

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 3, 1943

My darling Al --

Sunday night

I feel very badly because this is the longest I've gone without writing you (i.e., since this past Wednesday) since I first heard from you in Africa. But moving into this particular apartment has proven to be a big job, and for five days now steadily, I've been working, painting, cleaning, buying food and household accessories. The apartment has four rooms (see floor plan below) and while they seemed small when the other family which preceded us had it, it seems like Grand Central Station to me now. First there is the cleaning problem - Rose (who has come in one day so far) or I have to scrub every inch of it except the ceilings (excluding the kitchen) and the bathroom, which the management graciously consent to clean (in the first order) and paint (the bathroom pink, at my request and their horror). And then there is the problem of furniture. We really don't have much for this place. I ordered a chest of drawers from Sears, unpainted, and it came completely in its virgin state, just strips of lumber, plywood and cardboard, and nails. Since I am horrified at 1) the labor of putting it together (Marion Gerson spent all yesterday afternoon at it and Janice's husband all this afternoon), and 2) the amount of cardboard in it where wood used to be in the old days, I am going to try to make them take it back. I don't know whether they'll do it because it's half put together already. It is truly the House of Pride (cf. Spenser, Sir William, The Faerie Prince) looking all gleaming and light-woodish and trembling at one's very breath.

I have the loan of Diana's studio couch, which is swell for the living room (remember it - I think it's one of the many pieces of furniture, plots of grass and nests of ants we have defiled in our time) if I ever get a decent looking cover for it. Joan is lending me a cot for the bedroom and nursery (all one room). Right now I sleep in the in-a-door on the mattress you used to run down so at 5508 Ellis.

But mostly the place needs cleaning and I am too lazy and too busy painting john seats white and kitchen doors red to do it. It

really is a big job - the floors and woodwork. I've been sleeping here since Thursday night (as I said I wrote you Wednesday), the first night amidst book boxes and indescribable squalor. I got the living room together a little bit Friday and Friday night Cooney arrived with the studio couch, in Maury's (the guy downstairs) truck. Cooney is taking his new home very well. He cried a bit Friday night after the family, who came down on the truck, left, and we both spent a restless night because he barked at the slightest noise. Now he only barks at every other noise, proving himself to be the excellent watchdog I always said he was. The only thing to mar a life of spotless bliss together is the fact that the janitor says I can't have any dogs. (It said so in the lease, but being as the people before me had a dog, I overlooked it.) But now that apartments are so easy to rent he is getting tough about it. I pleaded and got two weeks amnesty, until I got used to sleeping alone, as I put it. After that, I'll plead some more. I just found out they can't throw me out because I'm a soldier's wife, so comes the last resort, I'll use that, though it would be so unpleasant. Cooney is so sweet and well-behaved I really enjoy having him around, although it's a mite more responsibility.

Today I stopped the ceaseless and fruitless labor for a while, and went out to Joan's for breakfast and lunch. Cooney actually rode the I.C., with nobody even batting an eyelash and not even demanding a ticket from him. I put a little muzzle on him, which he detests, and he sits on the seat, on the window side to be precise, and gazes dejectedly at the South Shore landscape. Joan had to go to work on the 3pm shift, so I didn't stay all day. Her mother, Mrs. Walter, was there to help her out. She is a lovely old lady, and thinks you're the handsomest man she's ever seen. She went to Mount Holyoke, so her opinion should have some weight, since at least she's been around, albeit fifty years ago. Joan has grown entirely differently from me, although, like me, she looks wonderful in spite of sleeplessness, hard physical labor (which I may not have been doing as long as she, but which I've done five times as intensively the past week) and a certain amount of worry over husband and home. You may be interested in these variations of growth. (Mrs.

Walter and I both decided it was too bad that Tom and you, as first fathers, couldn't be around if only to watch the process of growth; you in particular wouldn't feel so squeamish about my losing my figure - Joan never had much of a one - if you could see it happen gradually.) Anyway, she's kind of rounded all over her body, while I'm still flat in the diaphragm and waist, and suddenly jut out to a point in the part of the stomach called the abdomen, I believe. Hers is a more graceful way of growing in the nude, but my way makes me look less pregnant and better in clothes. In the nude it's slightly eye-catching.

She's still at the steel mill, and expects to stay there another two weeks. Tom is still in Biloxi, and maybe it's Gulfport, and will never be an officer at this rate, because they don't let members of the Air Force apply for other OCS's, and the one at [Miami ?] is virtually closed.

I guess my letters the past week have been rather pettish and bitching, and I'm sorry, and pray you to overlook them. I was depressed, too, because I hadn't heard from you. But now I've gotten three wonderful letters and a lovely sentimental card all in one week, and feel quite reassured of your safety and love. It is true that your Mom and I argue once in a while, but it's in the same vein that you and I do it, and usually my fault, as when you and I do it. I'm just overcritical sometimes. However, basically, we get along wonderfully well. Of course we have different ways of approaching things - gosh, the difference in our financial circumstances and generations would create that - but I'm so pig-headed I get sore if things don't go the way I want them, exactly. Well, you're sort of the same way, so you can understand what I mean. When I think of the difficulties and discomforts you've had to undergo during your Army career, and even before it, when you worked, I feel somewhat ashamed at the state I can go into over a dirty apartment or a malfunctioning or ill-colored piece of furniture.

Janice and her husband have tried to be very helpful and are constantly inviting me to dinner. While I think Bill impossible, I'm not ashamed to accept their offers of aid and food, because I

figure that for every comfortably located couple like them, there are ten guys like you sweating it out on some war front or some dusty camp around Biloxi. And they should pay a little for their comfort. Is that a bad attitude? I guess I'm exploiting my situation a little, but this much is true: I didn't will your going away, I can't will your returning, and in the meanwhile, my life is somewhat off-kilter because of your absence.

Tonight I had dinner with Bea and Fritz Neugarten, my neighbors, and Smudge, who is right now waiting for me to finish this so I can walk over to 57th and mail it with her. Fritz is, as ever, swell. Smudge sends her love (with enthusiasm, she says) and says for you to never mind, she will take care of me. Actually, people have been very helpful and friendly since I've come South. Mrs. Biesenthal gave me a chair, not lovely but mahogany and serviceable. Sybil Farreter, a Mortarboard and several generations behind us, has taken my bike, which I am glad to get rid of for the time being, is having it fixed and attending to its every want, and brings me odds and ends like those inaccessible items, coat hangers, in return. I don't kid myself that she's still getting the best of the bargain, though it's a temporary loan. Joan is giving me a cot and negotiating for a rug and a maid for me. And so it goes.

Will somebody please find my husband for me? In any condition. More tomorrow, dearest. This one's getting too long for comfort.

All my love to you

Your Jill

The Apartment

Ridgewood Ct

Grass

Grass

Living Bedroom

Alley for Closet

Cooney's Closet

ingress

John Closet & Front egress

Door

Dining

Kitchen Back door

Alley for Cooney's

ingress and egress

AL TO JILL OCTOBER ?, 1943

Undated postcard of "Napoli - Piazza Plebiscito" received in Chicago Oct. 24, 1943

Darling,

From East to West, I'm beginning to meet myself coming & going. I hope to get a chance to write you a longer letter today. I got your really swell letter of Sept. 6, delighted at such late news, and also delighted to know you are as profoundly in love as I am. Now to find someone going the right way to mail this.
Your Al

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 5?, 1943

October something

My Darling Al --

Wednesday

I'm afraid that being a good hausfrau is not synonymous with being a good wife, viz., my inability to write you for three days on end. I feel badly about it too, not only because I judge you set some store by my letters, but because writing you is some of the most fun I have. But literally, I haven't had time to take a crap -- how coarse, Jill, how coarse. Driven on by some inner

demon, compounded of vitamin B1 and apparently a genuine dislike for disorder, I work from early morning to late at night, painting, sanding, scraping. I haven't had to do much of the cleaning this week, because Tuesday Rose sent her cousin in and she did the floor in the bedroom and the windows, i.e., she did the windows from the inside and I did them from the bushes on the outside. I forgot to tell you that the joint is completely hedged in by foliage of every variety. The janitor is a great horticulturist. In ordinary times I would make some caustic remark to him about ceasing to water the plants and how about fixing that leaky faucet for a change, but *le temps c'est le temps*, or something. Anyway, I kill myself being nice to him and having visible orgasms over his goddam plants, so that the day of Cooney's reckoning may be staved off. (I guess I wrote you that he had told me that Cooney must go; well, he, the janitor, has been in several times since then and hasn't said anything more about it, even though Cooney tried to bite him.)

Cooney, I find, is like me in many respects. I find that in the past I have ingratiated myself with all kinds of worthless people. People like Laura Peterson think I'm a dream. Mortarboards swoon in my wake. But, as you know, at every crucial social contact in my career, viz., my contacts with employers, I manage to bollix things up beautifully. I never had a boss who liked me yet. Well, that damn dog is the same way. He is always fawning over itinerant colored men and 12-year-old high school girls. But comes the day when he has to be nice to somebody, like the janitor, he tries to bite him. I even fed him the chocolate cookies I was saving for my lunch the other day when the janitor came in, so as to associate the presence of the janitor with gustatory delights. No Pavlov's dog he; it didn't work.

It really will be a pleasant and pretty apartment when it's fixed up. While it's about a foot below street level -- the floor, I mean, it's very light. I keep the windows locked all the time when not in use, and of course, Cooney barks constantly, so I'm quite safe. Anyway, it's a street of small homes, to coin a phrase, and dead end at one end, so it's probably unknown to the criminal elements on the South Side.

I'm varnishing all the floors, you know, which in itself is easy, but requires more foresight than I am capable of. The problem is to varnish one floor at a time, and then to arrange your life for the next 24 hours so it won't take you over that floor. It's quite a puzzle. I am also painting, or rather shellacking and varnishing a great line of bookcases I got to hold your great pile of books. That is a job for an expert, and, as a matter of fact, I'm getting pretty good. On the side, I paint the bedroom furniture, which, at the moment, consists of that awful chest of drawers Sears sent in such a primitive form. Incidentally, Janice's husband did get the drawers together and also the night table that came with it. However, I find that just as every other time I tried to use anybody, the venture was a failure. The night table is so badly askew it's incapable of holding anything heavier than a government postcard, and the drawers I could have done just as well myself. Meanwhile, I had to put up with a lot of crap because I dislike the man and his mother so (I was over there again for dinner Monday night). I principally resented, in particular, his snobbishness towards Cooney. Bill has a Kerry Blue Terrier which they are showing constantly, no doubt to a mass of dissatisfied onlookers, on which he and his mother lavish all the love they do not lavish on Janice or a child. Now a Kerry Blue is a curly-haired black dog, in fact, it's got ringlets, with an enormous ass and a microscopic head. If Cooney does not outpoint such a dog aesthetically on every count, I will kiss Bill, either end makes no difference. Furthermore, this dog has a loud piercing bark, which makes Cooney and I wince visibly, and which she is constantly employing to attract attention to herself. At least Cooney only barks when he is playing the part of a watchdog, which he does all the time and in everybody's house.

So much for the Blums. I know for sure now that if I ever want anything done, I will pay somebody to do it or do it myself. It is the only way, praise de Lawd.

MacEldowney stayed with me last night; she's working on the Daily News now. A couple of other Mortarboards descended upon us, staying long enough to interfere successfully with my

getting anything done last night. I figure if I do not paint at least one object before going to bed, my day is a failure. Needless to say, the joint stinks, and eventually I shall come down with an occupational disease, or at least a Union Card in the Int'l Pnt'rs. and Dec'r'trs of America. I got your letters of September 2, 9, 10 and 14 all this past week, and Mom told me over the phone today I had some more mail for *[from?]* you up there, which she'll send down tonight. They were all wonderful, needless to say, and I'm just re-reading them now. Between what I want to say in reply to them and what I have to say on my own hook (see above paragraphs) this letter will be a book.

First, if you really can't use your excess pay, which is quite likely in the field, send it home with specific instruction as to what you want with it -- for yourself. You're wonderful to think of me, but I have all the clothes I need and am spending your money right and left on furniture and paint, not much of which you can appreciate now. How about some books for your collection, like that McKeon edition of Aristotle which you never got yourself, I don't believe? Or I'll just put it in the bank, to be violated along with all the other shekels there.

Incidentally, I opened a small savings account in the University Bank, which is right at this corner, of 133 rocks. I did it mainly to have enough money to cover any Riggs checks I cash there; if you have a savings pass book, you don't need to pay for out-of-town checks. However, if you like, I'll keep adding to it for a fund we can use together after the war. Despite the vast expenditures these past months, we still have about 800 in the bank in Washington. However, my Field's bill hasn't come in yet, and that will be enormous; I got a dinette set there for about 50 dollars, which isn't so much for that kind of furniture, but looks big at one time. I can't make up my mind whether to keep it, on account of the color. The finish I ordered it in is damn near white, and Jill, unlike Jennie, never can make up her mind. I did think it was pretty in the store, however.

Of course, there's always that money from Dad for after the war, but even then, I think we ought to hold it till we see what we

want most and where we want it. It'll come in swell for a house and farm, or something. It certainly isn't big enough to dissipate on little things.

And the pictures came (incidentally, we sent you some of the boys in band uniform at the beginning of the summer, a couple of me and Cooney at four months of being enceinte, one of Dad holding little Joey about six weeks ago, and some are now in the process of being developed; however, they probably won't come out because of Vic's and Mom's predilection for double exposures). Anyway, those pictures are awfully interesting, but gosh, honey, you look just like Tom Dewey. If I didn't know and love you from of yore, I might be turned against you. I certainly never was any admirer of the phiz, as well as the politics of the present governor of New York. I hope you'll consent to trim, if not remove altogether, that toothbrush sometime between now and Victory, or rather, between now and the time you see me. I'd hate to think of that thing tearing up some of my vulnerable spots, such as my upper lip, which is at the present a becoming shade of blue, from knocking it against the bureau I was painting. But you do look awfully cute and jolly, a horrible way of putting it, I know, but that's just the way you do look. I like pictures of you serious too. I've either changed my mind or always did, I can't remember.

I told Mom to tell the boys to clip stuff for you. If I ever get to look at the newspaper again, I'll scout around too. I did see a story the other day which I meant to send you, about a judge who gave a bank clerk suspended sentence for embezzlement, with the statement that bank clerks were the most underpaid class of white collar help, for the responsibility they carry. Isn't that amazing? A whole new concept of justice in our courts. I think he was an Illinois downtown judge.

There's been a lot of gangster stuff in Chicago lately. Danny Stanton was killed, and in turning up the killers, the police managed to turn up a lot of embarrassing data on the South Side gambling-and-vice syndicate. A lot of ward politicians are being implicated, also, naturally, guys like Murray Humphreys

and Sam Hunt, who are old hands at the racket. I don't understand it all very well because I haven't been reading the papers thoroughly, but if we did have somebody in Chicago like that silly Dewey right now, something might be done about it that would stick.

The fight north of you seems to be a step-by-step one still. Christ, when are those Germans going to give up.

I've had several phone conversations with Ruth Shils, who asks for you of course. She had a letter from Serano saying he was married, and I guess Buss keeps in touch with her too. I've also run into most of the other South Siders already, too, like Smudge. I bumped into Stud in Stineways today and he looks very gloomy indeed, as well he might, since his wife is getting a divorce and I think he really liked her. I feel sorry for him but he really is too peculiar for toleration. I couldn't bear being around such an irrational being. Cooney is bad enough.

I have to mail this before ten, my sweetheart, so I'll give up now. Incidentally, in your letter with the picture, you asked a long question about my morning habits which may have been rhetorical but which I'll answer just the same. I'm still guilty of all those vices. And how about you? Are you still a chilly Good Humor bar, which I must nightly defrost with my apparent overabundance of body heat? Would you still fix me in a vise-like grip during the night, only to kick the covers when you get out of bed first in the morning? Do you still feel like making love in the morning and sleeping at night, when I'm feeling particularly unsociable in the first instance, and particularly sociable in the last? It's a wonder we get along at all, yet I'd give all my painful dentistry and Cooney to have you annoy me all over again tonight.

I love you too, more than you love me, yah, yah.

Your --

Jill

AL TO JILL OCTOBER 7, 1943

Dearest Jill,

Again I feel in the throes of desperation over the impossibility of replying in kind for your most delightful letters. I'm sure I could be fairly amusing and perhaps interesting if I had both the time & the license. But I have neither. They are interacting too, for I must spend time on judging the amount of license I am permitted. Your letters, contrariwise, are wafted to me (or rather passed from grubby hand to grimy palm) by the very air of freedom, and with a mistressly touch both diverting and enticing. Would that I could seize your pen hand and take the words from your very lips, thus to enjoy more fully the humor and spirit I so love in you.

I do not know, for instance, whether the censor will strike out my explanation to you that I've been in Naples lately and have had little time for epic epistolizing. The city was not as destroyed as reported. A large part is in fairly decent condition. Foggia is a good deal worse, a veritable ghost city which gives one the creeps to walk through at night. Bari is the finest city in Italy today. The Neapolitans have it to their credit that they stuck by their city to the bitter end. The same crowds are on the streets today as there were five years ago. They still have their proverbial devil-may-care attitude and I'll bet that even the fiestas will recommence before long. The last days of the city were somewhat epic. The Germans sacked, burned and fought with the population. They shot hostages and the Neapolitans shot at them. Most remarkable of all were the gangs of street urchins who armed themselves with hand grenades, rifles and pistols and attacked tanks and trucks, destroying a number of them. Our first arrivals in the city found them already there, armed to the teeth with the evidences of their exploits scattered about them. Some of the weapons they had gotten by diving into the bay where the Germans had dumped confiscated weapons. These were the same boys who had in times past dived for pennies tossed from tourist ships by travellers. Their exploits were no shock to me. The Italian adolescent boy is the most sturdy being on earth - sardonic, daring, anti-authoritarian

and romantic. He is capable of the most astounding feats. Unfortunately he later becomes familial, harassed, and cynical. The reasons for the change are manifold. Italian history is a primary factor, of course. Just the other day, I happened to read a brief history of Bari and it is one succession of oppression & uprisings, and the uprisings never succeeded. The same thing is true of all the other cities. Successes were transient always.

I am greatly interested in what America is thinking about the new Italian government. Please send both your ideas & press comment post-haste. It is impossible to get news from America through any other source in good time. The papers and magazines are delayed too long. Your ideas are good, too. I remember being very impressed several times recently with your comments on one or another political subjects. If all goes well, one bright day you should receive two packages. One is small, the other gigantic. The large one contains a set of the famous French illustrated encyclopedia Larousse, and a dozen or two Italian books which I thought were interesting. I ask nothing more of you than that you let the postman through the door to put them in some dark corner. I don't even require you not to yawn as you sign the receipt for them. The smaller one contains the only Christmas present I shall be able to get to you, I fear, four pairs of silk stockings of unknown size & unmentionable color, and a turquoise shell cigarette case pour après l'enfant. It's a difficult and despairing venture to send a package home, especially without an organization, base or depot and from the British side of the campaign. I'm always far ahead of an army post office (or have been) and never have any stamps at all. String and cartons can't be found. The article must be borne from one place to another, and so forth and so on. But at least you must realize that I love you, whatever be the depressing effects of the gifts themselves. I managed also to get hold of two pipes, one of which I suppose I could give to Buzz for Christmas & the other to Ed but the possibilities of getting all the details together to execute the deed are distressingly few. Maybe I'll smoke them instead & think of you between puffs.

Again, all love to you, sweetheart.

Al

ON October 9, he cuts his orders, gets them signed by Greenlees, and heads for the small Bari airfield. There he finds a DC-3 leaving for Catania with a load of sick and wounded men for the evacuation hospital. He climbs aboard. The night is stormy, visibility nil, the men anxious, himself included. The interior of the plane nothing but a metal cylinder with strings of wires, with metal bucket-seats and a ragged rug on the metal floor, so that stretchers incline this way and that, and the men sit as best they can, holding whatever part of them hurts the most as best they can to ease the painful bumps. The noise, the smells, the groans, the thunder, the lightning, the dips, yaws and jolts -- almost like continuous collisions.

The other healthy passenger aboard is a flight lieutenant of the RAF, born in the West Indies, graduated from Yale, named Kennedy, a man who has spent a year in the Soviet Union and speaks Russian -- a good man for dinner-table in Catania, he thinks, whatever that may be like now. At Catania he finds his villa -- the same that they had taken possession of, it seems, years ago. Only Beauclerk and a couple of others are old faces among the dozen there now. But their welcome is hearty enough, and the cuisine has continued in the respectable tradition set by Captain Robertson and Company.

The next day, he lucks onto a plane to Algiers, so bids all good-bye and flies smoothly to Africa. The people in Catania are really enjoying the war, it seems, but life is even better in Algiers. Sometimes, you know, at odd moments for some, most of the time for others, not only these characters, but soldiers even down to where the other guy's machinegun can be heard, say, "I pity those poor bastards back home; they don't know what they're missing." And they really mean it, at least for a couple of hours now and then, maybe even for the whole long time they're gone.

AT the Algiers airport, he phones to the Headquarters of the First Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company, using the handy list of the

Military Police, and shortly a jeep arrives to fetch him home. It is home. He is still on their roster. And they are even drawing rations for him because nobody at the rations dump asks the pertinent questions. Further, they are glad to see him, with his news of places they say they would like to see, if the circumstances were pleasant: what gold-bricks!

They are already apologizing for why he has not been promoted to the rank of Captain. They claim that he was recommended for his captaincy on September 23. Who would be blocking it? Among themselves, but not to his face, so maybe he is imagining it, they can say, "He got in some brawl." They do not tell him, but they are all up for promotion and before long they will be sprouting double bars and maple leaves. It is inevitable: if you don't stay close to where the promotion orders are cut, your chances of being passed over are increased. The swine, as Heycock and Galsworthy liked to say about such types. Better, the farrow: they stay close by the teats.

Waiting for someone high up some day to tell them what to do, and meanwhile living high off the hog. Vehicles, spanking new and well-maintained, with mileage more than ample to take them on excursions and into Algiers. A few are assigned to jobs in Algiers and stay in town most of the time, using the Company as a weekend residence. No K-rations, C-rations, here, but the best that the Quartermaster can provide straight from the States supplemented by locally grown fruit and vegetables. Refrigerated steaks from America. Fresh coffee beans by the sack, too. The whitest fine flour for breadmaking and piemaking. Native Algerians to police the kitchen and the grounds. Sandlot baseball, pattering on the radios and motors. Drinking and card-playing. Concerts and spectacles.

To these worthies go the comforts and pleasures of soldiers whose tedious and tiring training days are distant in memory, whose fears of the Front are languishing, whose anxiety over transfer to the infantry are still non-existent, even while the generals of the European Theater are being told that they had better postpone plans for a Second Front because the rate of induction of civilians into the Army has been rather slower than expected.

All of this weighs against an occasional boredom, mixed with a

gram of bad conscience, thoughts more or less poignant of a lagging education or career back in the States, nostalgia for families and friends and old neighborhoods and even wives in a couple of cases and American girls in many cases, mostly imaginary film starlets. The imbalance of risk and suffering in wartime, let us admit, is outrageously unjust.

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 8, 1943

My darling --

Saturday

As ever, I have been delinquent about writing to you, but once this house is put on a calendar, or currently operating basis, I'm sure I'll return to my old days of virtue.

Your last letter, dated September 15th, came the other day, in which you said you would be moving again. So I s'pose I won't hear for a while again, until your lines of communication, which must be sturdy indeed to bear up under the lovely burden you put on them, catch up. Or whatever it is that makes your letters not come when you're moving.

I feel so much the way you do about our loving one another. At first I missed your body next to mine more than anything, but even now, when I've fallen into that benighted state of being somewhat less painfully aware of sleeping alone, I miss you terribly. Not that I don't think that sleeping together is the crux of love -- I never could understand people who could sleep apart except for short carnal snatches. But it's sort of a case of I love you in December, I'll love you in May -- no matter where you are, you are the world for me. And now that much of the Sturm-und-Drang of house-establishing is over with -- I only have one more floor to varnish and the place looks reasonably clean, and at least half the windows have curtains on them, and most of what I need consists of the trimmings -- rugs, drapes, furniture covers and pitchers on the walls -- I wish you were here, since it might be a little fun for you now. I also wish you were here to handle some of the difficult personnel problems which I'm apparently incapable of handling. I'm a whiz with the paintbrush,

but when it comes to getting a janitor to do something for me, or an aggressive Negro maid to treat me with some respect, I fall down. You know, I have Rose's cousin coming in twice a week now (Rose doesn't work any more), and she weighs 188 and insists on calling me by my first name. I'm going to get her to wax the floors and then give her hell about it. No point in cutting off my nose first. If she turns out all right, I may have her come in once a week thereafter, to do whatever heavy work there is to be done. Actually, I can do practically everything, and do it if I can't get help, although I really shouldn't I suppose, but I figure as long as I can get a maid to do it, I might as well. Incidentally, the gals get four dollars for an eight-hour day now, which is somewhat better than beginning office or factory help get in the city, considering that they eat on their working time. I never thought I'd see the day when domestic help got reasonably well paid, and while I'm theoretically in favor of it, I'm not so sure that some of the help getting that amount today deserve it, either because they're incompetent, or still carry over the traditional dishonesty of some help, which would never get by in an office.

And Cooney keeps trying to bite the janitor, so naturally the guy doesn't come to fix things. He asked me the other day what was wrong with the dog (and also, couldn't I get a human being please to live with me?), and I sort of wiggled out of it by saying that he was afraid of all men, and only liked women. That is true to a certain extent; I notice that Cooney responds very well to most of my friends, even to Vera Miller who apparently is a dog love under the neurosis. I guess the men Cooney has known, with the exception of Uncle Willie, have just been too harsh for his hyper-sensitive soul. But the fact remains that he wants to bite the janitor, which is only the expression of my feelings, were I to show them.

Yesterday I did some shopping in the afternoon and then went out to Uncle Joe's and Ivy's, at their apartment on West Madison, or in the vicinity. From there, we, including Mom, proceeded to the Senior Thomas J. Kelley's in Oak Park, where we picked up this cot Joan is lending me for the duration. Then Ivy drove us south, inasmuch as Joe had to be back at the club.

(Incidentally, he has a stripteuse there now.) When we got back to the house, Cooney was barking, which still worries me, so I let him out. He jumped all over Mom, who was still on the street, barking with excitement, and then a strange man came along, and Cooney, either scared of a strange man in the dark or thinking it was Dad or Joe, ran up to him barking. The man hit Cooney with his paper and naturally Cooney tried to bite him. There was an awful scuffle, during which I, a typically pregnant woman, just burst into tears and hid behind the car, and finally Mom got the dog in the car. The man, an obvious cad, yelled that he was going to call the police, and taking down Ivy's license number (which is Texas, but he didn't notice) hooted into one of the apartments on the court. Then he came out again, by which time Cooney and I, both bawling loudly, had scuttled into my apartment. Mom told him, with a stroke of genius, that I just was a strange woman with a dog, and she had put the dog into the car just to protect him, but really hadn't ever seen me before. Anyway, the upshot of it was the man retreated into his hole mumbling that if he had a gung he wood shoot Cooney, but that was that.

What irks me is that ordinarily the dog behaves so well and is the joy of many dog-lovers both in Hyde Park and Addison Street.

Gosh, there is so much to tell you I don't know why I take up space with that damn hound. In the first place, you probably want to hear more about life on the South Side and in this particular apartment. Well, it is lovely to be back again, in a way. The weather has been typically soft and mellow October. I only wish I had more time to be out in it, but even so, I manage to take a walk or two every day up around 57th and 58th streets. Yesterday morning, I managed to get everything in the house full of wet paint or varnish, so there wasn't really much I could do in the house. I went over to school and walked around campus and went over to the bookstore, where I bought Thomas Mann's *Stories of Three Decades*, which you know I have been promising myself these many years. Then I accomplished the chief object of my mission, to see Earl and

say hello and also enlist his aid in advising the boys about school. Vic may or may not have written you, but he is rather anxious to go to the four-year college, IF they let him take music courses and play in the band. I got him a lot of literature to reassure him that it was still a liberal place so far as courses went. Mom took it to him when she went home today. Well, to get back to Earl, he's awfully anxious to see the boys again. Tuesday is Columbus day, so I rather hope they'll take time off from their numerous activities and come down and have a talk with him. I feel he is the one adult left in Chicago who can give them some sort of direction, which God knows Vic needs. I really think a man is better equipped to do so than I, a female, and not a very dignified one at that, am. And Vic, despite all the petty antagonisms he can generate by his bad manners among family and teachers, really has a lot on the ball, I often think, as much as anybody in the family. Ed with his grades, which I guess are on the A- or B+ level, translated into my eastern-school terms, has very little to worry about, so far as scholarships are concerned, and needs not much guidance in his academic life. They've both mentioned that they'd like to start school in June, though Vic finishes his sophomore year this February.

Earl seems harried, the way he always is, the little-man liberal who finds no more appreciation of his role as a teacher than the little-man bank clerk or accountant. Men like Earl are destined to be ignored and unappreciated, because they don't make great splashes in research or administration, yet by their influence over their students, they really do a lot of good in the world. I feel awfully sorry for him -- he's so attractive and politically well-oriented, and yet there's not a damn thing he can do except to keep on stammering the truth to a few adolescents. If he had only half of your organizational ability, he'd be somewhere today. He showed me the letter you wrote him at the beginning of the summer, which of necessity I had to read in haste because it was in the middle of a conversation. I was amused by your reference to me -- that I never could understand the way one could just go on living, in a very un-materialistic way, around school. Now you've convinced him of

what he always thought of me -- that I'm a great bourgeois hussy. Well, it's true that I'm probably more a child of my early environment than I ever thought I was, to wit, the way I take to my role as a consumer and apartment dweller. At least, I'm no Bohemian when it comes to our own home.

But I found the campus a rather sad place, that bright day which was like so many bright days I had spent there before, with you, and, that first quarter I was there, with Mary-Lou Welsch, sitting on the grass and discussing *Life*. The place is more full of service people than ever before, or with unfamiliar and distinctly unattractive young female civilians (as a matter of fact, they have a bunch of Wave officers in training, but one doesn't see them much, and avoids the sight if possible, since women in uniform do look like Lesbians, with a few exceptions). And no longer can I pass for a student, even remotely, although you would have shot me Friday for visiting Earl in red ankle socks and those white moccasins you asked me to throw away two years ago. Now, however, I have the excuse that any heel higher than three-eighths of an inch gives me a backache, which isn't true but I could easily make you believe it.

There are a few people still around. Mickey Maguire, whom I didn't see, but whose sister was pointed out to me by my catty young friend, the Mortarboard, Jane Barry, in *Stineways*. Mickey's sister is a great gaudy girl with bright yellow hair and slacks done in a light plaid. I bumped into a peculiar creature named Herb Goldstone, a friend of the Pecks et al, now taking personnel courses in ASTP but about to be shipped out. Ed Rachlin, whom I don't think you knew but is a great gaudy boy who had his enlisted men's equipage done by Brooks Brothers, was given a medical discharge and was seen around Chicago for a few days. One of those delighted observers being your loving wife, who loves fine tailoring for its own sake. Dick Himmel was also given a medical for a heart condition, and was seen by Laura Berquist downtown one day. Stud is writing that radio show, the Human Drama or Human Comedy, I forget what it's called, under the aegis of the U. of C. publicity department, and can be seen any day by a host of bored onlookers. And

that's all of our generation that is left, and even then, they're somewhat younger.

I started to write this before dinner, and then I ate, and Maxine, P. C. Rubins and Dr. and Mrs. Biesenthal came around and we all went to see *The Maltese Falcon* at the Hyde Park. I had seen it a couple of years ago, but enjoyed it just as much tonight, time having dimmed all but the remembrance that it was just about the most sophisticated, and therefore, the best, movie I've ever seen. This is the third time Maxine's seen it, and I suggested she do her Master's Thesis on why it is the best picture Jill ever saw. She's seriously considering the suggestion. After the movie we went to Cunny's and I had a sticky fudge Sundae, a rare treat these sugarless days. Incidentally, I seem to have lost ration books one and three, but haven't suffered much so far as people like your mother and Laura Berquist keep giving me points, which is illicit. But one can hardly let a mother-to-be starve, I suppose. Incidentally, Mom stayed overnight last night, which was a great treat for me. She slept on the new cot, and as I arose during the night for the usual reason and heard it creak mightily, I have decided to keep the in-a-door bed, and look for something quieter as my permanent resting place. Ruth Shils knows a man who is coming Monday night to sell some furniture, so maybe I'll be able to pick up something larger and quieter than. My Condition makes me take up a lot of bed space now, as I have to sprawl to get out of the way of my stomach. Actually, I'm told I'm pretty small for the stage I'm in, and I haven't gained any weight for almost a month, which should delight the doctor and does me (although God knows I've worked hard enough to keep it down) because I can eat all the gooey stuff I want. Tonight I had two inch-thick loin lamb chops, definitely not gooey stuff, but something you can only get when you eat alone and have been given extra ration points, like me. Actually, I don't enjoy eating so much alone, and usually eat much later than usual, until I've worked up a beast-like appetite.

Laura is getting a lot of unpainted stuff for her apartment, a very pretty one over on Cornell, so she dropped in today to see how I

was making with the paint and varnish. This place, incidentally, is damn big and comfortable for one person or a couple, and I don't think you'd have claustrophobia in it. The kitchen and bathroom fixtures are all very new, relatively, like our place at 5479. It's really a nice apartment, much nicer than 42.50 would ordinarily get you in this district. The woodwork is white, and not a depressing brown. I spend all the time wiping my fingerprints off it, as my hands haven't been clean since I moved in. The dinette set came from Field's, and it's damn near white and very classy and modern looking. The bookcases, which look swell after all that sanding and varnishing I did, are still damp, so your books are still sitting around in boxes. I don't think they'll all fit in anyway. I am trying to pry Aunt Lillie, the old bag, loose from one of Howard's. The latter gave me a lousy book on baby care. I think it was kind of a dig, because I had given his wife a copy of a cookbook I had just bought for myself, and I guess Howard must have thought it was an insult, though any fool would know that even the most experienced cook needs a good cookbook. Even your mother.

I got a very nice letter the other day from Hank Danenberg's wife, telling all about the baby, which she described in Ladies Home Journalese terms, and saying that Hank had his own gas station now and was very busy. I'll send you their new address when I can find her letter. I just made an unsuccessful skirmish through my drawer for it. I guess Dad was kind of sore at Mom's staying overnight with me -- he couldn't find the coffee this morning -- so she had to leave about noon, which was much earlier than I wanted her too. She helped me put up some curtains. She's done a lot of buying at Ward's for me, of things where judgment of values comes in much handier than taste (I wouldn't exactly trust her with a chair), and it's been very helpful. I wish she could visit me more often. It's quite an adventure for us both, and I sort of feel so patriotic about the South Side I like to show it off to her.

This is getting to be a terribly long letter. More tomorrow or Monday.

All my love to my sweetheart --

Jill

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 10?, 1943

My darling --

Monday

All is shambles again. I varnished the living room floor and have to write this in the kitchen as there's no other furniture in the BR or DR (see diagram of several letters past). When will I ever be done with wet floors. I tried sorting out your books today & some of them tax my neat librarian's mind. I'm sorely tempted to throw out all those not coming under the headings of Politics, Pol. Philosophy, Psych, Phil, Lit. & Pornography.

I lost my ration books & have to go to the police station & swear out a complaint (against myself?).. The way Cooney's been biting people & crapping on the 55th St. pavement, they'll probably keep me.

Got a nice letter from Paul & Ann today. They're sending me the buggy & anything else I want. I really don't need anything else, except you.

Yesterday I went to Joan's for dinner & we had a very nice time, re-reading the newsy parts of your recent letters. You certainly write good ones. Her mother was there & you know how fond I am of her. Cooney is always happy to go there too, because he is surrounded by gentle and admiring women of all ages. He even tolerates Vesta. Joan quits work at the mill at the end of this week, & she & Vesta are going to spend the weekend with me, which ought to be fun.

Earl Johnson & the boys, Vic & Ed, are coming to lunch here tomorrow so that he can have a talk with them, & vice versa. I'm very nervous. I haven't cooked or served for such a long time.

I wish all this varnishing were done so I could get down to reading something. Bill Steinb[recher] lent me a book by Max Beerbohm. It's a satire on Oxford Life pre World War I, & as

Oxford life pre etc. is one of those things I draw a blank on. I'm not enjoying it very much.

Mom says I have a letter from you up north. Oh joy. I was a fool to tell you to *[turning the page, she erased "Dearest Paul" with the words: "Gosh, I didn't see that till just now."]* address me as Mrs. Alfred Jr. because now the mailman can't tell Mom & I apart. I hope you get my new address soon. I'm not particularly jittery or abysmally lonely in the new place, as I was the first few nights, but my longing for you is ever-present. I wonder if you'll find me changed when you return. I've had so much time to think about how wonderful you are & how often times bitchy I've been, by comparison, that you'll probably find me suffocatingly angelic. Or maybe all I need is you to revert to my old acid tone of life, though why, I don't know. End of page.

All my love.

Jill

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 12, 1943

Darling,

Tuesday

I'm pleased to find that things are settling down somewhat, so that now I can get off my theoretical one-a-day to you. I'm still varnishing floors madly, in what I thought were well calculated segments, but to no avail. People & animals (the former includes me) still walk on them when wet. I just had to lift Cooney & leap with him over a large expanse of floor, so he could follow me from the bedroom to the kitchen, where I am writing this.

The boys & Earl were over for lunch. They chatted & I hope he's given them moral support. After he left they started talking about entering this winter quarter (so Ed can hurry up & get his A.B. in the 2-year plan, or at least get a good bunch of schooling in before he's drafted. Lunch consisted of home-made & underdone vegetable soup, tongue sandwiches, fruit & chocolate cake. And kosher pickles. Earl had to get back to

school, so those good boys helped with the dishes, & then we went out & bought a record. They went back early, as I had to go to the police station & also see a man about some furniture. After I swore out my complaint about the ration books (I still don't know if it was against myself), the police Lt. said "Bless you, my child. Go forth & do no more evil." I thought that was cute, coming from the Hyde Park Police Station.

The man I saw about furniture is a friend of Ruth Shils', a fellow named Sarkin, who was selling his. I bought another cot, this one larger than the one Joan gave me. I slept on Joan's last night & spent most of the night on the floor.

I dropped in on Ruth's later & we had a hamburger together. She knows the strangest men. A fellow named Dexter something was there. He used to work at FCC with Buss, has a pendulous upper lip & looks like an owl. Surbin does, sort of, too. I guess those are the intellectuals for you. I mean real intellectuals, the ones that read stuff I can't understand. Me, I like cute men, like you. Maybe you're as smart as they, but I can always understand what you say & find you singularly free of oddities of physique, dress & mannerisms. Your English officers look owl-like to me, incidentally. However, the English always look so washed it may be forgiven.

Coming home I bumped into Art Lidov & his bride, who looks just like him & acts just as gauche. I went up to their room at Goff House & looked at some of his pictures. He's really very good, not like that anemic Californian whose water color I am now cursed with. He's done a smart thing - had his murals photographed on those little Kodachrome slides, so one may see them easily. He's still an awful boor, though. I'm sitting here eating while I write. I've just gone through a whole bunch of grapes, a piece of chocolate cake & now I'm on an apple. What a pig, or is it just an oral erotic.

I got a newspaper from you, dated Sabato (Saturday?), 18 Settembre. That's not the Syracuse one, is it? Which one?

Earl says Italian is so much like English, he doesn't see why the

Italians don't speak English & be done with it. That's like your English sergeant, isn't it? I like that group picture of them you sent. It was easy to tell the British from the Americans by their hats. I wish you could tell me more about the group.

Well, I must hasten to mail this before 10. Did I ever tell you how much I loved you? Well, you must wait to hear it till I get more paper (which I can't do now because the varnish around the desk is wet!)

All my love.

Jill

AL TO JILL OCTOBER 12, 1943

Dearest Jill,

Tuesday, so they tell me.

My flying Dutchman fate pursueth me and I am back in Africa, flown here some two days ago in two jumps. I can now see again the glories of the queen city of North Africa stretching below me on the bay. I don't expect to stay here long, thanks be to the same Dutchman but find it a delightful combination of PWB business and personal recoupment. The first thing (or the second or third, anyway) that I did was to get Tommy Anglin to get me some pay. Since I haven't received anything since June, I should get something over \$150 anyway, part of which I must use to pay Rae Heycock for the money he lent me to buy my incredible watch.

The planes weren't too comfortable. The one I look first had wounded soldiers on and we all held our breath as she staggered down the runway. Maybe "held our breath" is not literal. We smiled sickly grins at each other. I had a good, scornful look at those Calabrian mountains which tortured our trucks a short time ago and a fine view of Mt. Etna before we settled down at Catania. I spent the evening with Lt. Hartley, U.S.N.R., who is holding down the paper there and had an

excellent meal of spaghetti & meat loaf - my father knows what it is called. I brought with me a very interesting RAF lieutenant with whom I had groused for a few minutes at the airport & who had no particular place to spend the night. His name was Kennedy. He was an accomplished linguist & intelligence officer, born in the West Indies, graduated from Yale, who spoke Russian & spent last year in Russia, and who was also a good liberal. He was going to Malta and then returning to Italy to work. Malta, incidentally, is a very picturesque collection of rocks, which some of the military seem to have liked & enjoyed & others to have hated.

The city here hasn't changed a great deal. PWB is full of change creatures, scarcely a handful of whom I recognized. They intend to settle down here for the North African work and for the rest, I think the big center will follow the armies with all the other military organizations. I met Tommy Anglin & went off with him to where the biggest part of the 1st MRBC was camped. Caskey, I was told, is in the U.S., curse his black soul, in search of some equipment, and they are feeling happy enough to be let alone. They are expecting an assignment in the near future & are happy enough at the thought of going somewhere. They have a very fine camp in the country & I enjoyed very much the dinner they had prepared.

I visited the PX, too & got two pairs of socks, some American cigarettes, some lighter fluid, a bar of soap and a bar of chocolate. I also bought a pair of pajamas which are too big for me - they don't run except too big or too small. I did have another pair once upon a time but I left them with all my winter clothing & superfluties when we struck off for Sicily. I understand that they are presumed to be now somewhere in the Naples-Salerno area. I hope to rejoin my only warm things, now that my wife isn't with me, before the cold nights set in. This afternoon I had a fine opportunity to sit on my cot and arrange your letters, something I've been wanting to do & that you've done in my case already. I find I have for August & September now the following: Aug. 1, 3, 6, 10 (2), 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, Sept. 3 and 6. I got them all in Italy and I

shall always remember them as my fairest recollection of Italy in the summer of 1943. Never has a man had a better correspondent and I should take my rank with the great prophets for having, with the world crisis in sight, fallen in love with such a fancy, faithful scribe. My efforts at writing the last month must appear fearful & frightful - but spasms of love they were, really. When, despite all external pressure, I couldn't resist telling you something, just anything, so long as it told you I loved you, I scribbled it down and hope you'd understand. I could never do, as some of my calloused friends do, write several letters in the same day & then date them back to make believe they were written each on a different day.

Now I shall read through your letters and tomorrow I'll be able to do such things as suggest baby names & snicker an "amen" to your remarks re people like Janice's husband.

It's getting dark now (6:15) and I must trundle down the hill to eat dinner at the Hotel. I'm staying at an officer's billet while waiting for a vacant room there. It's very nice & countrified up here, though.

Today was a great literary day for me. I got hold of Time mag. for Sept. 6 and 29 (the latter a miracle), two New Yorkers, a public opinion Quarterly and a Harper's for September. With them spread out before me, I feel as if I am lusting in the halls of Babylon. The New Yorker for Aug. 28 has one of the greatest cartoons of all time, that of Peter Arno on the man floating in the flooded shower-room. Don't you agree? When Rathburn showed it to me, I rolled up hill & down dale with laughter. I think its secret lay in the exposure of one of the ridiculous positions a human being could ever be in. Christ, it's funny! And I wish we were together to have spotted it together. I remember so well how on such occasions we laughed at each other like silly fools - but very much in love.

Al

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 13, 1943

Darling --

Wednesday

You know how I've always been screaming for somebody to give reasonable immortality to the American comic strip, or at least to some portions thereof. Certainly some of the best of indigenous American humor in the past two or three decades has arrived via that medium. (Although I think even an Englishman would appreciate Barnaby). Anyway, Barnaby is my special passion -- I think you left the orbit of the Chicago Sun too soon for it to be yours -- so I have about one hundredth of the joy of childbirth in finding him bound and booked. The strip today is sort of typically Barnaby -- terrifically sophisticated, as you can see -- so I'm sending it along with the ad, which is also funnier than ads usually are. Mr. O'Malley is, as you know, the kid's fairy godfather, a pompous ignorant little bastard. Right now he is running for office against a machine candidate whose election is a foregone thing -- do you call candidates like him lame ducks (I forget that course I had my junior year)? He's put up his own campaign fund from moneys he got from an invisible leprechaun, who asked him to hold his strong box while he went to the races. (In the last strip, the leprechaun was crying, invisibly, because he never could go to the races, having to sit around all day and guard his strongbox of cash.)

I spent a kind of Mr. O'Malley-ish day myself. This afternoon Cooney and I hiked over to the ration board at 63rd and Cottage Grove, in a blinding drizzle. You know, one of those days in which at first it seems like a great idea to take a walk, with the water and wind in one's face, and ends up a perfect nightmare after the first two miles. I filled out a great horde of forms in triplicate, asking for new books to replace the ones I had lost, and then hiked back, in misery. Of course, as soon as I got home, I started to rummage about the desk drawer for something else, and found those damn books. That makes three afternoons spent in safari. I called up the board in great embarrassment, and asked them to call the whole thing off. In penance, I am volunteering to register people next week for ration book number 4, over at the Rae School. It's really lots of

fun, though, to be able to participate in these community activities which I had never had the time for before. As I told Mom, I'm the kind of woman who'll end up being secretary of the local PTA when she is 45. The place still has a lot more work to be done on it, but I've resigned myself to doing a little at a time, since I've managed to run myself cuckoo doing it the other way. The maid was in again today, but it will be the last time, because I've decided to fire her over the phone. I simply can't bear such a large, obtrusive person around, and figure I can do just as well by myself, since I seem to do just as much work whether there's a maid here or not.

I wonder what effect Italy's declaration of war against Germany, the news of which came in today, will have on Italy's status at the peace table. I sort of hate to think that the little king and Badoglio are just doing it to feather their own nests. Italy's declaration notwithstanding, it looks as if you have a hell of a hard road ahead to the Brenner Pass. It's kind of depressing, to see things going so slowly.

I hope the luck, and commendable caution that attended you in that time bombing at, or around Catania, will continue. There was a pretty harrowing story in the papers about some men, several score, I think, being lost in a building they were quartered in at Naples, when a time bomb went off. I told myself a long time ago that you were born under a lucky star, but sometimes I can't help thinking about it all. I guess only a fool would be perpetually optimistic.

I'd like to get this off before ten, and it's already rather late now. Take care of yourself for me, and if not for me, for that last spit in Hitler's eye. Anyway, keep your fingers out of car doors. I love you several million times over.

Jill

JILL TO AL OCTOBER 14, 1943

Darling -

As you can gather from Oxie, the Col. thinks Rhodes scholarships are a plot vs. U.S. sovereignty. I haven't been exactly following the Tribune, so I can't give you any more details. I wonder what they (the Trib) have to say about Churchill lambasting our five gooney Senators, by inference. You didn't catch a glimpse of them (the Senators) on their famous trip, did you? They certainly came back just as full of s--t as when they left.

I haven't much time to write & certainly not about politics. I was shopping all afternoon & came home looking like an over-worked dromedary (one bump, not two), because the new ruling is one must carry all packages under 5 pounds, & as I shopped in many stores, I had many packages under 5 lbs. Tonight I had to iron, because the wash has been moldering around for days. I was consoled by Jimmy Durante, my second love next to you, for a half hour anyway. Incidentally, one of the March of Time (vile program) announcers had a voice just like yours, causing me to burst into tears over the ironing board, to both Cooney's & my surprise. It must be pregnancy, but it seems that I am always on the edge of some violent emotion or other, & it takes only the slightest shove to send me into a fit of rage or tears (or both, since I often, as you know, cry out of sheer pique). This is not to deprecate, of course, the very profound way in which I feel your absence. But I think sometimes it's more funny than sad the way, & the times, I take to show it.

Gosh, darling, the months ahead till we'll see one another again stretch out so interminably. And I dare not wish for the war's swift conclusion wholeheartedly because that would turn me to thinking like an America Firster. So I must just sit & suspend judgement, like a person under water, just filled with my longing for you & (at the present moment) your bambino.

All my love,

J-

AL TO JILL OCTOBER 14, 1943

Darling Jill,

It's a little chilly this bright & sunny North African morn and I'm staying close to my cot for a few minutes longer while I begin this letter to you. Then I'll shave, dress, and walk the three miles downhill to eat breakfast, after which I'll finish the letter.

Rather symbolic of my return to civilization, I saw Jack Benny in *To Be or Not To Be* last night at the Red Cross Officers' Club. I enjoyed it very much despite the badly dilapidated machine that stopped exactly at the high points of tension & humor.

I also got my first letter in a week from you yesterday here, though I know you have been writing ever so well and doggedly and that others are probably being passed along my trail in Italy. In it was your new address, a sort of thrill even for me inasmuch as now I can while away free time thinking of what the place must look like. Knowing your tastes, I shall undoubtedly like it, after the preliminary investigation for booby traps. I've gotten very suspicious of buildings of late. You may have read about the Naples post-office blowing up, and I've told you about our experience in Catania. I gave Lt. Col. Whitaker (he's in the Army now) a scare when I arrived in Naples. None of them had thought to check their own basement. Since it was one of the few intact & modern buildings, it was a logical place for a mine. However, nothing was found when we searched, much to their good fortune.

Now that I have had breakfast I might suggest a few names - the other night in bed I had some good ones which I may have forgotten by now. How is Lila June for a girl? Or Mary Ann? or Elizabeth Ann? Catherine Rose or Susan Rosetta might do. Jane might be worked in somewhere. Or Ruth Geraldine (to be called Jerrie). Or Diane and Virginia - both are nice, don't you think. And if he is a boy, there is John Philip or John Franklin (neither is too good). I like Sebastian Paul, too, and Michael Victor or Victor Michael, Edward Alfred is O.K. for me. I give up. He'll grow up into his name whatever it is. I thought of Jesus Christian but he might become irreligious. If you're tired of Mike

already, tell Mom & Molina to stop calling him by such familiar sounds. Tell them that if they don't I shall name him Ebenezer.

Habe [the novelist Hans Habe] already has a picture of his baby & it is a very nice one too. I saw it in Naples. It has some funny Hungarian names which I can't recall. Herz is still looking for a girl with green eyes to fall in love with. I'm afraid he won't succeed unless he is bludgeoned into matrimony. Interesting it is to know that the Evers are expecting. We ought to form an infant pool après la guerre in order to handle parents' recreation. We must watch our little one to see that he doesn't associate too much with Jo-Jo. Otherwise, he'll get younger boy feeling, and will go to extreme heights of precocity to beat out Jo-Jo. Harmony amongst the infants should be our aim - park all side arms at the nursery door.

I'm having my eyes treated at present. There are tiny, irritant cysts in both which are being medicated at the dispensary here. The first sign of it began about the time we went to Sicily & I never had a chance to get medical care of that sort. But apart from this temporary and unnoticeable blemish, my eyes are still filled with light & love. I warrant that if you were to look in them this minute you would see practically every one of your desires' mirrored - the principal one always being to be with you this minute, very, very close as a matter of fact.

All love to you, darling,

Al

AL TO JILL OCTOBER 15, 1943

Dearest love,

I am swamped in all sorts of mail from you, or, to put it more accurately, it is a great bubble bath of correspondence to compensate for the lack of real bubbles in the vicinity. My last bath was very cold and the horrible memory has lingered for days. Anyhow, I have letters from you today of Sep. 3 and 6, and V letters from Sept. 14, 15, and 17, the latter bringing me

deliciously close to you in time. Bill Steinbrecher's letter also came this morning too and was a goldmine of facts, though corrupted by Aristotelian base ore. Regarding the last, though, I've had some fairly original thoughts on social behavior of which more in a later epistle. Briefly, I think I've had some rather remarkable evidences which clarify the meaning of mental courage, and they begin to trail back into old, distant, ideas, which were once put aside for lack of understanding and/or corroboration.

Before I plunge into an abyss of intellectualization, I shall get back to my strongest motive behind this particular daily letter. It is the same as in every other letter, though obfuscated by factual & descriptive diversions, to assure you that I love you and, with lecherous ambition, to even hint at the grand proportions of your meaning in my life. I have been writing love letters to you now for nearly four years, as you recounted in one of your letters, and I am as little satisfied as ever that I can convey what I want to convey. I can't feel very flattered, therefore, when you compliment my letters of the near or far past. I judge them absolutely & know them to be shallow conveyances of my feelings. But, again, perhaps you realize & take them only as symbols, as trinkets, and know instinctively what they mean. If I am de Lawd to you, you are my Green Pastures. You cannot have written truer words, and modesty be damned, than when you said the most horrible thing about war is the want of you.

You wrote that my inquiries suggested your letters were querulous. Never on my word. A cheerier, and still more sober, correspondent could never be found. But I'm convinced your lot must be harder than mine, but let's not argue about it. I can't understand how you can be such a fountain of eternal wit and romance amidst all the knock-down drag-out duties you seem to have. You need not make all the furniture yourself, you know. Here I am, in a little over two months to be a father because mother would have no other - let's hope he only appreciates & doesn't emulate the great Colonna. Boys' name for the day - Roland James. Girl - Margery Francis. Result - utter exhaustion

of mind. It's amazingly easy, this becoming a father at 6000 miles, as long as you're sure you feel fine. Is your new apartment assured of plenty of heat this winter? Do you have my soft, "C" blanket to keep you warm? Do you have a radio and a phonograph - if not, buy same. Add financial questions - do we have \$1000 plus the \$500 or so in bonds? Are the bonds coming in regularly each month? Also, are you bored with unwanted visitors - if so, I can send you my wicked-looking Luger which if lifted in air (using both hands) will cause opponents to swoon with fright. It will also make a nasty mess on floor - partly fright, partly effect. But on the subject of the child, what can I possibly say. I hate sentimentalisms such as "I am with you in spirit if not in person" or "I wish I could suffer instead of you" (In fact I have enough to do without having a baby at the moment.). If it's any consolation, you can be sure I'll be sweating out Christmas week and will be waiting with lolling tongue for the Red Cross telegram re infant. I'll probably be well up in Italy by then, but they'll be able to reach me alright. I can't send much in the way of Christmas presents this year. There's nothing to send & the sending is difficult. I may have several more snapshots soon. I hope you got the pictures from Sicily. I think the ones of you and Cooney were fine. The dog is very handsome - he almost looks like a breed. And yourself -it was like walking into your home: "Yes. That's the girl I love". The months since I've seen her have meant nothing at all.

Yes, and I meant to remark on how apt your remarks on various political things were. I forget each individual remark, now, of course, but I do remember each time grunting in agreement "True, very true, must tell her how true that is". I shall love getting back to an orgy of political agreement with you.

Finally, could you sketch me an inimitable sketch of where Ridgewood St. is? I don't recall it.

It's raining here in North Africa, too, and is pretty cool. I wish I

had you, darling, instead of a scratchy wool blanket.

Your Al

End of October (first of two parts) 1943 letters

