

THE orders to move came at the beginning of May. This had given the Lieutenant and his wife time to get a preliminary opinion -- positive it was -- on her pregnancy. The question could not be fully decided. He thought the carefree occasion was the sandy bower of Spring flowers brookside. She, who was contracepting in



Al, brookside.



Jill at Camp Ritchie.

her typical unreliable way -- or was the unconscious wish creating unreliability? -- believed the conception to have occurred on Cousin Singleton's bed with the breezes of April blowing the light curtains into the room over their heated bodies, or even in their airy bedroom in the Maryland hills.

Howsoever that may have been, they reversed, almost without discussion, their long-enduring refusal to grant any neonate the privilege of their parenthood. Not only that; they even felt that it was the best thing that could have befallen them at this moment in time. They wanted to commit an act of reproduction, to bring in a unifier who would serve to defy their fateful separation. Since they were not sure of the conception themselves, its chief indicator being a by-passed menstruation, unless you want to consider a loss of appetite and a

slight illumination of the senses and skin, they spoke of it to no one.

No one would have listened, anyhow. They were all busy packing their gear, drawing an issue of new shoes and clothing, polishing and greasing vehicles against the salt air, writing their families despite the rule to keep any troop movement secret, redrawing wills, and arguing about their unpreparedness when, as was anticipated, they would be cast to die or survive on a battlefield of grand scale.

They boarded trains that reached Newport News, Virginia, somewhat after the arrival of several cars of wives and sweethearts. So much for the secret destination. Everyone knew that the Nazi SS wanted especially to kill enemy propagandists; this was evidenced in Russia in thousands of cases. Also, they knew that the sea lanes were hardly safe for the Stars and Stripes; the truth of the matter, unknown to them, was that convoy losses were heavy, 21 eastbound ships having been lost in one engagement with submarine packs in March, 13 westbound ships from an April convoy. May would be a better month, watching the sinking of 264,852 tons. In June, (they could not know) the situation would dramatically improve, with Davy Jones' Locker in receipt of only 95,753 tons. On May 6, in what was guessed to be a last contact, Jerry was given a letter for her:

**AL TO JILL MAY 6, 1943**

Thursday 1:00 - By hand

Dear love,

I'm writing this note for Jerry to give you in the event he goes into town today.

Everything, book vouchers, and field jacket arrived this morning, so that I'm pretty well set for useful objects. I shall also write to you c/o Buzz so that you'll have a letter waiting for you when you arrive.

*[following paragraph lightly crossed out]:* I really can't say what you should do during the next day or so. If you can't stand the local rat race any longer, start up North. If you feel like waiting a little longer on the chance of seeing me again, do that. Either

way, I love you very much and will not feel hurt.

*[in the margin]* P.S. You might as well leave tomorrow sometime, inasmuch as we shall be departing tomorrow. This looks like it. Goodbye for now, love.

I would really like to drive up with you to Washington on my next pass and say good-bye to you there and then come back, and will try to do so if you stay down and I can get another pass.

Certainly we haven't had much leisure in which to reassure each other of undying fidelity and love but I feel such reassurances not very necessary, even though very nice. I have no intention of giving you up for any girl in the world. I have every hope of creating happiness for both of us in the not too distant future. Even under the stress of these uncertainties of the day and the tomorrows, I am growing more delighted and expectant over the probability of a child to come. At the same time I pledge a successful resumption, and this time an unfrustrated one, of romance as we know it - and we do know it intimately, from breakfast for two to breakers off Santa Monica. You need never feel that you are being forced to create a world of yourself and a child. I always love you and you always are, barring sleepless nights and nerve-racking departures, a gay blade with an open heart & a boon companion.

Well, wish us luck and carry the torch high. Maybe, I'll get home sooner than we think, the way the African battle is going today. All my love.

Al

*[in the margin is written]* P.S. You might as well leave tomorrow sometime, inasmuch as we shall be departing tomorrow. This looks like it. Goodbye for now, love.

EARLY the next morning, at the dockyard gate, silent around save for the guard and a couple of soldiers passing, he does meet her. They hold hands, kiss, especially they look at one another for a few minutes. Then, when they should have been trudging off back to back to the tune of Lili Marlene, they said things like "Don't forget to.." and "Tell

Buzz that.." and "Watch your step when.." and "Have a good time with Liz and Bill at Quantico," and, most ridiculous of all, "Don't forget to write.." One more kiss.

His description in a letter that he slipped to a stranger going ashore, which reached her when she arrived at the home of Miriam and Sebastian in Washington, says it better:

**AL TO JILL MAY 8, 1943**

Saturday evening

Dearest Jill,

This is a good chance to get a letter to you in care of Buzz. Today was a very busy one and I am glad to relax in comparative peace for a change. Two remarkably good meals and a nap have done wonders to put economic determinism into place.

Our schedule has worked out as expected, though, of course, I am not permitted to go into details. There really seems to be little to worry about, even for Buzz. I hope your trip was a pleasant one and that you'll have an opportunity to live pretty much as you please for a while.

I wrote Dad a couple of days ago, asking him to get a larger place on the South Side in the event he decided against moving to Washington. I'm leaving the monthly check to the family up to your good judgement.

Again I'll repeat my address to escape Herz's fate - 1st Mobile Rad Br Co / APO # 3976 / c/o Postmaster, N.Y. Disseminate it among deserving friends.

I have been thinking about our anniversary for several days but can't find any decent way of conveying my sentiments. Next year, however, I promise to double the ante and make you very happy with imported and exotic products. You have my heartiest congratulations now on a highly successful first year and best wishes for another fifty years of increasing bliss. I know the young man & think he is a good match for you (sic).

If you ever catch up with my hunting knife sent it on. I'll send in this letter the necessary letter of permission from Maj. Caskey.

Pardon my dull and unrealistic letters. There is a great deal which I can write later.

You were sweet when I saw you last, quite wide awake for such an early hour. It was a nice, brief way to say goodbye. When the parting is prolonged, the thought of how much I love you grows more and more oppressive, and the pain unbearable. All my love, baby, may we be together forever soon.

Al

(in brackets notation by Al): [May 9, 1943] - [No date?] -  
[Mayday - day of leaving for N. Africa]

Hotel Warwick, Newport News, VA

**JILL TO AL MAY 9, 1943**

Darling,

Jerry [Sterns] just told me the news and gave me your note. I hope I'll be able to see you at the gate in the morning. If I do, no written words are necessary. But if vile fate intervenes once again, this will have to be our last goodbye, for the duration + six months anyway.

To say I wish you all the luck in the world is redundant, almost silly. I know we'll see each other again - that we'll both be as we always were, only there'll be more of us. I'm not sorry for anything - that we married in wartime, that you're going over (I still wish, impossibly, that I could too) or that I'm having what we hope will be a baby. And - and this may annoy you, since it marks me as a dupe of propaganda - I am and always have been, very proud that you were in the Army - from private up.

Come back soon. There'll be lots of us waiting for you.

And this is anti-climactic - I'll send in your OSS applications tomorrow. The laundry is in & it's mellow. I presume they'll pay you for it. I'm going to stop in Quantico a few days, perhaps. I lost Herz's instructions in re the car. I'll bet he's mad. I'll

probably go back to Chicago for the time being. I still am not sure. And today I swam in the Chesapeake & got a sunburn. Much - in fact all - love to you, old bean.

Jill

**O**N the 9th of May the convoy finally got underway.

That night he lay in his bunk, his fellow officers no more than a spit away in every direction, and thought of convoys and submarines, and Jill driving northwards in Martin Herz's car towards Quantico to visit Bill and Liz Evers, then to Washington where she would stop with Sebastian and Miriam before going on to New York to see her sister and others, turn over the car to Martin's mother, and then head home to Chicago for the duration.

The duration, he thought, could be as much as a year. The nation had been at war almost a year and a half. He was trained well for some things, but not certainly for what could be coming, and he felt that all about him were men who were much less trained. Who is in charge of this show? What in the world is this crazy company going to do? It would be weird to run it up to the Front with its panoply of equipment, its gibberish, its bedlam; it would certainly startle the enemy into some response. No other combat unit would want to be near it.

In all his Army time he had done about 300 hours of learning and training; the rest of 3000 working hours had been wasted. And of these 300 hours, only perhaps a hundred represented skills and knowledge that would be used. In the 14 months before he was transported to North Africa, he cost the army about \$800 in cash and \$500 in keep, and then his share of the low-cost training and his pro-rated part of the use cost of some equipment the most expensive of which would be 1%, say, of the cost of eight 40-mm cannon, on whose sales their Swedish developers had grown rich while preserving their neutrality.

He might have been sent overseas ten days after he was inducted, a day for clothing and shots, a couple of days to explain a batch of equipment and arms that were to be draped upon him and carried overseas, and several days of military intelligence about the front to which he was being sent. All the rest could have been learned, and a

lot more, especially concerning the environmental factor, in and near the action, or behind the action getting acquainted with the people he'd be working with. He could afterwards have been pulled out from whatever outfit he was with for his special work. Feeding in, that's the way it should be done: feed the recruits into whatever units, British, Russian, Indian, Senegalese, Jewish, etc. that were in action, American, too.

The Army, like the school systems of the nation, did not prepare one well for what would happen, the real thing. Were the other soldiers on the boat even less well trained? Or perhaps their jobs were simpler. But that's not what bothered him; it wasn't the technical niceties of warfare. It was the lack of agglomerative flexibility that was just mentioned. And, too, it was the failure to emulate the environment of logistics and battle that affected the individual's behavior and thence the outcome. Were American troops really acculturated to this environment? How long would it take for them to test themselves and adjust the difference?

**AL TO JILL MAY 12-24?, 1943**

*[Note from Al: Aboard ship. 25 Post. See Censor's note p. 4]*

United States Navy

Dearest love,

Avast and aye! aye! Lay off and pipe down! The sea is in my blood not to mention my stomach. To get me now you must sing like the Lorelei and pipe like a boatswain's mate. Only then will I come trawling after you, looking for the sea in your blue eyes, the ship in your body and the sun in your heart.

Even when excitement is rampant, things are happening and I can't possibly think or reminisce for a moment, I am serene for I know I love you, so far, which is not far, I have not pined and groused, accepting, in fact, my fate very fatalistically. That is the only response to an impossible situation. Still, never have I loved or desired you so much as now. I am sure of our ability to be happy together. Under the most adverse circumstances we have done a lot with each other. I have no regrets except for the

times when I could have (if free will is assumed) given in and therefore been embraced forthwith by your smile. You may find a mite of consolation in my favorite day-dreaming subject, evolving all the little escapades, delicacies, and itemized surrounding to the twin double beds which you might like. All, of course, with the entirely selfish motive of enjoying this life.

The trip is worth a great descriptive effort from beginning to end. Like all of the army it had side by side those elements of great physical and mental pain and those moments of great fascination in people, settings, scenery, incidents and psychology.

We had little sleep to commence the great journey. I had a hasty breakfast after a brief nap, and then packed my laundry into my snappy grip, which, incidentally, has aroused much favorable comment. All my buckles had to be tightened, my straps slung and my cartridge clips filled, before taking off. We were a staggering lot, borne down, in my case, by a knapsack, jammed with small articles & a raincoat, a gas mask, a belt with compass, first aid kit and cartridge container, a pair of binoculars, an ammunition sack pregnant with .45 ammunition, a dispatch case full of essential papers, and a tommy gun. Plus the helmet.

The men were similarly laden with a barracks bag in place of several of the above items. Le tout ensemble tottered for the mile or so to the trains, the weaker dropping slowly behind. Every now & then I would carry a rifle or a bag for one of the men.

The loading was accomplished with some efficiency and it wasn't long before the smell of salt water cut the smoky coach air and we had arrived.

We awaited impatiently outside of our new ship home for an hour while final details were straightened out; by then, hot, with the straps rubbing into our bodies, and hungry as wolves, we were mad about the whole war effort. Finally, the signal was given, and the men filed aboard, giving their first name and middle initial in response to their last name. That was the passenger list, a list as irrevocable from the first step aboard the

vessel as that on Charon's skiff. Most of the men were assigned bunks in the forward hold of the ship immediately. Apart from Caskey & Rathbun, the officers were assigned to a little compartment with bunks three high.

We were only the beginning, the advance party, the first sprinkling of men. The long lines [*too much information on page 5-6 - Censor*]

in the hold where the air is foul and dark. The bunks there are packed four deep with a thread of space in place of an aisle, line after line of them, in or around each a barracks bag, two blankets and a rifle. The occupants sleep a lot in them, but otherwise shun them. They clamber up the ladder to the deck, girded with the padded life jacket which is the laissez-passer to the world of sea and sunshine. Some hardy gamblers stay below and shuffle their cards and clink their coins in a shaft of light which enters from a missing board forty feet above.

At the first signs of darkness the order comes from the loudspeaker to "Prepare to Darken Ship" A few minutes later comes the order "Darken Ship!" The smoking lamp is out on all weather decks. This means no smoking except in prescribed places inside the ship. From then on, one stumbles in darkness, feeling his way up and down ladders, into staterooms, along cluttered decks and into dark latrines. I have suffered my share of hard knocks, funnier to discuss than to endure. First a crack on the head from an overhanging assault boat which didn't hurt as much as an excruciating bang of my knee against a bulkhead.

Lately, I have taken to sleeping topside in the open. The air is so much cleaner there than in our tiny compartment where nine men breathe the equal cubic space of a room at International House. It was very cold last night outside & I'm making more adequate preparations tonight. I carry my cot up with blanket, my life belt and my tommy gun with some ammunition. The compensation is drifting to sleep with the sky and sea stretching immeasurably around me, with the other ships in the convoy lying away gently into the darkness and with the whole world being put to sleep naturally instead of artificially by a flick of a

button. Whether at sea or in the desert, sleep in the open is, like reading a book before falling asleep, an unconscious denial of the regimentation that now it is time to sleep, ergo sleep. You remember those very pleasant nights when neither of us was pressed by the morrow and we could lie in semi-darkness talking affectionately and agreeably at ease.

Some of the men grouse around each night for a place on deck to sleep. The sailors are crowded too and they crawl into all sorts of places to sleep when twilight comes. They sleep in the assault boats and on all the decks except the top one. Despite the small size of the ship, its domain, so to speak, there is a kind of nomadism about these boys in their prowling around and changing of lairs in the evening, and in the way they shimmy from here to there to no seeming good purpose. You get the same sensation watching monkeys in an outdoor rocky cage. They still are wanderers and migrant citizens.

There isn't too much work for anyone aboard the ship, and frequently a group is composed of both soldiers & sailors. There is a great deal of friendliness on all sides with an astounding display of courtesy on both sides. The most irritating things are passed off with great good humour. Painful encounters in the darkness, many dull questions, terrible crowding are passed over in a most gentlemanly fashion, befitting well-fed, housed and slept persons of strict Christian upbringing.

The men don't have too much to do. The food is good but the hold is stifling and the deck space is limited. There is a little reading, a considerable amount of card-playing, but mostly there is rail-leaning hour after hour, rewarded by the sight of other ships, some flying fish, a scout plane now & then, the great seaweed bed, and once a whale. Conversations are endless. The men are already planning their return trip. Some are looking forward to the women of North Africa. The length of the trip, seasickness, incidents of the sea and ship are all favorite topics.

Some of the group clusters are striking. A dozen or so, clad in coveralls and a padded life jacket, unshaven and unkempt will stand around listening to two or three champion BS's, or to a

soldier strumming a guitar, or watching a young sailor painting a post with patient, unexcited interest.

The officers are fortunate in possessing a wardroom which, when the tables are cleared, serves as a smoking and reading room. It is a great asset, since even our rooms are too cramped to bear for long. It is here that meals are served by very efficient messmen in white jackets.

The life of a naval officer is soft and pleasant. They have very little to do with the men. They have their quarters which are far more comfortable than any in the army. Their food is superior. Their linens are clean, on the table & on the bed. The lieutenant commanders have spacious rooms with private baths. All of this goes with them to the last battle. They go into the fight living & eating & sleeping as gentlemen. They come out of the fight with the same blessings. How different from the soldier who never has a home, a place for his possessions, bathing facilities or a constantly good food supply. If he is lucky, he goes into battle on a tin of food and exists for days on less. He is exposed to the rains and snows, to heat & cold, to great noises and great confusions. There is something of finality about his absence from home, whereas, to the sailor, home is never more than several weeks away on an order that may come at any time.

Most of our ship's officers are reservists, some of them from commercial lines. For several ensigns this is a maiden voyage. They are recent V7 graduates who have never been to sea. Needless to say, they are not fertile sources of information about sea lore. Some of the older officers are old sea-dogs, though the men are young on the average and were unambitious and vigorous farm lads before joining up. It is easy to draw a line between officers of college education & ordinary seamen on this basis.

A very cute, though comic opera, touch is given by the customs surrounding the ship's commander. "The Captain lives alone." He doesn't socialize much, less fraternize. He has a separate dining room & valet. More than that, the Commodore also lives alone, not only from the officers but from the captain. He has his separate dining room too.

The chaplain aboard ship is from the Univ. of Chicago where he took some work in Sociology. His name is Phillips. Perhaps you can recall him -- a slender, medium-sized man of about thirty with a small mustache, glasses, sparse blond hair & a receding chin. Most ships haven't chaplains but this is an exception.

I've read several books during this voyage. Appeasement's Child is excellent - calm and learned. Massock's Italy from Within is likewise good. I've done some conversing in Italian and am able to get along pretty well, as well as a person who has spent a couple of years in Italy, according to my partner in conversation.

Have you ever read Not Peace But a Sword by Vincent Sheean, U. of C. fellow alumnus. He is really good, a clearer thinker than Schuman on what lay ahead, I believe. He gives out on the kind of socially conscious writing I like. I mean that he makes it a part of the whole fabric of life - not some monstrous and all-consuming Marxian whole. No doubt his mind, and he is only human, would tend that way, but he had that trait of mixing with life, of wading in the currents that drives obsession from actions or thoughts related to actions, if not from the original fort they hold in the ideology to mince platitudes, he is a "practical idealist" - words that ordinarily mean nothing.

This is my fifth crossing of the Atlantic and the experience is as it was always, boring much of the time. Despite the lack of women, dancing, swimming pools, many flunkies and scrambled sweetbreads for breakfast, it is not a worse voyage. The ever-present danger lurking around us night and day gives some zest to the trip. But I suppose it is again the abnormalities which one always finds in war which afford the chief interest, the efforts of men to adjust, to find meanings, to take or avoid responsibilities, to explain unknown fears, to pass the day and night, the way they bear discomforts which always cause one to ask himself "What does unbearable mean?"

You may have noticed indications here & there of this letter being compounded over a period of days. This afternoon, after several days of good weather and slick seas, a heavy roll hit the convoy. All the ships are pitching mightily, nosing up great puffs

of spray. The stocky cruiser, especially, is bucking and tossing like a bronco. Appetites were not so sharp this evening and pale, wan smiles are common. The land had never so much to offer as now.

Another day and less change. A convoy passed us at a distance this morning, homeward-bound. It looked to be chiefly cargo ships. A funny sight in a way, that crowding of masts and hulls away off. One felt like exclaiming "Ahoy, the Spanish Armada," or "Lo! The Carthaginian fleet." I realize the thrill a look-out must have had in those days of visual communication.

What an ordinary beautiful day this is. The sea is again very calm. I have read more. I have read several short stories by Aldous Huxley, again admiring his masterful techniques and condemning his approach to his subjects, poor things. They are certainly flailed unmercifully. And I have read some absurd pastoral by Thornton Wilder called Woman of Andros. The pastoral is typically an attempt to sugar-coat nonsense so that it will be swallowed easily. Prurient sex becomes charming & cute; drivel becomes mystic and corn goes rustic.

Today I am a little bothered by the fact that I've written no one except you. Perhaps I'll reform and write notes to various people tomorrow. I'm sure you'll realize that any such attention is purely casual. I have more or less relapsed into the lonely well, with no particular idea of rubbing psyches with anyone. I'm only not lonely with you and this second inescapable alternative isn't wholly evil. There are things to be done, and things to be thought about. There are letters to write and people to look at, and a panorama of objects. Probably nothing will change. I'll go on my private way until I see you again, never loving war or men as much as you.

We have been giving news programs to the ship's complement & troops twice each day. The idea was put out by Herz as a good exercise & a way of getting the men out of the hold. The talks are very successful & are heard throughout the ship. It was by means of this loudspeaker that the men learned the cheering news of the fall of Tunisia, the great diplomatic activity everywhere, and now the brilliant RAF assault on the Ruhr

dams. The news has done a lot, I think, to take the men's minds off the submarines. Zimmerman has been doing an A-1 job of announcing. He is as good as any I've heard. I've found that I've lost none of my editing skill & can cut a thing to pieces & put it together in quick-time. Most of the time I let my extreme critical faculty rest & allow ordinary, decent presentation to get by. Funny, though, how little effect an "abased" life has on one's mental processes. Habe is pretty good at handling the relative importance of items. He has a little of the Hollywood about his literary efforts, however.

Several of the men have been giving language classes to the officers of the ship. a nice way of taking up time & learning a little. Peter Viereck and I have had a chance to converse at length several times. He is, to my mind, a brilliant man, an American Shelley, a writer full of epigrams and wit. I expect him to be writing famous books some day. He is as nervous & thin as a reed, wonders where the war against Fascism is, and rather too constantly is complaining and railing. I reprove the latter behavior by forcing him to admit that to me it is old, old stuff - I know it & I agree but so what & T T - but he can't help himself and says I have no right to be an intellectual, because of my stability.

Sometimes I agree. Ah, the curse of a 1A body and control of will. Were I a feeble stick with a fevered pulse, bulbous spectacles, and a stumbling gait, I would now have become a famous author, assistant to Archibald McLeish or perhaps a pet of Mrs. Roosevelt. People look at Herz with his shoddy gait and his rasping manners and "Lo, the Intellectual". They look at me, "Cannon-fodder".

Great indign [*line missing*]

destroyers, disturbed at the [*words missing*]

into our march of pomp & circumstance across the broad sea.

I have read much, too, some short stories, a biography of Churchill and now, with great voracity, Thomas Wolfe's The Web & the Rock. And what a delight it is. I recall now why I treasured Look Homeward, Angel in those rather bitter days in

New York. Here was a man who knew so much - and had expressed it all, for kindred souls to agree & find solace in his company. He is so good, so rich, so consummating and vast! To every bit of life he describes I can add evidence. Yet I know that my writing would never be of his type. I am repressed. I hate to blurt. I cannot confess so completely in all detail, though I be ever so conscious & full of these details. And he is so, so American. Every phrase, and I mean that exactly, rings a bell in my mind, so accurate are his portrayals, so wise his sociology. He is no great conceptualist, no great psychologist, no great social philosopher, but he is an infinity of pearls, tiny and priceless, pouring out from page after page.

*[line missing]* lands of blue waters & perpetual sunshine - old Mexico, Southern California in their pristine state - white buildings set like jewels in mountainsides. And now after more blue water, our port of disembarkation, a great cluster of white houses, some looking quite large through my binoculars. It is a marvelous day - a flat sea full of tiny wrinkles & glorious sun and land!

The tedious work lies ahead as does our future. I must start slinging packs and checking equipment. At my next, my very next chance on land, I shall write you further. These three continuous letters go with the boarding officer who is coming aboard shortly.

Kiss your lovely face for me in the nearest mirror, dear love, and give my love to the family. I shall always love you and seek for you in my heart where you must be - so it is writ" "It was for her that his world *[words missing]* pulse beat and his *[words missing, censored?]*

Another day of fine weather, somewhat too cool. Last night, I had that old short blanket trouble, awaking, it seemed, innumerable times to readjust things. It was a beautiful night, however, a full moon that cut a huge swath of silver into the calm sea.

No sense in elaborating how much I want you in moments like that. A depressingly popular record played in the wardroom is "You are so nice to come home to."

There is a slight air of expectancy about the ship today. We should [*words missing*] soon, perhaps tonight. It is a crushing blow to all those who had been planning to head for [*words missing*]. Where we finally disembark is still a secret, which we can only solve by the process of elimination as we pass up various places.

I hardly know how to phrase encouragement and affection regarding the infant. I hesitate to say anything until I hear from you; you might get angry if I expostulated on your courage. Yet not for a second should you believe that I am not thinking about you and the baby-to-be constantly. But there really is so little for me to say. I don't even know what your diet is, and therefore can't accuse you of neglecting B in favor of C. You know, no matter what you do during these times of separation, that my heart and mind are with you.

My darling, tomorrow has come & it is another day. The moon was big & bright last night, with fury clouds which, unlike any other clouds ever, went in little circles around the top of the foremast with the pitch & sway of the ship. It is nice to sleep [ ] in sheltering wings of giant [ ] neck, of the ship, bunches [ ]k, looking lying flat on one's bunk, looking up to where the multitude of cables [ ]ses and booms merge on the [ ] conductor of a mast - a *so[ ]ing* to a pitch, an electrostatic needle, which shoots them into an infinite universe where they become nothing. Below a call, a whisper, a grunt and a curse - above brave stars, a dead but cheery rock, and clouds.

My darling, we had savory chicken tonight, stewed - no nasty fryers. We have felt a warm African breeze, too, and passed and old, smoking, Spanish tramp which moseyed into our path & was ushered away with

*[rest of letter missing]*

**JILL TO AL MAY 15, 1943**

Darling,

Saturday

I arrived today at Buss's, after a week with Elizabeth and Bill, to

find your welcome letter. I've read it over and over again. It will probably [be] the last I get for some time, some time being, in the argot of us who are used to a letter a day, a week or two.

The news has been wonderful, and you probably know it all. No, I'm not the least bit worried. Besides, according to Stekel, I must think beautiful thoughts so that the baby will be reasonably human. I've already started to fret about such details as the shape of its head (we both have such funny shapes), the presence of tonsils, colic, dyspepsia.

Despite all the tempting alternatives - the Waac, a \$2600 job as ass't technical editor at Fort Monmouth (a telegram came for me at Buss's this week - that's all I know about the job) - Lockheed, etc. etc., I'm awfully happy about the baby. I must assure you again of that, because maybe I didn't give you that impression when I last saw you. The idea just grows on one, and now I wouldn't lose it for anything & can't wait til I get large & complacent. I've been whoopsing some, but that will pass, & besides it isn't hard for one who whoopsed her way through college.

Last week at Elizabeth's was lovely. We get along so well - she appreciates my clownish wit - and furthermore her old life-long nurse was visiting her, a witty Scots lady near 60 - & the three of us made a quaint and happy threesome. We went swimming in the Quantico creek (ugh) about 4 times - naked because it was protected from the road. It also rained a lot. I didn't do much else - Elizabeth, who knows infinitely more about pregnancy than I do - forbade be from tennis & riding. Bill is fine and will write you. He regaled me with a great many imitations of Franklin, Eleanor, & Italians in flight, I guess because I am such an appreciative audience.

We went to a tea for Marine ladies yesterday & half of them were obviously enceintes, all of them well-dressed & upper-classy. The Marines are definitely selective about their officers, of which I'm not entirely approving. And I met a girl I'd known at camp and then at Smith. She is married to a son of Sol Lesser, who, if you are at all conversant with the hierarchy of the gilded city, you'll recall as being president of United Artists. We both

railed against Smith, agreed we'd both changed a lot, and that we both had married well! Her husband is, naturally, in the photographic section at Quantico.

One of the tires went down one night & I had it mended & the spare put on. I found Herz's original letter of instruction in my bag (suitcase). I'm afraid he doesn't love me anymore, or at least, thinks I am irresponsible, perish the thought. Tell him all will be well. I have to stay here in Falls Church, however, until I get more gas from the local board. That OPA slip for a full tank doesn't work because I'm a civilian. I went to Fort Belvoir about it on the way back & an overworked Waac so informed me.

I hope I'll be able to stay in New York a week or so, and see friends & family. I just wrote Unk to find me a place to stay. I don't want to stay in a hotel because it costs & because if I don't feel hot, I like to be waited on. What the hell is family for!

Then back to Chicago & to working out details of where I'll live & work for the summer months. Washington is out, I guess. Heck, I can make more money & be cooler in Monmouth, if I want a Civil Service job. But I don't think I do. More of all that later.

It's so nice being able to write you. I feel almost as light-hearted as if you were here, listening to me drool out my assorted woes.

Doris rode with me as far as Quantico, then just made trains there. It was nice having her along as company.

Buss & Mir & Joe are fine. He (Joe) gets bigger & cuter all the time. I've been thinking a lot about Buss's responsibility to the family & have decided he is definitely spoiled by your Mom & that I'll have no more of it. All I can do, of course, is point out the necessity of his sharing the responsibility of the family with us, which I've done in a feeble way. As for the monthly check - I'm going to wait til I get to Chicago & find out just how things are. If it's at all possible

for 1) their being able to do without it; 2) Buss going halves, that's what'll happen. Of course, if I live with them this summer, I'll pay board or whatever it is. Buss got notice to report for a physical, & altho Mir thinks he'll at least get a 6-month deferment from the office, he kind of uses that as a club to

refuse to commit himself.

Don't worry about any of this. Anyway, I'm not asking you to answer any questions or make any decisions. Right now I feel like a raging tigress protecting the interests of her young - like Mrs. Antrobus - (or did you sleep all through that play) - an attitude I've always decried in other women. Really, darling, ain't it the truth tho - that one's family is consistently shittier than one's friends (I hope the censor is not a man of delicate sensibilities).

I'll send your knife, honey, with the letter you gave me.

I must remember to write on only one side of the paper next time so I can put in things of a quasi-censorable nature - like my salty & subversive views of the political scene. Then if it gets censored, nought will be lost.

Well, darling, my next will be on v-mail, just for a change. Gosh knows this all never would have fitted. Oh - those pictures we took on our picnic came out dreadfully - blurry, tight-struck, tip-tilted. They're not worth sending.

I thought of you lots on our anniversary, but didn't take a drink in our honor. Next year.

All my love,

Jill

***JILL TO AL MAY 24, 1943***

Darling,

Monday

I just wrote you a page of deathless prose and discovered that I had inscribed it on a piece of cardboard exactly the size & color of this paper. Since that would hardly conform to the requirements of Air Mail or even Boat Mail, I must start anew.

I hate to go over old ground but I must, since there is little chance of my seeing you in the near future to communicate the following:

1) I am dying to hear from you

- 2) There are too damn many people still in civilian bliss in N.Y. & Washington, & I am envious and grumpy.
- 3) I left Washington Thursday and spent the night in Philly with Betty Hannah Hoffman, my Smith chum. Her husband was in the hospital having his loose knee, which is like your arm, fixed so he can join the A.U.S.

That was as far as I had gone when I discovered my error (decouvert mon erreur). Since Friday I have been here with Unk & his great & good friend Cousin Adele, at their house in Rockaway Beach, Long Island. Apparently Daisy's plumbing is still out of order as I received no invitation to remain at 36th St. while they were in Cal., which infuriates me beyond reason. However, I spent a pleasant weekend in the country helping Unk with his garden & he [*fixing ?*] my bike in return. He's really a mechanical genius. Then Sunday my cousin Teddy, Adele's youngest son who's just my age, came home from the Coast Guard, & we played ball on the beach in our suits (it was about 55 but the sun was shining). Teddy always was the roughneck of the family, destined to be nothing more than a good mechanic, & I've always been very fond of him, altho when we were little my mother didn't encourage my playing with him because she disliked Adele so.

I'll stay here til Daisy gets back at the end of this week & then probably go back to Chicago a few days after. I am quite fond of New York this trip, but it would probably wear off. Rosable is coming to New York June 1st, God knows why, to live. She just wrote she hates leaving Chicago & a wonderful new man she met (!) but her apartment is sublet and all the gates closed behind her. What a screwball! You never were as convinced of that as I.

Oh yes - I saw the doctor today. That test he took was positive, all right. However, since you didn't give me his home number, I called his office that day in Washington & got the wrong message. He's awfully glad it's a baby, & say I am well & should lay off ice cream. I am already abstaining from coffee, coke, cigarettes, alcohol (except when I'm forced) candy, spaghetti, fried anything and root beer, so I see very little point in eating at

all, since the range is so narrow. I can't even have as much milk as I want. Incidentally, that long list of prohibitions is self-imposed. I'm just naturally averse to all those items. I'm glad you're not here, at least at mealtime. I would sicken and die at the sight of your filling your sweet face with goodies.

I wish to hell you were here the rest of the time, tho.

I brought Martin's car back today, as I shall presently inform him.

I'm telling everyone about the baby now, as I come to it. There's no point in keeping it a secret & it gets people to carry my bags for me.

Darling, darling. I wish I'd get a letter from you soon. I love you so much - it seems a shame we can't be together now somehow - either me there or something.

Keep well and write soon. All my love, always,

Jill

ON the thirteenth day, the ship docked at Oran in Algeria. There had been alarms, but no submarine strikes. Near the Azores, an old Spanish tramp had labored near, been warned off, and changed course.

Corporal Tuero, a Cuban who had fought in Spain for the Loyalists, would have liked to sink it with shots from the ship's large guns, now lightly covered against the heavy spray. He wished they might invade Spain instead of Algeria, and was certain that all their movements were reported by Franco Falangists to the enemy.

The convoy, faithful to its orders, swung nicely into the Mediterranean Sea below the great rock of Gibralter. Nor were there further alarms before landing.

The Company disembarked, its vehicles were unloaded, and it rolled off into the hills behind the city. The hills were burnt and bare and the facets of the great Sun's diamond flashed upon them. They encamped. They set up pup tents, boiled water for Nescafe, and, even while they blessed *terra firma*, lamented the lost sea breezes. Nothing to do, nowhere to go, no escape from the heat. Wasn't this a conquering army? Why shouldn't they have pushed into the

comfortable houses of the city? And let the inhabitants, the indifferent Arabs and the Vichy French, double-up, shift for themselves. "Protect yourselves!" cried Sgt. de Lattre, "I know this heat. I was a soldier under General Lyautey. You will get sunstroke. Cover your heads!" They looked at him despairingly. The Lieutenant looked at his bare bald head. "Cover your head, Sergeant," he suggested. But the Sergeant said he was fine because he had gotten used to it. They tried crawling into the tents; the Sun was blocked but the heat was worse. *Tout passe*, and the Sun at last draped itself in an orange blouse and left for the night. The next morning Sgt. de Lattre was a startling red and complained of a bad headache.

All were up by dawn, each with his own hopes and fears for the day. There were no orders to move along, or to find some better place in the area, or to pick up large tents. There was an order, ascribed to General George Patton, their Commanding General, to wear woolen uniforms, the olive drab, not the summer khakis. It was because of the sweat drenching the cottons and the cool nights causing chills. You can argue the point; it was, in any case, from the frying pan into the fire. An immediate wholesale adjustment occurred. All empty vehicles were used to transport men to the relative comfort of town, whose most notable monument seemed to be a huge sign in a Greek that even the unlearned understood: PROPHYLAXIS. The other vehicles became refuges if they had generator-operated fans, or two-storied shelters with their canvas tops and beneath their chassis. Some men dug deep holes in the rough soil beneath their pup tents, and lay in these.

**AL TO JILL MAY 25, 1943**

American Red Cross

"not wounded division"

Dearest love,

Nous voici et tout est bien. It is remarkable how diverse and interesting these days have been. But I love you more and more. If you'll wait for me, I'll marry you and give you a nice house on the ocean in California, purchased with my bonus.

Our camp is pitched temporarily at a distance of several miles from a large town which must go unnamed. It is a hot place, rescued from the sun and the bare hillside by the cool nights. We are able to get into town a lot since we aren't at our permanent station doing our job. It is a great thrill to get into a French city again. The Arabs are very numerous, unbelievably dirty and thieving scoundrels. We must maintain a very diligent guard at night to prevent stabbings & robbing. Yesterday, Herz & I went in by truck. We visited one of our men who was in the hospital after an appendectomy aboard ship. We then interviewed an Italian & two German prisoners. The Germans were captured in Tunisia, the Italian on a hospital ship, after he had taken sick on a submarine. The Germans believed they would lose the war & hoped it wouldn't last long. The Italian said Italy was predominantly anti-Fascist & disliked the Germans very much. The Germans were harmless and friendly specimens, not politically-minded at all.

Later on we visited the Red Cross officers' Club which is a godsend to all these jampacked and strange locales. They give free food (pay a franc, 2¢ if you wish) which is hardly obtainable elsewhere in town. We managed later to get into a restaurant, probably formerly a fine place with excellent cuisine, but were able only to get some liver, cooked very well and some noodles. Restrictions on wine are very rigid. No restaurants or bars sell it after 7:30. There is no selling by bottle, though I found a bottle & am able to get it filled with vin rouge ordinaire. Everything is high relative to former times, and prices vary a good deal with the place & the bargainer. The water is very salty & therefore wine more desirable. After dinner we saw a French film in a hot & stuffy little show. It was a very poor production, as bad as Gene Autry in a different way. It was called *La Vie Privée* but was dull stuff.

Our propagandists are in their element now. We are already more divorced from the rest of the men and have a pretty good time despite lack of water or anything else. This is like the desert in Calif. but with plenty of natives and more freedom. Two turtles came wandering into our bivouac last night & we hope to keep them as pets.

I am sending you a poppy in this letter, sweetheart. I picked it from next to my pup tent this morning. It is a color which is so beautiful on you. Please send me the pictures I took of you in Maryland soon. You no doubt know that mail is very irregular at these parts. I live in expectancy for my first letter from you. Love to all the family. I'll write them forthwith. Tell Dad I'll see him soon. Many kisses from your only lover, darling.

Al

P.S. How's Vic's great hotel job. It's about time he ran it.

Dear love,

It is blazing hot out here & there is no place to go. We are on a bare hillside away from any trees at all. Inside my tent, it is even hotter, plus vicious flies.

I had a nice time in town last night. Habe, Wallenberg, and Grigis got notice of their commissions yesterday & are now full-fledged second looies [i.e. lieutenants]. I am very glad for their sakes & for the good of the outfit. Little has changed in the organization except that very close association with certain individuals is no longer inevitable. Thank God for the wide open spaces. Anyhow, Habe invited a couple of us to the home of a friend of his where we had a very nice meal and some excellent French wines - Vermouth, Armagnac and Cinzano. Then from the luxury of a private home we went back to our hillside.

Unfortunately, the water here is nauseating & salty, which makes the heat worse. I keep a bottle of wine handy and that helps.

I wish I would get a letter from you, so that I might know how you are. I suppose you are already writing in V-mail. We haven't a stock available as yet. I found out that I can send films to you via the Army's reproduction system which develops the prints in America. All you have to do is to print them. I have four undeveloped rolls on hand & will be sending them on to you in due course.

People in N. Africa seem very optimistic about the imminence of an invasion of Europe. I hope they're right. I don't mind fighting a war but I'd rather see the world with you.

The "coke" is an extinct thing here as is any other cold drink - except the vermouth & ice & soda that I was able to get in a cafe when I was in town last.

Interesting news, that about the dissolution of the Comintern. A very smart move, done at a good time, but with no effects on the Communist movement in the world except to make them national & therefore more palatable.

Darling, if you come across Mike Homes' address, would you send it to me?

I hope to write another letter to the folks now, so I'll kiss you goodbye for now. When I get home, dear, I hope your great love will have provided an icebox full of coke, cool sheets, a cold shower (& of course you between the sheets).

As ever yours,

Al

**AL TO JILL MAY 30, 1943**

1st Lt. Alfred J. DeGrazia  
Headquarters - De Grazia Family  
African Branch

Dearest Jill,

It is the time of evening when one's mind reverts to the pattern of Gray's Elegy and thinks of homeward paths mid deepening shadows and glowing sunsets. There is a glorious coolness and mellowness in the air, a quietness sponsored by a relief from oppressive heat and the day's details.

I've just been down to the ocean with a truckload of the men for a refreshing swim. Quite a ways off the beach lay a French torpedo boat, sunk by British aircraft, and to it I swam with several others. There is something ghostly about a sunken ship drifting with the tide. Walking its sunken decks, one gets a squeamish feeling about the various bottomless holes that lie there for the unwary. Its twisted metal and slimy parts are like a cloying and sinewy ghost. I managed to rip off two dials, one

from a torpedo tube and the other from an instrument room which I shall send on to you at the earliest possible moment. They may look nice above my desk some day.

I spent part of the day in a prisoner-of-war camp, where Herz and I plus Reis and Sadun enjoyed our best meal



AI with Coen and Sadun, both Italian specialists at Oran, North Africa.

since coming to Africa and conversations with a number of German and Italian prisoners from the Afrika Corps and the Italian African Army. Those Italian officers had all spent three years in the desert under the most horrible conditions, without adequate news, a handful of food and a cup of water for their daily fare and guns that would shame the Brazilian army. They didn't know the meaning of motorized as we know it. I am amazed at the capacity of men to take hardships without rebelling. The results which I have written up I shall send on to Buzz for his use, plus other valuable observations I have made thus far.

The prisoners are well taken care of by the Americans & the Italians are looking forward to be "visitors" in America. Neither the Germans or the Italians know much about what is happening in the world. In the absence of real news, the Germans readily coin myths of their invincibility. I am looking forward to a lot more interesting developments through this type of work.

Give my love to everyone at home, darling. Many kisses from your lover.

AI

**AL TO JILL MAY 31, 1943**

Dear and only love,

How I missed you today. It was a wonderful day, full of sunshine and things to do.

One of our men named Tuero, a proud, arrogant Cuban, took me to a beach he had discovered nearby. We set off along the road towards the place but were picked up before long by a Citroen, driven by two Frenchmen who were testing the car before turning it over to a French admiral. We arrived at our destination shortly, and darling, it was magnificent, sharp buttes and great rocks dropping sharply down to the sea, everything bathed in rich browns and blues. We went to a little place on top of one of the rocks directly over the sea and found there an old couple of Spanish descent who were able to prepare us some freshly caught fish and to give us some wine. They had no bread but one of the sailors had his ration along, so we could dine sumptuously. I was so deeply impressed by the beauty of the coast and the earthiness of the inhabitants that I swore to Tuero that I would bring you there again. Bread, wine, and fish seemed to be the acme of cuisine in such a place where anything more would seem presumptuous -- like trying to outdo God's perfection.

We ate and drank at length, we got to feeling very good, and finally our friends from the French navy insisted on a ride along the coast. That we did mid screeching of gears and confessions of dizziness from Tuero. After a great amount of joy-riding we wound up back at camp sans the swimming we had started out to accomplish but with a grim determination to make up for it tomorrow.

One of the men spoke Spanish, too, and I find myself getting along right well in a combination of about three languages. Tuero is a much chastened Spaniard tonight.

To make up for the lack of swimming we went later on around twilight to a farmhouse where there were settlers of Spanish descent whom Tuero knew. They had an irrigation pump from which poured a stream of cold water. So there, between a

pigsty and a barn, in a country which becomes more beautiful with every degree of slant the sun rays take, we had a bath without comparison, followed by the great treat of hot milk from the farmer's cow, with sugar.

It probably would not amaze you to know how often I think of you and wish you were here to enjoy these experiences, unrealistically assuming at the same time that you could avoid the numerous tribulations. However, we shall have our days together and it isn't too far off to get discouraged.

I have been writing you a lot. I hope the letters turn out to be spaced pretty well. You undoubtedly have other things to do besides read my letters. One of these wonderful days I should get my first letter from America.

I wrote Ed, Vic and Buzz yesterday.

There is no use asking you silly questions which you have probably answered in a letter already. It seems that other men in our outfit are expecting babies sooner than us -- Salemson, Habe and Baisich are all in the tearing-the-hair stage.

It's late, sweetheart. I'll write again pronto. Give my love to all the family, and take care of yourself. My future isn't so bright without you.

Love as always,

Al

***AL TO JILL MAY?, 1943 V-MAIL***

Sweetheart,

Today I shall direct my propaganda to my audience; there have been tremendous developments in regard to a "bug-eyed" view of the world. Just now, for example, a steady stream of ants is winding across my tent floor, forthcoming only bathroom and no bug le size [?]. Another army not far away is carrying off everything but the GI soap. They are not alone - there are weird little things that would bewitch, drive your pretty nose into the ground & befoul our romance - scorpions & daddy-long-legs, fat funny beetles & a horde of nearly invisible things of all kind.

Yesterday, some winged little beast hit me in the back & almost knocked me down. There are lizards scampering about, interesting little snails, toads and turtles. They all hop, skip, march or crawl through our encampment en route to some great destination beyond.

But down at the sea yesterday! How can I describe it? I swam out around a point off the cove, where short, sharp cliffs descended into the sea and found dark, murky little caves with shiny rocks & the sea beating in at them, with dark and skulking crabs that slithered into crevices when I approached, little shell fish imbedded into the rocks, snails that crunched beneath their fancy shells and little red globs of jelly that packed things into itself. Ah, what fun you would have had!

Nothing of great import, darling. I'm slim, healthy, fed and hot. But Chicago must be worse. Love to all and all love to you.

Al



A blustering gang of 1<sup>st</sup> MRBC technicians and officers, a picture that promptly hit the cover of *Printer's Ink* in the US, to Al's embarrassment.

*End of May 1943 letters*

