

POW Monitoring and the Messages of Alfred R. Young

by

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The topic of POW monitoring—shortwave listeners transcribing messages from POWs that were transmitted by Axis shortwave broadcasters during World War II and sending them to the POW’s family—has received increased attention in recent years. Lisa L. Spahr devotes her book, [*World War II Radio Heroes—Letters of Compassion*](#), to an exploration of many of the 69 cards and letters received by her great grandparents during the more than two years that their son, her grandfather, Robert May Spahr, was a POW in Germany. POW monitoring is also addressed in the [“DX History/POW Monitoring”](#) section of the [ontheshortwaves](#) website, as well as in the sources cited in my [review](#) of *World War II Radio Heroes* and in my own book, [*On the Short Waves, 1923-1945: Broadcast Listening in the Pioneer Days of Radio*](#).

Now another chapter has been added to the story. Al R. Young, in his 320-page book, [*My Father’s Captivity*](#), tells the story of his father, Army Staff Sgt. Alfred R. Young, who was a POW in the Far East from May 1942, when General Wainwright surrendered the Philippines, to the war’s end in August 1945. He was imprisoned first in the Philippines, and then, from November 1942, in Kawasaki Camp 2B, near Yokohama, Japan. Alfred had enlisted in 1939 at age 19. His enlistment would have expired within days of the American surrender.

The Axis POW messages most widely heard in the United States were broadcast from Berlin and Tokyo. However, POW messages were also sent from the stations in Rome, Singapore, Saigon, Shanghai, Manila, Manchuria and Batavia, Java (now Jakarta, Indonesia) during the time these areas were under Japanese control. The Young messages were broadcast from Tokyo.

Alfred was from Tulsa, Oklahoma, where his father and mother, police officer Samuel P. Young and wife Ollie, lived. It was a large family—Alfred had seven brothers and sisters: Albert, Cornell, Jim, Lindy, Owen, Ruby and Verlin. *My Father’s Captivity* deals with many aspects of Alfred’s ordeal, and the POW messages are but a small part of it (four pages). However, the book is supplemented by the website of [Al Young Studios](#) in Orem, Utah, which, [at this page](#), contains images of all the POW messages received by the Youngs, together with much other documentation of Alfred Young’s story. This is probably the largest single collection of POW monitoring messages that is publicly available. ([Another page](#) provides alternate access to the messages.)

The purpose of this article is to review the messages on the Al Young website and see what they tell us about POW monitoring. Numbers in parentheses (# __) refer to the image

number on the website. A few of the images are reproduced here, and they are provided as a public service of Al Young Studios (www.alyoung.com and www.benhavenarchives.org), whose cooperation is gratefully acknowledged. The reader will benefit most from this article if it is read in conjunction with viewing the images on the website.

The images.

The images are of high quality, and the scanning was very thorough, including even the blank backs of letters and envelopes. Excepting the blank images, the total number of posted images of POW messages is 340. These include two official letters and two official telegrams from the government. The images of communications from civilian writers include 94 letters (many of more than one page), 46 postcards (scanned front and back) and one greeting card; a scan of a recording disk which contained a message from Alfred; a scan of another recording disk that appears to contain a message from another POW; plus, in most cases, associated envelopes.

The dates and the letters and cards.

The communications relate to messages from Alfred that were broadcast on several different dates. The bulk were for messages of September 19, 1943 and October 28/29, 1943.

Date	Letters and cards Received	Percent of Total
September 19, 1943	95	66%
October 28/29, 1943 ¹	36	25%
November 7, 1943	2	1%
September 18, 1944	4	3%
October 22, 1944	7	5%
A general communication	<u>1</u>	-
	145	

In addition, on October 5, 1943 one of the above writers (#98) heard a message from a Canadian POW who said that he was with three other POWs and that one was Alfred, for whom he relayed a brief message.

The civilian writers.

The total number of civilian writers (that is, excluding the official communications, see below) was 118. Some wrote to the Youngs more than once, either because they heard Alfred's message more than once or because they had established some correspondence with the Youngs.

¹Two reporters (#135, 136) gave the date as October 29.

Most of the 118 writers were from California and Washington. States and provinces with two or more writers were:

California	59
Washington	17
Nevada	4
Idaho	3
Oregon	3
British Columbia	2
New Mexico	2
Oklahoma	2
Pennsylvania	2
Texas	2
Utah	2

Other places heard from were Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Manitoba and Ontario (the same writer wrote from two locations), Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wyoming, as well as India, New Guinea, South Africa, and a ship at sea.

Of the 98 writers whose gender could be determined (some used only initials), 60 were women and 38 were men. Three others wrote as Mr. and Mrs.

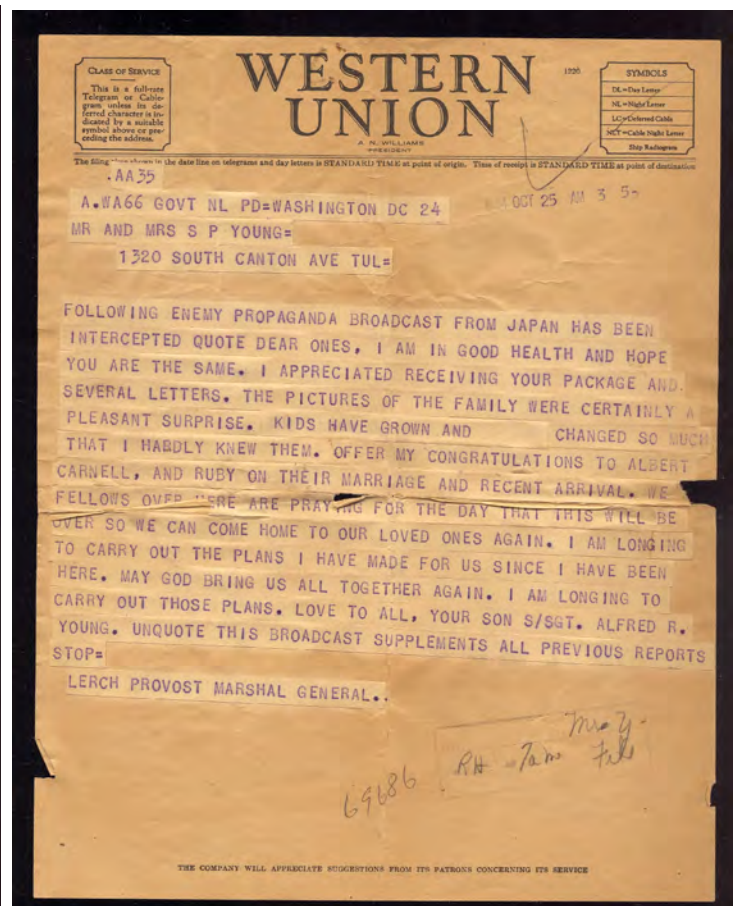
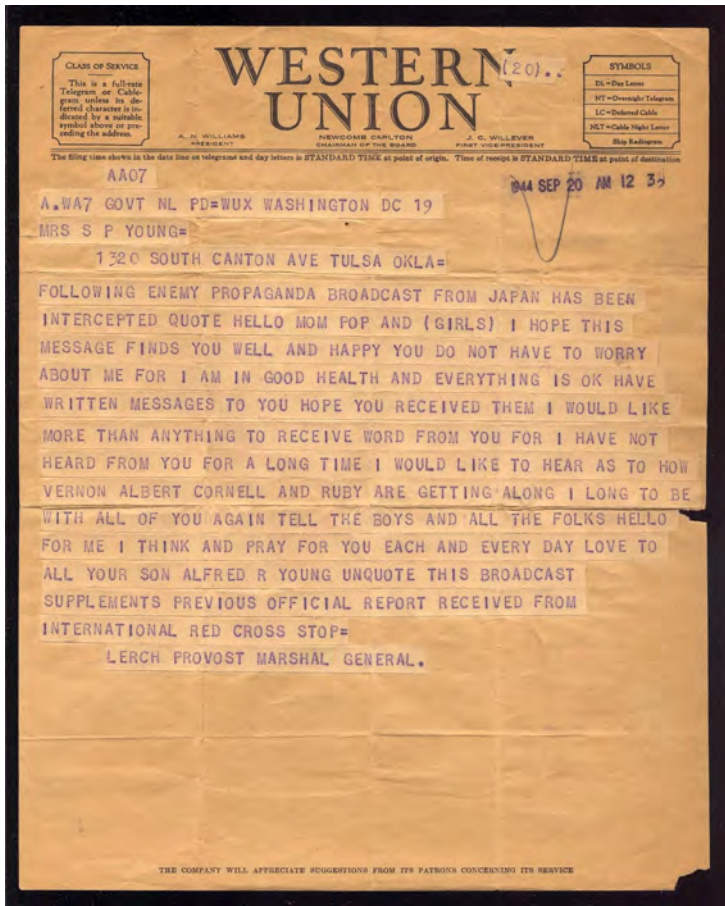
With two exceptions, the civilian writers were all individuals. One exception was the American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS), Pasadena, CA (#3-4). Their mimeographed form letter advised recipients that the message had been received at the "official Listening Post of the American Women's Voluntary Services, authorized by the United States Government to act in its behalf." Presumably the AWVS effort was connected with the Provost Marshal General's arrangement with the similarly-named Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Service (WAVS) of Los Angeles (see p. 4). In any event, a letter from AWVS would likely not have been perceived as having quite the same official standing as a telegram from the Provost Marshal, regardless of what connection there might have been.

The other exception was a letter from Headquarters, San Francisco Port of Embarkation, Office of the Port Transportation Officer, Fort Mason, California (#67). Although signed by a military officer, this letter appeared to be a separate monitoring effort of some kind, unrelated to the Provost Marshal program.

Although official in some respects, for purposes of this paper the AWVS and Port of Embarkation letters are considered part of the non-official correspondence.

Official notification.

In the case of two broadcasts the Young materials contain Western Union telegrams from the Provost Marshal General giving official notification of the broadcast and the text of same.



Although the dates of the broadcasts are not given specifically in the telegrams, the telegrams were hand stamped September 20, 1944 (#113, above left) and October 25, 1944 (#114, above right) and are presumed to be for the broadcasts of September 18, 1944 and October 22, 1944 respectively.

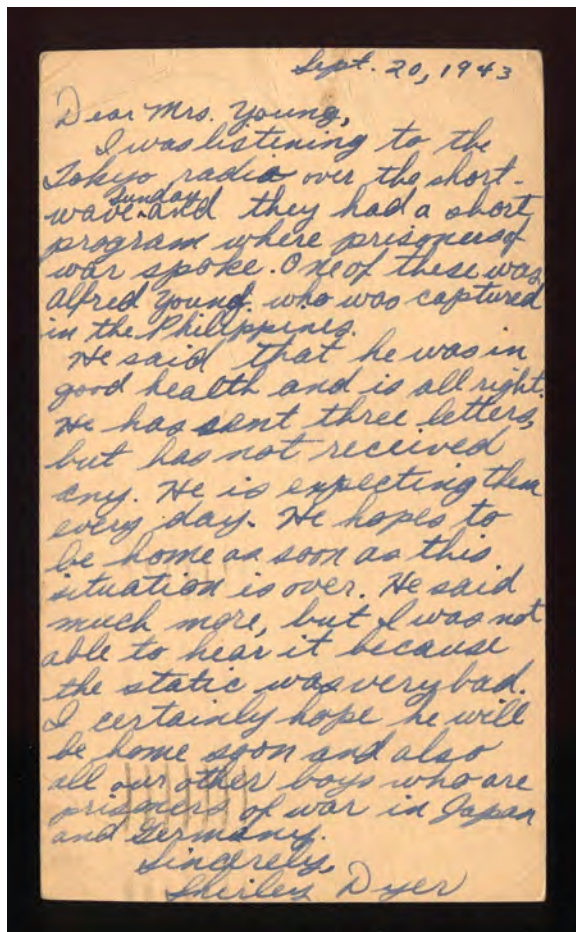
Circa June 1943 the government's Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (FBIS) began sending transcripts of the POW messages heard in Axis broadcasts to the Provost Marshal, who notified the families. Later in the same year the Provost Marshal advised FBIS that the government's Office of Censorship had assigned the job of monitoring broadcasts and notifying families to the Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Service of Los Angeles (WAVS), a private organization. In November 1943 or thereabouts, FBIS itself assumed the burden of sending the telegrams, a duty it appears to have performed ably. However, the procedure was expensive and time consuming, and eventually, as the above telegrams indicate, the Provost Marshal's office itself resumed POW message notification to families, working from the notifications that it continued to receive from FBIS. The government viewed the POW message broadcasts as a technique of enemy propaganda—a means of increasing the number of listeners to the enemy's

broadcasts—and it questioned the genuineness of the messages themselves.² The practice of government notification to the families was undertaken at least in part to discourage civilians from doing the same.

With regard to the message of September 19, 1943, the Young materials contain a form letter (#44) from the Navy (Alfred was in the Army), specifically the Public Relations Officer, Office of the Commandant, 14th Naval District, San Francisco, transmitting a typed copy of the text of the message “in the event you have not received it from any other source.” The addressee was directed to the Provost Marshal in Washington for any additional information about POWs, although it is unclear just what connection this letter had to the office of the Provost Marshal.

In addition, there is a letter (#16) dated October 30, 1943 to the Youngs from the Information Bureau of the Provost Marshal in Washington, D.C., forwarding another intercepted message. This would most likely have been the message broadcast on October 28, 1943. However, the message itself is not among the images on the website.

Format.



Most of the communications to the Youngs were handwritten or typed on either a postcard or plain paper. A typical card, #33, is shown at left. In some cases a letterhead was used. These included personal letterheads of the writers; “U.S. Army” personal stationery (used by a radio operator at an Army air base in Moses Lake, Washington, #10); a few business letterheads (#57-58, #117-118, #140); a hotel letterhead (#128); an American Red Cross letterhead (sent from Station Hospital at Camp Crowder, MO, #60); the letterhead of a VFW post in Ponca City, OK (#104); and the letterhead of the Port of Embarkation, Fort Mason, California, mentioned earlier (#67).

Of special interest are the forms that were developed by writers who handled large numbers of POW messages. In two instances, writers used specially-printed cards. One (#42, see next page), a “Short Wave Listening Post” card, contained the sender’s name and address and provided space for the time, date, frequency, station and location heard, and the text of the POW’s message. A

²Joseph E. Roop, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service—History, Pt. I: 1941-1947* (Washington, DC: CIA, 1969), pp. 108-115 (Chap. 4).

similar card (#130), somewhat more elaborate, was received from South Africa.

Several writers used full- or half-page printed forms that contained information similar to the postcards. These were produced by mimeograph or similar process (#3-4, #54, #75-76, #83-84), or using carbon paper (#88, #93-94), and filled in by hand or typing. On the back of one (#75-76) was a description of the monitoring process, a note that the letter was not an official or government communication, and the observation that the authenticity of the broadcast message was a matter of individual opinion but that personal information in such messages had in many cases been confirmed by the families and that the writer believed the message to be genuine. One writer (#96), a postmaster in a Texas town, used what appears to be a military message blank.

The image shows a yellowed, rectangular form titled "SHORT WAVE LISTENING POST". At the top right, it reads "G. C. GALLAGHER, 18 Delano Ave. 12 San Francisco, California." The form contains the following information:

Date Sept. 19, 1943 Time 9:15 A.M.
Station JW3 Location Tokyo, Japan Freq. 11.72 mc.

Message (Information) for you as follows:
"Hello Mother, Dad and all...I hope this message finds you all well and happy...I am in good health and everything is OK...I would like more than anything else to receive word from you... How are Verliq, Albert, Carmel and Ruby getting along? Hope they receive word from you...We arrived here last November.. The winter was a little cold after the Philippines...I hope we will all be together again soon...Tell the 3 boys and all the folks Hello from me....I hope and pray for you each and every day...Write soon...Your loving son,-Alfred"

Message read by Tokyo announcer from Staff Sgt. Alfred R. Young
Above heard by writer and relayed with best wishes. Please acknowledge. V... —
Yours truly, *G.C. Gallagher*

Another writer (#36), located in New Guinea, used a "V-mail" form. "Victory mail" was a means of wartime communication whereby, to reduce the burden on the military of transporting large quantities of paper mail, a letter was reduced to film, the film shipped, and the letter reproduced at its destination. A couple of monitors (#32, 42-43) included the widely-recognized Morse code "V" symbol (..._) in their communications.

Message to the post office.

Often a writer would miss some detail in the address as it was heard over the air. As one writer observed (#32), "So many times it's hard to understand the Japanese announcer. They pronounce the names so differently than we do. You have to use your imagination a lot on the addresses." Thus undelivered cards and letters were always a concern. As a result, some writers included on the front of the card or the envelope a message to the post office that this was a POW message, and requesting that the post office try and deliver it (#10, 17, 30, 40, 49-50, 52, 75, 77, 79, 88, 93, 95, 117, 131, 132, 134, 146). One writer (#117) used envelopes displaying an imprint that the letter was not sealed and that if it could not be delivered it should be opened and read ("Please try and see that it reaches proper party").

The “Port of Embarkation” writer (#67) was not certain that he had the Youngs’ name or their Tulsa address correct, and so he sent a copy of his letter to them to the *Tulsa World* newspaper and asked them to see to it that the information reached the parents of Alfred R. Young of Tulsa. And a listener in San Diego (#59) sent a “recording” of a message—presumably an audio recording although this is not absolutely clear from the cover letter—to the Tulsa Police Department, “for your examination and your decision as to whether it should be forwarded to Mrs. Young.” The “recording” is not present in the images. The writer had the Youngs’ address correct. As noted earlier, the government discouraged POW message monitoring by civilians. Was the writer trying to protect himself against possible criticism of his monitoring activities by filtering the matter through a third-party law enforcement agency? Or was he simply taking an extra step to ensure that his letter reached the Youngs?

Addresses.

Overall, the monitors did well in getting the Youngs’ address—1320 South Canton Street, Tulsa—correct, and the post office did very well in filling in the gaps. Pencil corrections to the addresses, apparently made by the post office, were noted on many cards and envelopes that contained errors. These were, of course, pre-ZIP code days.

Of the 115 cards and letters in the non-official category where the address was shown, 82 were substantially correct (some omitted “Street,” and two used “Avenue” instead of “Street”). Nine others omitted “South” in the street name, while 15 more had the correct street name but wrong house number (132, 1230, 1820, 3020), or house numbers that were correct but street names that were wrong but close (Campton, Compton, Cantor, Hampton, Kenton, Panton, Sansone).

Nine others had more serious address problems: 1220 Southampton Street; “1320 South Tonken or Conklen St., Tulsa”; “1320 South Canton Street, Tulsa or Kaslo, Oklahoma”; “Alfred R. Young, 130, Tulsa, Oklahoma”; 1230 Santon Street; “1320 South ____ Street”; 1320 South California Street. One had no street address at all, and another was addressed to Postmaster, Tulsa, and included a possible address of “1320 South Conklin Street, Tulsa” on the *message side* of the card. All bore the Young name, however, and all were delivered.

The letters and cards that make up this online collection are, of course, those that were actually delivered. There is no way of knowing how many did not get through due to inadequate addresses.

Content.

Sometimes the cards and letters were brief, presumably because the writer did not manage to get very much of the message (#47, 48, 53, 68, 127, 133, 134). More typically, however, especially with letters, the communications were more expansive. The usual pattern was: a greeting; information on the name of the station and the date, and sometimes the time, of reception (but seldom the frequency); the name, address and age of the POW; the POW’s message; and a conclusion. The conclusion often contained some consoling language,

expressing appreciation of the family's pain, hoping that the message would provide some relief, and expressing the wish that the war would end soon and the POW would return safely. Often the writer acknowledged that the family would probably get many similar letters, but that he or she was writing to make sure that the family did not somehow miss the message. There were a few religious references.

Writers often told of their own connection to the war effort, sometimes mentioning a loved one who was in the service (#38, 41, 135) and sometimes even a POW himself (#18, 50, 52, 64). One writer (#23) said that her son had died in the war. Two writers said they had received a POW message from a family member who was a POW (#18, 64). One (#64) had received 101 letters following a broadcast containing a message from her son.

Often writers would close with the promise to write again if they heard more about the POW, and several did. Sometimes letters prompted correspondence that continued for a while. There were a few unflattering depictions of the Japanese, but seldom more than just the observation that the broadcast might have been "Japanese propaganda" (#87, 93, 94, 95), implying perhaps that the information transmitted might not have been reliable.

In two cases the writer was relaying to the Youngs news of someone else hearing the message. One writer's nephew, who was in the army in India, heard Alfred's message (#137). The writer provided the nephew's address, and the Youngs wrote to him and received a response (#138). The nephew was monitoring POW messages in India and notifying families. A writer in Pennsylvania (#144) told the Youngs that the September 19, 1943 message had been heard by his son, who was in the navy in the South Pacific.

A few of the most active listeners indicated how many messages they had relayed, and some of the numbers were high. One listener, #117, had sent about 800 messages; another, #93, about 1,000. One writer had sent 2,341 messages when he first wrote to the Youngs (#83), 2,761 when he wrote a second time (#84). Another (#95) had sent 4,235 letters. In one case (#135) it was the writer's first message relay.

Quality of the text.

Cards and letters varied in the amount of the message they contained. It is difficult to judge with absolute certainty the accuracy of the message content because there is no "official" text of the messages that is known to be 100% accurate. However, one might expect that the government monitors, using professional equipment, did the best job, and that the Provost Marshal telegrams (#113, 114) and the Naval Commandant letter (#44) would be the most accurate.

There were Provost Marshal telegrams for two broadcasts, September 18, 1944 and October 22, 1944. The broadcast of September 18, 1944 (#113) brought only two civilian communications (#35, 36), and neither contained very much content. The broadcast of October 22, 1944 (#114) brought five useable civilian communications (#51, 56, 95, 108, 112, plus #143, which was largely undecipherable). The five tracked the telegram version fairly closely. One

(#108) was nearly as complete as the telegram itself.

The broadcast of September 19, 1943 brought in nearly 100 civilian letters and cards. Using the “official” Navy Commandant text (#44) as the standard for this broadcast, it can be said that the civilian cards and letters were generally accurate in their portrayal of the message. However, they varied greatly in detail. Some writers reported just the basics of the message (e.g. #2, 7, 12, 13, 20, 34, 47, 48, 53, 68, 85, 101, 125, 134), while others gave a more complete text (e.g. #3, 50, 54, 62, 75, 83, 93, 117, 130).

Some writers paraphrased Alfred’s messages, but most attempted to quote the actual words of the message, suggesting that they believed their transcription was accurate. It appears that many did fairly well, usually conveying the essence of the message and using many of the words heard over the air, if not necessarily capturing all the fine points.

It should be remembered that, in 1943, today’s commonplace home recording was still years off, and thus a listener had to write down the content of a message as it was broadcast, without the opportunity to play it back later and refine one’s notes. Such home recording as was available was done by disk cutting, not tape recording, and it was the rare individual who had such equipment. The task of listening to, recalling and writing down in “real time” messages read by announcers for whom English was probably a second language, while getting names and addresses and the details of the messages correct, would have been no small challenge even under good reception conditions. Any shortwave listener can confirm what numerous writers mentioned, namely, that interference and mediocre reception conditions could make complete and accurate transcribing difficult.

In addition, most of the monitors were probably using shortwave receivers of limited capability. Information on POW monitoring generally suggests that most monitors were not “DXers,” or shortwave enthusiasts with an intense interest in shortwave listening generally. Only two identified themselves as ham radio operators (#66, #79). DXers or hams could have been expected to have better-quality equipment that would give better reception. During the 1930s the “all-wave” receiver had become very popular. These were consumer-grade sets that covered shortwave as well as the standard broadcast band but lacked the special controls needed to optimize shortwave reception (the specialized sets were called communications receivers). It is likely that many of the monitors used such receivers. New radios were unavailable during the war, nearly all production having been diverted to the war effort, and so pre-war equipment was the rule.

Of course, success depended not only on reception conditions and equipment, but also on the skill and motivation of the listener.

Did Radio Tokyo alter the messages?

At least two writers (#52, 93) observed that POW messages were sometimes repeated. This would explain why some listeners heard a female voice and others heard a male voice (see p. 11).

The message from Alfred that was heard on October 28, 1943 (two writers reported the date as October 29), brought forth three dozen letters and cards. This message appeared to be the same as that broadcast on September 19, 1943 save for two distinguishing particulars. (1) It was widely reported in the September 19 message that Alfred had not heard from his family “for a long time.” On October 28, numerous writers reported that Alfred had not heard from his family “since December 1941” (a few writers were unsure of the month). (2) Whereas many writers reported that on September 19 it was said that the winter was a little cold “after the Philippines,” on October 28 many reported that the message said that it was a little cold “after the tropics.”

It is clear from the number of times these differences appear that they were not simply mishearings by a few listeners. The sameness of the rest of the October 28 message to that of September 19 suggests that the October 28 message was not an entirely new message but a slightly altered version of the September 19 message.

A similar anomaly appeared among the messages for the October 28, 1943 broadcast. Four of the 36 listeners reported various references to the Red Cross, e.g. that the Red Cross said you could send chocolates, fruit cakes, and pictures (one letter reported it as “peaches”), that during the last winter they had issued Alfred some warm clothing which was really appreciated, that he had received a nice Christmas package through the Red Cross. Two of the four (#63, 145) reported hearing the Red Cross references on October 28, two on October 29 (#135, 136), but none of the many others who heard the October 28 message mentioned the Red Cross references.

In addition, occasionally a writer reported hearing something not mentioned by other writers. Only one writer (#128) reported, “He especially wants his mother to know he is alright . . .” Another (#110) reported hearing, “I’m working hard every day, don’t have time to get lonesome.” That writer also observed, “They all say they are there and working hard.” With regard to the Red Cross items, one listener who appeared to be monitoring POW messages on a regular basis (#77) observed, “Most of the men ask for packages to be sent thru the Red Cross.”

Was Radio Tokyo sometimes adding “Red Cross” language, or “hard work” language, or other “stock” language to some messages in order to emphasize the positive? If so, and if messages were repeated, this could have easily resulted in the broadcasting of slightly different versions of the same message. In this case, the government’s caution about the “authenticity” of the messages, or at least parts of them, may have been well founded.

Judging from the Provost Marshal telegram covering the message broadcast on September 18, 1944, that message also appears to have been a repeat of the September 19, 1943 broadcast, by then a full year old. However, the 1944 broadcast, as described in the telegram, contained no reference to two details that were mentioned in many of the civilian cards and letters covering the 1943 broadcast. (1) In the 1943 broadcast, numerous writers heard the statement that Alfred had arrived in Japan the previous November and that the winter was a little cold after the Philippines. There was no mention of this in the 1944 broadcast. (2) In addition, according to the telegram, the 1944 broadcast said, “Have written messages to you. Hope you received them. I would like more than anything to receive word from you for I have not heard

from you for a long time.” Many writers in 1943 said that Albert had specified that he had written *three* letters to the Youngs. This may be a further example of how messages got altered in the course of multiple broadcasts. Alternatively, the information may have been missed by the government monitors in 1944, or omitted from the telegram for some other reason; or the 1944 message actually may have been an entirely new one.

Who spoke?

A basic issue in all the broadcasts was: who was speaking? POW messages were of two types: those spoken by the POW himself, in which case it was the POW’s voice that was heard; and those spoken by an announcer, presumably reading from a message written or dictated by the POW, in which case it was the announcer’s voice that was heard. On the form letter of one experienced listener (#83-84) there were check boxes where he indicated whether the message “was read by the station announcer” or “was an electrical transcription” (presumably meaning a recording of the POW’s voice). Another experienced listener (#75-76) said on his form: “These [the messages] are presumably written in the various prison camps by the prisoners, and sent to Tokyo for radio broadcast . . .,” suggesting that all the messages were read by announcers.

It is clear that some listeners got confused on this point. With regard to the September 19, 1943 broadcast, the bulk of the writers who commented on the voice reported that the message was read by an announcer (#9, 19, 31, 42, 50, 54, 57, 69, 70, 75, 83, 88, 93, 96, 105, 109, 111, 115, 117, 121, 122, 139, 142). Two (#19, 96) specifically said it was a female announcer. One (#50) distinguished between Alfred’s message, which was read by an announcer, and those of some Canadian POWs who were voicing their own messages. Two other writers (#105, 142) made the point that some messages were recorded, while others were read by announcers.

However, some writers (#10, 11, 28, 72, 79, 91, 107, 110) reported that it was Alfred’s voice that was heard. One (#10) said, “His voice sounded very clear and I’m sure his moral [sic] is as high as could be expected.” Another (#11) said, “Your son’s voice sounded very cheerful . . .” Another (#79), a ham, noted, “While he was talking he sounded like he was in good health as his voice sounded good.” A fourth (#91) said the POW seemed “in fine spirits.” A couple of writers (#116, 138) were not completely certain if it was Alfred’s voice or an announcer’s; and in some cases it was unclear if the writer was saying that the message was voiced by Alfred or by an announcer. If, as is likely, Alfred used the pronoun “I” in his message, and the announcer read the message as written, it would have contributed to the impression that it was Alfred who was speaking.

With regard to the October 28, 1943 message, of the half-dozen writers who commented on whether it was the POW’s voice or an announcer’s, five (#43, 52, 76, 104, 145) said it was an announcer’s. One (#77), who appeared to have listened to many POW messages, said she and her son heard the message twice, and while the second time it was read by an announcer, they were sure that the first time it was the voice of the POW himself. “He spoke very distinctly, in a strong clear and resolute voice, quite deep in tone. He did not sound in the least nervous or intimidated. He sounded like the kind of man that it would take more than Japs to scare.”

Recordings.

In three cases the writer sent the Youngs a recording of the September 19, 1943 message (there is no audio of the recordings on the website.). Writer Arthur H. Hart (#57-58) of San Francisco, whose company, Cinematic Developments, was involved in some aspect of the audio-video business, used a form to advise the family that a recording was available if they wanted it. When he sent the recording he enclosed some playback needles “which should give some six or eight playings before having to be thrown away.” Hart offered to supply another record if the one sent became worn out or damaged.

R. P. Read (#117) of Hopkins, MN sent a letter containing the text of the September 19 message and offered to send a recording, which he subsequently did. On one side of the record was the message as read at 10:15 a.m., on the other side the message as read at 5:35 p.m. Read’s activities must have been well known, for another writer (#131), who was located in Las Vegas, mentioned that Read could provide a recording of the message. Read supplied an interesting information sheet that described the recording process (p. 14, below).

Mr. and Mrs. B. O. South (#129) of San Francisco also sent a recording, and an explanation of how to play it (they also enclosed a needle). The disk is shown below. (The audio of a recording that B. O. South sent to another family whose son was a POW in Japan can be heard in the [“DX History/POW Monitoring”](http://www.ontheshortwaves.com) section of www.ontheshortwaves.com.)



Authenticity and cost.

As noted earlier (and addressed in more detail in my [review](#) of *World War II Radio Heroes*), the government discouraged civilian monitoring. It felt that the authenticity of the messages as broadcast could not be confirmed, and it also made the point that some monitors were seeking to profit by charging for the service (see note 2, p. 5).

As to the authenticity of the messages, some civilian monitors were careful to point out that they could not vouch for what was broadcast. With regard to profiteering, in none of the letters or cards was there ever a demand for payment. A small number of monitors invited contributions of postage to support the service generally. One (#83-84), who had processed well over 2,000 messages, included as part of his form letter transmitting the POW's message the name of an earlier message recipient whose donation of postage permitted the sending of the letter. R. P. Read (#117), in the information sheet he enclosed with his offer to send a recording (p. 14), gave an approximation of what the cost to him was (small records, \$1.00; medium, \$1.25; large, \$1.50). He expressed appreciation for reimbursement if the family was financially able, but said he would otherwise send the record at no charge.



As welcome as the cards and letters must have been, they also created something of an obligation to reply, and this would have been no small matter in the case of a hundred or more letters and cards that were received all at once. One writer (#128) must have recognized this, and advised the Youngs that he knew they would appreciate his letter and that it was not necessary to write and thank him. However, because listeners often were not confident that they had heard the address precisely correctly, many would ask the family to acknowledge receipt of the letter or card so that the writer would know that it got through (#15, 27, 36, 42, 43, 69, 80, 109, 110, 125, 127, 131, 132, 137, 141). Various such thank you letters from POW families surface from time to time.³

Notwithstanding the government's lack of enthusiasm about civilian monitoring of POW messages and the boost that it felt the practice gave to Axis shortwave propaganda, it is clear that the motives of the monitors of the Young messages were humanitarian. A ham radio operator (#66) noted that "since I no longer can transmit [hams were prohibited from operating during the war] I am using my equipment for this purpose that it might benefit those who need it most." Women were prominent in POW monitoring, perhaps as a demonstrable way of supporting the war effort from home. One (#32) expressed a feeling that was probably shared by all the monitors. "I always feel I'm letting them down when I miss a night," she said. "When you once start there is just something that makes you keep it up. I always think of the boys' loved ones that

³See the thank you letters sent to August Balbi, a well-known California shortwave enthusiast, under "[DX History/POW Monitoring](#)" at www.ontheshortwaves.com; and the recent article, "Voices of the past: A suitcase full of letters helps tell stories of World War II prisoners of war," in the January 26, 2013 [Billings \[Montana\] Gazette](#).

are hoping and praying every day for some word of them.”

Hopkins, Minnesota

This message is taken from a recording of the broadcast specified. Sometimes proper names are very hard to understand, especially when receiving conditions are poor or the station announcer speaks with a decided accent. The writer has copied the message from the recording to the best of his ability but does not guarantee the correctness of wording nor the authenticity of the message. All messages are sent on as soon as possible after reception, by air mail if it will expedite delivery.

Usually there are several messages on the broadcast. It takes more than one blank to record this section of the broadcast. As it takes from 10 to 12 seconds to change recording blanks a few words will be lost during this time. However, your message is complete unless otherwise noted.

You may have a copy of the portion of the Master Record that contains your message if you wish.

Please refer to the name of the sender of the message, date of broadcast and the number of the Master Record when requesting a copy of the record or any correspondence in connection with this message.

10:15 AM
11:15 AM
12:15 PM }
11:50 A. M. and the same messages are rebroadcast over Station JLG-4, 15.105 megacycles at 6:20 P. M. Central War Time. There are other rebroadcasts of these messages at other times but they are not received well in this part of the country. When the 11:50 A. M. broadcast is poor or some portions of the message not understandable, another set of Master Records is run on the 6:20 P. M. broadcast. Many times Master Records are taken on both broadcasts and receiving conditions will turn out to be so poor that they are of no value.

8:35 PM
6:35 PM }

Master Recording blanks, copying blanks, cutting needles, stationery, postage, etc. involve considerable expense. The approximate cost to me for copies of the recordings are as follows:

Small Records \$1.00: Medium Records \$1.25: Large Records \$1.50.

Additional copies of recordings may be had at any time. The message is recorded on both sides of the record in order that you may play it more times before it wears out. When the length of the message and the size of the record permits, your record will contain the opening part of this section of the broadcast, the recording of the portion of the Master Record that contains your message, and if room permits, the announcement at the close of the program. Sometimes this last announcement is not available as the Master Record comes to an end at the same time as the end of the last message.

Please understand that this record is a recording of a short wave broadcast and will not compare in volume or quality with commercial phonograph records.

I have been recording these messages and sending them on every day since Christmas 1942 and so far have sent on about 800 messages. In case there is anything published in your local papers in connection with this message, I would appreciate a clipping as I am building up a scrap book.

If you are financially able, I would appreciate being reimbursed for the cost of record. Otherwise I want you to feel perfectly free to write me and the record will be sent without charge. All the spare time of the writer and two assistants is donated to this work without charge.

Yours very truly,
R. P. Read