, how it was built and when he sold one the pilot usually went with it." After he arrived at the plant, he decided to reconsider his decision. "I went back and had a talk with a few more officers who were stationed at Selfridge and decided to stay [in the service]." See Curtis E. LeMay, interview 1450, transcript, USAFOHC, 4.

109. During the war, several private airline companies did contract work for the air force, including United Airlines. They were primarily tasked with transporting wounded troops, as well as mail and personnel, from frontline battlefields in the Philippines and central Pacific islands to hospitals in Hawaii and on the mainland. Evidently, Mr. Nelson flew one of these routes. According to Beckemeier, Nelson intermittently had dinner with LeMay when he flew into Guam. See Frank H. Heck, "Across the Pacific," in *Services around the World*, vol. 7 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 196–204; and Beckemeier, "March 3, May 5, July 15, and September 12, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

110. LeMay had a conference with General Harmon and Admiral Nimitz on this date. See Beckemeier, "February 1, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

111. Beckemeier, "February 2, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

You don't have to worry about this place. We haven't had even one air raid and I spent half my time in a slit trench in China, so this is much better. Even this isn't close enough. I wish we were about 700 miles from Japan then we could really drop a big load of bombs when we went over.

Larry was right; this is a better spot from all angles. A better command and a better location. I see Stud Wright occasionally. He has a group in O'Donnell's wing. I have news that Aug. Kissner is on the way at last and should be here shortly. I certainly need him. I wouldn't count too much on the Swami's prediction if I get home by Spring. It probably will be because I couldn't swing this job.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 3, 1945¹¹²

Dear Helen,

It looks as though air mail is the fastest out here. Just received two V mails written on the 17th and 18th and two air mails yesterday written on the 22nd and 23rd.

There is no place out here to get the miniature medal fixed, but I will forward it over to India and have it made there.

The foundation and cement floor of my new house should be ready tonight and tomorrow. They should start putting up the framework. It will look something like this:

112. Beckemeier, "February 3, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Everything is open and screened including the porch. So, by the end of the month I should be living in style if the furniture all gets here. I'll take some pictures of it when it is finished.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 5, 1945¹¹³

Dear Helen,

The beach here isn't too bad: not much coral and what there is [is] mostly rotten, so you don't get cut up on it. There are quite a few sea slugs around, but they don't bother you.

This just blew off on the floor, so you will see some of the same red dirt that we had in Hawaii. I was going to try and go swimming this afternoon again, but couldn't get away from the office, as usual.

What news of Smitty? Has he graduated from the rehabilitation center and gone to work yet? It looks like the Japs are about to take [illegible]. I hope we get word from Lee soon.

How is Janie getting on in school now? You sent me one report of her grades, but didn't say whether she went to the 2nd half of the 1st grade or not.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 7, 1945¹¹⁴

Dear Helen,

It looks as though MacArthur has the camp Lee was in. I hope Alexander crashes through with transportation for him. Let me know if Dinger and Bill hear anything from him.

I haven't been in the immediate vicinity of your cousin, but will go to see him if he comes into the neighborhood. I seem to remember that

113. Beckemeier, "February 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

114. Beckemeier, "February 7, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

many *months* ago I asked for a bottle of [R]onson lighter flints. Of course, I *know* you have sent them a long time ago, but they haven't arrived yet.

Twitchell brought in the chief nurse of the hospital that serves us, a Ms. Roth, I think. She was a nurse in its OB and outpatient wards at Schofield while we were there and remembers the arrival of the Putle twins. I wonder if you remember her? We seem to have a good hospital here, or at least Twitchell thinks it is OK. Of course, we don't give them much business from the Headquarters.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 9, 1945¹¹⁵

Dear Helen,

Upston came through last night on the way home, so I am sending by him the evening bag I got for you in India before I left.¹¹⁶ I don't think they are worth \$50, but maybe you will think differently. Anyway, it's your birthday present because it's the last chance I'll have to buy you anything until I get home. Keep it away from wool, etc., so the gold and silver doesn't tarnish.

No mail for the past four or five days. I don't know what the hold-up is.

All the framework is up on my new house and the roofing should start tomorrow.

If I don't get any mail tomorrow I'll have to wire Larry and find out what the trouble is.

Love,
Curt

115. Beckemeier, "February 9, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

116. General Upston was LeMay's chief of staff for the XX Bomber Command until January 1945. Following General Ramey's arrival in Kharagpur, Upston transferred back to the United States, where he became commanding officer of the 72nd Fighter Wing, a training wing in the Second Air Force based at Peterson Field, Colorado, on March 14, 1945. See Beckemeier, "February 8, 1945"; Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 452; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 406.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 10, 1945¹¹⁷

Dear Helen,

One V mail today dated January 25th, so I guess there is mail on the way, but just slow getting here.

I have been listening to the radio hoping to hear a list of people who were in the concentration camp at Manila, but so far nothing has been published.¹¹⁸ I suppose Bill and Dinger know by now whether Lee was among them or not.

I am going to try to get down to the beach this afternoon again for a swim. I wish I could do it every day, but something always seems to happen.

Ping, who used to be at Langley, is one of the group commanders under Davies.¹¹⁹

With all the cold weather you are having, how is the coal situation holding out? Do you have enough for the rest of the winter, or are you still battling to get it?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 11, 1945¹²⁰

Dear Helen,

Perhaps you have mentioned it in one of your letters I haven't received, did Janie's silver bracelets I sent for Christmas by air mail ever arrive? They should be there by this time.

Another dull day as far as activities I can write about. General Harmon and part of his staff are coming over for a drink and dinner tonight.¹²¹ I suppose we will have a movie and go to bed as usual.

117. Beckemeier, "February 10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

118. Santo Tomas.

119. Colonel Robert A. Ping, CO of the 505th Bomb Group under General Davies and the 313th Bomb Wing. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 369.

120. Beckemeier, "February 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

121. Other attendees included General Hale and Brigadier General Martin F. Scanlon, president of the Army Air Force Evaluation Board. See Beckemeier, "February 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary; and Ansell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 440.

What do you think of the new congressman's idea of shipping wives out to the combat zones? The few nurses we have around here cause enough trouble I would hate to think of the trouble we would be in if any more came out.

We love you darling, but *at home*.

Love,
Curt

Following the poor results of the two January missions, LeMay outfitted his B-29s with incendiary bombs and sent them against the Kobe industrial district on February 4. Kobe was considered a less "hot" target, and it provided an ideal test for the efficacy of incendiary-dominated payloads. Other than the ordnance, the Kobe mission mirrored previous ones. LeMay's units flew in formation and dropped their bombs at altitudes from twenty-four thousand to twenty-seven thousand feet.¹²² The results were encouraging, but the following raid against an Ota aircraft factory on February 10 was considered more successful. It, too, included incendiaries, although they made up only one-third of the total payload for the force.¹²³ The target was another Nakajima aircraft plant on which eighty-four Superfortresses scored minimum hits, but the nature of the mixture of incendiary and high-explosive bombs did maximum damage, halting production for several months and destroying a reported seventy-four completed fighters.¹²⁴

These results demonstrated the effectiveness of incendiaries, even when limited by high-altitude bombing, and, before March 9, one more "experimental" daylight incendiary mission took place against Tokyo's industrial district, on February 25. Fortresses dropped the ordnance from thirty-one thousand feet and burned out an area of one square mile.¹²⁵ The rest of this period, however, featured conventional daylight precision bombing against more Japanese air industry targets and in support of the amphibious assault of Iwo Jima, which occurred on February 19.¹²⁶ Ever since the Marianas had been acquired the previous summer, Japanese air forces based on Iwo Jima, located approximately 850 miles to the northwest, sent harassing attacks including kamikazes against American forces, especially the XXIst's airfields soon after

122. Cate and Olson, "The Precision Bombardment Campaign," 570.

123. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 142.

124. *Ibid.*

125. *Ibid.*, 142; and Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 231.

126. Frank, *Downfall*, 58–62.

*Hansell began very heavy bomber operations. As it concerned the Twentieth Air Force, Iwo Jima was targeted by planners for four reasons: (1) to serve as an emergency landing station for damaged B-29s or Fortresses low on fuel; (2) to serve as a forward long-range fighter base for escorts; (3) to allow B-29s to fly directly over the island instead of around it, which cost fuel and time; and (4) to serve as a base for search-and-rescue units to recover bomber crews downed in the ocean.*¹²⁷ *After over a month of some of the most brutal fighting of the war, on March 26 the island was declared secure by American forces at a cost of approximately seven thousand dead and another twenty-four thousand wounded.*¹²⁸ *The Japanese garrison of twenty-one thousand was virtually wiped out, with only about a thousand survivors.*¹²⁹

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 14, 1945¹³⁰

Dear Helen,

Today is Valentine's Day and I hoped your picture would be here by this time, but I guess all forms of transportation are slow out here.

I'm sorry you have a cold. Have you and Janie been taking your vitamin pills?

I went up to visit Tommy Powers at his HQ. last night.¹³¹ He has one of my wings. We had dinner (spam) and played a little poker in the evening. Monty went along with me and we had a good time and a profitable one.

127. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 148.

128. Frank, *Downfall*, 60–61.

129. Both military commanders and historians have challenged the decision to acquire Iwo Jima, and the debate endures to the present day. Defenders of the action highlight the success of the campaign's aims after acquisition. For example, Richard Frank pointed to the thousands of B-29s that used Iwo Jima's airfields to make emergency landings due to battle damage or low fuel. Kenneth Werrell acknowledged the island's value as a base for search-and-rescue units, which significantly improved their response time and ability to aid downed crews due to Iwo Jima's proximity to Japan; however, he considered the contributions of the XXIst's escort unit, the VII Fighter Command, "superfluous" to the campaign. Others, most recently marine corps historian Robert S. Burrell, argued that none of the benefits were worth the lives of the marines and sailors who died, because the island never proved to be the worthwhile base that planners had envisioned. Further debate here diverts the narrative from its proper course, but readers should be aware of this controversy in the historiography. See Frank, *Downfall*, 61; Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 142–145, 148–150, 186–187; and Robert S. Burrell, "Price of a Runway," in *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006).

130. Beckemeier, "February 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

131. Brigadier General Thomas S. Power, commanding general of the 314th Bomb Wing based at North Field on Guam. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 421–422.

I hope Kitty arrives eventually.¹³² I know you will enjoy her visit. Does she have the offspring along? Janie will enjoy having him to play with.

Did Janie have a birthday party this year and how did it go?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 16, 1945¹³³

Dear Helen,

Another all day rain yesterday, so everything is damp today, but it looks as though the sun will come out today and dry things off a little.

I still haven't heard from you about the two checks I mailed you from India.

Getting word from Lee is encouraging. He should be out of the clink by now and I imagine on the way home shortly.

Progress on the house has slowed up considerably. The engineers can't find the plumbing and bathroom fixtures, etc. I suppose they will get here by the time the war is over.

I haven't had the headaches for several days, so maybe they are gone for good.¹³⁴ I hope so.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 17, 1945¹³⁵

Dear Helen,

Two letters today, air mail and V mail, both postmarked the 3rd

132. Kitty Sault, wife of Captain William E. Sault, who was an executive squadron CO in the 305th Bomb Group while LeMay was in command. The editors were unable to identify their son. See Curtis E. LeMay, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding, "Special Orders No. 70," Headquarters, 305th Bomb Group, Army Air Base, Muroc, California, August 22, 1942, CELMPR.

133. Beckemeier, "February 16, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

134. LeMay had some issues with headaches in late December while still in India, although the doctors could not find a cause. This was apparently an ongoing issue for him. See letter of December 28, 1944.

135. Beckemeier, "February 17, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

although the V mail probably was written on the 3rd and mailed the 4th. I think the air mail is probably a day or so faster. Your letter today mentioned the checks for the first time. I haven't received the other two you say you mentioned them in. I would like you to mention check numbers or amounts, so I can keep the records straight and know what has arrived and what hasn't, so if one is lost I can get it replaced.

Dick Lee is stationed here now with General Harmon's staff.¹³⁶

I hope Janie's birthday party was a success and that the house is still on its foundation. I'll bet you were a wreck when it was all over.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 18, 1945¹³⁷

Dear Helen,

Kissner came in this morning at 5:00. I was surely glad to see him. He will take a big load off my shoulders.

He got the salted nuts in Washington. Larry knew he was coming back and held them for him, otherwise, they would have missed connections. Jack is here also.¹³⁸ Been here for two days, but I saw him today for the first time. He is coming over for dinner tonight.

Augie said he sent Janie a birthday present, but it probably would get there a day or so late.

A letter from Dinger and Bill today and they sent copies of the cards they received from Lee. I hope my plan for getting him out works, but I have no confidence in it. However, it's the best I can do.

Love,
Curt

136. The editors were unable to identify Dick Lee.

137. Beckemeier, "February 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

138. Lieutenant Jack Chandler, LeMay's brother-in-law who was married to Faith Maitland Chandler, Helen's sister. He was stationed with or near LeMay on Guam and Saipan according to an article published in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on August 21, 1945, as well as letters in this chapter. See Beckemeier, "March 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary; and Cornelia Curtiss, "Cleveland Girls Leaving to Enroll in Vassar College," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 21, 1945. Unless otherwise indicated, LeMay's references to Jack in this chapter should be assumed to mean Lieutenant Jack Chandler.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 23, 1945¹³⁹

Dear Helen,

Another letter today—V mail dated February 1, the first one that mentions the two checks I sent. Letters are certainly arriving all mixed up.

I haven't had time to see much of the island except the camp and one of my fields here. The weather isn't too bad but it gets muggy at times. There may be fruit here, but the only kind I have seen came out of a can.

I'm going down to the square and compass club tonight to speak and am taking Jack along.¹⁴⁰ I don't know why I let myself in for these things anyway.

I saw a partial list of people taken from San Tomas concentration camp in the Honolulu newspaper, but Lee's name wasn't among them. I imagine Dinger and Bill have heard from him by this time if he was there, but it may take longer if he was in another camp that took longer to capture.

Wish I were home enjoying some of the cold weather and to help warm you up.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 24, 1945¹⁴¹

Dear Helen,

I got my running off at the mouth finished last night. That's positively my last effort. I took Jack along with me. The square and compass club has about 1500 members and there must have been over 1200 there.

Beckemeir has been gone a week now, I think.¹⁴² I'll have to put the

139. Beckemeier, "February 23, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

140. Apparently, General LeMay agreed to speak to a group of Masons at this club constructed by Navy Seabees on Guam. The Square and Compass is the name of the symbol used by Freemasons, depicting an architect's square with two compasses and often the letter G in the middle. Ibid.

141. Beckemeier, "February 24, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

142. On February 17, Major Beckemeier (whose name LeMay often misspells) left along with several other XXI Bomber Command staff members for Oahu, Hawaii, to "pick up furniture, plumbing equipment, light fixtures, electrical appliances, etc. for the new house" that was being built for General LeMay. He returned on February 26. See Beckemeier, "February 16, 17, and 26, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

whole crew in jail when they get back. They must like it over there to stay so long.

Bill Ball, who used to be on the 20th A.F. staff in Washington and now works for Harmon, is going back to Washington Monday.¹⁴³ I told him to call you up. I wish I were coming home to do it myself, but don't see any chance of it in the near future in spite of your swami friend's prediction.

Well, have to close and go play some volleyball. I have been trying to get exercise, but something always interferes.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, FEBRUARY 25, 1945¹⁴⁴

Dear Helen,

I'm glad you enjoyed Kitty's visit. What did she have to say about Bill? I imagine he was able to get a good rest if he has been home for two months.

The party sounds like a big success. I wish I had been there to hear the racket.

Too bad Angus is mad again.¹⁴⁵ He probably needs a girlfriend and not one that is kept locked up all the time.

Do you remember Ankenbrant, a signal corps officer at Schofield when we were there and I think he was at Langley on the G.H.Q. staff also? He is on Harmon's staff and has just been made a B.G.¹⁴⁶

143. Colonel William Ball, executive to the deputy commander for operations, Army Air Force, Pacific Ocean Areas. See Taylor, "Preparation for Combat," 530.

144. Beckemeier, "February 25, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

145. The LeMay's family dog.

146. Brigadier General Francis LeRoy Ankenbrandt. In August 1934, General Ankenbrandt was transferred to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii after serving for four years on the faculty at West Point as a chemistry and electricity instructor. He remained at Schofield for two years and was sent to Wright Field's Aircraft Radio Laboratory. In July 1940, he was appointed as a signal officer with GHQ, Air Force, at Langley Field, Virginia. He served in handful of positions between 1940 and the outbreak of hostilities, and in July 1942 he was appointed as theater signal officer for AAF forces in the South Pacific area, a position he held until July 1944, when he joined Harmon's staff as director of communications for all AAF forces in the Pacific Ocean areas. He remained there until the end of the war. See Ansell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 362; Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 1, 64–65; and U.S. Air Force, "Major General Francis LeRoy Ankenbrandt," U.S. Air Force Biographies, at <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/Biographies/Display/tabid/225/Article/107852/major-general-francis-l-ankenbrandt.aspx>, accessed September 30, 2013.

How is the car holding up? How many miles on it and are the tires still OK? If I weren't coming home in April as you and your mystics prophesy, I would recommend selling it now. You could probably get \$2500, which is a lot more than we paid for it.

Love,
Curt

The difference between LeMay and Hansell was LeMay's ability to understand Arnold's impatience, reasonable or not, and seek out new solutions without restrictions on which avenues he explored. The development of the XXIst under LeMay to this point mirrored his earlier efforts with the XXth. Abort rates fell, formations tightened up, and flying improved. In addition, bomb loads, always a key issue in Arnold's mind, steadily rose from "an average of 5,400 pounds in mid-January, to 6,200 pounds in late January and to an average of almost 6,700 pounds in February."¹⁴⁷ Reciprocally gross takeoff weights fell by almost 4,000 pounds over the same period.¹⁴⁸

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 3, 1945¹⁴⁹

Dear Helen,

I'm glad Dinger has finally heard from Lee. I imagine he is skin and bones, but some good food will fix that up. One of my staff officers saw a friend of his army officer who had been a prisoner since Bataan.¹⁵⁰ He had gained 50 pounds since being released but was still skinny. Even with the best of treatment, being a guest of the Japs is no fun.

Your mail is coming in a little better now that you are writing air mail. They are still mixed up; some come in 10 days and others 18 or 20 days, but it seems to be better than V mail.

Sid Nelson is back on another trip from the transport command. He is coming over for dinner tonight and I think we are having a movie

147. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 141.

148. Ibid.

149. Beckemeier, "March 3, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

150. The Bataan Death March began on April 9, 1942, following the surrender of American forces on the Philippine island of Luzon; Japanese forces marched their American and Filipino prisoners under inhumane conditions, often physically abusing them, withholding food and water, and even killing them, to POW camps many miles away. See Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 315.

afterwards. I'm going to be spoiled after the war being used to having movies on the back porch.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 5, 1945¹⁵¹

Dear Helen,

Maj. Ghall arrived this morning and delivered the candy and Janie's picture.¹⁵² She surely has changed in the last seven months and looks quite grown up.

Twitchell just came in and looked at my immunization card and is insisting on a lot more shots; smallpox, tetanus, plague, typhus etc. How I hate them.

I haven't heard from Lee yet although I have written another letter to Alexander and enclosed a letter to Lee. I know Alex will do all he can if and when he is able to move his HQ to Manila.

Now you know why I didn't spend much time with Smitty in England. In addition to being too busy, they were hogs in my estimation and you kept insisting that I would meet such nice people through him. No thanks, I'll pick my own. In spite of Smitty's loose talk, there were a few people fighting the war in England.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 7, 1945¹⁵³

Dear Helen,

The mail has picked up considerably. I get two letters every second or third day now that you are writing air mail. I hope it keeps up.

The candy *and* lighter flints arrived in good condition. I'll give Jack some candy when he gets back.

151. Beckemeier, "March 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

152. The editors were unable to identify Major Ghall.

153. Beckemeier, "March 7, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Just found out that Becky Gibbs has been married twice since Don was shot down.¹⁵⁴ Stud Wright is going home in a few days to a job in Washington.¹⁵⁵ I imagine he will be with Larry. I don't remember whether I told you or not, Peterson is out here and I see him occasionally. Bill Ball, who was going to call you when he reached Washington, was on the ship with General Harmon, so you can forget the call as there have been no results from the search so far and it doesn't look very hopeful.¹⁵⁶

With all your activities, it sounds to me like you are dashing around too much. If I'm coming home in April as you say, better get some beauty sleep.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 12, 1945¹⁵⁷

Dear Helen,

Larry has been here and gone and I have been so busy with him, plus our recent missions that I haven't had much sleep and I don't think I have written to you in the last two days.

We had a good mission on Tokyo the other day. I sent a message home

154. Possibly Major David R. Gibbs. Major Gibbs was the commanding officer of the 19th Bombardment Group, which was stationed at Clark Field, Luzon, Philippines. It was attacked by Japanese forces on December 7, 1941 (December 8 in the Philippines), and Major Gibbs was one of the group's first fatalities, serving as CO for only two days. He was replaced by then-Major Emmett O'Donnell Jr., who escaped from the island with retreating U.S. forces. He was the same O'Donnell who went on to serve in Europe and lead the 73rd Bomb Wing under LeMay. See Glenn Justice, "Gibbs Field," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, at <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qcgo3>, accessed October 28, 2013; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 65–68.

155. Colonel Wright was first assigned as a radar officer with the Twentieth Air Force in March and then made chief of the Equipment Programming Section, Office of Air Communications, Headquarters, Army Air Force in July. See Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 2, 570–571.

156. On February 25, Harmon, along with several members of his staff, were en route to Washington to meet with General Arnold when their plane, a B-24 named the Dove II, disappeared near Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. Air force and navy units spent eighteen days searching for the missing airmen but neither they nor their aircraft were discovered, so they were declared MIA/KIA. See Fred Blechman, "The Search for General Harmon," *Bomber Legends Magazine* 1, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 24–27.

157. Beckemeier, "March 12, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

to have you notified about the *Army Hour* program. I hope it got there in time.

I'm glad you liked the evening bag. I'm sure I spoil you. I can remember the time when that would have paid the grocery bill for a month.

I hope you don't work too hard on your various activities.

Dick Lee is still a Colonel in Harmon's HQ.

Haven't yet moved into the new house. We are all living in tents now. I have a wooden floor and porch, so it isn't too bad.

Love,

Curt

On the evening of Sunday, March 11, 1945, Major Ted Steele, an officer with the army's Public Relations Division, introduced General LeMay as part of the National Broadcasting Corporation's Army Hour radio program, which reached the homes of American families every Sunday afternoon from April 5, 1942, to the end of the war.¹⁵⁸ Major Steele was present on Guam to personally record an interview with LeMay about the XXI Bomber Command's latest raid against Tokyo, which had occurred two nights before, the results of which changed the Pacific strategic bombing campaign for the rest of the war.¹⁵⁹ "Nine thousand seven hundred acres of urban Tokyo are now twisted, gutted rubble," LeMay announced; "hundreds of war business establishments—many important administrative buildings—and thousands of home industries were burned down in the fifteen square miles where the fire blazed hottest."¹⁶⁰ "It felt like you were staring into the mouth of hell," remembered Second Lieutenant David Braden, a navigator and radar bombardier with the 73rd Bomb Wing; "[y]ou cannot imagine a fire that big. It's like if Dallas . . . was on fire. That's what it would have looked like."¹⁶¹ "The heart of this city is completely gutted by fire," wrote Beckemeier on March 11; "[i]t is the most devastating raid in the history of aerial warfare."¹⁶²

158. Robert T. Davis, *The U.S. Army and the Media in the Twentieth Century* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 33.

159. Beckemeier, "March 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

160. "Army Hour Program, 11 March 1945 (Marianas Sequence)," *Army Hour*, January 7, 1945–March 25, 1945, Box 60, Public Relation Division, News Branch, Radio Scripts, 1942–1945, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, 1791–1948, Record Group 107, NACP. See the Appendix for the complete transcript.

161. David Braden, interview by Dr. Alfred Hurley, February 4, 2005, interview 1567, transcript, UNTOHC, 16.

162. Beckemeier, "March 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Despite the great improvements made to LeMay's organization, it took a fundamental change in tactics to achieve the required results. Operations and tactics born from his experience in the Eighth Air Force fundamentally drove early operations, but "it was now clear that we couldn't possibly succeed by basing our strategy on our success in Europe."¹⁶³ So, in late February/early March, LeMay, cognizant of the upcoming Okinawa invasion (Operation Iceberg), which would divert his units to supporting the campaign, decided to lower the bombing altitude of his B-29s to five thousand–ten thousand feet, from the customary twenty-five thousand to twenty-seven thousand feet; strip the bombers of gunners and guns; and attack singly at night. In theory, these changes addressed all the major issues affecting the XXIst's performance; as LeMay recalled, "This was, I think, a combination of several people's ideas," including his wing commanders, Generals Power and O'Donnell.¹⁶⁴ LeMay made the final call, and he considered it "my second most important and difficult decision [of his career]."¹⁶⁵

Flying at low altitudes significantly reduced fuel consumption, wear on the engines, and the effect of the jet stream on accuracy. Night raids would take advantage of the dearth of Japanese night fighters and reduce the usefulness of antiaircraft guns, whose operators would have to rely on spotlights and radar.¹⁶⁶ No one in LeMay's command, including the general himself, knew how many low-altitude antiaircraft guns the Japanese defense forces employed, but reconnaissance photographs suggested that they had few emplacements.¹⁶⁷ Still, half his staff was against the idea and believed that such runs were tantamount to suicide missions.¹⁶⁸ Finally, LeMay stripped his planes of defensive armament and gunners, leaving only the 20-millimeter tail cannon. This shedding of weight, in tandem with the lower operating altitude, allowed each B-29 to carry a full load of ten tons of ordnance.¹⁶⁹ Night raids made formation flying much more difficult, so LeMay nixed that idea, but the weather was slightly better at night and radar more effective. In addition, Japanese fighter activity during the day was still significant at this time and represented

163. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 121.

164. For the quotation, see Curtis E. LeMay, interview 785, transcript, USAFOHC, 5. See also Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 153–154.

165. According to LeMay, his most difficult wartime decision was, as commander of the 305th, ordering his B-17s to fly straight in formation on bombing runs in late 1942. See Curtis E. LeMay, interview 714, transcript, USAFOHC, 1–2.

166. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 155.

167. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 121.

168. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 154.

169. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 66.

a real threat to units that attempted low-level daylight raids.¹⁷⁰

LeMay chose Tokyo as his experimental target. He wanted to make a statement, and striking the enemy's capital was a bold one. He scheduled the raid for the night of March 9 and informed General Norstad of his decision, intending not to tell General Arnold, allegedly to give the chief plausible deniability and a final opportunity to "make something of the '29's."¹⁷¹ The nature of the mission was kept secret from the crews until the afternoon of March 9. When the wing commanders informed the men that they would be flying at an altitude between five thousand and seven thousand feet, their reaction was immediate and disbelieving. "The audience was just aghast," remembered David Braden. "Most of the guys thought it was a suicide mission. Some of them went in and wrote good-bye letters to their families."¹⁷² The results of the raid demonstrated the fears of American crews for their own safety to be groundless, but the inferno they created, which caused rivers to boil over, birthed huge, black clouds of smoke that interfered with their own navigation over the city, and killed tens of thousands of Japanese civilians, left a lifelong impression that few servicemen forgot. Of the 325 Superfortresses that took part in the mission, only 14 did not return.¹⁷³

Reconnaissance aircraft revealed a barren strip of sixteen square miles, and Japanese dead were estimated at between eighty thousand and one hundred thousand.¹⁷⁴ It was the deadliest single attack ever endured by a civilian population in modern history and set the stage for an air campaign that leveled a nation in approximately four months. LeMay's gamble had, again, paid off, and he would spend the rest of the war dropping as many bombs as possible as often as possible on every industrial district in every Japanese city on the COA's target list. In a matter of ten days and five raids, LeMay had exhausted his supply of incendiaries against Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe, destroying a total of 31.9 square miles of urban areas.¹⁷⁵ After a weeklong rest, the XXIst resumed daylight precision raids with high explosives against aircraft industry targets and in support of the Okinawa invasion, but they had their blueprint for success in place and continued incendiary raids when they received new supplies and bombs in mid-April.¹⁷⁶

170. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 236.

171. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission With LeMay*, 348; and Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 120.

172. Braden, interview 1567, transcript, UNTOHC, 13.

173. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 160.

174. *Ibid.*, 160–161.

175. *Ibid.*, 167–168.

176. Nutter, *With the Possum and the Eagle*, 246–247.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 14, 1945¹⁷⁷

Dear Helen,

I haven't seen Jack lately. Too busy as you can see in the newspapers. I'm putting a blitz on the Japs and haven't time for anything else. Too bad Jack doesn't like the food; it's better here than anyplace I have been since the war started. Twitchell says we are getting 4200 calories a day, so I guess he won't starve.

I haven't received the package you sent to me yet. It must have been lost or it would have been here by this time.

Dinger has sent me a copy of the letter she received from Lee. It sounds just like him, so I guess he is OK. I hope Alex is able to get him on A.T.C. I know he will do the best he can.

I hope yours and Janie's speech went off alright.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 15, 1945¹⁷⁸

Dear Helen,

Jack came back from Saipan and I had him over for dinner tonight and gave him some of the candy you sent over. He seemed to like it up there better than down here because they get fresh meat more often than we do.

I just had a letter from Sy Bartlett and he sent me a couple of boxes of Havana cigars.

The Plain Dealer war correspondent was in today.¹⁷⁹ I have forgotten his name, but we had quite a long talk.

I hear the newspapers are whooping up our attacks on Japan. We did build quite a fire in Tokyo.

One of the things Larry mentioned while he was here was a trip home around June with a week's leave attached to it. Sounds good.

Love,
Curt

177. Beckemeier, "March 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

178. Beckemeier, "March 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

179. *Cleveland Plain Dealer* war correspondent Gordon Cobbledick, who was temporarily stationed at XXI Bomber Headquarters to do the interview. Cobbledick authored an article about LeMay; see "Tokyo Is on Road to Patricia Jane," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 17, 1945.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 18, 1945¹⁸⁰

Dear Helen,

OK, you can have the car, I suppose. I have been keeping you in luxury so long you probably couldn't survive without it.

Bechemer was in Hawaii for a few days a while back getting a few things for the house. I am finally going to move in tomorrow. They are still working there, but if I don't move, they will be there when the war is over.

The lighter flints came with the candy you sent by the Major from Washington, but the package Larry was to send over never arrived.

Too bad Smitty doesn't like his new post. Most of the training setups are at places like that. Hansell is at Williams [Field], Arizona, a little backwater east of Phoenix.¹⁸¹ He is home, so should be satisfied!

The training command is being cleaned out and everyone who has not been overseas will be gone shortly.

Still getting V mails you sent to India.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MARCH 31, 1945¹⁸²

Dear Helen,

I'm just about to go out and fly. Here it is the last day of the month and I have been so busy that I haven't [had] my flying time for this month.

You and Janie probably need the money. How about a financial statement and when you mention bonds, how about stating whether it is the cost price or the matured value you are talking about? I'm going to

180. Beckemeier, "March 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

181. The 38th Flying Training Wing, Williams Field, Arizona. See Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 1, 742.

182. Beckemeier, "March 31, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary. It is unclear why there was a two-week break between LeMay's March 18 letter and this one. The last incendiary raid before LeMay's command ran out of bombs took place against Nagoya on the eighteenth, but it was followed by a series of high-altitude raids against aircraft industry targets and airfields in support of the invasion of Okinawa. According to the Beckemeier diary, LeMay was at his headquarters for most of this period and was engaged in an unusual number of media interviews and related meetings promoting the unit's success, but there is no clear reason for the lapse. See Beckemeier, "March 18–31, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

have to get busy and figure out how much income tax we owe. I hope we have enough to pay the bill. I imagine it will be about \$6000.00.

Back from flying, so you won't be broke this month.

No mail today or for the last two days. I imagine I'll get about three tomorrow though.

I had one of the group COs and one of his crews down for dinner last night.¹⁸³ I plan on having a crew in once a week just to give them the idea that we are thinking a little about them. Dinner time, so will close. We are out of food except c-rations, so there probably won't be much use going to dinner.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 1, 1945¹⁸⁴

Dear Helen,

Still no mail. You must have tired out with all your work or the airplanes have stopped flying.

Easter Sunday slipped up on us and I didn't realize it was here until this morning. I suppose you and Janie were dressed in new clothes for the parade in spite of the rationing. Our Easter outfit was khaki stained with sweat and red dirt.

Don't spend the check I am enclosing all in one place and let me know when it gets there this time instead of waiting until I ask about three times.

We broke all records for all the air forces last month for sorties per airplane, sorties flown, etc. and we are just getting started. I'm going to be more unpopular with the Japs than I am now and they are already screaming their heads off.

Happy Easter.

Love,
Curt

LeMay's tactical revision was the primary reason for the command's success,

183. Beckemeier did not record which group or crew was invited to this dinner. See Beckemeier, "March 31, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

184. Beckemeier, "April 1, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

but his other changes paid dividends as well, as did the increased numbers of B-29s that became available in March as more units from the 313th and 314th Bomb Wings joined the fight. The success of the XXIst's revised maintenance program was evident in statistics available after March. In January and February, the XXI Bomber Command recorded 543 and 841 Superfortresses "airborne" for missions, respectively, compared to 2,704 recorded for the month of March.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the percentage of ineffective airborne B-29s was cut in half by the month's end, from 16.4 percent in January to 7 percent by the beginning of April.¹⁸⁶ The XXIst's total tons dropped per month increased appreciably as well, from 1,404 tons in January and 2,155 tons in February to a staggering 13,847 tons for the month of March. The number of incendiary bombs utilized by LeMay's forces, 10,761 tons, dominated payloads by April, with 3,086 tons of high explosives used alongside them.¹⁸⁷ Except for April, when LeMay exhausted his stockpile of incendiaries, incendiaries exceeded high explosives in tons dropped by a 2:1 ratio for the rest of the war, and mid-summer low-level incendiary operations systematically destroyed Japan's major cities and their industries.¹⁸⁸

At home, Helen was fighting her own battles in support of her husband as evident in a photograph of her and Janie flanked by an article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on March 17, 1945. Helen is pictured sitting with Janie on her parents' couch, a slight smile on her face with one of LeMay's letters in hand as Janie looks on. Written by *Plain Dealer* war correspondent Gordon Cobbledick, "Tokyo Is on Road to Patricia Jane" documented both the recent success of the general's raids as well as the physical fatigue he experienced and the effect of separation from his family. "It was Patricia who gave him the first big thrill," wrote Cobbledick, "when, after he had been home on a visit last August, she gravely confided to her mother that she thought she liked the general." From Janie's perspective, at that time, "he was a complete stranger. . . . When he was able to convince her in the space of six days that her father was

185. *Army Air Forces Statistical Digest: World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of Statistical Control, Headquarters, Army Air Force, 1945), Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 227.

186. Percentages derived by dividing "effective" bomber value by "airborne" bomber value, multiplying the product by 100, and subtracting that product from 100. *Ibid.*

187. For January and February, the HE/incendiary ratio was 927/477 and 1,140/1,015, respectively. *Ibid.*

188. This period also included the beginning of the campaign to lay mines at Japan's major harbors as well as the invasion of Okinawa, which LeMay was obliged to support by bombing Japanese airfields, diverting him from his primary strategic campaign against Japanese industry. *Ibid.*; and *United States Strategic Bombing Survey Summary Report: Pacific War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 16–17.

something special he felt he had achieved a major triumph.” Despite LeMay’s letters to Janie, his absence was plainly felt by his daughter. LeMay rarely expressed his feelings directly, but his desire to stay connected to his wife and daughter was evident throughout the collection. LeMay had been overseas almost continuously since November 1942 with only a handful of visits home, and he and his family were ready to be reunited permanently. Germany’s near collapse coupled with Allied gains against Japanese forces encouraged hope for an imminent homecoming.

Helen was busy at home supporting the war effort locally primarily through volunteer work with Lakewood’s Junior Red Cross League. As cochair, Helen led a positive effort to bring comfort to American troops abroad. On August 1, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that their organization had made “1,000 Christmas folders and decorated 1,000 postcards with Santa Clauses, bells and holly for ‘servicemen’ to send to their friends. They have made 500 Christmas try favors, 100 bulletin board posters, 100 trees, 200 ornaments, and center-pieces for the Christmas dinner table.”¹⁸⁹ Helen organized the activity based on a previous project concluded during Christmas 1944 in which she and Janie constructed similar ornaments, garnering volunteers from all the Lakewood schools to make up the “summer school” that produced the holiday decorations. In addition to her work as a Gray Lady at Crile Hospital and other volunteer organizations, Helen maintained a full schedule of other activities in addition to letter writing.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 2, 1945¹⁹⁰

Dear Helen,

The letter with the Plain Dealer clipping came today and you don’t look any too well.¹⁹¹ You had better slow down on Red Cross work, etc., or I’ll have to trade you in on a new model when I get home.

In case some of my letters didn’t get through, both pictures arrived although I didn’t like the one you had taken in New York. Janie’s pictures came also. The package you gave Major Ghall arrived too, but the one Larry was to send isn’t here yet.

189. “Lakewood Girls Make Gifts for G.I. Christmas Abroad,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1945.

190. Beckemeier, “April 2, 1945,” LeMay Daily Diary.

191. Cobbledick, “Tokyo Is on Road to Patricia Jane.”

Jack is coming over for dinner tonight. We will probably have c-rations, but I'll give him enough beer and cheese and crackers to fill him up.

Have you decided what you want to do when I come home on leave? Don't make it too strenuous a schedule.

Lee should be home by this time if he left in February. Let me know when he arrives.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 5, 1945¹⁹²

Dear Helen,

It is still hot and raining cats and dogs. Without the wind, it doesn't seem to cool off much.

I'll try and get some additional information on that flight engineer, but it probably won't be much.¹⁹³

My headache is completely gone now, but I still have a pain in my left shoulder. I had an x-ray taken of it today and there is some calcium in the joint. So my teeth are being x-rayed again to see if they can find some infection. Had an x-ray treatment on the shoulder with three more to come.

I have some fishing tackle together and I'm going to see what I can do tomorrow if nothing happens to interfere.

The box of cigars and the color plate of the medal came today, so that leaves everything but the food I guess and I can get along without that. I can now buy stuff at the naval commissary [which] helps a lot.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 7, 1945¹⁹⁴

Dear Helen,

I hope the Easter bunny got in and out again without being chewed up too much by Angus and Happy.

192. Beckemeier, "April 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

193. The editors were unable to identify this flight engineer.

194. Beckemeier, "April 7, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Four letters today; the last one written April 1, so I guess the mail has caught up again. Also in the mail was a letter from Marion Thompson, the gal who painted my portrait while I was in school. She is now teaching the portrait class at Ohio State while her husband is away. He is with Patton in Germany.

I spent the day fishing yesterday. Davies arranged it and I flew up. We had a Navy picket boat complete with beer, fishing table, and U.S.O. girls. They kind of interfered with the fishing, especially after they put on their bathing suits. Maybe that accounts for the small catch—namely none.¹⁹⁵

I'm glad you have decided to overlook my temperament. I would hate to have you try to make me over at this late date.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 8, 1945¹⁹⁶

Dear Helen,

It looks as though our heat wave is broken; it is much cooler today.

The supply ship we were expecting came in, so we have fresh meat again, so we are happy for a change.

Just had a letter from Dinger saying the War Department notified them Lee is on the way home. He should be there by this time.

I wish June were here, so I could get that 10-day leave. I could use 15 or 20 minutes at home anytime now.

Have you made up your mind what you would like to do in the daytime yet? Janie's school should be out by that time, so we won't have that to bother with.

I think I have told you about all the packages. Now everything seems to be here, but the package of food you sent.

I think the x-ray treatment is helping the shoulder. The pictures of the teeth didn't show anything, but they are suspicious of that front tooth.

195. LeMay took a rare break on this day. Following the incendiary campaign, available munitions were exhausted and the XXIst had begun mining operations and high-altitude raids against Japanese airfields in support of the assault on Okinawa.

196. Beckemeier, "April 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I hope you have let up on the Red Cross work. Tell Lucille I said hello when she arrives.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 9, 1945¹⁹⁷

Dear Helen,

I just came back from the hospital; one more x-ray treatment to go. I think it is doing some good, so will complete the series. My face is peeling today from the sunburn I got on the fishing trip.

I am expecting Rosenblatt over on a visit before long.¹⁹⁸ I imagine he is on the way by this time.

I spent an hour yesterday overhauling my foot locker. It smells like a mushroom cellar. You remember how everything molded in Hawaii? It is worse here. I imagine I will wind up by throwing everything away when I leave here if it lasts that long.

I just got a new orderly yesterday who is a lot better than the old one and keeps the house a lot better. It is either dusty or muddy, so either way it is a battle to keep the house clean.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 11, 1945¹⁹⁹

Dear Helen,

I'm glad Lee is finally getting home, but I suppose not half as happy as he is about the subject.

The boned chicken, candy, and nuts came yesterday, so I think I now have everything you have sent.

I received an Easter card from the Scherr's. Will you thank them for me?

197. Beckemeier, "April 9, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

198. Colonel Sol Rosenblatt was still the principal supply officer for Twentieth Air Force at this time. See Hansell, *The Strategic Air War*, 161–163.

199. Beckemeier, "April 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I'm afraid your birthday went by and I didn't realize it, and if I had, I couldn't have done anything about it. Happy Birthday, Darling.²⁰⁰

I'm glad Janie's cold is over and she is out again.

Iwo Jima is certainly a desolate looking place.²⁰¹ Saw Moose Mussett and he is getting along fine.²⁰²

Again, I have to go to work.

Love,

Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 13, 1945²⁰³

Dear Helen,

I was going to have Jack over for dinner tonight, but I am going to be away, so we will have to put it off.

We just heard over the radio about President Roosevelt's death.²⁰⁴ That will probably throw confusion in the ranks for a while.

I talked to Alexander last night. He also looked for Lee, but before he could get into [illegible], Lee had been shipped out, so all my plans failed to work. I didn't have much confidence in them anyway. Too many ifs. I'll get a letter off to Lee now that he is home.

Must get to work.

Love,

Curt

200. Helen turned thirty-seven on April 4.

201. LeMay and General Hale were entertaining Lieutenant General Ira Eaker, who was appointed deputy commander of the army air forces by General Arnold (officially) on April 30, 1945. At this time he was touring the major commands of the Pacific before assuming duties in Washington. After arriving at Guam on April 9, the trio toured Iwo Jima, Saipan, and Tinian the next day. See Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 1, 506; and Beckemeier, "April 9-10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

202. Colonel Eugene "Moose" P. Mussett previously served as CO of the 90th Bomb Group until September 11, 1942, when he was assigned to the staff of the VII Bomber Command, where he remained in various staff positions for the rest of the war. At this time, he was the deputy commander of the VIIth under Brigadier General Ernest Moore. See Fogerty, *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers*, vol. 2, 148; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 445.

203. Beckemeier, "April 13, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

204. President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, as the result of a stroke.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 14, 1945²⁰⁵

Dear Helen,

I went up and spent the night with Rosy last night. We had pork chops and chicken with canned pineapple for dessert.

The candy, nuts, and chicken have arrived. I haven't seen Jack to give it to him yet, but will shortly.

I don't know Mr. Vorpe's address, so am enclosing a Thank You note in this letter you can forward to him.²⁰⁶

Lloyd's daughter, Phyllis, graduates from high school in June.²⁰⁷ Will you send her a graduation present (address: 391 E. Whittier, Colorado).

I was just thinking about that leave I'm supposed to get in June. It certainly seems that I have been gone longer than eight months. It's been long enough anyway.

I saw a good one in the paper the other day: "Having wonderful time; wish you were here."

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 15, 1945²⁰⁸

Dear Helen,

I'm glad you did well in your examination, but I wish you would slow down on your Red Cross work.²⁰⁹ It sounds to me like you are trying to do too much.

I have finished the course of x-ray treatments on the shoulder and I think it has helped a lot. I imagine it would be a good idea to have that front tooth taken out when I get home.

Regarding the clipping you sent: you can wear your wings or halo until

205. Beckemeier, "April 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

206. The editors were unable to identify Mr. Vorpe.

207. Lloyd LeMay, General LeMay's brother, who was stationed in the CBI.

208. Beckemeier, "April 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

209. Likely something related to her work at Crile Hospital, but the editors did not discover what LeMay is referring to here.

I get home, but they should definitely be discarded as soon as I get in the house.

I have been two days trying to get a letter off to Lee. I hope I can complete it tomorrow. I'm lucky if I can get a letter off to you.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 17, 1945²¹⁰

Dear Helen,

Not much news today. I had Jack over for dinner last night and afterwards we had a movie on the porch.

Lee's letter came today and since I had mailed one to him yesterday, I'll wait until he answers it before writing again. I gave him the dope on getting in the Army, but I think he should wait until I get home on leave before doing anything. Will you call Dinger and tell her to talk Lee into waiting?

My front tooth feels funny again and in spite of the x-rays, it must be causing all the trouble. I suppose I'll have to have Dr. Travis take it out when I get home.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 18, 1945²¹¹

Dear Helen,

You must be a case of operational fatigue. You dated two letters the 18th and 19th, but the postmark says the 13th.

I'm sorry Betty is having trouble with Smitty. I doubt if Betty is very understanding. Lots of things happen in war time that aren't normal and although I don't agree that using the war as an excuse for expensive hi-jinks [is acceptable], it certainly isn't a normal existence. Maybe if Betty were a little more understanding, Smitty would straighten up a little.

210. Beckemeier, "April 17, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

211. Beckemeier, "April 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I hope Janie likes her swimming lessons. Maybe she will like sailing. We are going to try and get some exercise again tonight, but it is too hot to be very active.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 21, 1945²¹²

Dear Helen,

I don't know whether I told you or not, I went down to Admiral Nimitz's for dinner the other night. General Richardson was also there.²¹³ I wish I had Nimitz' cook; he has a couple Phillipino [*sic*] mess attendants that are good.

I haven't seen Jack for a few days, but I finally gave him the candy and nuts you sent. He is about due to come home. I asked him if he would like to stay another month, but he didn't seem much interested. I wish I were coming home too. Just fighting the war is not so bad, but there are enough other headaches to drive you nuts.

We are going to be good and exercise again tonight although you don't feel much like it in this heat. You always feel better afterwards.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 22, 1945²¹⁴

Dear Helen,

I'm glad Lee is in good condition. If I were him, I would stay home and find a job for after the war. He is too old to get in anyway; we are relieving people over 40 quite regularly now and sending them home, and as soon as things fold up in Europe there will be a lot more discharged. His chances of getting in are very slim, so he might as well forget about it and go to work while jobs are available.

212. Beckemeier, "April 21, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

213. Likely Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson, commanding general of army forces in the central Pacific. Taylor, "Preparation for Combat," 507.

214. Beckemeier, "April 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I haven't heard anything more about my leave. I probably won't know until the last minute. I'll let you know as soon as I find out anything definite.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 27, 1945²¹⁵

Dear Helen,

I finally am in the yachting class again. I have a 65 ft. cruiser. I haven't seen it yet as it just arrived. It is supposed to be a reserve boat, but the Navy takes care of that for us, so I am going to use it for fishing. I can at least get a few people a few hours relaxation. There is absolutely nothing here except work and more work.

I talked to Larry on the phone last night. We had good luck hearing each other in spite of the distance.

It is still boiling hot; everyone is afraid to look at the thermometer, but without the trade wind it seems to me to be as hot as India.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 29, 1945²¹⁶

Dear Helen,

No mail for the last three days. I suppose they will all come in at once today or tomorrow. Wilson, your cousin, was on the island yesterday and I talked with him for about five minutes.²¹⁷ I asked him out for dinner, but he was too busy to come, but may have more time the next time he is through here.

Periodically all the generals and admirals on the island gather together

215. Beckemeier, "April 27, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

216. Beckemeier, "April 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

217. Wilson was not mentioned in LeMay's war diary and could not be identified through other records.

and present purple hearts to the wounded.²¹⁸ I don't relish the job much, but it is the least we can do for them.

In case you didn't get the other letter, will you send a graduation present to Lloyd's daughter? (Phyllis LeMay, 391 Whittier St., Colo.) She graduates from high school in June.

I suppose you and Lucille are tearing up the town.²¹⁹ Has she heard anything from Russ yet or has Rabo, the pilot on Russ' ship, been released yet?²²⁰

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, APRIL 30, 1945²²¹

Dear Helen,

Still hot. I have about given up hope that the trade winds will blow again.

Rosenblatt has invited us to use his place on Long Island during my leave, but I don't think too much of the idea; it requires too much traveling and timing to work out properly.

I haven't been down to see the new boat yet. As soon as the crew gets it cleaned up, I think I will try another fishing trip. It will probably be a long time before I have my private yacht again, especially since I had such a sea going family, so I might as well take advantage of this opportunity.

Love,
Curt

Daylight raids in support of Operation Iceberg, and the ongoing incendiary campaign, when bombs were available, dominated much of the XXIst's activ-

218. On this day, LeMay joined a group of flag and general officers at the 103rd and 111th Fleet Hospitals on Guam to dispense Purple Hearts. Beckemeier, "April 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

219. Lucille Wilson, wife of General Russell Wilson, who was killed in a raid against Berlin on March 6, 1944, when his B-17, *Chopstick*, was critically damaged by flak and later crashed. He was considered MIA at this time. See A. W. Kissner, Brigadier General, Chief of Staff, "APO 559," Headquarters, 3rd Bombardment Division, March 15, 1944, CELMPR; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 114–115; and Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 195.

220. Major Fred A. Rabo, one of three survivors from the *Chopstick*, all of whom were POWs until the end of the war. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 114.

221. Beckemeier, "April 30, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

ities during the months of April and May. In addition, on March 27 LeMay initiated an aerial mining campaign to support the U.S. Navy's blockade of Japanese shipping in the home islands. In this action, codenamed Operation Starvation, LeMay assigned the 313th Wing to mine major Japanese harbors and waterways as part of their joint bomb and blockade strategy with the navy, purposed to force surrender without the need for an invasion.²²² B-29 efforts centered on the "inner zone," namely the waterways and harbors surrounding Japan's main cities and islands including the critical Shimonoseki Straits separating Honshu and Kyushu. LeMay instituted tactics for these missions similar to those of the incendiary campaign. Superfortresses flew at altitudes from five thousand to seven thousand feet at night and dropped mines individually by radar.²²³ The campaign was highly successful, and Japanese imports and naval action ground nearly to a halt. In the first phase alone (March 28–May 3), mines sank or damaged thirty-five vessels at a loss of nearly one hundred thousand tons of shipping.²²⁴ General David A. Burchinal, who served as operations officer for the 313th before becoming deputy operations officer for the XX1st, recalled: "The aerial mining campaign that we ran out of the Marianas with the 313th Wing . . . was one of the most successful that has ever been done anywhere. In fact, we were starving Japan by late summer 1945, because all her ports were blocked with mines. They couldn't sweep them, they couldn't clear them, and it was a heck of a complementary effort as far as the forces were concerned."²²⁵ By July, at least one Japanese government official conceded that his nation's resource situation was "hopeless." After the end of the war, the Strategic Bomb Survey's report confirmed the efficacy of the mining campaign, reporting that of the total of 8.9 million tons of Japanese shipping destroyed, 9.3 percent of it was due to B-29 efforts.²²⁶

222. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 173; and James Lea Cate and James C. Olson, "The All-Out B-29 Attack," in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 646.

223. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 175.

224. Ibid.

225. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 72.

226. Cate and Olson, "The All-Out B-29 Attack," 673.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MAY 2, 1945²²⁷

Dear Helen,

Three letters today after a lull in the mail.

Why all the excitement about not coming home the last week in June? I will be very lucky to get home at all and it will be a miracle if I can pick the date.

We are expecting Barney Giles over in a few days to take over Harmon's job.²²⁸ We also expect Larry out for a visit soon.

I hope you and Lucille have a good time during her visit, but don't overdo it. I don't want you to look like a wreck if I do get home next month.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MAY 3, 1945²²⁹

Dear Helen,

I am sending Janie one of the cards I had our Topographic Company print up. Every kid in the country is either collecting shoulder patches, pictures, or autographs, so I send them one of these cards that takes care of everything.

Have you heard anything from Sybil and Cowboy lately? I suppose they are still at Montgomery.²³⁰

It is still hot here and it looks as though it will stay that way from now on. I could use a few days of cool spring weather.

227. Beckemeier, "May 2, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

228. Lieutenant General Barney Giles, who succeeded General Harmon as deputy of the Twentieth Air Force and commander of the Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, after General Harmon and his crew were declared MIA following their aircraft's disappearance near Kwajalein on February 25. Giles had previously served as Arnold's chief of staff. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 394.

229. Beckemeier, "May 3, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

230. Colonel Raymond "Cowboy" Winn and his wife, Sybil. Sybil was a close friend of Helen's and was living in Montgomery, Alabama, near Gunter Field, a training depot assigned to the AAF Eastern Flying Training Command, where her husband was stationed as its CO. See U.S. Air Force, "Brigadier General Raymond L. Winn," *Biographies*.

Thayer has been in and out for the last few days, but I haven't seen Moose for three weeks.²³¹

Just had a letter from Dinger. Jim now has 25 missions, but it looks as though the war will be over before he can finish his tour.

I just received some more movies from the developer that I took in India, etc. Will look at them tonight. I hope I can get them cut and titled before I come home.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MAY 5, 1945²³²

Dear Helen,

Rosenblatt left today with his party, so our roster of visitors is practically empty.

I had some more pictures taken yesterday. I don't think they are very good, but I'll send some of them to you anyway. Some of them are in Kodocrome [*sic*].

The movies didn't turn out any too well. Some of the film was old, I guess.

I'm going down this afternoon and take a look at my "yacht." I hope I can find time to do some fishing in it.

Sid Nelson is back again on his regular run; probably will leave tomorrow.

The candy and nuts came; also the package for Moose. He is leaving for home tomorrow.

Love,
Curt

231. Brigadier General Thayer S. Olds, CO of the 301st Fighter Wing, which was based at Iwo Jima and assigned to escort duty for LeMay's B-29s. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 415-416.

232. Beckemeier, "May 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, DEPOT FIELD,
GUAM, MAY 6, 1945²³³

Dear Helen,

For some reason or other today seems like Sunday; usually one day is just like all the rest. I certainly would enjoy a good old-fashioned Sunday (a la _____) and funny papers, etc.

Last night was cool for a change, but it just as hot today. I would have to stay up half the night on the good sleeping night we have had for weeks.

I'm glad Lucille is enjoying herself. Robo should be out of Germany soon, so we should be able to get a story on Russ.

Twitchell left for Washington today. He is going to send to Lee the information on a commission in the Medical Corps as a pharmacist. I don't know whether he will be interested or not, but he can be thinking about it.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 9, 1945²³⁴

Dear Helen,

Barney came in yesterday, so we spent this morning making him acquainted with the place. He and I are going on a trip in the morning, so you probably won't get any mail for two or three days.²³⁵

Jack is still at Saipan, so I haven't been able to give him the nuts and candy you sent. Jack may have some time in Honolulu on the way home.

233. Beckemeier, "May 6, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

234. On May 8, Depot Field, XXI Bomber Headquarters, was renamed Harmon Field in honor of Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, whose aircraft had gone missing near Kwajelein in the Marshall Islands on February 26 during a flight destined for Washington to discuss his command responsibilities with Arnold and his staff. See Beckemeier, "May 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary; and Taylor, "Preparation for Combat," 531.

235. On May 10, LeMay and General Giles traveled to Manila to attend a conference with General MacArthur and other senior army and navy general and flag officers. On May 11, Nimitz officially released the XXI Bomber Command from his direct command in support of the Okinawa invasion. See Beckemeier, "May 10, 1945"; and Cate and Olsen, "Urban Area Attacks," 635.

The ship stops there, and if there is a rush of passengers, you have to take your turn.

I wonder if you had a big celebration at home for V-E day; it was just another work day here and somewhat of an anti-climax anyway as we could see it coming for some time.²³⁶

I wonder how long it will be before we can really celebrate?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 13, 1945²³⁷

Dear Helen,

I spent the last two days in Manila; we stayed with Kenney.²³⁸ Most of the city that amounts to anything is flat as a pancake. It would be easier to move someplace else and start a new city than try to build up the ruins.

I saw Freddie Smith and Jimmy Crabbe and Whitehead at Clark Field.²³⁹ Also saw Joe Dawson, my old instructor at Mitchell Field. Whitehead is a Major-General, Crabbe and Smith are Brigadier Generals and Dawson is a Colonel. I didn't see anyone else I knew.

Drove past St. Tomas camp and saw where Lee spent the last three years.

I'm still not too optimistic about getting home on leave. I hope it works out alright, but there are plenty of loopholes.

I took a few movies in Manila; hope they turn out well.

236. V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day) took place on May 8 following the declaration of unconditional surrender of the German government to the Allies.

237. Beckemeier, "May 13, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

238. Lieutenant General George C. Kenney was CO of the Far East Air Forces as well as the Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific, which included the Fifth, Seventh, and Thirteenth Air Forces as well as British, Australian, and other Allied air forces in the southwestern Pacific area. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 410.

239. All three officers served in the Fifth Air Force based at Clark Field on Luzon and served with LeMay at various early stages of their careers. At the time of their meeting, Brigadier General Frederic Harrison Smith Jr. was CO of the V Fighter Command, Brigadier General Jared V. Crabbe was the CO of the V Bomber Command, and Major General Ennis C. Whitehead was CO of the Fifth Air Force. Colonel Joseph Dawson was a World War I fighter ace who was LeMay's instructor for basic flight training at March Field, California, from the early winter of 1928 to the late spring of 1929. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 442-444, 460-461; and chapter 2.

I suppose Lucille has gone home by this time? I hope you both enjoyed the visit, but I suggest you take some time out to rest up now.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 14, 1945²⁴⁰

Dear Helen,

Yesterday was Mother's Day and I didn't realize it until after I sent yesterday's letter, so consider that you have received some flowers or candy and lots of love.

Show the enclosed to Dad; he will get a laugh out of it. We did.

If Jack's group has been set up to come over here, he will probably come with it; however, if anything slips up and he doesn't come, I will ask for him.

Smitty's brother was through here the other day and spent a few minutes before going on west.

I don't remember whether I told you or not, I gave Moose the package you sent over for him. He has finished his work here and has returned to Washington.

Don't work too hard at Red Cross.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 16, 1945²⁴¹

Dear Helen,

Just returned from Tinian. Spent the afternoon with Jim Davies. I'll get this off before going to supper.

I just had a letter from Leonard written March 25th. He is in Germany. Apparently, he is seeing something of the war (North Africa, Italy, France, Belgium and Germany).

I have a new movie camera and another supply of movie film, so I'll try

240. Beckemeier, "May 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

241. Beckemeier, "May 16, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

and get some more movies taken here. I also have some color snapshots taken here by a new process that is really good.

It still continues to be hot out here. If I do get leave, I hope it isn't in the middle of a heat wave.

I haven't seen the prints of the last pictures I had taken, but they should be ready soon.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 18, 1945²⁴²

Dear Helen,

The buffet supper wasn't much. It turns out Moss Hart also wrote "*The Man Who Came to Dinner*" and he is doing the play over here.²⁴³ The cast came along.

I haven't had a chance to go out on the boat yet, but I am going to try and take a day off before long and see what I can catch. Either there aren't many fish around here, or the few people who go out don't know how to catch them because there aren't many caught.

I just looked at some more movies I took in India and they aren't too bad.

I imagine Lee has heard from Twitchell by this time on getting in the Army. If I were in his place, I would forget it and get a job in the U.S.A. while they are available.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 20, 1945²⁴⁴

Dear Helen,

Kissner and Montgomery are out service testing the boat today. It is off

242. Beckemeier, "May 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

243. Moss Hart was an American Broadway playwright and director who was touring the Pacific with his company for the USO and performing his 1939 comedy hit *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. Hart and his troupe performed the show for LeMay and his command on May 17. See Beckemeier, "May 17, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

244. Beckemeier, "May 20, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

the dry dock and already [*sic*] to go. I hope they catch something. General Doolittle and Pat Partridge stopped through on their way home and I received a lot of news about the old outfit.²⁴⁵

Zempke is out of Germany OK as is Del Spivey, Jenkins and a flock of others.²⁴⁶ Apparently, Lawson, Forrest and Russ were killed although it isn't official yet.²⁴⁷ I would still like to talk to the pilot of Russ' ship.

Still no definite word on the leave. I probably won't know anything definite until Larry comes out here again. The next time you talk to him, you might mention it so you will have the news, if any, as soon as I do.

I see by the newspapers that filter out here from time to time that you will be able to get some more gasoline soon.

How are the tires holding out and what is the possibility of getting new ones?

Love,
Curt

245. Lieutenant General Jimmy Doolittle, CO of the Eighth Air Force, temporarily relieved of command to confer with Arnold in Washington and help establish the groundwork for the Eighth's move to Okinawa, where it would be based. Major General Earle Partridge, who had previously commanded the 3rd Bomb Division, was his deputy. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 463–464; and Frank Futrell and James Taylor, "Reorganization for Victory," in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 701.

246. On October 30, 1944, Colonel Hubert Zemke, then-CO of the 479th Fighter Group, was captured by German forces after he was forced to bail out of his damaged P-51 Mustang. He was interred at the famous Stalag Luft I POW camp, where he led the Allied prisoners until it was liberated by Soviet troops in May 1945. He was not officially back in U.S. hands until July. Then-Colonel Delmar T. Spivey was captured by German troops after the B-17 he was on as an observer was shot down by flak on October 12, 1943. He, too, spent the war in a POW camp and was liberated on May 22, 1945. Finally, Colonel Jack S. Jenkins was CO of the 55th Fighter Group until his plane was shot down and he was captured by German forces on April 10, 1944. He was freed on May 24, 1945. See "Hubert Zemke," Records of World War II Prisoners of War, 1942–1947, RG 289, NACP; "Delmar T. Spivey," Records of World War II Prisoners of War, 1942–1947, RG 289, NACP; "Jack S. Jenkins," Records of World War II Prisoners of War, 1942–1947, RG 289, NACP; Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 180; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 118.

247. Colonel Ernest H. Lawson was CO of the 305th Bomb Wing from November 1943 until June 18, 1944, when he was killed in action. Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest was CO of the 4th Bomb Wing, and he was killed during a mission over Kiel, Germany, on June 14, 1943. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 247; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 391.

HEADQUARTERS XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, MAY 22, 1945²⁴⁸

Dear Helen,

I am having a new office built on the end of the building, so this isn't the quietest place in the world. We will have a little more room when it is finished.

Your cold weather sounds good to me. You are dripping continuously out here. I would like to be dry and chilly for a change.

Since Doolittle and Partridge left England, Keptner has the 8th A.F., Shippy Harbold the third Division and Peck has the 2nd Division.²⁴⁹ Butch went with Keptner to the 8th A.F.²⁵⁰ Also, Pinky Stranton just arrived.²⁵¹ He is Chief of Staff for Frank Armstrong who is due over here soon.

We had Augie's fish for dinner last night and it was very good. We haven't had anything but the canned variety for quite a while.

I imagine Lucille has Rabo's address and will write to him and get the story on Russ.

Love,
Curt

248. Beckemeier, "May 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

249. Major General William Kepner was previously CO of the 2nd Bomb Division, to which he was reassigned when Generals Doolittle and Partridge rejoined the Eighth. Brigadier General Norris Brown Harbold was previously chief of staff of the 3rd Bomb Division before assuming command of the unit, and Brigadier General Walter R. Peck served as CO of the 96th Bomb Wing before gaining command of the 2nd Bomb Division. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 399, 410, 432–433.

250. Brigadier General Francis Griswold was previously the CO of the Eighth Fighter Command and was temporarily Kepner's chief of staff while he had command of the Eighth. See Robert Fogerty, "Francis Griswold," in *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers, 1917–1952*, vol. 1, A–K (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, 1953).

251. Colonel Leland Samuel Stranathan, Brigadier General Frank A. Armstrong Jr.'s chief of staff. General Armstrong was CO of the 315th Bomb Wing, the final wing to join the XXI Bomber Command after the 58th Bomb Wing had transferred to Tinian from India on March 29. See Robert Fogerty, "Leland Samuel Stranathan," in *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers, 1917–1952*, vol. 2, L–Z (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, 1953); and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 399–400, 422–424.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 23, 1945²⁵²

Dear Helen,

I'm afraid you are expecting too much if you expect us all to come home just because the war is over in Germany. A lot of those people will come out here to fight and more will stay in the army of occupation. And, in addition, a lot of them have been overseas a long time and deserve a visit home too. I'm afraid we will have to lick the Japs before any great number of people get home and then we have a lot of places to garrison and someone has to stay there.

Larry Kuter is due out soon, so I guess I'll have to have another dinner party and have a few of the visiting dignitaries over.²⁵³

Don't look forward to that leave too much. I have a suspension [*sic*] that the chances aren't as good as they used to be.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 25, 1945²⁵⁴

Dear Helen,

We have been swamped with visitors again. General Stilwell was through.²⁵⁵ Larry Kuter has arrived plus Jamison, Parker, McNaughton and several others.²⁵⁶ Mr. Patterson, of the Baltimore Sun, is also here on a visit.

I'm becoming more and more skeptical about the leave. So many

252. Beckemeier, "May 23, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

253. Major General Laurence Kuter, who transferred to the Guam to serve as General Giles's deputy. Beckemeier, "May 24, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

254. Beckemeier, "May 20, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

255. General Stilwell took command of the Tenth Army on Okinawa on June 23 and was touring Pacific commands at this time.

256. Brigadier General Glen C. Jamison, who was part of the air staff in the office of the assistant chief. LeMay is probably referencing Major General James E. Parker, who had recently relinquished control of the Fourth Air Force on May 19 and was slated to receive command of the Twentieth Air Force on October 15. Brigadier General Kenneth Perry McNaughton was Giles's deputy chief of staff for administration. See Ansell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 407; Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 460, 471; and Beckemeier, "May 24, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

things are happening that it doesn't look to me like it will pan out. I hope I'm wrong.

I visited Ramey yesterday. He has most of the people who were with me in India and China. They are certainly glad to be over here. The living conditions, food, etc. are so much better.

Fred Anderson is back in Washington. He is going to be A-1 (Personnel) for the Army Air Force.²⁵⁷

I am having all the visiting firemen over for dinner tonight. I hope Bechemer can find something besides c-rations to eat.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 26, 1945²⁵⁸

Dear Helen,

Yes, Bill Mathenney is a B.G. and I'll bet Smitty is burned up about the move.²⁵⁹ As I remember, he and Bill didn't get along very well.

The dinner went off OK last night and we had filet mignon and good ones.²⁶⁰ I guess they are rare everyplace now as the guests—most of them fresh from Washington—said they were the first they had seen for some time.

We took quite a beating over Tokyo last night, but I think we did a good job, so it was worth it.

I still haven't had time to go fishing in the new boat, but hope to get out soon.

Don't work too hard on your Red Cross activities.

Love,
Curt

257. Major General Frederick L. Anderson became the assistant chief of staff for personnel at AAF headquarters in June. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 361.

258. Beckemeier, "May 26, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

259. Brigadier General William Albert Matheny, deputy commanding general of Air Training Command from March to August 1945. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 420.

260. Generals Giles, Hale, and Kuter were present at the dinner. See Beckemeier, "May 25, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 28, 1945²⁶¹

Dear Helen,

Frank Armstrong is finally out here. Arrived this morning. He will be close by. Si Bartlett is with him also.

The tooth doesn't bother me, but I still have a sore shoulder in spite of the x-ray treatment. I can't imagine what could cause the trouble if it isn't the tooth.

I hear there is a new shipment of furniture in, so I may be able to get something else for the house. I could use a washing machine, some lamps and a few other odds and ends.

We lead a monotonous existence out here and every little thing helps. We have a movie projector, ping pong table and poker chips, radio, etc., but still something is missing. It might possibly be that we could use a woman or so around the place. Too bad they aren't issued like they are in other armies.

Well, I'll put this in the mail and see what we have for supper tonight.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, MAY 29, 1945²⁶²

Dear Helen,

This has been a busy day starting out by showing Admiral Nimitz pictures of our last two jobs on Tokyo. We now have 52 square miles of the city burned down. Then [illegible] stopped in on his way to the Philippines; Si Bartlett came in weather meeting; one of General Arnold's people and so on.²⁶³ As soon as I finish this, I'm going home and collapse.

I have a press conference tonight at 8:00 to give the newspapers the dope on the last two missions and then I can go to bed.

261. Beckemeier, "May 28, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

262. Beckemeier, "May 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

263. "Illegible" was likely Major General Paul Bernard Wurtsmith, commanding general of the Thirteenth Air Force, part of the Far East Air Force and based in Leyte, Philippines. He and General Kuter visited LeMay's headquarters on this day. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 468–469.

You still sound to me like you are doing too much Red Cross work. I would take it easy for a while and rest up.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 2, 1945²⁶⁴

Dear Helen,

This letter should reach you on our wedding anniversary. You probably would overlook it entirely if I didn't remind you. I was hoping I could be home for it, but I guess not this year.

I think the carpenters will be finished with my new office by tomorrow. I hope so—all the pounding interferes with work.

The Navy has a skeet field near here and Barney and I are going to do some shooting tomorrow. It has been so long since I have done any that I probably won't be able to hit the side of a barn.

It seems longer than nine months that I have been away, but it can't be too much longer. I don't see how the Japs can stand up under the beating we are giving them. I hope I don't get stuck in an overseas command after the war is over.

Let me know when you get the check I mailed yesterday.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 3, 1945²⁶⁵

Dear Helen,

I broke 48 out of 50 this morning at skeet, which isn't bad for anyone out of practice. I hope my guns in storage are in a dry place so they don't rust.

I went down to the radio station last night for another radio broadcast.

264. Beckemeier, "June 2, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

265. Beckemeier, "June 3, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

They cut the program on a record and then put it on the air at the proper time which keeps us from getting up in the middle of the night to put on a day program at home.

I think I have all the movies I have taken back from the developer. As soon as I get time, I'll make some titles for them and get them in sequence for showing.

Today has been another hot day. I hope it will be cooler when I move into the new office. It has a higher ceiling and more windows.

I suppose Janie's school will be out soon and you will have her on your hands all day. You had better give up some of the Red Cross work to take care of her.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 5, 1945²⁶⁶

Dear Helen,

What did Larry have to say in his letter? I haven't heard anything about coming home in July, especially for good. As much as I would like to be home, I don't want to come until the war is over. I have the best job in the Air Force now and I want to keep it if I can.

I think I have convinced the Japs in the last two months that they are beaten and that I will destroy everything in Japan. You can see by the newspapers that already they are trying to get out, so it shouldn't be too long before I get home for good. It can't happen too soon for me, although it will probably be hard for me to get used to being settled down again and I can be hard to get along with.

Don't forget to send Larry's letter out or tell me what was in it if you haven't thrown it away.

Love,
Curt

266. Beckemeier, "June 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 6, 1945²⁶⁷

Dear Helen,

General Jones, the A.A.F. inspector is out here.²⁶⁸ Since this is the only war we have now, it seems as though everyone is coming out here to have a look at it.

Barney is having another dinner tonight for some newspaper men. I would rather have a poker game, but will have to go anyway.

General Yount's son went into the drink the other day, but we were able to fish him out alright.²⁶⁹

I imagine Twitchell is running into a little difficulty trying to find a way to get Lee in the Army. I doubt very much if he succeeds. I look for him back here before too long and if he hasn't written Lee, I will do it myself.

I guess I had better go over and dress for dinner.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 8, 1945²⁷⁰

Dear Helen,

I guess I must be getting fairly well known back home. I just received a letter with my name on it and no address. That is a bad situation as I might want to take my secretary to Atlantic City for the weekend or something.

I spent the day visiting Rosie and Jim Davies. It is a lot cooler up there. Rosie was entertaining Mr. and Mrs. Luce.²⁷¹ We are surely getting a flood

267. Beckemeier, "June 6, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

268. Major General Junius Wallace Jones. He served as AAF HQ inspector from 1943 to 1948. Beckemeier, "June 6, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary; and Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 408–409.

269. Lieutenant General Barton K. Yount, commanding general of the Army Air Force Training Command. His son, Lieutenant Barton K. Yount Jr., was a pilot with the 498th Bomb Group, 73rd Bomb Wing. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 460–461; and Robert F. Dorr, *B-29 Superfortress Units of World War 2* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 90.

270. Beckemeier, "June 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

271. Magazine mogul and editor Henry Robinson Luce, who embarked on a five-week tour

of visitors. I don't know what people will do when this war folds up on them and they don't have anyone to visit.

You sound to me like you are making a full time job of Red Cross work. Better slow down to a couple of days a week.

Supper time, so will mail this.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 9, 1945²⁷²

Dear Helen,

I haven't taken anymore color slides, but I will try to get some color film and take a few. This is a restricted area, so they cannot be shown until after the war. The new movie camera is a 16 mm. I have taken a few pictures with it.

The snapshots came today and I thought they were very good, except Janie was trying to pose too much.

I haven't made up my mind what to do for our anniversary celebration. Eat canned stew and go to bed I guess as usual.

I am beginning to feel very optimistic about the war out here. I definitely have them squalling for mercy, but it is a tossup whether they will give up or keep on to the last ditch like Germany. In either case, it can't be too long.

Love,
Curt

of the Pacific at the end of May. He was best known for his *Time* and *Life* magazine series, and he was active in the Pacific and China during the war as he had been born to Christian missionaries in China on April 3, 1898. He was married to Clare Booth Luce, who at the time was serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. According to Beckemeier, LeMay and General Giles entertained Mr. Luce on June 10 at their headquarters. See "Japs Given 18 Months," *Stars and Stripes, Nice-Marseille Edition*, June 23, 1945, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NACP; and Beckemeier, "June 10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

272. Beckemeier, "June 9, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 10, 1945²⁷³

Dear Helen,

I managed to get away from the office for an hour this morning and shot 95 out of 100 skeet, which is back to my former scores.

Ramey, Powers and I are going fishing at daylight in the morning. Moose seems to be able to catch anything in the afternoons, so we are going to start at daylight and see what we can do.²⁷⁴

The paint in my new office should be dry, so I can move in tomorrow. It will be a lot cooler. These steel Quonset huts are just like ovens. They even look like one.

I guess I had better mail this and see if Bechemer has the fishing trip arranged. We will have breakfast on board as the boat has a galley bunk, radio compartment and a crew of seven who can live on it all the time. Hope we catch something tomorrow.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JUNE 14, 1945²⁷⁵

Dear Helen,

I haven't written for a day or so. I'm not sure when the last letter went off. The boss is here at the present time, so we have been quite busy.²⁷⁶ The old man seems to stir up a mild cyclone wherever he goes. However, he does seem to be very happy about everything.

Jack is back from his trip and will be coming home in a couple of weeks. He apparently wants to get out of the Army as soon as possible. He says he has 60 points and thinks he can get out with 62. Just for fun, I

273. Beckemeier, "June 10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

274. They caught no fish. See Beckemeier, "June 10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

275. Beckemeier, "June 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

276. General Arnold made a tour of the Pacific area following his recovery from his fourth heart attack and visited Hawaii, Guam, Iwo Jima, and the Philippines from June 6 to 24, primarily to secure further cooperation from the navy to support the final strategic bombing efforts against Japan. He arrived in the Marianas on Saipan on June 12, where he was met by LeMay and a who's who of general and flag officers stationed in the area. See Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 307.

added up my points the other day and I have 200, but I don't think it will be enough to get me home.

Bechemeir's older brother is visiting him for a day or so.²⁷⁷ He is a Sgt. in the Air Transport Command stationed at Kwajelin [sic].

I had better get this in the mail or you will think I am neglecting you.

Love,

Curt

Prior to this trip, it had been almost three years (September 1942) since Arnold had visited the Pacific Theater.²⁷⁸ Convalesced after his most recent heart attack, Arnold followed Germany's surrender in April by putting his full efforts into managing the air war in the Pacific. After initiating the reorganization of strategic commands, he decided to visit Hawaii, the Marianas, and the Philippines in early June, departing Washington, D.C., on the eighth, to explore concerns expressed by LeMay and other air force commanders concerning logistical issues with the army and navy "to ensure that the potential success of the B-29 was not in any way limited."²⁷⁹ During General Arnold's visit, the army's chief of staff, Lieutenant General George C. Marshall, wired Arnold to request air force representation at a planned JCS meeting with President Harry S. Truman on June 18 "to discuss the subject 'Can we win the war by bombing?' . . . I was convinced it could be done," remembered Arnold. "I did not believe Japan could stand the punishment from the air that Germany had taken."²⁸⁰ The JCS had approved a November 1 target date for the invasion of Japan the previous spring, and Truman was interested in the progress of the war, including the strategic air campaign.²⁸¹ The Okinawa campaign, which was still officially underway although it was close to ending, had come at a heavy cost, with a total of seven thousand marines and soldiers killed with another thirty-six thousand wounded.²⁸² This figure included two general officers.

In light of the XXIst's success and LeMay's thorough briefings offered to the general from June 12 to 16, including strike photographs and other evidence, Arnold decided to send LeMay in his stead. "General Arnold asked me when the war would be over," LeMay recalled; "I hadn't thought about it, but I said

277. August Beckemeier. See Beckemeier, "June 13, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

278. Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 307.

279. For the quotation, see *ibid.*, 312. See also Arnold, *Global Mission*, 561–575.

280. For the quotation, see *ibid.*, 566. See also Arnold, *American Airpower Comes of Age*, vol. 2, 316.

281. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 130.

282. *Ibid.*, 132.

we would soon run out of targets. I thought we could win without the invasion."²⁸³ After a lunch briefing on June 15, the air force chief gave LeMay the news.²⁸⁴ It was the ideal opportunity to present Marshall and other skeptical leaders with evidence that the planned invasion of the home islands, which figured to cost hundreds of thousands in dead and wounded Americans, was unnecessary with the continued blockade and air campaign. To this end, LeMay and Beckemeier boarded a B-29 on June 16 and made the flight back to the United States in a record twenty hours. On the same day, the XXIst completed its initial incendiary campaign against major Japanese cities, and on the seventeenth it turned its attention to the "war industries" and "transportation centers" of small cities (populations between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand).²⁸⁵

LeMay and his group arrived at the Pentagon at 10:30 a.m. on June 17, "and from that morning through the 23rd," wrote Beckemeier, "we were in one mad rush. The General held conferences hourly every day that we were there when he was not busy giving a presentation to the Air Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Marshall, or some other important military group."²⁸⁶ Despite his best efforts, LeMay could not convince Marshall or the JCS that an invasion was unnecessary. "I briefed General Marshall and the other Chiefs to show that an invasion was unnecessary," he explained, "[but m]y briefing didn't have much effect."²⁸⁷ He went further in his memoir, *Superfortress*, revealing, "They paid absolutely no attention to us. Marshall was sleeping or dozing through most of it. Admiral Ernest King, the chief of Naval Operations, reacted with disbelief and a complete lack of interest."²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, President Truman called for a continuation of the blockade and bombing campaigns while leaving the invasion scheduled if these strategies, along with Soviet entrance into the war in August, were to prove indecisive.²⁸⁹ Exhausted following their string of meetings, LeMay and his staff took a short leave to visit their families from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-eighth.²⁹⁰ It was not the vacation LeMay or

283. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 714, transcript, USAFOHC, 2.

284. Beckemeier, "June 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

285. Cate and Olson, "The All-Out B-29 Attack," 653–654.

286. Beckemeier, "June 16–July 4, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

287. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 714, transcript, USAFOHC, 2.

288. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 142.

289. James Lea Cate and Wesley Frank Craven, "Victory," in *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945*, vol. 5 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 711.

290. Beckemeier, "June 16–July 4, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Helen had hoped for, but it was something, and they believed that the war was coming to a conclusion soon. After this leave, the officers gathered in Washington on the twenty-ninth and flew to Muroc Airfield, where LeMay had a short conference with Colonel Joseph Preston concerning the operation of the lead crew school there, and began their journey back to Guam on July 1, arriving on the morning of Independence Day.²⁹¹

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 4, 1945²⁹²

Dear Helen,

Just a note to let you know that we arrived OK. We spent the night at Muroc Lake, Hawaii and Kwajelin. I went up to Wheeler while we were there.²⁹³ It was dark, but I went around to see our house. Seeing the old place again made me kind of homesick.

I just sent a message to Larry to call you and tell you we arrived.

We passed Jack in Hawaii, so he should be home in a day or so. I didn't see him, but Bechemer did.

I have to get at the stack of papers on my desk. Will write a longer letter tomorrow.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 5, 1945²⁹⁴

Dear Helen,

I certainly am swamped with work. So much stuff piles up on your desk while you are away that just reading it is a chore. After an exchange of wires and a telephone conversation with Larry, it is beginning to look more and more like I won't be home as soon as I expected. I don't know whether to be glad or sorry. I would like to be home, but at the same time,

291. Ibid.

292. Beckemeier, "July 4, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

293. Wheeler Field, Schofield Barracks, Oahu, Hawaii.

294. Beckemeier, "July 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I dread the thought of the Pentagon Building. I suppose I will have to take it eventually though. Sometimes I wish I had stayed a Captain, don't you?

It surely is a long way out here and we were plenty tired when we arrived. I don't know but that I would rather take it all at once and get it over with rather than taking a night off at the stopovers. Pass on all the rumors you hear. We don't get much over here.

Lucille wanted to know if there was a will in Russ' effects. Augie says that there was *not*. He looked them over. Will you notify her at once? I have forgotten the house number.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 6, 1945²⁹⁵

Dear Helen,

I still hope to get out from under the pile of papers by tomorrow sometime and get out to look around the outfit to see what happened to it since I left.

I hope you weren't too mad at me. While I suppose I did try your patience somewhat, but three years in a command position is bound to leave its mark. Perhaps when I get home you can housebreak me. Anyway, Janie didn't get mad at me this trip, which should be a hopeful sign.

Hawaii is ruined as far as I'm concerned. The place is so burnt up you wouldn't recognize it. And all the construction of camps, warehouses, etc. are all temporary and an eye sore. Any beauty the place may have had is long since gone. I hope we aren't stationed there again.

Back to work.

Love,
Curt

295. Beckemeier, "July 6, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 8, 1945²⁹⁶

Dear Helen,

Your first letter just came in and I'm glad you still want me to hang around the house a little while longer. I think the next time I come back I won't come home at all, but have you and Janie meet me someplace for a leave where we don't know a soul.

Bessell is due through here soon on a trip.²⁹⁷ He is still G2 of the War Dept., so we will have to give him a good briefing on what we are doing out here.

It is beginning to look as though initially I will be Chief of Staff for Spaatz. I won't know definitely until the first of the month. If that is true, I won't be home until Fall, I suppose. I'll let you know as soon as I find out anything definite.

I am enclosing a note to Doc Travis on Connolly.²⁹⁸ Will you get it to him as I don't think I have his address so I can send it to him?

I don't know his first name, so I'll enclose it after all.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 9, 1945²⁹⁹

Dear Helen,

Bessell has come and gone. He spent about three hours with us yesterday and we gave him as much a picture of what we are doing as the time allowed.

I suppose Jack is home by this time? I hope he can get out of the Army as I don't think he likes it particularly well and probably would do better at his old job.

296. Beckemeier, "July 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

297. Lieutenant General Clayton Bissell. General Bissell was assigned as assistant chief of staff for army intelligence in January 1944, a position he held through the end of the war after serving with Stilwell at the outbreak of the war followed by a stint as Tenth Air Force commander and chief of air force intelligence. See Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 367–368.

298. This note was not present with the letter.

299. Beckemeier, "July 9, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

The next time you go to the Library you might look up the articles by my old public relations officer in the “*New Yorker*” issues of June 9th, 16th, 23rd.³⁰⁰ Also you might be interested in page 54 of the July issue of *Esquire*.³⁰¹

I just read one of your letters written last month and you were talking about my leave. It hardly seems possible that I have been home and back again. I guess we will have to start thinking about the next one.

How is Janie’s new tooth coming along?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 10, 1945³⁰²

Dear Helen,

There must be some holdup in the mail someplace. I have only received one letter since I returned. I suppose as usual, I’ll get three or four together when they come.

The Navy has fixed up their skeet range to shoot at night. I am going to try and go up there tonight and try it out.

Our mess has improved a great deal since I left. We have a new mess officer who used to run a restaurant and we are able to get better food to cook. That probably means more weight you will have to take off me when I get home. I can tell I’m not going to enjoy the process.

We are certainly giving the Japs a going over. In the last two missions, we have burned down eight towns of over 100,000 population, each without losing a man.³⁰³ Over 1200 sorties without a loss. If they don’t give up soon, they are a lot dumber than I think they are.

Love,
Curt

300. St. Clair McKelway’s four-part, detailed *New Yorker* series published in June covering the activities of the XXI Bomber Command. See St. Clair McKelway, “A Reporter with the B-29s, 1: Possum, Rosy, and the Thousand Kids,” *New Yorker* (June 9, 1945): 26–37; “A Reporter with the B-29s, 2: The Doldrums, Guam, and Something Coming Up,” *New Yorker* (June 16, 1945): 28–37; “A Reporter with the B-29s, 3: The Cigar, the Three Wings, and the Low-Level Attacks,” *New Yorker* (June 23, 1945): 26–39; and “A Reporter with the B-29s, 4: The People,” *New Yorker* (June 30, 1945): 35–46.

301. See the appendix.

302. Beckemeier, “July 10, 1945,” LeMay Daily Diary.

303. These cities were Chiba, Akashi, Shimizu, and Kofu, bombed on July 6; and Sendai, Sakai, Gifii, and Wakayama, bombed on July 9. See LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 170.

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 12, 1945³⁰⁴

Dear Helen,

A letter finally dated July 3; the other one was June 28, so there are several missing.

I didn't think your kids were wasting time on Red Cross work, but I did think you looked worn out and are trying to do too much. In fact, you looked tired and more worn out than I did. I think you should slow down a little and get more rest.

I don't belong to a clipping agency, but a lot of people send them to me and Bechemer clip[s] items from the newspaper we get out here.

Sure, I miss you and Janie, but I would like to finish up the war too, especially since it is so close to the end. The way I figure it, a few more months at the most will see it over. I didn't argue with Eaker on the subject, but told him I respected and would accept his decision on the matter. I thought that would be fair to you and Janie even though I think it would be better for me to stay until the war is over. If I'm here when it ends, I'll have a better chance of avoiding any occupation job.

I won't be too disappointed if I come home if we can get a house and live normally again.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 14, 1945³⁰⁵

Dear Helen,

While I think of it, there is another article on the B-29's in the June 30 issue of the *New Yorker*. That is four all told.

It surely is hot out here. We get quite a bit of rain, but it doesn't seem to cool off any. One shower after another and steaming in between.

Barney Giles has invited me and my best poker players up to have dinner tonight and to look at a few cards. I hope I'm lucky.

I'm having a physical exam today to see if I am falling apart. I haven't

304. Beckemeier, "July 12, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

305. Beckemeier, "July 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

had one since Westover before the war, so it is a good idea to have a complete checkup. It might be a good idea for you and Janie to have one too.

I am going to try and get 80 days leave when I come home next time. Where would you like to go to spend it? I would like a fishing trip to Canada, but I suppose you would prefer New York or Mexico City?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, XXI BOMBER COMMAND, HARMON
FIELD, GUAM, JULY 15, 1945³⁰⁶

Dear Helen,

We had a really good poker game last night. I managed to win a few dollars and we had a good time too.

I still think you are doing too much Red Cross work. I think you should cut out part of it and get a little more rest.

Sid Nelson came in again today. He is thinking about quitting flying in two or three years and starting a game farm in Wisconsin. His uncle is in the business now. He thinks it will be something to do until his insurance starts paying dividends.

On the 16th (tomorrow) we become the 20th Air Force, so you can change the address. 20th AF instead of XXI Bomb Command. The rest of the address is the same.

It now looks as though I will be Chief of Staff for Spaatz, however, I'll have to wait until he gets out here about August 1st to find out definitely. I should have by then some indication as to when I'll be home.

Love,
Curt

Following Germany's surrender in early May, the AAF strategic forces in both Europe and the Pacific were consolidated in order to bring their full might to bear against Japan. To serve as the head of this new force, which was primarily composed of the Twentieth and Eighth Air Forces, Arnold established the U.S. Army Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific (USASTAF) and placed the USSTAF

306. Beckemeier, "July 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

CO, Lieutenant General Carl Spaatz, in command.³⁰⁷ Arnold believed that it was necessary to enlarge the authority of his strategic air forces to protect air force interests from MacArthur and naval designs, especially with an invasion still planned for the fall.³⁰⁸ Spaatz, as one of the most seasoned senior combat officers in the air force, had the stature to assume this role.³⁰⁹

The Eighth Air Force began the process of transferring some of its units and personnel from Europe to the Pacific on May 19 and also converted part of its force to B-29s, two of which, the 333rd and 346th, were ready by early August.³¹⁰ Okinawa, where airfields were being repaired or constructed to receive the Eighth's aircraft, was also within the B-17s' operational range of targets in the home islands. USASTAF was officially activated on July 16. Spaatz arrived on July 29 and had officially organized his staff by August 1.³¹¹ Lieutenant General Jimmie Doolittle retained command of the Eighth Air Force while Lieutenant General Nathan F. Twining took command of the Twentieth Air Force. Two new members joined Spaatz's staff, General Giles as Spaatz's deputy and LeMay as chief of staff. Until Spaatz's arrival, LeMay served as Twentieth Air Force CO. On August 2, LeMay officially assumed duties as Spaatz's chief of staff.³¹²

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 17, 1945³¹³

Dear Helen,

What is your source of information about the three stars?³¹⁴ I don't know anything about it and think that is very unlikely. I would be interested in the details.

Yes, Mrs. MacArthur is with him, but that is the only Mrs. I know of who will be out here for some time to come.³¹⁵

You had better keep your eye on Janie at the hospital or instead of helping the soldiers she will probably create a riot.

307. Cate and Craven, "Victory," 700–701.

308. Wolk, *Cataclysm*, 152.

309. Ibid.

310. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History*, 232–233.

311. Cate and Craven, "Victory," 700–701.

312. Ibid.

313. Beckemeier, "July 17, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

314. Three stars denote the rank of lieutenant general.

315. Mrs. Jean MacArthur.

We had a few submarine commanders up for dinner last night. The ones that pick up our crews when they ditch. Did I tell you Pud Mundy had to jump over a sub off the coast of Japan?³¹⁶ He was only in the water 45 minutes. Good service. Our loss rate is still going down. We have only lost three ships and two crews in the last 2500 sorties.

Supper time.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 19, 1945³¹⁷

Dear Helen,

We had such a violent volleyball game last night that about all of us are physical wrecks today. I guess we don't do it often enough. However, that isn't the *only* line of work we are out of practice in.

McNutt and some Congressmen are out here on a tour and we have to give him a briefing this afternoon.³¹⁸ Guam is worse than Broadway and 42nd now. It seems as though everyone comes through here.

Jimmie Crabbe was through here last night on his way home for 30 days leave. He says the Feldman's are getting a divorce. It seems that Carl is trading Mary in on a nurse he met someplace in his wanderings.

I am getting more and more optimistic on the war folding up soon. I hope so. Then we can come home and rehabilitate you.

Love,
Curt

316. Colonel George W. Mundy, CO of the 39th Bomb Group, 314th Bomb Wing. On June 26, Colonel Mundy and his crew aboard the B-29 *City of Galveston* were forced to bail off the coast of Japan following a mission against Nagoya in which flak crippled their plane. All twelve crew members survived but were scattered over a one-mile area. An American submarine came to their rescue about forty-five minutes after they bailed out of their failing aircraft. See Edward L. Thomas, "B-29 Survivors Are 'Stripped' by Sub Crew," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, July 9, 1945; and Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 95–96.

317. Beckemeier, "July 19, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

318. Paul V. McNutt was the head of the Federal Security Administration and War Manpower Commission on a tour of the Marianas, Okinawa, and the Philippines on behalf of President Truman. He was joined by an unidentified group of senators and staff members. See Joe Fisher, "Memo 'Unfortunately Worded,' WMC Says; McNutt Eyes Case," *Stars and Stripes*, August 6, 1945, M1624, 166 rolls, RG 287, NACP.

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 21, 1945³¹⁹

Dear Helen,

Well, I survived the volleyball game, but just barely. The only rule we have is that the net must remain standing.

I suppose C. V. is still at Mitchell Field and griping to get out.³²⁰ The last time I saw him a year and a half ago, he was already talking about getting back in the war.

I have a lot of film that Frank Lloyd took while he was over here making the B29 movie.³²¹ I'll have to get the best of it stuck together. He has also promised me a copy of the completed movie. It should be good because there is a good story to the B29 operation and all of it was taken in color.

You still sound to me like you are still going full blast. I think you should slow down so you won't look like a hag when I get home. Why don't you try taking a nap every afternoon?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 22, 1945³²²

Dear Helen,

I went down to Giles' for dinner and a movie last night. Doolittle was over for a visit also. Butch Griswold is now on duty in Okinawa as air force liaison officer with Stilwell.³²³

319. Beckemeier, "July 21, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

320. Brigadier General C. V. Haynes served as commanding general of the I Bomber Command, an antisubmarine defense force based at Mitchel Field, New York, from September 16, 1943 to December 31, 1945. See Robert Fogerty, "Caleb Vance Haynes," in *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers, 1917–1952*, vol. 1, A–K (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, 1953).

321. Frank Lloyd was an American film director of Scottish birth who was best known for his Academy Award–winning epic *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935). He was appointed to make a propaganda film about the XXI Bomber Command and was active in the Marianas in April and May 1945 shooting film of the unit's activities. The final product was a thirty-three-minute documentary, *The Last Bomb: B-29 Superfortresses over Japan*. See Beckemeier, "April 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

322. Beckemeier, "July 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

323. Officially, General Griswold was chief of the Eighth Air Force (XX Bomber Command) Liaison Section. See Robert Fogerty, "Francis Hopkins Griswold," in *Biographical Data on Air Force General Officers, 1917–1952*, vol. 1, A–K (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Historical Division, 1953).

We got a new washing machine the other day. Now, if we can find some soap powder, maybe we can get our clothes a little cleaner. I'm afraid they are tattle tale gray now.

I still haven't heard any more on my status except that I will be Chief of Staff for Spaatz. I hope to find out when he arrives whether he expects me to stay for the duration or not. If I'm coming home, I hope it is soon enough for us to get settled before Janie has to start to school. It would be kind of nice to see whether I could get back to a normal existence again without you getting after me too much.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 25, 1945³²⁴

Dear Helen,

I'm fooling around with another broadcast again for the *Army Hour*. I think this one is to be presented on August 1 which is Air Force Day.³²⁵

We are getting a new squawk box installed in all the offices. It's a little better than the telephone if we can get it to work. So far, I can get Bechemer only. Eventually it will work, I hope.

With Janie growing up and demanding a separate bathroom and you wanting one too, I suppose I'll be forced into the maids room or a chicken house out on the back of the lot.

I just had a letter from Harvey Dyer.³²⁶ He has been in the training command all during the war and wants a job.

Spaatz should be in the on the 28th, so I can confirm the feeling I have that this new job is permanent. But, even if it is, the end is in sight and it won't be too long.

Love,
Curt

324. Beckemeier, "July 21, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

325. LeMay participated in another interview for *Army Hour* on this day, and it was broadcast on July 29. See "Army Hour Program, 29 July 1945," *Army Hour*, June 3 to July 29, 1945, Box 62, Public Relation Division, News Branch, Radio Scripts, 1942-1945, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, 1791-1948, Record Group 107, NACP. See the appendix for the complete transcript.

326. Colonel Harvey E. Dyer, CO of Douglas Army Air Field, Douglas, Arizona.

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 28, 1945³²⁷

Dear Helen,

I think I have missed a couple days writing. I have been busy with Twining and General Yount is here now on a visit, so we are busy with him too.³²⁸

Tomorrow is Sunday again, so I think I will try and get out for an hour's skeet shooting. I haven't been able to do it for the last couple of weeks.

I wonder where you are mailing your letters? I received two today; one written on the 18th and one on the 19th, and both postmarked 2 PM on the 20th.

We are planning a big celebration here on Air Force Day August 1, speeches, etc., plus other activity. Apparently, there will be big festivities at home too.

I'm just as glad we *escaped* during my visit home. I think the risk is too great.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 29, 1945³²⁹

Dear Helen,

I managed to get away for an hour this morning to shoot skeet, scoring 49 out of 50.

General Spaatz came in this afternoon. So far, I haven't had a chance to find out what my future plans will be. However, I am having dinner with him tonight and may have a chance then to find out something.

I agree with you on the leave. That's the reason I suggested we go someplace where we don't know anyone, so we can really do the things we

327. Beckemeier, "July 28, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

328. General Twining arrived in the Marianas on the twenty-third and spent a week with General LeMay touring bases on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, and in consultation with LeMay to facilitate the command transfer of the Twentieth Air Force, which officially took place on August 2. Beckemeier, "July 23–August 2, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

329. Beckemeier, "July 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

want to do without outside interference. Maybe we had better wait until we get another leave first before we start talking about it.

Skippy Harbald arrived with General Spaatz.³³⁰ I haven't seen him for a long time. He has aged quite a bit. I wonder if I'm as much a shock to them.

We had 600 ships over Japan last night without a single loss and we told them what towns we would burn down.

Well, I'll have to go and dress for dinner.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, JULY 31, 1945³³¹

Dear Helen,

I finally had a chance to talk with General Spaatz and he has convinced General Eaker that I am needed more out here than at home, so it looks like I'm here for some time anyway. I'm disappointed that I'm not coming home, of course, but this way I can at least influence the future course of the war. Anyway, it won't be for long as the Japs are actually hanging on the ropes now. I hope you aren't too disappointed in my delay in getting home.

General Spaatz gave me an oak leaf cluster for my D.S.M. today for my work against Japan in the 20th and 21st Bomb Commands.³³²

I'll let you know if any new developments occur. Maybe Spaatz will let me come home after he has been over here long enough to get thoroughly indoctrinated.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, HARMON FIELD,
GUAM, AUGUST 1, 1945³³³

Dear Helen,

I just came back from a quick tour around all the bases to see all

330. Brigadier General Norris Brown Harbold, assistant chief of staff for intelligence, USAS-TAF. Ancell and Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 399.

331. Beckemeier, "July 31, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

332. Distinguished Service Medal.

333. Beckemeier, "August 1, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

the wing commanders once more before going over to the new job tomorrow.

I'm going to live in the same house for the time being and later on Powers, McNaughton and I are going to move into another house, so we will be just as comfortable.

We are really celebrating Air Force Day at the expense of the Japs and, since it is my last mission, I am really pouring it on. Over 800 ships and over 6000 tons of bombs. It's the largest raid in history.³³⁴

I'm going down to Barney's tonight and have a little poker session with Paul McNutt. If he is going to be the next Secretary of War, it won't hurt to get acquainted.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 2, 1945³³⁵

Dear Helen,

I came over and started in the new job today and am completely snowed under already, but I suppose I will be able to dig out in time.³³⁶ I finished up with the 20th A.F. with a bang. We had 850 airplanes out dropping the largest tonnage of any single raid in history, sixty seven hundred (6700) tons and only lost one ship.

Kissner is coming over to USASTAF HQ. also and will be my Deputy Chief of Staff. Between us, we should be able to get the HQ organized, I hope. I'll get a letter and the pin off to that soldier you wrote about. I just happen to have lost a pin, so I have an extra one. I only have one set left and you can't get them out here, so don't make any large scale promises.

Don't forget your chest exercises while you are on your getting in shape programs.

Love,
Curt

334. Air Force Day was a propaganda-driven celebration purposed to highlight the achievements of the air force, and especially its B-29s, in the war. In a show of power, LeMay sent 862 *Superfortresses* against Japanese targets, 667 of them on incendiary raids against the cities of Hachioji, Toyama, Nagaoka, and Mito. See Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 207–208.

335. Beckemeier, "August 2, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

336. LeMay was officially activated as chief of staff for USASTAF on this day per General Orders No. 8. See John H. Ives, Colonel, Air Corps, Acting Chief of Staff, "General Orders No. 8," Headquarters U.S. Army Strategic Air Forces, August 1, 1945, Box B13, CELPLOC.

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 5, 1945³³⁷

Dear Helen,

I am having a little trouble seeing, so I hope you can read this. My right eye ran into someone's fist during a volleyball game. The eyeball is scraped and the whole eye is quite inflamed. The doctor has it dilated to ease the pain. It should be alright in a couple of days.

I'm glad Janie's tooth trouble is over for the time being.

I hope you can get some rest now that your Red Cross work is coming to a close. I wouldn't start any more if I were you.

I'm having trouble seeing the paper, so I guess I'll have to give up.

Love,

Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 7, 1945³³⁸

Dear Helen,

I have really been swamped since coming over here, so I'm afraid I'll miss a letter occasionally.

I suppose you have seen in the newspapers what happened to Hiroshima yesterday? I have been planning that for some time and it was one of the things I had in mind when I told you we weren't too important when you had the whole picture. Suppose our enemies had that weapon instead of us and you would see what I mean.

I hear Butch Griswald will be in for a visit this afternoon. I'll try and get him to stay with me.

The eye is very much improved today and should be alright in another day or so. I think I will have to take a trench knife or something to the volleyball games.

Love,

Curt

337. Beckemeier, "August 5, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

338. Beckemeier, "August 7, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 8, 1945³³⁹

Dear Helen,

Three letters today, so I probably won't get any for a couple of days.

I'm glad your Jr. Red Cross work is over. Now maybe you will get a little rest. *Don't* take on any new jobs.

I just saw a message General Spaatz sent back to Washington in which he stated that he had had the opportunity to check up on B29 operations and believes my outfit is the best organized and most technically and tactically proficient military organization that the world has seen to date. Strong language for him and my men will be glad to hear it.

I'm glad you heard the broadcast as it probably is the last one I'll make. General Spaatz will probably do those in the future.

Be careful with Janie at the beach. I see by the papers there is still quite a bit of polio around in the states.

It's supper time, so I had better go home and clean up. Butch is still here. I imagine he will leave tomorrow.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 9, 1945³⁴⁰

Dear Helen,

Today is a sad day for the Japs. We dropped another atomic bomb on them and the Russians have come into the war. I don't see how it can be very long now.

The Red Cross picture arrived today. It is good of Janie.³⁴¹

I'm enclosing a copy of the radio I told you about yesterday. You can put it in the scrapbook.

I think it is pretty definite that I will be here until the war is over, but you never can tell. Things happen so quickly sometimes. Anyway, as you can see, it won't be too long.

Butch went back to Okinawa today to get back to work. As soon as I

339. Beckemeier, "August 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

340. Beckemeier, "August 9, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

341. "Lakewood Girls Make Gifts for G.I. Christmas Abroad," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1945.

get settled down here, I'll probably have to make a trip over there since the 8th is under us. It probably will be another one of those places I don't want to see again.

It's time to go home and doctor my heat rash. The eye is OK.

Love,

Curt

At 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, Colonel Paul W. Tibbets Jr., commander of the 509th Composite Group, piloting a specially modified B-29 called the Enola Gay, banked his aircraft sharply after the only bomb they were carrying was released over the Japanese city of Hiroshima located on the largest of Japan's home islands, Honshu.³⁴² When "Little Boy" detonated, the resulting explosion obliterated the city and most of its inhabitants, reaching a temperature of 5,400 degrees Fahrenheit at its hottest, fueled with the power of an equivalent of 12,500 tons of TNT.³⁴³ Three days later, when the Japanese government failed to surrender to Allied forces, Little Boy's brother, "Fat Man," was dropped by another of the 509th's crews, led by Major Charles W. Sweeney, from his Superfortress, Bock's Car.³⁴⁴ Their target was the city of Nagasaki on the island of Kyushu, where they were diverted because of excessive haze over their primary target, Kokura, that prevented visual bombing.³⁴⁵ The next day, following a failed military coup intended to prevent negotiations, the Japanese government began communication efforts through the neutral countries of Sweden and Switzerland to surrender to Allied forces. All the while, the Twentieth Air Force continued its conventional campaign, launching raids against a Japanese naval arsenal at Toyokawa on August 7 and incendiary raids against Yawata and Fukuyama on August 8.³⁴⁶

General LeMay's role in the deployment of the atomic bombs was administrative and advisory; it was President Truman who actually authorized the "nuclear mission."³⁴⁷ "I got only the information I needed to prepare for, and operate, the 509th Group," LeMay later wrote.³⁴⁸ LeMay learned about the existence of the Manhattan Project in May, when an army engineer came to Guam to brief him before the 509th came to the Marianas. The group's

³⁴². Frank, *Downfall*, 264.

³⁴³. *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴. *Ibid.*, 284.

³⁴⁵. *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 172.

³⁴⁷. Cate and Craven, "Victory," 713.

³⁴⁸. LeMay and Yenne, *Superfortress*, 147.

eighteen B-29s arrived at North Field on Tinian on June 11 and were trained specially to drop single bombs, but otherwise went through the regular courses according to standards established by LeMay.³⁴⁹ He was one of the few who knew that Little Boy had arrived on the cruiser USS Indianapolis on July 26, and was one of the final men to brief Tibbets before he took off in the Enola Gay flanked by two other Superfortresses as escorts and observers.³⁵⁰ When USASTAF headquarters received Tibbets's report, LeMay was astounded. "I guess I was one of the many who didn't realize the explosive power and potential of the bomb," he wrote. "I agreed then with dropping it, and still believe the decision to drop it was correct."³⁵¹ He continued to have confidence, however, that his raids would have eventually forced the same result without the atomic weapons.³⁵²

On August 10, General Spaatz ordered that all strategic forces should proceed only with precision missions, and the next day Truman ordered a halt to all raids to give the Japanese government time to surrender.³⁵³ By the fourteenth, the Japanese had failed to respond, and Arnold pushed for a final show of force, urging USASTAF to send a thousand aircraft against Japanese targets. At the end of the day 1,014 planes had made strikes against Hikari, Osaka, Marifu, and a number of other Japanese cities, and the Japanese government finally surrendered.³⁵⁴

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 11, 1945³⁵⁵

Dear Helen,

We had a little excitement around here last night when we heard over the radio that the Japs wanted to quit.³⁵⁶ However, not much in the way of celebrating is going on until we get the official word that the war is over. I hope it's true, so we can get home. There is still a lot of work to be done out here, so we will probably have to stay until we can get replacements.

349. Ibid., 148.

350. Ibid., 147–149.

351. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 714, transcript, USAFOHC, 2.

352. Ibid.

353. Cate and Craven, "Victory," 732.

354. Ibid., 733; and Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 221–223.

355. Beckemeier, "August 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

356. On August 10, the Japanese government issued a statement through neutral countries accepting Allied terms for their unconditional surrender as disseminated in the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, with the caveat that their emperor would remain as leader of Japan. See Beckemeier, "August 10, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Augie took the afternoon off and has gone fishing. So far, he is the only one who has caught a fish around here. I hope he is lucky again as we could use it in the mess.

In case the news is true, you probably will know it as soon as I do, but you wait until I get home to do the celebrating.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 13, 1945³⁵⁷

Dear Helen,

Things are certainly in an uproar out here pending the results of the negotiations with the Japs. I don't see how there can be any other answer than acceptance by the Japs of our terms. It has been a tremendous victory for Air Power. We licked them with our B29, but whether we will ever get credit for it is something else again.

I have seen a copy of the August 13 issue of *Time*.³⁵⁸ The picture looks like I am smoking an el stinko instead of a good cigar, but I thought the article was alright. I hope you were satisfied with it.

We all have our ear glued to the radio hoping for the good news. I imagine a lot of people will have to stay out here, but if the war is over, I think I have a good chance of coming home fairly soon. Hope so.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 14, 1945³⁵⁹

Dear Helen,

Still no word from the Japs. It looks as though they have changed their minds and need a little more treatment.

I don't think much of the new office I'm in. It is hot and crowded compared to my other one. I have a WAC clerk out with Bechemer.³⁶⁰ I

357. Beckemeier, "August 13, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

358. General LeMay was featured on the cover of this issue of *Time* magazine and a corresponding five-page article titled "V.L.R. Man," an exposé of LeMay's career, his World War II rise to prominence, and the B-29 campaigns. See "V.L.R. Man," *Time* 46, no. 7 (August 13, 1945): 24–28.

359. Beckemeier, "August 14, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

360. Likely a Lieutenant Foley. According to Beckemeier, "She is to assist us in the office of the

don't know what she thinks of the setup as I'm not used to watching my language. Two hours out to investigate false rumor of peace.³⁶¹

This is worse than the war. I wish they would either give up and get it over, or say they are going to fight on so we can get down to business again. If we don't get back to routine and get some sleep, we will all be in a padded cell.

I'm going to try and go to bed tonight, but I don't expect to stay there very long.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 15, 1945³⁶²

Dear Helen,

We celebrated VJ Day last night with a little poker game at General Spaatz's that is pretty fast company for me, but I managed to come out about \$250 ahead. Don't spend your share right away as I may not keep it long. I still haven't caught up on my sleep and I would much rather have gone to bed.

I am anxious to find out whether I will stay out here now that the war is over, but I guess I can only sit tight and wait and see what happens.

I received a nice wire from General Arnold today.³⁶³ I'll send you a copy of it as soon as I can get one made.

I hope you have a good time in Washington. Don't do too much running around so you get some rest.

Love,
Curt

Chief of Staff." See Beckemeier, "August 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

361. The Japanese formally surrendered at 7:00 p.m. EST on this day. See Beckemeier, "August 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

362. Beckemeier, "August 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

363. The message read: "The part you played in developing and commanding the 21st Bomber Command represents one of the outstanding personal achievements of this war. You and the men under your command has [*sic*] indeed made clear to the world the full meaning of strategic bombardment. Your imagination, resourcefulness and initiative have reflected credit on the entire Army Air Forces. We are intensely proud of what you have done." See "AAF POA Incoming Message, from COMGENAIR to CG USASTAF, for LeMay from Arnold," August 15, 1945, Box B11, CELPLOC.

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 15, 1945³⁶⁴

Dear Helen,

Today is the day we have been looking for, isn't it? I didn't think they could last much longer. No one could take the beating we have been giving them the last few weeks.

I'm all ready to come home now. With the war over, it is going to be a hard job in being interested in staying on this rock and I hope they get me out as quickly as possible. Keep your fingers crossed.

I suppose there was a big celebration at home when the final surrender came? Things were very quiet here although there were six men killed and 60 wounded in Okinawa when they heard about the surrender offer. Everyone shot off the AA guns and everything else, I guess.

I believe the mail will be very much off schedule for a while so you will probably get this late.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 17, 1945³⁶⁵

Dear Helen,

There is a couple of articles in *Colliers* (August 11 and 18 issues) on B29's. I wish you would get copies and save them.

Sy Bartlett is about to go home for discharge. He has invited us to spend a month up in the high Sierras, if I get back home reasonably soon. What do you think of the idea?

I have just read Murphy's second article for *Fortune* which isn't bad. I told you about the first one. I think it is due in the August issue. There is one more to come. Try and get copies of them if you can.

I just received a letter from Sal Rosenblatt. He is getting out of the army too about September 1. I guess he is going back to New York to his law practice.

I suppose you were in Washington when the war ended. I hope you and Lucille didn't celebrate too much.

Love,
Curt

364. Beckemeier, "August 15, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

365. Beckemeier, "August 17, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 18, 1945³⁶⁶

Dear Helen,

No mail since the peace offer. I suppose it will be some time before the schedule gets ironed out.

I just said goodbye to Sy. He is leaving for home in the morning. I wish I were going along.

I am still snowed under at the office and it doesn't look as if I will ever crawl out. In fact, we are in such a mess we almost wish we were back in the nice, quiet days of the war.

I suppose you are back from Washington by this time? I hope you had a good time and were able to see the people you missed last time.

How is Jack making out in his attempts to get out of the Army, or has he tried yet? I imagine he can get out alright now that the war is over.

We are having trouble with prickly heat. It seems to be getting worse on everyone and the doctors admit they can't do much for it. I would like to try northern Maine for a cure.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 19, 1945³⁶⁷

Dear Helen,

There isn't much happening out here now. Everyone is waiting for the surrender to be signed, I guess.

I had dinner last night with General Spaatz and General Doolittle.

I have been so busy that I haven't had a chance to have a movie on the porch since I took this job. I think I'll try and have one tonight.

We hear over the radio that they really had a celebration in San Francisco and tore the place up considerably.³⁶⁸ I wonder why the riot

366. Beckemeier, "August 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

367. Beckemeier, "August 19, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

368. Following the Japanese surrender on August 14, most American cities celebrated. San Francisco was no different. The city's populace, including a large contingent of sailors, celebrated for three days and nights. On the night of the sixteenth, drunken riots occurred in the city's downtown area resulting in widespread looting and causing thousands of dollars in damage to businesses on Lower Market Street. In addition, more than seven hundred people were injured and seven were confirmed dead. It took a force of 3,200 policemen and shore patrolmen, as well as a statement by Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, the local senior naval officer, to disperse the raucous crowd. See "7 Dead, Windows Smashed as Frisco Spree Continues," *Stars and Stripes, German Edition*, August 17, 1945, M1506, 138 rolls, RG 287, NACP.

there and out here where there is some reason to celebrate we just went to bed?

Time to go home and clean up for dinner.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 20, 1945³⁶⁹

Dear Helen,

I received a letter today written [on] the 8th after you had arrived at Lucille's. I don't know how it got through as practically everything has stopped.

I hope you are able to see Maurine, Pricilla and all the rest of the people in Washington. There are a lot of them there that we didn't get to see when I was home.³⁷⁰

I suppose Janie was disappointed when you didn't take her? She certainly has had her share of traveling in six years and probably thinks that is a natural state of affairs.

Mr. Higgins of the boat company and Mr. Pruitt of Newport News ship building were here today.³⁷¹

Still no news on my status, but I really don't expect anything until after the peace is signed. Being in Washington you probably know more about the latest rumors than I do.

I'm moving down to my new house today with difficulty however as it has just poured all day long and the mud is knee deep every place.

I'm going to General Spaatz for dinner and poker tonight. I hope my luck still holds out.

Love,
Curt

369. Beckemeier, "August 20, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

370. The editors were unable to identify either woman; however, it is likely that they were spouses of LeMay's peers, as they are mentioned in earlier letters. On September 7, 1944, LeMay referred to Maurine in connection with "King" and their time at Hawaii in 1936 at Schofield Barracks. He referenced Priscilla in several February 1942 letters concerning housing at Pendleton Field, Oregon, when he was stationed with the 34th Bomb Group.

371. Andrew Higgins, a ship builder based in New Orleans, was responsible for the most important American amphibious landing craft built during the war: the "Higgin's Boat," officially "Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel." See Frank O. Hough, Verle E. Ludwig, and Henry I. Shaw Jr., *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, vol. 1 of *History of Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1958), 24-28.

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 21, 1945³⁷²

Dear Helen,

I'm all worn out today. We moved into the new house yesterday and I went to General Spaatz for dinner and poker, so I didn't get enough sleep.

I'm going to have to stop I guess. If it isn't General Spaatz wanting to play poker, it is the teleprinter keeping me up every night.

I don't think it will be very long before I will be home. The whole impression I get out here is that people with a lot of overseas time will be sent home as soon as possible. That suits me fine. For the first time in ages, we can look forward to a normal existence again in the near future.

I think I'll go over and try to straighten out my things. I didn't do a very good job of packing when we moved.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 22, 1945³⁷³

Dear Helen,

Mr. McNutt is a mild poker player compared with General Spaatz and General Giles. I'll be lucky if I escape with my shirt, but I have done alright so far.

I am becoming more and more to believe that I will be home in a short time, possibly in about a month. Of course, the situation can change very rapidly, but right now it looks promising.

Yes, I knew about McDonald being killed. He was shot down over Dunkirk shortly after I arrived in England.³⁷⁴ I wrote you about it at time, but you have probably forgotten about it.

One of the groups is opening an Officer's Club they built with bomb crates, etc., so I'll have to get dressed and go to it.

Love,
Curt

372. Beckemeier, "August 21, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

373. Beckemeier, "August 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

374. The editors could not identify McDonald, and he was not mentioned in this collection during the time period LeMay referenced here.

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 23, 1945³⁷⁵

Dear Helen,

The mail seems to be picking up somewhat. Several letters came in yesterday. I wonder if my letters are getting there alright?

Jim Garcia, my A2 in the 20th was killed in a takeoff accident this morning.³⁷⁶ He was back with me on the last trip to Washington. If you remember, he met us at the airport and rode to Pittsburgh with us.

I am still holding my own in the poker game.

I think I will go home early and get some sun on my heat rash. It is supposed to help some people, but apparently there just isn't anything standard that will do any good except cooler weather.

Time is certainly going slowly now that the war is over. It seems months since the Japs offered to give up and the surrender isn't signed yet. It will probably seem like years before I get home.

Love,

Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 25, 1945³⁷⁷

Dear Helen,

Still no news out here. We are just sitting and waiting. It really has been hot in the last few days.³⁷⁸ I didn't seem to mind it while the war was going on, but now that it is over, I can't get out of here soon enough.

I'm glad you are getting to see so many people we know in Washington. What do you think of the Ft. Meyer quarters?³⁷⁹ I have never been there. If I go to Washington, we may have to live there.

I have only met Mrs. Eaker once.³⁸⁰ She is a good looking gal about 35 I would guess. Dresses very well and I gathered goes in for parties and

375. Beckemeier, "August 23, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

376. Colonel James D. Garcia, an operations officer under LeMay's chief of staff for operations, Colonel J. B. Montgomery. See Beckemeier, "August 23, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

377. Beckemeier, "August 25, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

378. According to Beckemeier, this was a widespread problem in the islands during this period due to a terrific increase in humidity, causing many to suffer from heat rash/heat stroke. See Beckemeier, "August 25, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

379. Likely Fort Myer, a small base located near Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia.

380. Mrs. Ruth Eaker.

the social whirl. I'm not surprised that Claire doesn't think much of her.³⁸¹ They are direct opposites. However, everyone I have talked to seems to like her.

I hope you talked to Larry again before you left to see if there were any further plans for me since the war ended.

I'm going to try and get away this afternoon and go out on the boat.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 26, 1945³⁸²

Dear Helen,

I suppose you are going to have trouble explaining to Janie why I'm not home now that the war is over?

I don't expect to know anything definite until about the 15th of September. I think General Spaatz is going back for a visit about the 5th, so I may find out something definite after that. I imagine I'll be in Washington whether I like it or not. If we do go there, I think it would be better to live at Ft. Meade if we can get quarters there.³⁸³ It probably will be cheaper too. We can do nothing though until some decision is made in Washington as to where I will be.

This being Sunday afternoon, we are going to take some time off and go out on the pistol range.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 28, 1945³⁸⁴

Dear Helen,

No mail for several days. I imagine it will be two or three weeks before we get back on schedule. General Spaatz and Giles left to join McArthur [*sic*] for the signing of the surrender.

381. The editors were unable to identify Claire.

382. Beckemeier, "August 26, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

383. Likely Fort George G. Meade, an army post used as a recruiting station during the war located in Annapolis, Maryland.

384. Beckemeier, "August 28, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

Thayer Olds is back for a few days. Butch Griswald is taking his job and Thayer is going to Iwo Jima.³⁸⁵ I imagine Moose Mussett will be going home shortly.

Things are beginning to quiet down a little. I hope that we can get some regular sleep from now on.

We have a couple of good cooks and are able to get beef, etc. from the Navy, so we are eating well at the present time. If we can survive the heat, we will be alright until we get home.

Time for supper, so I had better go and get a bath.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 29, 1945³⁸⁶

Dear Helen,

I have just come in from flying and getting the rest of my time for pay this month. We flew low over Rota which is 30 miles away and held by the Japs. They must all be hiding in the weeds because we didn't see any. We have been using the island as a practice bombing range for some time, so it is beaten up fairly well in places.

We have been busy the last few days dropping food and supplies to our Prisoners of War in Japan, China and Manchuria.³⁸⁷ Most of them seem to be in bad shape for lack of food and medical attention.

We had a good movie last night "Weekend at the Waldorf" the best one we have had for a long time.³⁸⁸

385. General Griswald assumed command of the 301st on August 24, while General Olds took over the VII Fighter Command on September 4. See Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, 415–416, 445.

386. Beckemeier, "August 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

387. USASTAF dropped food, clothing, and medicine to POW camps in Japan and eastern Asia from August 27 to September 20. A total of 4,470 tons of supplies were provided for approximately 63,500 POWs over the three-week campaign. See Werrell, *Blankets of Fire*, 222.

388. *Week-End at the Waldorf*, starring Ginger Rogers, Lana Turner, Walter Pidgeon, and Van Johnson, was a 1945 remake of the film *Grand Hotel* (released in 1932), which featured Hollywood greats Greta Garbo and John Barrymore among others. The romantic comedy centers on the interactions of a group of hotel guests during their weekend stay at the Waldorf Hotel. See "The Screen: 'Week-End at the Waldorf,' with Ginger Rogers, Lana Turner, Walter Pidgeon, Van Johnson at the Music Hall," *New York Times*, October 5, 1945.

I have to go and sit for another portrait tonight.³⁸⁹ It probably won't be pleasant as hot as it is.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 30, 1945³⁹⁰

Dear Helen,

The end of the month has finally arrived. It has been the longest two weeks I have ever spent. Since the Japs have agreed to give up, time seems to just barely drag by. It will probably be another 10 days or two weeks before I hear anything definite about going home.

How did you survive Faith's visit? I imagine Jack will be out of the service in time to start school this Fall, at least he should be. I'm sure he has enough points to get out if he wants to.

We have had a lot of rain and thunderstorms around here lately. We are supposed to be in the typhoon season, so I wouldn't be surprised if we got one before long.

I suppose if Jack gets out right away, they will be with you for a while until they find a house. I hope I can get home soon and rescue you.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, AUGUST 31, 1945³⁹¹

Dear Helen,

I am having another portrait done by one of our staff officer's brothers, who is quite well known. Sykes is his name, from the south someplace, Birmingham, I think.³⁹² It surely is hot work posing in a blouse out here.

How did you find the housing situation when you were in

389. The portrait was executed by an air force artist, a Mr. Knight. See Beckemeier, "August 29, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

390. Beckemeier, "August 30, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

391. Beckemeier, "August 31, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

392. Twentieth Air Force artist William Paul Maltby Sykes, who was from Birmingham, Alabama, and enjoyed a long career as an artist and professor at Auburn University.

Washington? I imagine if I come home, that's where we will be. I hate to think of buying a house, although I suppose it would pay if we stayed there three or four years.

I think I will go home and get a bath before we run out of water, which is happening every day now.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, SEPTEMBER 8, 1945³⁹³

Dear Helen,

Just a note before I go down to meet Doolittle. He is due in in a few minutes for a conference. General Spaatz is back in the states and Barney has gone to Japan again, so I am here by myself. There isn't much doing at present though.

The picture I am sitting for is about finished—about two more hours, I think. It is by far the best one I have had done. I wish I could keep it instead of giving it to the government.

I took a lot of movies yesterday, while I was visiting one of the fields a B29 crashed and burned up as they made quite a blaze. I should have some good shots as I took about 250 feet.

Where is the school Janie goes to now and do you think she can get there by herself without crossing too many streets?

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, SEPTEMBER 11, 1945³⁹⁴

Dear Helen,

One more sitting and the portrait is finished. It is really good. Much better I think than the one Bersford painted.³⁹⁵

I just found out today that Doolittle[,] Twining and I will try to

393. Beckemeier, "September 8, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

394. Beckemeier, "September 11, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

395. British artist Frank Beresford, who completed portraits of British and American (Eighth Air Force) air force subjects during the war, including a picture of LeMay. See LeMay and Kantor, *Mission With LeMay*, 298–299.

make a nonstop flight from Japan to Washington D.C. about the 19th of September. However, I still don't know whether I am going to stay home or not. Keep your fingers crossed. At least it will be a relief to get out of this heat for a while and get the prickly heat cured up.

I'll let you know the minute I get any other news.

Love,
Curt

HEADQUARTERS, USASTAF, GUAM, SEPTEMBER 12, 1944³⁹⁶

Dear Helen,

We finally got all the movies I have taken spliced together in some sort of sequence. There is enough for well over an hour of movies.

I forgot to mention in yesterday's letter—don't tell anyone about my proposed trip until it is announced by Washington.

I am going to get all my stuff packed and ready to leave and if I don't come back I can have Bechemer bring it on back. I have certainly collected a pile of junk. Files, pictures, etc., that will add to our weight in carrying around.

I suppose Janie is settled in her new school. Does she like it as well as the other one?

Love,
Curt

HOKKAIDO, JAPAN, SEPTEMBER 18, 1945³⁹⁷

Dear Helen,

We have been up here two days now waiting on the weather to start the trip. A typhoon has gone by and tomorrow looks as though it will be as good as it is going to get.

We are staying at a Jap naval air station, a queer situation—about 200 of us and right in the middle of thousands of Jap sailors, etc. However, they seem most docile and helpful, so I think we will get off without any trouble.

396. Beckemeier, "September 12, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

397. Beckemeier, "September 18, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

I'll give this to one of the boys to mail, but I hope I arrive before it does.

Love,
Curt

At 6:00 a.m. on September 19, 1945, three B-29s took off from Hokkaido, Japan, piloted by Generals Giles, O'Donnell, and LeMay, respectively, in an attempt to bolster the air force's image following Japan's surrender by completing the longest nonstop flight to date—Japan to Washington, D.C.³⁹⁸ They did break the old record but were unable to reach their final destination. The three generals were forced to stop at an airfield in Chicago after encountering headwinds that consumed more fuel than planned, before finishing their journey.³⁹⁹ Arnold aggressively sought out opportunities to promote the cause of air force independence, and this was yet another example. Several days after this flight, Major Beckemeier received word from General LeMay concerning their future and wrote his final entry: "I am to return to Washington immediately, . . . Generals LeMay and O'Donnell are both remaining in the states."⁴⁰⁰

LeMay's command of the XX1st challenged his view of how strategic bombing operations should be run tactically. He was faced with a continuing set of obstacles that were familiar from his experience in the CBI, and under escalating pressure from Arnold and the air staff he found solutions that countered conventionally accepted precision tactics. As with tactics he developed for the 305th in Europe, his March 9–10 raids were fraught with danger; although a calculated risk, they could have resulted in a Ploëști-like disaster.⁴⁰¹ Still, those are the types of decisions that successful leaders are called upon to make during wartime, and LeMay was willing to choose to move forward while fully realizing the consequences of failure. His frustration with poor results was

398. Beckemeier, "September 19, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

399. Curtis E. LeMay, interview 736, transcript, USAFOHC, 17–18.

400. Beckemeier, "September 22, 1945," LeMay Daily Diary.

401. Ploëști, Romania, was one of the Axis nations' most strategically important crude oil targets, representing 60 percent of their total crude oil refineries. American and British air forces first targeted the complex in the summer of 1943, and the largest American raid occurred against it on August 1, 1943. A force of 177 B-24 Liberators set out from bases in the Mediterranean and utilized low-level incendiary tactics that resulted in heavy damage to the target, but at a cost of approximately 31 percent of their total force in *Men and Planes* (54 heavy bombers and 532 men out of a total roster of 1,725). Despite the results, such prohibitive losses dissuaded leaders from further attacks for some time following this initial raid. See Albert F. Simpson, "Conquest of Sicily," in *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948–1958; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 481–483.

evident in his February letters, while the success he acknowledged on March 12, the first letter he wrote following the March 9–10 raids, was matter-of-fact: “We had a good mission on Tokyo the other day.” By the summer, it was clear that his confidence that the war would end soon was building, as was his belief that the victory would be due to air power. On August 13, before the Japanese surrender, he declared, “I don’t see how there can be any other answer than acceptance by the Japs of our terms. It has been a tremendous victory for Air Power. We licked them with our B29, but whether we will ever get credit for it is something else again.” His comments here are not surprising, although the credit he affords the efforts may go too far. While air power played a central role in the defeat of the Japanese Empire in 1945, without the naval campaigns and the central Pacific campaign waged by the army and marine corps, bases from which to conduct his raids would not have existed. Still, LeMay’s accomplishments made him a well-known public figure in the media during the summer, with articles spanning America’s most popular magazines such as *Time*, *Collier’s*, the *New Yorker*, and others, and radio spots on NBC’s *Army Hour*. It was a lot of public exposure for a man who was not comfortable in such a role.

In Cleveland, it was clear that Helen was ready for him to be home, and she was quite vocal to that end throughout 1945. On September 21 she got her wish, and they would not be forced apart by war again. General LeMay also got to spend the time with Janie that he had missed since leaving Syracuse in the fall of 1942, and she, no doubt, never questioned who her father was again. Their war was over, but much success was ahead in LeMay’s air force career. The Cold War loomed, and his skills and leadership would be required to save West Berlin from communism and build and lead the Strategic Air Command.

CHAPTER 10

Epilogue: Home

“When Will He Be Home,” queried *Cleveland Plain Dealer* society reporter Cornelia Curtiss on August 26.¹ Among the six wives pictured whose husbands were overseas was a smiling Helen LeMay, right hand full of General LeMay’s letters, left hand grasping one to read. “She is hoping the general may get back some time in September,” wrote Curtiss. “If he does, she has a plan all ready for a trip to Mexico or some far-off place where he can rest.” Less than a month later, LeMay was in Washington, D.C., and his part in the war was over. On September 22, shortly after his arrival in the United States, the *Plain Dealer* published another pictorial on the final page of the issue, with General LeMay seated in a chair at his in-law’s Lakewood home, Janie on his lap and Angus the Scottie perched on his left leg. “MY DADDY’S BACK,” was the happy cry of Patricia Jane LeMay yesterday as she greeted her famous father, Maj. Gen. Curtis E. LeMay,” reported the caption below the photograph.² Their wish to be reunited permanently, conveyed through letters over the previous four years, appeared to be fulfilled.

The United States, too, was ready for some leave and perhaps “a return to normalcy,” although certainly a better “normal” than what existed for most Americans in the 1930s. The nation was victorious and now one of the most powerful societies on earth. The war had changed the face of geopolitics. It lifted the economy of the United States out of the Great Depression and forged its citizens’ sense of duty and purpose to face a new enemy—communism—chiefly represented and led by a former ally and similarly pow-

1. Cornelia Curtiss, “When Will He Be Home? Service Wives Await the Day When Husbands Recross Seas,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 26, 1945.

2. “MY DADDY’S BACK,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 22, 1945.

erful global player, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It established the legacy of America's "Greatest Generation" but also bolstered conflicting ideologies in a Cold War that would dominate world politics for the rest of the century. General Curtis LeMay came to play a central role in the new conflict, and Helen LeMay and Janie were with him throughout the journey.

In late September 1945, Arnold and Spaatz considered LeMay's role in the postwar air force. LeMay was mulling over important decisions himself. Soon after he arrived home, he was offered Ohio senator Harold H. Burton's seat in the Senate when Burton was raised to the Supreme Court.³ LeMay reportedly desired to help guide national policy in opposition to communism and against aggressive demobilization of the military. Of course, he supported the establishment of an independent air force and seriously considered accepting the spot offered to him by Ohio governor Frank Lausche to directly address these issues.⁴ For her part, Helen welcomed the possibility of joining Washington's political society; however, constitutional restrictions prevented LeMay from remaining in the air force while serving as a senator, which forced him to decline the opportunity and await orders from Arnold and Spaatz.⁵

General LeMay's technical expertise and intimate knowledge of the B-29 and bomber aircraft prompted the duo to apply his skills to research and development of new technologies. In October, he was assigned to head the AAF Air Material Command at Wright Field, Ohio, with General O'Donnell as his deputy in Washington to perform necessary administrative duties associated with the job. Helen "felt fine about the Ohio deal: it was our old stamping ground—our mutual native State—and why shouldn't we like to be in Ohio?"⁶ This command lasted briefly before he was appointed as deputy chief of air staff for the Research and Development (RAND) Corporation, established by Arnold to develop cutting-edge aerial technology, principally jet-engine aircraft and missile projects at this time. General LeMay was headquartered at the Pentagon and held the position from December 5, 1945, to October 1947.⁷

Meanwhile, Arnold's health continued to decline. General Spaatz succeeded him as air force chief of staff in February 1946 and completed the rapid demobilization of massive wartime forces, which had peaked at ap-

3. "LeMay Declines Ohio Senate Seat to Stick by Army," *Washington Post*, October 5, 1945.

4. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 249.

5. *Ibid.*, 250.

6. LeMay and Kantor, *Mission With LeMay*, 395.

7. "Statement of Service," CELMPR.

proximately 2.4 million officers and enlisted men in March 1944 and was reduced to roughly 500,000 by March 1946.⁸ Historically, the United States had demobilized its armed forces after wars, maintaining only a small peacetime military. Because of the threat posed by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin's leadership, LeMay, General George S. Patton of the army, and other American military commanders believed that demobilization was unwise.

Some American leaders saw the value of an enlarged nuclear-capable strategic air force as their primary tool to deter Soviet aggression worldwide. LeMay himself spoke to this in a lecture he presented on June 23, 1946, at an alumni meeting at Kenyon College, a small liberal arts school northeast of Columbus, Ohio. "We must revamp our war plans and reorganize our military power to meet this new type of warfare where time and space are virtually eliminated," he argued. "If we realize these facts and organize to meet them, then our country will be secure. If we insist on building a military machine to fight the *last [sic]* war, we will have no real security, and a tremendous expenditure of the taxpayers' money will have been wasted." On September 26, 1947, the air force gained its independence and with it the power to develop its strategic forces. The next month, Spaatz assigned LeMay to the top air force command in Europe (USAFE) with his headquarters located at Wiesbaden, Germany.

LeMay took command of the USAFE on October 10 and remained overseas, along with Helen and Janie, for almost a year to the day.¹⁰ His small family lived in the "mammoth" 102-room house of Adolph Henkle, which the air force had rented, staff of thirty-six included.¹¹ The hallmark of his short tenure there came with the first real confrontation between the Soviets and the West when Stalin blocked ground access to the American, British, and French zones of control in Berlin, surrounded by Soviet-controlled territory, beginning on June 24, 1948, in an effort to force the Western powers out of the city. To avoid a military confrontation, Western leaders led by General LeMay, General William H. Tunner (deputy chief of operations for the Military Air Transport Service), and General Lucius D. Clay (who held

8. Chauncey E. Sanders, "Redeployment and Demobilization," in *Services around the World*, vol. 7 of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 566–567.

9. Curtis LeMay, "Some Lessons of World War II," June 23, 1946, Command Assignment Papers, 1928–1965, Box B44, CELPLOC.

10. "Statement of Service," CELMPR.

11. JLLOHI.

command over the American Zone of Occupation in Germany), devised a twenty-four-hour-a-day airlift to keep West Berlin supplied, an operation that lasted for nearly a full year. LeMay was only involved until October, when he was assigned to the position that fostered, perhaps, the greatest achievements of his postwar air force career: commander of the Strategic Air Command (SAC). It was also the job he held for the longest period of time, serving until July 1957.

LeMay's predecessor, General George C. Kenney, had accomplished little as SAC's first CO after it was established in March 1946, and Spaatz decided to make a change in 1948.¹² SAC's importance to the air force and its future in the Cold War was paramount because it represented the air force's chief contribution to the overall U.S. military: the capability of delivering nuclear weapons, if necessary, against key targets in the Soviet Union, which maintained and fielded a much larger and even overwhelming conventional armed force in the Red Army.¹³

At the very least, American leaders, especially air force commanders, believed that SAC would be a deterrent against communist aggression.¹⁴ Stalin's blockade of Berlin brought the West's fears to a head. General LeMay's involvement in the airlift to save the city illustrated the challenge represented by communism and the potential of a strategic air force to thwart and/or prevent Soviet aggression. The phrase "peace through strength" came to define SAC, and "peace is our profession" was its motto.¹⁵

Over the course of eight years, LeMay transformed SAC into an organization that could deploy a large force of nuclear-capable bombers against almost any target on the globe at a moment's notice. He changed its "organizational culture" to reflect "the beliefs and values of LeMay and those who shared his personal history and experience [which] first became apparent in SAC's policies but eventually would manifest itself in the organization's institutions, routines, technology, and appearance."¹⁶ LeMay's purpose was simple: "My goal was to build a force that was so professional, so strong, so

12. General Kenney ran SAC based on prewar concepts that emphasized cross-training crews to overcome manpower shortages due to demobilization, with the idea that if war came there would be time to build up forces. He also had no cohesive plan for SAC's role in any future war. According to Melvin Deaile, he "failed to adjust SAC's operations, tactics, and culture to the external [political] environment. War could come at any time, Air Force leaders thought, and SAC had to be prepared." See Deaile, "The SAC Mentality," 113–116.

13. *Ibid.*, 87.

14. *Ibid.*, 103.

15. *Ibid.*, 242.

16. *Ibid.*, 120.

powerful that we would not have to fight,” he stated. “In other words, we had to build this deterrent force. And it had to be good. So I got guys who knew something about doing this, and we got busy and did it.”¹⁷

LeMay’s method was consistent with every command he had held in World War II—identify weaknesses in the organization and rebuild it from the ground up through constant training. SAC’s crews were on call twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, and were the elite among their peers worldwide. Perhaps the greatest evidence of his achievements as commander in chief of SAC was his adversary’s opinion of him and his command. Lieutenant General Russell Dougherty, who served as SAC chief from 1974 to 1977, questioned several senior Russian commanders about LeMay following the end of the Cold War. “They treated him with awe and respect and fear,” Dougherty remembered. “They feared he could do exactly what he said he could, and they were right. . . . The Russians that I’ve talked to, who were contemporaries, were very respectful of the gutsy guy that was LeMay. One of them called him one time ‘the gutsy guy,’ or at least it translated into that.”¹⁸

In 1957, LeMay was promoted to air force vice chief of staff, and in 1961 he achieved his highest position as air force chief of staff under President John F. Kennedy and Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson. LeMay’s service with the joint chiefs was primarily marked by his attempts to maintain SAC as the preeminent U.S. military force and the decision by Kennedy and his secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, to pursue a policy of “Flexible Response,” which called for a “flexible and balanced range of appropriate response, conventional and nuclear, to all levels of aggression or threats of aggression.”¹⁹ Instead of allocating huge parts of the air force’s budget to intercontinental bombers, McNamara and others wanted to distribute more money in support of missile systems and conventional air forces, primarily represented by the Tactical Air Command (TAC), to provide the capability to support ground troops in places like Vietnam, where the Cold War was being fought through proxies.²⁰

In 1965, General LeMay retired from the armed forces; he had a short, unsuccessful stint in private business as CEO of the Network Electronics Corporation in Chatsworth, California, and a catastrophic foray into poli-

17. Kohn and Harahan, *Strategic Air Warfare*, 84.

18. General Russell E. Dougherty, interview by Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, 17.

19. Deaile, “The SAC Mentality,” 297.

20. *Ibid.*

tics as George Wallace's running mate in the presidential election of 1968.²¹

General LeMay's World War II letters to Helen provide us with a picture of the general as a man, husband, and father. They reflect the straightforward, terse, and sometimes gruff character that history has molded as LeMay "the commander," but they also reveal another side of LeMay. LeMay "the man" had a dry, quick wit, which his closest comrades knew well but which was even more evident in his correspondence with Helen. LeMay, who intimidated subordinates and peers as a commander, had to remain cautious when he dealt with his wife, because reprisal might be forthcoming in her next letter if he was too brusque with her. If she was upset with him, he did what he could to assuage her anger except in the most stressful periods when he made clear the realities of command in wartime.

LeMay was quick to send gifts to his Helen and Janie and make sure they were taken care of materially, and even spoiled to a degree. He relied on Helen as a confidant to express his worries and fears about his performance and grief at the loss of subordinates. He also used his wife as a correspondent to relay news and gossip about their friends and family back home. As a body of work, the letters demonstrated the strength of the LeMays' relationship despite the significant differences in their personalities. As a father, LeMay's letters indicated that he was deeply interested in his daughter's development and regretted his absence in her life. He had strong opinions about her well-being and was always direct with his input about necessary decisions concerning Janie. Finally, these letters illustrate that he had his flaws and prejudices, especially in his descriptions about locals and locales in Asia.

Following Wallace's failed bid for the presidency, the LeMays returned to life as retirees. Janie had married an air force doctor named James Lodge, and they produced a son named Charles, the LeMays' only grandchild.²² Throughout his retirement, General LeMay continued to serve as adviser to the air force and was called upon by subsequent SAC leaders and other air force commanders such as General T. R. Milton, General P. K. Carlton, General Russell E. Dougherty, and General John Chain among many others. He was also active with the Air Force Historical Association, giving a number of oral history interviews in the 1960s and 1970s, many of which were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

Helen, too, served the air force during LeMay's career and after his

21. "Helen LeMay: Many Interests," *Washington Post*, October 4, 1968.

22. JLOHI.

retirement, centering her efforts on air force families including such programs as SAC's Dependent Assistance Program; the Wherry Housing Bill; the Soldiers', Sailors', Marines', Coast Guard, and Airmen's Club of New York; the Junior Army-Navy Club Guild Organization; and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation. She considered herself a member of the air force as much as her husband but was outspoken with a lively sense of humor, in contrast to "the General," as she called him in their later years. Speaking of her membership in the Capitol Speaker's Club, which she had joined in 1959, Helen commented: "My husband says I talk all the time, but I know I do it better now."²³ During LeMay's short political campaign tour in fall 1968, Helen was described by one reporter as "the unflappable candidate's wife who says whatever's on her mind."²⁴ As the "strawberry blond Mrs. LeMay" noted, "I have done it all my life. . . . The only difference is that I was selling the Air Force."²⁵

General Curtis E. LeMay's contributions to the United States were many. He was instrumental to the rise and success of the air force in the interwar period and in World War II, and he helped secure the service's equal status with the army and navy, and even its primacy, during the 1950s with his administration of the Strategic Air Command. In the roles of chief and vice chief of staff he was less successful, and his involvement in private business and politics somewhat tarnished his legacy. It is our hope that these letters have provided a valuable new resource with which to examine his character and his life.

23. Donnie Radcliffe, "First Lady Job Wouldn't Bother Mrs. Curtis Le May," (*Washington*) *Evening Star*, October 23, 1968.

24. Ruth Dean, "Concerned with Image Thrust on Husband," (*Washington*) *Evening Star*, October 15, 1968.

25. Elizabeth Shelton, "Mrs. LeMay Plans Ohio Campaigning: She'll Help the Ticket," *Washington Post*, October 15, 1968.

APPENDICES

HEADQUARTERS, THIRD BOMB DIVISION, ELVEDEN HALL,
ENGLAND, APRIL 28, 1944¹

Dear Larry,

Thank you very much for your note. We are happy to hear of your promotion. It is very good news to us over here. Auggie and the rest of the boys join me in extending congratulations.

I'm curious to know what happened to the B-29 plan now that I am remaining here. I hope it doesn't mean too radical a change. We all have high hopes for them and I expect we will hear big things from them soon.

I have been trying to get two new formations into combat, one designed by the tactical school and the other a modification of the formations we have been flying. Both are basically twelve ship formations. Due to our present rate of operations it has been almost impossible to get any training except the barest essentials, but with luck we should be ready next month. I'll let you know how it progresses in combat.

Best Regards,
Curt

1. Major General L. S. Kuter to Major General Curtis LeMay, April 13, 1944, CELMPR; and Major General Curtis LeMay to Major General L. S. Kuter, April 27, 1944, CELMPR.

**305th Bomb Group MIA/Destroyed Aircraft and MIA/KIA Personnel,
November 17, 1942–May 18, 1943**

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
17-Nov	10	0	0	305th's first mission, diversion
18-Nov	20	0	0	Diversion
22-Nov	23	0	0	Lorient U-Boat Base
23-Nov	20	0	0	Saint-Nazaire U-Boat Base
Monthly Total	0	0	0	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
6-Dec	24	1	10	First downed bomber, Lille Industrial Area
12-Dec	21	0	0	Rouen/Sotteville Marshalling Yards
20-Dec	23	0	0	Romilly-sur-Seine Air Depot
30-Dec	24	1	11	First KIA, Lorient U-Boat Base
Monthly Total	92	2	21	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
3-Jan	22	0	0	Saint-Nazaire U-Boat Base
13-Jan	23	1	11	Lille Industrial Area
23-Jan	22	0	0	Brest U-Boat Base
27-Jan	18	1	10	Wilhelmshaven Naval Base
Monthly Total	85	2	21	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
4-Feb	18	2	20	Emden Industrial Area
14-Feb	17	0	0	Hamm Marshalling Yards
16-Feb	18	2	21	Saint-Nazaire Port Area
26-Feb	20	3	unknown	Wilhelmshaven U-Boat Yard
27-Feb	12	0	0	Brest U-Boat Base
Monthly Total	85	7	41	

2. All data acquired from Roger A. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary* (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1990).

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
4-Mar	18	0	0	Hamm Marshalling Yards and Rotterdam
6-Mar	18	0	0	Lorient U-Boat Base
8-Mar	16	1	10	Rennes Marshalling Yards
12-Mar	17	0	0	Rouen/Sotteville Marshalling Yards
13-Mar	18	0	0	Amiens/Longeau Marshalling Yards
18-Mar	18	0	0	Vegesack U-Boat Yard
22-Mar	18	0	0	Wilhelmshaven U-Boat Yard
28-Mar	19	0	0	Rouen/Sotteville Marshalling Yards
31-Mar	19	2	1	Rotterdam Shipping Yard
Monthly Total	161	3	11	
DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
4-Apr	18	3	30	Paris Renault Works
5-Apr	18	0	0	Antwerp Industrial Area
16-Apr	21	1	10	Lorient U-Boat Base
17-Apr	28	0	0	Bremen Aviation Industry
Monthly Total	85	4	40	
DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
1-May	21	1	10	Saint-Nazaire U-Boat Base
4-May	27	0	0	Antwerp Industrial Area
13-May	27	1	10	Méaulte Airfield
14-May	28	0	0	Kiel Shipyards
17-May	21	4	37	Lorient U-Boat Base
Monthly Total	124	6	57	
Grand Total	632	24	191	
Total Missions Flown	35			

**4th Bomb Wing/3rd Bomb Division MIA/Destroyed Aircraft and MIA/KIA Personnel,
June 19–November 19, 1943**

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
22-Jun	84	5	50	Hüls Rail Industry
25-Jun	78	3	30	Convoy off Juist Island
26-Jun	81	0	0	Le Mans Airfield
28-Jun	71	3	0	Saint-Nazaire Lock Gates and Port Area
29-Jun	84	0	0	Le Mans Aviation Industry and Marshalling Yard
Monthly Total	398	11	80	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
4-Jul	83	1	10	La Pallice Lock Gates
10-Jul	101	2	21	Le Bourget Airfield
14-Jul	84	5	41	Le Bourget Airfield
17-Jul	125	2	15	Convoy and Amsterdam Aviation Industry
24-Jul	129	1	0	Bergen and Trondheim Port Areas
25-Jul	141	5	41	Kiel Shipyards
26-Jul	122	17	137	Hanover Rail Industry and Hamburg U-Boat Yard
28-Jul	120	16	134	Oschersleben Aviation Industry
29-Jul	81	4	40	Warnemünde Aviation Industry
30-Jul	67	6	45	Kassel Aviation Industry
Monthly Total	1,053	59	484	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
12-Aug	147	3	22	Bonn and other targets of opportunity
15-Aug	147	2	21	Merville, Lille/Vendeville, and Vitry-en-Artois Airfields
16-Aug	66	0	0	Poix Abbeville and Airfields
17-Aug	146	25	204	Regensburg Aircraft Industry
19-Aug	45	2	10	Woensdrecht Airfield
24-Aug	42	1	1	Conches, Evreux, and Fauville Airfields

24-Aug	85	5	30	Bordeaux and Merignac Airfields
27-Aug	65	0	0	Watten V-Weapons Site
31-Aug	149	0	0	Amiens and Glisy Airfield
Monthly Total	892	38	288	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
2-Sep	152	0	0	Airfields in northwest France
3-Sep	130	5	40	Dummy Air Field, Dieppe and Meulan les Mureaux Airfields, and Caudron-Renault Industrial Area
6-Sep	157	19	182	Stuttgart and various targets of opportunity
7-Sep	147	0	0	Watten V-Weapons Site
8-Sep	150	2	21	Paris Industrial Area, and Beaumont-sur-Oise and Beauvais-Tillé Airfields
9-Sep	148	9	77	La Pallice Port Area, and Château-Bernard, Cognac, La Leau, and La Rochelle Airfields
26-Sep	84	2	20	Reims and Champagne Airfields
27-Sep	141	5	41	Emden Industrial Area and targets of opportunity
Monthly Total	1,109	42	381	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
2-Oct	186	1	10	Emden Industrial Area
4-Oct	168	6	29	Saarlautern Industrial Area, Saint-Dizier and Robingson Airfields, and Sarreguemines and Saarbrücken Marshalling Yards
8-Oct	170	16	140	Bremen City
9-Oct	152	7	41	Marienburg Industrial Area and Gotenhafen Port Area
10-Oct	133	30	297	Münster Railway and Waterway
14-Oct	142	17	147	Schweinfurt Industrial Area

20-Oct	109	8	67	Düren Industrial Area
Monthly Total	1,060	85	731	
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DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
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3-Nov	221	6	60	Wilhelmshaven
5-Nov	194	7	57	Gelsenkirchen
7-Nov	63	0	0	Düren Industrial Area and Randerath
11-Nov	167	4	40	Münster Marshalling Yards
13-Nov	154	4	30	Bremen Port Area
16-Nov	160	2	12	Rjukan Industrial Area
19-Nov	167	1	10	Targets of opportunity at the German-Netherlands Border
Monthly Total	1,126	24	209	
<hr/>				
Grand Total	5,638	259	2,173	
<hr/>				
Total Missions				
Flown	46			
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**3rd Bomb Division MIA/Destroyed Aircraft and MIA/KIA Personnel,
January 19–June 30, 1944**

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
21-Jan	291	1	16	Pas-de-Calais and Cherbourg V-Weapons Site
24-Jan	272	3	22	Zukunft Power Station
29-Jan	309	14	139	Frankfurt
30-Jan	274	3	31	Brunswick City and Hanover
Monthly Total	1,146	21	208	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
3-Feb	323	2	22	Wilhelmshaven Port Area and Emden Area
4-Feb	302	11	100	Frankfurt am Main Marshalling Yards
5-Feb	182	6	23	Villacoublay
6-Feb	189	4	30	Saint-André-de-l'Eure and Évreux-Fauville Airfields
8-Feb	116	5	51	Frankfurt Marshalling Yards
10-Feb	169	30	297	Brunswick Industrial Area
13-Feb	277	6	unknown	12 Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites
20-Feb	314	7	63	Tutow Airfield and Rostock
21-Feb	281	8	77	Brunswick, Hanover, Alhorn Airfield, Diepholz Airfield, and Verden Airfield
24-Feb	304	5	50	Rostock
25-Feb	290	13	114	Regensburg
28-Feb	124	5	43	Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites
29-Feb	226	1	10	Brunswick Aviation Industry
Monthly Total	3,097	103	880	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
2-Mar	106	1	10	Chartres Air Depot
3-Mar	295	6	60	Targets of opportunity
4-Mar	238	12	101	Berlin/Kleinmachnow

6-Mar	242	38	354	Berlin suburbs
8-Mar	179	24	236	Berlin/Erkner, Wildau
9-Mar	137	4	13	Berlin
11-Mar	62	1	10	Münster Marshalling Yards
15-Mar	187	1	11	Brunswick Industrial Area
16-Mar	221	13	131	Augsburg/Ulm
18-Mar	221	8	73	Munich City, Oberpfaffenhofen, and Lechfeld
19-Mar	64	0	0	Marquise-Mimoyecques V-Weapons Sites
20-Mar	122	3	11	Frankfurt and Bingen
22-Mar	187	3	30	Berlin
23-Mar	224	17	161	Brunswick
26-Mar	145	0	0	Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites
27-Mar	256	2	31	Bordeaux/Mérignac, Cayeux-sur-Mer, and Chartres Airfields
28-Mar	191	2	28	Châteaudun and Chartres Airfields
Monthly Total	3,077	135	1,260	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
1-Apr	245	0	0	Ludwigshafen
8-Apr	256	4	41	Quakenbrück Airfield, Achmer Airfield, Rheine Airfield, Twente Enschede, Hesepe, and Handorf
9-Apr	151	12	120	Posen, Warnemünde, Rostock, and Marienhe
10-Apr	248	3	10	Various airfields
11-Apr	302	34	332	Arnimswalde Industrial Area, Pölitz, and Rostock
12-Apr	174	3	16	Schkeuditz, Halle, and Leipzig
13-Apr	243	20	173	Augsburg City
18-Apr	221	14	141	Berlin Area: Oranienburg, Annahof, Brandenburg, Luneburg, and Rathenow
19-Apr	246	0	57	Lippstadt and Werl Airfields
20-Apr	282	5	40	Pas-de-Calais and Cherbourg V-Weapons Site
22-Apr	248	6	55	Hamm Marshalling Yard and Soest

24-Apr	243	9	78	Friedrichshafen Aviation Industry and Industrial Area, Manzell Aviation Industry, Loewenthal Aviation Industry, and Neckarsulm Industrial Area
25-Apr	126	0	0	French target: Dijon/Longvic; only two WIA
26-Apr	183	1	0	Brunswick Industrial Area, Hildesheim/Hanover; only one WIA
27-Apr	187	1	10	Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites
28-Apr	106	2	21	Sottevast V-Weapons Site
29-Apr	218	28	264	Berlin, Magdeburg, and Brandenburg
30-Apr	124	0	0	Clermont-Ferrand/Aulnat Airfield
Monthly Total	3,803	142	1,358	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
1-May	187	1	9	Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites
1-May	125	3	20	Metz, Brussels, and Sarreguemines
7-May	270	3	33	Marshalling Yards
8-May	500	26	262	Berlin
8-May	164	6	49	Berlin, Brunswick, Magdeburg, Brandenburg, Brussels, and Schaerbeek
9-May	313	3	22	Glacierie and Sottevast V-Weapons Sites and Brussels/Schaerbeek Marshalling Yards
11-May	70	4	31	Juvincourt, Laon-Athies, Laon-Couvron, Lille-Vendeville, and Chièvres Airfields
11-May	609	9	85	Chaumont Marshalling Yard
				Numerous marshalling yards in Belgium and Germany

12-May	295	42	380	Zwickau and Bruex Oil Industry, Chemnitz, Gera Marshalling Yard, and Hof
13-May	199	1	10	Osnabrück Marshalling Yard
19-May	175	11	64	Berlin
20-May	271	6	34	Liège and Brussels Marshalling Yards
22-May	438	6	82	Kiel Port Area
23-May	1,045	6	32	French airfields and rail targets
24-May	1,106	34	486	Berlin
25-May	388	3	29	Rail installations and airfields in France and Belgium
27-May	395	8	71	Karlsruhe Marshalling Yard, Strasbourg and Meinau Aviation Industry, Strasbourg Marshalling Yard, Woippy Aviation Industry, and Fécamp Gun Battery
28-May	971	30	254	Primaries were German oil industry targets; some secondaries—airfields, marshalling yards, etc.—were attacked
29-May	694	29	253	Pölitz oil targets, Tutow Air Depot, Rendsburg Airfield, Misdroy, Schwerin, Leipzig/Mockau Aviation Industry, and Leipzig/Heiterblick Aviation Industry
30-May	341	3	23	Münster/Handorf and Diepholz Airfields, Reims, Troyes, and Schaerbeek Marshalling Yards, Brussels, and Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites
31-May	778	2	10	Osnabrück, Schwerte, Oeske, and Hamm Marshalling Yards, and French and Belgian rail targets
Monthly Total	9,334	236	2,239	

DATE	SORTIES DISPATCHED	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA	TARGET
2-Jun	1,168	2	22	Pas-de-Calais V-Weapons Sites, Paris railroad targets, Conches Airfield, Beaumont-sur-Oise Airfield, and Caen-Carpiquet Airfield
3-Jun	439	0	0	Pas-de-Calais
4-Jun	571	1	1	Pas-de-Calais
5-Jun	670	7	48	Cherbourg and Pas-de-Calais coastal defenses
6-Jun	2,587	6	35	Coastal defenses
7-Jun	575	6	35	Tactical targets, north-western France
8-Jun	1,178	7	58	Rail targets and airfields in France
10-Jun	507	1	6	Tactical targets, France
11-Jun	471	3	20	Tactical targets, France
12-Jun	1,442	11	65	Sixteen airfields in France and six railroad bridges in the Rennes/Saint-Nazaire Area
14-Jun	542	7	15	Airfields in France and the Low Countries; construction, supply, and one oil refinery
15-Jun	1,361	5	18	Airfields and rail targets in northwestern France, and oil targets in western Germany
Monthly Total	11,511	56	323	
Grand Total	31,968	693	6,268	
Total Missions				
Flown	87			

305th Bomb Group Aggregate Casualties, November 17, 1942–May 18, 1943

	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA
Total Casualties for Period	24	191
Total Sorties for Period	632	
Total Missions for Period	35	

4th Bomb Wing/3rd Bomb Division Casualty Comparisons of Major Raids and Months, June 22–November 19, 1943

CAMPAIGN	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA
First Regensburg, August 17, 1943	25	204
Stuttgart, September 6, 1943	19	182
Bremen, October 8, 1943	16	140
Münster, October 10, 1943	30	297
Schweinfurt, October 14, 1943	17	147
First German Oil Raid, May 12, 1944	42	380
Total Casualties June	11	80
Total Casualties July	59	484
Total Casualties August	38	288
Total Casualties September	42	381
Total Casualties October	85	731
Total Casualties November	24	209
Total Casualties for Period	259	2,173
Total Sorties for Period	5,638	
Total Missions for Period	46	

**3rd Bomb Division Casualty Comparisons of Major Campaigns and Months,
January 19–June 30, 1944**

CAMPAIGN	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED/MIA	CREW KIA/MIA
Big Week, February 20–25	33	304
First Berlin Raids, March 4–9	78	704
Baiting Campaign, April 8–13	76	692
Second Oil Raid Series, May 27–29	67	578
Total Casualties January	21	208
Total Casualties February	103	880
Total Casualties March	135	1,260
Total Casualties April	142	1,358
Total Casualties May	236	2,239
Total Casualties June	56	323
Total Casualties for Period	693	6,268
Total Sorties for Period	31,968	
Total Missions for Period	87	

ARMY HOUR PROGRAM¹, MARCH 11, 1945
(MARIANAS SEQUENCE)

STEELE: This is Major Ted Steele with the Twentieth Air Force on Guam. And here is the air commander who planned and directed the devastating B-29 fire raids over Japan this weekend . . . commanding general of the Twenty-First Bomber Command . . . Major General Curtis E. LeMay.

LEMAY: Ever since the first report of “bombs away” over Tokyo some forty-eight hours ago, I have been receiving additional information on the results of our incendiary strike against Japan.

These results have all been good. Nine thousand seven hundred acres of urban Tokyo are now twisted, gutted rubble. Hundreds of war business establishments—many important administrative buildings—and thousands of home industries were burned down in the fifteen square miles where the fire blazed hottest.

Among the targets lying in ruins in the destroyed area are the Ueno Railroad Station—which we have hit before . . . the Rising Sun Petroleum Terminal . . . the Ogura Oil Company . . . the Nisshim Spinning Mill . . . Japan Machine Industry . . . the Marunouchi Telephone Exchange . . . Kanda Market . . . and many other keystones of Tokyo’s commercial and industrial life.

To get a clearer picture of what this means, let’s make a comparison with one or two principal American cities. Our fire raid on Tokyo burned down an area roughly equal to all of downtown Manhattan in New York—with a large portion of the Brooklyn waterfront and congested urban sections thrown in.

The B-29s devastated a region as large as the main government building area in Washington, D.C.—plus much of Georgetown, too. You can work it out for your own city or town—if you picture it lying in ruins with an area more than a hundred blocks long and more than forty blocks wide—nearly ten thousand acres of destruction.

As you have heard or read by now, more than three hundred B-29s of the Twenty-First Bomber Command took part in this mission. They came from all three of our Marianas bases—from Saipan, from Tinian, and from

1. *Army Hour*, January 7, 1945–March 25, 1945, Box 60; Public Relation Division, News Branch, Radio Scripts, 1942–1945; Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, 1791–1948, Record Group 107; National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Guam. This was the largest force we have yet put into the air against the Jap empire.

Naturally, we are feeling pretty good about this mission—its size . . . and its results. But there is one thing I want to emphasize—and that is that we are still a long way from the attainment of our full striking force.

The Twenty-First Bomber Command has been operating against Japan from the Marianas for just a little more than three months—about one hundred days. In this last mission to Tokyo, we hit the Jap with more than three times as many B-29s as we had over the empire in our first strike, last Thanksgiving . . . this is what I'd call an encouraging growth. You can be sure—and the Japs can be sure—we intend to keep it up. When General Arnold sent me to assume command here in January, I promised to increase the tonnage of bombs dropped on Japan. If the Japs persist in keeping on with this war, I now promise that they have nothing to look forward to but the complete destruction of their cities.

As commander of the air crew members who fly and fight these missions—and the men on the ground whose work makes these strikes possible—I have something else to say at this time. I think the best way to say it is to read you a message I sent today to every member of this command:

“Your determination, skill, and guts have delivered a stunning blow to the empire of the rising sun. You took to the enemy and dumped upon him the greatest bomb load ever carried over great distances.

“Today, over fifteen square miles of his capital is in smoking ruins and is ravaged by still burning fires. I heartily commend commanders . . . the combat crews . . . and the hardworking maintenance and staff people on their accomplishments on this historic operation.

“The enemy has been hit hard—but needs more treatment. I enjoin all personnel to demonstrate continuously the fighting spirit which made this mission successful.”

STEELE: You have heard Major General Curtis E. LeMay, commanding general of the Twenty-First Bomber Command, Twentieth Air Force. And now—from Guam—the *Army Hour* returns to New York.

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