

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 16, 1944 (A) V-MAIL

Dearest one -- The second half of your letter came today, advancing arguments against universal conscription. I guess you're right. At any rate, my zeal for that particular argument has passed. I'm just snatching a few moments at noon hour to write you. The baby is having a movement, to put it delicately, and I suppose she'll leave me alone until she is through. The maid is here again today to do the laundry and the morning was again passed in teaching her how to use the machine and fighting it out with the janitor, who seems bent on giving me ulcers. This is positively the last time I'll refer to this weekly and nightmarish episode. Oh yes, and the baby has been screaming like fury in between meals, which I think is an indication that her formula is not rich enough. She cries and then I cry out of sheer despair and we have a merry old time of it. The doctor is going to call me when he gets in, as his nurse vaguely put it. I think our joint insistence that the baby look like the other is touching, but there's not much we can do about it. I insist the portents are in my favor, i.e., that she'll look like you. As for her being pretty now, well, it's just nice to have a pretty baby. I agree that it doesn't mean much for later on. However, we can always have her teeth straightened, her legs unbowed, her hair curled or uncurled and her eyes sharpened up, if nature fails to do right by her.

As for your coming home, my feelings on the subject are too unpatriotic to print. Patience was never one of my strong points, as you know. But being in love with you is. Ah, what a rattrap. It shouldn't happen to a rat.

Like a bunny to a snake, I have succumbed to the fatal allure of a poor book. To wit, *So Little Time*. I got it out of the lending library yesterday, and lost much sleep reading it last night, fascinated by its utter corniness, its rank superficiality, its addiction to schoolday prose and puerile cynicism. I should have known better after your description, but I honestly wanted to read something that was easy to read and that contained characters that would make me feel scornful and superior, and

not sad. The newspapers and the plight of some of my friends and me draw sufficiently on my fund of sympathy and ability to despair for the human race. I thought the hero's complete assiness went out with the class of '39. But come to think of it, I would probably have been like that if it hadn't been for you. It certainly was the best thing that ever happened to me. But you would have been a hungry law student if you hadn't met me, and possibly quite lonely despite your winning ways and your nice family, so I guess we both have much to be thankful for. But back to the book, now I know why Fadiman resigned from the New Yorker staff at the end of the year. He used to have a policy of reviewing his reviews of books during the year around new Year's time, on second thought, so to speak, but I guess it was just too much for him to have to recant on his glowing critique of Marquand. I can't understand now how he was so taken in in the first place. I guess he's a bit of a fool himself. Any friend of Adler's, etc. Incidentally, under separate cover I'm mailing you the Sun's reviews of Adler's latest. The page is noted for the paucity of critical ability (four reviewers took over) as well as for a good idea of the stupidity of Adler's latest thesis.

Come back soon & show them.

All my love -- Jill

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 16, 1944 (B)

Darling -

I wrote about this in a V-mail. Hawahaya is the only one with at least a glimmer of mature judgement. I always did like him though you berated me for reading his book. I guess I quoted too freely from it, as if it were the only book I'd ever read (which is somewhere near the truth).

I love you I love you I love you. So does Kathy. But not as much as I do. Nobody could.

A million big kisses -

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 16, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

I've been extremely busy the last couple of days, the phrase covering not only mental, but physical and emotional activity, dashing about, seeing sights full of meaning (or full in their lack of meaning) and coming back to my tent with scarcely enough energy to stay awake let alone write letters. Is it enough to say that though I didn't write to you yesterday, I thought amid everything of you and always in terms of how much was gone in my life? I feel in a morbid, melancholy mood tonight, fit to kill more than to love: yet and without a trace of romanticism, I can truthfully say that the only thought that lightens the mood is of you and Kathy. I don't pretend that my blackness is particularly useful. It won't help my war effort or hasten the time of reckoning with you. But there isn't even any cognac around to help shake it off. Nor were there any letters from you yesterday or today. Perhaps I can get Tom Crowell into a chess game later in the evening.

I got a note from Aunt Anna yesterday, very pleasant and cheerful. She is very kind and nice. I got two Daily News from last October which afforded us some amusement despite their antiquity. I found some of the comics more revolting than ever, Don Winslow in Algiers, Joe Palooka in Yugoslavia and sundry other characters doing the most outlandish tasks in winning the war. I felt very humble after reading their heroic accounts. I had better reading matter come in too, Hutchins' report on the state of the university. You might read it, if you get it and the time. I agree with practically all of it, though I don't have too much hope to see his program adopted generally throughout the nation after the war. I am very glad to see him holding the fort for the university during the war, for it might so easily crumble

away without him. I got a letter from Ollie Kerner too which I enjoyed because it showed Ollie to be doing the most amazing and constructive things. Apparently he has decided to put into practice all his thoughts of the last year in one fell swoop.

At the risk of causing you visual harm, I might tell you that I am to be currently seen with a banging self-propelled cannon in some newsreel which may turn up at your neighborhood theater.

Dabinette got a couple Christmas packages last night. Maybe they're for next Christmas, I don't know. Anyhow, he now has more chewing gum, toothbrushes, and deodorant. Apparently people don't realize that the last is a purely social device and not in great demand where one must only impress other stinking specimens of humanity. Dabby has now got a job similar to my own and is very happy about it, since he can now gad about and get a fine view of the war.

Please tell me if my letters even begin to limp along or you are not of the opinion that there are enough of them. I honestly have little ambition at present other than to make you as happy as I can under the circumstances, and to assure you that I depend on you as you on me, one bracing the other as well as embracing. That punnish union, I think, is typified in the peculiar joint stance the origins of which were not clear to you. Maybe with Kathy, we can manage a tripod.

Love

Al

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 17, 1944

Hi-Ho Darling -

It's the day after yesterday, and I'm almost converted to smiling at people. Nothing like sleep to assuage the aching noggin'. Of

old, when I felt particularly sad about not being with you, I used to sleep it off - not that it is an especially effective and healthy way of dealing with a problem, but because if the problem is insoluble, it is the only way, and if it is soluble, as in our affair, sleeping helps keep the personality fit to solve it and merely temporizes in order to gain strength. I am more chipper, too, because I got four different letters from you, none of them later than that of the 31, but all of them as welcome as the second front. They were dated the eleventh, 17, 21, and 23. I must now have a letter for practically every day in January, praise be to Jesus and you ought to get two palms to attach to your Silver Star. The best one was the one which contained the first pictures of Kathy at the age of two weeks. She is beyond doubt all you say she is, a most remarkable female specimen, just like her mother. I think also that the prevailing opinion that she looks like me is more than half correct. Despite my lack of comparable statistics, she impresses me as practically a grown lady even at that early age. Is she still as dark? She seemed very brunette in those three pictures, which incidentally, as pictures, compared with my worst efforts. Remember that when you criticize me again. You didn't do justice to the little girl at all and some day she'll reproach you for it, though I haven't ever had any great curiosity over the pictures of my first weeks on this savage earth. For two weeks now, day in and day out, I've had a running battle with myself to decide whether to send you a conventional Valentine, assuming that could be done. Well, I didn't and you can beat me for it. But it still won't make me think that you are anything else but my only beloved Valentine. Next year, I'll get you a six-layer box of chocolate creams. Better than that, I won't awaken you before eight in the morning, for any reason whatsoever. I had a real ham and egg dream the other night, in which we sat down and had just an ordinary good dinner in ordinarily decent surroundings. But it was great fun.

If ever I can finish this page, I'll brew up some tea for Foster and myself. The bully beef we had for lunch didn't settle as good bully beef should and we feel in the mood. I didn't have to move far from the camp today so am spending the larger part of the

day right here. With a good cup of tea under me, I should be set for the second round.

The "golda brick" joke was pretty good. The best allied propaganda of all over here has been the single word "paesano," which means coming from the same locality, signifying a sort of bond. Many Americans picked up the word in the U.S. and over here its usage spread like wildfire, until the accepted mode of address between Americans and Italians on the common level is "paesan". It immediately cuts all sorts of barriers with no particular attempt to do anything. It is really funny but effective and to the Italians typically American.

I took time off for tea as I said I would, but Dabinette and Martin came in and we talked until supper time. Then we ate our mixed rice and meat, coffee, chopped pineapple and only now that it is dark am I getting back to writing you. A visiting colonel and I had fun at the mess talking over our experiences in the desert in California. WE agreed that it was the best training in America for troops who are going into the theater of war. So many soldiers manage to get over who have had no severe training, especially in the non-combattant units. All units need more discipline. I had to laugh at three of our men who were attached to a British unit to do a job. They bitched bitterly about the food, though they were even getting bread. We used to think we were lucky to get bread instead of the detestable biscuits.

I was jowl to jowl with you on your thesis that no matter what people do it can be found to be useful for the war effort and think the examples you cited were beyond disproof. I think you're a very unusual girl to be thinking out such nice theories at the same time that you're bringing up baby. It shows that you can't ever be hopelessly domesticated. Regarding Grafton's column, I believe him to be the most astute political commentator of the generation. I would like to see him attempt some larger opus.

You can drop your perfunctory clipping activities right now sweetheart (as if you haven't already). You're right. They aren't

so interesting as all of that except in unusual cases and those you can still send along. But teach Kathy how to use the scissors soon so she can cover the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature for me.

You asked about that clipping I sent you. It comes from a microfilmed British press digest which covers European newspapers thoroughly and intelligently. It is a worthwhile thing and I think you might be able to get hold of it if you go about it. Perhaps the University gets it.

I was as wrong as you about the immediate effects of the Rome beachhead, but we've still accomplished a good deal, I think you'll agree. Every German we can engage in Italy is a tiny victory for us. They don't get men and supply them from nowhere. We can afford it. They can't. And it does make their position insecure with the probability that it will at some time collapse. If the Germans did stop us from dashing directly into Rome, it was a pyrrhic victory for them.

I found a flea on me the other day and searched avidly for others. To date there is no sign of a plague. The one I caught I destroyed with a pop as pleasant-sounding as a 155 mm. cannon. So much for personal hygiene. I can't wait until you give me a decent bath with a warm aftermath.

Many kisses to both of my loves,

Al / Al

P.S. Send me some fudge. I like it. (This is not to be construed by the postmaster to include any except fudge you make yourself.)

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 18, 1944 V-MAIL

My darling --

Your nice tri-partite V-mail of Feb. 2 came today, all three parts

together amazingly enough. All kinds of people are urging us to use V-mail these days. I was enjoined twice tonight, by such distinguished personages as Bing Crosby and Henry Aldrich's mother. It's a small world.

If you catch that mole you can make a pair of gloves out of him, or a tobacco pouch. I think that's what they use moles for. Real ones, anyway. This mole sounds more like a delusion of DT specter. Does he leave a ridge? Then you know it's a mole. We seem to be the special targets of fractious members of the animal kingdom. This morning when I got up to give Kathy her six bottle, there was a spider in the bathtub, big enough to play football for the U. of C. He positively had shoulders. (I hope he was a he. The females are worse). Anyway, I timidly disposed of him with boiling water, cruel but necessary. I'll make pets of mice and ladybugs, but I stop there.

Another snowfall today, soggy but decorative. It's days like this that I miss the freedom to take long walks, though I probably would have gotten my feet wet and caught pneumonia, given that freedom. And Cooney, my favorite walking partner in lieu of you, would probably have bitten a policeman, so it's just as well, I suppose. Cooney is up North, I guess I told you before.

Kathy is in the living room with me, cooing and carrying on. She's been doing it for an hour now. It's about time she went to sleep and stopped making semi-offensive noises. Besides, she usually ends a session of good humor with ten minutes of very bad humor, until she cries herself to sleep. It seems to be the way of babies. Her new and enriched formula seems to be setting well. Anyway, she doesn't scream as if she were being stuck with a pin anymore. Again in answer to your query, I strew her with kisses. She is very kissable and I have to kiss something, in lieu of you. Now she is crying. I knew it, I knew it. I just got up to turn her on her stomach. She is still crying, in a desultory way. Now I just wheeled to *[the?]* basket into her room. Now she has stopped crying and is on her way to sleep. Now you know what you have to contend with in opus two and three, etc. Now she is crying again. Oh hell, there's a limit to

graphic descriptions. (P.S. she is asleep).

I'm enjoying So Little Time very much, despite my original criticism of it, which still goes. The Connecticut people are very authentic. I know, because Renee is part and parcel of them. Her farm is quaint and non-utilitarian and she's filled it with spinning wheels turned into cocktail tables and butter churns used for magazine racks. She was always inviting people up for weekends, so that you couldn't turn around in the wild open spaces without tripping over an iced-tea glass. And she would insist on having me at least twice each summer, although I hated to go. None of the people were ever interesting -- they never quite made the grade of being celebrities -- and I was just an ill-at-ease adolescent among a lot of half dead and brittle aspirants to social glory. I was at her place the weekend war was declared between England and Germany. I think I felt worse about it than anybody there. I even went off for a solitary walk and wept a little, in a melodramatic way. Now I know what I was weeping for, though I admit then it might have been more melodrama than prescience. But, darling, it will be over soon, won't it? I'll love you always, no matter how long it lasts.

And so will Kathy.

Jill

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 20, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart --

Again I note sadly that I haven't written you for a day or two. Yesterday was very hectic -- Mom came down Friday night because I had something to do downtown Saturday morning, and somehow, despite her being there and giving a helping hand, I got so far behind that I seemed to be making formula (or cleaning up after the baby had upchucked the formula) at one last night. We were both so exhausted that we didn't wake up till nine this morning, an appropriate hour for Sunday, but now how

am I ever going to get her back on schedule. You are right -- Kathy is remarkable about sensing that I'd like a reasonably unbroken sleep. She invariably now sleeps a straight eight hours at night. Of course, this doesn't mean I get eight hours too -- far from it, because I usually have a little cleaning up to do after she drops off, and then, too, I rather prize those moments when she is dropping off into what I know will be a relatively lasting sleep. They are mine, all mine, which is more than I can say for any other time during the day or night. So I read, smoke a cigarette and perhaps have a bottle of beer (and a hard-boiled egg, as I did last night). I get about six or seven hours' sleep a night. On seven I can feel fairly good, the way I used to feel on eight, which I never considered enough either. But I'm thin and can obviously do with both more weight and more sleep. I try to sleep during the daytime, after her nominal two o'clock feeding. But it takes me hours to drop off and then some asshole always calls me up. I wish there was some way of disconnecting the phone. In New York Paul and I used to have a phone you could stuff toilet paper into. It would deaden the sound but after a while my ear got so sensitive that I could hear the minute, frustrated vibration of the jammed-up bell, and then that would wake me up. My life has been just one long battle to achieve sufficient sleep. I guess it has to do with some not-so-secret rationalization that if I could get enough sleep, I would be overwhelmingly beautiful, and if I were overwhelmingly beautiful, what the hell would I be doing here? I would be in Hollywood with a maid to answer the phone. But I'm not really complaining about status. My only complaint is not having you here, and having a lot of other people around instead.

Daisy is coming out Tuesday, thank God not with Walter, but her coming is over-shadowed now in DeGrazia estimation by the sudden news that Buss, Mir and Jo-jo are coming Tuesday from Washington. Buss is changing jobs. Having not seen his letter and having to rely on Mom's word, it sounds like something like statistics with the OSS. But I'll let you know more when I see them. We are all having a family dinner up north Tuesday night, with the exception of Kathy, whom I shall

gratefully abandon to the efficient hands of Mrs. Thompson, the old nurse, who will come in for the day. Kathy is the [way] I spell it. I'm sorry you don't like Gail. Well, it's still better (I think) than the names of popular songs and semi-precious stones which you came forth with. Oh now I'm being waspish. Anyway, Kathy is doing very well today (it's some hours later now than when I started to write this), considering the irregularity of her schedule and the visitors I've had. Mac and Syb dropped in unexpectedly (dam) but I went ahead imperturbably with my lunch and then her bath. Then they left and Joan and Vesta came expectedly, for a short but nice visit. This was Vesta's weekend treat, to see Kathy. With the hideous frankness of childhood, she told us she like the kitty (Kathy) better than the Rabbit (Mike). Gosh knows why they've been given those animal identifications but they have. I gather, even from Joan, that Kathy is better looking than Mike, but that is how it should be, considering the sexes. Incidentally, I understood very well your feeling about women in war and sex equality. You can't confound me with your paradoxes. So there! Joan and Vesta left about five and I have been puttering about the house, re-arranging books and orange-juicing the baby ever since. Pretty soon now I have to give her her six feeding (at seven) and then feed myself. It seems like I've been feeding her steadily all day long. She's been taking her orange juice from a spoon, like a man, since her fourth week. It's swell that she got used to it that way, instead of via bottle, because it will be so much easier to feed her cereal, which starts in about ten days, after I take her for her second month check-up. My doctor starts infants very early on juice and semi-solid foods. I know the Freudians don't think much of that -- they are very late in their schedules of development, because they think that a baby should indicate a physiological and psychological readiness for all these things, and not be forced. Which is perfectly correct, except that in the case of a kid like Kathy, who is so far ahead in development as it is, it would be silly to wait. However, I wouldn't use her as a criterion for any future children. Kathy has been doing everything ahead of time -- holding up her head, spoon-feeding, laughing like a fool, and now she is just beginning to examine

her hands with interest. She also is beginning to distinguish among faces. If more than one person leans over her, she will look from one face to another. I held the panda up for her to see, and she looked at it, and then when I talked she looked back at me and grinned. What a genius! Joan says too she resembles you. Anyway, she doesn't even remotely look like me. Her skin is even darker now, and her eyes are getting a very dark grey which will probably turn into brown. Her hair is dark brown, what there is of it. It's very soft and pretty, and hangs down in back over her nightdress collar like a *[tramp ?]* or a pansy actor's.

There really isn't much new. Mom went back yesterday afternoon to cook Dad's dinner. Poor gal, she's really torn in her loyalties and duties. She insists it would have been better if I'd lived up North in the neighborhood, but despite some of the difficulties I've encountered in the past two weeks, and my growing distaste for my local friends, like the Mortarboards and the Kerners, I still don't agree with her. I finished *So Little Time* a little while ago and still didn't think much of it, though was vastly entertained. I really don't have much to say today, except to tell you how much I love you and miss you. I've said it so many times before, but I still get a satisfaction out of telling you, and hope you do out of hearing it. I just wish I didn't think you were so wonderful -- then it would make your absence a little more bearable. I know there will never be anybody like you, which isn't a comforting thought at the moment.

All my love -- Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 20, 1944 (A) V-MAIL

Dearest Love,

In response to your query of Feb. 3 "We'll be together soon, won't we, darling?" after much mature consideration, your European branch is inclined towards the solemn affirmative. I am still in the dreary region beyond expletives wherein I cannot

express the hope passionately enough nor the prediction scientifically enough. I can only grind along in doggedness as relentless as any man on earth in my pursuit of the long road home. Beyond all doubt, the happiest day in my life will see me bursting in on your household, bursting gently, I hope, more like that of a Roman candle than an HE shell. Before you can say boo, I'll be rocking the baby, walking you along the lake, tasting your meat loaf and nudging you in the movies. And if these habits are too banal for you, I am willing to do anything. If only I could see you to tell you these things instead of trying to convey all the emotion in writing! I honestly think more of you than everyone else put together even at this late stage of our separation. Even Kathy takes a minor part to your stellar role. I don't feel as if I'm slighting her, however, since I'm sure any love directed at you beams off her brown pate, too. Incidentally, you said that *[words cut off]* hair was long and bushy. Well, I wish I were there to smother myself in it. I would kiss it several times, take a number of deep breaths and expire happily.

I'm not worrying a bit about your taking care of Kathy alone. After all, you took care of me alone, and I was capable of more misbehavior and peregrinations than she - at her present stage, anyway. I should think you would be too proud to speak with anyone with your great milk-production. Most amazing! You're as good as grandmother. Babies are disgusting about the noises they make when consuming food, aren't they? Even when they think they're getting food. Such little fools, too. They'll go after anything and can't tell a thing orally but must wait for the stomach to record whether they're full or famished. Everyone here admits that Kathy is a very prepossessing little girl. Even at 2 weeks and 3 days she looked very much like a person and a hefty person at that. Please send me more pictures frequently. Every new picture means one slightly happier day - slogan for me this year.

I'm feeling well, darling, and expect to be such when we meet, despite the constant dull unpleasantness of life without you. It apparently does not kill one.

Always your only

Al

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 20, 1944 (B) V-MAIL

My Dearest Jill,

It is practically impossible not to write you immediately after getting a letter from you, especially if the letter shows signs that this wicked life and age are not treating the most lovely and sweet girl in an appropriate manner, and, in fact, causing her considerable annoyance and chagrin, not to mention a deterioration in her vocabulary which calls for washing her mouth with soap. I am sorry I can do nothing so practical as kicking unwanted guests down the stairs, terrorizing the dog, feeding the baby, or even giving you kisses in consolation. But know ye here that I bleed mightily for you, darling, and am sorry beyond words that my part as the father of yon buxom baby must miss the curtain call. I am serious and wish to have you believe that: I'm terribly sorry for all little incidents that you must bear and that I might possibly have helped you through.

Anything I write must be the blind leading the blind, because I feel as tired these days as I've felt anytime until now. The full impact of this creeping, petty pace comes down on us here. The illusive town of Cassino stretches prettily out before us but mocks any advances. How many times have I seen it there, languid in the morning mist or crystal clear in the bright afternoon, its windows sharp checkers of black, or dissolving and dying into the dusk, spitting out flashes like blood. So near and yet so far, so quiet and yet so menacing, dead but full of the vermin of mines and machine guns close in. When there is a lull in the fire,, there is such peace that at times I feel like driving straight down highway 6 into the town. A couple of visiting firemen almost did, by mistake. And there is or was the Abbey that I learned to like very much, standing as it did so majestically above the town, untouched by the fury of

cannonading around it. Its change was ghastly, like the beautiful girl from Shangri-La who turned repulsive before our very eyes upon leaving the sacred protection of the valley. The Abbey now looks like any one of the gutted, aged castles that crown many an Italian mountain. People at home can forget Cassino for a week at a time, but every minute we must hark to it. That's why the war seems to move so slowly for us. When you don't have to, you rarely pay attention to a slow-moving action and you don't mind it so much - there are other flashier acts in the three-ring circus of the World War. But we become hypnotized by the events immediately before us.

The afternoon itself is scarcely unpleasant. It almost seems like a Sunday. It is warm in this farm room and what seems to be the beginning of Spring sun is shining through the dirty window-pane. Only quiet paperwork is on the agenda. Foster has just made the best tea and toast on the stove that I've had since leaving your company in America. How wonderful brown, hot, buttered toast is with tea. All in all, the opportunity is great for gently dreaming.

And I have been doing so, blessing you and all my children (all one) and weaving a delicate and connected fabric of remembrances and desires. I thought to myself that in the winter I needed you for your warmth and in the spring to satisfy my Quixotian Want; in the summer you are my companion to the rich harvest of water, sun, and earth, and in the fall you are my reassurance. If you were here, I would take you down to the old water mill, lay you down and trace it all out on your hand.

Aside from the reverie, I ought to acknowledge all the interesting gossip about Gertie, Hubie, Cook et al. Too bad about Gert. She needs a man she can be somewhat reverent towards and towards whom she has great respect, an Abraham Lincoln type. I thought Johnnie's letter excellent, his sense of humor perhaps even improved by marriage. I feel a little pity towards the guys stuck in training camps, though probably they feel the same way towards us. But they don't have such pretty tiny bronze stars to pin on their pockets like we do. They are

called campaign stars, and I have two of them which I got just today. I'm sure that I'll lose them, they're so small.

I had never expected that our baby would be so showered with gifts. You had better wait to see how the war is coming along before getting yourself clothing just like hers. I want to be able to tell you apart when I come home. I figure that at her present rate of growth, unless something happens to stop the catalyzing qualities of your milk, in four months she will weigh 170 pounds and be 6 feet tall. I never thought you would be such a lactic fount but then I never quite approached you from that angle.

I am regrettably behind on my letters to everyone save you. I've been getting a lot of clippings, newspapers, detective stories and magazines lately and it's always easier to play the passive rather than the active intellectual role. Don't you understand how I must feel when it comes to a choice between a fast-moving story and writing a letter? I have only admiration for the determination with which you attacked the problem of acknowledging gifts. Another benefit of being an overseas father - add them all up and you get enough to put in your thumbnail.

I sometimes wonder whether you realize what a heroic role you are actually playing in this whole business, and how capably you have played it. And how superior you are to the larger number of women around you. Really, there ought to be a classification of girls like you called something like "shock troops of the home front." You are mistaken if you think I regard what you are doing as just an ordinary bit of pulling back there. I expect that you understand I find it difficult to make sentimental comments like this. But I can make love to you sentimentally enough and mean it.

Always your

Al (and Kathy's too).

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 21, 1944

Dearest,

I'm sure that there is something insidious about typewritten letters that destroys romance and am taking insurance by scrawling a letter every now and then, viz. now. I don't know whether my hands feel uncoordinated and trembling as I write because I'm cold, because I'm accustomed now to typewriting or because of thoughts of you. I wrote you twice by V-mail yesterday and yet here I come bouncing back, trying to think of something that might interest you and not the censor. Certainly I can be permitted to remark happily on the 16000 planes that have been over Germany in the last 48 hours and the most successful pasting of truck. The last reenforces my feeling that the Japs can be slit open very neatly and sliced up rather than beaten in a bloody slug-fest. Apparently the blitz krieg now finds its proper home in the Pacific. We've taken bloodier losses here in Italy, and no one is breaking his neck in the mad rush to Berlin. It's nice to know that we are forging ahead so well in the Pacific. An old fear of the divisions in this theater was that they would be sent to fight Japan after the European War was finished, so that good news from that theater goes over very well here. I don't think the people in the Pacific ever had that feeling towards the European sector. What do you think of, by the way, when you hear of a figure like 1000 or 6000 planes. I've seen a hundred and fifty pass over my head and it's a very happy sight, believe me. They look magnificent and irresistible. The whole army cranes its neck as one man. People come out of their holes, huts and tents to watch. They make admiring remarks to each other and for an hour, the world feels markedly lighter.

Hartley is blowing enough hot, foul smoke in this room to make it warm. Otherwise the night is pretty cold. I completely bury myself in my blankets at night, breathing inside to help keep warm. About 2 A.M., I'm warm enough to stick my nose out for fresh air and at 4 A.M. not even breathing inside keeps me warm. So I keep rolling and wrapping until it's time to get up

which is unfortunately also the time when the temperature starts to rise. There'll be cheers for the day when the radiator hisses at six and I get up at seven or eight. I haven't slept late in bed now once in the last three months, though I suppose if I wanted to accomplish that mere physical fact, I could so arrange it. I don't think I've really slept late since leaving America. I recall a couple of nine o'clock risings in Palermo.

My pants are getting tighter for me. Do you think I'm getting bigger or is it because they are always washed instead of dry-cleaned? I've still got my pinks with me, which I never wear, and those brown chukkers we bought together in New York last year, which I occasionally wear and still look beautiful. I'm going to wear them when I get off the boat, unless I have to swim back, in which event I won't wear shoes. Irrelevant suggestion for the day: why don't you make yourself an expert on farm lands and farming - so we can get on the land when I come home - with suitable hired help. Someone wrote a book recently, telling about the ease with which he produced everything from yams to hams from a dismal swamp. That's the life for us, *tuttus ab nullo*.

What's our financial status these days, speaking about stupid girls who ask vulgar questions about how much babies cost? Don't include your new financial entanglements. They only cloud the picture. Your reports were going along fine - I could almost understand them even though I'm sure various magpies are carpeting their nest with my war bonds. Your horror of stuffy places would prevent you from putting even dirty money in a closed old vault.

But I love you as no one else could, or will. And I hate to send you only paper kisses as I must. You know for yourself and Kathy that I am always yours.

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 21, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart --

I pick the damndest times to write to you. It's noon, I just got your V-mails of Feb. 6 (ain't it wonderful, the mail service I mean) and Kathy is having a super-doooper crap on the house. I was going to take her shopping in the sun, it being a very nice mild day, but there she is grunting and groaning and getting red in the face on the bath table, and it would be the better part of wisdom to wait until she is through, lest her buggy be soiled. I am feeling very well thank you -- got a good eight hours last night. She is a darling -- she sleeps till about eight every morning from here on in, I hope. And she goes to sleep about 11:30, amid much protest I admit. Her sleeping habits are like mine. However, last night I went to sleep with her. I was even too tired to succumb to my nightly Pabst and a cigarette. She is such a sweet little girl, really and truly. No mother could ask for a better, jollier, healthier baby. She is always smiling, unless she has to cry for something. I held her up to the mirror last night and she laughed at her own image. Don't tell me she doesn't know it's a mirror.

Heck no, I get along fine on your salary. I think I have been consistently spending about twice as much as you earn, but that was because our expenses have been abnormally high, with baby and furniture. But we had saved a lot as you remember, and in January I got a check for 140 from the semi-annual interest on the trust. But I have absolutely no complaints, having very few desires in the material sphere. One thing about being in love and being terribly deprived -- it sets one's sense of values a-straight, at least, the sense of values that will bring one closest to the Kingdom of Heaven, which is where we want to be, I presume. But I would naturally like you to be a captain. Who wouldn't. On second thought, if making you a buck private would bring the war to an end tomorrow, I'd snatch your bars off myself. More later, dear, I think she's finished. I return some hours later, after shopping, bathing and feeding her and then a ten-minute nap for me, broken by Bernice at the back door.

Some day we must get a soundproof room for me to sleep in. I can't even sleep in the bedroom here because a small boy in the apartment above practices the clarinet in his bedroom. It is without doubt the most agonizing sound I have ever heard. I would like to tell his mother about it, considering she has complained thrice to me about noises but they had a hard time in Austria -- the father is a doctor and had to scrub the streets when the Storm Troopers came in -- but they are awful pricks I fear nonetheless. This is an interesting point for you to mull over -- the paradoxical situation that arises when disagreeable people must suffer innocently at the hands of even more disagreeable people. How is a just society to treat them? Grafton is good, isn't he. He has been running a good series, albeit repetitious, on how we are to treat post-war Germany. His thesis is that they must solve their own problems. Our role is to prolong the occupation until they can work out a reasonable solution. I didn't clip this because I was too busy but maybe will get back copies and then send them to you. I had rather hoped you wouldn't have expressed such manifest joy at receiving those clippings I sent in January. It was such work getting them out to you. Standing in post office queues, et al. Incidentally, I never did get the maps from Buss. I'll ask him again tomorrow or whenever I see him this week.

I think it's funny the way you are dogged by dogs. I guess I'll never win my case for having a large and probably ubiquitous dog with us at this rate. I know exactly how you feel about dogs, though I don't feel the same way -- namely that they are funny but there are other things in life, particularly when the dogs in question make a lot of work and trouble. I guess the dogs I've known, with the exception of Cooney, were relatively easy to care for. Cooney is OK too, if we were living in some other building and neighborhood where he had not already gained a certain painful, for me, notoriety.

I am sorry you so steadfastly refuse to believe that your child is a genius. You were always so willing to admit Vic and you were, too. Well, she is. After all, I ought to know the difference between one kind of smile and another. I see enough of her.

I have a half-ass cold, the kind you wish would put up or shut up, and it is very annoying. Half the time I'm not aware of it and the other half I am putting down windows and trying to find something to cover my ordinarily bare feet. I got a very classy pair of white rubber-soled shoes in the neighborhood today. The soles are about an inch thick. They are like moccasins only tie. I like wearing rubber soles around the house because the floors are mostly bare or linoleum covered and I would not like to slip when I am carrying the baby. When I was pregnant I wore rubber soles all the time because once I slipped and it gave me quite a start.

It's funny the way we write the same things to each other at substantially the same time. Yesterday I wrote you that you were wonderful and in today's V-mail from you I find you telling me exactly the same thing. Is it because the language of love is so limited? Only sometimes we've said rather complicated things to one another, and it usually seemed to come out that we said them pretty much the same way at the same time.

I am very discouraged about our progress too. The only hope I have of seeing you within the year is for you to get a leave. Christ I get sore at all the little married folks around here, the young ones I mean. None of them seems half so good as we, half so much in love, half so aware and appreciative of the other. The one thing, too, good about us is that I never felt I needed you because you were so good to me, in the material sense. The fact that you have given me things seems just sort of incidental, a lot of dressing in the turkey (not that I want to belittle my chief source of support at a time when I'm hardly inclined to go out and support myself). But our being together or not being together, or getting married or not getting married, never had to do with anything except ourselves. When Day was so outraged because I was obviously sleeping with you that first Thanksgiving, I told her we weren't married because you were still at school. Actually, I've never told such a big lie before or since. We're the kind of people who can get married and have children when we damn well please, and even when we damn well don't please, and never have to worry about a thing except

our spirits. I don't know why this is. Other people worry with more.

I guess God is taking care of us or would, if he weren't so gun-shy.

All my love

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 22, 1944 V-MAIL

Dear love,

You don't deserve a scant letter tonight. You deserve lots of roses and perfume, dancing and music, and lots of kisses. You can blame it on the gigantic forces of history that I have turned out for one year of our lives to be a half-adequate lover, trying to fondle you properly with bare words and gnashing my emotions beneath the keys of a typewriter. Not that the forces of history would give a damn; they are most indiscriminate. Still you may find consolation in that insofar as I can actively love anything at all in my present paralyzed state I love you. Kathy is well in the running, however, with her latest batch of ten pictures which I found in three of the marvelous four envelopes I opened today from you. I think you're right in saying she resembles me in that photograph, in the eyes, forehead and nose, even as undeveloped as the last is. Perhaps it's the bridge, Grecian and all of that. Not unexpectedly for me, I liked best the pictures of you. Nothing you can say about Kathy can possibly wean me from you. The striking thing was your appearance of extreme youth, apparently about 16 years old, a lot different from your equally beautiful but more mature pictures just before childbirth. They make the responsibilities you have assumed so much more remarkable, and leave me a little shaken in the blind faith with which I regarded you and them. Perhaps I ought to worry more, but I honestly can't find anything that you've done which would demand anxiety in the slightest degree. You seemed to dash off your first baby with the utmost of aplomb, a savoir-faire which is evidence for the theory of reincarnation, of mothers at

least. Really you looked most charming and appealing in the photographs, and if you think I did not observe your legs, you are mistaken. You are wonderful for sending so many.

I've now got letters for each and every day in January save perhaps one or two. I can't possibly acknowledge my agreement to the array of points you made, though I want so much to do so. I would otherwise have to rewrite your letters inserting, "yes, how true" here and there throughout, and would make a great assentive bore of myself. But I think you realize this and don't let my mail silence interrupt your justified impassioned stream of invective against people and things.

Today went in an ordinarily dull way. The Feb. 7 issue of Time came, I got my two packages of cigarettes for today's and yesterday's rations, I shined my shoes, a nearby mountainside has a glorious blaze on it from a shell hit which started a forest fire to light up the night a little, I am pointedly not curious about the origins of the fine turkey à la king we had for dinner tonight, I saw Martin for a while and we discussed some notes we were working up for informational purposes and I gloated over your and Kathy's pictures.

And I am always your - Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 23, 1944 V-MAIL

My darling --

Regretfully I note that another day went by without my writing you. Daisy came in yesterday and in the excitement and female babble, you were neglected. I hate missing a day, though I do it fairly often I guess, not because I fear your wrath but because a day just doesn't seem complete without my telling you I love you at least once during it. Oh well, I thought I loved you yesterday, many times too. It's been lovely to see Day, though I'm quite exhausted from talking so much, and so is Kathy, over whose head the conversations have been swirling. I've never seen her

sleep so hard as she has the past 24 hours. She's asleep now (at ten AM when she is usually awake and clamoring for her bottle). This afternoon Mrs. Thompson is coming to take care of her while Day and I sally into the Loop and thence up north for the great family reunion. I'm very anxious to see Buss and Mir and little Joe. I spoke to Mir on the phone yesterday and Jo said hello too. What a genius. But I could swear Kathy is trying to get some message through the ether herself. When he is in a good mood, i.e., when I am talking to her after a feeding, she makes all sorts of noises and stretches out her arms to me. She likes it best when I say "Yesyesyes" to her very fast. An affirmative personality already, whatever that means. Even Day, no lover of children, is entranced with her and I have a great deal of difficulty keeping them apart so Kathy can get her proper rest. Day knows a lot about the technical details of cleaning a child up but nothing about feeding, so in short, she is no help because keeping a baby clean and dry is a very unimportant part of child care. It is difficult to make people understand that a baby does not have to be diapered every time it is wet. I try to keep diapering down to a minimum. I diaper her when she dries (although I realize that she doesn't cry because she is wet but because there is something else wrong -- she is tired or bored with her present status) and when she has to be cleaned up for other reasons, i.e., for the bath or when she has spilled or spit. But otherwise I just let her be, generally speaking. I think it's true that diapering is over-emphasized and involves the kind of handling that isn't particularly useful in the development of personality. Day is so damned fastidious that if she had a baby she would be changing its entire outfit twenty times a day. Maybe it's fortunate that she doesn't have children. They're not exactly like cars or woodwork -- they don't thrive from waxing and polishing. And I've discovered, too, from trying to delegate authority to Mom and Day, that nobody knows how to feed a child as well as her own mother. I think the analogy between a child and a horse is a just one -- you've sort of got to be able to feel their mouth in order to handle them well. Kathy has little idiosyncracies of feeding -- every child has, I'm sure, that nobody seems to understand except the nurse and me. So I

must just resign myself to standing by and feeding her myself until she's old enough to take food in a fairly consistent way. I guess that will be when she's five or six months old. I really don't know. Anyway, I'm rather proud that I'm acquiring the master's touch. Oh, I didn't mean by any of this that a father couldn't learn to feed a baby just as well as the mother. You better had!

Sweetheart, I have to go now but I love you today, tomorrow and always.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 23, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest,

Perhaps these are the beginnings of the spring rains or a sign of spring or something. At any *[rate]* it is pouring down and cold to boot. In a way I asked for this sort of thing when I asked to be placed with an army rather than at one of the urban stations. Probably I am learning a little less about the economic situation but I am learning more about the army, and I am still not uninterested in that subject even after these two years. Really, though, I don't care too much where I am as long as I'm not with you. I take that back - in the next war I'll join the navy where you can live like a gentleman and always have hot coffee. A friend who was up to the beachhead enjoyed his sea trip as he would a vacation, plenty of food and comfortable beds and chairs, nice clean air and shelter. Even the enemy fire was nicer to take aboard a ship where there was always a hefty piece of armor to get behind. I can't imagine how much different war would be if there were always hot water running in the tap. And the war is so clear-cut, like it is in the air, no civilians around to mess it up, you go into it comfortably and come out of it comfortably, a cup of hot chocolate on clean linen for jangled nerves. Yes, my dear, it'll be "avast and clear the deck, pipe Lt. De Grazia aboard!" Cart his clothes down to the ship's laundry, draw him a

hot bath, shine his shoes, give him a drink in the saloon, a book from the ship's library, the menu for supper. Now wake him up.

A wet, muddy messenger just came and I told him that I was writing my wife about joining the navy. He agreed in an obscene way. He brought in the intelligence report which tells you what the army is facing in a grim sort of way, facts and figures.

I am reading Willkie's *One World* which I have known hitherto through reviews and acid comment. I find it fresh, honest and innocent. How competent those theories are to flourish on earth I have yet to learn. But I am willing to know and meanwhile do find it most cheering to see such Christianity openly espoused by an influential man. I like it and am quite willing to read the book. Certainly he is anti-imperialist and yet he is not pacifist and weak. In other words, he believes in cooperation passionately but until complete world unity arrives, we must remain powerful. People have not gotten around to the stage where they respect properly humility as a national virtue, not the least of whom are the Russians.

I have looked at all my new pictures a number of times since yesterday. More than ever am I the proud father. Give Kathy a fond antiseptic kiss for me, dearest, and take many more for yourself. I love you, as always. Your Al

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 24, 1944

Dearest,

Today was periodical day in my young and momentarily dull life. All at once came about twenty copies of the Chicago Daily News from October and November, plus the January issue of *Private Maroon*. The papers still prove interesting but I really think they ought to be stopped. They make up such a huge burden for the postal service for one thing.

I located indirectly several more old friends in *Priv. Maroon*. It's

nice to know where they are. I found out that Sol Wiener who used to be my NYA assistant and was a swell guy is now an ensign and participated in the landings in Italy. I remember writing him a letter of recommendation to the navy on that very subject.

The papers seem prodigious when you're not used to them. No paper in Europe, including England, has one tenth of the bulk of the News. [*In pencil in the margin: "Biggest paper in Italy or Africa is four pages."*] Yet they seem to get everything said and done. America looms more prodigal the more one stays away and is subjected to the world of poverty outside. And all the languorous young models, fur coats, tweed suits, and knick-knacks are incredible. It's not that we resent them so much as that we are amazed by them, by their strangeness among other things.

Dabby got hold of a nudist cult magazine somewhere and in reading through it came across the enclosed letter to the editor which he gave me. It is one more item for your mental file on anything being patriotic. That magazine, too, seemed out of this world, or at least out of the world around here where normal people are striving desperately to keep their lives from being wrecked. It's an easy going, unwarlike culture that allows such deviations from the line of national effort. By that I mean that when a society is really pressed terribly, those things just vanish. People are shocked into being realistic. At any rate, we all laughed ourselves sick over the magazine, the letters, the silly, gaunt male and female nudes that gallivanted about the rustic settings, and the noble "natural" philosophy behind it. Someone interjected the comment half-seriously that that sort of activity was fun. Not without pleasant memories, I answered that it was, but not when obfuscated by a pathological doctrine which was based on exhibitionism and voyeurism.

I shall also insert a letter that reached me this morning from Jerry Ross. I've already answered him. That's the first direct communication we've had since last October, which though it feels just yesterday, is already four months gone. It is very

comforting, this quick passage of time coupled with the immutability of my attitudes towards you and home. If my passion for you weren't so warm, I could say that my love was frozen in ice. But I can't, can I? But whatever the figure, the fact remains.

I had an idyllic day in the country today. It was a gusty day, beating about the tent in a frenzy. Just the kind of day that inspires the appetite. And apparently the QM, too, because we had pork chops for lunch and steak for supper, I repeat, pork chops and steak! I am not one to deny that our food is the best in the world. Only an ungrateful dog could fail to be thankful for his nationality at that meal. And between times I took a bath, a sort of drafty bath inside canvas, but very playful canvas which would give a great flap and let in a twenty-mile-an-hour wind. Finally, to make you realize what a plush life I am leading and how much I shall ultimately sacrifice by leaving it for you to prove my love, I replenished my stock of cigars the other day, so that today I could even whip out a stogie with a grand flourish and give it to cigar-smoking, egg-shaped, German-speaking, radio-rabble-rouser Hans Wallenberg. Hans sends you his best in return.

My reading for fun, commencing this evening, is a collection of short mysteries starring Father Brown, by G. K. Chesterton. I wish it were possible to say that I am snug and contented but I can't. I can only say what I say when I am most uncomfortable, and that is that I miss you beyond words. Or beyond anything. I wouldn't be able to express it even if I were to kiss you a thousand times. It's unutterable and unintelligible, another life, perhaps, as different from this one as this world from the next, but so connected by the false common senses that the quality of the difference is not perceived - as if death of the body did not separate life on earth from life in the other world, but the whole transference were consummated by merely taking a walk.

All my love to you, dearest, and to my daughter my best and most tender regards. Your -- Al

J. D. Ross to Al February 6, 1944

Dear Al:

Just spoke to Frank Kaufman on the telephone who brought greetings from you and news of your general whereabouts. I've been wanting to write you for the past week, every since I had word that you are a father. Herewith, my heartiest congratulations.

Frank probably told you about my new job. It's keeping me plenty busy and I'm enjoying it and this place thoroughly. True, I'm not forward -- which is what I want eventually -- but this is a welcome relief after my first long and boring sojourn. This city teems with hospitality; one meets people everywhere, makes friends, goes to parties, in between the million duties of keeping a radio station going.

Will you very be heading this way? Do let me know ahead of time and I'll see to it that you're handsomely entertained in a manner befitting the most recent papa in our family!

Best regards and give Jill my congratulations and love when you next write.

Jerry

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 25, 1944

Darling Jill,

I got a letter from Dad today dated the twelfth of this month saying you were well and that mom was going down to visit you

for the week-end. He said you both were making a great fuss over the baby and said that he was just waiting for the day when he could bounce her around as grand-daughters should be bounced around. I'm waiting for the day myself when I can give her the treatment a father should bestow on her, whatever that is -- probably to grin sheepishly at her.

I spent part of the day at a division out of the line. They're just taking it easy, just living. Their camp is pitched in one of the infinite number of pretty camping sites this country affords. There was just a slight softness of spring today in the air. It is raining this evening and that feeling is gone. I don't know how I will contain myself from writing the most fantastically romantic poetry in another month. Perhaps by then, I'll be so busy rushing up to Berlin that I won't have time to think of anything save traveling - I hope.

It's remarkable how much miscellaneous reading I've been accomplishing. We get a lot of reports on political subjects, as well as the military and fictional stand-bys. There isn't much danger of my mind going to pot intellectually. For example, that news digest, in which appeared the speech I sent you, comes out once a week, covers all the newspapers in Europe and gets to us fairly rapidly. Then, all of a sudden the FCC reports started to come through. The latter are excellent and very useful in the work being done here. Their analysts are most competent. Buzz' stuff is very good.

I was able to place where we live exactly when you mentioned the open lot we used to cut across on the icy mornings. Herz thought it highly amusing when I showed him the picture of the building and said in all seriousness, "Apparently that's where we live." Thinking of that lot and these cold walks reminded me of other less cold walks along other streets. I somehow recall Blackstone Ave. as one of my favorite streets to walk with you, especially when you were living with that Southern family. Those were beautiful, peaceful evenings! If the world would only take off its uniform, so that we might have more of them.

I am all alone in the tent tonight. Too bad you can't be here. I could feed you some Nescafe and there is a good hot fire in the stove. My cot is very comfortable and well-blanketed, if narrow, and the rain has a comfortable sound to it now. I blush to hint more darkly what I would be up to. But you would probably get a run in another pair of your stockings.

I wouldn't like that either, because silk stockings cost \$5,00 in Napoli. If I can get into Rome early I may be able to buy you some more. I hadn't quite meant for mom to get so many of the last batch, though I know how pleased she must have been.

Churchill's latest speech wasn't too happy, was it? The Germans are doing their best to console themselves on the thought that there may not be a real second front after all. I think they're doomed to disappointment and am just as happy that they will get a greater shock when it does come. I have a \$50 bet with Martin that the war against Japan will end this year, made three months ago. I shouldn't make such rash bets. Well, if I save ten dollars a month from my pay I'll be able to cushion the shock if it must come.

I can hardly wait to get that book of Borgese and the New Yorkers. I haven't seen a copy of the New Yorker since Christmas. This evening, in one of the last November's Daily News, I came across an article by Harpo Marx the great inventor. He has a wonderful idea to put cleats on the face of dice for use in a rocky terrain. Just the thing for Italy.

I enjoyed Kathy's mark in one of your letters, but really isn't she getting old enough to write a letter herself? Only a look at her clenched jaw and tightly-shut eyes is sufficient to tell that she is grappling with weighty problems. Or maybe she's trying to figure out how to get more milk out of you and how to postpone that critical day when she must start slurping it out of a glass.

In any event, give her my love. Many kisses, darling.

Love, Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 26, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

I'm still trying frantically to answer four of your letters that have arrived the past four days -- days full of relatives as you probably know. I read them, re-read them, make mental notes, take written notes. But every time I sit down to write the phone rings or the baby wants something. I don't know where to start, so forgive the disjointedness of the following. As ever, I was somewhat confused by your comments on representation. I don't think we ever met on common ground on that subject, possibly because you were in the middle of evolving a radical theory on the subject when you were snatched off and as a result you're using definitions that, through lack of time, have only been made clear to you and maybe Gosnell. Anyway, I'd like to know what the hell you make of Congress's disgraceful behavior in overriding the president's tax veto. If they are representing the public, which I rather doubt because I refuse to believe most people are as venial as all that -- they are deliberately misinterpreting their mission.

I liked your description of the battle scene around the town of blank. Yes, that's how it came to me. I quote --"I'm really attached to blank for my work, that's the blank on the main front ... Blank is helping assault Cassino these days. I never saw a more peaceful scene than blank on our side of the river near the town of blank..." The dogs! They cut out some nice things you started to say to me on the other side of the page, as a result. This is only the third letter that's ever been mauled, however. To answer the rest of the letter (I have to do this systematically or it won't be done at all) I shall start collecting chocolates and cigars at my earliest opportunity. Your Dad suggests LaPalina. I'll also tell Time about your new address. Your subscription to the News was only for three months, says Mom. It has probably been buried already without your ever seeing the body. For your edification, when I do get the News, which is infrequent because I get the Sun delivered and hardly have time to read that, I read the woman's page first. I hang my

head in shame. How did you know I like gruesome fiction? I love stories about monsters and man-eating plants and lepers and psychopathic killers. Day and I sat up till three this morning talking and one of the subjects we covered was our mutual love for *Weird Tales* (the magazine -- which I no longer read though she does) and weird tales, generically. Buggy girls are we. Incidentally, I was very sorry to see her go. We had a nice time together, mostly talk talk talk. She also took over a couple of feedings. My best birthday present was being able to take a three-hour nap that afternoon. She didn't wake me for the six PM feeding but did it herself. My birthday makes no impression on me anymore. I actually forgot all about it until about noon of that day. I didn't get many presents, for which I was grateful. Presents are beginning to bore me, Kathy and I have gotten so many the past few months. Day gave me a handbag, Unk sent a table cloth and napkins, very dashing and in good taste too, Irmie knitted me a pair of pretty white gloves. That was about all, I repeat, Gottseidank. Day and I get more intimate as the years pass by. She actually confessed that she thought Walter was more dependent on her than she on him, and that they used to fight. I think that underneath it all, I long felt about Day the way one does about one's parents -- in some respects they are infallible. I think some things about me surprised Day -- as well as me, to wit, my efficiency with the baby. I didn't realize I had a system until Day unintentionally threw me off one day. She thought the baby ought to be bathed in the morning (I usually do it right before the two feeding) and as a result the baby was so exhausted she slept through a couple of feedings. I don't know why that is. Most kids get bathed in the morning but she's just too sleepy. Or maybe I am and she's just being obliging. I don't think I would try so hard to do things right if you weren't away. I sort of feel that I'm a trustee of the baby -- that I'm keeping her on ice for you, and therefore have to be very very careful. She seems to be more your baby than mine, possibly because she resembles you and not me. I wouldn't think she was my child at all except that Day pointed out she has a small red patch at the base of her skull, a hereditary birthmark among Ops. I have it too but the hair covers it. So

would her hair if she had more. I wish I could give you more information about her eyes. They're just no color at all, just very dark. Mir says they will be brown. I don't know really. Mir, Buss, Dad and Mom came over last night about 10:30 from Dad's concert and stayed a short while. Day thinks your father is the nicest, most attractive man. I wouldn't exactly say her estimation is correct, knowing that he can be pretty un-sweet at times, but you can hardly blame her because he really knocked himself out to be nice to her. Either because he really likes me or because he loves you so much, or because he may have guilt feelings about prejudice, he has paid me a great deal more attention than he does to most of the people who come around. And that attitude holds over to my family, apparently, as well as to such friends of mine as he's met, i.e., Gerson and Rosable. I think it's awfully nice of him, whatever his reasons are. I guess he's pretty pleased about the baby too.

I'm ashamed to tell you that I have only taken a quick glance at one of the Encyclopedias and that my chief contact with them has been picking them off the floor, whither they occasionally fall with a resounding crash. It's sheer lack of time, not interest. I never even got a third of the way through looking at the book of Goya etchings I bought you for Christmas. The past week I haven't even had time to take a bath every day, which may bring a sardonic smile to your chapped lips but which horrified my sister, who is practically compulsive about cleanliness. She insisted all the baby's blankets were filthy though I couldn't see anything wrong with them and tossed them all into the laundry hamper saying she would wash them. Needless to say, they're still there. I am writing this sucking a lemon. My milk still hasn't disappeared and I am trying to cut down on drinking until it does. Ergo the lemon, to wet these parched lips. Don't think your child is being gypped. It's a lot easier for her to take the bottle now, since her jaws are stronger and particularly since I've punched a lot of holes in the nipples so that the milk practically squirts in her eye. I can make myself squirt in her eye too, and have done so on occasion. It's a very vulgar sight.

I love you - more tomorrow.

OOOXXX Jill

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 27, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Since I have vowed on my honor as a Brownie of Troop 103 (Local, New York) to write you every day, I have abandoned house and baby to do so. The former is dusty, the latter is damp. It is noon Sunday and I haven't diapered her since midnight last night, when I got my fill of it. She always picks a night when I am thoroughly exhausted to decide to go to the john and spit up all her bottle at one fell swoop. I vow the room was ankle-deep with stuff. And then she lies there, while I ruefully mop milk off my face and chortles away. I not only had to change her from the skin out, give her a bath in the bathroom sink because her bath-table was floating away, but clean up floors, furniture et all. She was in such a good mood she refused to take any more bottle, so I let her go to sleep and at five she was up and around. Fortunately she took her bottle then without casualties and played quietly in her crib (the basket has busted -- that brings the score up to four -- the desk chair, the new chair and the dining room table are also non-functioning -- ah, this victory furniture -- such victory shouldn't happen to a German) and I slept until eleven. Then I gave her another bottle, fed myself and here we are. I can circumvent diapering by putting knitted wool pants over her diapers. They are called soakers and are just that. Very effective. They keep her reasonably warm and keep me from having to diaper her more often than I care to. Right now she is playing in her crib again. Correction please. She has started to whimper a little. I guess I'd better make her happy. But she really is a good child. She stays awake for hours muttering to herself and smiling now. I think she is going to talk early. She makes so many little sociable sounds already. At the same time, she is well able to stay by herself without screaming for attention, like other babies (what other babies? My basis for comparison is rather limited.)

Your postwar plans, which center about bathroom and bed, intrigue and appeal to me. It's been a long time since I've viewed the bathroom as a place other than a receptacle for

damp diapers and a dull rendez-vous between me and the inner woman. And ages have passed since I've flicked a wet towel at somebody or been flicked at. I tried stinging Cooney but he's not much fun. He gets too scared or else tries to bite back. You are the perfect flicker and flickee. Just the proper amount of indignation is manifested, but no blood drawn. But you are going to have a hard time enjoying the solitary comforts which the modern john affords. If in the days when we should have had our fill of each other's company (a patent impossibility as the rest of this sentence should prove) you used to complain that I would never give you a moment alone, you can imagine how I shall dog your trail when you come back. You'll have to bolt and double bar the bathroom door. And perish forbid that you'll ever get a minute to read the paper or the latest APSR (go on, laugh). Your powers of concentration will be dimmed with loving and irrelevant words (there are two of us now to do it, too), your eyes will be made astigmatic with kisses, and finally, the paper will be crushed and torn under the impact of 120 lbs of affectionate female hurled at your lap. Well do I recall the running jumps I made at you in the past. Past Commando, past nymphomaniac, I must have been hell on wheels. You must view the future with apprehensiveness, to say the least.

I love you. J.

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 28, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

Tomorrow is Leap Year Day and I regret deeply that you won't be around to offer me some sort of amorous inducement. Herz is in an even worse position since one of his few golden opportunities to snatch a bride is wasted on the tent and myself. I thought I denoted a note of rancor in his leaflet today. For most of today, I felt as if I had been clubbed. The assailant was the demon rum, the dissolving agent at a drinking bout last night. The party was a classic of stag drunks, a group of men all

with hidden talents which came out as the cognac went in. There was singing (shouting), violence to property and person, and some remarkably good specimens of solo dancing. Everyone at one time or another was ushered onto the floor by his guiding spirit and committed to the dance. Tom Crowell and Jim Clark were best, Tom with a complete repertoire of old burlesque songs and soft shoe steps, Jim with a gay, graceful sprite of spring affair. The publisher of the NY Post whose name has slipped me at the moment made a most beautiful partner for Tom in a couple of steps straight from old vaudeville. I can't possibly describe how funny they were, typical old New York specimens. My modest contribution was bit parts in a couple of spontaneous and united buck and wings. I did somewhat better on the ballads, and was pretty good in the knife-throwing contest, though when I broke the bone handle of my knife, the latter degenerated into chair-throwing. Finally, Tom, who had been sweet and jolly all evening, knocked Hindley down, which sobered up Hindley who was then able to drive our car. We got lost, infuriated a guard and finally got to bed. This morning I didn't feel so good.

Now before you condemn me, let me say, dearest, that these occasions are very rare, that I do not like to drink, and that I was able to let off a lot of steam. Your beloved husband has not become a drunkard but remains infatuated and faithful to you. Especially since two two-page V-mails came from you today, Feb. 13 and 15, as well as a letter from Ed. First of all, I can't help feeling a little depressed with your problems, those of boredom and those of bringing up baby, not to mention your social relationships with "too many people." I wish I could help you with all three, but I'm afraid all I can do is to keep writing letters directed at making life a little less impossible. I feel all three myself, the second in a negative way and can do less about the people and the boredom than you can. The knowledge that you love me does more than anything else to give a tang to the present. Kathy is beyond all doubt my idea of the most privileged person in the world today. Imagine spending six hours so close to you! I'm always half-famished for want of

you.

Bill and Elizabeth are going through some rough weather now, I agree. Still they are glad to be getting the baby. They knew what they wanted and what they would be probably be up against. They've had no tougher a time than we've had. They've had an almost idyllic life at his camp, so much superior to the physical conditions under which we lived and did not live together during my life in the army. And as to his chances of capture, etc., we're on the offensive in the Pacific now and our men are not likely at all to be taken. He may well do a staff job, in which event he'll have more or less the same experiences as I've had. If he is in a rifle company, then there's more to worry about, but still I'd prefer to be fighting the Japs than the Germans. The latter are a lot tougher. The disparity between our and Japanese losses in the Pacific is fantastic. Finally, I'm not so sure that the Japanese war will take much longer than the big show here, with the way things are going in the Pacific now. *[Note: Not bearing out Al's optimism, Bill Evers will be killed at the landing at Iwo Jima.]*

I remember with a faint regret the day you said you were going to buy a sleek convertible Buick with your money. Cheer up; you'll still have a chance. It won't hurt to keep it in the bank for a while. There is not a thing you can do with money in the way of investment without taking long risks and studying a lot of dull figures. Therefore, I am again your completely devoted but inutile husband. Just don't leave it around the house. I appreciate your kind thought about letting Ed have some money to go to school. I'm waiting for some details from him regarding the various alternatives which may present themselves. Rather than his waiting around for a year or doing a routine job, I'd prefer to see him join the navy.

Both Martin and myself highly appreciated your informed treatise on why babies cry. It sums up apparently that you just can't win. And me, I wouldn't mind even hearing her cry. It looks as if Earl is going to escape for a while to the glamorous Indies. I think I told you that I had gotten a letter not so long ago from Borgese which he wrote while he was at the University of Puerto

Rico. It'll be a U. of C. faculty playground. Tomorrow morning I shall on my word send you a copy of Time mag. and a cartoon clipping. The New Yorker has not yet arrived. You must have had a fine time with Daisy. What did she think of the baby? Did it look like Walter to her? Did Kathy burp vulgarly at her? You say Kathy's hair is still black. Are her eyes still nondescript?

We are amusing ourselves here on the words on that baby-talk song which was printed in Time mag. Hindley swears the country is going to pot but we all enjoy rolling it off our tongues. See also the pictures of the little girl concerned - she looks like the innocent destroyer, cuter than words. -- I love you for all I'm worth, darling.

Your Al

HE has a small problem, impetigo, dirty, no, an itinerant barber is wandering among the soldiers cutting hair, scrapes his cheek with an infected razor. It itches and spreads. He applies salves, stops shaving, begins to look like Bill Mauldin's famous cartoon infantryman, G.I. Joe. The nuisance clings and spreads. He chaperones a truckload of men down to see what Pompeii is like; it happens that at this very moment Mount Vesuvius is erupting. They watch it as they drive along, shooting a column of tephra flaming into the sky, exploding white steam clouds, carrying a delicate white collar of snow, red beads of lava trickling over it and down its flanks. The men are impressed by the Roman pornography; he had seen it before the War.

His face still blotches and itches, and now his neck. He stops by an evacuation hospital and there meets Dr. Stillerman whom he knew at the University of Chicago, who says Kupperman is here, too, so there were now these two acquaintances who said why don't you stay for a couple of days and clear it up. He sends Pvt. Long back to bivouac and climbs into a bed under canvas. He is awakened near dusk by a monotonous loud drawling voice saying, "There's a real soldier. He sure looks like he's been through hell. It's awful to have to live that way," and poking a long nose this way and that from the gloom of his corner of the tent, like a groundhog sensing the air, seeing who was listening, nobody, judging from the motionless lumps in the beds, with

their own world somewhere else, except for the Newcomer, who was embarrassed; he hated pretense and was proud of shaving regularly; he did not approve of G.I. Joe's couture; he stirred visibly to signal the long-nose to shut up. "I reckon he's waking up now," the man says, raising himself on his elbow, his horse-face sympathetically pointed that way. "How do you feel, Lieutenant, not so good, huh?"

"I'm O.K."

"That's good. It'll be time to eat soon." He espied an orderly outside: "Hey, orderly, what about some lights in this tent?" Then.. "That orderly is a real funny character. He's got a good deal going for him. You know, he goes into Napoli every week. He picks up medical supplies and he spends the night there every time, he has a regular girl. I told him, 'Hey, boy, you better watch out who's laying your girl the rest of the week, a big buck nigger, I bet.' And he says to me, 'No, sir. I have her scared with my medical supplies. She thinks I can tell when she's had a man.'.. This orderly took a blood test from her when he first met her and had the lab give him a report with her name on it, so she thinks he can check her up any old time. Ain't that a bitch?" There are several amused sounds. "I tell you, it's something! He said it to me, too. You know that creek down the hill right over there? Well, here were these soldiers coming into the hospital with V.D., they get treated, but when it's time to leave they still have it. It beat the hell out of the medics how come. You know what? These guys, when they were let out to walk around, they headed down to the creek where these Italian women are washing clothes. A couple of these have the clap, and give it right back to them." He laughs, but gets serious. "You know, whenever I get next to one of these Italian girls, I tell her, now don't you go around with any niggers, you understand, you hear me? They say, yeah, sure, O.K... but they're just pigs, they do it anyway, .. they say, 'Capitano, you crazy,' pointing their finger at their head."

Nurses apply ointments, sulpha, but the Lieutenant had already done this. He plays volley ball with the medics; they are good at it. He watches the two doctors operating on brain wounds. Kupperman, he says, I saw a letter from you in *Private Maroon*, the alumni magazine. He raises his eyebrows questioningly above his white mask; he doesn't remember writing. Well, it wasn't much except a thank you note. He

remembers.

Back in the ward there is a flurry and the orderlies bring in a lieutenant who is laughing loudly and put him to bed, saying, stay there now until the doctor sees you. He had been sitting with several men that night in a half-destroyed villa, he tells the other beds, listening to the sound of an airplane overhead. (Our Man knows the place, the very house, on the lee of Mt. Trocchio.) Then there was a whistle, an explosion, and all his natural functions stopped dead; when the smoke cleared, there rested in the middle of the room a large armed bomb breathing heavily. He dove out a window and began running wildly he didn't care where, mines or no mines, until they caught up with him and brought him to the hospital. He giggled and chortled as he talked.

The Lieutenant is disgusted with his own case and moves to a backup hospital farther south where he is given anti-biotic injections and the volcano is beautiful by day and night. He heals quickly and amazingly. He shaves and reveals the miraculous radiance of a Saint. So he departs for the Front, finding it just as he had left it. Worse. Civilians have been finally evacuated for good, under military escort. Maybe the combatants just couldn't feel like proper warriors with the women hanging out a wash and the men plowing.

End of February 1944 letters

