

Dear Hearts And Gentle People

Dinah Shore



May 15, 1940

Dear Mary,

I had a vivid dream last night in which we were housed in a huge old building. A shiny brown pipe came down through the ceiling. On the spur of the moment I reached up and grabbed it and found it pulled through quite easily. I had been thinking before I went to bed what a coward I would be if I were exposed to some of the dangers to which people in the war zone are. I interpreted that as meaning one possibly rises to the occasion when it arrives.

They sat across from each other in companionable silence. Two greying heads bowed, concentrating on their respective tasks. He was reading *The Dutton Advance*. She was labouriously knitting a sock, standard issue khaki. One ball at 80¢ would knit one pair. She hated the colour, but was determined to do her share for the war effort. The previous day, the Red Cross work room gang had held a tea and display of their work. She had made 75 little sox, Dort made 39 mitts and her sister, Cath, had 24. They took in \$26.00 and were so thrilled they could hardly contain themselves.



June 19, 1940

Dear Mary,

I heard today that Mrs. Lucas has left town. Where am I to get a cheap permanent now?

Isn't the war baffling? I wonder what on earth is going on in France, there is evidently treachery somewhere. We will not know much until the result of Hitler's and Mussolini's conference is made public.

THE DUTTON ADVANCE

April 18, 1940

READ FOR RELIEF FROM WAR-STRAIN

Public libraries can contribute enormously to the "nerve tone" of the civilian population in wartime, Miss Winnifred Kydd, former dean of women at Queen's University, told the Ontario Library Association at its fortieth annual conference.

Miss Kydd said reading exerted a steadying influence on nerves subjected to the strain of war. By keeping people informed and expanding their knowledge, she added, it helped to prepare them for the peace to follow.

LOCAL BRIEFS

Donald Graham has joined the R.C.A.F.

Buddy Rogers, his orchestra and show company, will open the dancing season at the Port Stanley ballroom on Friday, May 3rd.



The Bambridges: Jack and John, Mary and Elona

On the radio the Andrews Sisters be-bopped in harmony. Almost imperceptibly two right feet tapped in rhythm to the tune.

Jack and Elona Bambridge had been married for over 25 years. They had survived a previous war, family tragedy and the Great Depression. Unlike most couples of their generation, they both had busy careers. Jack had his own business, Bambridge Jewellers. He was a scoutmaster, played badminton and lawn bowled, led the band and enjoyed certain notoriety as an amateur magician. Elona was the town librarian, organist at St. John's United Church and an active member of the Red Cross. She also read tea leaves.



September 25, 1940

Dear Mary,

We received our quota at the R.C. work room for refugee sewing to be sent to England. We have two months in which to get it done and shipped. I can't see how it can be done. Dresses, slips, underwear for women and skirts and everything for boys and girls. Shirts for men, sweaters, sox, mitts. We will have to work on Sundays too if we expect to do it all.

"What would you like for your birthday, dear?" Elona asked.

Jack thought about it for a minute. "Nothing," he finally replied. "I seem to have everything I need."

"Well, aren't you the lucky one," his wife laughed.

Their daughter, Mary, was living 40 miles away in London, working at London Life, living with a bunch of girls and having a hoot. Often on weekends she came home on the bus or caught a ride. At 23, Mary was still Daddy's little girl. Since she had moved away, Mary had not missed one week without a visit or a letter. Elona, likewise, wrote to Mary twice a week, usually during quiet moments at the library, filling her in on who was doing what around town.



Mary (left) and roommates in London, including Alice Johnston (second from right) of Dutton.

THE DUTTON ADVANCE

May 30, 1940

RED CROSS SOCIETY

An urgent appeal for hospital supplies and refugee clothing has been sent out through the Provincial headquarters of the Society to all branches and in response the local workroom will be open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons from 2 to 5 p.m. and Saturday evening from 8 to 10. The Canadian Red Cross had made stores, which had already been shipped overseas, available to both British and French Red Cross as well as cabling a large sum of money. The women at home are asked to replenish these supplies and that there will be an immediate response from local workers there is no doubt. Provincial headquarters is asking for surgical towels, rolled bandages, hospital bedgowns, pyjamas, pillow cases, all kinds of refugee clothes and all types of knitting except wristlets and knee caps.

Son, John, was in the army now, but still near enough in Woodstock to come home and visit his parents when he had a free weekend. Hopefully, his skills as a mechanic would keep him there.

They had gone to Pinafore Park in St. Thomas to see the "Elgins" on parade. Elona didn't know how she would feel if she was actually seeing them "off". She wept just thinking about it. It made her so sad to see the boys from town going past. Some looked all in, as if their feet were killing them.



December 4, 1940

Dear Mary,

Isn't this frightful? I ploughed through snow half way to my knees coming down today. It is so cold too! Business is paralyzed: I love that expression. The snow is still coming down. I wish I would hear from John. Perhaps there will be a letter tonight. Would you like to knit a scarf?

Don't forget her...
SHE'S A GOOD SOLDIER TOO!
Give Mother a
BULOVA

MOTHER'S DAY MAY 13th

FOR THE FINEST OF MOTHERS — GIVE THE PERFECT OF GIFTS — A BULOVA!

J. Bambridge
Jeweller

The Dutton Advance

THE DUTTON ADVANCE

June 6, 1940

A READY RESPONSE

Citizens Ready to Receive Refugee Children from Europe

Dutton and Dunwich residents have shown a commendable degree of cooperation with the rest of Elgin in the campaign to place refugee children from war-torn Europe in homes in this locality.

Organizations to care for the youngsters being brought to safety from Nazi frightfulness have been set up under the Children's Aid Society of the city and county and there has been a ready response to the appeal for material and shelter.

Temporary accommodations are being provided for the children on their arrival in the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. The immediate need is for used or new mattresses, sleeping bags, wool blankets and quilts.

Records are to be kept of all the refugees, with their photographs, when they arrive, in order that full details may be available in the event of parents being alive and later seeking their little ones. There is a possibility that numbers of the children have been separated from their parents during the evacuation of Belgium and Holland. Efforts will be made to get the history of each child, its age, what town or village it is from and also the names of parents and brothers and sisters.

August 22, 1940

LOCAL BRIEFS

D.M. Treadgold, Louis Burns, John Bambridge and Harold Haines are in camp at London with the second Elgin battalion.



December 4, 1940

Dear Mary,

The Elgins are going to be moved and the Elgin Red Cross Society is going to give them 600 scarves. They have to be in by the 20th. I took wool home yesterday then found last night I had only one No. 8 needle. Where the other one is, I can't imagine. I suppose I shall have to buy a pair now.

Their world seemed idyllic and quaint. But no one in the 1940s was safe from the consequences of the Second World War, no matter how small their town or how happy their family. It permeated every aspect of their lives.



December 11, 1940

Dear Mary,

The Women's Institute are packing boxes for all the Dutton boys in uniform. They have done 27 boxes, aren't they industrious? They are now going to have a cup of tea. I feel rather embarrassed at having them send John a box, but all must be treated alike.

THE DUTTON ADVANCE

October 31, 1940

WON HONORS AT AIR SCHOOL

John Ruston Awarded Trophy For Most Proficient Air Observer Student

The Edmonton Journal of October 24th contains a report of the first graduation class from Edmonton's No. 2 Air Observer school of which John B. Ruston, of Dutton, was a member. Mr. Ruston was awarded a trophy as the most proficient air observer student. The Journal's report of the graduation in part follows:

"First graduation class from Edmonton's No. 2 Air Observer school, a group of keen, hard working young men who knew their way around the skies, was congratulated by Hon. J.C. Bowen, lieutenant-governor at the training grounds Thursday...He had special words of praise for Leading Aircraftman J.B. Ruston of Dutton, most proficient student."

From Edmonton the graduates go to a bombing and gunnery school for a six-week course and from there to an advanced school for a four-week course in celestial navigation. The course totals 26 weeks.



Hyla Duncanson, John and Mary Bambridge