

JILL TO AL JUNE 1, 1943

Sweetheart -

Tuesday

It's awfully hard to remember to keep writing at such a distance. My first impulse is to wait for an answer from you - but that would never do. At least, I'd have a very outraged husband on my country's, if not my, hands.

I've been in N.Y. about 10 days now, staying out at Rockaway until yesterday, when Day & Walter got back from Cal. & I was released from the baneful, vile duress of stopping with Cousin Adele. What a kitch she is. You'd think that the war & all the morale services & armed forces rested on her & her two sons (in the Coast Guard) shoulders. Oh well, Unk loves her & I love Unk & like all the rest of my family & family-in-law I don't like (excluding the Addison St. branch) I must put up with him/her for this/her sake.

I've been spending a lot of time in the stalls of Vanity Fair, buying clothes & taking them back the next day. So far I've gotten a couple of cute summer dresses. I've never had time to really shop before - ever since you've known me I've been either at school or work - and anyway, Chicago clothes are nothing like N.Y.'s.

I feel guilty, tho, buying things you won't see me in for a while. I'll send you a picture.

You may well say in a couple of months I'll be too big to wear anything but a tent. However, I really don't have a thing to wear now. [*In margin:* I've also read 2 novels by Jane Austen & one by Thackeray - Vanity Fair & adore them all - since you left.]

Daisy & Walter had lunch with Mom at the Palmer House in Chicago Saturday. I really think Mom must have enjoyed that, & seeing them. Just because you & your father are misanthropic old grouches doesn't mean she shouldn't have a good time.

I miss you more all the time nacherly & can't wait for your first letter.

A large wet kiss to you.

And all my love

Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 4, 1943

NORTH-AFRICA

Dear love,

We've moved again, a dreary convoy through beautiful country so much like Southern California that I felt we would cross the San Berdoo mountains into L. A. at any time for a wonderful week-end with you. We must get around to that again soon. I am for these three days the only American officer amongst a group of British officers in a field hospital. I came in with a smashed finger, incurred while passing thru a town. To keep people from seeing into the van I was riding, one excited soldier slammed its door without looking. The finger was in it, and voilà, I have a fine convivial time with these Britishers. I feel I ought to lecture everyone on the resiliency of human flesh, for, not only does my flesh tingle at the thought of you, but I still have my finger which will recover completely despite a sound-proofed door being slammed completely closed on it. The flesh bursts but the tendons & bone stretch like holy hell. We've managed to have a fine time at the hospital. They all came from the fighting at Tunis, not very seriously damaged. We have two large tents, one a mess & club tent, the other our beds. We drink great draughts of tea and carry on long conversations. Two were sent to England and we had some Scotch whiskey in their honor. Other things happened but these V-letters are short. I'll write a long letter right away. I'm very well & I hope you're the same, darling.

All my love.

Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 6, 1943

Dearly beloved,

It is Sunday morning and the early sun is pouring through the casements of our thick-walled room onto the little French school-desk with the ink-bottle hole in the center where I am writing. I've had a very nice breakfast which erased the effects of a gala dinner given in our honor in the city last night. There was tomato juice, a canteen-cup-full; there was bacon & an enormous chunk of toast bread with thick canned butter and jam, and lots of coffee with evaporated milk. Our kitchen is well set up now, in a fine cool wine cellar and shaded tables in the orchard outside. We live amidst a great blooming vegetation with strange, bold birds and ridiculous unkempt fowl and livestock. A perfectly orderly conversation may be disturbed at any time by a wandering sow with a numerous & charming little brood tailing her. And as for that rooster that clarions the break of dawn, one bright day I shall emasculate him. We shall see then how loudly and arrogantly he crows.

[*In margin:* Dinner to welcome our IRBC camp. arrival. Col. Hazeltine]. Last night's party was given us by the people with whom we shall be working from now on. If it was any indication of how we shall get on, the First Mobile again is in hot water. The chief of the works (whom you know from us talking about him) got extremely insulting towards Habe [*the writer Hans Habe*] for no reason whatsoever except intoxication. Caskey couldn't say anything and it went on at a great rate. The issue is yet unsettled, but Habe is as sore as hell. The situation of our own organization is duplicated in the larger organization. There are some very good men doing Psy. W. and some very bad ones. The end result of the ensuing conflict is greatly decreased efficiency. However, things are happening at a great rate which I wish I could convey to you. Caskey has, one the advice of others, shuffled the sections, we have split up the pp. section three ways, and I have one complete pp. unit with Rathburn & Herz commanding the others. In addition, I am being given a special assignment which will involve my absenting myself from my section for a short time. I won't mind that too much under

the new set-up for that would leave Bell, who is sober & trustworthy in command & Wallenberg, who is likewise in my unit, to assist him. There are still all sorts of equipment problems to solve. Perhaps they will never be solved in our unique outfit.

The dinner last night was rather nice until the incident occurred. We had several courses and wines with some excellent french fried fish. There was also a string ensemble to furnish music.

Here it is a month since I've heard from you and I am still writing you furiously. Isn't love wonderful? I need no reminders, no inducements and no news. I assume, perhaps naively, that you are getting it all by this time. Any breaks could be explained by the uncertain deliveries around these parts. I wrote Buzz and Ed yesterday. I suppose Walter & Daisy have returned from their rest cure in California. Please send them my regards.

My finger is doing very well today, thank you. I have received many sympathetic remarks on the subject. I guess a door-jamming causes a pain everyone can appreciate unlike other pains of lesser frequency. I think most of the fellows like me alright despite the feuds in this organization. They were given the privilege of choosing an officer who would censor their mail and most of them asked me to do it. A sort of left-handed compliment, if you ask me, for I think it is a disagreeable and burdensome task. I believe it outrageous that officers should censor the mail of men they know and who are under their command. The British have the same system.

Dearest, I sent you the two dials from the sunken ship before we left our last encampment. I hope they come to you one of these days.

Tonight I plan to have dinner with the British officers in the hospital. I'll bring a few American records they like to hear. They have a little phonograph in the mess tent where we had a great discussion the other night on music and jazz. Two of them are absolutely silly. They play a record by the Andrews Sisters every so often & laugh their fools' heads off at some of the variations.

One dark Irishman with a little mustache was carrying on at a great rate about the crime of swinging the classics. A couple, like myself, were rather omnivorous in our tastes. One of whom I am especially fond, named Jeffries, is an architect and he was a little worried about how to get around the uselessness of an important finger in his left hand. I told him about Paul & he was very much interested. I told him about California buildings & New York buildings, talking enthusiastically because I had an image of us among the buildings. He seemed to have very sensible ideas about buildings. They were all extremely kind in their refreshing detached fashion, and very cheerful and polite in that rude sort of way. One of them, a tall red headed giant, with a bullet in his ankle, was confined to bed until lately. Without notifying the authorities, two of his colleagues who were ambulant patients commandeered a jeep, carried him out to it and packed him off to town where they got roaringly drunk. Then they got another lift and brought him back to bed, as high as a kite, to the utter mystification of the sisters (nurses). All of them were extremely interested in what I told them about America, and they would listen all night to descriptions of places, people and political behavior. Several expressed mystification at the suddenness of the Axis surrender in Tunisia. The Germans apparently were well-stocked. I find that additional evidence useful for my theory that the Germans will crack suddenly as soon as successful invasions are inaugurated. German morale right now is a compound of false news, and bad excuses. They are not the great political army they were once. The Italians fight because they fight, for the most part, because they are in the army and what else can one do but follow certain lines of behavior.

So as not to be dull and in order to clean up a bit, darling, I'll finish this. Tell Mom I have her picture on a mantle shelf in our room, as well as yours & little Joe's picture. I love that picture of you. You should have it taken more often. Love to Dad & the boys.

Yours with love & kisses, Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 7, 1943

Al darling --

I'm still in New York and what a miserable old city it is. Last week it was hotter than Hades (the irony of life -- while I was out at Unk's garden-spot-by-the-sea I damn near froze my toes off) and today, Monday, June 7 in this year of our lord, it is raining like mad, and a heavy coat of smog, fog and grog covers the city. However, I stay on, like a hardened old sinner at the end of life, hoping to wring a little fun out of it yet. Specifically, I'm going to try to get to see a couple of stage shows this week. Last week I went to countless movies -- with Carol, with cousin Frances, with Daisy and Walter, and I'll never go there anymore.

I also am engaged in that happy and closed circle of events known as shopping, to wit, buying and taking back that which I have bought.

Jack gave me a general examination Friday and said I was quite a healthy girl, as we have all known these many years, except for my severe relapses brought on by requests to do your typing, to clean the house, to iron your pants. He did say I was anemic, which is nothing new.

I am typing with Frances' typewriter, having spent the night at her house last night. Daisy's couch is so uncomfortable that I have spent several nights with Frannie, who is amazed and flattered at this sudden burst of cousinly affection from me.

Daisy and Walter are looking for a larger apartment. They are not only sick of their own but would like a larger place in case I decided to stay in New York, which I have assured them many times I have no intention of doing. I certainly must be a lovable kid, for them to wish to put up not only with me but with mine.

And guess what! Joan is also enceinte, it apparently occurring around the same time as our moment of mad, heedless pleasure, which will blight the rest of your life. Isn't that funny? She doesn't think so, however, although she plans to call it

Kiernan. She naturally is concealing her unfortunate condition as long as she can, so that she can continue to milk the coffers of the City of Chicago. So don't say a word to anybody, if you see anybody.

I had dinner with Betz last week. She is definitely going to marry Lanz, over her parents' objections. She could do a lot worse among the younger punks she knew.

I also had dinner with Naomi and her family -- she's that gal I introduced you to at the doctor's office, who was such a good friend of mine in high school. Her family are the only intelligent people I know in New York, and I always liked to be with them. Her mother is a leading lady Zionist and very attractive.

I'm going back to Chicago either Sunday or Monday, with bike, bags and that damned victrola, for which I hourly curse you. The doctor said I could ride a bike, so I'm not going to sell it. How else will I get to the lake? I'll get a job. I feel like a heel not working already, and busily setting aside ten-cent pieces for the baby's layette, or mine. Money-mad, that's me.

I certainly wish that you were here and not there. Do tell about your life and hard times.

Mine are not so hard, as you see, but rather dull. Life without you is not exactly complete. Oh well, you always did insist on sitting home and reading the papers.

That stinking lousy War Department, Office of Dependency Benefits, finally acknowledged all the letters I have been sending them with the coldest most ungracious letter you ever saw, ordering me -- mind you, ordering -- to send back the checks and the marriage license to prove I ought to have the checks. I sent them a bank check for 150 and a nasty letter saying that I was not going to send them my marriage license, since presumably some agency must have already been in possession of a marriage license in order for me to have received the checks in the first place. Of all the goddam lack of tact, they certainly have it. After all, I didn't have to tell them they overpaid me in the first place.

That was just an aside to the general issue of our being married, my loving you and being glad of it.

All my love, dearest one ... and let's hear from you soon.

Jill

JILL TO AL JUNE 8, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling -

New York

I've just written you airmail too, but perhaps this will get to you faster. I just got a note from Mrs. Herz, saying she'd heard V-mail from Martin didn't the trip car fine [?] & that you'd all arrived safely. So I am very relieved and grateful.

I also got a letter from Zemo's wife, Doris. Apparently she hadn't heard yet but just felt like chatting.

I hope you're well and that the passage was smooth. I'm feeling OK tho I don't much look forward to that train ride back to Chicago. I'm still flat as a pancake and it isn't very exciting yet. My appetite isn't the Gargantuan thing it once was, but that's no loss since I'm supposed to keep my weight down.

I'm going to see The Doughgirls - a comedy about Washington - and Angel Street - one of those psychological mystery plays this week. And I'm very excited.

Wish we were spending the summer together. We always had such fun in the summer - barring your sojourn at O.C.S.

Much love -

Your Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 8, 1943

Dear love,

Today was a red-letter day. Your first letter came and what was

more it was actually the first one you wrote. Some of the men got the fifth or sixth letter. It caught me after a much varied day and was received with many paeans. I had meant to tell you that I can't possibly tell you all I'm doing and that an unexplainable break or two may occur for a few days. However, each mail shipment will probably continue to bring you a great bonanza for the duration.

I was very happy indeed at your words about the li'l child. I hereby bequeath him the nice side of my face (I forget whether it was right or left). Any part of his mother is OK with me. I'm very glad you had such a nice time with Elizabeth. I hope you continue just the same for the duration and then we'll make everything twice as nice together. The way a man can think under a hot sun! Cool picnics, and lovely lake, long quiet dinners, a lovely woman like you in a breezy dress with brown & whites (either high or low) with bare legs, a whirl at the rhumba, a cool, prone position on the bed, blowing smoke into the air and giving no thought of the change tomorrow brings. No obsession with remembering where your mess kit is and everything else, too -- in a life where all you own gets tossed and kicked, mislaid, moved, lost & stolen. But there, one would think I did not appreciate my role as a soldier for democracy, & you know I do. These V letters are really too short for all I want to say. That's why I mix them up with air mail. I sent you a cable yesterday. Can't say very much in it. But it's fast. And it's true. "All my love, darling" is correct.

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 10, 1943 V-MAIL

[page 3 – rest of the letter missing]

I forgot what I was saying on the last page. Besides, I'm running out of wit. Anyway, Bill called last night & I went to see Good Night Ladies, euphemistically called a farce, with him & Jim Duncan, now a 1st Lt. in Air Corps Admin. Jim sends his very best to you & Bill says he'll write. The show was lousy - vulgar &

inane, a stupid producer's stereotype of what Chicago audiences will eat up. After theatre we walked about 2 miles, to my great grief and had a milk shake. Bill's notion of a good time if ofttimes not mine. He's passed the bar & is working 1/2 time in a Law office, the rest finishing course credits at school. Apparently he's broken up with Gert. Sweetheart, keep well. I think of you all the time & I'll always love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 10, 1943

Dearest love,

So far just your one letter, that from Falls Church, and one from Dad, the third from 1235. Evidently things are snafu with the mails as usual. I have been moved to the big city for the time being and find life full of great and interesting things, all sorts of sights, smells and people. Far too many to describe, of course. My work is blossoming out well under the right benign sun of the moment. The big things are yet to come but the little ones are intriguing too. The news of Pantelleria surrender just came in, and I hope the next surrender will not be far behind.

Meanwhile life in the large town goes on as usual. The sea stretches out in all its sunny blueness, the Arabs and the French go about their daily lives, eating and living much better since the Americans came. I met a man named Kaplan who is from the U. of C. & is in the OWI French division. He studied Romance Languages at Chi and knew the Johns sisters from Illinois. He tells me Liz married Drake and Pat married Heine (that NWV fellow I think). We don't work together at all, but we eat at the same place. In fact, it is forbidden to say with whom I am working at the moment.

Do you want to know what the women are like here? Scarcely a thick-legged specimen in a thousand. They tramp by with tanned bare legs on thick soled sandals, with a flash of gams that would turn the American college club-girl into a green-faced

witch. They dress very well, are as up to date (with the little they can possess) as our own women. They climb from the balconies of six-story apartments, and walk the crowded streets past gaping soldiers. I can say this to you, because you know how objective my comments are, with scarcely an emotional flicker unless I'm thinking about your next letter. And I know you want to describe the women to some of your friends.

I am living in a very comfortable large room, with the usual balcony, four stories up, in the company of an English hush-hush man - an old chap and very nice.

Believe it or not, I haven't been paid yet and still have a very little money. These francs make bothersome counting, so I don't know how little. Of course, I did win a pool aboard ship, as to the landing date, which helped to the tune of fourteen dollars, but there really isn't too much to spend money on. The army, bless its heart, sees that all the boys get cigarettes & candy when they need them. This change to an extremely civilized habitat is, needless to say, a remarkable one. I notice the little things - service at the mess, a toilet seat, running water (hot once a week), a cot to lie on & real live civilians.

I notice too, for one cannot help it, the Arabs. You know all about them already. There is little I can add right here without describing the extremely interesting native quarters I have visited. Do these views strike interesting chords: "a wavering Arab drunk in great good spirits struggling up a steep street with a bloody basket overflowing with a ram's head, wild and alive-looking. What a dinner the Arab will have." Or "an Arab cemetery, full of small graves bearing the half moon, with olive, almonds, pomegranate and fig trees shading it". Or "a brothel with ugly women who bring you in to where two Arabs play on a piano and tambourine and sing Arab songs." Or "a drunken sailor of unknown nationality swinging a huge club down a narrow gutter of a street with perfect abandon." Or a little meat shop in a grotto where entrails and other meats are sold & where a huge, quivering sheep's heart lies on the table with two great green flies sucking at it." Or "streets that are only

passageways & stairways over which centuries old wood and stone structures rot." Or "a mosque in which several Arabs are kneeling or lying in the gloomy coolness." Or "a working class section where on some wall in each block is inscribed the hammer and sickle." Or "A beautiful church on a great hill dropping down to the sea." Or "a gruesome stench of burnt flesh and garbage, human manure and sewage, of filthy bodies and unaired holes." I saw these things today in the company of a Europeanized Arab policeman in plainclothes. He knew his way around and that is no mere figure of speech. We should add another third below the President's two-thirds to include the native population of N. Africa.

I paused for a second to light a cigarette after the last paragraph and a beautiful image came to my mind, of us two driving along the outer drive in the clear twilight towards the loop. It was lovely. I wish I were with you tonight to do just that. Are the night breezes as lovely, are the stars as many. You have all the lights of a city at night too.

Sgt. De Lattre just happened in to me today while he was on pass. I included a picture of him in a roll of film I sent you. Would you please send it to his wife when you get it. He teaches French at Northwestern U. Her name is Ruth De Lattre, 8201 Avalon Ave, in Chicago. Her phone is Regent 8802. I have not yet received the knife but it will arrive in due time, I expect. De Lattre's cousin is the French army general who thought the landings in N. Africa were the signal for rebellion in France. He is now in prison there with most of his men.

Incidentally, mail from home is not censored. None of our magazines or newspapers have arrived yet. Their contents won't be too fresh when we get them. Here's hoping the New Yorker makes the grade anyway. Fortunately, there are dailies published in the North African cities.

I saw Josephine Baker last night, and will long remember her. She is a great artist as well as perhaps the greatest blues ballad & hot singer of the times. Her gestures and movements are like something out of the classical ballet, no, not the classical, I

mean the interpretative, modern dance. With her was a clownish ten-piece orchestra which played "le jazz hot" - a good enough sound for hungry ears but really quite bad relative to the good U.S. bands. There was also a French male soliloquist who was superb. A word-biting, big fellow with a fine scorn and wit. He stood there with hardly a movement and talked calmly, and the audience was at his feet, even we Americans.

Give my love to the family, sweetheart. I love you especially especially.

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 13, 1943 V-MAIL

Sweetheart -
Sunday

New York -

Mom sent me your cable - first telegraphed news of Al - and I was so thrilled & happy to know you're safe - and loving me. News of the first part was somewhat anti-climactic because Mrs. Herz got a V-mail letter from Martin about a week before, which she hastened to inform me of, to my great relief. Anyway, it's wonderful to hear from you, directly or indirectly, by wire or bird, by pen (which you'd better return me) or stylus.

Unk had yours (*pen*) fixed and it works no better than before. Gnash, gnash.

I am getting a bump on my stomach and can't imagine what it's from. A baby, perhaps? Very disfiguring. Don't come home before December 28, 1943.

I was going to leave tomorrow Monday, but couldn't get a seat out til Wednesday. I'll be glad to go back. New York is alternately stifling & cold, and at all times, too closed in for my, to quote you, middle Western mentality. (I wish you'd change that to Western. That removes the taint of isolationism.)

[Page 2 - read page 1 first]

I saw Angel Street & The Doughgirls, both of which were very entertaining, entirely satisfactory. Today, Sunday, we went to Chinatown for dinner (Day, Walter & I). I persuaded them to walk there. It's the first time I've ever been to the lower East Side, except for trips to the city pound at 1st Ave. & 21st St. when Tempo was feeling his oats. It's exciting and unnatural. The things man does to himself - like building buildings.

Dinner was very good & then we saw two marvelous foreign pictures - Conrad Weidt, my deceased hero, in Dark Victory, & a Fritz Lang horror picture, The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse. Did you ever see it? Or did Martin in France? It's marvelous.

[Page 3 - advisedly read page 2 first]

Daisy & Walter are looking for another apartment, a larger one. They found a 6-room duplex at 76th & Park but don't know if they can have it yet. My God, rents are high here. I suppose they are in Chicago too, but then we don't move in a set which feels something is lacking if they're not carried bodily into their apartment by a doorman in the uniform of a Senegalese warrior. Day & Walter are very bourgeois, I fear. They send you their love, however. I shall be glad to get back to my Bohemian friends. At least, they seem Bohemian in contrast to these stuffy New Yorkers.

Day and I went to the Bronx Zoo last week. It's a swell one. They had the formal opening of the monkey house, by invitation only. However, we managed to sneak in through the crowd of dowagers & retired bankers. Just the Great Apes, so called, were on display. Next spring come gibbons, lemurs and spider monkeys. I don't know why I go on like this.

All my love & several big kisses.

J

AL TO JILL JUNE 14, 1943

Dearest Jill,

I am in approximately a half-drunken stupor, the consequence of great heat and great loads of wine drunk in the company, respectively, of an American naval lieut.-commdr. and a British Minis. of Info. man. However my state may be, it is, one, sufficient to reject all womankind save my dear and only love and, two, to be sore as hell at the V-mail system which has produced no letter save your regular-mail one of the 15th or thereabouts. Given this noble grievance, I have just destroyed a V-letter to you of last night & shall incorporate its contents in this illegible leaf. I have little faith in the Hermes-like quality of V-mail, which apparently takes time out while its photographer gets similarly plastered.

The nasty little V-letter which I shall not send told about our party of last night and rather inadequately described your virtues in the light of those of the girls present. I wrote (quote): I had a pleasant time. I ate real ice cream and drank wine and played the trumpet, thereby achieving some small acclaim from musicians & guests alike. I also danced and, as usual, with the prettiest girls I could spot. One and all, there was a vain, mean streak in them, something I could never find in you. Your honesty & openness has been magnificent to a man who hates nothing so much as fraud or to be a partner to it. In other words, by a partner, I mean even pretending to succumb to a woman's frauds & thereby obtaining her. No, even when you were playing a game within yourself, it wasn't true. You are so solidly beautiful in character, in decency and sweetness that your behavior has always belied even your most evil thoughts. And I do not consider your inward self-consciousness as any sort of selfishness for me to judge. That is your own private person, yours to indulge or berate, and mine to live with and adjust to. So that's all that resulted from an evening far from you, and that is the gist of a measly little V-letter I wrote when I came up to my room last night.

I am still working away on those special anonymous problems

with the buzz of great events in the air. Several of our men have had their talents utilized for the time being in the central set-up here. Habe was among them and we are now trying to arrange a room together though I am enjoying hours of fine conversation with Mr. Brooks who is an entirely pleasant and intelligent old gentleman. Habe & I had a long walk last night after a rather inadequate dinner and we finally wound up at a familiar ship in the harbor where we partook of three delicious coca-colas each. Imagine that exquisite taste after a month of abstinence. Despite all the coke, I slept like a log on my cot.

Today I managed to have Viereck properly placed. He is so weak personally, despite his sparkling intellect. Now he should be much more happy, at least for the time being, doing analysis and living a more intellectual life. I talked to Herz today on the phone. He is still with the farmhouse gang and is coming in tomorrow so that we shall have lunch together. The great majority of men there are having a pretty good time, waiting, like millions of other men, for der Tag. There was one bad fight the other night in which the mess sgt. got cut up somewhat. His assailant faces a stiff court-martial for it. They had a nice little party in the neighboring village a few nights ago which I was unfortunately unable to attend but in which the mayor gave a great speech on Allied comity and all the children were given American candy to their great joy, & at which the local girls were flattered by the attention of eager G.I.s All of the men behaved like gentlemen which shows how easily bridged is the gap between good and ugly social behavior.

At present, I am paring down my possessions to a bare minimum for the next movement. I don't have as much as most people but that is still too much. I shall leave everything behind here except my bedding roll and a knapsack, tucking a few pieces of clothing into the roll. I do not know yet whether I shall be with the British or American forces. It all depends on who strikes where.

I got a polite, dry note from L. D. White two days ago wishing me luck or something, plus Dad's first letter. Dad always gives

great pep talks that almost cause me to set out on a rowboat assault against the Fortress Europe.

I have been getting more and more familiar with the city as time goes on. The story goes that if you come here eight days you write a book, if you visit here a month, you write an article, and if you live here a year, you never dare to make a statement about life. So a French inspector of police told us.

There are some beautiful villas far up the hills, owned by or leased by all sorts of people brought here by the war. Merely a list of their names & nationalities would throw great light on the problems and conditions of life in these times. There are quite a few civilian cars of all sorts around. I do much riding in a Hotchkiss and a Citroen myself. The other day I was driving an 8th Army jeep that had come all the way from Egypt. It was banged up considerably and painted that peculiar sandy color of all 8th Army vehicles. It was on its last legs really. No brakes or no guts. I don't think Eng. maintenance is as good as American.

My handwriting is getting as bad as the light in this room. With great love, I remain

Your

Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 17, 1943 V-MAIL

Dear Love,

Your second letter arrived today, deathless prose and all. I can hardly hold it without thrilling to the marrow, so lofty its thoughts, so deep the love, and so ghastly the diet. It is enough when you say "darling" but when you say "darling, darling" I feel very, very anti-war and pro-you here and now via the fastest B-24. No matter how interesting and instructive this affair may be, the only place in the world I want to be is with you. As I was telling Mr. Brooks tonight, whenever my thoughts stray from the immediate work they go with great equanimity and resolve and,

you might say, happy determination to your breast (and farther, I dared not add). Old Brooksie is a very interesting chap & we have long talks together, over his Scotch or lemonade and with my cigarettes. He is a bit like Mr. Chips - quiet, philosophical, and intelligent. Used to be and still is a literary agent for his own firm in London. There are a number of people like him around (he spent four years in a German camp during the last war), together with quite a few phonies who get in the hair of the military even this far back of the lines. My side-kick on my next venture is a brusque and funny British captain, once a colonel in their army. His favorite practice is to stand on his dignity as a gentleman and old fighting officer. We get along rather well despite his inclinations to dismiss young officers as whelps and greenhorns. He has spent a number of years in Italy. There are more "characters" about & they'll probably be popping in and out of my letters. Before I close, I should tell you that I am now missing one formerly heavily-filled, back tooth which couldn't stand the gaff. A neat job and now I am perfectly well, healthy and deeply in love with you, my darling.

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 18, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling --

I hope this won't turn out like the bible engraved on the head of a pin. Ergo, the double-spacing, to forestall such a peculiar tragedy. I was happy as all hell to get your two letters, the one, in re bugs [*this letter must be lost*], which I dropped my eyes out reading. However, I put them back in again, so that when I get to your second letter, which they thoughtfully sent as is, without benefit of microfilm. Well, enough of this carping against our government's sweet gift to loved ones parted. I got in yesterday morning, or rather noon, as the train was quite late. Mom and Dad met me and I snatched your letters out of their hands without bothering to say hello. God, darling, you certainly have the breaks. First falling down hill with my bike on your shoulders

and then your finger. It must have hurt like hell and I quail at the thought. I suppose you have heard enough cracks about receiving a Purple Heart without one more, from the one person in the world who is supposed to love you, so I shall refrain. I do hope it's all right now. Knowing the toughness of your flesh and fibre, I shan't worry too much. Anyway, you got a chance to meet some Britishers, who are probably good people, better than most. Chicago hasn't changed much -- it's still hot in the summer and the lake is mouth-wateringly lovely, and too damn cold to swim in yet. The family is fine. Dad is still at the post office, working long hours and not liking it much. Ed has a defense job at Stuart Warner's with Norm and two other oafs, assembling jeep auto dials. He works four hours after school each day and all day Saturday. He says the work is sort of monotonous but he is with his friends, such as they are. Vic is clerking at the National at Broadway. At least he is away from food in its finished form, though I doubt if that is much of a deterrent to his eating. Mom fixed up the front room very nicely for me. I have a bureau all to myself and that big red table we painted together, to write upon. None of my clothes from last year fit, and all this year's stuff is mussed from packing, so I am sore as hell. I took the Trailblazer out, and slept very well, considering. I shared the seat with a Lt. in the Navy but he moved out ten minutes after I arrived, to the club car, I presume, and I saw no more of him the rest of the night, to my everlasting relief. Betz had a cocktail party the night before I left and then we all went out and ate at a German restaurant, which I loathed. I sent her a helluva expensive present from us, which should make up for all the meals I've eaten at the Betz and Lanz' households, respectively.

I was gratified to receive our last bank statement, if not the two preceding ones, and to note that our balance balances. Through no fault of yours. You might have told me about that \$25 check to Herz. We also got a check for 2.98 from the Post Office, for that coffee pot they broke last November. Mom has already bought me the makings of a sizeable layette, which is the nauseating word they use for a baby's outfit. Daisy and Walter have already given me a Bathinette, another word to

make the senses whirl, and a lot of sheets and diapers. A Bathinette, in case you don't know, is an unwieldy thing containing a lot of rubber, in which you lave the baby and change his diapers. I've seen Joan already and she is equally sardonic about the prospects of motherhood, particularly since she waived dependency so Tom could get in 1-A, and promptly thereafter discovered she was pregnant and fired, as of July 1st. Coony is still the same sentimental, fussy old dog. He looks at me with the eyes of a hero in a Longfellow poem -- hopelessly, unrequitedly, in love. Dearest, I love and miss you. Send pictures if you can.

Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 18, 1943

Well, my love, so it shall be. A letter a week from you, the 15th of May, the 25th and the 1st of June. How nice of you to find so much time to write! By all means preserve that vital sap for a week before letting it pour forth into a half-apology for not writing and half-discourse on your banal relatives. I can't really see how other men's wives and sweethearts manage their dozens of letters. How uninteresting they must be!

I imagine that by now you have accomplished your grand tour and have arrived in Chicago to wade into that mass of dull verbiage I have managed to turn out under ideal conditions of heat, work, and a bony knee desk. I greatly fear it may set a bad example for you and I hope to introduce such an unnatural, compulsive feature into your environment. Subversively & insidiously, against your better judgement and true spirit, you may be forced to destroy one or two of those idyllic leisure hours. God forbid that I should so unconsciously bring such a change.

With a shudder, I turn from such forebodings to a calmer and happier here and now. The weather is as always beautiful and the full moon drenches the tall white buildings with beautiful shades at night. Last evening Habe and I went for a late dinner

to the apartment of a Viennese woman who cooks exquisite dinners for about ten people in the evening. The affairs have all the taste and refinement of a private home without the bothersome task of amusing the hostess. We had reserved a table for two, and when we arrived there was a small group of high navy officers already there at the only other table. The food was the most delicious I've had in North Africa; the Vermouth, the wines and the brandies were excellent. About two hours later, when we had finished and the darkness was enveloping the roofs below our height, a navy commander approached Habe and reminded him that they had met at the Russian Embassy in Washington at a party. Whereupon we all sat in a circle around the brandy-laden table and talked for a while. With the exception of one navy captain who looked every inch a navy captain & nothing else and whose probably thrilling adventures became dull in his telling, the group was extraordinarily intelligent. One of the commanders' second wife was Hedy Lamarr, his first Carole Lombard. He is a raconteur of the first order, his description of an old Russian sea captain's English-speaking ability and crushing handshake a masterpiece of humour. The gathering turned out very well, especially for the hostess. For she told Habe (there's a long story back of her acquaintance with him) that one of the captains had previously not only tried to make advances but had retained an expensive bottle of cognac. Habe said very simply to add it to the captain's bill. The hostess did so and the matter was settled to her perfect happiness. We went directly to bed after reaching the hotel on foot, evading successfully the cries for company of two British officers who were faring right merrily in the lounge.

But here I go again, writing such long letters. Take good care of yourself now darling. I never use my shelter halves but you can find better dresses than them even in your condition. However, I think you're pulling my leg - you won't be very big at all.

Many kisses with all the love you want from

Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 21, 1943 (A)

Darling,

Here is an Italian major's insignia. He was taken prisoner in the Tunisian campaign and gave it to me. I thought you might like to sport it. He was quite happy about his changed situation, so it is in no way like the told out of a dead man's tooth.

I'm writing you a separate note today besides this one.

Love - Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 21, 1943 (B)

Dearest Jill,

Time and time again I have wished you were here during the last couple of dull days. You see, there is no time for big intellectual projects and there is too much time for the minor details required in preparation. There are just enough free hours to take walks with you, to eat in leisure at quaint restaurants and to lie in bed extra hours (*avec vous, ancor*).

Yesterday two men and myself went to a beach not far from here and of course it rained and there was no sun. But there was a dandy impromptu show put on by the most weird combination of a husky American cowboy singer with a banjo and a Limey from Limehouse - a real one with a horrible accent, an old gent of the pubs with a scrawny frame & a walrus mustache, with an immeasurably corny tap-dancing ability, dressed in a towel and a pair of huge military shoes. So there was this old man (who boasted he was classified B4 (physically deficient) but could stand on his hands & did) as repulsive as sin and as vulgar as a lollipop in the Supreme Court. And he danced and danced to the strummed tunes from the West of America, indefatigable, funny, and right out of the pages of Punch. He had hardly started before the whole of the tiny beach had gathered about him with shouts of laughter.

Hours later. 9:25 to be exact (everything in the evening is

pushed ahead here so that by 10:00 the evening is late.)

Peter Viereck interrupted my letter and now I am resuming it after considerable activity of a somewhat mindless sort. I had been trying & have finally succeeded in getting him permanently transferred to work more congenial to his experience & temperament. He is not a field soldier & will never be one. He is too neurotic and intellectual to take all the gaff and stupidity. God bless 'im. So he'll do a good job of propaganda analysis right here under the supervision of a good man who used to be in Buss's outfit in Wash.

After I straightened him out, I went downstairs for some air and met three officers from our old ship including Chaplain Phillips of the U. of C. It was mine to amuse them & I did so, only arriving here now after safely stowing them aboard their craft. We conserved many bottles of vin blanc and ate a rather good vegetarian dinner meanwhile. (Gosh, I must have eaten a million baked potatoes.) We went to a cabaret, perhaps the best in Algiers, where we listened to an orchestra playing familiar old Amer. tunes. We had a gay time, singing. Towards 9 P.M. when it closed, there seemed to be mostly Amer. navy officers there with a sprinkling of army and British army & navy officers. Everyone sang lustily to Tipperary & Over there & the Sidewalks of New York and the Heart of Texas (my holler is second to none on that.) Two ensigns gave a great demonstration of intoxicated Apache dancing & another performed a strip tease during which he was interrupted at the brassiere stage by the call of nature and headed rather obviously for the door marked W.C. A little later, the place closed & we started on our way to our roost.

So here I am, spending my life's energy in an enervated stupor after a "fine time with the boys". All on account of you, my fine little runt who would be ravished beyond pleasure if I were close enough. But I can only say, I love you, & shall love you any time, any place.

Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 23, 1943

Darling,

I've had very little to do this morning except to be barbered at length by a very excellent, French barber in the neighborhood. I've had my curly locks shampooed and now look very sleek. Just think what you're missing - my fine, tan skin, my black hair and a very black mustache of recent vintage that my friend Barney tells me makes me look like one of Ireland's famed "black brood". We are still sitting on our hands here waiting & waiting. A movement is due soon for Herz's gang (he has them now in my absence) and I too shall pack up my pack & be over the hill and away soon. I hope I never have to stay in any one place too long over here. I like to keep going. Time goes faster & that means the war does too.

This morning's paper reports race riots in Detroit, a damn shame. They ought to put the rioters in uniform & send them over here, if they must fight. There is another item about the Gallup Poll and isolationism which is encouraging. The only trouble is that a mere sentiment is not enough. In fact it may show a dangerous & evil sort of imperialism and interference rather than a desire to cooperate. We shall know better après la guerre.

I got a letter from Harvey Sherman yesterday addressed to both of us at Ritchie. He is still at Davis, Nebbie is in the North somewhere, but he hopes to get out of Davis in the next month or so. He says that the men from my class (22) got their 1st lieutenancies in May there. Also a letter from Hank which I got some time ago before moving East. He is unhappy at his new job which is managing the store of his brother who has gone into the army. His ear is not coming along as well as he thought formerly. Then I got a well-wishing note from White which I think I told you about previously. That's about all the news except for Dad's two letters & the acknowledgement of the allotment, the first check for which should be in our account at Riggs by much before now.

A walk thru town this morning convinced me that if the

Americans are somewhat uninspired in the war effort, the French in North Africa ought to be written off as a total loss. There are more draft dodgers walking the streets here than you could possibly find in Washington or anywhere else in the U.S. It's the old story of that trait which the French like to call hypocrisy, but which is really an attempt to live up to our conscience. They don't feel war-mongering involves any sort of individual commitment. I confess that I can't prove any of these statements & that my observations may be all wrong.

I had dinner last evening with Chaplain Phillips from the U. of C. You remember my writing about him. We had a delicious dinner with real roast beef that started on some Texas ranch and mashed potatoes, two things I find hard to get here. Our officers' mess in the hotel is terrible. Afterwards, we went up on deck and talked, viewing meanwhile the bustling harbor and the city above. He is one of that strange crowd I knew so many of at the University, quiet and not flashy, but loving the campus and the people there, and the Midway and rocks at 55th St., long walks here and there, finally breakfast at Steinways' or Hutchinson Commons. I left the ship just before dark and caught a ride down the long quai home.

The last letter from you was dated June 1st. I'm looking forward to a better day tomorrow. Perhaps the only consolation for no letters one day is the chance of two the next. But I know there will be fairly long periods ahead when I won't be hearing a word from home. I think I'll be active enough to feel the loss a little less.

The knife hasn't arrived yet, bad cess to it. I hope the foot locker hasn't suffered irreparably from the incident. Well, Jill pill, I wish I could take you tonight instead of my Atabrin. And so to the Atabrin.

With all my love,

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 24, 1943

Darling --

Thursday

Another letter from you came Monday, which makes my third. They are not photographing your V-mail letters so I wonder if Air-mail is not just as practical. Do write as much as you can, in any case.

I was going through some drawers the other day, to find Cooney's license, to be precise, and found the enclosed letter which Mom had omitted to give me. Was I mad! I raged for half the day but by now have accepted the situation philosophically. But to think we could have worked together at the OSS, if only for a short time.

I consoled myself by thinking that at least in Chicago, I have such creature comforts as walks to the lake with the dog. However, since yesterday, as the result of such activities, I have 1) gotten an awful sunburn; 2) was practically attacked by an enraged dog-owner. It seems this guy was in the saloon at the corner of Addison and Lakeview, and his dog was tied up outside. Cooney ran up to the dog, and after a vain effort to copulate with him (he really is disgusting) they started to fight. I couldn't break it up, but the lush ran out and kicked Cooney away. Then, out of malice, he aimed a tremendous kick at Cooney who was by then scuttling off in the direction of home -- and missed. The result was that he spun horizontally into the air and landed with a crash on the sidewalk. Then he jumps up and yells at me, "Goddam you, I'll break your neck if I ever see you walking that dog again without a leash." I just rode off on the bike, somewhat unnerved, however.

I answered an ad in the paper for a girl to do research who had a background of sociology at college, and the ad-dee called me up. This morning I went down, and it turned out to be a greeting card firm, one of the largest in the country, at 11th and Wabash. They are starting up a research department, to, quoting their young personnel man, be miles ahead of other greeting card firms at the war's end. They wanted somebody who could find out why people bought greeting cards and what kind. The

sociology comes in because they want to know how the war has affected people's sentiments, as manifested in greeting cards. One line that caught my ear particularly was, "Now, this firm regards the family as the basic unit of society." I told them that I didn't think sociology or psychology -- the literature of same -- contained a single proposition that would throw light on their problem, and implied that they might just as well farm it out to a market research person or firm. Anyway, we parted in good spirits and they will call me if they want me. It does sound interesting, but you know how I loathe dealing with abstractions.

Maybe I'll take a job in a war plant, if I can find one nearby. I went to Carnegie-Illinois's South Works Tuesday with Joan. She is being fired by fiendish Mr. Rubin. She got a job as an inspector there, but I refused because I didn't want to live South with Joan after all, and it's an awfully hot place to work. I really do get awfully tired now, more so than usual. Joan's funny -- she's awfully skinny but she has an awful lot of stamina.

I've definitely decided, however, to take a place of my own, come Fall. Mom has a lease here til next May, and I really don't think it would be very comfortable here for a baby and me both. For one thing, there is the question of the bathroom. You remember how much Buss and Mir were in the bathroom with the baby. Secondly, I'm sure we'd all remain on much better terms if we didn't live together. After all, I'm getting some pretty definite ideas on how a house should be run -- it's probably the result of living with so many different people -- and what a house should look like. I figure if I take an apartment South -- which is the only neighborhood where I'd really feel at home -- your Mother can stay with me a month after the baby is born, just the way she did with Mir. As for my leaving the baby with her and working or such-like, I really think she wouldn't like that very well. Babies are a lot of work, and as long as it's mine, I'll just have to do it. As it is, she has a lot to do, possibly because she's awfully inefficient. Anyway, it adds up to a lot.

I'll be able to take back a lot of old furniture lying around here, and really won't have to spend so much on furnishings -- I hope.

At any rate, I don't intend to indulge my fancy for a Frank Lloyd Wright-ish looking interior now, much as I'd like to.

O yes, I'll take Cooney with me (goddam his soul) to guard me against spooks and gremlins.

I was reading over some of your letters today, written when you were a private. You seemed to get more reading done then. Anyway, one whole missive was devoted to a critique of Saroyan.

God, I even thought of packing up from the place and going to Hollywood so that I could garden while I nursed, but it's just too fantastically far from any possible ports of re-embarkation, or whatever you would call them. Thing is, I'm going to be a homebody from now on, and I'd sure like to live in a pleasant place if I have to stick around it. Maybe we can go back to the West Coast after the war.

I think my attitude towards the baby has changed somewhat as the result of reading and talking to people. Apparently, a baby needs as much, if not more, love and attention the first six months, and year of his life than any other time. I'd hate like hell to have a bratty two-year-old. Don't think, however, that when you come home, you'll be enmeshed in a child-centered household. I hope by then, I'll have things pretty much in hand.

Mom wants to know if you got your knife. I sent that letter to the New York postmaster because it arrived after the family sent your knife. They returned it, saying that they couldn't find such a knife. Then when I saw Dad he said he had persuaded the post office here to take it without the letter of permission. So, did you get it?

I have to stop now. Mom wants me to go with her to see two new babies. She is taking them a pair of shoes and a pink sweater, the rightful property of the infant Michael (Anthony, John, Katherine, Michele). She's already been up to her tricks at the bargain room, in our behalf.

I think I'm going to Dr. Greenhill, when I get around to it. I asked

Dr. Biesenthal, Maxine's father and a lung specialist, who I should go to, and he said I couldn't do better than old Jake.

Well, that's a lot of news for now. You couldn't do better, but then, you're censored.

All my love to you, sweet darling. And
OOOOOXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Jill

Do you still have my pen, you rat?

AL TO JILL JUNE 24, 1943 V-MAIL

Dear Love,

Our lines of communication are again being extended, starting tomorrow. No mail from you in several days, and I don't think the future is very promising as far as mail is concerned. Not for you, I hasten to add. I seem to have the happy faculty of maintaining an unrequited correspondence. But your letters will probably wander all over Africa and Europe before getting to me.

I've just finished eating my last dinner here and am quite content to have done so. The concierge has a marked ability for hiring dames horribles. They insult everyone, throw up their hands to the Gods when a complaint is lodged, and mutter imprecations when you ask for "ancor". They are fat, have false teeth and are completely inefficient. I have only managed to fill my petit stomach by a form of smiling persistence that completely unnerves them.

Tonight I saw the only English-speaking movie since leaving America, and by great good fortune it was Arsenic & Old Lace. It was really funny in its macabre sort of way. The man who introduced all those detailed, ridiculous twists & turns is a genius. It was in 16 mm. and you probably haven't seen it yet. That was my final fling in this old city, thru the courtesy of our

beloved Red Cross. Keep well for me, baby darling. I love you.

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 26, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling -

What a day! Seven of your air mail letters came at the same time and I had a wonderful time reading them. I envy such experiences as the pane & vino one with your Cuban buddy. Despite the fact that it has been 95 most of this week, I can still say that the southern life is the life for me - and you, I hope, if you're not too sick of it by the war's end. The idea of plenty of fish, oranges and warm water to swim in delights my soul.

I haven't done any job hunting since Thursday. Instead, I've been swimming & shopping with your mother. (The latter activity I despise because of the heat, but she insists on buying me maternity dresses, all of which turn out to be too big & I have to return them.)

Inasmuch as you're with some expectant fathers, you can probably take comfort in the universality of man's experience - & also pick up a few pointers from your seniors in the matters of parturition. The first thing you must learn is that pregnant women usually feel a helluva better than their husbands. Something like that line from The Man Who Came, etc. -- "I had a grandmother who ate candy every day of her life til she was a hundred, & after she was dead 3 days she looked a goddam sight better than you do now."

The long letter you wrote me on the crossing was filigreed like a roll of John paper in a nuthouse, I presume, by Navy censors. No such mutilation had occurred with any of your other letters. I was chagrined, but c'est la etcetera.

Congratulate Hans W. for me - I know Mimi best - and greet Colonel Herz for me. What about Jerome - not that I'm interested in his health, except from a purely negative

standpoint.

Cooney has sore feet all the time now. I think it is a combination of the heat & running to the lake. Yesterday he got so upset when I swam out reasonably far that he dove in off the rocks & followed me. Was I astonished to find him by my side when I paused for a breather! He is a faithful dog and I feel very safe with him. I am still not noticeably big but cannot get into clothes that fit a 25-inch waist line precisely.

As you can see I am very absorbed with the problem of getting a suntan, altho I do read the Want Ads once in a while. The wages for unskilled help are still low - \$.50 and hour, & I cannot be induced to work for so little, even in a glamorous war plant. I am very lazy, I fear. But I read Jane Austin & the newspapers, which incidentally have been containing some appalling news. First Congress passed an anti-strike bill which among other things prohibited unions from contributing to political campaigns. Do you think the Supr. Ct. will knock it out because it's discriminatory? Then Congress refused to let the President subsidize meat producers & ergo lower prices. They are sowing the seeds of fascism, suh!

It is Saturday night & near 12, & I must get up in the morning to address these & still leave myself time for swimming.

Wish you were here for the 10,0011,000,000 time. [*3 illegible words*]

Your Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 27, 1943

Dearest Jill,

New places, new people and still further from home. Thru some unfortunate order, our little jeep and trailer with captains Haycock, Robertson, a driver, Kerkonen and myself got placed in the slow convoy formed mostly of the 1st Mobiles heavier vehicles. The result was almost three days of slow travel,

through mountainous country for the most part, to reach our destination. I saw some beautiful country, great and grand mountains, many, many Arab villages perched everywhere on the plains and among the crags. The road was most tortuous and rough and frequently we would encounter heavy convoys going the other way. Sometimes, we had to halt for a while on some little carved out spot while really heavy vehicles of 40-ton load passed along the face of the cliffs. What little safety the roads provided came from American construction work.

It was only later that we came down into the plain and there we finally left the convoy & proceeded alone to our destination. The ravages of war were everywhere apparent. Many crushed and burned vehicles are still about amidst golden fields and along busy roads. Guttled buildings are here and there. Just now we are near a great collection of wrecked German planes, a grim satisfaction to see.

The population has reverted to normal. The Italians get along with the French much as they used to without the strain of intense partisanship. Our parent organization, the Psy. W. Bd., saw to the immediate shift of policy in all communication agencies. For Haycock, a freckled, stocky British captain, it was more or less a homecoming to get back to our present home. He appropriated it from a prominent Italian Fascist as soon as we entered the city. It is a very beautiful villa, not very large, right on the sea some few miles from the city. It is the residence of our little group of about ten men, including three enlisted men (chauffeurs & clerks), at present. There is a lovely garden in the rear and a smaller one in front. I have a small room at the rear. The rest share the large front bedrooms. We procured all varieties of ration, have a great table to support them, and enjoyed tonight as fine a collection of rough, lush and heartening food as ever graced the groaning board, tins of corned beef and picnic meat, peas, huge cherries, onions & bread, wine, gobs of marmalade, oleo and canned cheese, and finally tea and chocolate. Not bad at all after several days of C-ration plus a few eggs purchased from Arabs en route. Our brief stay here promises to be exceedingly pleasant. We are under

"orders to relax and toughen" ourselves. That means mostly to darken a little more my already darkened torso, tanned by many hours on naked hillsides and riding, sans shirt, in jeeps and trucks. Several of the group already located in town (who constitute a sort of permanent cadre or staff) come out to the villa regularly to swim. They were in today about five-thirty. We have one man to guard the place and keep up the gardens already. I think he was born in Tunisia though he is Italian and speaks French without that nasal quality in the voice. He is about sixty years old, tall and husky, with a tough wrinkled skin from many years of sea and sun. He has with him a little boy, Salvatore, his son, who helps around the place and who is a very well-mannered and manly lad. We are expecting a woman tomorrow to keep the place clean. This afternoon I prepared a duty roster assigning each of us tasks about the place like shopping and cooking and a mild form of KP.

The men are very congenial and amusing. Lieutenant Hartly (USN) (SG) is a former League of Nations and W. A. White Committee to DA by A Allies director. A nice fellow, though an old woman in his habits. But he went to Eton & we laughingly claim he is neither fish nor fowl. He has written books on int. relations, not very technical ones, I'm sure. Capt. Robertson is a funny old coot. He has a very fine sense of humour, extremely British despite many, many years abroad, gifted with great powers of sardonic description and pomposities which are remarkably funny. Barney is a civilian from Britain, very nice and jolly in a quiet way. Capt. Heycock is a very industrious and serious fellow of a solid sort. Lt. Grigis is also here, in his solid and persistent, plodding, cooperative fashion a very tolerable guy.

The first Mobile isn't a theoretical fancy anymore. It isn't merely training. Some of its technicians are working. Most of its propagandists are contributing already in a worthwhile fashion. I am happy that the repressed talents are finally working their way out. I find my own job very interesting, with a certainty of increasing constantly in importance as the war develops. True, there are always obstacles and frustrations and people pulling

in their own direction, but that isn't unusual in any organization.

I do miss you very much, sweetheart. You may well realize that no pleasure, no dinner, sport or sleep is complete without you, that your letters or picture and thoughts of you, extremely limited though they are, are the nearest things I have to an integrated happiness, a happiness not of moods or spasmodics, but of complete horizons. Meine Haltung, in other words, is completely a creature of meine Stimmung. My behavior is based on a deep mood compounded of your love and many things about it. Living day to day is a quality which I have been fortunately able to acquire. Forgive my getting metaphysical about love, but it is an adaptation to distance. My eyes are still capable of a wicked gleam and my arms of a passionate embrace. But without your artistic drawing ability, I can do no justice to such sentiments with mere words. Furthermore, drawing is censorable.

I can scarcely feel like a father-to-be with no word on the condition of mother-to-be. I can't believe that you are getting gross, for whoever heard of Jill De Grazia being anything but a divine figure of a woman. Nor can I feel enough of the suffering, mental & physical, you must be undergoing on occasion. All I have is a blind confidence in you as a mother-to-be and a mother, too conscientious to be hedonistic.

Hey, we have three little boats here. One is a motor boat & doesn't work. Several things don't work here, as a matter of fact. Tomorrow I must fix the toilet and the shower. The refrigerator is on the blink, too, and Robbie must have a place for his many bottles of wine, purchased at 7 francs (His remarks on the tedious convoy were frightful - He will have George VI settling with the convoy commander ere long.)

You and little Joe are mounted as per custom on a little table in my room, alongside a pair of binoculars, a flashlight and a canteen. You look a perfect madonna in that picture - for such a racy girl quite an accomplishment.

Many, many kisses for you, lover. Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 28, 1943 V-MAIL

My Sweetheart -

I'll bet you're envious now. I'm writing with your Eversharp pen, over which you nearly sent me to Reno. Notice the firm, smooth-flowing lines, the effortless curves. And it's all thanks to Mandel Brothers, in the heart of downtown Chicago, who so kindly, & possibly in person, exchanged the point GRATIS for a Medium sub. Aside from the foregoing accomplishment, surely no mean one, I have been cooking & shopping for your Mom lately. Last night I made Borscht and it was very good (via the Russian War Relief Cookbook). Tonight I made sweet & sour meat balls (Won-Hock-Me-Tang) per the cookbook distributed by United China Relief. What would us brides do without the war. Possibly a lot better, since tonight I cooked a mess of rice, only omitting to add water, & burned Mom's best saucepan. And only Vic really liked the meat balls. (It was the fault of the recipe, really.) I told you he was both a gourmet & a gourmand. He wanted to know what the difference was and Unk said, "A gourmet is a connoisseur and a gourmand is a sewer". Pretty good, wot? Speaking of gourmands, I was down at Rosable's Sunday night. She has a really nice guy now, a brewer named Joe Hasterlich, very genial - and Henri (roll the r's) Simon Bloch was there. He still excretes from the mouth & sends his regards to you. He's teaching at the School of Mil. Gov't. which is in part at the U. of C now. As Rosable says, God help him if the war ends too soon, before he has time to establish his position. Oh well, he's well-meaning, like Walter.

Dad was piqued that I hadn't brought your Linguaphone set home & that all I can say is Buon vino. He wants us all to learn Italian. I wrote Mir yesterday to send the set. Do you know I've given up smoking? I haven't for a month now.

Smooch, smooch, Love, Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 30, 1943

Dearest love,

I am a month behind your life, but assume we are still married and devoted to each other and that you have not meanwhile prolonged your junket to Nevada for a quickie. I am even under the vague impression (so persistent are my thought projections) that you must be at 1235 by this time, belaboring the children or animals and being belabored. No doubt all this confusion of mine has something in common with your own impressions of my life, since my letters are probably arriving in inverse order as they are written, descriptions of convoys arriving after a letter telling about the new home.

My present life at Villa Stella is the latest of several residences in North Africa I have described for you. It is the most pleasurable of them too. Our chief problems are in housekeeping, since the plumbing has gone to pot and in reconciling ourselves to doing little work for the time being. Yesterday I repaired the flush on the toilet, a work of art that has excited considerable favorable comment on the part of my companions. Flushed by the success of this endeavor, I proceeded to the correction of a shower in the bathhouse adjoining. I traced the pipe for water to an adjoining roof where there was a reservoir and climbed up there. The results were exasperating. I twisted and turned valves, poked into holes, and unscrewed rusty bolts, all to no avail. I began to get wild-eyed and to pound on the pipes in order to exorcise whatever devils resided therein when a female apparition flew up the stairs and started to abuse me vilely. The gist of her French seemed to be that I was trying to steal her reservoir and destroy her home which put me in a very bad light indeed. The poor woman was going to defend her hearth against the invading horde at any cost, and it was useless to try to convince her of my innocence. Finally, of course, it dawned on me that I was following the spoor of the wrong pipe and I got out of the situation as gracefully as possible, feeling partly guilty but also somewhat angry at the abstract principles of justice voiced by this female in a battle-torn area where the law of might is supreme.

Despite all the handicaps of mal-functioning stoves and sinks and refrigerators, we manage to eat very well and amply. Yesterday I drove some miles to where Herz, Habe and their group were billeted. They are busy getting settled and making preparations. I expect them down to the villa this evening for a swim. Their bunch will be following up my companions and myself.

Fashion notes: the girls around here are neither as well-dressed or as shapely as the ones in the last city I visited. Partly the closeness of the war and partly the large Italian element I suppose. I wish very much that I could see you, darling, in your latest. You don't really expect me to mind your buying any dresses or many dresses while I'm away. There's no reason why you shouldn't remain the best dressed girl on campus even if you are carrying the torch. You must have the feeling I have at my fine mustache and tan - sheer waste on anyone except you.

This morning I went out to sea in our racing rowboat. I rowed and rowed all over the place, finally ending up at a sunken ship which was a very unprofitable specimen. I couldn't tell its nationality as only the smokestack and mast were above water, nor could I explore its contents. I'm going to row out to another one nearby as soon as I get the chance. The smokestack was full of machine-gun bullet holes.

My reading time is spend on Croce's wonderful History of Italy from 1870-1915 and Woolcott's While Rome Burns. I am sure that the fat boy in Wolf's Web and the Rock is patterned closely on Woolcott, a newsy, nose-y, folksy, feminine and self-indulgent personality. All life is odd and interesting, and isn't a gory murder lovely on a full stomach from the lip of the womb.

I wrote Mom and Bill Steinbrecher yesterday. Bill must be in the army by now. But he's a good bet for a prompt answer and usually knows what's going on among that circle of acquaintances. Did I tell you that Bob King wrote, that he isn't sure he'll be able to go to OCS before being sent overseas after finishing his technical school, and that he meet Greenman in New Orleans and that Greenman is married to a girl of some

time back and also expecting to come over one of these days.

Capt. Robertson is flailing away at the dinner preparations in the kitchen, and by the ascending pitch of the noise ensuing therefrom, I judge that the chow call is not far off. All love to you, sweetheart.

Al

End of June 1943 letters

