

JILL TO AL APRIL 2, 1942

My sweetheart-

I just got in and it is quite late (11-30) to be writing letters, even to one's beloved and betrothed, but your letter was so completely (I'm groping for a word but can only think of sweet) that it deserves an immediate answer.

I stayed at your folks last night, and came back home tonight, stopping at Smudge's for a brief visit, mainly to talk about you and Camp Tyson. Naturally all of Chicago knows that you've won a golden medal for valor in the service of your country. The cookies are only the beginning of a long line of burnt offerings to a minor godhead--and a major hero.

I spoke to Joan yesterday in re many things, including the happy fact of our impending, as they say in the columns, nuptials. She said she was married by an Episcopal, but this girl Gloria, whom I think I mentioned to you, although Protestant, married her Catholic husband under the auspices of a priest. This is all very secondhand, but I think, from what Joan says, that Glo only had to promise to bring her children up as Catholics and didn't have to go through any long induction ceremony. I'll investigate further...

You know, about two weeks ago I wrote my sister about Us. Well, I received a letter from her in reply, and I must say that, although I love my sister, in a way she is an awful deadhead. I'll quote you in part: "Darling, there is no answer to your writing that one of these days you may marry Al. (*Ed.: I didn't put it quite that casually.*) Wal and I were more than touched that you should confide it to us, and we assure you that if and when you do marry Al, you do so with our love. All we wish for you (absurd as it sounds) is your lifelong happiness... My only feeling about your marriage, and believe me, I don't mean to presume on being your sister, is that I think you and Al would be wiser to wait until these sadly unsettled times are past... Marriage is a wonderfully odd affair. It's built on loving association as much as love.. And for Al to be away and you to be alone is not marriage,

it's just a paper... It's not very fair to Al either to leave his wife behind and to have the anxieties a husband normally would have with a war and being so far away, worries about your well being and the many things we recognize only after marriage as being of vital importance..."

Well, she means very well, and I am touched by her concern even as she is by my confidence in her, if not in her judgement. But what a crazy idea she has about marriage! I can only interpret her reference to the "vitally important aspects of marriage" as a veiled allusion to the property aspects of same. Certainly, what else can we lack--the way we are, have been and will be--except the electric roaster and the handful of common stocks and the 12-month lease? She can't mean children, because she doesn't believe they're an essential requisite of a happy marriage. I'm kind of shocked at her in a way. I should think she would be proud to have a sister who would get married at a time like this, when there are no guarantees -- in the traditional sense -- of a happy marriage except for love, pure and unadulterated. And her naive belief that these unsettled times will ever pass -- in one way or another the times will always be unsettled for people like us -- makes me shudder. Well, I just wanted to inform you that all families are not as prone to philosophical acceptance of things as yours.

I haven't said anything to your mother about our getting married, although I don't see why I shouldn't. She'd probably be pleased to know it, and she certainly must expect it, since she knows I'm going to go where you are when you finish your school work. If you'd like me to, I'll tell her, although it is sort of embarrassing to break news like that to such interested parties.

I registered yesterday for compensation and felt appropriately demoralized today at the prospect of getting something for nothing for four or five weeks. Monday I shall probably get on my horse and look for a job. Right now, I am enjoying the exquisite pleasure of doing nothing in the economic sphere. Not that I haven't been useful. I tried very hard to be so today. I did

your mother's shopping and bill-paying, and, wonders of wonders, the dishes. I also watched attentively when she made an icebox cake and helped her with the cookies and a stuffed fish, which was my suggestion. The fish was lovely, I must say. Did you ever eat raw fish? It's not bad. This was trout, which I guess is naturally good, and I ate little pieces of it while I was pulling out the bones. It seemed a shame to waste the meat around the bones. I'm getting positively cannibalistic. Any day now I shall probably buy a rifle and take to the hills.

Johnny Naples came up to the house today with his mother, a tortured looking woman if I ever saw one. He's on furlough from a very swanky camp in Fla., according to his description. They're on the gulf and can go swimming. I never saw him before but he must look better..

Is that true about Mir and Buss selling their tires for bikes or am I just spreading a rumor? I'll send you your things tomorrow, also some writing paper.

I love you -- over & over again --

Jill

AL TO JILL APRIL 1, 1942

Darling Jill,

Just a few words to tell you I love you and a few inconsequential things besides.

Your letter came, and I know how you felt with W. I. Thomas' [*author of "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America" - Al seems to be somewhat chiding Jill for her attitude in the letter of March 31*] little children. Well, what can you do? If you abandon hope for people, you abandon hope for yourself. Cynics are notoriously drunkards, perverts, ne'er-do-wells, neurotics, and childless. You take your choice -- there is none. The sugar around the pills is the interest & the amusement, and, of course, the significance of it all. The cynic's fallacy is as basic as his very existence.

The lights are going out and I haven't said much. I'll try to write lots for you to read between your tomes of writing.

Curtis tonight said he thought that you were wonderful. He dreamt about you all Sunday night. I thought so too, I said, and asked him how he would like to change places with me. I do it every night.

School may be cut short a week or so to put us in active service. Hurrah. May I call you Sunday at 6? I'll try.

Your man Al

P.S. I thought that you might want the enclosed letter for your souvenirs.

JILL TO AL APRIL 6, 1942

Dearest-

These past four or five days have past extraordinarily quickly, without my having done a damn thing. I spent the weekend with your family, and we all agreed, tritely enough, that Easter would have been a lot pleasanter with you around.

Truman is back with me again and still finds the typewriter an endless source of fascination. It was she who made the little 1 at the end of the last paragraph. She is going to get a frightful blow on the end unless she mounts from this infernal machine. This is Diana's typewriter, a heavy office model, and is no less lethal a kitten-toy than a punch press. Truman, incidentally, was considerably subdued by her visit with Rose. I don't know what admirable technique the Iveys used in dealing with her, but for at least a day after she came home she was a very sweet and subdued cat. Now she is back to her old habits of biting and fussing around, and I loathe her. She has grown a lot, but is still not what you would call a big cat, and I can still bathe her by myself, without calling in the militia.

My vocational future is as yet unsettled. I am tempted to follow your advice and sit home and write and/or improve my mind

(the latter still, and everlastingly, consisting of reading War and Peace, which at this stage bodes being a lifetime occupation). I have taken up with Jane Tallman and Betty Chapman, who just bought a very adequate car for \$25. They are going to California in a month to look for jobs in the aircraft factories. Meanwhile we have a mutual interest in heavy industries around Chicago. I have developed a very romantic conception of life as a defense worker, and am at the point of abandoning a peaceful life at home to look for jobs in the plants around Chicago. I don't know why I just don't sit home and think and get my compensation checks. My desire for new experience is rampant at this point--and it takes the form of wanting to work in a factory. Friday we went down to the Pullman defense plant, which makes airplane wings. They were very nice to us, and told us that they weren't hiring women right now, since they were re-tooling, but would consider us in May. One of the training courses they have down there is for girls in industrial personnel, which consists of training you on the production line for a couple of months in preparation for personnel work. There are probably some form of labor that might be interesting for a while--operating machines, etc. However, I wouldn't take just any laboring job, like the one this morning. I answered an ad in the paper--a blind ad--asking for 50 defense workers at some plant on 22nd. St. I got down there at 8 and discovered that it was the Cuneo Press, and they wanted girls for packing and mailing at 40 cents an hour. Needless to say I turned around and came back home.

All my girl friends at Esquire, who, for some reason, are constantly calling me up and dropping over--I think they are envious of my new-found freedom--give me leads to the various publishing houses and agencies around town. I'm sure I could get a job at one of them if I made any kind of effort at all, but I either am too traumatized by my experience at Esquire or, sensibly enough, too wary of taking a job that I might find it necessary--and difficult--to abandon for the life of a camp follower to pursue their suggestions. I think the latter is the reason why I prefer a factory job at this point--that and the fact

that factory work is novel enough to be interesting temporarily. At least I can walk out on the latter type of work after a couple of weeks or so. As far as the traumatic aspect of all this -- well, I just have the feeling that as long as I stay in the glossy branches of white collar work, I am going to be kicked around, and I just can't take it. I'm afraid that, except in inter-personal relationships, I'm not much of a fighter.

Your mother showed me some of the letters you wrote her when you were a kid at summer camp. We both agreed that it was a frightful breach of faith, but that you probably wouldn't mind too much. You certainly were an over-active child, and very competitive, with all your blue ribbons and gold medals. You must have looked like Best in Show in the Westminster Dog Show when you came home.

Diana is still in New York. She caught impetigo on the bus -- some kind of skin ailment -- and is staying on until it clears up. She writes she is seeing Oliver.

I just got your letter. Did you try to call last night? Cause I'm sorry I was not in--I was still with your family. We ate all weekend and I have gained five pounds. I could still use some more, though.

Sweetheart, I have to write my sister now. I haven't done so for a month.

All my love,

Jill

P.S. I suppose it isn't really right or necessary for me to tell you this but I just got the curse. Since I was nearly two weeks late, it is an event worthy of communication. Besides, I want some sympathy and praise from you for having concealed my understandable apprehension so nobly for so long.

JILL TO AL APRIL 9, 1942

Dearest--

The precinct captain was around last night looking for you, that cute man, and was saddened that such a loyal member of the fold had been snatched away. Of course, I didn't tell him that you would not be voting for McKeough if you had been here. All my little female friends from the University parts are running around canvassing for Douglas, but still, for some obscure reasons of my own, I dislike and distrust the man mightily.

Last night was pleasant. This girl from the office, a Jean Mc'Eldowney, from Flossmoor whom I had become quite friendly with during the last days of my stay at Esquire--she's the one whose father is vice-president of the Terminal Bank, spent the night with me. She's only 20, but she's a very bright and quite unusual girl, considering the standard suburban Republican background, and it was lots of fun having a house guest. She just quit Esquire yesterday--got tired of being shoved around, although she had been there even a shorter time than I had. About three people have quit since I left--one, a very enlightened boy in the production department, gave as one of the reasons for his leaving my peremptory discharge. Apparently it is no figment of my imagination that Esquire is a stinking place to work for. As Johnny Wiggins said last night -- after supper Jean and I went calling on Jane Tallman and Johnny was there -- the Smart brothers are just one step above making book. Incidentally, Johnny sends his regards to you and says he'd like to hear from you.

I spent yesterday in a violent burst of job-hunting, which took all day and is the reason why I didn't write you, as I wanted to and should have. I had to wait about three hours to see the employment man at Ziff-Davis, a big publishing house at Ohio and Michigan, where another girl I know works. And after all that time, there was nothing doing. I called Meine and the Gas News, and there were no jobs open there, either. The man at the Gas News expressed regrets that I didn't take the job when it was open last Christmas, and I kicked myself mildly. Then I

went to see the man who edits Advertising Age, a trade paper. Some agency had gotten hold of my name and called me and sent me over to him. He couldn't make up his mind whether he wanted me or not, because I told him frankly my shorthand was none too hot, although I had the other requisites for the job. He had just broken his finger and he said it hurt him so he'd be damned if he could figure out what he wanted to do. However, he gave me the name of a friend at an advertising agency, who is looking for some one to do research. Although the man at Advertising Age seemed to be very nice, I'd just as soon not get the job, because I dislike very much paying out 40 percent of my first month's salary to any agency. I get my compensation today--how much I don't know, and still feel pretty damn independent of all these mundane matters.

The night before last, I had dinner with Marion Gersons and her mother. They were in a great tizzy because cousin Milton Mayer had just written an article in the Satevepost [Saturday Evening Post] (see March 25 issue) about what was wrong with the Jews, and drew the startling conclusion that the only solution to the problem of anti-Semitism was for the Jews to be righteous. A typical Adlerian conclusion. Mayer really let go with a diatribe against the chosen people, a very ill-considered one, if you ask me, since everything he said will immediately, and has been, for that matter, taken up by persons anti-Semitically inclined, to support their position. Needless to say, the Gersons are pained at having this apparent Judas sheep in their midst.

Apart from this violently social behavior on my part, I've been reading a great deal, profitably so, I like to think. In between War and Peace, I have been absorbing, with admitted difficulty, some of the long short stories of Thomas Mann. Even if you think he and his style are pains in the necks, you've got to admit that his work is intellectually challenging, like calculus. But, to paraphrase your Greek friend Johnny, who likes calculus?

Thanks loads for sending that picture, which I like having, if only to use as documentary evidence for my contention that you should wear your cap on the back of your head. All the other

boys do it... Darling, who are the unhappy pair, Dewall and Gerl? Did I meet them? God, it would be wonderful if you could get home this weekend .. And what's this about their shortening the school term? Really, or is it just another latrinogram?

It gets colder every day around here. I think I must have overslept and spring and summer have passed, and here it is winter again. It really feels that way.

[end of letter missing]

[attached to next letter is one page which may be the end of this letter]:

Diana, whom I heard from the other day, is staying in New York till next week. I guess I wrote you about the skin infection she acquired. Truman, That Bad Cat, is still that way. She craps in the bath tub every time I forget to leave the water in. And last night, after having eaten a substantial dinner of her own, she attacked a dish of spaghetti that Jean and I inadvertently left on the table and Ate It All! When I went into the kitchen to clean up, Truman was lying on the floor, her pulse weakening perceptibly and her sides inflated like a barrage balloon. This morning she is in good spirits, although she's been lapping up water like a drunk on the morning after. And she stinks of garlic.

I wish we could be together--all this foolishness falls a little flat without you. I wish you were here to beat Truman and bait the precinct captain, and marvel with me at the infinite pleasantness and silliness of other people. Including the fact that I love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL APRIL 9, 1942

Dearest Jill,

Again a morning letter. But this time under more favorable auspices. The rain has gone and left a rushing mass of clouds and cool Spring breezes. Black billows at all the horizons make it seem as if we were in mountainous country and they seemed

to be fringed with green where a few hapless seeds found root.

I picked up My Name is Aram the other day and finished it in short order with no reflections of the book because it is a good one. Saroyan is imaginative and writes a beautifully pure English. His imagination is young, his philosophy likewise young and of Atlantic Monthly character. Again, though, it is a fine book. His humor is as good as anyone's. His boy Aram is a thoroughly likable scamp whose iconoclasm & integrity of disreputability are really admirable traits. In a sense, both Saroyan & Perelman have a sophisticated Westernism in their humor--founded on a neat and imaginative hyperbole but phrased in Eastern idiom or rather graphic idiom. Instead of exaggerating in adjectives, they exaggerate in nouns and verbs, especially the latter. I myself fail to see much of the distinction between underexaggeration & exaggeration which has been the chief analytic dichotomy in criticism. But then I fail to see what makes most critics run. It would be very interesting to see a study of humor from a psychological standpoint. Maybe I'm just ignorant of what's available. I think next I'll read a few plays. I still have visions of that play about Huey Long, but may save it until I'm emeritus!

I'll write again tomorrow. Oh, yes.-the army. Well, I'm still in it.

And love you as much as ever,

Al

JILL TO AL APRIL 17, 1942

Darling--

It seems like ages since you've come and gone.. and I wish it weren't. It was, as always, wonderful seeing you.

Today I am a man, having fulfilled the sacred obligation (nay, privilege) of the franchise. George Parks collared me, needless to say, before I went in. His move was heroic as well as political, since I was on a bicycle and moving very rapidly. I had some

trouble with the ballot--I folded it all wrong, didn't recognize the names of any of the minor candidates and ergo couldn't vote for them, put a check instead of a cross in one of the squares and had to start all over again. I'm sure no lover on his first night could be as awkward, as mystified, as ashamed as I was on my first vote.

When I got back from the station, your letter (in re Saroyan) was waiting for me. It was a strange sensation.

Truman crapped on the floor over the lamp wires last night and I got so mad I threw her out and left her out all night. When I opened the window this morning she came in, very dirty and not at all penitent. This time I put her nose in it, so the nasty habit may be broken, but I doubt it. That stuff on the other side is Cocomalt -- not Truman.

Monkey Ward's called up yesterday (everybody and his dog called me yesterday, and I was trying to sleep) and I have to report for a medical exam Thursday. Such system. Johnny is coming over this afternoon and we are going to have dinner with Carl and Juliet at the Chez Paris. Such class.

Last night I went to a union meeting. It was very dull. I am getting bored with that union.

I'm going to type the Gosnell letter as soon as I do the dishes and wash my hair, the latter coming first because Truman walked in it and it needs washing badly. But I did want to write you first. I got your papers from Rosable this morning and have mailed them.

Lou Eisman, the m.e. at SRA, is going into the army. He's leaving work today and they're giving him a big party at the office, to which I was invited. I may drop in to say goodbye. I think he's rather glad to go, although I'm not sure.

Darling, it seems a shame that during the short time we have together, we must face such difficult problems as the one concerning my religion or whatever it is. I find it hard to discuss the matter with you, because you insist on treating on a rational

level a problem the roots of which are essentially irrational. It's all very well for us to say that I have no religion, and anthropologically I am of no race except Caucasian, and my nationality is American. But the facts remain that there is a category, whatever kind of category it is, that is called Jewish -- and I'm in it. To say I'm not--despite what our scientific knowledge tells us--is to practice a deception. I find it very humiliating to have to deceive people. Deception for me means that I'm ashamed about something. Well, there's nothing about me that I'm ashamed of. I hope I never do anything I'll be ashamed of, and certainly, there's nothing about the way I was born, or the fact of my parents' beliefs and practices, that give me cause for shame or for any practices of concealment. You know I'm not one of those nationalistic, self-conscious persons who go around shouting, "I am a Jew and I'm proud of it too." But, on the other hand, I dislike concealing it, particularly in the primary situation that characterizes--or will characterize--my relationship with your family. Your parents may be grieved to find that my parents (as well as my Uncle Sam!) espoused such a disreputable faith. But the alternative is a continuing, however subtle, feeling of humiliation on my part. When, in most of my dealings with people throughout my life, I've done everything to avoid this deception which is so distasteful to me, I don't think it's exactly fair that, in the most important thing in my life, I have to be party to it.

I'm writing these things because I don't think I made it all very clear to you the other night. I hope you'll agree with me--perhaps sympathize is the better word--and see fit to either tell them about it, or allow me to do so. I'm just sorry that I let them labor under this, I hope relatively minor, misconception as long as I have.

I'll type that other letter now.

All my love--forever

Jill

JILL TO AL APRIL 18, 1942

Darling--

I am writing this with one hand and eating a baloney sandwich with the other. My desire to communicate with you is strong but my desire to eat is stronger still. Here it is two o'clock and I have not yet broken the day's fast. It seems that I had a brief appointment with Monkey Ward's early this morning and in my haste and optimism, did not eat breakfast. Well, they gave me a medical exam the likes of which a civilian has never seen. What they don't know about me a dog shouldn't know (whatever that means). Furthermore, I stood in just about as many lines today as the average buck private does in a month. Because as soon as I finished with Ward's I had to rush to 63rd and Cottage Grove for my compensation. Here it is three -- forget it, I mentioned the time already.

Anyway, I start work Monday. I doesn't sound like very exciting work but I can always quit, and besides I get a discount in the store and besides, somebody has to make some money so you can come home early and often, like a Christmas package. Mr. Brutza, or whatever his name is, who I am to work for, looked at my legs. What should I do?

Johnny and Carl and Juliet and I went to the Chez Paris Tuesday night (dinner: \$3) and I had quite a good time looking at all the flashy phoney people. Three of the circulation men from Esquire were there, with girls who wore ankle bracelets. I had duck for dinner and it wasn't too wonderful. We stayed up very late and I have been sleepy ever since. That is the trouble, as I have said before, with going out with a young man who is not your special young man. You stay up too late, because there is no incentive to go to bed, i.e. the incentive of going to bed.

Tonight I am going to have dinner at Carl and Juliet's with John. He is not as bitter as he sounds, which makes him somewhat more dull. I don't know what he is. While I enjoy John's company very much and am very fond of him, I have not the

same overweening interest in his personality that I might have in a guy I knew less well--or better, comme vous.

Mc'Keough won, as you know. The Daily News just came out in a front page editorial supporting him. That's pretty remarkable, for the Republican News.

You're darn right I'm witty. You'd have to go a long way to find a merrier miss. I don't know what brought that on, except I was pleased to have you say I was witty and I am just prolonging the pleasure.

Truman is outside playing with three little children, not the same ones who led Jesus' fold. They just ran over her with their tricycle. Stop it, little children. I have my eye on you. That big cat has come in twice since you went away, both times while I was taking a bath. Which necessitated my rising out of the tub, dripping and wrathful, and throwing wet towels and nail brushes at him until he went away. Truman just sits cowering on the floor while I fight this losing battle for her virginity. She may not be one anymore. Monday night she crapped on the floor and I threw her out all night. I was very piqued.

Diana came back Tuesday night, well and relatively happy. She may decide to stay on in the apartment, since she has vague plans to take a secretarial course before she returns to New York.

Last night I spent a couple of hours with Marion at the Navy. I am typing some scripts for one of the yeoman, which gives me swell typing practice and their typewriters are superb. Marion went to Betty Betz's party Tuesday night, which I may or may not have written you about. I was invited but didn't go. The last party of hers I went to looked like a Culver academy reunion. To quote Chingos again, who likes kids? Marion corroborated my opinion of Betz's friends by a harrowing account of the dullness of the party.

They had a practice air raid business at seven last night all over Chicago, which consisted of sounding the sirens. They were pretty hard to hear, I must say. The papers also said that

apparently the only way Chicago will know if it's having a raid is by watching the bombs fall.

If you can get off in three weeks again and if time allows you to come all the way to Chicago, don't worry about the money. I will personally send you the necessary tokens.

Gate, I must go. To pick up my bike which I left at the 53rd station, also to straighten up this place which looks like Coventry. If there is anything you want or need, besides me, don't hesitate to write. Don't hesitate to write, anyway. I was somewhat irked at you for wanting to see Rosable Sunday night because I think she is such a silly bitch.

A big kiss to you.

As ever,

Jill

JILL TO AL APRIL 20, 1942

Dearest Al -
night

Sunday

I don't know how much sense this letter is going to make. I had a lot of sensible things in my head all weekend to write you, but now, the first time I've had a chance to sit down to write you, minor bedlam is breaking loose. I'm spending the night at your house: Fred Allen is booming forth; Vic is asking me incomprehensible questions; Coonie is barking; Ed is plunging thru the Sunday papers. So I guess I won't do very well. Oh, and your mother and father are out somewhere.

Your letter that came Friday was wonderful and heartening. *[This letter of Al, probably referring to her Jewishness, seems to be lost]* I just wish we hadn't had to scowl at each other over the matter in the first place.

Tomorrow I must start work, a very disheartening event. The hours are from 8:20 to 5, 45 minutes for lunch, salary \$25 &

presumably 10 minutes during the working day to take a leak. Everybody, i.e. your mother, that most perceptive of women, and me are sure I won't last the week. Well, that will at least give me enough dough to pay for my blue suit, as yet unpaid for, and a pair of dark glasses which I just contracted for (I squint too damn much). & besides, if you wear dark glasses during the day, people will think you're a movie actress, not a near-sighted office worker.

I tore around Friday & Saturday, preparing myself sartorially & physically for what is humorously known as the world of work.

Last night I, first, went to a cocktail party given by Mr. and Mrs. John Hart -- Mrs. Hart being the former Polly Osgood. Surprise, surprise. Somehow I can't get very shocked and surprised over the union. They seem to be very happy - each is finding, in his way, fulfillment in the other. John, because apparently he can only love older women (his mother, perhaps), Polly, because she's lonely and has little chance of making a match with such an attractive person as John at her age. And they're a damn good-looking couple, with the age difference not at all apparent.

Then we had dinner at Karl & Julie's house - John & another couple - the girl being a modern dance teacher & very much like Ann - a good gal - & I got home pretty early.

The boys and I walked down to the lake today, where it's been blowing like hell for the past three days. Anyway, we were walking along a secluded portion on the rocks near Belmont Harbor and we found a little pool of water on the rocks, about an inch deep, filled with minnows probably left by some trusting, if inhuman, fisherman. So we proceeded to scoop up the ill and probably hungry fish and throw them back into the lake. It was a good half hour's job and when we got through, Ed peered into the lake and observed that the fish ought to swim up and spell "thank you" which I thought was cute.

I'd like to get this letter out before the pickup. More next week - when I'm somewhat less distracted and more inspired. Much love, darling, Jil I

JILL TO AL APRIL 22, 1942

[beginning of letter missing]

Here I am back at work and busy as a bee. This is my second day at Ward's, and I'm sure I've lost another ten pounds from the early hours and the enervating influence of not having very much to do. I'm still not very sure as to my function here: the fate of the nation does not rest on it, that much I know. Kind of a glorified secretary to the editor of the promotional material in the catalog, I guess.

But at least the work is a little more responsible than the previous jobs I've had, i.e., I have a phone on my desk.

The hours are awful. I have to get up at seven to get here at 8:15. I bike to the I.C., which is an amusing spectacle, I suppose, to the local gentry. But I don't care.

Last night we had dinner at Fran Coughlin's--John and I. He's going back today, presumably for the duration. Karl Kahn, the man who had such a violent argument with somebody at Johnny's Christmas party, was there. And so was Jack Thompson, who is going into the Navy, I think, as a war correspondent. He just had some kind of operation so he could do it.

Continued after Lunch. It's funny but this place, despite its size, has, in practice if not in policy, much less of an authoritarian air than Esquire. If you don't have much to do, nobody insists that you sit at your desk and look busy. For instance, Marge, the girl who I am replacing because she is getting married but who is here this week to show me the ropes, is reading the paper -- the Sun -- now in full view of the editorial chief.

They have a cafeteria in the building where the food is very cheap and not much less inspiring than the Near North Side bistros where we used to eat. They also cash your checks free in the building and you can get a ten percent discount in the store. Ah, holy father Ward! I have to run a lot of errands in my job, which means that I am downstairs in the bargain counter

half the day. It seems to be a general practice around here to shop or browse during working hours.

Did your mother send those pictures to you. That dope Vic. Half the pictures didn't come out because he had the lens adjusted to a bright and sunny day at seven in the evening.

I must send you a copy of last week's New Yorker. They have a story in it by John Cheever -- towards the front of the book -- wherein the life and times of our decade is touched upon. It's a rather unusual subject -- nobody ever considers the problems -- when generations are under discussion -- of the people like us - - the people in their early twenties, who saw the depression, who are now seeing the war, yet who are not lost in any sense of the word. The boy and girl in this story are much like us: expecting not very much, yet far from cynical. And glad for each other. Disenchanted but hopeful is the way I like to consider us.

I can't say too often how proud I am that you're in the Army. Perhaps it is a smug pride -- after all, it's you who have to suffer the discomforts and ennui of Army life. I wish I could too, just to keep things even. I get awfully mad at all these punks, particularly those around the University of Chicago, who are looking for a nice, safe desk job. John and I ran into Study [?] at the U.T. last Thursday night, and he assured us that he was going to be able to stay out of the armed forces. It was pretty disgusting. And the ensigns -- most of them -- aren't much better.

I shouldn't have gone over to this page. It's high time I stopped this letter. Will write more tomorrow.

All my love

Jill

JILL TO AL APRIL 23, 1942

Dearest -

You are going to disown me - I just know it. I did an awful thing,

in the eyes of God and man. Forgive me, if there is any forgiveness in your Army-worn soul. I -how can I say it - I quit my job!

The reason - how flaccid it must sound to you, disciplined and self-disciplined as you are - I just didn't like it. I didn't like typing millions of requisitions, keeping millions of records, dusting off the boss's furniture, sharpening pencils for him, distributing paper to the copy writers. So yesterday, my third day at Montgomery Ward's, I bid them a tactful farewell. You may well ask why I didn't stay longer - at least for the dough. Frankly, it didn't seem worth it to me - the impossible long hours - including the complicated trip to get there at 8:15 A.M. - coupled with the physical deterioration I seem to undergo when I am bored and ill-at-ease in my job. It was a job, incidentally, which could be done by a person with a good deal less grey matter than I have - which may not be so much.

So now, I suppose, I must look for another job. I hope it will be more interesting than that one. But if I ever do have to take a dull job - I'll make sure it will be in a defense organization. At least then I'll be able to rationalize the alleged discomforts of my position.

Meanwhile, Diana had planned to take a lease on the apartment till October. She is just starting a secretarial course which will keep her busy in Chicago for the next five months. But that too - the plan for a pleasant abode until we can be together again - has exploded. Mohoney was over this morning with the announcement that he has rented it to another person... too little, too late. (They raised the rent to 37.50 with decorating, incidentally!)

You remember, I signed up to be an Air Raid Warden. Well, they are giving a series of courses for wardens over at Kent Hall, which I am starting tonight. Even with the depressing news that I am no longer going to be a resident of this block, I think it would be a good idea if I stuck it out. I may be somewhere someday where the chances for attack are a good deal better than in Chicago.

Somebody - specifically, Arnold Gingrich's assistant at Esquire - just called me now about a lead to a job on Radio & Screen Guide. I have an appointment with the editor this aft. - Lucky - Aren't I?

I loved the pictures you sent me & am taking them out now to have prints developed which I will distribute at busy intersections throughout Chicago (netch, netch). But where is your moustache, my charmer? I hope you didn't shave it off. I really like it - even if it scratches. Fun fun - so you're coming home with that disreputable group of card sharps and promoters the Army gives you as playmates! We'll get Rosable and have a gang shag. Not you and me, tho. Strictly monogamous, I am.

Truman [*the cat*] stays out all the time now. I can't figure out if she likes her boy friend or loathes him. Last night when I was taking my bath (nacherly) and he came in (a fixed sequence of events) she ran out after him when I drove him out. Either to administer further punishment or to comfort him with her dirty grey body. Maybe she's ambivalent. Frankly, I care less than the amount of space I devote to the sordid pair would indicate.

Tell Chingos he is not the only one who thinks I am a second Hepburn, altho I embrace him for the flattering notion. Hess says I am the type - a watered-down anemic - literally - copy of it, anyway. You are the Gene Krupa type. So there!

Sweetheart, I send you 3 hugs and a kiss. That's all for now.

Your Jill

That last phone call we made cost \$5.75. I just got the bill!!!!

JILL TO AL APRIL 25, 1942

Darling --

Sunday

Turmoil is slowly descending on this happy household - in between Truman being assaulted by her various b.f.'s, as Ring Lardner used to say, Diana's plans to move to New York, and

my total planlessness. And Ed and Vic being down here yesterday, and wreaking general havoc.

A group of the undergraduates, sponsored by D.A. have been giving a revue this past two weekends. Everybody said it was so good that I decided the kids might like to see it. It's so hard, financially and otherwise, to take them to a professional stage production in the Loop. They came down yesterday afternoon and we fooled around till dinner - during which brief interval Victor stepped on Diana's typewriter & broke it, knocked over a lamp and lost the chain to my bicycle. Then we ate, accompanied by many shouts and jeers, such as "Boys, sit down this minute" and Vic's ever-clever "Oh, yeah". We finally got to the show, but not before Victor had disappeared on the bike, apparently irrevocably, and Ed and I had to organize a searching party to find him. The review was very cute - better lines than music, perhaps - but the whole thing was very well done. A lot of skits, almost entirely satirical and not as heavy-handed as one might expect undergraduate satire to be. After the show I borrowed Diana's car & drove them home. They couldn't stay overnight because Vic had to go to work early Sunday to pursue his chosen profession - soda-jerking. He just got a job as a fountain boy in a drugstore, a most inappropriate profession for him.

Well, the three most important things in my life - you, a place to live, and a job are still uncertain quantities. You, naturally, because of the exigencies of Army life - altho I have great hopes that you'll be here in a week or ten days, after school is over. As for the place to live, altho it would be fun being with your family, I so much prefer the South Side to any other place in the city that I'm going to make every effort to stay down here, at least temporarily. And, altho at least three people, including your family & the other 2 - Betty Betz's family & Rosable - have asked me to stay with them, I prefer the non-sponging-off-people of living alone. I believe there's a room vacant at Goff's, right adjacent to Smudge's; if Julie Harrisson doesn't get it first, Mrs. Goff says I can have it. Julie is living with Dorothy Briggs - who is separated from Peter - and will probably stay there.

The job - well, I was interviewed for one as editorial assistant on an opus called Screen & Radio Guide - \$40/week - & will hear Monday or Tuesday. However, I don't think I'll get it because I don't know enough production work - typography, layout & so forth. There are some State Civil Service exams coming up & there's always that Federal one. I must say they're damn slow about letting us know the results, considering the great rush they were in to give the thing.

I am now drinking a virulently cloudy looking Coke. It has ice in it, & I think half the sewage from South Chicago is in the ice.

I wish so much that you were here. The trees have suddenly gotten very green - a fresh yellowish green, not the dusty deep green of summer - and we could have a fine time walking and talking. Yes, I wish beyond all words that we could be together.

My love is yours, darling, as always,

Jill

JILL TO AL APRIL 28, 1942

Al darling--

Your little darling is slowly falling to pieces. Just about once a year all the uncertainties of life seem to coincide for me, and then I go into a deep decline. I keep thinking that if I could express these confusions in some coherent and timeless prose, things would be better. But all I can do is write letters. Certainly not New Yorker stories.

The single ray of hope is that I got a 90 in that civil service exam for statisticians. Hey, hey. Of course, for all I know, all the other contestants might have gotten a 99.

Tomorrow your mother is coming down to help me pack, and presumably to remove her many possessions which are here. I've taken a room at Goff's, right next to Vera's and a rather nice little place. I thought that would be better than living off your family, although I'm sure no one else regards it in the same

light.

Your mother says that Jeannette wants to sell their car for \$50 and I am almost tempted to buy it, if I can get it for \$40. It certainly would make life simpler for us to have a car, even though it seems an extravagance in the light of present conditions. Benny has fixed it up swell, although I'm going to take a sharp look at the tires before I decide to do anything. But what do you think, really?

I'm so glad you're graduating Saturday. Maybe you'll be home this weekend. At least, I'm counting on your being home pretty shortly. Diana wants me to drive to New York with her, and at least spend a short while there, but I don't want to take the chance of missing you, naturally. My friend there, Carol is getting married, incidentally.

Oliver is in the Army, at Fort Dix, the reception center is New Jersey. He'll probably be moved, though.

Well, darling, I shall return to my brooding and to my eternal lists of people to see about jobs.

Best of love to you ...

Jill

AL TO JILL APRIL 28, 1942

Dearest sweetheart,

I shouldn't complain but the fact is I feel somewhat stir-crazy today. I would be happier if I were sure of being shipped somewhere next week, but I'm not. Everyone keeps saying it, but down deep we know that we may be here another month or two.

Last night Pvt. Haviston & myself - you remember my speaking of him, Steinbeck's Casey - hit the road to Murray where there is a teachers college. We were cemented together with iron bonds of a whiskey bottle and a deep sense of having been fed shit on

a shingle too often.

We got there in due time and wandered around feeling sick with nostalgia at seeing a college campus. There were many girls, all so young it seemed. The sight of a bare-legged moccassined foot made me so sad and aching through my whole body for you that my morale will be forever impaired.

We groused around at the campus cafes and walked into the library to relieve ourselves after a while. It was so respectable and stately, every little sound seemed so sonorous and significant, our uniforms so strange. As befit two drunken soldiers we paraded thru the halls and rooms, pointing out the reserved book titles in loud, contemptuous voices. Walking out, we spotted a box labeled "Give books to service men" with nothing in it and again raised our voices in great complaint against the parsimony of the student body.

From there, we proceeded to another campus hot-spot, talked long and garrulously to some young things (how young college girls are), and started walking unsteadily in the general direction of Paris along a pitch black road with no cars in sight, a cloud-obscured moon which peeped out palely from time to time, and a few dark trees and shrubs here & there. We must have walked for quite a while; my legs are a little tired this morning. I recall that we finally stopped at some black spot and sat on the curb, for no good reason, with only stillness on either side of us, and held a loud and incoherent conversation on the nature of the world's misery and the abominable condition of subordination in which we found ourselves. This mauve dialogue went on like a cut out of Krazy Kat with the accentuated grotesquerie of a drunk's eyes.

Far away I could see a light from a car heading our way. It crawled along the road and I had a dim realization that I should make some attempt to flag it. Haviston didn't give a damn. He just sat where he was. "Haviston," I said, "come up and let's get this car." Haviston went on along his old train of thought. "You know, ol' buddy, there are so many geniuses and so many dumb animals in this army that I just can't tell the difference any

more." That was the final piece of wisdom. I stepped out, waved at the car, and it stopped. The driver was a looie whom Haviston promptly subdued by describing people he knew in Texas that the looie had wanted to know but couldn't. I sat in the back seat, hunched up in a little bundle, thinking thoughts that must have run thru Hitler's mind in the long years from 1914-18.

Here I am now, writing my most precious love on earth with a headache and an eye on the dumb sergeant who is talking about a maintenance log.

I'm so sorry I didn't reach you when I called home Sunday, and am even sorrier about your lack of a home and a job. It's too goddam bad that I get mentally exhausted trying to escape to a life of constructive effort while you, with your freedom of chances, can do nothing very much. You can't even find time to write letters as frequently as you ought, though. I don't know.--

Love Al

AL TO JILL MAY 1, 1942

United States Army

Dearest sweetheart,

It's hard to realize you're not within week-end stride from camp. You can't imagine how much I'd like to be in New York too.

I should think that if you were bent on traveling that you would travel down here to me who needs you much more than your family. I realize, however, that Paris is not N.Y., etc.

Hank and I walked into a crap game last night, went into partnership and came out a hundred bucks ahead. Neither knew how much the other was winning. I didn't expect him to be so far ahead as 50 dollars, since he was playing a very conservative game. I won practically all of my \$50 in a couple of

beautiful plunges, doubling the pot each time. Hank was paralyzed with fear whenever I refused to take money from the pot. Later on, we laughed ourselves sick over the game while we counted the spoils in the most appropriate place for money - the latrine.

Anyhow, I'm sending you \$25 to spend for yourself in N.Y. I figure you may spot some little thing that touches your fickle heart.

Have a good time and think of me in the nonce (wherever that is -- toity-toid & ate, I suppose).

Your lover,

Guess who

JILL TO AL APRIL 30, 1942

Dearest -

This is a special delivery letter & very important. It is to a) contradict your thesis that I don't write enuf & b) tell you to disregard my first wire [*this wire seems to be lost*]. To hell with New York. I am coming to Paris. Unless you are coming to Chicago.

I don't know how I'll get there or when. I am negotiating for a car. Sit tight.

All the furniture has been moved out of the house and Diana has just packed my leg in her trunk by mistake.

A Sears Roebuck driver and a one-eyed Western Union boy of about 45 have just come in through the window. We are all drinking cokes. Diana has just left through the window to invite the postman and two passing cats in. The cats demurred. Diana has just packed away an empty coke bottle, my senior thesis, my left hand and an old copy of Your Car; How to Own and Drive It by mistake. I think she is going to cry.

Do you want your toothpicks? Diana would like to take them to

New York.

Sit tight. Will wire if I am coming. Don't know yet.

[Incomplete]

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 3, 1942

Dearest love,

Your new job is wonderful news! It really is a break for both of us. I feel so much more happy when you are somewhat settled and doing something interesting. And I am as happy as can be that your job is the type that it is; if you stay with it even for a short time we'll have so much to say to each other that we'll probably shun all our friends, a thing I've often thought of as long as you were around me. And the pay is grand!

Without shouting "I told you so," I'd like to point out how baseless your lack of self-confidence was. Your occasional depressed periods and past inclinations to recklessness have been prompted by that feeling. Learn as much as you can about politics, dear, and maybe we'll go into some sort of partnership later on. I don't know either of the two men for whom you work but I have means of finding out and will write a couple of city hall pals to see what's and who's cooking. I'm suspicious of everyone and want to know what they want with a beautiful pair of legs in their office. It's slightly incredible that politicians can recognize brains.

I'll be eagerly waiting for your impressions of the work and, for a slight fee, will give political advice. Vanity, oh vanity!

Enclosed is a letter first addressed to N.Y. & a money order. Since the trip has been postponed & you probably don't need the money, put it away for me. If you feel like buying yourself something, tho, spend it. I'd love to know that I've made you a little prettier. All kinds of love and kisses. Write often.

Your Al

P.S. I'll telegraph you about new outfit tomorrow.

AL TO JILL MAY 4, 1942

Dearest love,

How is every little thing? Still love me? Cut out the comedy and give me a serious answer.

Because I'd hate to marry a girl this coming Sunday who didn't. I think this is it, darling. I've just spoken to the 1st Sergeant who is arranging a three-day pass (maybe four), starting Saturday at one. If all goes well, I'll be on the city of Miami at 10:30 that night and loving you to death shortly thereafter.

Hank Dannenberg will be with me on his way to NYC to get a divorce -- funny? --. I'm sure you'll find him an eminently lovable character, enough so to be best man. To facilitate recognition, here is a picture of him, all 225 lbs. of brawn and as light as a mosquito.

The 302 is an old battalion, the first one here and they're a pleasant bunch. I'm giving a short current events lecture Wed. & Sat. at noon to the battery. I'm also rehearsing with the 306th dance orchestra. In other words, I have a few interesting things to do. But none so interesting as to keep me from longing & fretting for Saturday to come around.

I'll know for sure Wed. but am almost positive of the leave. Imagine yourself, if you can, as a married woman, J.O., I can't quite. To me you'll always be someone I'm trying to make.

I've got to go, now. All my love and more. Will write right soon.

Your Al

Love to all the family.

JILL TO AL MAY 6, 1942

My darling -

You deserve some explanation for my awful indecision tonight; yet I hardly know how to give you one. I have turned the moment that should have been our happiest into something miserable and confused for us both. Yet why I don't know.

Do I want to marry you? The question should be -- do you want to marry me, now? Al, I haven't changed. The things in me that made me undecided, quarrelsome, tearful before are still there. I yearn for things, the existence of which I can't define. I look frantically towards your love, and understanding, but I hardly know how to give you those things.

You grow furious with me when I call myself a neurotic -- it's a smug, pat generalization, I know - but I think I am. And then my anxieties are intensified because I think or know I am behaving differently from other people.

You want me -- and I'd like to, too -- go into marriage high-heartedly, viewing it as the climax of all my hopes and expectations. That's the way some girls -- maybe all -- do it. But how can I, Al? God, for two years now we've fought, equivocated, contemplated infidelity -- and loved -- one another. We must have had reasons for doing all those things. Or I must have had them (perhaps, truly, I was the sole instigator of all this atypical behavior).

And now I am on the verge of getting married, and worried sick because I don't have the same feelings I think other people have when they get married. Yes, I love you in my way -- that is -- I can't imagine loving anyone else. You are the fixed point in my existence. And because I realize that, I am afraid to get married. I have this idea that people get married for reasons that I don't understand -- not for my reason -- that I am lonely and dependent on you. Even when I say I love you, I sometimes feel that you and everyone else have a secret knowledge of the words that I don't and never will understand.

You see, I take my trouble to you as I have always taken it, telling you everything as if you were a detached observer. Which of course you're not, which must make this letter something at the same time ludicrous and painful to you. I want your assurance -- as if you were my mother! -- that no, I'm not the least bit queer or different from other people, that everything will be all right, that of course I should marry you. And, as I write these words, I do want to do that. But again, the pain rises up in me -- that I can never honestly be the sort of wife you need and want.

Shall I sum up what stands between us? It comprises all these vague yearnings, all this preoccupation with self -- the chief characteristics of my mildly disordered personality. When I see you again, I shall probably swear that I am whole and perfect as a government stamped side of beef. But there will be nights when I'll weep and toss and not know why --

When I see you -- and how much I want to -- I'll not be able to say the things I've said. I shall have forgotten them by then, because I never wanted to say them. By then, we'll either do what we both want to do -- I think -- or else we, or rather you, will make one more of your gentle accommodations. You've been wonderful to me, Al, all these years. You've really put up with a lot of -- well, the word is inappropriate in this context. But how much more can you take? I love you, darling, but God, do you really think you can stand being psycho-analyst, mother, brother and lover to me?

I'll get a room on the South Side for the weekend -- for Hank -- but how about us? I am staying here you know. Why don't we get the room & let him stay with your folks? They suggested he could.

And there were all these other things that came to my mind when you asked me tonight -- that I want to stay with my job because it's a good one, even tho all I have done is color counties red and blue. I was -- and am -- afraid that that's not the right attitude.

Please, darling, forgive me for all this crap.

Your

Jill

I sent your knife today. Watch for a small package from Field's. Hope you like it -- it was the most expensive one in the store.

AL TO JILL MAY 6, 1942

Dearest love,

Wednesday

I should be used to hearing what you said over the phone, but somehow it hit me awfully hard last night, probably because I was so happy over the prospect of coming home.

Most certainly something must be done. I can't go on having you as a wife but not in name. It is terribly unfair to you. Whatever you say about being willing to go ahead, I can't let you do it.

For quite a while and perhaps even now, you thought me hard and untrustworthy. If that is why you don't want to marry me, I am happy -- first because neither is true and second because, if you believe it, it is something in me and not something in you. I pray that if we do not marry, it is because you think there are things about me you don't like. I pray that your reasons are not in yourself -- either because of not confiding in me something that stands in the way, something that has happened, or some basic disturbance in your character and mind. If this were so, I would be really smashed in heart and spirit.

All I care for in the world is that you be happy and well-adjusted. I could stand it being with someone else. I can't bear to have you torn within by something not rational, meaning by "rational" a weighing of my qualities against someone else's or yours. My stomach shrivels when I think that you may love me but that I can never make you happy.

I'm sending this letter before I receive yours because nothing

will change what I've said. When I receive yours, I'll send either a telegram or another special delivery letter to you. I'll be home but can't say exactly when, - Sat. nite, I hope.

During all the time I've known you, I've never been unfaithful; the only exceptions you can recite me were done for the reason I told you, because I loved you so very much.

I seem to recall us being very happy together for months. In fact, it seems that when we were together we had delightful times, jaundiced over only by the uncertainty of their duration. But, again, I am not you and I may have been wrong. Perhaps you had happier times before then which you could recall & compare to my disadvantage.

I beg of you to tell me the truth about yourself. Put me in my place and I'll be content. You can count on me for all of your life for anything; so please don't feel that by leaving me you will be alone.

This is no love letter, darling, as you know. I'm not recounting the infinitude of pleasures you have given me and telling you how much I desire you. I don't want to sweep you into a marriage of reciprocal sympathy. I want you to love me as I love you, not with troubled feelings and deep insecurities, but with a lover's light heart and boundless acceptance.

If you decide to marry me, I will be most happy. If not, I want to know the true reasons why you don't.

I hope all this is not hurting your new work too much. But I know it is. Well, this love affair has hurt my work in the past, too, if that is any consolation.

Please smile for me, darling, and say, "Well, that ape wasn't for me but we had a lot of wonderful times together and we both came out the better for it." If not that, smile to think of Hank & myself staggering off the train with drunken grins and smile at the thought of our future marriage.

I love you, Al

AL TO JILL TELEGRAM

FT447=WUX CAMPTYSON TENN

JILL OPPENHEIM
1235 ADDISON ST. CHGO

TO THE MOTHER OF OUR CHILDREN - AND MY
SWEETHEART - HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY=

AL

End of April 1942 letters

