JILL TO AL DECEMBER 16, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

I just got back from one of the most harrowing journeys I've ever taken up north. It included such terrors as the train stopping but failing to open the door for me at the Southport station, my arriving some half hour later by way of Evanston, it appeared, to find Mom not home but presumably waiting at Southport for me. Kathy and I both falling on the stairs and both weeping. Then, on the way home tonight with the temperature hovering around zero, we got on an Englewood train and had to transfer about ten times, all transfers taking places in areas where no white woman has ever set foot. I don't care, I love colored people but not when I'm outnumbered. Then I'm scared, probably senselessly.

The clocks have all stopped, probably in mourning for my sad day, so I haven't the faintest idea what time it is. It could be midnight for all I know except that Kathy has preserved remarkable equanimity of spirits. Actually we had a pleasant time in between at the family, those few minutes snatched in between running after El trains. We shelled nuts, millions of them, for cookies for you, and Mom and I gossiped. Then Dad came home and so did a small feeble-minded boy with his mother, and Dad and Vic proceeded to teach him jointly, with Vic doing most of the teaching. I could hear Vic hollering at him "You'll never learn to play the trumpet unless you practice," strange words from a boy who used to have to be beaten into practicing up until a couple of years ago. Vic is working on a mail truck during the holidays, too, and is altogether a useful and busy citizen. Dad says he'll write you soon and sends his love. He teaches school every day as well as these lessons on the side and is very busy, up until the holidays, which are coming too close for comfort. I still haven't done all my shopping and God knows what I'll do it with, when and what.

But I still like going up north. It kind of takes the edge off the loneliness which nothing else -- friends, such as they are,

movies or books -- can do. I guess it's the old business of the soul's need for primary relationships. I often wonder what I would do if I were in the Army, or what you do. It's awful and terrifying, always being with people you know don't at root really give a damn about one. And what frightens me is that we'll have to go on indefinitely like this, each sweating it out alone. If there were only some chance of your getting home before the end of the war, but you never write of that possibility, only of the one of the war ending soon, which I don't believe. I think I might almost be satisfied with the delusion that you were getting a leave, if you could give me some material to work up a good delusion. Did you ever hear anything from Oscar Dystal, who brought in a brief ray of hope? I know I'm not being a very good sport about this all. Somehow you seem to be taking it better than I do, and I know it's not because you love me any the less. I guess it's because at heart I'm a great baby, infantilely impatient and unphilosophical. Oh well, writing this doesn't make me feel any better and I doubt whether it will have exactly an enlivening effect on you. So I take my leave, with all my love to you sweetheart.

Jill

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 16, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling,

I'm sorry that I didn't get around to this letter before now. It's about 10:30 and we've just finished a bull session in which we reminisced about Italy and the various characters it was our misfortune to meet there. I confess so incredible is the human memory, that I now feel some nostalgia for Rome and the quaint experiences that befell me there. This life is so much different. With all contact of a social nature out of the question in Germany, it may be very uninteresting too! However, I don't feel so badly about anything that happens over here. I merely want to get out of it as soon as possible to see you again.

Last night we gave a party of sorts in our mess hall. We bought three barrels of weak but good beer, got a phonograph set up, and has the town crier announce that all & sundry were invited to the dance. It was a huge success. Everyone turned out, and it doesn't take many of the girls and their mothers around here to look like a vast crowd. The old men just sat and drank our beer, not taking much interest in the proceedings. The dancing went badly first because they have no idea of American dance here, but around eleven the town accordion player arrived to great shouts of delight and played murderous polkas and waltzes for the rest of the evening. The din was awful. They are certainly an unattractive people. Only occasionally do you see a woman who looks French, dark and slender. As I was sponsor of the gathering, I stood glumly by until the last reveler went home. I actually had to close the place down somewhat after midnight on the pretext that it was Sunday and therefore dancing wasn't nice any more, imagine! But everyone had a fine time, especially the villagers who had all but forgotten the time when they could assemble & dance. They will long remember it, down to the piece of jellied or peanut buttered white bread they had. How gay, these Americans!

I wish I could take you by the shoulders and see what you are thinking tonight. Are you perhaps wearing a frown too often, wondering when we'll be together again? Or wondering how you'll recapture me - in the lightest of all senses, the fine adaptations, there being no doubt about the deep communion. The light nerves of our love have been cut somewhat, I suppose, though the main sense remains, and we will have new ones afterwards - new picnics, new parlors, new sunlight and new darkness, all tinted, differently because we've been apart and have changed colors to cast. I'm not homesick for you any more. That is too cheap and narrow for me now. I'm only half myself; the rest lies in a fatal vacuum.

Always,

BUT now there is Hitler's Ardennes Offensive to contend with, beginning on December 16. Captain de Grazia drives back to Army HQ at Saverne every day to follow the news carefully on the Army HQ map. He refuses to believe it can be as serious as it is taken to be -here again is that conflict of feelings: when thousands of men are falling, the very fact of casualties stamps events as monumental; never mind that there is no ultimate sense to the enemy's strategy. He is confident from the beginning that Hitler has thrown all he has into this crazy attack that cannot last long. The enemy is attacking forces several times its size. If the Allies had been less complacent and unexpectant, and more aggressive, the German attack could hardly have been launched. Where will it break down? Eisenhower casts division upon division into the fray. True, in woods and hills and sleet, air power dwindles to little effect. Also, Allied communications are a mess; divisions are overcrowding and stumbling about while isolated units, as large as a division in the case of the 101st Airborne, can become isolated.

Let the enemy in, our undergrad strategist thinks, and then they cannot get out, what with all the forces that the Allies can bring to bear upon Northern and Southern flanks. Indeed, Montgomery is told to hold up everything else and dig into the Northern flank of the enemy. Patton's Third Army is ordered to attack the Bulge from the Southeast. The Seventh Army is told to lengthen its lines to cover Patton's rear and flank. It does so. The Captain moves his Company to a new village by the German border in Lorraine. Snow is deep over everything. The village is deathly still. Christmas comes and all seems well. At the dump the soldiers set up a small Christmas tree, decorate it with insignia, tinsel, bits of glass, and they group with him when he comes to photograph themselves around the bar and tree, a family portrait.

The week is dismal but the Germans are retreating out of the Ardennes Bulge, not by any means trapped. Closer to home, G-2 warns that an attack against the Seventh Army is being prepared. Another absurdity: why would Hitler destroy his few resources in attack, knowing that every time he reinforces and attacks in the West, or even resists more stubbornly, the Soviet troops speed up on the road to Berlin? The Captain and his cohorts cannot send this in a message to

the Germans, because of their top leaders' promises to the Russians; but the Nazi leaders, and the Wehrmacht Generals: must they not see the plain truth and save something of their country?



Near Bitche (Lorraine) - the shell conversion crew.



In Hermenil (Lorraine) - the shell conversion cre



The shell conversion crew.

There were steps the Team could have taken. They -- Wallenberg was the key player here -- could have despatched a message to the German troops huddling for the foolish attack: "See here. We know that you are trying to get ready to attack us. We are ready. What are you waiting for? Whatever your personal qualities, this is madness. The odds against you are enormous. Hold off. Take it easy. Survive." As I said, there wasn't the imagination for this kind of

propaganda. Instead, the Exec became involved in two typically playsafe ploys. The first was a leaflet printed and distributed to American soldiers, not German, with a headline "...if you should be captured" and telling them that, with the Luftwaffe reconnaissance gone, the enemy had to extract intelligence from prisoners, and you know a lot that he wants to get out of you, so "in case you're that unfortunate" to be captured, remember that he can get nothing from you but your name, rank and serial number. Practically a license to surrender readily. This was the brain-child of G-2 Counter-intelligence.

A second request came out of G-2 for a leaflet to be fired into enemy territory, civilian as well as military, warning them to give no information to the enemy -- this in case the enemy returned -- lest they be considered as spies later on and dealt with accordingly. The Exec reacted negatively to the proposal: if people were to be informers, they would be now alerted to the need for keeping their activities secret. The project was dropped.

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 17, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Al --

You'll never know what inexpressible joy has pervaded this household since 5 PM, when the laggard mailman brought your letter with the certificate of promotion. Kathy and I have been rolling on the floor with glee, in between mad phone calls to interested parties, to wit, Mom. God, darling, I'm so happy about it. I think my chief reaction was, well, it just shows they haven't forgotten about him, and since they've remembered you in this one instance, maybe they will in the next -- your coming home. It's funny, if you had never gotten a promotion I wouldn't have felt differently about you than I do now -- that you are the most deserving man in the world, but somehow your getting it makes such a difference. I guess it's just the fact that it is good news in a world that has recently contained very bad tidings. The German counter-attack is just horrifying -- the only germ of hope in it is that they may very well knock themselves out in this last great effort. I was listening, by sheer accident, to that anathema

Kalternborn tonight, who had just come back from Europe. He reviled the home front, quite rightfully, for lack of effort while so many men had been over so long and had sacrificed so much, and also mentioned that it's about time some of the old hands were allowed to come home, to sort of make up for the imbalance between sacrifices abroad and the non-existent ones at home. So maybe now that opinion will leak up and down the hierarchy and some of you guys will be getting home, please God.

You're right, Kathy is ineffably cute these days, and although I've always been of the opinion that she was fascinating since the day she was born, you would probably have the most fun with her now. She's awfully affectionate, and whereas before the supreme reward for a parent's efforts was a smile, and later on, a shout, now she kisses and hugs. Her kiss is still mushy and bity but it's distinctly a sign of affection, because she reserves it only for me and for younger babies (who, as I've said before, fear her because of the fierce noises she makes) and Cooney. She gets very excited when she sees your Dad but as yet hasn't kissed him or any other adult. And she plays games with a will. She can bounce a ball and more or less catch it, and of course knows all the angles of hide and seek. And she is very keen about feeding herself. Toward the end of every meal I let her take over, and she handles the spoon nicely, giving it to me when it's empty or else making passes at the dish with it, although she still can't fill it up herself. We've had a most pleasant two days past, at least from the point of view of her behavior. These two troublesome front teeth, upper, are both in and now I know that's what had been bothering her and had been making her so fussy. It's been terribly cold but we dashed out twice today briefly and yesterday we took a walk over to the Midway with Lettie -- the girl in the building who has a baby three months younger than Kathy. Kathy was in her stroller and in the middle of the walk several strategically placed bolts fell off and the handle collapsed and the bumpers dropped away, so we ended up with both babies in Lettie's buggy. Lettie's baby is a very turgid lad and I think she feels very badly when she sees

how active and enterprising Kathy is. I console her by telling her that naturally Kathy is active because she's always had her own way with me whereas Bobby has had a nurse and hasn't had the same freedom of movement, but he'll end up just where Kathy is. But I don't really think it is true -- the last part, I mean. Kathy's had such a headstart over all these neighborhood babies that there will always be this slight feeling of envy among other mothers and this smug apologizing on my part. I wouldn't venture to say what part is due to heredity and what part to environment. I do think that Kathy's been the most unrestricted infant I know, and that has helped a lot from her point of view. even though she is pesky at times. But at birth she showed signs of having more know-how than many infants, witness the ease with which she caught onto nursing and the early age at which she smiled. She understands quite a few things now too, like "give it to me" -- she'll drop whatever the object is into my hand -- and also "I'll be back in a minute." That will prevent her from screaming with chagrin when I walk out of the room. I tried to teach her the meaning of "Look out for your head" a couple of months ago when she was bashing around into things all the time, but now I don't have to say it much because she gets around so easily. That certainly would have been a fine introduction for her into the language. She knows what "Look" means and also goodbye and hi. I guess that pretty much exhausts the limits of my understanding of her understanding. I'm trying to teach her to say "Mamma" to me, although she still says it rather indiscriminately when pleased, and when she catches on to that, I'll tell her to say "daddy" to your picture, although she probably will say that to your picture and still "Hey you" to you. Oh, I also got that letter from you today, Nov. 24, a fine, long and literary one. I agree with you perfectly in your analysis of the party structure -- that the Democrats would gain by losing the south. But that is never never land too.

I hope I get a letter from you every day this week. I've been so immensely cheered by the two I got today. It's awfully hard usually to keep up even a semblance of cheerfulness except when I am with the baby, and naturally there are many hours

during the day and night when we are apart. But I would be a heel not to be thankful for having you and her -- there are so many who have so much less. And I'm so terribly sure that when you do come home, we'll have a completely happy life together.

Oh, you asked about finances. Well, I can't give you down to the last penny until my statement from Riggs comes in (Oh, I did send a card to the Singletons and gifts to the King children, a blouse and a pretty edition of Bambi for Leslie) but here it is approximately: 9000 in savings, 6300 (maturity, multiply by 3/4) for face) in bonds, about 300 in Riggs -- you can add or subtract 100 to that figure which is the way it fluctuates from month to month, depending on expenditures. I find that if I don't have abnormal ones, and I always seem to, I can save about 25 a month out of the 200, mainly because I still get 33.33 from Dad's property. You also have the insurance policy which counts for money later on, doesn't it, if we convert it? As for your extra pay, you can of course do anything you want about it. A bond deduction of 37.50 might be a good idea but not knowing your needs. I have no suggestions or objections to make. Oh yes, we also have 238 in the savings account at the corner bank. I may take 138 this month because I am lower than usual and may have to maintain our 200 balance at Riggs that way. I spent about 100 on my trip to New York and probably more than fifty for Christmas presents by the time I get through. I feel justified in drawing on that money because I opened the account the summer I was working before Kathy came and therefore don't feel I was drawing on the estate's money, which I feel pretty strongly about, that it is your money to do with what you want when you come home. That way I think bonds are a good idea too -- it puts the money where I can't get at it. It's not that I'm extravagant particularly, it's just that I'm much better off if I get used to maintaining a certain standard of living and no more. It's the difference between buying a lot of liquor when people come in and just serving cookies or something like that.

Rosable is coming in tomorrow, I think, and we are all planning a series of fetes for them. I think I'll have them over New Year's

Eve, as well as all itinerant Southsiders. I dread New Year's Eve and wish I were in the hospital having a baby all over again, or on a train going to meet you, as I did the one preceding that.

We've gotten a lot of Xmas presents already. Dady's sent a raft which I haven't opened -- I'll save them for Christmas Eve's at Mom's, and both Unk and Irmie gave Kathy pretty bathrobes. Renee sent an elaborate carriage bag made of fur for Kathy. It would have been useful for her last year but now she is to big to lie down in anything when she is out. Hank sent a gold bracelet with a locket on it, to match the necklace job of last year. It was terribly nice of them but I'm not very grateful for the fact or object, since I loathe jewelry on the young. Mir sent a sweater for Kathy and that's about all I can think of now. As you can see, I haven't been exactly continent about saving everything to open on Christmas day.

My hair is getting so long and bushy, I wonder if I should have it cut. I hate to do it, for fear some fiend will cut out the bleached part from last summer. Actually I don't think of my appearance much unless I am going to a party or somewhere. It could be a bad sign except that I know as soon as a man, specifically you, heaves into sight, Narcissus will be back once again.

Mostly I worry about my hands, like the women in the ads, because housework is really hell on them. I bought some rubber gloves today but dread putting them on. I guess I've read too much Stekel. Priscilla read one of your volumes last summer and has been going around ever since chanting, "I'm in love with my bicycle grips" much to the confoozment of the non-cognoscenti. Bicycles -- that's an emotionally packed word for this little psyche.

Darling, for some reason this day has put new life in me, for, as I've said before, irrationally I now have new hopes for your coming home. I love you so damned much. And so does Kathy.

Jill

P. S. Do you want me to send you double silver bars or can

you get them over there?

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 18, 1944 V-MAIL

Jill, my love,

The nicest Christmas present of all arrived from you today, that trio of little pictures in technicolor. It was a most pleasant surprise since I had almost forgotten that you had once promised to send them. I have them atop my field desk now and they add real charm to this unlovely office. The one of you and Kathy together is all one could ask in the way of a mother and child picture. She is almost beside herself with zest and gaiety in it. The accompanying letter of Dec.4-5 told also of her wondrous accomplishments in linguistics and perambulation. I must get back home to see all this. And just the dim sight of you in a picture is enough to set me wild with desire to see you. But I suppose I must console myself as best as possible for the next couple of months. Damn it all, why didn't I stuff you in my barracks bag when I had the chance. There would now be two of you and we could have a grant time together even if we were in the dullest corner of this earth, as I actually am now. Everywhere one walks in this village he must kick his way through a brawling mass of flapping geese or clucking hens. Every time he turns a corner he goes head on into a hulking ox waiting to be harnessed. They are the most stupid looking beasts on earth, eyes like pin points which must be searched for painstakingly and then are complete blanks, and they have a habit of dumb drooling that they don't have even enough imagination to blow bubbles from as any human infant will do. So much for the ox, blast their hides. And the people are pretty dreary specimens themselves. There is none of that intense individualism that characterizes the gens meridional of the Mediterranean-Latin basin. It is most interesting for me at the moment to compare these villagers with the characters in the Elliot Paul book on the Balearics and to see how extensive are the differences between the two. I can't dogmatize on my

position but I can say this: that if I were to wake up some bright morning next to you and felt the wanderlust, I would say, "Jill, let's go find some sunny Mediterranean village and make love there for a couple of months. Kathy can hunt for starfish and snails. Then we could eat wonderful differs of great salads, fresh baked fish, bread and wine. We will listen to guitars, play with the children, drink in the soft air, and watch pure white breakers emerge from deep blue and dash themselves against red-brown rocks, all in the golden days of our future.

The news these days are as annoying as you paint them. I am angry at the British for the way they have betrayed, willingly or unwillingly, the hopes of everyone in Greece. They have had four years to manipulate the so-called Greek government into something resembling the hopes of the Greek people and have turned up with something that was repulsive to them almost the moment the country was liberated. I would be even more angry if I were an ordinary Britisher and knew that some of our people were dying in such a disgraceful cause. Again in Italy, the British policy only brought them rebuffs at the hands of the people. A few more incidents like that and the Italians will have a resurgence of nationalism and a whole new set of national heroes. Sforza wasn't popular in Italy before but he is much more so now. I can't follow you about our state department. In both cases we came out clean with an independent policy which was much more idealistic and I think much more successful. I have just read Time mag. for Nov. 27 and I agree with it that things are and will be in a turmoil all over Europe, and that the parties of the extreme left are at an advantage. They know what they want. But we don't know how to look at them. Russia does, even though it doesn't bat an eyelash one way or another. One simply knows that Russia is not against these movements. Now what is our dilemma. That is the very essence of the problem, a failure on the part of many of us to find out just what we don't want. We want to let the peoples have a government that is popular and yet we want a government of the propertied classes, or at least, that is the British policy - I think ours is a lot better and is changing significantly. My sympathies are not with

a Russian type of communism over Western Europe. They are capable of a much finer thing. It is this finer thing that the mass movements and the resistance movements are out after, and many people like Churchill don't realize that. Therefore I feel that we might support them just as the Russians do, tacitly, with the conviction that out of them will come something much better than the old systems and the emigré governments could provide. It is infantile political philosophy to put oneself at the antipode of Communism on every position, a black-and-white view of politics that may result in disastrous and stupid conflicts. I know how the people feel who support the British government in Belgium, Greece and Italy. They feel that they will be swallowing Russianism if they support these movements. And since they can't see any difference between the two, and can't realize that what they really want and have been fighting for is actually in the movements - not Russian communism - they are hopelessly confused and cause great misery for all concerned. Shall I oversimplify the whole thing and say that they are afraid to trust the people, that they fear the people are communists, and that is the whole irrational "reason" behind their behavior which is causing such damage. I hope I have made my thoughts clear enough. But don't ever think that I don't appreciate how sad these events can make one; you are justly hurt by them. My comment on your agitation is only that one can do what he can do, and beyond that one should not waste away in selfdestroying emotions.

I received a very nice package from Buzz and Mir today which included a collection of the short stories of Katherine Porter - !!! remember? -, a carton of different cigarettes, and a pound bag of Nob Hill Coffee.

There is nothing left to say now, save goodnight, darling. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, together, no less, toujours ensemble. Give my love to the family. I wasn't able to find anything nice to send them lately.

Always your Al

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 19, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

A letter you wrote in New York came today, full of recriminations against your no doubt innocent family. Still, I am glad to know that everyone there is well, even if you were bored by it all. I wish I could have smelled of you with all that perfume. I'm getting so that I recognize only two odors, burnt food and BO. Today I also received \$12.00 back from Barracinia Chocolates because they could only send you all sample boxes. I hope you girls don't think I was cheeeep. I don't know what to do with the check now anyhow. I can't even get near enough to a paymaster to get my well-earned dough, much less cash a check. But if you think that therefore I will send it to you, you are mistaken and I'll bite your arm if you reach for it. I will spend it on the next issue of special merchandise that is available for army officers hereabouts. That's the way it's referred to by the AG in order to fool the WCTU Gestapo. Or I will spend it on Schnapps. But I will drink it to your health and lovely hair and long legs, with a chaser for Kathy and her kiddy car. Just now we are riding on the wave of a case of the best cognac in the world. Where the case is no one knows, but a fresh bottle appears whenever one is exhausted and no questions are to be asked. I've been very active these past few days despite all inclinations to the contrary. The weather has helped things by being nice. Naturally everyone is interested in the big German offensive. It is the last dying gasp that will precipitate the end or will it prolong the war? The next chapter will tell -- if I'm awake to read it.

What a bad impression my letters are giving you. Your latest one said that a quick perusal of my latest batch showed that I was thinking mainly of my stomach and stuffing lots of food into it. The last part was true, but I think much more of you. Can I help it if there are more identifiable varieties of food than there are of synonyms for love? Or maybe I can help it but am just too damned terse in my letters. I truthfully am dismayed by the amount of writing I can possibly do and the complexity and

extensiveness of the way I love you. They aren't equal and the latter must suffer. After all, you eat eggs all the time too and that sets sex on edge, a 'raring' to go. I don't get eggs and therefore spin out misty conceptions of noble relationships, ending perhaps in bed but perhaps also on the other four days of the month. So I love you in my own inimitable way and unfortunately that almost rules out expressing it in common words. Someday when we are too completely exhausted to do anything but talk, I'll try to verbalize it - and lo you'll find sex, jig-saws and political discussions raised to a metaphysical plane and fused into a Weltanschauung.

I received a gift of ten dollars from the Addison Street block association as one of the "boys overseas". I will write them a note of thanks. I gave it to the company to buy a barrel of beer for the party they had.

A long, passionate kiss for you, dearest.

ΑI

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 20, 1944

Dearest Jill,

As you may notice, I'm reduced to an old-fashioned pen. For a week or two, my fountain pen has progressively broken down until today - passé, finito, and kaput. I'll wait until after Christmas before looking for a new one just in case someone got an inspiration & had enough money to buy me one. This isn't bad, though, is it? The meanest chatter looks like important script. I'll have to write all my messages in Germany with this sort of pen, and perhaps get my calling card printed in German Gothic, with a skull & crossbones motif in the background.

Last night, sitting morosely in our little room, we were very, very angry with the Germans and I don't mean on the stratosphere level. And I was very much in love with you all evening, thoughts

of you and of how much I missed you popping into my head all evening while I listened to Tom Crowell curse the world and the Germans in particular as he drank down the cognac. Often I am that way, not forming a connected, long dream of you but being accosted with nudges of recollections, desires, and hopes time after time over the whole period of time. I prefer it that way too. It makes you a much more living part of me, not the other side of my schizophrenia, and thus my present life fuller & my future life more plausible.

I wrote Buzz today thanking him for his present. I've already read three short stories of Katherine Porter and they are all flashing gems. She has an exquisite touch and sense of reality two precious assets that neither Hemingway, nor Dos Passos, nor Steinbeck can attain. She is so far as I have read, a completely objective writer, with no ugly facet of personality to inject into her work.

I'm glad you liked the books I sent you, even at first sight. I got a personal letter from the publishers full of signatures protesting faithfully that they had executed their part of the transaction - viz. selecting, packing, mailing, and accepting the cash. It must be a queer little company, full of dusty corners & burnished aspirations.

It's about 7 PM now. At 8:30 we're going to show some German propaganda films we captured in the café, if the projector is fixed by Isenberg in time. The other night we got hold of a film from special services & the projector made a terrible mess of it. It was a bad movie anyhow, even though Hitchcock put it out and called it "saboteur". I didn't see it but I heard it was no good. Besides I am distinctly not interested in sabotage as entertainment.

Anspacher got a letter from Dystal who is in Washington. He writes that he is having very little success in his Pacific schemes. I'm not surprised nor dismayed. If I were to leave my present assignment, I would prefer to get some sort of a company in a completely different type of service like a trucking

company or a field artillery battery. Or maybe a good soft job drilling troops somewhere - I'd like that best I think - Fort Sheridan, for example, where I could kiss you every day and walk Kathy around the parade ground.

For now, all my love and many kisses.

Αl

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 21, 1944 (A) V-MAIL

Darling --

I really should take advantage of my temporary good mood (which is only blighted ever hour on the hour by the sad news of the German breakthrough) to write you constantly and at great length. But alas, I defected (is there such a word) on my duty yesterday, and also this afternoon when I had a little free time. At the latter instance I sat down to write and then got entranced with the notion of doing something like mounting the sweet little cards you sent Kathy and also some pictures of her, her cousins, dogs and father, as a decoration for her room. Maybe I'll just get a piece of glass the size of her dresser and arrange them artistically underneath, so that I can shift and add from time to time.

Well, that's an irrelevant and immaterial way to start out a letter to you, my only and infinitely beloved one. I guess I am temporarily manic because (a) you have been a captain since the day before yesterday in my tardy books; (b) the weather is getting warmer and we have been able to go walking quite a bit; (c) Rosable came to town yesterday with Buster and it has been great fun seeing her again. They spent the afternoon with me and then Priscilla was here last night so I didn't get a chance to write. I'm writing all V-mails these days because I read someplace that regular mail was being delayed by the Christmas rush and uncertain plane crossings. Well, to get back to Rosable, it was a delight seeing her after her absence of a

year. I guess that's the way you keep your friends -- don't see them too much. Buster looks amazingly well. He doesn't drink at all any more and has gotten over his very serious illness that he had during the years we knew him. I guess the poor guy really had a tough time, in and out of institutions but maybe if Rosable treats him right and he is not too thwarted from here on in, he may get back on his feet, professionally and otherwise. He has only a temporary appointment at Conn. Coll. for Women and of course, it's quite a comedown from his former academic status and girls' schools stink anyway. But if he is as well as he looks, I'm sure his life is far from over with. Rosable is still thin and discontented but certainly the life she leads now is better than any she's ever had before so perhaps everybody will live happily ever after, after all. They send their love to you, as who doesn't.

And guess who else I saw today. Leonard White in the bank. I said hello to him and then introduced myself as your wife and he asked about you and I naturally told him where and what you were. He said T. V. was back in town still in the Army, and sent his regards to you. He is a funny stuffy little man.

I got those cards from you and also a long letter dated Dec. 24. I did write you more than that in New York. You'll get the letters eventually. Anyway, they weren't very good letters as I was in a bad mood most of the time I was there. I liked very much the Christmas card you sent me. You can be sure I don't let Kathy chew the ones you send her. I put them aside in my jewelry box, where I keep all those wonderful sentimental little picture postcards you've sent me at one time or another. I was looking at them today and found one you'd left on the desk when we were living at 60th street. I think that you left this card the morning you left for Davis after you'd had a furlough in Chicago, and I was down at work already. You said such nice things on it I promptly wept on re-reading it. I think that's the advantage of writing something on a small durable object like a card. I'll never be able to re-read all the letters you've sent me -- they're so many of them and all packed so tightly away. But I'll always be able to turn to these precious little cards. It seems a shame that

one's words should be lost that way, just because of sheer bulk and inaccessible format. Now if you were regarded as another Thomas Wolfe things would be different -- your every last word would be emblazoned on medium weight paper in legible type. But you're not, and it's just as well, considering the way I feel about Thomas Wolfe, our one point of disagreement. I'm reading Thomas Hardy now, Tess of the D'Ubervilles and it's very sad though abundantly descriptive of rural life. I don't know if you know the plot -- it's the nineteenth century one of the wages of sin. It makes me so mad, and I guess it made Hardy mad too, since he was the rebel against Victorianism, that such a perfect creature as Tess should suffer so for a mere seduction. I got a similar feeling of enraged sorrow when I read Edith Wharton (on the train). Life was so loveless in the nineteenth century. We of the twentieth may be cursed with universal warfare but at least, if we live through them, we have that which is as important as life itself -- a chance to live with the people we love. Of course, that "if" is the curse of our generation. I guess ours is a century of libertinism too, though how one would define that I don't know. I don't think I mean sexual libertinism, since in defining it that way, one would surely fall in Victorian traps. I guess I mean that all-out false hedonism, that you find most in our country, that permits black markets and Miami Beach and the kind of talk you heard a couple of months ago -- about how we were going to bust ourselves on V-day. I can't figure history out. Sometimes things seem to be getting better and then they seem to be getting worse. Maybe there isn't any clue at all. All I know is that it is very uncomfortable, being part of it, and being no longer able to take for granted the peace and prosperity my parents thought would surround me forever more -- particularly the peace, since we're decidedly not unprosperous. And yet one can hardly blame them, since I shall do the same thing all over again with Kathy, making her believe she is living in the best possible way one can.

Well, I think I finally got all the Christmas presents for all the people I should. You know, the trouble is that both my (one is yours) wrist watches are broken and Kathy tore up my only

calendar, so I really never know what day or hour it is, unless I have the radio on. That of course accounts for my singular tardiness in getting this Christmas business done with. I got a book on jazz that Vic wanted for Vic today and some bubble bath for our colored friend Rose and a Mother Goose book for little Paul and the New Yorker for Ed and Paul and Ann, as well as other stuff I've enumerated before. The only person I haven't gotten a gift for is Walter because I'm waiting to hear from Day what records he likes. And das is alles.

Darling, I love you. I really do!

Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 21, 1944 (B) V-MAIL

Al darling --

I'm afraid my brief mood of exhilaration is past as I predicted. Only a booby could be happy in the light of the awful things that are happening in Belgium. I don't understand how our general staff didn't foresee such a contingency. We're not getting very full reporting here, though I torture myself with hourly news broadcasts, but it looks as if the First Army is being cut to pieces. And of course, even if I weren't involved in this by reason of my world philosophy, such as it is, I take it very personally because this means that our seeing one another will be delayed indefinitely. And certainly now there will be no thought of giving anybody leave, where they've been over twenty months or twenty years.

My black mood wasn't helped any by your little daughter today. Last night she woke up about eight and I heard her playing for at least an hour. Finally I went in and found her in a merry mood, with her cheeks apple-red. Though I'm not usually hypochondriac about such things, I took her temperature and it was 101.5. I practically fell through the floor. I piled sweaters on her and put her back to bed and she eventually went to sleep,

still uncomplaining, but this morning I found she'd whoopsed in her bed. But she didn't have a temperature all day long although she was in a bitch of a mood, and tonight she went to sleep early and has been that way ever since. I called the doctor this afternoon but since she didn't have a fever there didn't seem to be much we could talk about. I guess what happened what that she caught a cold and, in the weird manner infants have, threw it off just as promptly. The trouble is that when a child her age gets ill you can't keep them guiet in bed, the way you can with an older, more reasonable child, or a younger, more helpless one. So the day was spent trying to keep her amused and warm at the same time, a hopeless task. I also labored over the laundry, it being Thursday, and performed other miscellaneous household tasks. Your lovely pipe came and I shall hide it away, where nobody, including you, will ever find it, not to mention me. I hid your other one with equal success several months ago.

I am girding my loins for a big brawl tomorrow night, given in honor of Rosable and Buster at Lucy Halperin's, who is Klaus's fiancée. She incidentally is a pleasant warm-hearted girl, probably too good for a screwball like him. She came over yesterday morning, fresh from her analyst's (sic) and we drank endless cups of coffee while bemoaning the state of the world. All these poor people who feel the need to be analyzed. All I need is you, damn it. Doesn't it amaze you that we've been apart nearly twenty months and we're still as intimate as if we were living together in a room not much bigger than a double bed. Now I can understand the great loves of history, which were only nourished by a touch of the hand, a look or a lover's glove, put away to be cherished ... And now that I think of it, the very notion of psychoanalysis is laughable for the majority of the world, whose lives are governed by mainly the objective and allcompelling conditions of war and poverty. If it is valid at all -- as a method of therapy, I mean, it is only useful for those singularly fortunate souls who are isolated from the misfortunes of history -- the rich, the 4-F's and, in America, the women.

December 21-22

Lest you think me a butterfly-brain, let me explain that there was a lapse of at least 12 hours between the sentence about love and those preceding profundities about analysis. I suddenly decided it was much too hot in the area around the desk where I was writing (that's where the ceiling radiators depend) and went to bed, to sleep fitfully. I've just finished the early morning routine of feeding Kathy and myself, and whilst applying my morning lipstick I suddenly conceived the brilliant notions I just regaled you with. And now, having drooled over onto a new Vmail page, I am confronted with the pleasurable necessity of finishing it and also, of the not so pleasant one of cleaning this dirty house. I know you can't believe that I can spend so much time in housework but it's true. Things get out of order, things get washed and have to be taken off the line and ironed, food gets smeared on the floor, mainly through the perverse whims of Kathy and the floors have to be washed. Kathy is perfectly normal in every respect this morning, so I can only conclude that whatever was bothering her has disappeared, probably to be picked up by my susceptible constitution. Although, aside from my poor sleeping habits, I really am in good shape. I wish I could get into a state where I didn't care whether I slept or not. but until I pass the stage where I care about my looks -- some forty years from now -- I shall probably always fret about that elusive eight hours of unconsciousness.

What a screwball Kathy is. She's hat-happy. Yesterday while she was roaming the house she found this beret I used to wear, and to which I had affixed that little major's star you sent from Italy last year. Next thing I knew she had put it on and was dashing about the house in great ecstasy, with this enormous blue beret dropping down over her brows, looking exactly like Dopey of the seven dwarfs. I think her hat mania is a combination of her passion for woolen (or leather -- since she will do this occasionally with a leather purse) objects and her nascent vanity and/or sense of humor. Anyway, it is a very funny and singular trick.

I don't see how I can write much more right now, since my hands are far from unsullied for the pristine task of writing you. The diaper man just called and in my haste to get the wet bag out to him I dropped two diapers into the toilet, where coincidentally my toothbrush and hairbrush had also fallen earlier this morning. However, I shall continue to use them imperturbably. When you have horsed around dirty diapers as long as I have, you're not apt to be bothered by the rather refreshing sight of a clean toilet bowl, even if half your possessions are in it.

Honestly, I have been working so hard all day trying to get this place cleaned and it still isn't. I think I'll give up now. I think Helen Hawkins is going to stay here tonight after the party which is the reason for all this activity, but the hell with it. The mailman just brought a little letter from you, Dec. 8, in which you were being visibly distracted by your drunken friends. Is that Crowell or Crowell Publishing, or did you tell me that already. Anyway he should know better. Damn if this isn't the end of the page. I'll show them, I'll continue it.

Let me see, where was I. Oh yes, drinking. Now I find drinking makes me (1) sexy, or sexier (2) unfit for household and parental duties the next day EXCEPT (1) if the drink is taken in the afternoon. Then I reel relaxed but terrible by dinner time, (2) if the drink is beer. Then, because of limited capacity, I feel either nothing or a mild exhilaration which wears off by bedtime, at which time I am able to read peacefully for an hour or so until Morpheus leaps into bed with me. Oddly enough in the light of my manic-depressive tendencies, very rarely does drink make me moody or ill-tempered. Usually I find myself being killingly funny, anyway it kills me. I have the reputation anyway around here of being guite a humorist, although I never remember being very funny around you, or of you thinking I was. This may be because (1) you do not think I am very funny, which I don't consider any great loss in our relationship or (2) when my energies are properly channelized, and you know what I MEAN, I just don't have enough energy left over to be very funny. But as matters stand, Kathy thinks I am very funny, Vic thinks I am

very funny and Priscilla thinks I am very funny, it being mutual in all cases. Priscilla and I nearly killed ourselves the other night. I started peeling on the rubber gloves to do the dishes and of course we immediately fell into an elaborate Dr. Kildare pantomime, ultimately ending up by tying diapers around our faces and doing the dishes that way.

It's funny the way I regard you. I really do think you are just about perfect, positively the best man in the world for my money. Even when I remember things about you that used to get me mad, specifically, the way you used to get mad when I beat you at cards, I think now, "Well, why shouldn't he get mad? Only a snob and a dilettante doesn't, or pretends he doesn't, get mad when he loses." I never mind losing at cards because I am eternally playing with people who either know less about the game that I do (witness you and Russian Bank) or else have less money that I do, witness Priscilla when we play gin rummy. Even though we don't play for money, that argument still holds, because we almost talk as if we were going to play for money.

Damn it, I never seem to be able to end my complicated thought processes at the end of a V-mail page. Right now I'm dying to lie down but if I leave this letter and return to it again I'll have a whole new set of homilies to regale you with, and the process could be endless. I finished Thomas Hardy last night and don't think I'll read any more books by him because they are so sad. He is very fatalistic. All the characters sit around and take a beating as God intended them to, without lifting a finger. I certainly don't know why I should think man can control his own destiny, witness, how we have been snafued, but I don't like to hear about it from other people, like the man who subscribes intellectually to a single standard but still gets sore as hell when his own wife turns out not to be a virgin.

But here it is, getting close to the end of the page again, and this time I will say it, and have ample room for it, what is more. I LOVE YOU!

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 21, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

I might as well get out of the realm of conjecture as to when the war will end and write you a letter. After all, my poor strained hand, beset by distractions, is all that ties you to me concretely now, whereas the second quessing on the end of the war accomplishes nothing. Faas has been in the dumps for two days now with Nostalgia. He's only been gone nine months. It's very hard on newcomers to get with men who have been over a long time. They can't even open their mouth without being hooted at. Partly for his reassurance and partly for my own I evolved a new theory that should bring me home by April in time to enjoy Spring with you, even if no other breaks come my way and I'm not "ordered" back for some reason. I figure that the German attack is now at its peak. In a couple of days we ought to be on our way getting back at them. Within a very short time, there is a better than even chance that we will bring disaster on their efforts, and after that the war should wind up in a month. After that it will take two months before my number is called and I go home. Isn't that nice. Spring on bedsprings. I guess I told you that Harold Adams went back home to try to do something about his wife's desire to get a divorce. I know it does seem to you that many people are getting back home. However, they are mostly emergency cases of death, divorce or severe sickness, or the man has been badly wounded or he is retired from the service for inefficiency or over-age or lack of a post. There aren't a hell of a lot of guys getting home, sane and sound, by any other way. There are a few who have been able to work angles. Civilians are certainly a little more fortunate in that respect, especially if they can create an air of importance and don't get tied down to a very useful job, like our friend Dystal who always has a scheme up his sleeve that will take him where he wants to go. The contrast to people like Dystal who are forever "visiting firemen" is someone like Crowell who has been overseas two years, wants to go home like anything, but yet sticks because he won't do anything a soldier can't do. I have nothing against Oscar. He is just that kind of a guy. He just can't

sit still and take it. They wander from one headquarters to another, and by headquarters I mean the huge ones, like AFHQ and SHAEF, and are forever getting ideas and planning grandiosely. The extent to which we are influenced by that sort of thing is honestly nil. I only met Oscar when I returned to base in Italy for reassignment and in France that day he breezed in and out. When they venture up, the rumor spreads guickly that there's a "character" in the area, that word coming to mean simply a foreigner in the Greek sense, someone who comes from outside your town. The infantry is most that way. Their world is their company and they sniff at and stand around a strange soldier like curious dogs, or they don't pay them the slightest attention, no matter how extraordinary the circumstances are. I think we are all jaded tourists. Well, Tom ought to have a pot of coffee brewing by now. Wish you could take a cup with u.

All my love, dearest. Blow Kathy a kiss from the captain.

Αl

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 22, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

I have only a half an hour before I must attend a gala occasion wherein two fresh eggs are being fried which I will eat with great gusto, simple souls that we all are. Tom and Fred are joining me. But I must write you to rescue you from what you call a spell before I can think of eating a fresh egg, even if the rescue does occur belatedly. I think you analyze your symptoms correctly and am sorry the only drug - or should I say dope - cannot be sent you quickly. It must wait like quinine and penicillin for the end of the war to be distributed among civilians. Of course your mild headaches are undoubtedly due to reading with dark glasses, especially since the reading matter is V-mail. The backaches are there because you would like to be rubbed

there as of old. You are annoyed because you have to do housework. So have I ever since I could remember. As for moods of elation and depression, hell, one minute I think the German offensive is the finest thing we could ask for to break them down at a smaller cost and the next I think that the end of the war is being postponed. Remember, though, - thought for the evening - that an army can lose a war going forward just as well as going backwards, e.g. Braddock and Napoleon in Russia, and that the offensive can't be judged until its results are borne out. But this is all a hell of a time for you to start feeling depressed and suffering badly because we aren't together, after twenty months of bearing up and doing nobly. I'll give you the signal when to pull down the flag. I can judge it better from this end, even if my standards are crude and simple. True my morale is not affected by the sight of as many useless civilians and seemingly healthy males as yours is, and therefore I feel more at home in my misery. But you have cheery Kathy and I have only a grubby pack of comrades who shudda stood in bed. What a pack of characters. The first sergeant is on a rootin' tootin' tear at the moment, Hans is going out on one of his dirty jobs. Anspacher has been trying for an hour to get somebody on the field phone for me, and Tom I'm sure is waiting impatiently while his eggs are frying and hoping that I won't turn up for mine. But I will.

But a few more lines too. The days are getting longer now, several minutes each day, starting yesterday. Isn't that wonderful? It adds a bit of optimism to each damned day. I got a package of ancient New Republics, good to look at, though, from you today. The package was in perfect condition but it sure took time. I also got a nice Christmas package from Aunt Anna who certainly is a nice woman, very considerate of people like myself whom she could just as well ignore for all that I am one of her nephews. I always liked her, especially on New Year's Eve when we sat up and ate herring and things.

In sum, I love you ad infinitum.

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 24, 1944

Angel --

It's the day before Christmas and guess what Santa brought me -- a nice big cold in the head. I feel just lovely as a result and about as full of Christmas spirit as a fly on fly paper. I don't know whether the Big Party for Rosable Friday night lowered my resistance or what. I do know that, after going to bed about five Friday morning I awoke at eight with a stiff sore throat and an anguished spirit, which has remained with me ever since. It's not because I drank much, either, because I didn't, being sufficiently wise to the dangers thereof. But I went out without stockings, only a good coat of leg paint and it was cold, and when we got home about 3:30, Helen Hawkins, who was spending the night with me, insisted on talking for hours. This makes me mad. If I had caught the cold from a roaring drunk, during which I had wrecked all the furniture and marriages in sight, I at least would have felt some poetic justice involved. But Jesus, it's too big a price to pay for going out without stockings. All the nice silk ones you gave me have runs in them. I guess re-dying them the way I did was rather hard on them.

I'll have you know I was the most glamorous woman at the party the other night because I wore this black sequin kerchief given me by Day for a Christmas present. I got a letter from her today and she said that the pipe you sent Walter was one of the nicest things she had heard of anyone doing ever. I do so think too. Even if I don't like Walter, anything that makes her happy makes me happy because she is my only dear sister.

Kathy is so bitchy these days. She must be getting another tooth or worse yet, a cold. I am scared stiff she will catch mine. This afternoon I am taking her up to Mom, as a Xmas present Benny is driving down for me, and then I will stay a while tonight and go home by myself and sleep alone and come back up north tomorrow. I really have to get some rest to throw off this terrible affliction.

The next day --. Christmas night to be exact. I was spirited

away in the middle of the letter by Dad and Benny: we arrived on the north side about five and the rest of the evening was given over to preparing a large and elaborate feast, home-made sausages (which I detest), pizza (good), salad, broccoli, etc. etc. It all sounds very good now that I am home without a stitch of food in the house but as invariably occurs, when these feasts are put before me, I never have any appetite. Present were Aunt Lil and Bill, Howard, his wife and their poor child of six, Bennie and Jeannette, the two boys and me. Kathy somehow managed to crawl off the bed she was supposed to be sleeping in and entered uninvited into the festivities. I kept losing my appetite over the brutal way that little boy was being shoved around, psychically and physically by Howard. The child is starved for affection and so obviously neurotic it's a wonder he doesn't burn the house down. Which is probably just wish fulfillment on my part. Finally the party broke abut midnight and I went over to Lil's to sleep, there being more room over there. This morning I returned bright and early, after a gay fall on the early morning ice, and spent the day sneezing and preparing for the second Yule feast, to be given at Lil's. Ed and I took a walk in the morning and Bill came over with gifts for Kathy. Oh yes, there was general gift-giving last night. I got notably a pretty wool scarf which I shall probably lose tomorrow. Also overshoes from Mom, large and useful and snappy-looking.

Finally this afternoon we reached the orgasm, dinner at Aunt Lil's, a huge turkey, nobody very hungry because we'd all been eating breakfast all day to stave off hunger. Kathy kept weeping and getting mad because nobody was paying any attention to her, Howard kept bawling out the little boy, Vic just didn't appear because Mom wanted him to wear a tie and he wanted to wear a sweat shirt. I secretly believe that was just an excuse to avoid the Blencoes. I, throughout the whole weekend, if you can call it that, swore a great deal and generally enacted the toothsome role of Jill At Her Worst.

All in all, this was not the most kosher of Christmases, and I truly believe that all this anti-social behavior enacted by the two members of the family most capable of blatantly anti-social

behavior -- namely Vic and me -- was a not too covert protest against the mockery of Christmas in the most crucial and devastating year of the war. I was too full of cold germs yesterday, and too full of venom for one and all, to even permit myself to say aloud or to myself, "How sad it is that Al isn't here". It's just as well. It would have been sheer hypocrisy to say it that one day which proved so uncomfortable for one and all if I didn't say it the other 364. And as you know I do the latter, I'm sure you won't miss the emanation of any thought waves in your direction yesterday.

NEXT DAY, THE 26TH

This letter was interrupted last night by a kindly neighbor, Virginia's husband, bringing me some chicken soup. Today Virginia is doing my shopping for me. If there is anything worse in civilian life than having a bad cold and having to take care of a baby, with, conversely, nobody to take care of you, you name it and I'll give it to you. And I'm so terribly afraid all the time of giving my cold to Kathy. I know there is something wrong with her because she lies awake for hours at night -- until one last night -- playing and because she is so touchy sometimes, but whether it is a cold or teething, or the excitement of her stay with her grandparents, I do not know. You never can tell when she is sick anyway. Kathy has only two visible states of mind and being -- manic and hyper-manic.

Damn it, I took my V-mail up north to write you and then left it there, ergo the strange shape this letter is going to you in.

Well, darling, this isn't a very merry letter and I'd better stop it before I have you blowing your head off in sympathy with your carbine. I love you very much in spite of your family, which at this point even includes cold-susceptible, teething, whine-producing Kathy. I do try to be pleasant with her on days like this and even told her a long pointless story this morning about a little dog who got lost in a forest, while I was cleaning her room. She didn't seem very interested in any of it except the part where he barked. She is more interested in the pull-toy

Virginia gave her for Christmas. I thought she would be too young to use it but no, she dashes about the house in her machine, holding one end of the string and dragging this little wagon behind her, the whole thing producing a most awful racket. She's amazingly quick to learn what you do with things (well, maybe they all do but nonetheless it amazes me). I just showed here what to do with the toy and she did it. Similarly did she learn how to get down off furniture -- by backing up -- and how to put a hat on. She also knows simple commands like "give it to mother", at which she hands you whatever she has in her mouth, usually a safety pin. I think the less commands you give them the more effectual discipline is. Of course it's too early to judge anything. I know she hands me things now just because it's such great fun to function her hands and to watch mine function. But generally my policy is pretty much laissezfaire, even when she exercises her most detestable current habit, throwing food on the floor and picking up plates and rubbing her face in them. I just pick up and shut up. You know, the amazing thing is how little destructive she is. She almost never touches your books. I think I can count the number of times she has ruined things. She used to like to tear up paper and only the other day ripped up the pages in a photography album but since there is no printed matter on those pages, it wasn't very important. But mostly she likes to examine things now and to drop them down or put them on her head. I don't think I'm even going to bother to train her to leave certain things alone. Apparently the less you say, the less attention is paid to these verboten objects. Of course, I have to keep ashtrays out of her reach, as well as boxes of soap flakes -- the two things she goes after that make the most mess. I guess one reason, too, that she doesn't seem so destructive (of course, she has stripped the wall paper in her room down to the people who lived here in 1935) is that we just don't have very much to destroy. And never will, if I have anything to say about it, as the duster of the family.

Well, pray for her that she doesn't catch my cold. All my love to you, darling.

[in pencil] Jill

I lost my f--ing pen. F--k everybody!

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 24, 1944

Dearest Jill.

It's a nice sunny, crisp day, good Christmas weather under all circumstances. Unless it snows tonight, there will be no white Christmas, save for the early morning hours when there is a heavy frost that sparkles and is very becoming to the otherwise drab landscape around this little village. I don't think I'll be doing much this afternoon, except to make a short report on how everyone has been spending his time lately. Someday I'll be happy to write something socially significant, something that hasn't a line or detail that won't be as important ten years from now as it is today. Jim Clark spent the night with us but we didn't have much time to do any talking. Last night I read more of A Tree Grows in Brooklyn and enjoyed it. I guess that I'm much more interested in little girl stories since Kathy was born. Even before that, I became more interested in little girls after meeting and loving you and wondering what sort of a little girl you were. Originally I was completely incurious about the lives of little girls. The picture of poverty presented in the book is touching and yet the compensations were in the future, as the author pointed out, providing the future could be attained. One learned to appreciate what could be had and how much nice it was to have than to have not, just as I will never overcome my admiration for a sparkling toilet bowl - so that you will probably have not one but two members of the family to evict from that artistic masterpiece every so often.

That all reminds me to ask you to buy me the biggest and best reading lamp you can find for when I return. My eyes get tired very easily now and I never get decent lighting for reading. For example, the best thing we can get is a generator which creates

current which we can wire into bulbs. But it is very inconstant, and apart from variations in intensity every time someone tunes on a radio or works another machine on it, it has a minute, but unconsciously straining, fluctuation all the time. In addition, even when we have this sort of light, there is hardly ever a comfortable position for reading. True, the houses aren't bombed out often like they were in Italy, nor are we living in tents as we used to, but still, as you remember from previous lurid descriptions, we do not dwell in soaring reaches of harmonious space. That is why you must be a good girl and occasionally look a second time at ads that say, "marvelous Reading Lamp, 220 volts, natural light bulbs, your vision actually improves with reading, Can be contorted into any imaginable position to give proper adjustment, Can be adjusted at a distance by Returning Soldier Who 'can't get out of his fart sack'!"

You asked me in a letter whether I had received the cigarettes you sent me last summer. I honestly don't remember, darling. I don't believe so, unless they arrived months ago. I got the cigarettes that came with the salami from Mom & that's the last I remember. However, I'm doing well enough for butts now. We get a pack a day most of the time with our ration, and I understand there is a special distribution of cigars this week.

The only other question you raised was regarding my attitude to Veterans Organizations. I'm not fully decided on my own membership & don't consider the matter pressing, personally. They have some good points and some bad. On the whole, they are probably representative of their membership. I'm against them eating at the public trough, even tho I might profit personally from it. A veteran deserves recognition & help but that help should not run into anti-social, selfish grabbing through political power. The problem of the veteran is like that of society, - freedom of opportunity to develop & better himself. More than that he cannot conscientiously ask. For doing his duty, a man is not entitled to become a public charge. Therefore, if I join, it will probably be an organization with principles approximating these most.

I'm not sure that increase in pay my captaincy will bring. I think it is around \$50 a month more. I am undecided yet whether I ought to write an increase into your allotment, thereby putting into motion the formidable error-creating machinery that can hardly be stopped once it's started, or whether to merely send you the extra \$50 or so in a money order each month, or whether to buy a bond and have it sent you each month with it. I am certain that the extra money won't be needed at this end, even if I entertained an idea of going on a spree (two bottles of Kirsch instead of one). My expenses just aren't very large. I have two sets of OD trousers & shirt & I just keep changing from one to the other. Mess expenses aren't high & won't go any higher. No one plays poker among the officers here - we hardly have enough officers for a poker game anyhow. I have enough books and right now enough money so that I can order a couple of books direct from the publishers that I've been wanting to read. I've failed ignobly on Christmas presents to everyone this year so that I'm not debt-ridden on that account. Let me know what you think is the best thing to do with the jack, Jill.

And before you say another word, a thousand quick kisses, and I'm off to see a man about the war.

Give Kathy a hearty handshake for me. As always, I love you dearly,

ΑI



Christmas in Lorraine: Al.



Christmas in Lorraine: Al with the shell conversion crew.



Christmas in Lorraine with the shell conversion crew.

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 25, 1944 V-MAIL

My darling --

I didn't write you yesterday again -- all the excitement involved in seeing siblings and siblings-in-law is too much for me. But I did get two very nice air mails from you, the 28th and the 11th (how fast for airmail) and the day before I got one dated the 24th. I am trying to re-read them all at the same time now and the place is littered with pages, so that I can answer them, at least in part. The process is not more leisurely than that because I'm expecting the family in a little while (around 0 PM). Dad is playing somewhere out south tonight and Mom, Ed, Buss and Mir and he are coming over after the concert. Vic is at home taking care of little Joe. I suspect Vic took on this job very willingly. Joe looks more like him than like any other member of the family. We went up there for dinner Wednesday night. He has beautiful reddish-blonde curly hair, a face like a St. Bernard's, so rolling in fat is it, and a disposition as sweet as

candy. He really is an adorable, plump lovely little boy. He says a few words. When I was there he came forth with a very clear piping, "Hi, there". Naturally my mean little mind can't help but make invidious comparisons, to wit, Kathy is prettier, but again, that is how it should be. She has grown a lot in the past two or three days and is vastly sociable. And she cries relatively little. As a matter of fact, she never cries at all for no reason. I can always make her stop by feeding, diapering or changing her position. It's a wonderful feeling to finally find oneself in command of the situation. I can make formula now without spilling anything and without the feeling that I'm discovering radium. I handle her from any angle without a qualm. And now today my bête noire, nursing, is finally over with. It was fine to be able to nurse her when I didn't have any other duties, but it became quite a burden when I had to shop and everything. It just about doubled the feeding time and I gave her so little and always worried about it. The past two days I've just been skipping some nursing periods and giving her a larger bottle instead and today I called her doctor and told him I wanted to stop it entirely. So he increased her formula and I think it will work out all right. I don't think I'm entirely dry yet but if I don't drink much fluid I'll probably dry up altogether. I thought I would be sad when I finally had to stop but I'm not -- I'm just relieved. Nursing is OK if you don't have any other responsibilities but when a baby is as big and strong and obviously thriving as Kathy, it's just hard to nurse. Miriam said the same thing. She did it with Joe for five months and said she was completely worn out. Maybe I'll gain some weight now. I don't know.

It's ten now and I'm still waiting for the folks to come. Vic has called twice, speaking in very harried and mournful tones. Joe was wakened by the phone -- of course it had to be Sarah -- and has been screaming ever since. Meanwhile, Kathy was wakened by the sound of Vic calling, and I had to stop writing this and douse her with orange juice. Meanwhile Vic called again and when I got up to answer Kathy spit up her orange juice. Babies babies babies. But I love them dearly and wish I had ten like Kathy. It doesn't seem possible that our next can be

as lovely as she is. Daisy just got in -- she had been downtown having dinner with Walter's brother. She sends her love. And you have all of mine. I wish I could write more but will tomorrow when things are more settled. I loved you.

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 26, 1944

Jill, my love,

Christmas passed very quietly. It was a clear, cold day that saw lots of air activity but air war is so remote, that it doesn't detract from silent night, holy night. Last Christmas was somewhat rougher for me as I recall, even if one doesn't consider that I was waiting to give birth to a baby, your baby. So this Christmas is so much better for having a live (!!!) and cheerful infant, and I'm sure that our debt of gratitude to her for being born is quite large. Out of the ashes of our desolate separation she has produced a great good, perhaps painful in many ways to you but precious in more ways. I am thankful to her and always will be, whatever the changing moods may produce at any given moment. I am thankful to you also for being all that I would want in a lover and for accomplishing that state at a huge distance. I'll be happy when you will be able to see that in my eyes & my manners, without trusting to words. Our love has always been many leagues ahead of our words on it. I loved you deeply and achingly before I ever said that I loved you; you loved me too long before you committed yourself to a statement about it. We've always distrusted words and have been obsessed with the significance of actions. Therefore it is strange that we have been bound to verbiage for these many months and those shadowy, weak-webbed things have supported us to their fullest capacity & have probably served us as well as they have served any two lovers through the centuries.

Yes, even when you write on politics. I honestly don't see why you feel it necessary to assure me you don't honestly think your theories and analyses are truly correct. If you allow me to flatter

you without thinking I'm trying to feel superior, I think you are very right most of the time. And shrewd, too, in your hesitant, embarrassed way. I shall probably have to sit at your feet in order to learn about local politics after the war. From one point of view, I ought to look on this new blow as the final defeat of my prestige. If I can't smile tolerantly at your political comments, when the hell can I? I am completely useless, just a sex machine. Maybe you ought to send me that book on love, so that I can at least be a good one.

Two letters came yesterday from you, December 7 and 8, and one very nice one from Dec. 1 today. What a pen pal! Also a package of good eatable merchandise from Mom came yesterday. I'll write her very soon, since I owe her a letter anyway, but give her my love & thanks if you see her.

I carry your color pictures with me all the time and think they are lovely. I bet I'll still have them in my pockets when I come strolling home.

Last night was a quiet one. I read. We had coffee, and we went to sleep. Tom is slowly recovering from a whopping binge as are several of my men. The Christmas dreary cheer gushed profusely. While in the middle of it all, Tom gave extensive vaudeville performances of the early years of the century. He had some of the solid burghers in stitches with his soft shoe routine & buck & wing. Despite all I could do to persuade him, he insisted on doing his "bumps", a most scandalous exhibition. The turkey dinner on Christmas was as good as Thanksgiving.

If I can remember, I'll enclose those things you want me to sign -- anything to keep a frown from your pretty face. But one question please: If the bonds on one form are in my name only (the reason remaining a mystery to me), why have you signed it too?

Love and all, darling.

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 28, 1944 (A)

(Kathy's birthday)

Darling --

No sooner is the spit dry on the Art Corners than I write you. No code is that, but a simple explanation of the fact that I got your big picture today and have just tacked it up on the mat opposite Ed's graduation picture. I'm glad you sent it. It is just the same size as Ed's picture and I'm sure visitors have found suspect the huge display of Ed's handsome face and none of yours. I keep your little picture on the desk, and also a gruesome one of you in uniform (we sent the larger one to Dad from El Paso) but they pale in comparison to the size and splendor of Ed's. But this enlargement is very nice, though super-glossy. I always find a package from you very exciting, even though I know the contents (and so do several thousand post office employees and neighbors). I think of how you wrapped and handled the package and somehow it seems almost more personal than a letter -- all the paper and cardboard and string. You seem to have tied this one with a GI shoelace, a nice touch. You can imagine to what abysses of sentimentality I've sunk when I tell you that I'm saving the shoelace! I've put most of your back letters in the box from Bari and the one that contained those candies way back. Bill, who was over vesterday, commented on the former box, which is still resplendent with golden Pegasus though the clasps are broken. He said that an American box would be ugly but the hinges would work. I guess that is as good a commentary on cultural differences as any.

Bill was over yesterday, as I said. He came about three and insisted on wheeling the buggy over to campus. Kathy was much impressed though we were both exhausted by so much fresh air, more than either of us have had since she came. Then we picked up some chop suey at the corner joint and ate it with beer and listened to the radio. No, Kathy had milk. But today I took her to the doctor and in answer to my complaints that she is always hungry, he started her on cereal. I gave it to her

tonight at six for the first time and she wolfed it so eagerly she damn near took off my hand. This is just another example of the amazingness of the amazing Miss DeG. In the first place, they never start babies on cereal until the third month and this is only her second. In the second place, everybody told me what a chore it was getting babies used to eating instead of drinking. She went at the spoon without any hesitation whatever, in fact, she was screaming mad with hunger when I started out, and swallowed the first mouthful with as much ease as you would a forkful of spaghetti, if not more. The doctor told me to start out with just a half a tablespoon and work up gradually to two, but she cried when I stopped at the first half and so I just went on & gave her the full amount. I'm sure this is unparalleled in the annals of babydom. She has gained another two and a quarter pounds, which brings her weight up to 12 and a quarter. This is such a vast gain, comparatively speaking, that he punched her all over to see that she wasn't getting too fat. But she's not. It's just packed in solid and he was very pleased. He had struck me as rather a grim type before, but today he played with her a moment, in a fashion that would have horrified the noncognoscenti, namely, he bounced her on the table a couple of times. She must be a masochist already because she laughed like a fool. Babies can really stand a lot of rough handling and seem to like it. I watched this boy in the building, who subsequently went into the Medical Corps, undress his baby once. (He was an intern in pediatrics.) He just turned the kid upside down and shook him out of his pants. The kid loved it too. Bill is so funny with Kathy. He is all solicitude and is convinced that she will get a concussion when the buggy goes over a bump, of which there are many on Ridgewood Ct. I guess he thinks I am brutal with the baby too. I had the feeling she would break at first too. It's one you get over fast. I saw Ruth Shils today for a moment coming back from the doctor's and was awful mad when she said Kathy looked like any twomonth-old baby. What ignorance.

I'm so happy about the baby because now I'm sure all the feeding problems are over with. He increased the amount of

orange juice too -- she used to get awfully sore when she came to the end of her ration -- so now she won't be so hungry and won't cry on the one hand or overindulge on milk on the other -- the latter caused her to spit occasionally. She is sound asleep now, the first good evening nap she's had in days. The poor little kid was just ridden with hunger pangs, I guess.

Bill showed me your letter to him and a very good one it was, though I didn't understand the analogy between the moral and the social man, being sublimely ignorant of Aristotle. Bill did, though, and thinks you are hotter than a pistol. I am sending you Lippman's column in today's <u>Sun</u>. I think the last paragraph is sort of interesting.

This is the first evening in over a week I've had to myself. I got a stupid book out of Woodworth's lending library called I Am Thinking of My Darling. It's all about a mysterious fever that hit New York in which people lost their inhibitions. Sort of like the Topper books. Very dumb. But I'm hot on escapist literature these days. Though I'm less depressed than I was before Day came, I still don't feel like flagellating myself with so-called provocative literature. Now don't ask me why I don't start reading Aristotle. The answer should be obvious to you, dear, after all these years.

There is a young boy in this building, the fifteen-year-old son of one of the refugee families. He had heard from his mother, who visited me one day, that you and Vic play the trumpet and so he came hurtling up to me for advice. It seems he wants to learn to play the trumpet professionally and what did I think? I was rather embarrassed since I hate being put in the position of career mentor, and to a practically unknown lad at that, but I sat him down, gave him a cigarette and equivocated nicely for fifteen minutes, to the effect that it's wonderful to learn an instrument but he couldn't expect to get very rich at it unless he was very good. Isn't that what you would have said? This kid doesn't have much money and has to pay for his own lessons but I didn't see what difference that made if he wanted to learn. I like boys of that age. They're so damn eager and attractive in

an ugly way. Remind me to have a couple of sons too, though truly, if I could have five daughters like Kathy, I'd like that too.

And remind me to have you as the father. We're an unbeatable combination. Not that any of Kathy's virtues are of my own making -- I give you all the credit, but you have to have me as sort of a catalyst, anyway. I love you so much, darling. Please tell them to get it over with soon.

Always -- Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 28, 1944 (B)

DECEMBER 28

Darling Al--

I guess you can't avoid knowing what day it is, by the capitalized figures of doom above. And let me add quickly that if all children's birthdays are like this, I'll hand in my resignation right now.

Of course, it's my fault partly and Kathy's too. She was the one who tore the calendar, leaving her mother in pretty complete ignorance of the passage of time (through the end of this year anyway. Then I can start using the new calendar the newsboy brought, with his compliments). Anyway yesterday I thought Kathy's birthday was tomorrow, until last night when Diane called up to congratulate, and then I forgot again (it's all very Freudian but it may also have something to do with the fact that your birthday is tomorrow, and a more than parenthetical congratulation to you). Then I woke up this morning in a snit because I'd been coughing all night -- the traditional tail end of a cold with me -- and called up Diane and said guick, we must have a party. So she came over and I went out like a heroic mailman through snow and wind, etc., and purchased ice cream, cake, candles, chop suey for the big people and we finally settled down to dine circa one. Both babies got

exhausted rapidly and wept and had to be put to bed. Then Mom and Dad came down, also on the spur of the moment, and we had pretty much of the same kind of dinner. In the middle of the afternoon I was suddenly smitten with the idea that I ought to give Kathy a sled for her birthday so Diane and I and the two babies started out on a long and difficult hegira through the snow with our unwieldy buggies in search of a sled. We found a small second-hand one at a store at 57th and Lake Park and tomorrow I shall strap a packing box on it, restoring Kathy and me to our pre-winter mobility.

And last night Bea Neugarten had a small dinner party for Buster and Rosable which I attended and yesterday afternoon I spilled a pound of barley over the kitchen floor directly after washing and waxing it. It isn't exactly dirty stuff, just ubiquitous. And just after I'd finished sweeping it out into the alley, whereafter I shall forever more arouse the hostility of the janitor, I found Kathy innocently playing on the floor with my aspirin and pheno-barbital. With some or less presence of mind I stuck my finger down her throat but nothing came up but milk and she regarded it as a great joke. I watched her closely for several hours afterwards but since she only appeared more manic than usual, I can only conclude that she swallowed none. A stern lesson, though.

So you see, Christmas week is and always will be pretty awful and hectic, especially to one of my limited nervous resources. I get so jittery when all these people are in town and descend on me. Now I contracted to give a party for Rosable New Year's Eve and the thought is driving me screwy.

I got a letter from you dated Dec. 6, not the very latest but the one announcing your captaincy, although I got the letter with the enclosed paper weeks ago, anyway a week. I'm a little concerned that I don't hear more from you now that the fighting is so heavy, but I really know you are all right because Kathy and I love you so much. That may sound like a <u>non sequitur</u> but it really isn't.

I have to make this a quicky because Dad will mail it on his way home if I do. All my love dearest darling.

Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 29, 1944

Darling AI --

I keep forgetting to buy more V-mail, ergo this run of air mail letters that are descending on you after a run of V-mails, which I had been virtuously writing for several weeks after seeing a movie short describing the virtues and reliability thereof. Of course the fact that the Air Mail letter containing the documentary proof of your promotion came some 10 days before the V-mail announcing it should put a few doubts into any doubting Thomas's that may be around. However, since my name is not Thomas, I shall continue to subscribe intellectually to the efficacy of V-mail, even if I don't use it.

At the moment typing is difficult because I just finished eating a pound of fudge and my fingers keep sticking to the keys. I feel simply awful, needless to say. Oh, my cold is getting better or else I have wisened up and started using cough drops, a habit I've always detested in others. But they really do work on Night Coughing, that dread disease.

I think yesterday's letter might have been a little too sour, considering the nobility of the occasion of celebration, namely the birth of the baby. I had all sorts of wild dreams last night of pain and excitement. Maybe the birthday serves also to remind the mother, for the first few years of the child's life, anyway, of the birth experience -- as well as being an occasion for celebrating the fact that the individual is born. I don't know. They say you forget the event but I must have been traumatized or something because I certainly haven't forgotten. It probably isn't the pain so much as that feeling of desperate aloneness, which I wouldn't have so much if you were here. Perhaps the

birth process was merely symbolic of the general loneliness of our lives.

Anyway, that was a digression. I really didn't feel as cynical as I sounded yesterday after a day of fatigue, writing a fast letter to you because Dad was waiting to go and mail it. I suppose I should breathe a sigh of relief that I've brought her through one year of life without any serious accidents or diseases, but it's been so long since I've considered her in that light -- of being a delicate little organism liable to topple over the rim of the earth any minute -- that somehow one year seems just as easy as any other. Amazingly enough, the past day or two she has started to walk as spiritedly as any infantryman, well, a drunken one anyway. On Wednesday she took 28 steps without stopping and today she took 40, not to mention all the minor side excursions. Yesterday she didn't take so many because I took her out in the afternoon, the time she usually reserves for walking. She walks with her arms outstretched and making a peculiar whirring noise with her mouth, like an outboard motor. I don't know why she feels she has to make this elaborate sound, or why her efficiency seems to be increased when she puts on a horrible blue beret I inherited from you by way of Buss who wore it on his European jaunts. She is always bringing me this thing and then tilting her head, like a lady in the hat section at Field's, for me to put it on her. Sometimes, she goes to the mirror and stands there adjusting it at various angles, all of them excruciatingly funny.

Today I got a sitter for the afternoon, a refugee lady who lives in the building, and went out for lunch with Rosable and then downtown. We had a nice afternoon mostly eating, for though we had lunch out South we immediately repaired to George's when we got to the Loop and had sodas and sandwiches. Kathy let out a great howl of rage when I departed but was in a good mood when I came home and we played for quite a while. I always pretend I am her father between the hours of five and six and play violently with her, as a father would do. Otherwise our relationship would seem so businesslike -- you know, I would just be the person who fed and bathed and clothed her.

I got my first recent letter in a week from you, December 16. Damn it, darling, I don't know why we have to be separated for so long. I keep hearing of other people coming home, like Lepawsky, who was in Russia, and T. V. Smith. Lepawsky is only a major so the mere fact of his rank shouldn't be the factor in getting him back. I'm always amazed when I talk to friends who have their husbands here -- at the things they want out of life. They want money or a fur coat or their husbands to do the dishes, and I can't think of a single thing I want, or will ever want, out of life, except you. And I can't imagine ever feeling any differently. There'll be so much for us to do together that we just won't ever have time to disagree. I don't think I'll ever even ask you to do the dishes, although I'll appreciate any help you may see fit to give me.

Now it's time to go to bed and there's some slight incentive — the new New Yorker and a book I've been reading by a Victorian novelist named Willkie Collins. He was a very literary and high-class mystery writer and I'm just reading him to fill in my self-imposed course on 19th century novelists. Then I'm going to start on Dickens, the less lugubrious ones anyway.

And, darling, I love you so damned much. And I'm sure Kathy would be infatuated, and would never stop buzzing once she met you. Oh yes, she has a special canary bird trill for Dad, which she never does for anybody else. I think it's because he sings scales to her. Vic says it's a genuine flutter tongue and is sore as hell that she can do it and he can't, because (and you know this better than I do) it's a requisite for getting a dirty tone on the trumpet. I told him I'd be glad to let her learn the trumpet and that satisfied him. It will be a new form of the Trilby-Svengali relationship. I really do think she's going to be awfully musical. Whenever something particularly rhythmic comes over the radio she starts waving her arms around and singing in her own peculiar way.

And again, I love you.

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 29, 1944

Darling Jill,

I didn't realize until this moment that today is my birthday. Now the rest of the day should be different, full of pleasant surprises and things of joy. It so happens that the sun has picked today to hide itself, however, and the day as a result is somewhat gloomy. There isn't a lot to do, inasmuch as we've had a chance to reorganize everything properly and we are not exactly moving into Germany by leaps & bounds. The news of the blunting of the German offensive is good and I hope there'll be more of it in the next couple of days. We've felt the shock all the way down here by those waves of sympathetic reaction which hit crowds and cause the prolonged molecular bumping of the members.

I haven't had any really recent letters from you, since the one of Dec. 11th which came a week ago, although I've had several older ones since then. Yesterday I received three packages from home, from you, and two from Mom. To do justice to them I ought to hold up & praise each item individually but it would take too long. Sufficient to say that I don't think anyone received such well-chosen food parcels and I. Tom & Fred thank you all too. The canned eggplants were a brilliant inspiration. So were the Capacollo, and the anchovies. Tell Mom that the cookies & nuts came as fresh as if they were just bought around the corner, or just came out of the oven. No need to thank you in many words: you know I think you are lovely and nice and I am in love with you over and beyond the call of duty. You are not the most bragged about wife in the company, but every man knows that I am in love with you and 'hurting' for you without saying. I suppose the fervency of my remarks when I do say something on the subject and the extent to which I seem to exist in another world of reflection, mail and reading create that impression very well. It's quite true. I am in love more than most people - I feel that deeply.

I suppose I shouldn't bring the matter up because there is little likelihood of success in this oldest of armies, but a system of

leaves has been begun and a minute number of Americans will get to go home for a month at regular intervals. Since this army has so many men who have been over here two years, my chances are reduced for the time being. If I were in another army, they would be a lot better. It is a constant source of wonder to us to see units and men who have only been away from America a year or less. When we find someone a couple of months out of the States, we are almost stupefied with the thought. All in all, I am glad to see something started, and perhaps I'll get a chance too someday.

I have some things to do now, dearest. I'll write you again this evening. Give Kathy a kiss for me and take care of yourself. Always yours,

Αl

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 30, 1944

My dearest Darling --

I feel just awful, yea even to the point of slashing my wrists. I wrote a long letter to you yesterday and never once mentioned the fact that it was your birthday, and more important than that, how everlastingly grateful I am that you were born. Please forgive me, darling. My notion of time and events is so screwed up these days. I think it's because when, separated by time and infinite distance the way we are, it takes almost superhuman effort to anticipate events. And then, when they creep up on one, they are forgotten. I've been that way throughout this whole holiday season, if you can call it a holiday, this fearful mockery. I nearly forgot Christmas and then Kathy's birthday and then yours, and only yesterday did I learn that tomorrow night was New Year's Eve, the night I'm supposed to be giving a great brawl for Rosable. Woe is me, but

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.

That reminds me that, at the lighting of Kathy's sole candle, Diane and I sang "Happy Birthday to you" to Kathy in fantastically cracked voices. Poor Kathy, she is so musical and her tastes are so sure to be perverted.

I honestly have the worst guilt feeling about you. And you know when I suddenly remembered it was your birthday. I was just over at Lettie's house for dinner, as a reward for taking care of her turgid baby all afternoon. We were talking about Walter Johnson and she said how young he was to be a professor and so I pointed out a long list of things wrong with him, including the fact that he would be a nobody if all the good young guys like you hadn't been drained off by the war, and she said, yes, that was right, you were young, weren't you, and then my stomach turned over and I remembered it was your birthday. I'm glad I sent you the Camels because maybe you thought it was a birthday present then even if it wasn't, and now I am going to send you something nice and belated, like a plaid necktie or a picnic basked.

I wish to God I believed in God, that way anyhow, so I could go to church or temple and pray for you to come home, but under the circumstances it would be a terrible hypocrisy. And even if I did believe in a God who went around doing things for people, it would still be an imposition to ask for something for me. I really should get converted to a good rousing faith so I could go to church with a clear conscience and ask for the works. At least one would have some hope that way. I guess skepticism is a great curse in one way, even if it does rid one of a great many fears.

Next week I am going to call that lady again and have some more candid shots of Kathy taken. It occurs to me that it's been too long a time since you've gotten any good pictures of her. Of course, she hasn't changed much in physical appearance until she started to walk last month. Since then she's lengthened out and looks like quite a little lady. Rosable gave her a little rocking chair and you should see her rocking back and forth in it. All she needs is a corncob pipe.

I got another letter from Liz, not saying much. An amazing coincidence. Buster's sister is married to Elizabeth's father. He mentioned her (his sister's) name the other day and I said I had a friend who was named Robb and it all came out. Anyway, Liz is real depressed as usual. We have contests to see who is the most, it would seem. I guess life must be harder for her than it is for me, for even though nobody could be more in love with anybody than I am with you, Liz has an awful mother to contend with. And of course, nobody could have as amusing a child as we do.

Tomorrow I absolutely am going to buy some V-mail paper. And today all my love --

Jill

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 30, 1944 V-MAIL

Jill, Darling,

I didn't write last night as I had promised. Conditions were unfavorable physically, and a late supper, made up of all the things I and others had received from l'Amérique, consumed most of the time. We sliced up some of that find Pork Shoulder "Copocola" Mom sent me, some tongue that Anspacher got plus that canned eggplant and bought some beer. It was wonderful. Afterwards we had "real" cocoa, also Mom's gift, the first perfect cocoa overseas for everyone. I went to sleep reading the first pages of "Confidential Agent". You made a perfect choice of books for me and I love you for it, besides all the other things I love you for. Don't worry about my leave. I'll get it when it's due me. We're well over the hump on that score. I took some pictures of some of us on Xmas day and will send them to you later today. I remember too the night after we saw that Jean Gabin picture. We spent a couple of pleasant evenings in that sordid place of yours, didn't we? Even with the annoying shadow of Janice & the Cook boys in the background

and Johnny Hess bumbling around the foreground. I have been in practically every romantic situation in the world, & I think our setting and story was the perfect one. It would have been worse on a great ocean liner, in cafe society, in bourgeois or proletarian milieus, in silks or in rags, in Paris or in London, in the army or in Washington. I would exchange no other way for the way I fell in love. I would exchange no imaginable days anywhere else for those days with you in Chicago. It had exactly the right proportion of hardship and small luxuries, inconveniences & conveniences of other persons, of hearts & flowers, books and ivy, sunshine and coolness, of sweet nights, of glimpses of a tougher world. If I loved you for nothing else, I'd love you for the time I spent falling in love with you. Now when I think of those times, everything else in the world seems ugly. But it is not so. When I can see you again, it will be those days again, living in us, not pleasant, throbbing memories, but the fully realized actuality. When I hold you in my arms again, you will be the eternal Jill, we will always be on the Midway, we will always be side by side on dark streets, we will always be on the edges of the world together.

Until then, there will be my thousands of dreams of you to comfort you. If I could kiss you now, it would be full of all this. Al

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 31, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

We're sweating the New Year in a dull way, typical of this life, you might say. We split a shot size bottle of twenty-year-old brandy Tom had three ways, and washed it down with a bottle of champagne. Later on, we'll drink a bottle of Schnapps we have on hand and call it quits. I'll probably end it up reading some of Mr. White's delightful essays. There have been no fireworks at all tonight, no air raids or anything. I'm not with the artillery and therefore do not have to worry about the particular manner in which the cannoneers like to celebrate the New Year.

A quiet and morose evening was had by all, knock wood. Today has been a beautiful, bright day with about an inch of snow. Everything is prettier for it. I took a bath today too at a nearby headquarters and thought that was fine, even if I did freeze myself in the process. It is quite a novelty to be completely naked, it happens so rarely. I noticed that I was getting rid of my summer's tan and that I didn't seem to be losing or gaining weight. In a couple of weeks I'll give you the next report on the body I'm wrapping up so carefully for you.

Several letters came from you today also, from Dec. 12 to Dec. ? which letter was the first one addressing me as Captain. And you say you date all your letters. I am beginning to feel concerned with the tone of some of your letters lately, meaning about leave, loneliness and lethargy. I wish you would be a little harder on yourself and therefore make it easier for yourself, darling. I realize that you are surrounded by civilians and I know it is harder not to feel dissatisfied under such circumstances. The more you let yourself slip into depression and melancholia, the harder it is to recapture your balance and to get rid of the hangover. Certainly, your reason and your self-respect must justify the part you are playing. Granted the impossibility of my contributing any more just now to your happiness, I don't see where you can ask any more than you have. Don't feel hurt by these remarks, dearest. I don't love you any the less for them and hope that you won't love me any the less for them either. And I ought to mention that these are constant problems with me. The job of an officer gets more and more difficult as the war drags on. The men are suffering hardships and they have family troubles and very deep gripes. But Christ, if you gave in to them, everything would fall apart. And the temptation for all of us is to cry on each other's shoulders and to say to hell with everything. No one is rational anymore. Men are more and more motivated by irrational considerations. So please do not weaken on me because I can't handle you like the men.

I wrote you already about the possibility of leave. I'll keep you informed constantly, even on rumors. What else, save to say I love you and send you many kisses. Al

AL TO JILL (Undated letter, starting with page 3 Dec. 22? 23?)

The barber and I discussed general things like the Russian offensive, the electric clipper the Germans had stolen from him, the necessity of having a good haircut if one were where it really mattered and the necessity of letting the French occupy part of Germany. He would like to go himself to steal back an even better electric clipper but has a club foot. I suppose by the time the continent is over its troubles, every piece of property will have changed hands three or four times, from the soil itself on up.

Incidentally, I picked up "the Old Soak", that little book by Don Marquis on prohibition at the RC and the first couple of chapters were rich and very funny. I'm sure you would enjoy it too if you picked up a copy for yourself. I can't send you this one 1) because it's an armed service edition and 2) because several men have already asked for it and I'm sure it'll get lost in the shuffle.

I saw the movie "Destination Tokyo" last night. The mess sgt. has improved his technique a lot and by now can run a film with only the necessary stops between reels. The picture was exciting and a couple of the scenes damned good, especially the one of the frustrated barber. You would enjoy it, I think. Again we had occasion to enjoy the clean, neat life of the Navy and to envy it, though the film skipped the long, dull times of the voyage, of course, and a sub is too dangerous to be pleasant to most men. We thought that the way the men fought amongst themselves in the picture was scandalous. They were certainly incompatible. Our men are angels in comparison. And the Greek that hated the enemy like bloody murder was a sure phoney; in contrast the commander's little speech was unexpectedly good.

So much for the movie. Lately I've taken to reading out of that "Out of the World" you sent me, despite previous qualms. The three stories I read by Wilde, Julius Fast, & Jack London,

already have made the book most worthwhile. At one time or another I had encountered all of the stories, but they were now again completely new to me. Quote the old saw, "the more you read, the more you forget."

It is now past suppertime. We had a good meal for the first time in a couple of days, roast beef. The news is excellent, with the Russians entering Warsaw and approaching within 48 kilometers of the Silesian border. As I had hoped several weeks ago, the Germans will be crushed flatter than a pancake by these events after the spurious flush of success from their Ardennes offensive. (block that metaphor!)

And so, my gay-witted bedtime companion, I leave you, still without a letter today, but still convinced you are the girl for me, you and your daughter too.

Many kisses to you, dearest.

ΑI

[received January 3]

THE New Year stomps in for the Team on white snow by black night, with a feast and boisterous inebriety. Like the Hessians at Trenton they are. Thick snowflakes are piling upon the village and its host of vehicles. The Captain, well-oiled, tucks himself into his bedding roll. The deadly nonsense of the Ardennes attack -- the very idea of crashing through the Allied lines to the sea, the exaggerated accounts of Nazi successes, and the inevitable collapsing of the Bulge -- makes it all the more ludicrous that the depleted foe should launch itself upon the well-led, well-supplied, confident American Seventh Army. But it does. In the first hours of the Year 1945.

End of December 1944 letters

