

**AL TO JILL OCTOBER 16, 1943**

Darling Jill,

I'm not very busy during this stay in North Africa, and am consequently in a somewhat better position to cope with my need to write & write to you. I've written every day, I think, the past few days & bear my head higher, live with a slower pulse, and eat with a great appetite. Nothing like frequent correspondence for one's mental & moral regeneration, I say.

This morning, the doctor put drops in my eyes and said they are a fine pair of peepers, and I gave our Intelligence Section a brief resume of what I thought about the Italian scene. Somehow that took care of the morning, that plus the Saturday edition of Stars & Stripes, which is a very good paper. The British put one out here called The Union Jack which I find somewhat duller. Then there are about four French dailies, La Dépêche Algérienne, L'Écho d'Alger, Alger Républicain, and another one which may be a weekly, I'm not sure. They are all single, small sheet affairs for the paper shortage here, up till now, has been as bad as elsewhere. None of them looked with kindness on the Italian maneuvers of the past week or two, though they weren't too blatantly opposed. They emphasized rather their inability to comprehend the proceedings, a sort of snobbery. They pretend to not being able to see what we got out of it. They can make out a good case, too. You can let yourself go on all these things much better than I can in letters. I can say that the declaration of emphatic intent to establish an Italian democracy after the war in Italy was heartening & necessary. "Betrayal" I'm convinced is an utterly false word in this situation. Even "compromise" I think is wrong. The policy remains to be judged by consequences, and all I can say & believe is that taking the pros & cons of the policy in mind, the decision to go through with it was a matter of judgement containing invariably elements of guesswork. There is therefore no occasion for a moral aversion to the policy.

The news from the other fronts today is very good. The pasting Rabaul got & the advances in Russia made breakfast a cheery

meal. If only we could land a half-million men on a wide front in France, I think that the Germans would collapse. Not that I want to get home soon for that would mean no more nice letters or lovely photographs.

Last night I entered into a great swapping session with Fred Annunziata, who works in the Radio section of OWI & who is a bug for souvenirs. I traded him that fine, extraordinary watch I bought in Bari for \$35 in return for his American, conservative-looking Elgin watch. He wanted the other so badly, though I think he was foolish. My Elgin is in a solid gold case, has 17 or 21 jewels, and retailed a year ago in the U.S. for \$125, he says. I don't feel particularly philanthropic about the swap but he is happy. But I must get something else for you to fiddle with now. I also traded him a German automatic of unusual make for an American 32 cal. automatic and some ammunition.

My winter clothing I think is now in Naples. But it's not very cold & I don't really miss it. I have a raincoat & a field jacket which are all that are necessary. It rained a lot the last two evenings.

Why don't you get Rose or another reliable maid to help around the house while you're getting settled. And for when you can't work much. She together with Mom ought to be able to ease your work-a-day details sufficiently so that you can think great thoughts & write great letters as per custom. I haven't written anyone besides yourself letters in a long time. I think I wrote several cards to people while in Italy. But I just have no desire to communicate with anyone else. From time to time, though, I promise to write Mom & Dad & the boys, even if it may be difficult to tell anything new to those sophisticated travellers & jazz-hounds. Life must be a raucous trial to you. You were so kind to my trumpeting that again one must assert that love conquers all.

This morning I had a rush of elation over a sudden memory from the past. I remembered the party which I didn't attend & missed meeting you for a time. Instead of regretting the delay, I felt very happy and fortunate that despite the close call, we did meet again and for good. One doesn't often get another golden

opportunity, does one?

I remain with high resolve not to miss ever Miss Jill, the golden opportunity. That I say as an implacable foe of opportunism.

I promise to take a bath tonight if you promise to take very good care of yourself. Your love,

Al

***JILL TO AL OCTOBER 17, 1943***

Darling --

Sunday

This is the end of a very busy weekend for me, and I am glad, for at last I have time to write my own true love. You know, Joan and Vesta came out last yesterday afternoon, and stayed until late this afternoon, from which time on I have been sleeping. It was fun having them, but I got too ambitious yesterday about cooking, and as a result, ended up frantic and cursing, with dinner on the table no later than 8:30 and Vesta almost in tears from hunger. I can see what your mother means now.

Apparently shopping (especially on Saturday, and especially when you're in quest of a respectable looking bird), dusting and cooking, as it is done in the DeGrazia fashion anyway, i.e., interspersed with numerous incoming phone calls, people dropping over for lunch and during the afternoon, just take up more time than any one human being has in one day. Especially if you must consult your notes at every move. I don't believe I ever tried roasting a chicken before -- I might have tried a duck on you -- and this was sadly underdone because Vesta was so impatient to eat and I had spent too much time on the dressing, and not enough on concentrating on getting the chicken into the oven. The dressing, however, was divine. I also made a chocolate cream pie, just as phony as the mayor of Chicago. The whipped cream was Milnot (do you remember that vile dish of civilian days?), the crust was of graham crackers, and the filling was a little product sponsored by Jack Benny.

In the middle of all this, Helen Hawkin dropped over to

announce somberly that Rosable's mother had died and R. was back in town for the funeral. I am going to call and condole just as soon as I finish this letter. She was neurotic and sick for a long time, you know. During dinner, Sybil Farreter dropped over and stayed the rest of the evening too, which I didn't mind, because she's quite a nice girl. She's an anomalous figure -- a convent-bred Catholic who still believes in it, yet is very liberal despite her immaturity (was I that wide-eyed when I was 21 -- I guess not, you fiend) and a devout student of the social sciences at the U. of C. She's also attractive and upper-class, which is a surprise to me, who is used to the lace-curtain type in general. (Although now that I recall, at Smith, there were always a few Irish Catholic girls whose fathers seemed to own the principalities in which they lived, and who themselves seemed to own Smith.)

Today we just lolled around and ate, or rather ate.

I am enclosing two clippings from the weekend papers, to keep you abreast of technological progress in and around Chicago; in the one event, your brothers were participant-observers. The news itself this weekend is nothing very exciting -- just the long slow advance we're making on all fronts, but hardly any portents of the end of the war by Thanksgiving. Mr. Willkie made another speech the other night, in which he neatly mixed a lot of partisan chit chat about "that man" and a few more or less liberal pronunciamentos on a world federation and trust-busting (where have I heard that song before) and giving labor more of a part in our own government. He taketh away with one hand and giveth with the other. Well, I suppose he is no more inconsistent than Mr. Roosevelt, and possibly more liberal at the present time. However, his audience bears watching. The other night they were Missouri Republicans.

Next week will be frightfully busy for me. I'm going shopping at Ward's with Mom tomorrow, and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday I'm registering people for book number IV over at the Rae school. You know, the doctor (whom I'm going to squeeze in somehow on Wednesday) told me I could go to New York if I

were back by November 10, but now I'm sure I'm not going. I really have too much to do around the house yet, and have to get all the buying end of it done before the middle of November, since I could never cope with the Xmas crowds in MY Condition. Besides, I'm having a nice time here, and sort of dread that long train ride. I'll probably not get to go to New York until you arrive at the Staten Island p. of e., and will kick myself for not having ventured this trip, but at the present moment, the heck with it.

I got all the books away in the bookcases finally, and it's a joy to be surrounded by them. I'm totally on a mind with you on the subject of collecting books, now that we have a place for them. The only thing is, if I get one more book, I have to buy a new bookcase, since yours seem to fill up the four cases we have rather tightly. I found a letter I'd written you when you first went to Washington as a civilian, and I think I'll quote you a paragraph from it verbatim. It's really startling to find out how little I've changed about you. I had rather thought that the war at our toes and the prospects of a Baby had made me an old softie, but here it is, in my own handwriting, to the contrary. I always was one.

"Please don't hold me to the No Typing Letters rule. I really find it awfully hard to write them ... and I do so want to write you nice long letters. Of course, I do agree that saying things like "I love you, Al, and I miss you in a way that I've never missed anybody before" looks better in my own handwriting. And more on the way I miss you. Because I'm relatively calm and happy these days, I miss you in such a calm, unlike-me way. I just don't crave, frantically, for an object on which I can let out my fears and anxieties. I just miss you, Al, because you are the most wonderful guy in the world."

Well, that pretty well sums up my position today. I hope you didn't mind my reading your mail! Incidentally, that 1st letter was written in my own childish scrawl.

Your -Jill

**JILL TO AL OCTOBER 18, 1943**

Darling,

Monday

Here's the other of those 2 clippings I talked about in my last letter. I must have forgotten to put it in the envelope I mailed last night.

I have to go shopping now, & before I go, I have to read the paper, walk the dog, wash the kitchen floor, dust the parlor, hoist the tops'l, last the mizzen & put on a pair of rayon stockings.

Wish you were here X .

000XXX

or, I love you with all my heart.

Jill

**AL TO JILL OCTOBER 18, 1943**

Dearest Jill,

I moved from my billet away up on the hill down to where the majority of people from PWB stay last evening. It's certainly a grimy hotel, this. Fortunately, I've got as a roommate Capt. Rudolph whom I knew from Tunis and who is a very pleasant fellow, though somewhat unhappy at the moment for lack of occupation. He was shell-shocked in Sicily and after a time in the hospital was sent back to Africa for convalescence. However, he finds it pretty difficult to convalesce in these parts, not a strange thing, since it is hard to do anything at all save sit at the mess table drinking wine or to see movies. Inasmuch as he has some trouble with his eyes too, he can't do the latter. Ergo, the ennui.

Probably the chief merit of my move was the decrease in the number of times I must risk life & limb with our Arab chauffeurs. They are a shiftless lot, as harum-scarum in their driving as their cars are old & battered. The worst of the lot is a young

fellow of about 17 who drives a convertible with baseless conviction and septuagenarian aplomb. He drives in the blackout like a bird in the sky taking care only to sound his horn when he mounts crowded sidewalks. He practices English words like "OK" and "What time is it" constantly while driving, improving the means of communication by turning around in the driver's seat & bending forward intently towards the rear to catch the pronunciation. When screams, shouts, and startled cries become unbearably insistent, he turns to the front with a disgusted air, "Waaah, Joe!" or something.

A cause of considerable agitation & professional pride was my billet. I lived in the most unreasonable of places, surrounded by a maze of blind ways, precipices & crooked streets. The department of streets got in the spirit of things by refusing to post signs on some streets & switching names during the recent political confusion on others. The first day, the chauffeurs avoided me like the plague when they found where I was trying to go, but the very next day, a complete metamorphosis of public opinion took place. It seemed that I had complimented a chauffeur who found the billet on the second trip. He naturally recounted his triumph to his colleagues when he resumed his loafing at the bar. One by one they succumbed to the incubus of competition and I think by now they have their abilities carefully graded on the basis of the number of times they took to find Rue Edmond About. After moving my belongings into my new room, no mean feat with an elevator which works eternally on the principle that what goes up must come down, but immediately, I walked downstairs to eat dinner. I picked a semi-empty table and sat down to eat, trying not to converse with a garrulous, high-voiced, read-headed English girl, newly-arrived & convinced that the thrills of a lifetime were all about her, just like the movies, and was joined by two strange people from OWI who, happily enough, talked with each other about the film, *Keeper of the Flame*. I was rendered tranquil by this new interposition and ate in happy silence, until I felt like casting in a remark about the film myself (I had seen it two nights ago at the Red Cross Theatre). I asked the blondish, bespectacled man opposite me who had written the screen play & added that I

thought the author knew almost too many of the political details of semi-Fascist organizations & seemed bent on using them all. He more or less agreed, and we exchanged a few more remarks on that type of film. I said that Rosten should have been able to do something like that well considering his background, and then, while he was answering at some length, a very peculiar idea began to dawn on me. There was no conscious association, but somehow, unconsciously, several coincidental facts rushed to my mind. It was partly his speech, partly his physical type, partly his being in OWI, partly his talking about films - but whatever the curious association, when I said "May I ask your name," I wasn't expecting anything else but "Jerry Ross." I couldn't help a very broad grin which must have perplexed him considerably until I told him my name.

Remarkable?

He's assigned to PWB, may be going forward, and has only been here less than two weeks. We finished the dinner after mutual exchange of wonder & salutation and adjourned to my room where I opened a special bottle of champagne I had brought with me from Italy. We talked very late into the night, too much about the work here, I thought, but Jerry is very anxious to learn about everything right away. He's very anxious to plunge into the work. I notice generally that OWI is improving the calibre of its men out here, probably as a result of the dissolution of the Domestic Branch. They're still of little influence in the forward echelon where the British groups hold sway. Of course, far up, it's only military, "and dats where dis darkie longs tobe."

But that's an encounter you can put in the books. I'll probably see a lot of him in these coming days, and, we hope, well into the future.

Far be it for me to finish my letter without telling you, "I love you". I thought of another good girl's name, "Louise." I also sent you a telegram yesterday, somewhat amazed at my ability to pick out of all the canned phrases a couple that aren't too remote & idiotic.

Best of love, darling.

Al

SO the people of the Hotel Corneille have a foggy notion of up front, also. So he could swagger a bit around the place. He preferred the City and the Hotel and moved into a room there. Around the corner were their offices and after a decent interval of days he called upon the effective Director of PWB, C.D.Jackson, whom we last encountered in mortal combat with the Head of PWB, the shit-kicker Colonel, across empty dishes and wine bottles at the Eighth Army Team's Apartment in Syracuse.

By now, the Lieutenant is becoming prickly out of his own contradiction, for he begins to see that he has profited from an act of censorship, just or not, whereas he has always been a foe of censorship. It's like being an anti-slavery slave-owner. He wishes he had coldly accepted the tirades of the journalists instead of tossing them out.

They go on excursions to the Casbah to gawk and reflect upon Arab culture. More important to his state of mind, he takes up with a young woman who works for PWB at menial tasks, cleaning up. (We recall that he has always been a chow-hound and last to leave the dining room, so we suspect, and rightly, this to have been the occasion.) She is surprisingly pretty, considering the job she dutifully performs; she is using the job to get rations, PX supplies, give-aways (people are always leaving for the West or North), decent treatment (the Americans and British are so much more kind to the help than the French -- here and everywhere), and relatively high pay. She has an unpretentious apartment not far away, clean, airy, simple, comfortable, where he learned to let himself in whenever he pleased.

She is even-tempered, doesn't ask for anything, and gets very little from him -- who does? -- at least so far as one can tell, certainly not in a material way, and there are no promises, no confessions of love. She is French, *pied noir*. Who is she really? Where is her family, her man? She is too attractive and altogether too nice a person to have

no suitors or lovers or husband, not to mention her sexuality, for she is a gentle and appealing lover, in and out of bed. Perhaps her husband is in some far away place, possibly in a German prison camp, or one of the blockaded units of the Foreign Legion. There is nothing of the masculine in or about her flat, nothing fluffy feminine either. Perhaps she is just what she looks like, an independent, prudent self-contained person, and there is nothing else, and he is an interlude in her life as she is an incident to his life. He hopes she is not growing too fond of him, because -- but she must know -- he will not be with her long.

I do not know, I cannot figure out, whether a woman is much stronger than a man when it comes to giving up a lover, or some woman are resigned and able to take such events in stride ( while others blow up in anticipation, from the very first moments, or as the affair begins to close down). Cecile is her name, "Cecy" or "Sissy" he calls her. She likes her nickname. It makes her proud and distinctive and intimate.

***JILL TO AL OCTOBER 20, 1943 V-MAIL***

Darling --

Things are not exactly hopping at the ration board, where I'm helping to register people for book IV. They've got things so well organized that nobody has very much to do. I've been here since 8 - left at 12, napped a bit, & got back just now at 4. I'll stay through 8 now. Cooney is lashed to the mast outside. I got a very pale, virginal cover for the daybed in the living room & would just as soon not leave him too long in view of temptation. At night he sleeps in the bedroom with me - he on the uncomfortable cot Joan lent me, I on the comfortable one I bought. This morning, thinking they were from Finchley's, no doubt, Cooney attacked the underpinning of the Negro boy who delivers my Sun. Aside from the fact that this will probably be the last time I ever get the Sun delivered, I felt bounden to pay the lad a dollar for damages. That damn dog! I wish you were here to tell him off. You can reason so much more cogently in these cases of misconduct than I can.

I went shopping yesterday at Ward's with your mother & got thoroughly exhausted by it all. I also got us an ersatz rug, some dishes & incidental fabrics to make our house a house. I should have color photos taken, à la House and Garden magazine, with me sitting in one corner of the shambles in flame red velvet lounging pajamas and a lamé bodice, & send it to you. I should, but I won't.

We got the most startling announcement of the birth of the Peck's baby, a girl, yclept Antonia. It's in the form of a poem, apparently written by Christine. I'll send it to you, or a copy of same, since it really is a treasure that I shouldn't risk on the wild Atlantic. And I hope the w. A. hasn't been swallowing any of your precious-to-me communications; I haven't heard from you for two weeks now. But I know you're safe & just feel that if I don't hear from you, it's just one of the pleasures of life (the chief one, at the present time) that I must forgo because of the war.

The lady next to me is married to an engineer formerly from Rome. She herself is Swiss. We've had a nice time chatting together. She also knows Borgese, Lazzatto et al. We both share a low opinion of Germans & southern Italian cooking. Really, I have come to loathe spaghetti & pizza. MY CONDITION no doubt.

A million big kisses to you, dearest one. All my love, too.

Jill

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 20, 1943***

Dearest Love,

My program for the day is relatively harmless, even though it started with a breakfast of explosive qualities. No sooner had the last dregs of coffee settled in a crevice of my stomach to do its dirty work, than I hastened up to write you, for in a short space of time I shall probably be shuddering with all sorts of coffee-motivated forces & with a palsied hand which would

scarcely cover the Palmer Method with glory.

After writing you, I shall hie me down to the dispensary for another eye treatment - I enjoy them - the doctors are a lively, funny bunch. Then I shall goad the Arab chauffeur over to the Red Cross Club where I shall take a "bath hot". After that comes the shoemaker & the laundry - only illusions - one never really gets anything back. One fellow tries to maintain the illusion by telling a tall story of having retrieved his shoes after three months with one of the soles perfectly repaired, but he is largely discounted by reputable observers. By that time, it will be fairly towards noon (it's ten already) and I'll drop over to the offices to look for mail which I haven't received in five days and to read the latest intelligence stuff coming out of Italy. This afternoon, I shall shine shoes, visit the PX to buy a shirt and my weekly allotment of 6 packs of cigarettes, do some reading in the various mags I now have, thanks to my truly wonderful wife's thoughtfulness, and perhaps write a letter or two. Come six-o'clock, Jerry and I will be taking in a show, Sahara, with Humphrey Bogart, followed by a supper at the Red-Cross snack-bar. A lazy day, I admit, but it's about time I got my shoes repaired.

Yesterday afternoon, I escorted Jerry through the native quarter in a stumbling fashion. He thought it was the real thing and we had a very interesting if exhausting walk. He remarked several times on how really very like the films the quarter is. I think he almost automatically checks life, wherever he finds it, to see whether Hollywood is telling the truth.

We planned to go to the films last night, joined by an English girl named Elizabeth Ellige, but were frustrated by the overflow throng to see the great Humphrey. Instead we proceeded to the Red Cross Officers' Club where we found some coffee, and for two hours talked about the war and the films & theatre. Then Ellige went home & we went up to Jerry's room where we sat and drank cognac & talked until two this morning. We covered the army, the war, the income tax returns, & numerous irrelevant subjects, until I went downstairs to bed. It is

remarkable how many hours were passed in straight conversation yesterday, when I look back on it. There is no doubt that given the proper stimulus, I can still utter sounds.

I showed Jerry my small picture collection in which he especially admired your latest ones with Cooney. He and I both agree that we like the frontal one best. You are a darling, though, in any picture you take and I love you very much. And besides all your other endearing charms, you're as loyal and courageous as any girl I'll ever know or have known. I don't think many can match our hectic years together & get out of it any approximation of the devotion I have for you & you for me. And what attracts me profoundly to you is that you can come out of those years with, not self-pity, but pride.

Give my best to every one, sweetheart. I wrote Mom a V-mail yesterday. Tell me how everyone is feeling. Is Dad working overtime now? Incidentally, Jerry says his mother & wife are both well. He has large photographs of both on his table.

Your

Al

***JILL TO AL OCTOBER 21, 1943***

Darling --

Thursday

I haven't written you since Tuesday, and since I've had a very busy time, it seems like ages since I last wrote you.

First, I received today the first letter from you in over two weeks. It was V-mail, written September 21 from what you described as a large modern city in Italy. It was swell to hear from you, and I'm looking forward to more this week, since you said you would write a long Air Mail. My silliness in asking you to address me by my legal title, Mrs. etc. etc. Jr., has redounded upon me a thousand times. The mailman absolutely refuses to distinguish between Mrs. Jr. and Sr. and so while all letters address to Jill DeG at 1235 are forwarded here immediately, the ones to the

former name are not, and so I must wait an extra day until Mom forwards them. And how I resent her seeing your precious handwriting before I do, after a long wait like this last one! A nasty little bitch am I.

I got a cream-colored tweedy looking cover for the moldy studio couch and am having a hell of a time training Cooney to stay off it, unless there is a coat lying on it, in which case he is welcome to the only comfortable spot in the living room. I just looked around now to find him on it, to my particular horror, since today was one of the muddier ones. I trained him to stay off the one new chair, a light bluish green modern job (20% off at Mandel's because Maxine works there), but only after numerous swats with the New Yorker, and loud cries of "Bad dog". Don't ask me why I get such impractical colors. You just don't have any choice in colors or fabrics nowadays. If I knew how to whip things up on a sewing machine, it might make the problem easier, but I figure that my housepainting ability is enough talent for any one person.

I tore through hours cleaning and hair washing yesterday morning, arriving at the doctor's breathless and apparently shedding a few pounds en route, because I hadn't gained any weight since the last visit three weeks ago, bringing both him and me great joy. He, and most up-to-date doctors are fanatical about weight-gaining. And since I at the moment am fanatical about chocolate bars, which I consume at a great rate, my stoppage of weight-gaining is a thing of beauty. He says I am fine, and that the housework is good for me, and I can do anything I want to do, including swinging from the chandelier, if it doesn't bother me. In that respect he's much less strict than Miriam's doctor was, yet since he is absolutely and according to all reliable reports the best guy in the city, I trust him implicitly. And it certainly makes life easier for me, not having to call the fire department every time I want to get a can off the top shelf. I shopped like a mad thing all afternoon, and have pretty much everything we need in the way of furniture and kitchen stuff now, with the exception of things you can't buy any more, like aluminum stuff. It's kind of a relief to get the worse part of house

making over with, and now I can just relax and fiddle around the house all day. Today was rainy and I did just that. I mounted those two maps we sent the boys and which they apparently didn't want -- the classical map of the Roman Empire and a pre-war European one. They are wonderfully useful to me, since I never could keep up with the news otherwise, my knowledge of geography being a poor thing indeed, as you know. I'm going to try and get Mir to send all the maps we left in their basement in Washington, and spatter them about the dining room walls too. I agree with you that maps are both decorative and useful. I also made cookies this afternoon, which didn't turn out so well, by my estimate and the tactful one of the janitor. That one finally got over his grouch against Cooney and came in this afternoon, to fix a chair that had gotten busted up in transit. I discreetly closed Cooney in the bathroom, to avoid any re-occurrence of animosities.

Last night I had invited Sybil and Jane over for dinner, which turned out to be a great ordeal for me, since I didn't get home from downtown until dinner time, and had to rush to feed them. They left in the fullness of time, and I was just about to take a deep breath when Bill Steinbrecher dropped over. We talked for a while and I showed him your newspapers, with which he was duly impressed. I was also impressed by the fact that I could read some of them, particularly your editorials (they were yours, weren't they) which are both simple and beautiful, like Saroyan's cosmogony.

I was supposed to help rationing-register today, but when I got over there this morning, they had so many helpers they didn't know what to do. So I didn't get to see that lady I had gotten so chummy with Tuesday -- the Swiss one married to an Italian engineer (named Cohn). I didn't have room in the V-mail I wrote you at the Board Tuesday to tell you all about our conversations. They're very friendly with the Borgese's -- she went to school with Elizabeth in Switzerland and they had rented the Borgese's place when the latter were on the coast last winter. Anyway, we got talking about Renzo. You know, in one of the Tribune's smears of OWI, they gave brief

biographical notes on some of the OWI people, naming Facci, who is a friend of Buss, I guess, as a Red, and Renzo as a member of some Fascist professional society, in years past. I had just overlooked this, but Mrs. Cohn said she had been puzzled by Renzo's politics and that it was true he had belonged to this society. She also said Borgese didn't think much of him, which struck me as an odd thing. I guess you're right -- Italians are hard for us to understand, because they are so realistic. Or maybe Renzo is just an unstable character and no more.

The news has been pretty good since last night, when it appeared that the Russians made a major breakthrough of the German line around the Dnieper. God bless and keep the Russians. Maybe they'll bring you home this spring after all. That's what you call taking the narrow view.

Thursday night is my radio night, the one time I give our gramophone some exercise (on the same theory that you should give a car or a bike an occasional spin). Even while concentrating darkly on my letter to you, I must have those two old flames of mine, Bing Crosby and Jimmy Durante, on the air.

Damn that dog, he's on the couch again. He doesn't feel very well, poor thing. He was sick in the 57th St. art store today, where I got the cardboard for the maps, and has also refused to eat my cookies. The former might be understandable if he had done the latter, but the time sequence made that impossible. There are a lot of kids on the block, all males except one wonderful little girl who always dresses like a boy. She's like the younger of those two girls in El Paso, gorgeous-looking and tough. Anyway, they always play with Cooney, and I am considering just loaning him to them when they're around, sort of like sending him to nursery school.

There's a young woman upstairs with a baby about Jo-jo's age who has been very nice and helpful to me, such as giving me the name of an infant nurse whom I'll have to call one of these days, so I'm assured of help after the baby comes. I've decided that it would be better for me to get professional help for a

month, if I can, even though it costs quite a lot -- 30 a week is the average -- rather than depend on Mom, who has her own responsibilities. Since I've been South and have had to do a lot of things myself, I've discovered that I've been rather more dependent on her than I should be. It's hard for her, and then, I have my own ideas on everything, despite very little ability to carry them out, and get sore as hell when anybody disagrees with them. Some people make good and willing pupils, and others can't learn except through hard experience, and I'm in the latter class of dopes.

I got a little red leather folder the other day, and put your picture in it -- that one you had taken a couple of years ago at Billings. It's still the best picture I have of you, since snapshots ordinarily look better in an album or a wallet than they do on a dresser. I think you've aged a lot since that picture was taken, but it still looks enough like you so that I greet you in the morning.

There's a wonderful song now -- "They're Either Too Young or Too Old" -- referring of course to the residue of males, and very comforting it should be to you guys overseas. I hope you've heard it. Of course, I'm no longer a legitimate target, although I still get a whistle or two from the Hyde Park High School boys, who don't yet know the Facts of. That is, when I'm wearing one of my envelope coats. Mrs. Levy, the lady upstairs, says I am very small, but even very small would be a shock to you. And yesterday Greenhill, with a hideous laugh, said, "Oho, so you're getting big finally."

I got a letter from Ann yesterday, the second in little more than a week, which damn near knocked me down, because you know how awful they are about writing. Little Paul is racing all over the place on his own two feet, and they are looking for a bigger place. You know, Bernice and Pete, that couple you didn't like too well, had a baby, but Bernice was awfully sick and the baby died, which I'm sorry to hear. Bernice is around 35 and it's not likely they'll try again. Ann told me what they had sent you for Christmas, and it sounds like something you'll get a great bang out of.

And I got a letter from my friend from Philly, Betty Hoffman. Her husband is the guy who had his slippery knee fixed to go into the Army. Well, it slipped out again on the obstacle course and they gave him a medical discharge and he probably won't be able to do very active things like tennis again, although he can walk all right.

Oh, and this is news -- Polly Hart called me yesterday. Apparently they're back for a few days. They are coming over Saturday afternoon for drinks. I was taking a bath when she called so I didn't get a chance for more information than that.

And that pretty much covers our friends and family. I also got a letter from Walter today, not saying much but full of that stiff upper lip and enjoinders to keep a neat house business.

Well, darling, I guess I don't have to tell you how much I love you. You ought to know. But here it is, for the ten millionth time again -- I love you with all my heart.

Jill

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 21, 1943 (A)***

Dearest Jill,

Yesterday, two letters came from you who are apparently my sole remaining correspondent, though I have that letter from Bill Steinbrecher too. And just a minute ago came four letters from you dated Sept. 20, 22, 24 and 26. The others were Sept. 16 and 25. I'll write this note quickly even before digesting the latest ones and write an answer to the others later on in the day, after I've had time to read them once at my desk, then again flat on my back in my gloomy, dingy room and then again when I start to write you. The day and evening promises to be pleasant indeed.

Jerry Stern is around here & he got very late mail this morning, dated as late as the 12th of October, V-mail, that is. We must mix our regular stuff a little more, I think, with V-mail notes,

perhaps once a week. Not that just any old thing from you doesn't make me very happy. I remember carrying the 2nd page of a V-letter from you around with me for days despite the absence of the remaining parts and I referred to it consequently with the zeal of a mystic as well as a lover.

About names for our little bundle of floy-floy, Peter Joseph is fine by me, but don't you ever consider, my darling, that he might be a she. What then? Will you be shocked into namelessness?

Last night, Jerry (Ross) and I tried to see Bogart in Sahara after dinner but were frustrated again, by religious services in the cinema, this time. We then went to another cinema (French) which was all sold out, winding up at the Red Cross Officers' Club where several pathetic attempts were made to project Abbott & Costello on the screen. We despaired both of machine or the loathsome two and had a cup of coffee upstairs & talked. He told me the full story on the "moronic little king" of the OWI, which you may remember having told me about. I confess that I think OWI deserved a brief reprimand on their false conclusion regarding the new policy, though the viciousness of the press reaction to it was wholly unwarranted. Jerry was pretty vehement about it, so it must have struck pretty deeply in the OWI. We ended again by talking well into the night. He thinks he will attempt some serious writing after the war. I hope his stuff won't get lost in the flood of post-war writing. So many people are holding themselves in check for the post-war market.

You seemed a bit depressed, in your letter of the prospect of moving. I don't blame you. I get that old feeling too often to recount. I hate the sight of my bulky bedding roll with its straps. I detest my barracks bag which crumples all my clothing into little balls. I hate my ammunition case which hangs like lead (I guess it is lead). You ask me to tell you about my coming home, à la Lanny & rabbits! I ask you: tell me about my home, Georgie, and the bed that doesn't move, the fork that isn't dirty, and the soft body and bronze hair of my wife. What is the color of your tumbling tresses veering towards these days, darling? It looks about the same in the pictures.

I can't postpone reading your other mail any longer. Many fervent kisses with all my love.

Al

**AL TO JILL OCTOBER 21, 1943 (B)**

Darling,     nuit

I'm bored and restless already in Africa del Nord. I have nothing to replace the terrific Italian pace which, though I wouldn't recommend it for a lifetime, has the effect, in the scheme of the mind & its occupations, of preventing me from thinking of you and my home all of the time. In that unhappy land, I was at least in the position of the Senator who was speaking to the college men on temperance - you remember, a shot when you awake, a jigger while you shave, one before breakfast & then away with the stuff until after breakfast! It is coincidental that your letters show the same feelings just in the period before mine - boredom with Addison St., dislike of moving, and desire to get on with the new house, the baby and the glorious spring to come. So be it. Such spells are natural and I must say that, after the obstacles and the difficulties, there is very little on heaven or earth that can shake us save a loss of mutual esteem. And our letters seem to be fuming with that particular inter-attraction these days. I shall try, and I know you will too, to be so eternally occupied that there will be no chance of a complete melancholic depression for want of each other.

I found considerable variety in your four letters of this morning. One held a Phi Beta Kappa magazine which was a very dull affair and a most charming, albeit flattering, note from you. And the little pictures, what wonderful things they were! How does your mind spin such images - humped, grotesque animalia. I really do think there is something startling about them. They convey meaning at a certain semi-conscious level, and are tantalizing because their full meaning can't be grasped. I hate thus to even try to analyze the flowerings of your nimble and giddy mind, but I want you to know that I regard them as truly a

form of art and not at all as mere scratchings or cartoons, which tho certainly they are not at the level of the Cistine [sic] ceiling are not to be found in Golblatt's basement. They may point up your fond desire to retire to the caves like the Cro-Magnon and engrave the walls, in which when you go, my soundings on the trumpet have something weird & aboriginal about them too.

And as for that electoral pamphlet that arrived in another of the letters, it is just another impetus towards the caves. I don't understand the whole thing. Are you sure a recipe didn't come with it "twice a day between meals" or "Eat one page every two hours & wash down with rot-gut"? One element in it is sure; it is backed by a P.R. group, and just that knowledge sets my eyes a'rollin' & my teeth a'barin'. It is only as silly, once must say in fairness, as political science literature seems to be generally, these days. The summer copy of Public Opinion Quarterly which I have in my possession, is full of utter rot and should be banned in the interests of paper conservation.

It is with some relief that I turn from the slough of my profession in war-time to the news about babies & things. Julie must have hers by now. Are all parties concerned doing well? I'm sorry I can't afford you such a nice physical set-up, for bringing-up-baby, as they must have but I suppose it's mostly the hospital that counts & you have that. Several babies were born in filthy, crowded caves near Syracuse & Messina during the fighting. Near Syracuse are to be found the great ancient quarries of the Greeks which have since become partly tree & weed covered even in their profundity. When the fighting raged about them, thousands of people descended the long, rocky path into the pit where they stayed for many days. It was like a great gypsy caravan sheltered in the crevices of the quarry beneath the trees, with the sheer walls of the quarry rising above them. They seemed to survive on hardly anything to eat. They would forage about the countryside during the day but there was very little to be found - some grasses and tomatoes, grapes and sometimes some bread. I think I should post this now. I miss you like everything, Dearest, but have all sorts of pleasant ideas about the near future. It is certain, you know, that we are nearing the

end of all possible causes for our being separated & that is indeed a pleasant thought.

All love to you from

your

Al

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 22, 1943***

Telegram

All well and safe you are more than ever in my thoughts at this time all my love dearest,

Alfred d Grazia

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 23, 1943 V-MAIL***

Dearest Jill,

This morning a great plaintive letter came from you, written with the desperation of a woman who is moving a home, living a life as usual (or trying to) and having a baby. Your bill of particulars on what you did in a single day was truly amazing. Probably if I didn't love you so, I wouldn't be particularly affected emotionally by your trying times, for, if you recall, it was all a mess of your own making. You just tried to do too much in too few hours, which is perfectly all right as long as you're not upset by failure to pass a happy day. As for the furniture, you are not down to your last cent; why expect to have it materialize out of the air? And you had enough time to do all those things. Why weren't they done before? But, alas and alack, I love you, and therefore I want to take you in my arms and say that I understand all that rushing about and the attempt to make furniture joints meet, and the hated journeys from the South to the North Side and the impatience with the family (remember at what an early age I left home) and the people who must be seen just when you have most to do otherwise. And when I think of the series of

stores you visited in one afternoon, I shudder with vicarious physical exhaustion. So I thought I ought to write you a V letter right away to at least try to explain my sympathy and concern, and to advise indirectly such cliches as "keep a stiff upper lip", "buck up, bud", and "don't bite off more than you can chew". I'm sorry about the funny picture, if it hit you at the wrong time. I thought you'd be amused and I undoubtedly hadn't the time to write a letter to address you as a "great cowlike, sentimental mother-creature" or words to that effect. I continue to regard you as I know you. One may claim that I retain the universal soldier's fallacy of thinking that everything and everyone will be the same when he gets back. But I claim that I know you and my refusal to treat with a cow is a rational one. Your raging and ranting writing on the eve of the blessed event indicates that it will take more than a baby to make you a lady.

I understand my mail may be delayed slightly by not spelling out MRBC. True friends and family, take note. I wanted to ask why the boys hadn't been drawn on for forced labor in moving you down South, and I also wanted to ask for a specific list of our things up North that anyone has objections to moving South. Let's have no nonsense on that.

I saw Bogart in Sahara the other night at the ARC theatre. A very exciting picture by its very nature, though there were a lot of dubitable military features, including the main battle itself. The German battalion in question could have destroyed them utterly within ten minutes by using one or two of their numerous mortars. But it was fun anyway.

Wish you were sitting alongside me, though. I remember doing our supper shopping early on 55th Street in order to make early shows. I guess we weren't very affluent then. It seemed that I was in your financial clutches a good part of the time and buying you sodas the rest of the time. Just a sad sack in a vicious circle, but I loved it and YOU.

Al

**JILL TO AL OCTOBER 24, 1943**

Sweetie-pie --

Sunday

What a man of mystery you turned out to be (just the way I like them, too)! Wednesday I get a letter from you from somewhere on or near the Calabrian peninsula, dated September 21, and Friday I get a letter from you, dated October 16 and hinting strongly of a return to North Africa, unless your allusion to the North African climate was only to confuse any literate porpoises who might pick up your letter. Then Mom called me and said I had a card and letter from you yesterday up north, the card showing a scenic view of Naples! And Friday night I damn near had a miscarriage receiving a cable from you, which, upon opening, revealed to my great relief, just an assurance of your health and continued good will -- unless something's happened in the interim which I don't know about. But I prefer to be optimistic.

So, you old stinker, where are you and what are you doing? I hope your eyes aren't too bad. Maybe you're back just for medical treatment -- that's a plausible guess, isn't it? I had one rather large one of those things once inside my eyelid. The doctor, that Mick who lived across the street from us in New York, ferreted it out. It didn't hurt much. I hope yours don't either.

There's a lot of news. First, Mir and Buss are moving, presumably to a smaller place, in Alexandria, which is probably a good thing for them, and mayhaps for us too, since it seems to be the only way of prying them loose from all that stuff I left in their basement. I'm particularly anxious to get the OSS maps, so that our little hovel may be made bright, cheery and educational.

The place looks sort of nice now, at least, the living room does, with a large rug from Wards bargain room, wine-colored, made of Kotex or Fibrex or Cellutex, on the floor, and end tables around and about, so that there is something to put ash trays on. Marion Gerson is coming this afternoon for Sunday dinner, and I hope she will help me finish the large store of unfinished

furniture (including the end tables) that is lying about. I think you'd like the place all right. It's light, comfortably large and the furniture I've bought is sufficiently neutral to suit anybody, with the exception of the Matisse painting. I won't promise to be all things to all men so far as decorating goes when we make our first million, since I'm definitely of the chartreuse walls and yellow rugs school of decorating, but anyway, you'd like it now.

Your suggestions for names came in good time, since I'm just starting the eighth month, in case you forget dates, and it can happen any time between now and December. (After the seventh month, you don't have miscarriages -- you just get the baby -- a rather small one, to be sure, but a Baby). Hey, are we having a child or a Southern Belle? Where do you get this Lila June stuff? I do like Diane or Susan, however (*tout seul*), but don't you think our original idea of Kathryn was the best? Then Mom (that's me) who harbors a smitch of sentimentality in her flinty heart, can call her Kathy (if you remember, the ill-starred heroine of that wonderful, wonderful romance, *Wuthering Heights*), Pop can call her anything he pleases, and her boyfriends can call her Kay if she grows up to be long-legged and long-bobbed, and beautiful as her old lady hopes she will. And last, but not least, think of how impressed her grandmother will be, not to mention her grandmother's friends! We can throw the Michele in the middle, in case she decides to go on the stage or write poetry. And as for the boy (though I'm so intrigued with calling a little girl Cathy I could almost tolerate our first-born being a girl), I don't think I'd like John Franklin, since I might change my mind about our current heroes if Willkie turns out to be a good man. Sebastian Paul is beautiful, but I can't see calling him Sebastian, and won't add to the confusion of Pauls already existing in the family. Do you like Pete? (Let his friends call him Peter if they write poetry). I do, and I think Peter Joseph goes very well together, and I do think father and son should have at least one name in common, besides the last one, which you'll fortunately share. (Just in the nick of time, too). Perhaps you've realized the dreadful truth before, but I don't like the name Alfred, even though it's yours. You may have noticed that I've never been known to call you by it, and curl up and die

when the non-cognoscenti members of my family, like Aunt Renee and Cousin Rose (the one who gave us the blankets) refer to you as Alfred. You're just old Al-Pal to me. There are, incidentally, a lot of other famous guys named Alfred De-something, viz., Alfred DeLiagre, a famous New York producer, and Alfred de Marigny, currently on trial in Nassau for the murder of his quote, wealthy-and-prominent father-in-law, Sir Harry Oakes. I don't know if you've heard about the case, though if you're with the British still, you might have. Very entertaining. Next to Willy Bioff's testimony for the prosecution of Six Chicago hoods now transpiring in our august courts, and the imminent Russian entrapment of the Nazis at the Dnieper, fully the best thing in the papers today. Life has been gai, toujours gai, these past three days. Friday night I had some beer with some of the Mortarboard gals I know, yesterday lunch at the Commons, yesterday afternoon, John and Polly Hart came over for cocktails. John's got his gold bars, and has been transferred to AMG, which has a training center at Fort Custer, Michigan. They were in town for the weekend, and called. John will be at Custer six weeks (they just give them a variety of MP training, he revealed), and then gosh knows where. Polly looked stunning, I might add. They said Oliver was still at the Army General Hospital at Utica, N.Y., with this mysterious ailment. Probably a nervous breakdown, don't you think? Then, they left, and McEldowney, who was there all the time and swilling away like an old hand, stayed for dinner. The Neugartens, who are very neighborly neighbors -- I think Fritz is one of the nicest guys extant, and remember you thinking somewhat the same thing too -- and Bee is very intelligent -- asked me up for bridge, but I demurred, because I don't like bridge. So I walked Mac to the train, and then dropped in at Smudge's, who had been in New York mysteriously for weeks, and is going back again for good next week. It sounds like the turning point for her. She changed her analyst here, you know, but the past two months was as sick as she'd ever been before. Then her father came out to see her, and they got along wonderfully well, so she decided to make this first New York trip, just to see if she could take it, and discovered that she was quite happy being back

and with her family (the two separate divisions of it since her parents are divorced). So now she's going back for good, and will get a job, she hopes, in city planning, and her own apartment, which her father has promised to furnish like a dream for her. I think everything will come out fine for her now. The poor gal has had a hard time of it the past four years, and she really is too cute and bright to be unhappy. Furthermore, she's a damn competent worker, and even if you didn't like her in any other way, you would have to admit that it's a damn waste of human talent for a person like that to be actively sick and unhappy.

I don't know what this proves about psychoanalysis. If Vera can stand being in New York now, which she couldn't three years ago or even two, it shows something must have changed her, but as for analysis bringing her case to a definitive conclusion -- well, it just hasn't, and she still has a lot of things to work out herself. I keep bumping into Stud, and he told me he was starting analysis, and I wonder what it will do to him. He of course is not sick in the sense Vera was, but he needs something, gosh knows, since people aren't the way he is out of sheer perversity. And again, in his case, he has quite a good mind -- I think so, anyway -- and maybe something can be salvaged. His parents are really lousy, what I remember of them anyway, so it's not entirely his fault. I'm thoroughly convinced that neurotics are all their parents' fault, and that is why if I ever said anything indicating an irresponsible attitude toward parenthood, I take it back now. I think when we first talked about it, we said, well, if I wanted to work, I could always leave the kid with Mom. Well, I don't feel that way at all now. I'm going to try to take care of my baby and give it affection as soon as I can, because I think that's really what's wrong with all these people -- they just weren't given affection and security early enough and long enough. I think the reason you boys have all turned out so well, despite some of the most erratic conditions of discipline and lack of it that any children ever were subjected to, was that Mom gave so freely of her love and herself when you were little. Nobody could ever say you were basically insecure people, with the possible exception of Buss, who had to compete with you

for your Dad, and didn't do too well at it. But now I think your father spreads himself pretty equally over the two younger boys. They certainly seem to be well-balanced kids.

And that's why I know I'm not neurotic, though at times in the past, I acted sufficiently disoriented, i.e., lazy, to give the appearance of same. I don't think I ever doubted for one minute that my family wasn't just mad for me, which indeed they were. And who could resist it?

Got, I'm certainly running off at the mouth today. Cooney has been behaving rather well, and sends you his love, although truthfully, I don't think he gives two hoots in hell about any DeGrazia now except me. But he's mad about college girls, just mad about them. You should see how he exults when he gets over to campus. Between the squirrels and the girls, he's out of this world.

And you darling, keep well and keep the sand out of your eyes, and write me often, and remember how much I love you.

Always -

Jill

***JILL TO AL OCTOBER 25, 1943***

Sweetheart --

Your letter of October 13 came here today (it had arrived up north the 23, Saturday). It was a swell one, and clears up the North African mystery for me. I asked the postmistress over at Woolworth's if your statement that the pajamas over there were either too big or too small could be construed as a request for some, and she said yes, so you may expect a warm pair around your birthday time, exactly the color of the living room upholstery. (I expect to wear them you when get back, All the time).

You know, we can't send packages overseas weighing more than 8 ounces unless they are articles specifically requested by

the soldier in question. This doesn't apply to the Navy, I don't think, which is rather unfair.

I went shopping today, and got a very flossy set of drapes and bedspread for the bambino's room, as well as a haircut and a cigarette case for Smudge, who is leaving for New York Thursday. The stores are as crowded as they were the day before Christmas in former years. My heart quails at having to return again and again during the next month. While I've pretty much finished buying everything for the house except a frying pan which doesn't burn everything (and they all do now), our family has expanded to such vast proportions that I'll be kept fiendishly busy getting presents for them all. In former years, at least you took care of Buss & Dad, but now, there's all them and the babies too. And then, one of these days, I have to take inventory of what I have for our baby, so I can fill in. That kind of bores me. I'm not very interested in infant wear yet, although naturally, I'd get quite a kick out of dressing a child over a year in age. Incidentally, I ran into Dorothy Briggs today -- do you remember who she is? -- and her child Andy, aged two and a half, is really darling looking, with much distinction for a face so young and tender.

Much later -- Janice dropped over, inquisitive as ever, and causing me to have to wait till tomorrow to mail this letter. She is knitting the baby a sweater so I suppose I shouldn't look a gift horse. She is so anxious to know whom I've been seeing, etc. that I figure she must lead a very barren and lonely life with Bill.

Gosh I'm sleepy. Shopping really is a chore. I'm reading *Look Homeward Angel* now because you liked him so much. It really is a much better book than the only other one I read -- *You Can't Go Home Again*, and I may end up concurring with the judgement of you, Liz Evers, Joan, and the countless other people I know who love him so dearly. But I can't imagine ever finding Hemingway anything else than a bore, though someday I may get around to *For Whom*.

Goodnight, darling. More tomorrow. Yawn, yawn. Incidentally, I'm awfully pleased you've gotten so many, apparently all, in

fact, of my letters. Did you ever get the pictures we sent? And any letters from the family? And don't you think it's wonderful, how fast I've gotten your mail from Africa?

All my love, dearest --

Jill

Enclosed are some Trib. articles.

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 25, 1943***

Dear Love,

Monday evening

While waiting for cousin Jerry to wend his weary way back from the office in order to eat, I might be able to write you a letter. For some unknown reason, I seem not to have written you yesterday - partly because of a sullen & unsocial mood, perhaps. Not that I felt that way towards you, but it might have crept in unwittingly - and why should you be even slightly hurt by the bad food, the dingy hotel & the stupid people six thousands of miles away. I went out to where my old company was stationed yesterday, had a swim, and then a good meal with Rathburn, Anglin & Stern. I returned, ate dinner with Jerry Ross & for lack of anything under the sky to do, we sat in his room, drank bad wine & talked until eleven o'clock. Afterwards, I continued reading an Ellery Queen mystery, I confess with some embarrassment. He is a terrible writer no matter how you look at him. But I sunk low for want of something attractive to do. I'm afraid I am more anti-social than ever, in a personal sense. I have very little desire to meet anyone.

To continue my dull journal, I visited the eye doctor this morning & he resumed his tinkering with my left eye with a piece of silver nitrate (he calls it "hot stuff"). The idea is to slowly burn off the little cysts. It isn't painful, though my eye bothers me after the treatments for a few hours - I have salve to ease the outraged tissue.

Today, I had a fine lunch with Daniel DeLaitre, the man in the picture I took at Oran. He is now a master sergeant with the

Civil Affairs Commission here. A very interesting and worthwhile job it is, too. The CAC is Murphy's baby, you know, & will turn into our embassy here. Several of the people that I've met there seem very nice. De Laitre was telling me that he had dinner last evening with Antoine de St. Exupéry, who sadly enough is grounded because of age.

An hour or so ago, downstairs, I encountered a former goldbrick from our company who took his over-38 discharge in the U.S. He promptly joined OWI at an unmentionable increase & has just landed here. I hope to get out again fast. I'm not too thrilled with the vast & motley assemblage. I shall know right away, I think, when I should go up again.

I met a former acquaintance from Italy in the Dispensary today. He had just returned & had jaundice, unfortunately. When I had left him in Italy he was looking for some beer which I had put him onto. He says he got there to the brewery too late for his share. The British had requisitioned it for their troops. But the next day he got a hot tip, broached an arrangement with a P-38 pilot & they flew up to T--- where, sure enough, the Germans had left behind a large number of bottles of Lager & they were able to haul off several dozens.

I'm enclosing two of the "Sad Sack" comic strips, the classic of all soldier cartoons, unfailingly good, and so sad & so true. It is immensely popular with the soldiers. The boys in the 1st Mobile have a dog that is called "Sad Sack". He has dog tags saying so, and one look at him tells the story. He is truly the most ungainly, formless animal I have ever seen, and has a nose like the Sad Sack's. There is a minor wave of optimism here in the last couple of days concerning the end of the war. People for no reason at all are talking about a collapse before the end of the year. I doubt it, but if I'm not home to you before the end of next Spring, I shall be mightily shocked & chagrined. I don't want to miss the formative months of the infant's life - my prescription is to try to make an optimist out of him. He'll live longer. Don't you think? Certainly the influences coming from his parents will be in that direction. When we finally rejoin each other, we'll be the paragons of sunny optimism, convinced that all has a happy

ending in this happy world.

All love to you, my sweetheart.

Your

Al

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 28, 1943***

Darling Jill,

The arrival of a neat plan of our apartment coincides ironically with my hasty packing here. It's hasty mostly because I have no enthusiasm for slow and methodical goods handling. Despite all pruning, I invariably have a hundred pounds of bulky gear to lift in and out of cars and planes. There's no way of avoiding it when you must carry your bed, wardrobe, love letters and GI shoes. I have much less than the average person moving around, still. Most all the British carry along a cot, for instance. I still have objects that remind me fondly of you and home, just as you have home now objects to remind you, sometimes oppressively, I gather, of me. There is that bottle of hands & feet lotion which I treasure highly and use sparingly on my face at long intervals. It is such a beautiful bottle that I can't face the thought of emptying it. I think I'll put in a cognac refill when its present contents are exhausted. Then I'll guzzle cognac and become very mellow and look admiringly at the bottle and think of what wonderful taste my wife has. There are my chukkers, too, which I keep at a high gloss and worry about in rains, polishing them afterwards with such fury that one would think to find mirrored in them a past scene of she-buying with Jill in Manhattan or an oracle into the future. Then there is this fountain pen which I can never love like its owner, but which is one of the few things I've ever been able to abscond with over your shrill protests. I come across, also, from time to time, & when in dire straits, the sewing kit which was one of your noble efforts. And the pen-knife ought to be mentioned very prominently because I've used it thousands of times for everything and have never ceased to admire it and you. Finally,

there are the letters which go into my dispatch case and will probably add up until après la guerre I shall stumble down the gangplank with a barracks bag full.

It is nice to hear about old and beloved objects of furniture finding their way into the new home, beds of yore, books, and now babies. After all, my taste & practices go into the baby, too, you know. Beds, books, and babies - a fine slogan. If only food began with a "b". Beefsteaks might do. That's the life for me. Do you realize that when I began to look through my kit for a brush the other day, I found the following articles of "silverware" (showing the extent to which my mind unconsciously facilitates my desires to eat: -- three knives (assorted butter), 2 penknives, 1 hunting knife, three tablespoons, one little gold spoon I picked up somewhere, and two forks. There's nothing as depressing as losing one's eating implements, or "oral emasculation".

I just wrote a poem, dedicated to you, with religious reverence:

Ode to a Woman Bearing a Child for a Soldier Far Away

It isn't everyone who can bear a child  
In the knowledge that its father will like it,  
Even tho its male parent is fit  
To be tied what with French, Arab & Italian brats  
Who drive the most Christian GI wild.

It isn't every lovely and intelligent woman  
Who can keep house, write letters, read the papers  
And bear a child whose capers  
She'll like because they remind her that her man, too,  
Has in him more human than acumen.

Obviously, only love makes the father like it,

The mother bear it and the child it.

What a Happy Family!

Finis

Ho, hum! Just remember that I'm 5000 miles away from any abuse you see fit to hurl.

Incidentally, I've paused with pen in midair, so hungry did the mention of food make me, to pour myself a glass of wine and open a box of cheese tidbits which I got yesterday through God knows what erraticism of the Quartermaster Corps. Christ, when I think of you slaving away amidst the shambles of a home and myself pigging away at wine & cheese-bits (cheesebit bids, cheese-tits, I don't know), all the manhood in me rises in protest. I'll volunteer, I'll take the chance, I'll do my bit on the home front!

Seriously, though, darling, I follow your activities with the adoring, penetrating, & sometimes uncomprehending attention of a dog. In GI language, I sweat out the janitor, the maid, the dog's habits and your fluttery stomach with each & every letter. To deprive me of details is to turn off the radio with the bags loaded in the ninth inning. I really don't have enough to subsist on emotionally here. Part of it, I suppose, is a deliberate emotion-tightening in the face of hopeless human situations, people confounded, ensnarled, buffeted, beaten down, tempted & tormented, repulsive and degraded, human and to be considered as such.

Well, I'm through with North Africa for the nonce. I can say only that there are still as many problems here as when we came, tho the people have a few more material things. But no great decisions have been made. The angry compromises, the resented subjection, the envy of the less-powerful are still here the dominant sentiments.

Your letters indicate that you have assembled indeed a vast

assemblage of people to participate in your house-setting-up exercises & in meals of all sorts. Return Smudge's love for me. Coo at all the lil mortarbitches for me. I suppose I shall have to shoo them out of every corner of the house when I arrive to take possession. You must guard me carefully in that instant. I've acquired a habit of entering through windows or bursting through doors. One of the kindest words I've ever received was from a carabinieri who when I painstakingly examined a house for openings before breaking through a window said the Italian equivalent of "That's very polite of you, old man; the Germans would have thrown a couple of hand grenades." I neglected to explain to him that my wife had made a gentleman out of me, & besides, she was such a crack window-enterer herself that I am shamed into a high sense of professional pride in entering houses.

I can't wait to see what the hand of woman has wrought at 5436. I couldn't exactly figure from the diagram how one got into the house, but presumably you aren't worried by such little things. What does the pink bathroom match? Your pink cheeks? Or that kimono with the pink spots - remember that one? Then there was the one that was all blue which was very nice and I enjoyed very much removing. God, I don't think I could ever find another girl like you. Life with you was great joy in heaven with enough hell to make things interesting. I'm sure no one ever carried on like us - hop, skipping & jumping all the length & breadth of America, now thinking deeply, now thinking lightly, planning this thing & that thing which with the invariance of the seasons ultimately involved the other, always looking for thicker creams for our coffee and lighter rooms to live in, huddling together on cold mornings and heading towards each other in the dark, cold early evenings of 55th St. in winter, just rubbing noses or vying with each other to see who could make the other most passionate from a kiss. Despite all the manly things I'm doing, I feel anemic without you and believe myself to be very much beyond hope save for the transfusion you will bring me at long last.

About the pictures, I've received them OK and regret the

mustache again, but everyone likes it here - mustaches never photograph well, do they? Anyhow, stay content. I have no intention of harboring it permanently. It will come off one of these mornings. And if you like serious pictures of me, which you have repeatedly denied, dust off the nice one with the helmet & the desert background & pin that up.

Incidentally, I know Mickey McGuire's sister. I took her out a couple of times when she was visiting Mickey once, and she was just as you describe her even then. She affected great airs & I had fun jibing her.

The smells from the court remind me that a gruesome repast is before me. With all love to you, darling.

Al

***JILL TO AL OCTOBER 29, 1943***

Sweetheart -- Friday (started)

And you are my sweetheart, quadruply over, because this morning I got four of the most wonderful letters from you, dated September 29, October 15, 16 and 18. I'd like to answer them phrase by phrase, but I'm expecting Mom and Ivy, Joe's wife, any minute now (they're driving down in Joe's car to pick Cooney and me up for the anniversary celebration tonight) and I want to talk to you This Very Minute.

My gosh, that exciting about you meeting Jerry. I'm going to write Renee about it as soon as I can (my first letter to her since I left New York this spring), out of very reprehensible motives, I must confess. You know that Renee has always tried to deprecate the Oppenheim children, particularly Paul and me, and to have you, my husband, doing the same kind of thing as Jerry, only better, I'm sure, is a great triumph for our side.

Oct. 30

Jeepers! I never got any further than that nasty paragraph yesterday, when I started this letter. All of a sudden, the

postman and Mom, Uncle Joe and Ivy descended upon me in one grinning, gift-bearing horde. The postman brought be four more of your letters, one containing a lovely scarf and card (seta pura, it said on the scarf and I understood) and the other three envelopes containing your lovely prose and dated September 22, 28 and October 8. What a windfall! I felt like a kid with too much candy. And then this morning came two more letters from Algiers, the 20th and 21st, which is startlingly and wonderfully recent. I've just had the fine enlightening experience of reading all your letters since you left Sicilia in sequence, and can now better reconstruct my pilgrim's progress. I discovered that by putting your inside date on the envelope, I can keep them in order with relative ease. Anyway, it was from Catanzara through Bari, Foggia and Naples, back to N.A., wasn't it? I've also very systematically made notes of the questions you asked and things I wanted to say in reply to them, especially, so that there'll be no stone of misinformation unturned when I get through with this

Happy Halloween! Boo!

Jerry is a nice guy, though, isn't he? I'm glad you found each other. He has a good sense of humor, like me. Let me see now, where is my little list. Until I can find it (I think Cooney is chewing the pad I was writing with) I shall stall you off with family news. Mom's anniversary dinner with the boys, Joe and Ivy (the breach is healed between Joe and Dad, apparently), Mom and Dad, Jill and Cooney in attendance, was fine. Ham and sweet potatoes, the latter made by Ivy, who is a Texan. She's quite young, incidentally, about 29, not very pretty but awfully pleasant and spasmodically well dressed. A fine figger. There was a lot of inconsequential stuff to eat too, but I concentrated on the ham, as I hadn't had any for a long time. I brought Dad a bottle of Schenley's blended and Mom some of that good chocolate from Cunag's. The whiskey stocks are getting really low here. I paid three and a half for this fifth, and it is about 2 and a quarter quality, pre-war. I've had a bottle in the house, however, and find it isn't too raw. I keep it for guests, and occasionally take a snort before dinner when I am too

fatigued, which I have been all this week because of the life toujours gai. Neither an occasional drink nor cigarette will interfere with the bambino (can it really be Pete, oh joy!) or the milk supply, which is even more important, as I'm naturally anxious to nurse him (all right, her -- I suppose a certain amount of flexibility is necessary in this matter). Anyway, I left early with Ivy and Joe, who had to get back to the club, and took the I.C. at Randolph with Cooney, arriving home safe and winded.

Dad has a clerk's status at the post office now, and only works four hours a day (6 to 10) and seems much happier than I've seen him all summer. On Fridays he teaches at a Catholic school out South. The boys changed in two weeks -- they're still growing -- and look and act wonderful. They went to a dance last night. I guess they take lessons at the Y one night a week, and practice at these HiY dances the rest of the time.

You know, Oliver and Diane have been staying with me since Thursday and probably will through the 3rd, when they are getting a small furnished place down at 53rd and Kenwood, until the discharge becomes effective. It's been pretty hectic for me, not so much having them around, as having a lot of social and painting engagements when they marched in. I had had this rendez-vous with Bill Steinbrecher Thursday night for dinner here and the concert downtown afterwards, and by the time he came and I finished coping with the maid (who was new Thursday and will remain that way, as I don't intend having her again -- I've decided I, or even Cooney with a clothes brush attached to his tail -- is infinitely more competent at housework than the average day maid, including my girl-friend Rose) and the dinner (Swedish meatballs, completely unintentional since I had forgotten he was one, too), I was absolutely bushed. So must you be, after that sentence, too. We climbed all the way to the top of orchestra hall, and he was more winded than I, I think. The concert didn't amuse me; they never do. How could you have married such an unmusical girl? I much prefer the movies, the legitimate stage (my favorite), art galleries, radio programs or shooting galleries. Afterwards we went to Kranz's with Jerry

Moritz, a friend of Bill's from the Law School, and had coffee sodas. Very good. Bill is being frightfully attentive but if he thinks he is even remotely substituting for you (socially -- it goes without saying he would make no attempt to do it any other way) he is crazy. You are much more debonair and furthermore I spend all my time talking about you.

Well, that takes me through today, I guess, with a brief allusion to my insomnia of last night, which I finally did something about by reading Thomas Wolfe all through the night. It didn't put me to sleep, but at least gave me a feeling of accomplishment. You know, you get sort of itchy sometimes at this stage of pregnancy. Your skin gets dry, I guess. I could have used your backscratching talents to good advantage last night. Anyway, between the itchiness and this new feeling of utter bigness, sleep passed me by. The doctor will give me an aspirin, I expect.

And oh, Juliet Hess had her baby -- this is news for you -- and Carl called me, being utterly ecstatic about it. It's a boy -- Eric the Hess -- and very large, so perhaps our doctor specializes in big boys and we may have hope. And Julie would have had a hard birth if it hadn't been for Jack, so you see how lucky we will be. I feel fine, incidentally, except for itching. The place is very well heated, to answer your question, for the ordinary mortal. For me it is stifling and the windows are always open. I shall have to get over my hot blood ere your return (just as you'll have to get rid of your mustache). I remember it always was a bone of contention between us -- the windows, I mean -- though it seems to me you are unreasonable in expecting both a perfect bedwarmer, which I am, and someone tolerant of steam heat, which I'm not.

My Christmas presents sound beautiful and I don't see why you should apologize. Mine to you are so basely utilitarian, because I thought you probably would be on the march all the time, and not back in the general direction of a PX. Next year we shall really give each other presents we like (though, as I said, I'm sure I'll like everything you'll send, particularly pictures). And aren't you fancy, with two watches! Does the American one you

got in the swap have a stop watch? My egg was too soft this morning. I am wearing your hot Bulova. My waterproof one is not.

And I'm excited about the books too, and will hie out the very first of the week for bookcases, so that neither they nor Pete (I've gotten the crib, finally) shall be ill-housed when they come. As I've written already, I'm acquiring your love for book-collecting. I probably always had it -- when I was little I was always spending my allowance on fairy tales or tropical fish. The radio-phonograph we have works fine, in answer to your other question, so I don't need to buy one. And I too yearn to be a pistol-packing Momma (see latest popular song in America). Were you serious about sending me a Luger, or is that the gun you swapped for a 32 American pistol? You see, you're always right in the end. I have come to the conclusion that a gun would be a nice thing to have around the house, particularly in an English basement, though this one is sufficiently remote from the street to avert the unwelcome attentions of voyeurs, saboteurs and malfaiteurs (my own word). Could yo send me something I could easily get a half dozen cartridges for? I hope this request doesn't cause you to worry. I'm not nervous. I just feel tough. The tigress and her child, you know.

How are your eyes, darling? Yes, I know they're pretty. I hope they're inherited, too. But is your malady going away, and besides, isn't it fun to get mild medical treatment? Now you know why I always yearned for a cold, and never got one. You were always so spartan about being fussed over. When you come back, let us get colds alternately, so one of us can always be bringing the other breakfast in bed, and climbing in after it.

You heel, get out of my toast!

You know, I really think I shall continue this tomorrow, as I haven't the strength left (unless I eat, in which case I'll get sleepy) to cover the Italian situation and How I Intend to Spend Halloween, the next two topics on the agenda.

I really do think you are the most marvelous guy to walk the earth, and can't understand how I found you, or how I

recognized it when I did, ordinarily being the poor judge of character that I am. Give my love to Jerry, incidentally.

Although there isn't much left over when I finish giving it to you.

Jill

In re finances - since I've had all these household expenses our bank account has gone down like Old Man River - about 800 in the bank & 500 in bonds (negotiable now). When I get your check in a couple of days we'll be back to 1,000, except I have the rent & a big Field's bill to pay. However, let's not be too ambitious about saving dough, because from here on in, it will be expensive. But look what we'll have - a B-A-B-Y! Anyway, we have all Dad's dough for you to play or study on après le - about 14,000 after my debt are paid.

**B**EFORE his British friends can set up shop in Naples and get to him and before the Fifth Army Team realizes that he is available (Herz and Weaver are there) and can get itself together, the Palermo office calls for somebody to become their Political Intelligence Officer (what a gas!) and off he goes, his weeks of "rest and rehabilitation" over with, winging to Sicily upon a deep blue October day. Nor is he to have any but fine Sicilian early winter weather from now on, even though he comes in on a bumping aircraft: they all bump when they come to fly through the narrow pass between two rocky peaks on their way down onto the Palermo airport. The weak-nerved close their eyes when the plane goes swooping in, swaying its wings to brush one or the other peak.

***AL TO JILL OCTOBER 30, 1943***

My Darling Jill,

[Palermo]

Perhaps I'll finish part of this letter before the car calls for us to go out for breakfast. Yesterday was a fine, interesting one. It began and ended in totally different places, spanned by a fast, beautiful plane ride. Yesterday morning, I finished packing, said

goodbye to a few people including Jerry Ross and drove down to the aerodrome in a station wagon which made the final bit of difference up between California and that small section of North Africa. I met a Mr. Costas, also of PWB, there and we came here together. Costas has a status all his own of "temporary civilian". He is one of the 1st Mobile men I picked up in Ritchie and has been a sergeant. Now he is going to work with a Prof. Dodd of Beirut who is doing political intelligence work. Costas got his doctorate from the U. of C. in Classics. He speaks several languages extremely well, including German, Italian, and Greek, modern & ancient. He was born in Sparta and has spent many years in travelling over the continent, studying here and there. He is a classical Greek "Leites" in reality, a charming gentleman of middle age, greyish, tall & dignified. He is by nature the kind of Greek Adler turns hand-flips to emulate. And when he speaks the classics, you feel very deeply the direct line of descent from the fount.

The day was of a flying weather designed for a page in Antoine de St. etc., layer upon layer of different clouds, pierced above, below and from the South by the sky, the sea, and the sun. The Mediterranean was in its full fall mood, playful white caps not big enough to be grim and terrorizing, breezes that nudged from time to time, against the ship, not enough to hurt, but enough as if to say "I'm playful today. Don't think I'm always a lazy, sleeping collection of small-muscled airs. Move over. Let a cloud or two by. Drop a few feet. Get in the spirit of autumn in the historic sea."

The tiny islands of the Mediterranean passed below, none of them big enough to warrant a page in Baedekers', all of them big enough to possess one house or many houses, tucked into their rocky sides or clustered about the one place where the drop to the water was not sheer. What "Time" must mean in their history is beyond comprehension.

We arrived, were met by a truck and car and were driven to the PWB villa, a beautiful building, surrounded by many trees and a lush garden with a fountain. The people here for the most part (there are only a few) I knew as old friends, British & American.

There were a couple of new people, too, one a news photographer, the other a former New York newspaperman. They had a fine fire going in the large sitting room which fronted on the garden & Warner mixed some very good drinks with anisette, vermouth, lemons and ice. We had a fine time bringing each other up to date on the various doings of the scattered groups and went over to the mess about 7:30. The mess is probably the best one in all of the islands of PWB culture which dot the map, again marking up the contrast between life one day & the next. From K-ration to riches abounding, six pieces of silverware, food covered in silver, wine and brandy.

We returned afterwards to the Villa and talked for a long while before going to sleep. The day had been very pleasant.

I don't expect to hear from you for another couple of days - lines of communication, as you put it. However, darling, they can't stop me from thinking of you and I indulge that to joyful excess, a distant, vaporous pleasure, I admit, for one who loves you so passionately.

Al

***JILL TO AL OCTOBER 31, 1943***

Sweetheart --

Sunday

I hope you don't mind my typing all my recent letters, but I have so much to say, and so little time (so little time in a long-run analysis, when I think of the shopping and painting I have to do before Pete -- all right -- Kay comes). I have to get a new studio couch because Diana is taking back hers, and something for the dining room floor, because it's a large floor and I'm firing the last maid and I can't bear to think of scrubbing it myself.

Another question you asked that I didn't answer yesterday -- Ridgewood Court runs from 54th to 55th St. It ends where the University State Bank is. It has a lot of frame houses, apparently all inhabited by characters out of George Price's cartoons, and wide lawns for the many dogs and children who frequent the

block. There is a house right next door, with a Doberman the size of a zebra in the backyard. Cooney and the Doberman have the most vicious arguments through the fence every day, after which the owner comes out and beats the Doberman, and I slap Cooney. However, I petted him (the Doberman) through the wire fence the other day, after I had put Cooney in the house, and he licked my hand. I felt much the same emotions that I did that day at the Washington Zoo, when I petted the mountain lion. Fearless Fosdick, that's me.

And my hair is short and straight, and pretty much the same color. It's short because my barber at Charles A. Stevens is a free Frenchman and very garrulous. So am I. It's straight because this child of ours is apparently depriving me of my curl to his own greater good. However, I don't doubt that I'll be my own fuzzy self in a couple of months. Incidentally, did I tell you yesterday that Julie was nursing her baby, which is good news for us, because she's led just as depraved a life as I have. It is true that if the mother is of a rather high-strung, non-bovine temperament, which you must admit applies to me, she has trouble nursing the baby.

I'm going to dig up one of your letters complaining that you hadn't received the New Yorkers, and show it to the post office tomorrow, and thereby try to get off to you the big batch I've been saving up. I think that if you ask me about once every six weeks to send you the New Yorkers (in a tone suggesting that your life depends on it) I can send them to you with fair regularity. You understand the post office principle involved, don't you? And I can't keep showing them the same letter over and over again, because they stamp the paragraph in question, and also the envelope. It sounds as if you and Jerry are having a nice time together. Speaking of the family, Day and Walter sent us our wedding present -- a dozen and a half sheets and pillow cases (for double beds, naturally), a complete set of bathroom towels and mats with JdeG artistically monogrammed on them in white -- the towels are dusty rose -- and six lovely sets of stuff to put on the table and napkins, all different. So you'll have lots to sleep on and dry off with when you come

home. It really is a magnificent present, because those things are terribly expensive to buy, and I would have never gotten such good or attractive things if I had had to use your dough.

I spent last night, Halloween, with Joan and Vesta at their house. I brought with me, besides the inevitable Coon and a toothbrush, one of those paper skull lanterns that scared me so much, and nobody else -- when we had our Halloween together two years ago, and also a very original papier maché pumpkin with green eyebrows. After supper, the four of us lit up, except for Cooney, who had a cardboard pumpkin's face attached to his collar, and went outside. There wasn't a soul around for miles, it being very cold and windy, and we certainly made a silly sight, two decidedly pregnant women, a little girl falling all over herself because of the mask, and the dog, who was the only one scared the whole evening. You should have been there to make a face at me -- at least I would have been scared.

I got back early this afternoon and took a bath and started this letter to you. Diana and Oliver aren't here, though they will be tonight. Houseguests are a pain, but I feel I'm doing penance for all the times we were houseguests of other people. I don't like finding the spoor of males other than my beloved in the bathroom -- like shaving brushes. I'm getting to be just as possessive as all the other people we would criticize for just that -- but after you've worked hard to get a place clean and neat -- and I really did work hard there for a while, it's a pain to have other people mess up for you.

I think our little after-you-Alphonse bout of who-has-the-harder-time is funny. Actually, we come out rather even -- both having one enormous deprivation -- the other -- and both having a great raft of new experiences to keep one from falling in the hole the absence of the other has made. My experiences may be of the tedious variety at times, but they are new, and give me a feeling of responsibility which I needed more than anything (except you).

Some people dropped over at Joan's last night, and, in the course of conversation, I rather proudly announced that I

thought you might send me one of the small arms you had picked up. The gal of the couple gave it to me on good authority that they confiscate those things right and left, and that furthermore you'd never get it back because so many men have been sending arms, that they haven't the time to return it to them. So you'd best keep it till you get home. I don't know how to use a gun, anyway, and don't have you around to teach me.

God, Oliver is a schlemiel (ask your little brother what that word means -- they use it too, so it isn't just the property of the lower elements of the Chosen). I can't bear men who are incompetent around the house, and are, furthermore, so garrulous that nobody else can get anything done. He is a schlemiel, also, for taking all of Diane's bad temper. You wouldn't take it from me. Hell, you're perfect. When I see all these other males, I can't remember a single thing wrong with you, except your inability to take good photographs and some of the names you thought up for the baby. (I do like James, not Roland, but there's a Chicago police force lieutenant named James DeGrazia, currently being purged in the gambling clean-up).

Well, honey-bunny, I must be off for some more milk and also to get this mailed before seven. I'll try V-mail again. It's just such a nuisance when I haven't written you for a couple of days and have so much to say. Incidentally, you wrote me about twenty letters in two months, which I think is a damn good batting average, and should refute any claims you make of neglecting me in that respect. In any circumstance that's a lot of mail, and when you consider how you've traveled in that time, it's miraculous. Of course, half of it came in one day, but that's not your fault.

Gosh, I love you. I'm glad you're getting my mail, too.

Always, your

Jill

*note: At the bottom of that month, there is a pencil drawing of a baby, labelled in the back: "Virginia, my friend & neighbor, did this drawing of Kathy. The baby does not have three legs. It is*

*the Picasso influence.]*

Here is my interpretation:

*[a stick drawing of a baby with a gun in one hand and a sign in the other saying "Dare to Wed (??)"]*

**AL TO JILL OCTOBER 31, 1943**

My dear love,

[Palermo]

I find myself, at the end of a very pleasant and uneventful day looking forward only to making it a little more pleasant and eventful by writing to you. It is about 9 o'clock and the mess has adjourned, the majority to the villa to drink and talk, I to my new apartment, into which I moved this morning with the aid of a station wagon twin to the one in Africa. I transferred my quarters in truth because at the villa one was and would be always tempted into dart games, mixing drinks, listening to the radio (our own or another station), or taking part in lengthy discussions either around the fire or in the garden, and such activities interfered troppo with letter-writing and reading, which I also like to do. Since I can always do those things anyway -- I spent the cocktail hours there this evening -- it is no loss. Nor is the new apartment a let-down.

I'm afraid our sweet little Chicago affair would be dwarfed in my place here. It must have about seven rooms, plus balconies and halls and is very adequately furnished. My fellow-dweller is Sgt. Kamenetoki, the young & brilliant Italian whom I pulled out of the QM Corps in Tennessee. He is handling all the news programs on the radio station here and doing a fine job of it, a captain's job, too, for that matter, but rank means very little in a lot of the work of PWB.

Dinner tonight was a treat as usual. I haven't lost my touch at the table, I confess, darling. You will be as hard-pressed as ever in the life to come to fill my yawning chasm, your only consolation being that even amidst the gorging of food I preserve the ability to emit quasi-interesting phrases, a sort of

red-herring I've cultivated (or shall I say, spawned) to distract attention. The attractions of the table were heightened a little tonight by a pair of pumpkin pies, cooked up by Gene Warner in honor of Halloween, which the British didn't like very much but which I helped eat for reasons of patriotism and camaraderie. It seems that the Italians don't really have pumpkins but have squashes and melons. I believe the pumpkin is a cross between the two. Anyhow we settled on a likely-looking squash and it tasted fairly well even though the filling came out of the oven in lumps and juices rather than an even paste. We needed your fair hand in the kitchen, dear Jill.

It may console you to know that Thomas Wolfe also ate everything and anything. Dick Lee, who knew him well in New York before his death, said that Wolfe never got enough of anything -- food, drink, or experiences. He was always clamoring for more than he could handle. Dick himself is a semi-reformed Southerner from Virginia, like a number of the Wolfe group that formed a loose clique in New York.

Even in this expensively furnished study -- as I look about me now -- there is a great lack of taste displayed, and this morning I dismayed the maid by throwing all sorts of doo-dads and big pictures out of my room into the hall. She probably thinks I am a very simple barbarian, indeed. No doubt, for all its modesty, your new place must be much more tolerable aesthetically than this. There is a universal delusion, you know, that Italians instinctively have good taste. They have no better tastes as a group than any group of farmers in Iowa, likelier less, since their aboriginal instincts are cluttered up by centuries of art which is piled pell-mell into their lives, misunderstood, disordered and cheapened. A complete, low cost Nelson Bros. Furniture Co. "bridal suite" would be more tasteful and better designed than the ordinary lower-bourgeois Italian home interior. So much for a myth. And so much more the reason why I want to be living with you and not alone in the over-plushed magnificence of the mistakes of others. I'm cock-sure that you can do more with a Sears-Roebuck prefabrication than others have done with the world's greatest market in art. I reread your October-dated mail,

ending the 12th, this evening and don't find many queries that I must answer. I don't know if I maintain the same bedroom habits, and I won't know until I see you again. At least, I gather that you don't want me to go out and write a "new analysis of my habits in the light of recent experiments." It is your terrible fate to be tormented by surmise until the evening and morning of some fateful day, when you will learn beyond the shadow of a doubt whether I am still sleepy at night and amorous in the early hours of dawn. Even then, you shall have to wait for a time to reach a degree of statistical certainty, for when we meet again night will melt into day and who shall say when it began and when it ended.

Today, I decided that I should get paid for October and so hied my way towards a finance office for aid and abettance. There were two sergeants, each at a desk. To one I went to cash my francs into lire. Before I realized what happened, he seized upon me like a Maxwell Street merchant and commenced to tell me all about the war on the Russian & Italian Fronts, his theories of military strategy, his estimations of home morale, and his predictions on the future. It must have been fifteen minutes before I could bow and scrape my way out with the lire thrust into my pockets. Slightly dazed at the burst of commentary, I paused at the other sergeant's desk to see if I could get pay and find out about the new increase in dependent's allotments for enlisted men. Dependent -- a fatal word. Out came at least fifty photographs of his child, born while he was in Africa &, yes, I had to thumb through them all, cooing for all I was worth. To add the final touch, he exclaimed, as I course through the pile hastily, "there are funny descriptions on the backs of all of them that my wife wrote." That's all, but he said it with determination. So I had to read the comments, too. When the last was turned over, he leaned forward with the light of the Evangelist in his eye and said, "that's been my greatest joy in life, just hearing about my baby." I muttered something like "Let's hope we all get back soon" but weakly, and fled through the door, catching with the corner of my eye a glimpse of the 1st Sergeant waving something that looked like a news flash at me. I don't think I'll be able to muster enough courage to

return for my money. I couldn't face that fanatical political & patriarchal pair again. Maybe it's a new idea to personalize the Finance Office or perhaps, more likely, to frighten away expectant creditors like myself.

I should worry. I still have money in my jeans and maybe by December I'll be able to get paid through an agent. Anyway, money clings to me like a leech and if I have \$42.96 now, I'll have \$42.79 next week.

The owner of the restaurant which was made into a mess for PWB officers & employees has a parrot of unbelievable aplomb and erudition. He goes about his big cage muttering to himself in Sicilian and squawking at supposed abuses. His vocabulary is extensive and unrefined, and sets his listeners and teasers to shrieking with amusement. He says "Buon giorno" & "Buona Sera", "Arrivederci" when he wants you to go ("so long") or "Non posso parlare" when he is in a non-cooperative mood. But most wonderful of all, when you mention Mussolini to him he screams "Cornuto!" which is a frightful swearword in Sicilian something like S.O.B. He really is quite a bird.

Give my best to everyone, darling. I love you very much.

Al

VERY soon after greeting and reveling in the new circle, the Lieutenant originates various tasks for himself. The first project that he



“laissez-passer” from the  
“supremo commando.”

suggests to Cosgrove, who exults in the energies of others, is to set up an Information Center for things Allied and democratic, a modest enterprise, costing next to nothing, that is actually the archetype for the

American Information Centers that will be established around the world in the decades to come. He collects a few books, meets with several local artists to buy their paintings, gathers some propaganda published by the Office of War Information, prints more of it, arranges for cultural meetings to be held, and hires a sidekick, a pretty young blonde and blue-eyed maiden aged twenty-four, Carla Puleo, whom he puts in charge.

When he introduces her to the privileged restaurant of the Team, Cosgrove is mightily impressed. "How does it happen," for he is a man with an urge, "that you should find such a beautiful young woman in this burg, where I hardly see a one worth chasing after?" Or words to that effect. Well, the Lieutenant should say, Cosgrove, you are a fright to a young maiden, and Palermo is full of shutters, intermediaries, and dodges for evading males. But he didn't, because Cosgrove is really a decent chap, despite his loud and gauche way. Luck, he says, just plain luck, you know. But this alone, putting a woman in charge, a young one, without sexual compromise (oh, he may kiss her once or twice), marks a break with tradition even in this, in some ways highly sophisticated, stubbornly old-fashioned city. Carla gets mess privileges, a little cash to work with; rather soon, a cultural circle forms around her and thus the cultural and information center.

He hires a crippled little red-headed painter, Gianfallo, to draw a great map of the World on wood, which is then cut and nailed into a giant-sized unit that is mounted above the shop entrance. It hints to the proud Sicilian the appropriate size of the Island amid the Earth's land masses, and becomes a conversation piece in local society. He meets Carla's father, the Baron Puleo, whom he regards with respect, not alone for his dignified bulk and courteous manners, but for not having asked to meet him earlier, for not having put conditions upon his friendship with and subsequent employment of his daughter, for having trusted her, for behaving like a modern father should behave. From Gianfallo the painter he also purchases several pen and ink sketches that he mails back to Jill and she likes the stone walls and olive trees of the countryside of Sicily that they portray and that most G.I.'s had come to dislike in the course of their campaign in the dry hot summer.

Economic affairs are not in order. The country is near to starving. He notes how his visitors and companions of various social levels habitually carry a briefcase; when they open it to remove or insert a document, a lump of bread, and perhaps a piece of hard cheese, can be seen resting there, to be gnawed upon sometime in the course of the day or evening, if there is nothing else to be eaten. He is enlisted to arbitrate labor disputes in the film distribution business on questions of pay, of licenses to operate theaters, of claims over archives of film. He acts, too, as a film censor of an evening, viewing Fascist propaganda films and ordinary films that could be labeled fascistic and anti-allied. This is a waste of time, although he would not be aware of it yet; the audiences are so sensitive to and derisive of the old propaganda that such a film would not be played anyhow.

*End of October 1943 letters*

