

JILL TO AL AUGUST 1, 1942

Sweetheart -

Friday

My rear tire is flat again and I am desolate. This has been a most awful day. Very hot & full of petty frustrations, like having to go to the library & forgetting my card, having to walk from one end of Field's to another for a lousy defense stamp. And naturally, as soon as the weather gets really hot, I don't feel a thing. No. I just turn an interesting shade of pearl grey and go home and puke. Only this time when I got home Buss [*Sebastian de G.*] was there. I had given him the key & he was



Jill with bike

waiting for Miriam. I politely refrained from my intentions and they finally went to Leddy's for dinner. They are coming back about ten & Lt. John is coming about 11, with his old girl-friend before me, Jane Kosper. It ought to be fun, and, feeling conspicuously consummatory, if there is such a phrase, I am getting a fifth of Scotch.

I bought Mir a sweet bedjacket at Field's today which she can return if it is too damn sweet. I also bought four Modern Library Books as they were closing them out at 37¢ per. I got *The Way of All Flesh* for me - only I'm giving it to Mir because she lost hers & I still have Rosable's copy, Katherine Mansfield's *A Garden Party* (inexplicably) for me too. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* for Vic & Lindberg's *The Imperial Hearst* for Ed. They didn't have much there, so don't criticize the selection.

Mir bought me (what a family) a darling little red purse, convenient for carrying stuff when I am in play clothes. She also

bought me some lovely little silver earrings, with silver hearts dangling from them, from Washington. She & Buss insist it's a present from you. Is this true? Thank you darling, anyway. Even if it isn't true, I love you.

I'm awfully glad to hear you passed the course in Directions, whatever they are. What is Harvey Sherman doing down at Camp, incidentally. Is he a teacher?

We got a card today from Paul Douglas (kaff, kaff - that's the pompous sound, dope). He says he is teaching down at the Marine Base in S.C., likes it fine, & they promise he'll be put in action soon. (The card was to Hodes, but I got to see it per Rubin.)

Well, after Mir & Buss left I lay around for a while, my stomach on tenterhooks, as they say, & finally went to Int. House for a light, unattractive dinner. Then I came back & washed, shaved, pared & filed & here I am, my hair dripping nastily & me smelling like 10 nights in a Paris hoorhouse. Pretty soon Harper Liquor will deliver & then I can go out & mail this.

Boohoo. I can't use my bike! Unhappy day.

Well, darling, what else is there to say? All my love to you

Jill

JILL TO AL AUGUST 2, 1942

Darling -

Sunday

I haven't gotten to write you all weekend, mostly because the writing equipment in your family's house is so unsatisfactory I got discouraged every time. But now, waiting for the boys to come home to dinner - it's about six - I finally took my temper in both hands & herewith commenced.

I've been here since yesterday afternoon, mostly hanging around the house, because until late this afternoon the weather has been pleasantly dreary (I get awfully sick of the sun

sometimes - particularly because when it comes out I am too busy or too tired to enjoy it).

John & his friend Jane & Buss & Mir didn't come over til about midnight Friday night and left correspondingly late, so I just didn't bother to go to work Saturday morning. Then I got up and fooled around with the inner tube, which is apparently past redemption, & then came up here, with the intention of going back early today, to see Marion Gerson who was coming out south to see Maxine. However, at the last minute Maxine had a date so I am still here, to my relief.

We - the boys and I - went to see a rotten double feature - Suicide Squadron & the Tuttles of Tahiti, & don't let any pseudo-intellectual tell you otherwise; they are both terribly dull.

Rosable had recommended the latter flick to me, bad cess to her. She called up here frantically yesterday afternoon. Her cousin Arthur Belustoch, whom you may remember - I remember having flirted with him most abandonedly at a drunken Hawkins party a long time ago - was in town. She wanted me to go with him to some professor's house. I said well, I was going to the movies with the DeGrazia's, & she got pretty huffy about my passing up such jewels for what is her notion of your uncultivated brothers. Fooey, I hate intellectual snobbery.

Gosh, I made you the most beautiful fudge yesterday, only it doesn't seem to harden & therefore is not in a post-able condition. However my intentions are of the best. Next time maybe it will be hardened.

Also I made the spaghetti sauce for tonight's dinner, & a very tasty mess it promises to be. I have let it cook longer than I used to when I made it for you.

I haven't gone swimming this weekend at all & a great loss it is, too. I usually go when I have the curse, but since you are coming home in just a month, I had better not take chances with anything that might make me late.

Christ this pen is lousy. There really isn't much else to write about, or if there is, I have been successfully discouraged from writing it.

More tomorrow, dear.

Love,

Jill

JILL TO AL AUGUST 3, 1942

Darling --

Monday

As an old sea chanty of my youth would have it, I'm all alone by the telephone. Rubin has gone home, Lundy has gone to the dentist, and most of the higher dignitaries around here have gone to Springfield on a party jamboree. Left thusly to my own devices, I naturally squander the taxpayers' resources by writing you.

I am very sleepy, too, mostly because a detachment of sailors has taken to walking, or rather, marching under my windows at quarter of eight every morning to the tuneless rhythms of a perfectly stinking drummer. After they passed this morning and I clutched at sleep once more (I never get up til 8:10), I had a dream that Mr. Staley downstairs asked the naval authorities to have this luckless band of men re-routed because they disturbed his sleep. Actually, this would never happen, because Mr. Staley himself gets up at six (he tells me) to attend to his duties as a member of the Air Corps in training over at the University.

Not much has happened since I wrote you yesterday. I came home last night about nine and tortured myself with trying to figure out our bank balance from my surrealistic check stubs. I had to pay your mother's rent because she likes to send a check, which was the occasion for all the fiscal activity. I also paid the July or maybe it was June phone bill, sending along a harsh note demanding the meaning of some charge or other. I

am getting aggressive as all hell. I think it's because I have the notion I am being put upon financially sometimes. It's funny but I see-saw from pretty complete irresponsibility about financial matters and a certain literality I guess to a positive Scroogeness about same. Every once in a while I become aware of the fact that an awful lot of people owe me money or are in the process of touching me for same, and I get unreasonably annoyed about it. Similarly, I spend money like a drunken sailor one day and the next don't want to even buy myself a healthy lunch. Oh well, we all have our peculiarities. I have started to keep a rough account of the dough I spend in August, if such a thing is possible, so that some day we may have an enduring record of how much it costs to keep a dream girl like me looking and acting like such.

I had lunch with Janice today -- she is doing volunteer work at the Red Cross a couple of days a week as a case worker, I guess -- and she not unexpectedly poured out her troubles to me. She really is in a spot with that bastard Bill. He and his mother gang up on her all the time; it's like living in a domestic concentration camp. I pointed out to her as tactfully as I could that she asked for it, but that just because one makes mistakes, one isn't sworn to endure the consequences of same, according to that old Protestant dogma (or maybe it is Catholic -- all you infidels are the same to me). Anyway, I gave her a lot of gratuitous advice about the virtues of independence, that she ought to get a steady job for the moral effects of same. She was appreciative but probably won't do anything about it. I think she fears most being alone. You can hardly blame her. Anyone in their right mind dislikes being alone, but it is something she ought to take at least temporarily, and knowing it is temporary, just to get over her fatal dependence on turdy people.

So much for Janice, who you don't like anyway. There isn't a single thing else to write about, for a change. I guess it's only a month more before you'll be coming home. I haven't broken the news to Lundy or Hodes yet -- I hope I won't have to Hodes -- that I'll be taking a week or ten days off. I guess it can wait. But gosh I'm anxious to see you. Actually the summer has gone

very fast and will continue to do so, I trust. I think living for weekends makes the time go fast, because you count off in terms of weekends rather than single days.

When do you think you'll get through, I mean, what day? Do you really think we'll have time to go to New York and every place else? I'd like to go to New York with you, but not if we have so little time. Frankly, I don't care enough about seeing my family although I love them dearly (a little formula I have) to have us get all tired out dashing about the countryside. I think Glen Park here and a bender or two in Washington and Chicago will be plenty. However, it's up to you and, really, it depends on where you will be stationed and for how long and everything.

Well, sweetie pie, the charwoman is dusting about my feet and I'd better get home.

All my love,

Jill

AL TO JILL AUGUST 1, 1942

Dearest love,

Lookie, lookie, I'm a vacationer! Godfrey Lehman, a guy from the Class behind mine and U. of C. '37, thereafter U. of Calif., persuaded me to leave lovely Camp Davis for a weekend. Very reluctantly, I acquiesced and am now glad I did. For although I've only been out of the post for a couple of hours, I feel very swell -- I've taken a tub bath, a dip in the ocean, and am writing you from the cottage room we have on the beach. He has a standing reservation for it every weekend.

It's raining and thundering in great abandon, however, so swimming isn't so pleasant. Nevertheless, the prospect of a leisurely dinner, a show perhaps, a restful night's sleep and an easy day on the beach tomorrow has attractions beyond any other day I've spent in this clime.

The first part of today seemed like a week. The heat was by

outmoded standards unbearable. Yet we had to stand for a long time in the brilliant sunlight after having been inspected in the morning and taken a two and a half-hour exam. Again I get in difficulties in describing the situation because there are a million & one petty nuisances, jobs, commands, etc. to observe and undergo during those few hours. There were a lot of things to do, as usual, and no time to do them.

I felt exhausted by 9:00 A.M. when the fun commenced on the week's work in AA firing (the first part of the exam was Friday out at the point), and when we had to stand in the hot sun afterwards it was really bad. I don't recall being pleased with my work, but Harvey Sherman who instructs in the course revealed that my mark was 93, in the first dozen of about 360 men. Not bad, baby, not bad. But now don't go rushing about telling everyone I'll be an officer in no time. There's many a slip possible, and .. I was so pleased with your remark that it didn't make any difference & so annoyed at your correlation (perhaps only accidentally) of "manliness" with success in an Army OC School. Hell, girl, how many times must I tell you not to use false standards in judging a man's worth? I feel often that a "manly" guy wouldn't stand for the crap one has to take around here. Believe me, I'm storing up a hell of a lot of bile to be let out on something or someone.

So don't be at all deprecatory of Sylvia's boy friend. True, the QM is a lot of easy shit academically. They memorize millions of forms and learn a lot of good things, too, how to buy good meat and good goods. I like that, good goods.

I guess I would hate that sort of military training even worse than this. This is because I get a certain kick out of transferring my learning aptitudes to an entirely different milieu. Basically, though, I feel, and I think I've said this to you before, that the mechanics by trade are getting a hell of a lot more out of the army than the social scientist. Life for them is thus more of a continuous stream. Time will tell.

No better expression of that idea have I heard than from a letter I got yesterday from Mike Holmes in England. I don't have it

here but will send it on to you. That boy is the most wonderfully mature person I've ever met. He should be a great Britisher some day in social life or study. Read his letter when it comes & see if it isn't the most discerning thing and how his ideas are so remarkably parallel to the best we can offer here.

This place has a London Bridge aspect about it. A great number of ramshackle structures piled on a stretch of beach, with a lot of moldy civilians, Negroes, and females on vacation. Somehow I feel resentful towards a civilian and his girl, both in gaudy, airy summer clothing. It is too lewd a setting for the tragic motif of the age. Silly, yes it is. I'll become a puritan if I don't stop taking this war so seriously. I guess I'm like Ed. I take le beau monde too much to my heart. Perhaps I'm giving myself too altruistic a motive & that really I hate any carnival setting that I can't participate in fully, lacking you.

I think I'll get along to eat now. I don't want to embarrass you by describing how much I love and want you, so I won't. Whisper a word about it.

Take care of yourself, baby, e.g. don't cut your legs to ribbons while shaving them.

Al

P.S. *[at beginning of letter]* I just cashed one of the checks you sent me for \$10. Hope you don't mind. I should get paid tomorrow.

AL TO JILL AUGUST 2, 1942

My brave little bicyclero,

Sunday night

I got "home" only an hour ago after a rather nice day on the Ocean at Wrightsville Beach. I wrote there to you at length, describing the mildewed attractions of the resort and a few other things, but I can't find the letter to mail it. I expect, however, that it will be mailed by a friend with whom I left it and am writing this note only in case. My time is limited now,

whereas I had plenty of time on the beach before to dream of you, ramifying on that cute little Idyll of yours.

This week we are studying Orientation, beginning with Study Hall tonight. (Let me know if you get the letter from the beach. I said nothing noteworthy, but even the irrelevant demands attention when letter-writing must be so hasty.)

Mir's card came along with your letter. "Broiling steaks around a fire under the full moon" -- yum-yum.

I met a guy from Williams out at the beach. He's a couple of weeks behind me & had been working for the Provost Marshal in Chicago before coming here. What a job - expense account, sergeant's pay, nice work investigating political backgrounds of reserve officers applicants. He said the Navy intelligence officers were silly dopes, who used to ask people about other people in terms of "Does he read the New Republic?" Finally he got disgusted with his contacts with officers so much, that he decided to be one, so here he is, getting it the hard way.

Your constant escapades on bicycle are causing me to fret. Quit bruising yourself, darling. I'll do all that with my sadistic love-play when I get back (cf. H. Ellis, pp. 349 ff, 341, 343-4). And that doesn't mean I won't tickle you gently, or kiss you sweetly under the ear, or even from submitting to the clumsy fun you get from punching me in the stomach or beating me over the head with *Poetica Erotica*. In short, keep in trim on the assurance that our love hasn't changed from half slam-bang and riot to half coo and cuddle. Or, I might put it,

As ever, your Al

JILL TO AL AUGUST 5, 1942

Dearest--

Just a quickie before I go home and gird my loins for that awful first-aid class. For two cents or even less I would drop the whole thing, if I weren't plagued with the knowledge that that sort of

thing is awfully bad for one's character. Of course, I could rationalize that with the thought that at 23 one's character is pretty well formed, and no little inconsistency like the faithful pursuit of my first-aid lessons is going to alter that hummingbird quality of my character which indulgent relatives and husbands have found so charming all these years.

I haven't gotten your letter written at the beach yet, but then I haven't been home yet either. The other one came this morning which is how I know you wrote a letter at the beach. How I envy you swimming in the Atlantic, and how much fun it would be if we were together, goosing each other about in the waves. I forget now, how do you feel about salt water? Do you feel, like many in-landers, that Lake Michigan water is the purest and the best in the whole world? If you ever did hold to that fallacious fallacy, your mind will be changed when you come home. A summer of war effort in south Chicago and Lake County has given lake bathing a flavor than can only be rivalled by a dip in a vat of Campbell's vegetable soup, meat included.

Jeeps, I really had better go home so I can get something to eat before the witching hour at seven. Nothing much has happened the past 24 hours anyway, except for the trip I made yesterday to Mandel's to look for a raincoat. I didn't have my glasses on, and when I opened my eyes, I found myself in the College Shop, which had itself opened that very day. What a ghastly experience! All these little girls were lying around with their legs apart, smoking cigarettes and wearing Brooks sweaters, and viewing me as a coarse intruder. One finally staggered to her feet and approached me slowly, probably to inspect me for contagious diseases at a safe distance. She yawned, "Do you go to college?" I said, "well, no." She said, "Well, then you can't sign our college blue book." I came right back at her, feebly, that I didn't want to sign her book, all I wanted was a raincoat. She threw a couple of size twenties at me and sauntered off to talk to her mother, who was there in a little mink overcoat. As I left, I tripped over the equipment of a WIND man who was there to transmit the voices of these bumpkins to a eager world. The collitch shop, the collitch shop, I'll never go there any more.

That's all for you. All my love, too.

Jill

I just got home & found your nice long letter waiting for me so you don't have to bawl out your friend for negligence. Of course it's all right about the check. I had forgotten to mail them off anyway so you might as well cash the other & buy yourself something pretty or useful.

JILL TO AL AUGUST 6, 1942

Dearest--

I am getting reckless as all hell about the taxpayers' money. Somehow (sic!) I don't feel like working. Here it is almost noon and I have done nothing except read the papers and goof around with stray men who have wandered into the office in search of information or female beauty. It's rainy and cool out, perfect sleeping weather, and I see no reason why I shouldn't sleep -- here if not at home.

Your friend from England certainly pens a neat letter. I was much impressed by the clarity of his prose, as well, of course, by his unusual maturity and sensitivity.

I am going up north tonight to spend probably the last evening I shall have with Mir and Buss. Actually, of course, we didn't see each other on any strictly social occasions except for the one night we had drinks with Johnny and Jane at my place. Most of the time I was up north and by the laws of permutations and combinations, at least one of us was sleeping. Yes, I get my share in too, on that little back porch. Despite my protestations to insomnia, your mother said she found me sleeping out there one afternoon with the flies crawling around my bare feet - a reggilar Daisy Mae ..

I don't see why the hell you take my complaining so to heart, when you know I complain all the time anyway and hardly ever mean it. Rather, I mean it but it doesn't indicate any serious

state of melancholia. I should think you would know me by now for the changeable, moody and incidentally, generally exuberant person I am. While I can't say that I am always happy, or occasionally happy in the peace-on-earth-don't-I-feel-secure sense of the word, generally I have a pretty good time, barring extremes of heat or fatigue. I don't suppose I'll ever experience the Madonna-like peace and happiness that some women achieve, but I'll have an awful lot of fun.

So I don't want you to age yourself unnecessarily worrying about my welfare ... either directly or indirectly. By the latter, I mean I don't want you to run yourself ragged getting a lieutenant's commission or a \$100,000 in the bank for my sake. Too many men of my father's generation ran themselves into the grave or into untimely senility doing just that. I'd much rather we have a gay old time, interspersed with long periods of sleep and contemplation. It's sort of funny, I know, my admonishing you to keep your girlish laughter, considering that you do not exactly tower over me in the matter of years. But apparently I reached the peak in physical debility some six months ago, and am now getting younger and younger in relation to my chronological age. At least, people make such fatuous comments when they see my wedding ring as, "My, they certainly marry young these days, don't they." Of course, I never hasten to assure these dopes that I am well on in years and should certainly be married. Instead, I float off in a delighted trance. I guess, on good days, I still do look sort of post-adolescent, and I hope it keeps up, since no matter what anybody says, it's fine to be young, especially when you aren't plagued by the problems of youth and are blessed with the wisdom of age, as indeed I am.

I finally found the way to beat the Red Cross ennui. Now I volunteer to be the victim in class, and it's lots of fun, since all you have to do is lie down and close your eyes, and get pushed around a little. The people in my class, at least the instructor and the few favored students who worked on me, are surprisingly gentle. At least nobody dropped me last night when they were demonstrating how to move a broken-neck patient

from the ground onto a home-made stretcher. Our instructor is an old U. of C. boy, and sort of cute, in a dull Irish way. We had a test last night and I came in 20 minutes late and only had five minutes to do it in, but all I knew was five minutes' worth. I think he'll give me a good mark, though, if he, and not that awful woman who helps him out, grades the papers, since he always okays my sloppy bandages. Again, being a half-way decent female is one of those immorally advantageous things that being youthful is -- you don't deserve to get by on something that is purely fortuitous and God-given, but it's awfully nice to have that something, nevertheless.

I'm sure Mr. Rubin is wondering what I'm typing so assiduously. I never do my own work with such speed or industry. I had better stop lest his suspicions be aroused. I don't know how far I can go in taxing his good nature.

All my love to you, dear,

Very truly yours,

/signed/

Jill DeGrazia

RESEARCH DIVISION

AL TO JILL AUGUST 3, 1942

Darling Jill,

What a miserable life this is! I've almost lost the power to sympathize with your heat waves and job tribulations. No, I haven't. I really feel despondent when you tell me that you feel badly because of the heat or the job or the loneliness of a soldier's wife. All I can offer you is a promise of happiness in a month, of living happily together at Sheridan, on the Carolina Beach, or in Washington, D.C. The last is an excellent possibility, if I can stay out of trouble for the next three weeks. I hate more than anything this business of having other people, not very well-qualified, determine to some extent my destiny.

But that's the goddammed war for you.

For Christ's sake, though, don't you get any enjoyment out of your relatively free life. Is it all nauseating meals, worse heat, dull people? Even in my state, I feel I'm no match for you - you can outbitch anyone.

Well, thank God most of these days are gone forever and soon enough we'll be holding hands in the soft breeze of an autumn night. We are surveying and orienting this week, which means that nights will see me in the outdoors searching for Polaris and the Milky Way to find North. I know how I'll feel.

I will think of your softness on a Spring night and how I will lie on the grass with you and at length opening your clothing to get closer to you. You won't mind the stars and moon. They just give enough light for security of harmony with the universe, not enough to remove the glowing secrecy. Then I can look up and say, as we lie back, "Darling, that's Aries up there but he's far too far away to matter." And you'll probably nod sleepily and give an annoyed bodily inertia to my efforts to dress you again. It seems that I've spent a quarter of our life together trying to keep enough clothes on you to make you decent & respectable looking. How bad it would be if you weren't such a gorgeous clothes-horse.

I got another letter from England today, besides the one from Mike Holmes. Bob Mohlamn and I stayed with the Floods a few days near London [*on a pre-war trip*]. The letter, which I'm enclosing (please save it) has that quality of human decency so characteristic of a large part of the British people.

Darling, I'll set 6:30 P.M. as a tentative time to phone you this coming Saturday. Let me know if you can't receive the call at that time. I would liked to talk to you again. Despite the limitations, hearing your voice is a great joy for a man who tries all the time to live within you.

I hope, love, that you are your cool self and that the heat wave has expired. I love you so much, that time and distance are negligible factors.

As ever yours,

Al

AL TO JILL AUGUST 4, 1942

Dearest love,

There isn't much I can tell you that isn't (a) in the category of amorous dreams, or (b) a tale of constant deprivation and toil.

Yes, I can say that I'm in quite good health, something that a great number of the men can't say. Today in ranks, the man alongside me collapsed right into my arms, puking the meanwhile. I awakened last night by chance and actually found myself amid a bedlam of mutterings and short cries. About six men were talking in their sleep at the same time. A large number of men are bothered no end by a heat rash which in some cases covers the body & limbs.

I guess I can take any physical punishment they can dish out. In fact, the only way I'll leave this hole which I hate worse than anything is with my bars or by polite & firm request.

Lehman flunked his Directors and feels pretty badly about it. The Director, my naive little one, is une grande calculating machine which directs the fire of the AA guns.

I got a letter today from Bill Evers' wife Elizabeth. Bill is teaching at the Marine base at Quantico and they are living very nicely in a farm nearby. She is looking forward to meeting you and sends her best.

Again, I must rush to finish this letter. I hope you'll forgive these pithy, disjointed notes. I'll make it all up to you when we're together again.

Question box: Do you think you had better tell the landlady that you will be leaving on Sept. 1. Even if stationed at Sheridan, we'll want to live North. I won't know definitely of my assignment until a few days before graduation.

All my love, darling, to the best girl in the world.

Al

AL TO JILL AUGUST 5, 1942

Dearest Jill,

Check another goofy place from which to be writing letters, this time from a ditch during an air raid practice. We were in a class just before this, studying the celestial sphere (no, not you) and making vast computations. The sun, as usual, is hot as hell, I can only say "amen" to your affinity for a few dreary days. I'm glad I thought to stuff this paper in my pocket as I was rushing out.

Your letter of today was real nice, even though the weekend double-feature wasn't so hot. The nice thing about our seeing a bad double-feature together is that when the show is tiresome we can always neck.

Monday was payday. I received \$23 in travel money and \$33.40 pay for July. I'll send you about \$25 or so as soon as I can get to fill out a money order. How is la belle cheque account these days?

The uniform allowance if I graduate (and the chances are better than even), is \$150. I'll get another \$30 for August pay and with that will purchase some things.

I'm purchasing a bare minimum down here. The rest you can help me buy.

It's really too early to be definite, but if everything materializes properly, I would like you to leave your job. If I'm at Sheridan you can either live at leisure or work part of the time. Same in Washington, which would be more likely. In short, I know you won't have any trouble enjoying yourself without working & I have no desire except to let you do as you please. Think of all the fun you can have concocting devious spaghetti sauces. You'll have to feed me a course at a time, since I devour now

everything in sight within eight minutes.

I forgot to sign in when I came back Sunday so this week I am in the "fuck-up" squad, detailed to swat flies in the dining room every night for a half-hour. Oh, well, there's nothing to do during that time except flop on my bunk anyway.

Hurrah! It's raining & a breeze is blowing. I can sleep tonight.

So long, gorgeous, until tomorrow.

I love you

Al

JILL TO AL AUGUST 10, 1942

Darling -

There just isn't time enough to write you, I guess. Here it is five o'clock Monday already and I've been meaning to write you ever since you called. People kept dropping in all day yesterday til nine o'clock -- Polly and John Hart, Johnny Wiggins, then Marion Gerson. So figured I that it wasn't worth writing you after nine last night since the mail doesn't go out til the morning, no I would wait til I got to work and write you then. Well, I have been busy as hell all day til just now, and as soon as I get home I shall have to eat and rush over to a make-up class of first aid over on 67th St., which is quite some biking from where I sit.

So once more, darling, you are a sorely neglected child, for which I am duly sorry. It was lots of fun talking to you yesterday, a very satisfactory conversation from my end anyway. It was just long enough (sic!) so that I could relax and fill you full of my customary drool, like how much you weigh, how much I weigh and so forth.

Aside from playing hostess yesterday to all such people as mentioned above, I bought a light for my bike and screwed it on, which is always a good way of passing the time. I now am a model of conspicuous consumption, my bike sporting an electric

horn, a light (they match), a rear vision mirror and a little electric tail light (which I took off of Victor's first bike, the one we sold). A very fancy doll I am as I wheel down the Midway, humming a tune to myself.

I hope you're not worrying that I am reading that great opus on Lesbianism, *The Well of Loneliness*. A fine thing when you start to censor my reading. This book is a rationalization of that repulsive and peculiar way of life, and it's a badly written book besides everything else. In the first place, the writer has it all cockeyed from a scientific point of view -- he or she seems to think there's a third sex born in nature. Then, for a heroine, or hero, whichever you prefer, she has the most priggish character imaginable -- if you can imagine anyone conceiving of a fine and noble soul, nothing wrong with her except she likes to sleep with women. Furthermore, this doll has an income of some 50,000 pounds, per, which does not make her any more sympathetic. So, all in all, the author has defeated his or her end, so far as I am concerned, since now I am of the conviction that such characters should be imprisoned whereas before I was only prone to ostracize them socially.

Well, I must go home now and eat and do all the other little things that make a house a house.

It's after five, I must blow

Loads of love, Jill

JILL TO AL AUGUST 12, 1942 (A)

Darling --

I am writing this with my head dripping wet and my soul very sore indeed. The dentist just told me that I had a profound cavity in my right side & it will take many moons to repair. He also hasn't gotten around to fixing my broken front tooth.

Your Mom was on the South Side this afternoon, so I left the key for her and when I came home, there was your beaming

mater & a lovely meal of hamburg, peppers, potatoes & onions waiting for me. As I remarked rather bitterly, it was the best meal that's ever come out of that kitchen since the house was built.

I've been doing a lot of work over at the library & also at the League of Women Voters, digging up Jessie Summer's record. I bought two League publications. They certainly have dumb office help over there, but then, they probably don't pay them very much. Sharp ones like me can be had only at a price.

Last night's Red Cross make up class was sort of fun. It was over at 67th Street; the community over there is much more folksy than this one, & the OCD office where the class was held was a lot less formal than the stony Woodlawn library, where my regular class is held. The teacher last night was a German doc, a refugee from his heavy accent & German-Jew looks, & he was awfully funny. He didn't know a damn about bandaging, unlike the lawyer who teaches our regular class & who is a very meticulous bandager. But I learned a lot, if only from his errors.

Rosable just called up. Buss is back in town & they both talked my ear off, & here it is almost 10 again and I haven't still had time to write you a decent letter. But I will tomorrow because you are my darling & deserve one.

Love - loads of it -

Jill

P.S. I bought a pre-natal Brownie camera (that's smaller than a baby Brownie) and are you going to be surprised!

JILL TO AL AUGUST 12, 1942 (B)

Darling--

Again I write you on the festooned stationary of the Corporation Counsel. Thank goodness for the fate that put me in an office

as uninquiring as to how I pass my time as this one is. I'm afraid you'd hear from me far less these days if I did not enjoy this noble lack of supervision.

For tonight I have my regular first aid class from 7 to 10. And promptly at ten will occur Chicago's first real blackout test. I guess they will let us out of class a little early tonight so we won't all be wandering around the street, bumping our heads against walls, and being robbed and raped by the 63rd street gentry. The blackout lasts until 10:30. I guess I'll take a bath. There's not much else to do when the lights are out. Now if you were only here ...

I bumped into Grant Adams and wife on Randolph street yesterday. He's a staff sergeant down at some air base in Texas and in personnel. He likes it pretty much, I guess. His wife, Corky, is very young and not too goodlooking, but a pleasant girl, withal. Grant looked very well in his uniform. His head doesn't look as big as it used to.

Right after I wrote you last night Johnny Wiggins and a friend by name of Jerry Schwartz dropped over. I am, understandably, getting quite tired of the Wiggins brand of humor and personality. He's quite a bull-shitter, for one thing, and you know how acutely sensitive I am to slingers of horse, what with having a brother-in-law in the clan. So I am very rude to Mr. Wiggins, and in a way, it is gratifying to find someone I can unload my ample store of spleen on.

I got a swell letter from Ann and Paul yesterday -- it was to you, too. I'll send it down to you when I get home. Their baby is coming in a month (I'll digest parts of it in case I forget to sent it to you right away) and the doctor says, from the heartbeats, it's apt to be a boy. Isn't that wonderful? Paul is, as usual, working very long hours. And almost the best news of all: they're having the Nymph shipped out to the coast and are going to keep it in the San Francisco boat landing, so they'll only have to roll out of bed to go sailing. I'm awfully happy about this. The old girl was just rotting away in the East, what with Day and Walter not knowing a bilge from a hole in the ground about sailing. They

also said that their Italian neighbors are growing corn in their front yard. You remember how the house is located, don't you? Ann, resourceful as ever, is probably making a tasty stew out of corn borers. And their Doxie just had its tonsils out, which is the damndest thing I ever heard of.

As I told you yesterday, I bought this cute little camera for us for a fish and a half (am I getting the argot correct?). So your mom and I took pictures of each other last night. I hope they come out but I have my doubts, since the light wasn't too good and the camera is so small it jiggles awfully when you click it. However, I don't think any camera is worth more than a buck-fifty and we can have fun taking spectacularly angled shots and double exposures of each other when you come home. I always did think, incidentally, that photography was a foolish and expensive hobby and I still think so.



Mom, Cooney, Jill



Ed, unknown, Dad, Mom, Jill w.
Cooney

Gosh, I just had a big lunch and I still feel hungry. I guess it's the weather. I don't want you to burn with envy, since you're hot enough already, but it's cool as anything up here, just like autumn. It'll probably get hot as soon as you get here, which still isn't too bad as we can go swimming every day, then. I've been

thinking of Glen Park, and we really ought to go, even if we can't get a car. Mir and Buss took the train out because Mir can't travel over 50 miles in a car, and they said it wasn't bad. What we should do is take two of the bikes with us, so we can get over to the gravel pit easily every day. I'm going to condition you to bike riding if it's the last thing I ever do. Sort of the way you get babies to eat spinach. I'll give you a big kiss for every block you cycle; for every mile I'll give you a hug; and if you don't fall off, I'll give you ... Well, you'll see. But seriously, the chances of our borrowing a car grow less as the duration grows more. Buss tried and failed, I know. I think it's less trouble to take a train or a bus somewhere than to have to suck around such undesirables as cousin Howard.

I just got the phone bill for July and it's positively astronomical. Oh well, it certainly is worth anything to be able to talk with each other.

There's not much else new. My wrist has been hurting in this weather, so I call up Eddy all the time to ask him if his is doing likewise. He says, no, I should wait a couple of more years and mine won't either. It must be nice to be old and have things like broken wrists so far behind one.

So...all my love to you, dearest.

Jill

AL TO JILL AUGUST 7, 1942

Dearest love, Sunday night

No words can adequately convey how much I loved you as I was talking to you. No words can ever convey how precious you are to me. I am beyond all hope of happiness unless you are, or promise to be, part of it. By a promise I mean not that you be pledged to me, because you are and faithfully, but that my present is made enduring by your presence in the future. Contrary to most women, you do not destroy the illusions set up by your beauty when you speak words. Enough of flattering your

over-flattered being. (You can send this to the anti-climax dept.)

I haven't even time to write all about everything tonight. I got back too late to write much, the Chicago storm apparently making the Carolina shore in no time flat. It poured down, stranded us in Wrightsville & I got back only in the nick of time. I shared a room there with Harvey & a couple of other guys, frittering away the hours as best we could. The water was swell, the food & companionship OK, but, inevitably, nothing can compensate for your absence.

Dearest, Monday morn

This is just another part of the letter I began last night, haven't finished & have left in the barracks. I'll put them together this noon & get them off to you.

As usual, this morning's rising was a wicked affair, - lack of sleep over the weekend, a lot of mopping to do, laundry to send out and the accursed double-timing before breakfast. The course for this week is automatic weapons theory, 30 & 50 cal. machine guns, 37 mm, 20 mm, & 40 mm rapid fire cannon. Not bad as things in the army go.

I've a lot of letter-writing to do. Stouffer wants another morale letter but I have so little free time. I must write several other letters here & there, and periodically I worry about the income tax I didn't pay. Could you inquire about the amount and pay it for me? I really should do something about it, and I don't think there's any point in asking for a delay for the duration.

About the duration and its length, I can't help but be stirred by the bad events in Russia, but nevertheless persist in a "watch the cat in the bag" feeling, though this may be all too mystic for your caustic, sophisticated soul.

Your voice sounded swell over the phone. You are getting more vocal all the time. I remember when long-distance phone calls stymied your tongue.

Your letter re all the animals came. Very touching it was. I hope the sparrow recovered.

Terribly sorry I can't be more coherent & lengthy. But as always, you are my only love and I love you very much.

Al

AL TO JILL AUGUST 10, 1942

Darling Jill,

Tomorrow is Buzz's birthday and I recall those easy days as boys when that was a big day. Buzz and I would be dressed for the occasion and a select crew of little hoodlums would be invited for the occasion which usually broke up in a free-for-all with toys breaking liberally over everyone's head. The climax was blowing out the candles, but being unsatiated kids, one climax wasn't enough and the candles were blown out and blown out until mere shapeless hulks remained. Mrs. Erickson always baked a tremendous sponge cake for our family gatherings and various womenfolk dashed about the house doting on our avarice. We'll have to have such splendid parties for our children some day after we settle down from our lengthy honeymoon without child. Meanwhile a couple of nephews will suffice.

Gosh, the mortality rate here is terrific. We've lost a number of men from the platoon for a variety of reasons. Out of sixteen men in my row of beds, only four (including myself) have flunked none of the courses. Most will have to take an extra two or three weeks of school before graduating. The school to all intent and purpose is now more of a 14 than a 12-week affair. Some of the men who get through don't deserve to do so and vice versa. It's all a great rat race.

Speaking about rat races, at Wrightsville Beach Sat. night they had a roulette game in a miniature Coney Island there. A poor harried rat crouched in the middle of the big whirling disk and finally dashed into a hole of some color or another. If the color is yours, you are the winner. The rat never wins. He goes round & round and never comes out.

We groused around at great length, drinking pop, beer, & cubalibres. Mills had a hotel room full of men and whiskey. Later, Mills & I went swimming & then, since he had no place to sleep, we arranged a mattress for him at our room.

Mostly we sat around, ate pretty good food and swam. There were a lot of girls on the beach & I don't mean women. The Southern belle is like the rodent plague. She disappears at the age of 16 and is never seen thereafter. Oh, there were a few whose breasts were apparent but words confuse them so. The fact is that I would rather write you a letter than speak to any woman in these parts.

Well, duty calls me from my favorite pastime. I'm really happy to hear that you are getting a lot of fun from your job. I had a feeling you would. Give my love to the family. I can't write them very much.

I love you, dearest.

Al

JILL TO AL AUGUST 13, 1942

Al baby -

Thursday

The end of a perfect day, somewhere in the vicinity of 3:45, which is what makes it perfect. First I got up late -- 8:15 -- and found two letters from you in the mail box (the first since Saturday but I don't bother about it any more since I know how erratic the mails are). Then a swig of delicious ice-cold pineapple juice and off to work, which these days consists of getting coffee from 9:15 when I arrive until 10, and then reading the papers until 11. Then I finished what everybody agrees is a bang-up report on Jessie Sumner and the 18th Cong. Dist. and here it is now and I am going to go home because Rubin has a meeting somewhere at four and won't be here the rest of the afternoon. He says he has X-Ray eyes and will be able to see whether I am at my desk and working busily, but I don't think that's true, do you? Oh, and Joan dropped in and paid me \$10

which she owed me.

So all in all, I feel very sprightly. Your letters were lots of fun, particularly the description of the grueling birthday parties you guys used to have. I remember ours -- mother always used to serve broilers and we young 'uns, with the natural lack of coordination of youth, which I incidentally have not outgrown, used to shoot them off in all directions while cutting them up. It would cause quite a lot of innocent merriment to find our suppers all over the floor. Then later we would all retire and get sick.

The blackout was a great success, from all newspaper reports. You know, they blacked out the entire Lake Michigan area, even as far as the Province of Ontario in Canada, and including the 1400 block on 60th street. At the last minute I became rather hesitant about taking a bath in the dark, so I just sat at the window and watched nothing and the wardens flashing about with their green lights. Like Carter Harrison, who gave out such a statement to the press, probably in imitation of me, I just sat and contemplated the glories of the past.

Besides, I was feeling rather enfeebled, since at first aid class last night I played dead dog for a couple of ambitious artificial respirationers. One of them, a cute girl who attends with her cute husband, was very good about it, but the other girl who took over from her damn near bashed in my ribs. I am still breathing in long whistling sighs.

Jean McEldowney is coming to spend the night with me, which should be fun if we don't get into a political argument. She is without doubt the most reactionary girl I have ever met and have tolerated as long as I have.

I got your checks too, and will tear up the one I sent you because it is endorsed so peculiarly I probably will not be able to cash it.

Speaking of cubalibres, which you did, I got a recipe, unsolicited, from Colonel Foss, who is first or second assistant corporation counsel around here and Mayor Kelly's

representative when Kelly can't go. At three every afternoon, I can be seen trotting down the hall with Coke bottles clenched in my tiny hot paws, bent on keeping the research division going for the rest of the afternoon. The Colonel observed me today and stopped me to give me, in a grave military manner, the above.

What that a live rat in the roulette wheel? How awful!

Oh, that sparrow got to his feet that very night, and even took a couple of spins around the room. I took him downstairs then, because birds in rooms make me very nervous indeed, but he was disinclined to do any more flying. So I took him upstairs again - he was perched on my finger all this while - and made him a little bed on the window sill. Pretty soon he went to sleep, with his head tucked under his wing in authentic sparrow style, and when I woke up in the morning he had flown away. Since then I have been leaving bread on the window sill, in case he comes back. Incidentally, when he dried out, he turned out to be a full-grown adult sparrow, not a baby the way I thought he was when he was all wet.

Honeybun, I might as well go home now as the crowd has thinned out considerably. I can't wait til you get home when I think of all the fun we'll have together. Rubin said, oh sure, when I asked him about taking time off when you came home. And I don't suppose Hodes will mind since I don't see him from one month to the other. This morning I did and he patted my head, which I take as a good sign for future deals I might want to put over on him. Now don't be jealous ... he just thinks I am a nice kid, as indeed I am ...

You are, too. All my love,

AL TO JILL AUGUST 11, 1942

Hello sweet,

What's happened since yesterday doesn't make the overhead costs of writing, but my mind as usual spent part of the time

dreaming & figuring. Nothing came of it, because I thought of how I loved you and that's old stuff to you. And I wondered how I could see you mostest most of the time and that's an imponderable. Then I mused about how many more days I would be here. All in all it's quite complicated and I had to study Directors and calculate gun leads to ease my mind.

I saw Harvey last night and he said that Sherwyn Ehrlich had just arrived here for officers' training. I'll probably see him tonight for a short while to boost his morale.

I hope he's had a good basic training on a Springfield. I had to adapt myself to the change from an Enfield in no time flat.

Just now, the officers are waging a campaign for better manners in the mess hall. It's sort of ludicrous, considering the rush, the crowding and the fact that we eat on benches, though no doubt some of the fellows certainly lack breeding.

We also had a few minutes of "bracing" exercises tonight, a favorite pastime around here. You stand as straight as possible, chest jutting out, shoulders back, chin in, etc. while the officer points out little flaws deviating from the perfect posture.

I got a letter from Bill Evans today. He sends his regards and an invitation to visit him if ever around Quantico. We may spend a weekend there if we are around Washington for a while. They're good company.

I'm ashamed to write such a short letter but you know how it is -- the desire is here but time is lacking.

I'll bet you're looking beautiful these days. I wonder if you've been able to get tanned, tho your ordinary pink is OK by me. Mom sent me a picture of the three boys but none of you. I was disappointed. Has no one photographed you lately? Maybe you'd better send me that picture of you from California. I'll understand that your breasts are misrepresented. Having an intimate knowledge of the true situation, I'll just ignore your protests on that score, convinced in my own mind that your beauty on that score is unchallenged.

And I babble while you can't wait to take your daily bath. So long, love.

Al

P.S. Did the sparrow die.

P.P.S. They invariably defecate on one's hands when picked up.

P.P.P.S. I know, I sheltered lots of them when we lived on Hill Street.

AL TO JILL AUGUST 12, 1942 (A)

Dear love,

Another day chalked against nasty old Pop time for keeping us apart. All my hormones are functioning well albeit this lack of sleep is a great nuisance when we have to sit on hard benches for ten hours a day this week. Chiefly what I need is a week in bed with you. I imagine, no matter how much you've slept you'll have no objections to that.

This is an extremely complicated week, full of calculations again, this time for all sorts of automatic weapons which are fun to handle but hell to compute for. I'll be able to exhibit some of the charts, diagrams and schematics to you when I get back. Next week will be better, firing the guns over the ocean.

I saw Sherwyn last night. He's taking it all in his good humor, though perfectly aware of the idiocy of a great deal of it. Harvey, he and I are going to have dinner and see a show together Saturday night. Semper sans female. You'll have to hold my hand tight, darling, to keep me from running away in fright in the presence of the weaker sex.

I guess it's a good idea to keep the apartment for the first couple of weeks in September anyway. It'll save a lot of confusion during that period. I know I can't tell where I'll be stationed until several days before graduation whether that be

September 4 or any other day.

Harvey and I were bemoaning the lack of good officer material last night. There just aren't enough good men to go around, and this school is incapable of developing any. It's so tough, many good men are scared away. Many who have nothing to lose come. Some good ones are relieved. Many inept ones get out and hurt the efficiency of the war machine. This country just doesn't have enough highly skilled officers and doesn't know how to train the individual soldier to get along without highly skilled supervision. Only the lessons of combat will educate most of our soldiers, I'm afraid.

Here we go and I blow. Goodbye - my darling heterosexual,

Your loving,

Al

AL TO JILL AUGUST 12, 1942 (B)

Dear love,

Thursday

We are nigh to the end of our last tough academic week. It's pretty clear now that I can learn this res military as fast as anyone. My battery won't lose any lives because of my one knowing Dx or tan-1 H/Rm. Next week on the range ought to be soft relatively and the final week nothing but administration.

It's nice to know that some good cooking came off your stove. Maybe the habit will stick when I return. But of course it will for I'll be there to cook (!!!) Ed wrote me a really fine letter today which you must read sometime. It had me rolling under my bunk (there's no aisle to roll in here). Apparently Cooney as usual stole the show at Glen Park.

You may be interested in knowing that a newsboy brings PM around here almost every day so that my mind isn't thoroughly polluted by the military regimen, though PM has a few polluting qualities of its own. They almost made a Dreyfus case out of Ralph Ingersoll's draft trouble. He should complain!

I saw a movie last night, *This Above All* with Tyrone and Joan Fontaine, the latter very wonderful in her acting. The show was good with contradictory qualities, on the one hand, an excellent case for fighting the war for true values, on the other hand, a stupid rationale for fighting - jolly old England and the Cliffs of Dover, you know. It affirmed that faith gives better cause to fight the war than reason.

Several of the men who were relieved from school here in my class have gone to Fort Sheridan at their request. I felt great pangs of envy when I heard that one, a young kid named MacArthur, may give you a call. I gave him your address. He's a very nice though pretty ignorant guy. I thought it would be cute if he could call and say hello for me (though I warned him explicitly against telling you I said to kiss you hello). I'll be doing that soon enough.

I must take one of my infrequent showers. Much, much love, my love, You're the most luscious girl in the world.

Al

AL TO JILL AUGUST 15, 1942

Sweet love,

Friday night

My letters are simply terrible this week - no time, inspection tomorrow. I don't kid myself into thinking they're worthy of you, no more than I think anything in the world worthy of you. If I graduate the 4th, which appears likely, I'll be home by Sat. eve. to review your virtues in person.

Everyone is shining & polishing like mad around here. We had an exam today in automatic weapons. I was told I did excellently in it. Aren't you proud of your husband, darling? OK, so you're not, but I can still scare the sh-t out of you by saying "Boo!"

I heard from Buzz today. He wrote you were well but looked thin. Darling, please don't forget to eat every now & then. I want no Manon to justify my attractions. Eat hearty, me lad.

Mom's cookies came today, crumbled to bits, but very good nevertheless.

Buzz said he had lunch with Edgar Ansel Mowrer the other day. Mowrer wasn't very informative apparently.

Goodie, goodie, I'll be chasing Jill around the house soon and swimming at her like a flash in the waves. I'll be broiling her steaks over a wood fire in the country.

But just now, duty calls. My footlocker is very untidy.

Love, darling, Al

End of August (first of two parts) 1942 letters

