

JILL TO AL MARCH 16, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Gosh, I'm bushed. Don't ask me why. Just the normal days' activity, somewhat accordion-pleated by the fact that I went back to sleep after the six o'clock feeding, which strangely enough took place at six this morning, and couldn't get anything done I should have gotten done this morning. As a result I have been busy as a bee ever since. Kathy has been crying a lot too, always very enervating. I was torn between considering it just the manifestations of a spoiled child and the possibility that she was hungry. So I called the doctor, acting on the latter, and he gave her a richer formula and more cereal. As if I could get down the amount she was already supposed to have. He told me to put sugar in it and I must say, it worked very well at tonight's feeding and she took a lot more than she usually does. Nice doctor, pretty doctor. I guess he is very good, though at first I thought he was nasty and out for the dough. However, he charges just a lot for the first visit, after that it's three dollars a throw. I don't think that's bad, and he was rather pleasant over the phone today. She just let out a cry but by the time I got there she was back to sleep again. I have to go in every time she cries because now she can work her way around her crib, which is a lot of territory because it's big enough for a four-year-old, and jams herself up in one corner, causing her to rage excessively. And I thought she would never cry! But I think it was hunger this week because she is back to sleep again. I dashed over to Woodworth's today, the object of which mission I'll describe presently, and when I came out she was crying. I told her she was a spoiled little brat, as indeed it seemed to me then, at which moment a soldier came along and said, "Don't you call the poor child names." Already she rouses the protective instinct in males, soldiers, anyway.

Bowed and cowed by the amount of documents, bills and forms that creep up on the solitary housewife, I decided to buy a paper file, which I am now filling up with old income tax forms, bank statements and miscellaneous trash. The trouble is that the

chief category will be "Miscellaneous", leaving me as unable to find anything as before. You have no idea the amount of things I have to take care of. Your life may be crude, but it's simple, I hope. And my efforts to keep things straight are always thwarted, probably by my natural sloppiness, despite such pathetic efforts as this file, for instance. I'm sure it won't make things any simpler but I can try. I bet Daisy never has this trouble. Some people are just naturally neat, I've decided. Daisy can take fifteen minutes to get dressed and she looks as if she's just stepped out of Elizabeth Arden's. It takes me three days to get slicked up enough to go to the Loop, and by the time I get there my hair looks as if I'd just come back from a cruise on a tramp steamer and my face is as red and shiny as if I'd run the distance. It's a type, I guess. I still look good in slacks, though. In a moment of narcissism today, I measured myself and was pleased to note I am again at one with Venus, or maybe it's Kathryn Hepburn. Anyway, not to belabor the issue, I think my figure is better than it was before. Okay, slaver away. I slaver for you, if that's any consolation. I was momentarily consoled by the terrific blasting of Cassino which is once again in the headlines after several months' neglect. But today has the Germans hanging on in the ruins. Will it ever end. Johnny said he though it might be a stalemate in Italy permanently, that victory will have to be achieved through other fronts. Maybe he is right. Carl Hell, to change the subject which I didn't want to do but my mind wanders, said he would love to hear from you and would write you. His address is The Whitehall, Chicago. I got another letter from Liz Evers. She is back in Boston. Bill left a couple of weeks ago, and is waiting for the baby. She doesn't want to stay in Boston after the baby comes and wants me to live with her in New York. I can't think of anybody I'd rather live with than you, but after fixing up this place here with you in mind, and with my natural dislike for New York as a place for people with little money and children, I can't see myself making a change. New York would be fun if I didn't have Kathy.

Tom Kelly was in town for a week but I didn't get to see him. He is on his way to an Air field in New Hampshire, to replace a Wac

as he says dryly. He is still a buck private. May thinks it's because of his union affiliations -- the same thing happened to another friend of theirs in Gary. Do you think that could be so?

Walter's brother Stanley, a dopey well-intentioned guy who is a j.g. and has been teaching at Tower Hall these many moons, called up the other day and wanted your address. A friend of his is missing in action from the Fifth Army and he wants to get in touch with as many people as he can, to find anything out if anything is to be found. He's probably a prisoner if he's missing, don't you think?

You asked me if I thought one V-mail page was skimpy. Gosh no, not if it's typed. I just write more when I start running off at the mouth, as today. Actually, one page is enough to say the important things, to wit, that you are healthy and you love me, or vice versa, that we are healthy and that we are totally infatuated with our respectively husband and father. Anyway, it's like asking if you'd rather have black or green olives when you want a full-course dinner. Your letters are divine but anything less than you is inadequate (I know you caught on the first time).

Virginia and I were sitting over a coke in the kitchen today and we heard these amazing baby noises from the front of the house. My God, Virginia cried -- she is the hysterical type -- your baby is talking. WE both rushed to her room and found her fast asleep. Careful analysis of the situation revealed the radio was on, with some young Salerno butter cookie pusher about to vend her evil wares. What a jolly jolly laugh we had.

Kathy is discovering she has big noisy feet, like her mommy's, and has taken to pounding them on the canvas top of the bath table, whence I leave her strapped at intervals when I am drying out her bed. It makes a terrible racket, for one so young. I have taken to calling her Thumper, after the little rabbit in Bambi. I told her most of the unsad parts of Bambi last night, and she was fascinated. A bright kid. Well, I have to get back to my files.

Many smacking kisses, bearish hugs and loud sighs from your

diligent clerk (pronounced clark). Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 16, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest -

You should be deeply envious that I'm not where you can stroke my beard. It's as soft as rabbit's fur. Already people are suggesting that I maintain it when the infectious cause departs, which it shows signs of doing any day now. The striking growth even now is enough to make the most hardened nut quiver. Opinion is divided as to whether I look more like a character from Mauldin's cartoons of soldiers, a Sickly or Sinbad the sailor.

Today was bright and sunny. I had a chance to enjoy it fully in a joyride that took me, another officer, and the omniscient Long to a most beautiful mountain village. We hiked a long way up after the machine had to stop, up hundreds of stone stairs to a castle on top around which clustered some houses, separated from those below, though a part of the same general community. This separation of villages into parts is a common feature of the Italian country side, as Dad will tell you. We talked for a few minutes with the priest of this isolated, peaceful community. He was a youngish, tall, slender man, scholarly looking and friendly. He had traveled to New York for the exposition in 1939, to Chicago for the Eucharistic Congress in 1935, and other places as well. You might say he was a striking anomaly in that remote hamlet. But it really isn't so. Priests like that are frequent. They are most interesting people who can maintain a world view and yet live quietly in complete rurality. Without a man like him, the village would not be nearly the community it is. Its culture wouldn't be nearly as well preserved. Those priest-baiters who think that priests only live by their witchcraft and are wholly bad are blindly prejudiced or hopelessly misguided as to the function of the priest in such a society. Granted the semi-medieval status of such communities,

their incomplete modernization, the retention of all the ancient practices and the incorporation of comparatively few new ones, the loss of such a priest would be irreparable. To tear him away would be like rooting out the columned and arched doorway of an ancient home and inserting only a pre-fabricated wood door with a modern doorbell. An educated man under the capitalist system wouldn't stay in a town like that. He couldn't stand its limitations. And unless you are interested in people's souls, what concern would you have for such a town? In short, the priest there is performing the same useful functions that justified and glorified the Catholic Church through the thousand years of the middle ages. To start a general reform of a social system by discarding one of its most useful and beneficial parts would be folly.

Indeed, after spending a few minutes in that doubt, I began to feel any changes would be misguided and felt like one of those neo-romanticists whose flesh crawls at the sight of ancient beautiful things, medieval jewels sheltered from history in some geographical nook. I promise that I will bring you there some day. I couldn't do anything else if I were to enjoy it fully. For I thought of you, not generally or infrequently, but with every sight worth comment, with every bit of quaint ironwork, of cobbled pavement, and for each snowy peak that jutted into the blue sky.

Little Kathy will need a sturdy pair of legs to keep up with her parents, I'm afraid. But with her heritage, she'll probably love romping through snowy, forested mountains and picking up twigs for the family fire.

I had fun earlier in the day visiting the group I used to belong to. Beauclerk is heading it now. Only several of the old men are still with it. It was a very pleasant visit.

What do you think about the terrific pasting of Cassino? I guess they figured if we could drop such a tonnage on one Marshall atoll to save lives, there was no reason for not doing the same here.

I am, as always, completely in love with you. Many kisses.

Al

AL TO JILL MARCH 18, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest,

I've had typewriter in hand for about two hours now, intending to write you, but first Time mag and then a bull session intervened. The Feb. 28 issue just arrived. It has an article on the Cassino fighting and the abbey bombing which are of especial interest to us here. The bull session which we just completed concerned travel in the United States, various non-coms, privates and your lieutenant participating. We started to enumerate the wonderful train whistles we'd like to hear again and to discuss the various smooth and comfortable trains, and then went into harrowing tales which practically all soldiers have on the horrors of train-riding from army camps. I think the mess sergeant, Wangerin, did the best job with his stories of the trains around Fort Bragg, though I had a couple of good Tenn. stories. Just thinking about them, however, helped to dissipate the nostalgia we had at the beginning when we were describing the U.S. transportation system in peace time.

I am still bothered considerably by this virus on my face. It has spread a little, which means that I have to spend more time and annoying attention to it. My beard is quite the thing, but even that is not enjoyed to its capacity when it conceals an itch. There is a lot of sticky ointment, too, which the doctor prescribed that I apply.

I got Ed's letter today, as well as yours of March 2. He quoted the article quoting me. I don't remember having said those particular words, but I do know the Trib correspondent with the 5th Army. I'm sorry I can't involve Kathy in my stories. Certainly, if I were to publicize anything, it would be my paternity. I think it is nice that she is taking shark's oil now. It will increase the

range of expressions her face can assume. I can picture her very well, all screwed up with disgust. A couple of years of that and she is bound to have a well-cultivated scowl, which is always a social asset.

I didn't understand what Ed meant about ASTP being out as far as he was concerned until I read in Time about it being out of the army's program. I don't think he's missing a great deal, anyhow. I am inclined, now that I know his true age (I made him out somewhat younger), to urge him into the navy even before he comes of draft age, so as to get some service during the war, which would be much more exciting to him and certainly more stimulating. Don't you think so? If you do, you might speak to him on the subject. I know he can't help but be lonely without Vic and the family, but there is no particular use in postponing the inevitable for that reason.

I did Duke Ellington's job for him last night until the wee hours and am a little more sleepy than usual tonight. But it was a good change and interesting enough. Meanwhile Duke could relax and soak in a few. He is a really fine fellow with an unfortunate addiction to the demon rum. I know he is the kind of guy you too would like, serious without being obsessive and a good enough wit. He just got a series of clippings from a girl back home showing the rise of the prohibition movement. He's been away now since 1941. Buzz knows him.

I finally got it straight from Ed that Buzz is still a civilian and now with OSS. I wish he would get into the armed forces, but he is a most self-sufficient and stubborn guy. I feel towards that as I do towards matrimony. Having donned the khaki, I urge it for everyone else.

I have plenty of reading matter for a couple of weeks at least. I just started Borgese's book and found it stimulating and strange. More on that later. My chess is improving. I manage to average a game a day, though the fancy and/or occasion may soon pass. Your charming New Yorker magazines make every idle moment a joy. Magazines like Yank, Life, and paper books

are getting to us soldiers with increasing frequency these days. Life stinks worse than ever. I sent off the first-aid kit yesterday. Some month, you'll get it. The old and precious letters will be sent off soon too, as soon as I can muster enough faith in the postal system to entrust it with them. I washed and scraped the suitcase you bought me in Washington today. It was getting moldy with the winter rain and mud. Comes Spring and all good boy scouts tend to their equipment.

Dabby met a girl (sic) in Africa, a nurse, whom he is now contemplating marrying. *De gustibus, non disputandum est*. He has yet to pop the question, but we are egging him on with the malice which comes from boredom. He'll probably be rejected with disastrous consequences for his manic-depressive personality. He managed to get her up here to see us and pass inspection once. The officer group gets to be sort of a jury to its members after a time.

I wish I could find something to send you as a present and token of my great esteem, but there aren't even pretty pebbles to put into envelopes, much less precious jewelry. I would never send you jewelry anyway, knowing that Unk is always hovering in the background with an appraiser's eye and a wholesale discount. I would gladly share my week's ration of life-savers with my little Kathryn. It isn't much but it's better than fish oil.

I happened on a poem by Peter Viereck in the Dec. 11 issue of the New Yorker. You may remember him as the son of the indicted George, a member of our company (previous co.), author of that book on the historic origins of German Nazism, and a very shy, homely man. He showed me in Africa a draft of the poem; I thought it was good then. It was written (and concerns) our trip over.

In regard to your query as to what in the devil I did mean by representation in one of your past letters, I meant that there are two types of representation, both equally representative, though one is ethically preferable: the first does only what the people he represents insist he does or selfishly allow, the second that

does what they barely want and drags them along even against their selfish interests. I think the second is preferable certainly when properly motivated and can even be quite a successful political technique. In other words, public opinion is such a hazy thing, that various sorts of representation can ensue. (I guess I've only confused things, again.)

Well, anyway, I love you and love conquers all. Many kisses to you both.

Al

JILL TO AL MARCH 19, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Gosh, two whole days without writing you. I fell into the fell clutches of the Election Commissioners and had to spend Friday and Saturday afternoon canvassing. I did it with another lady, the Republican clerk -- I am the Democratic, it goes without saying. She came over Friday afternoon and we spent it in the most gruesome of clerical jobs, writing the names of 600 voters on tabs. Then we sorted the tabs and Saturday went into each dwelling in the precinct to see if the people really lived there. Then we had to send out postal cards, suspect cards, they call them, to the people who didn't. It was awfully cold yesterday and I was tired already, and it was just about the most gruesome experience imaginable, gruesome for a tender civilian anyway. The precinct is three square blocks bounded by Kimbark, Dorchester, 55th and 56th. The houses on and near 55th smelled terrible, the closer you came to 55th the worse they smelled, and in one a man and woman were having an awful fight. Needless to say, I didn't question them, but assumed they were there without asking. The lady I was with is an old veteran of local politics, German, Republican and reactionary. A God-fearing member of St. Thomas's over here. We got along fine. She gave me a banana when I went to her house. Well, now I know the mechanics of canvassing, for all

that's worth. I also know the ailment of every female in the precinct. Mrs. Naddy, my partner, knew everybody and would go in and say, "How are you, Mrs. Kelly?" Then Mrs. Kelly would say, "Not so good, Mrs. Naddy. I've been having some trouble with my feet and my back has been aching something fierce." Then Mrs. Naddy: "Isn't it a shame. I have the very same thing. it started about a month ago and I haven't had a good night's rest every since, etc. etc."

Mom came down yesterday morning and stayed with the baby, thank goodness. I don't know what I would have done otherwise. Then Benny and Dad came down this morning in Benny's car and drove her back. Dad is very pleased with the baby, who really looks a lot like him. They pay me a lousy eight bucks for all this labor, and I get another eight on election day. As I said before, I wouldn't have taken the job in the first place if I'd known I had to canvass, for it really is a dull hard job, but now it's over with and I guess all I lost was some sleep and some time to write you and spend with the baby. Isn't it awful. I'm just not easy leaving her with anybody, not even with Mom. But the baby seems to have survived, although Mom has a predilection for changing her clothes very often. I like to keep dressing her down to a minimum. I think that kind of handling only serves to annoy the baby and I think one reason she is such a notably un-crying kid is because I don't fuss with her much, unless she is shopping wet. People used to dress up kids as if they were dolls but I don't think it's a good idea. Anyway, I don't like to be fussed with so I figure the baby is the same way. Oh yes, a notably defective young man came over yesterday from that studio and took her picture. He did it very swiftly and effectively (I hope) although he kept calling me Mom, to my horror. He took two pictures, one naked lying on her stomach and one naked propped up. I hope you don't have a strong aversion to naked pictures. I thought it was the best way of your getting a good view of her. In all the snaps I've sent you you can hardly see her for the clothes. Some time next week or after I'll arrange to have my own picture taken, by a non-baby photographer.

It was nice this morning. Mom gave the baby her first feeding, leaving me to go back to sleep and have an awfully sexy dream about you. Maybe the good news about Cassino and the Russian advances are freeing my subconscious to dwell on such libidinous possibilities. But I think dreams like that don't serve any particularly good purpose -- they only make the reality harder to bear. Of course, you could say that they serve to remind me how much I love you but I don't need any reminding. That sad-happy thought is in my mind always. Your dopey little daughter also functions as a very potent symbol of you. She has your looks and some of your expressions, although I don't recall you ever being so unreasonably, so slap-happily happy. She is beginning to grab and hold things, however briefly, and to hold up her head and chest when she is lying on her stomach (see photograph when it comes). Such progress.

I am pleased to relate that after much packing, re-packing, weighing and weeding out, I have made ready your box of cigars and candy for mailing. It turned out that I had bought far too much candy for the five-pound limit the PO places on packages overseas so took out the crappiest sweets and gave them to my boy friends on the block, a gang of males about 25 summers, that is, their total age adds up to 25. They are nice kids and come around about once a week to get waste paper I save for them, to the annoyance of the janitor who thinks I ought to save it for him (he gets paid for it I think). Mom says she can get candy in her neighborhood, so would you write a letter to her for some, and/or to Aunt Anna, who is very eager to do things for you. She is a nice woman, isn't she?

We have another little radio. Mom got it for me in the radio store in her neighborhood. You can't get them at all down here. It cost nineteen dollars, strictly black market prices if you ask me, and buzzes, but I needed one for the kitchen where I spend so much time. It was getting a rupture hauling our big one back and forth. I really depend on the radio a lot now, for news and entertainment of a mainly doubtful variety. Anyway, it makes washing and formula making a lot more tolerable, even soap operas. Oh yes, I'm so happy in a mild way. I had gotten this

awful victory knife, fork and spoon set when I first moved in. It cost a lot and looked and tasted terrible. it flawed all the food and got black the first time it was washed. Well, Day dug up some stainless steel knives and forks we used to use on the boat and also found some sterling silver spoons that a friend of mother's used to give me, one for each birthday. They came yesterday and I have been eating with somewhat more relish ever since. It's funny what a difference it makes. I really don't care too much about household crap but after a period of using horrible silver and pots that burn everything, you get grateful for minor changes of this sort. Now if I only had some aluminum kitchen ware. I think it's this way -- life is annoying enough as it is, with one's chief reason for existence so far away, and then when you have to crap around with all this petty stuff, it gets even worse.

Damn, I am out of paper too.

OOOXXX (I love you).

JILL TO AL MARCH 20, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

I am in receipt of a simply staggering amount of mail from you, letters Feb. 17, 21, 24, 25, March 6, 7, 8 and 9. Apparently the February ones, all Air Mails, all came together on the same boat. I am in a state of pleasant confusion, not knowing which ones to re-read and answer first, since there is no time to go through them all again before the day ends and all of Kathy's insistent demands are attended to. I have a lot of mixed memories of them (after I read them all I fell asleep -- the effect of the other conditions of my life -- it had nothing to do with the inherent interest of your letters or the vitality of my feelings about you and them) which sleep served to jumble up further. I gather you are pleased with paternity and with the people involved, that your teeth are good what makes you think mine are? I'm just afraid to go and find out what ravages motherhood

hath wrought) that you read a lot and keep enjoining me to do so in effect. Anyway, if I were to read all the books you suggest I procure from the various libraries, shops and Ministries of information, I would have to give the baby back to Greenhill. I also remember, with slight twinges of horror, your request for fudge and an inventory of our finances. To the first I can only say I'll try. I have yet to make fudge that would hold together. But I like making you things, if that's any incentive. To the second I spit, I fume, I cringe. I fell off the track on a fast turn in February and have to get my March statement before I get back on. It seems I have a stub for a check for 25 that doesn't appear in my Feb. statements although it was cashed at the bank here which means that it would usually get cleared in a few days. And generally things did not tally, it was something like 33.41 cents off or something. So I have not the faintest idea of what our balance is, furthermore I have lent money to Joan and Daisy, 80 to the former, 150 to the latter. Daisy is in quite a hole from lending me money a long time ago. I guess she lent me some and didn't tell Walter and now after all these years the hole is catching up with her. She swears me to secrecy, apparently he is a very firm man with the dollar. So I gave her 150. And the damn war department is about two years behind in its bond payments to us. The last bond I have is marked (let me see, she said, bending over), Mar. 1943. It came last October. How time flies. No, I don't let birds build a nest in the bonds. I keep them on the floor, in a file, along with 13,000 dollars in checks I haven't had time to deposit yet. Oh yes, I finally got the money from the estate. it added up to (bending over again) 19,013.20 of which I have to send Paul 2,500 and Day 3600, minus 150. I certainly wish you had been my guardian during my college years and hadn't let me spend all that money. Gosh, Smith alone cost 3000 and then I got screwed simply awful by the family doctor on my appendix, Day said. Unkie says the same as you, put it in the bank. The only thing is that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. only insures up to 5000 so I have to put it in three banks which requires time and effort. As you can see, time is worth even more than money to me these days. So DON'T go telling me what I ought to read, because

then it only adds to all the twinges of conscience I already have about the disposal of my time -- the letters I ought to write when I want to lie down, the editorials I ought to read when I feel like taking a bubble bath.

I broached the subject of Eddie coming down here this summer if he goes to school to Mom this weekend and she was surprisingly acquiescent. But she thought that Ed might miss Vic and want to be with him. At first I said that they could be here together but now I think better of it. I don't think I'd have the strength to feed both of them or the patience to bear with Vic's foibles, the musical ones anyway, in a place as small as this. Oh well, it's a little early now to plan for anything and I suppose I show myself to be a woman of very little faith to consider a summer without you. But darling, I find that if I don't think of when we'll be together again, in temporal terms anyway (I naturally think of the moment of meeting and what we'll do and say all the time -- it's my favorite fantasy, but I just don't think when) it makes things easier. Otherwise I just feel as if I'm going to bust from impatience and chagrin.

I suspect Mom would like to shove off the care and feeding of the boys on someone else for a change, despite her original protestations that she would never let them leave home the way she "let" you kids do it. She has had a hard year with everybody having different hours and I think feels confined to the house. But I might feel exploited if Vic lived here too, fond as I am of him. Mom is very good at exploiting people when she wants to -- she's Machiavellian in a nice way. And I'm easy to exploit because I feel somewhat ashamed of having more money than they do. I admit I'm completely unreasonable and unpredictable in my attitudes on money. One minute I'm ready to deed over my bank account to her and the next I get sore at the notion of feeling obliged to do anything for anybody. I really need you to tame my fiscal impulses. And I'm still mad about giving her the silk stockings but you know what a spot I was in. It's just the principle of parting with that many. I really don't want any more. I have only worn two pairs and would not like you to pay black market prices for any more. However, if you can get them very

inexpensively, like fifty cents a pair, get me some, size 10 1/2 this time. I wear big holes in the feet of the others as they are too small. Oh yes, the baby cost about 400, 200 for Greenhill, about 70 for the hospital and 30 a week for four weeks for our excellent Mrs. Thompson. Of course they don't all have to cost that much. Greenhill's bill was more than most doctors charge, though well worth it and I would like to have him again if I had a baby in Chicago. I still don't know why he had trouble delivering Kathy or how it could be changed, though. Kathy is waking up now for her dinner. It's 7:30. Every day she is on a different schedule though the feedings stay about four hours apart. I've decided that a regular feeding time is only good if you have other people to cook for. I haven't eaten yet either but am not hungry. Diane dropped over about one and we wheeled over to the Co-op, which is full of non-proletarian dainties. As a result we ate a huge lunch afterwards.

Damn, the end. I love you too.

Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 20, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

Last night I got your letters of the third, one probably about the fifth and the second half of your letter of the sixth of March, together with the reviews of Adler's book. Your letter of the sixth evidently got wound up on the first page because on the second you were tearing into me for not treating you like a delicate, fragile flower but more like a Russian woman guerilla. I protest most vehemently, because if I ever did regard you in a stereotype, which I never stooped to doing, it was as a fragile sweet girl. Haven't I sent you crushed flowers and delicate ink drawings? Can I help it because we are too far apart for me to give concrete manifestations of tender care? And when I did expose my anxiety over your reckless swimming, picnicking and bare legs, you pulled the independent woman act on me. Not

that I was discouraged or intend to be discouraged in the future. I am eye to eye with you and the primary wish for a beach, quiet, and undress, and will add to that various throaty noises which can't help but be interpreted by the most uncomprehending mind as expressions of sympathy, affection, concern, and above all, the love of the male for the female. If you don't get someone to do the housework, it is not because I stand in the way. In fact, nothing would irritate me more when I return than to be deprived of your companionship because menial tasks need to be performed. I'm concerned about your not eating properly. It is not only unhealthy; it is also treason to the family tradition. It is nothing new in your life, I realize, because whenever you are left to your own devices you carry on the ingestive functions most eccentrically. I realize more than ever that I must get back to feed you spoonfuls of whipped potatoes. It won't be long now and then everything will be all right with you. We'll both eat good food and be happy again.

I was very proud of your judgement of Hawakays as the superior of the reviewers of Adler's book. I never disputed his merit. It just happened that a number of others had written on the same subject. The other reviewers promptly attacked the straw man Adler had set up for them, but Hawakays refused to treat on those terms and was exactly right. It is futile to dispute the undisputed.

I think spring has come to stay. The nights are still worth a pile of blankets but the sun is out and warm. Our muddy camp has practically dried up and when that happens, the rest of the theater is in perfect condition. You can imagine what effect this all has on my thoughts of you. My policy is to grit my teeth and pray for the day. The only barrier between us now is time and considering how we've mastered all other obstacles I have no intention of magnifying that obstacle into more than the little puddle which it is. When that dries up, well, there we are. (Apologies to Marquand.)

Give my beautiful Kathy a kiss and hug for being so nice and considerate of you. Make a date for me too to wheel her spiffy

buggy around the block. Incidentally, I thought your shoes in that picture were very cute.

All my love, as always.

Al / Al

JILL TO AL MARCH 21, 1944

Darling --

I started to re-read that great raft of letters I got from you yesterday. It is a big job, particularly when it also involves re-reading other letters around the same time so I can get some idea of the temporal sequence of your life, if any. Then I start thinking of answers to things to say & end up by writing, not reading. A very bad state of affairs, indicating disorganization of personality, etc. etc. Also indicates obsessive love of husband (tush tush), diversion of normal activities into phantazing (one syllable missing?) of various sorts, abnormal dependence of individual on persons or in this case person of opposite sex, etc. etc. How I rant. This is what comes of writing by hand, and this is the handwritten letter I send to you in return. Besides, I am lying on the couch surrounded by your letters & could hardly write otherwise.

I got some ready-shelled walnuts at the AP today & am girding my loins for a big fudge-and-fury session. I know you like nuts. Usually I have made nut-less fudge in the past. Today I also deposited some 3000 odd coconuts in the bank at the corner, got some papers notarized, shopped, did the laundry, wrote letters to Day & Unk, mostly about the estate & am now exhausted. I also had a beer with Virginia, & learned about Charlie Chaplin's sex life from a friend of hers, a Carmel (Cal.) girl. I had to see Virginia in the first place to borrow a dime to run the washing machine. What a complicated life I lead! It's a lovely springy day. All the windows are open & Kathy is lying in the buggy in the living room with me. I washed all her bedding

so she can't lie in it. (What an original speller I am). Marion Gerson just called. She is getting married to Bob Cook tomorrow. Now I have to buy her a gift & life gets ever more complicated. I gave a Red Cross lady \$10 at the bank this morning, feeling very heiress-y. Now you don't have to give anything. It is for us both. Maybe they will do you a good turn some day, like getting you a book you want to read or a hot bath.

Gosh, Marion called back & we have been talking for what seems like hours. They are going to Boston until Bob's ship is ready & then to Norfolk, poor things. This time last year you were getting ready to go to Ritchie. As a matter of fact I know exactly what you were doing a year ago today. You were waiting on a street corner for me & I missed the bus from Falls Church where we'd spent the night & I cried all the way home because when I got to the corner you weren't there & I felt sorry for you & afraid you were mad. (You weren't.) I remember the date because I had the curse & since it was the last time I had it & had to tell it to about 16 doctors so they could tell me when Kathy was due I naturally remember everything very well. It's funny how one treasures inconsequential bits of one's life, like crying over a missed husband on a bus. I also remember the waterfront place with the buns (buns b-u-n-s) you liked so well. It was such a proper tea-roomy sort of place & I was always trying to hold your hand under the table. I was always trying to hold your hand everywhere & you were always pulling it away because of one reason or another, having to do with status. I didn't mind, or anyway, don't now.

I still haven't re-read all those letters. I'll try again tomorrow. Now I have to feed our dear little girl, feed myself & make formula. Kathy eats all her cereal now - about six oz. twice a day, more than I would ever eat but I won't tell her. I put a lot of sugar in it & she likes it that way. Kathy says "clean plates help lick the Axis" & I hate her for it.

Darling, a million yearning kisses for you. I love you so much.
So does Kathy.

Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 21, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest,

Having become rather bored with life and not being overwhelmingly busy, I wandered over to a nearby hospital yesterday and allowed a couple of companion-seeking medical friends to talk me into staying. I'll be here for a couple days, I guess, having someone else put ointment on my face instead of doing it myself. The applications are not as expert as my own. But it's an interesting change anyway. Besides the new people are a change from the old and I have time to finish Borgese's book. The chow isn't as good here as in our own camp, but the medics have a good volley-ball team. Long is duty-bound to bring me my mail when and as soon as it comes. Dabby was over last night on some printing matter. He is slowly developing a respectable intelligence. Doc Stillerman and I talked over old times last night on the campus. We both would love to be there now that Spring is arriving. He was on the operating team last night and I watched them at work on a couple of head cases. The surgeon was doing a very deft job inside the skull of the man. We remarked to Kooperman who was assisting that a letter of his was in the last issue of Private Maroon. He raised his eyebrows questioningly behind his mask and said he couldn't remember it. It was a small squib about appreciating the magazine. I have the usual group of companions in my hospital tent, a badly wounded head case, a colonel with a leg wound, a lieutenant with a rash, several others with invisible wounds or injuries. They evacuated a couple this morning to the rear. My main reason for being here and for their insistence that I stay here, is that the ointment is sure to be properly applied a couple of times a day to my matted, hairy face. It's silly, because I do that faithfully by myself. However, I'm only a spit and a holler from my camp and I can slip over there if I ever have occasion to do so.

I'm gliding steadily through the New Yorkers. I think that it, as much as anything, will give us plenty of common chit-chat when we're together again, even though like Rip van Winkle, I quote

hoary incidents as fresh snips. I'll catch up with you though as soon as I get to ye bonny banks, if only you'll allow me time to disengage myself or read the latest couple of issues.

I got here just in time to get the weekly PX ration of 1 coke, 2 cigars, a Baby Ruth, a Hershey tropical chocolate bar, and 2 rolls of Necco wafers - total price, 24 life (cents). We get about a pack of cigarettes a day free. Mine today are Camels and the label reads: Give 'em H---, Boys. Eddie and Leon, J. Heyman, San Antonio, Texas. Just leave it to me, Eddie. I'll fix em! And I'll save you the butts.

I went on a swell outing two days ago with Duke, two officers from the 8th Army and Long. I'll tell you more about it when we get the snapshots we took developed. It was perhaps the finest day I've had since leaving the States.

My writing is in a terrible state. I haven't written anyone at all except you for weeks. I hope you'll be patient and tell them news about me - what little there is to tell.

I wish we'd get to Rome soon, so that I would have more to describe and also be able to wear my chukker that have been in the barracks Log for months. Something has got to break soon if we don't want to let Russia do the marching on Germany alone. You'd think a couple thousand tons of bombs would suffice for the garrison of a town like Cassino. But as always, it's the infantry that must dig them out.

Well, I think I'll stop writing and study some German in order to enchant you with lieder when I return. When are you going to send me a beautiful portrait of yourself and Kathy separately? I must add, hastily, that you have been wonderful about sending pictures to me. My pockets are crammed with your likeness, each lovelier than the other.

Kisses to you both,

As always, your, Al

JILL TO AL MARCH 23, 1944

Al darling --

What a silly life I lead. I started to write this yesterday and made a long list of things I wanted to say, after re-reading about thirty of your letters, and now I've lost the list and didn't get to writing yesterday after all. Let me pause to salaam to you thrice You are a faultless correspondent in every way. Despite your not infrequent complaints that you might not be writing enough letters or long letters, I found them very sufficient. And of course the quality of your style and content is impeccable. Your typing isn't so hot but who am I to talk.

Darling, please tell me too if you don't think I'm writing enough. Since I've been taking care of Kathy I notice that more and more I'm forced to skip days, for one reason or another. Do you think my letters have a harassed, confused quality? Can you understand me? Eh? Do you hat this paper? The character at Woodworth's who sold it to me said it was easier on the eyes than white onion skin, and I was tossing up between the two. Do you mind my typing most of the time? Is my typing unbearable?

Speaking of tossing up, I made the most interesting soup last night. I came dashing in from downtown about five and there was nothing in the house fit to eat, so I put lentils, mildly old cabbage, carrots of the same vintage, rancid butters, onions and a dated hot dog in the electric pot and let it short circuit for a couple of hours. It really made a delicious brew, very filling. Except that today I am sick. Maybe it wasn't the soup, though the odds are for it. Maybe I am getting the curse. I haven't had it for a year now and wonder how it will be again. I'm awfully late as it is, you usually get it about six weeks. I guess nursing delays it, except that I'm not nursing now. Maybe I'm having a late twin to Kathy.

I had an exciting day yesterday (my definition of an exciting day being going downtown). The maid came in and I had all this bank business to do in the Loop so I started to get ready to leave. About one I was putting the finishing touches on baby

and me when baby, the cad, spit orange juice all over me. So, with a stroke of genius, I decided to call up the banks -- the two Loop ones I picked out of a phone book to deposit our hard-won millions in -- and they told me I could open an account over the phone. The point of all this is that eventually you will be hearing from the Harris Trust Co. and Industrial National Bank, asking for your signature on a joint savings account. Incidentally, the Industrial Bank seemed a lot happier to have me than the Harris Trust. Mr. Strawn of Harris Trust called me this morning and had some silly argument with me, to the effect that the check I sent him yesterday wasn't endorsed. Banks are just like people, aren't they? Some are so much sweeter than others. Now take the University National Bank. They're not exactly sweet; rather, they have the unpolished but sincere friendliness of the rustic individual. The Upper Avenue National Bank in the Palmolive Building, where we used to get our lousy Esky checks cashed, was just what its name intended it to be -- snotty, unfriendly, staffed by chilly Swedes. Harris Trust feels sorry for me and sincerely wishes that you become a captain but the atmosphere is definitely feudal. I suspect the Industrial national is still a bit parvenu -- they seem to be trying a bit too hard to win my hand. Perhaps they have some skeleton in the closet, a third vice-president maybe who strayed the primrose path.

Well, finally the shooting stopped and I decided to go downtown anyway, to buy a chair. This is the damndest house. There's not a fittin' thing to sit on in it, at least, not when you have to feed the baby. I need something you don't go too far back in but which has arms to rest on. I have been having backaches for just ages now, and I'm sure it's because I have to assume such uncomfortable positions five times a day. And Kathy is so damned heavy. She weighs about 15 pounds now -- I'll know more accurately when I take her to the doctor next week for her monthly check-up -- and it's just dead weight. It's not like a one- or two-year-old who can brace its own back. I have to do all the bracing for her. I am getting to feel like an ancient mammy with the "miseries". Anyway, I found this little white wooden chair in the porch furniture section at Carson's for

3.95 and it is just what I wanted if it doesn't collapse like all my previous purchases in Loop stores. Don't you think it was clever of me to try porch furniture. I would have had to spend a lot of dough in the regular sections. I'm a natural for this Better Homes and Gardens stuff. I'm even covering that awful chair we bought from Dietz. I found this material and started hammering it on the chair with nails and it looks quite effective though God knows how I'm every going to get it off again if I want to clean it. I have also acquired two more end tables because I am always looking for something to put bottles on while I am burping her and if I put them on the floor we both collapse as I bend over. One end table is the box the Co-op brought my groceries in if I ever get around to painting it and the other is a luggage rack on which I'll put a large unwieldy try somebody gave us for a wedding present. Cribs into magazine racks, butter churns into stools, nasturtiums into luncheon snacks, DeGrazias into fools. (An original poem entitled This Changing World by J. O. Sorokin DeGrazia, popular 55th St. matron.) I just slid the typewriter carriage over and knocked over a ten oz. glass of milk I was preparing to drink. That's the second time I've done that. That is also a lot of milk for one little room. I had to use two bath towels to mop it up. There's some of it on the first page of this letter, probably the first fresh milk you've had in a year.

I also got a sewing box for Gerson like the one I got myself last year. Now she can sew for Bob.

I'd like to see those paintings of Edward Gropper in the flesh too. They look good though generally I like a less photographic, or just plain graphic style. I think in that our tastes diverge somewhat. But I wouldn't mind having one of his things if they live up to their promise in colors.

I'm enclosing a couple of cartoons I've pulled out of the paper at random. I think the Thurber one is funny, the other one just true to life. The same thing really did happen to me at Stineway's one day. I asked for a chocolate malted and when the girl started to make it, I noticed with horror she was putting pink ice cream in the shaker. I said, My God, you're not putting

strawberry ice cream in there, are you?" "It's all we have," the girl answered caustically. I told her well, just leave the ice cream out. "But it won't be a malted milk shake then" she said plaintively. I told her I didn't care, I'd just as soon have any malted milk without ice cream, but she kept on saying that it wouldn't be a malted milked and how could she price it then? How did it end up? You guessed it. I got a chocolate malted milk with strawberry ice cream and it tasted like hell. Oh yes, I think interspersed in there somewhere was that classic of contemporary repartee, that equivalent of the "oh yeah" of the 1930's -- to wit, "Don't you know there's a war on?"

What do you think of Wendell Willkie these days? I still can't figure him out. The latest has him giving the Republican Old Guard holy hell, and saying in effect that they can't hope to win without him or with anybody backed by the Tribune. He seems to be a sincere liberal when he so obviously flaunts the rules of partisan politics, yet he goes on in his criticism of the president's foreign policy so ill-advisedly. The trouble is that he doesn't seem to know when to stop attacking, which is usually a device of the party politician. Like criticizing the president for not having made a stand when the old Polish boundaries were crossed (I think he used the word violated but I'm not sure) by the Russians. On the one hand he criticizes the administration for being too conservative in its foreign relations, justifiable criticism that. But on the other he opens his big trap over a delicate question like the Polish boundary dispute and saying the same kind of things that the Hearst papers do. Maybe you can figure it out.

Kathy is asleep now but she'll wake up soon for her afternoon feeding so I'd better stop and leave something for me to say in tomorrow's letter. As if I ever could be at a loss, talking to you! My one big complaint is that there's so much to say about the world and all the dopey items of my life that I don't have time or strength left to say the only things that interest me really -- how much I love you, how I dislike having you so far away, how much I think of you. There are all the little secret things I think of to say to you when I'm feeding the baby or lying in bed before

going to sleep, and then when I get a chance to write, all the non-essentials of life -- for everything is non-essential that doesn't relate directly to you or to bringing you back to me -- intrude and for some reason I feel obliged to write about them too. For one thing, I feel obliged to write you everything Kathy or I do. It seems only right to keep you posted, and sometimes it's fun to put them down on paper.

That train of thought was successfully interrupted. A girl I used to sit next to in Stix came by with her baby and admired my baby, then Kathy had to be fed, in between which the mailman brought two letters from you, the 12th and 13th, bless you and the postal service. I read them to Kathy, she finished her bottle and burped three times loudly. (That last will be the title of my Great American Novel). Now I have to go out and buy her a rattle. I think she is entering a new Stage. Your letters, but Enough! I shall answers them tomorrow.

And always and always I love you, more than can be imagined, in sickness and in health, with or without rash, cigarette or cigar-smoking -- it's you I love. Jill

I am enclosing a review of Sforza's new book. If you want it let me know.* I am also enclosing a card from the Harris Trust for you to sign. When I get it back I send it to them with the passbook and they make out the account in both our names. Just write in one the line marked X, that's all. I'm anxious to get all three savings accounts in joint form because, aside from reasons of sentiments, I don't have a will and this will make it easier for you legally if a 55-51st St. streetcar should catch me intestate. I think it's sort of silly for me to write a will, anyway, particularly if this will do the trick with the important items of property.

Now I have to do the dishes. It's amazing how dirty everything is all the time, considering how little I cook and for how many. Gripe. Gripe.

But I do love you always and only you. The asterisk above is a

word of encouragement. Don't let anything I've said discourage you from asking for books and things. I always enjoy sending you stuff -- as long as I don't have to write the book, I mean.

Always,

Jill

This is the same shitty fountain pen you nearly left me over last March. How I've paid and paid for it!

Cartoon:

Washline Woman crying Pail of laundry Baby crying Pot boiling over on stove

all kinds of stick children playing, worms, telephones, moths, spiders, ears, bugs and chickens captioned: "The Horrors of War - after Goya"

AL TO JILL MARCH 23, 1944

Dearest Jill,

I'm sorry for the paper, but I didn't bring any with me, and, at the moment, I can't find any other. I hope the ink in my pen holds out. I'm feeling very well. Once in the while my face itches a little, which is exasperating, but nothing to write home about. I'm just discovering that impetigo is a stubborn thing to have in your stubble. I think it's beginning to go away, however, and one of these days I'll emerge with a clean shave. I suppose I could just pay visits to the hospital but the army doesn't work that way. They crave healthy patients, it seems. Meanwhile, I'm enjoying myself lolling about and reading. I brought along Borgese's book, which I am well on my way towards finishing, Time mag., a Reader's Digest and a German grammar. When I finish them (except the grammar, which goes slowly) I'll be able to find a lot of other stuff around the hospital to read. Borgese's book is certainly nothing to be recommended to innocents. It is

dizzying. It could almost destroy the faith of a New Republic liberal, not intentionally, but in trying to follow his tortuous mind.

The fellow across from me is sounding off about the soldiers' vote. He is nihilistic on the subject - the nation is a babbling idiocy, they can stick the vote you know where; he is a man of about 27, from Virginia. He has a neat little mustache and is funny as hell. The feeling is quite universal in the army that the people at home are crazy and everyone feels vengeful and recriminative. They had to wait until they were overseas to observe that it is a nutty world. Maybe we don't mind crazy things as long as we can participate in them, sharing the blame. But at a distance, the greatest imaginable atrocities are charged to civilians. Any isolated eccentricity causes a general wagging of heads. I think a lot of the hard feeling will dissipate in the first joyfests of homecoming, but some is bound to stick.

One man in the ward will never be the same. He keeps laughing in a silly sort of way, the most cheerful guy on earth. The other night, as he and several others were sleeping in a stone house, a German plane came over and dropped a bomb. It ripped through the roof and plunked down besides them, all 500 lbs. of it. When the dust cleared, their eyes popped with horror at the big black thing laying there, as big as a whale. The occupants were finally rounded up by a fleet-footed first-aid party. Life is very sweet for this lieutenant now. All he has to show for his conversion to gaiety are a couple of cuts from rocks and plaster.

Yesterday, after lunch, we heard plane motors and dashed out of the tent just in time to see a bunch of German planes go by, scuttling fast and low, once they were out of the protective clouds. Our AA was a little late on the draw but got off a good, showy display. The planes were very active. If I were with my outfit I could have taken a few shots at them; it's like duck-hunting. One laggard came by shortly afterwards, tearing lickety-split along the valley road, with the flak nibbling at his tail.

I'm going out now on a great shopping trip and will finish this

letter when I get back. I'm going to the post-office, the PX and Red Cross recreation room. Perhaps I'll come back with a bar of candy and a horror story that I can curl up with in lieu of you. I'll never cease wishing that I were with you and Kathy, no matter how trite and useless the expression of the wish. It's like the slogan "Pane Vino!" or "Bread, Land and Peace," - when you're famished they don't seem trite in the slightest. In fact, they're bursting with meaning. Anyway, it's only fair that you should know you are the basic component in my life, great world movements notwithstanding. I insist on explaining these things because I know that from time to time my words must sound hollow in the face of an empty life, devoid of the attention befitting an attractive girl, of the pleasure of giving and taking flirtation, and of the flattery owing for a job well done, but capable of being completely appreciated as a job well done by only the person.

Everyone in Italy is taking a surprisingly mild view of the eruption of Vesuvius. The soldiers are pretty much bored with their own lot to be profoundly stirred by it. Everyone agrees though, verbally, that it is a sight to see. Picture a mile-high mushroom of smoke, stretching up and then outwards with the wind, thick and oily, utterly unlike the cool white clouds that drift around it. Just another trouble for the poor Italians' bagful. Some superstitious peasants will now say that God is displeased with Allies; others will say He is angry with the King's government; others with the Germans.

I got some air mail envelopes at the PO but couldn't get any thing at the PX without a ticket from the Red Cross worker. I'll get that tomorrow and meanwhile smoke some Twenty Grands I had stuck in a recess of my musette bag. I picked up a couple of books at the Red Cross (a mystery and that "This is my Best" omnibus of the writer's most mediocre efforts). The Hemingway story about Big Game hunting gave me a good sneering laugh and insight into him and his great straining for masculinity and sex appeal. Since I didn't think much of Farewell to Arms, I suppose I ought to read the Bell book in order to appreciate him properly.

I got into conversation with another guy next to me just now and in an hour we covered a lot of politics and geography in a friendly fashion. He is a thin S. Carolinian of about thirty and very sensible. It's nice to find people seriously and intelligently interested in the running of our country. We also discussed possible sites for homes in the States - country homes this time. We agreed that there are a number of equally wonderful rural places in America, all the way from Virginia and Maryland to California and Washington.

When I said that people feel dull about everything, that doesn't extend to the matter of a home in America. That subject never fails to bring a sparkle to a man's eyes. Sometimes I let myself go with some of the men when they touch on the subject. The audience is too eager to miss. I'd bring up something ordinary, like a train going through the country, or a drugstore, or a parlor, and the men would get an entranced look on their face. I would get in the details, the little point that make the memories acute and alive and they'd be sitting all lit up, silent and motionless, and only when I'd finish could I see the effect on them. They'd relax and smile and cuss a little in agreement. George had told them about all the rabbits. I enjoy these discussions, too, once in the while. Too often, and they begin to hurt. For I feel what I've lost more than most men and think I've really lost more. Merely your beauty is more than most men contemplate having, and that isn't the half of you. And there is all the rest, Kathy, home, family and all the pleasures I'd learned to enjoy. It's safe to say that I, like all the other soldiers, intend to use the time of my life to have the time of my life. I imagine that you feel the same way. Woe betide anything that tries to come between these world-rushing desires: We'll smash it like a pistachio in an iron vise, won't we, darling.?

Many kisses, dearest, and kiss my little papoose, too. She does look something like one in her winter bunting.

As always,

Your Al

JILL TO AL MARCH 24, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart -

I am writing this somewhat edgily as it is 7:30 and Kathy is bound to wake up for her evening feeding any moment now. Poor little lamb, she's so tired. It was a mild but windy day and so I decided to take her to the doctor, it being close to her third month birthday anyway. We arrived there about one, she was duly examined and pronounced not wanting and then, having a couple of hours of unexpected leisure ahead of me until her three PM feeding (we are on that schedule today), I ambled and chatted in the bright March sun. Oh yes, she weighs 14 1/2 pounds now, a very nice gain as the doctor put it. He wasn't there but a colleague of his, a lovely large Southerner named Cohen, looked at her instead. He played with her too. Her charms are undeniable. The office nurse said she had a beautiful head, she had never seen anything like it -- it's so round, so firm, so fully packed, or is that a Lucky Strike? And of course she always puts on a good show -- laughter, smiles and what not. The doctor said I should start her on vegetable soup in a couple of weeks and increase her bottle to 8 ounces. It was seven until today. Everybody was out on 57th St. like bugs out of the woodwork. Did you know Eve Balkan? She is a frightfully neurotic girl, a friend of Rosable's. She said Rosable just wrote her saying she was going to marry Buss Brown next month, but it's still sort of a secret. Eve gave me some plastic beads and a miniature potty seat that somebody had left behind at her house. I shan't use the latter, rather obscene item. Some people prop their young infants on them around the time the baby is supposed to go, but it's a poor idea as at this age they are too young to be trained and it just serves to confuse the child until you can't possibly break them in on a real john when they are ready, i.e., when they can sit up under their own speed, which is six months or after. I bought Kathy a rattle yesterday. It is in the shape of a french telephone and has some tinkling beads at one end, so that it really does sound like a little phone. I hope it won't condition her against the real thing, as indeed her mother is conditioned. If I put it in her hand she'll hold it, for lack

of better I suspect, and occasionally looks at it, but she really is too young to actually play yet. She is still at the stage where she looks at her hands but doesn't know exactly how to grip objects yet. However, she makes passes at the bottle and the spoon, and roughly knows how to make rejecting or accepting motions. She vaguely pushes the spoon away when she doesn't want cereal, and grabs at the bottle which she does want, and frequently keeps her hand on it, but of course she can't hold anything yet. She drops her telephone after a while and doesn't even know the difference. She can hold her head up while lying on her stomach very nicely now, and seems to enjoy the feeling of new power. I met some other people on the street too and they all enthused mightily over her, marveling at her size and beauty. Then they look at me and say, why she must look like your husband, she certainly doesn't look like you. After her three o'clock feeding I sat on the porch of my neighbor's the Steele's house, across the street and held her up to observe the passersby and the Steele's dog Pat, who is very fond of children. But then she got fretful so I took her inside and took a nap myself. Mac is coming over tonight so I'd better get to feeding her soon. My Day.

Send your letters back by all means. I am in complete sympathy with your desire to keep them. I hoard yours as if they were written by Lincoln, a poor simile. Not even Lincoln could rival you. And besides, they [*three unreadable words*] and the pictures I've sent you are the only record of Kathy we have. I have not added collecting baby records to my other arduous clerking (pronounced clarking) duties, like keeping bank books, tax forms, pictures taken by Al the summer of 1936 -- not to mention the pleasant burden of keeping your own letters to me filed and sorted neatly.

I grew pleasantly nostalgic over your recollection of underwater osculation. I have a funny if inaccurate memory that it was trouble getting you to acquiesce in this unusual erotic manifestation. In fact, I have a whole host of memories revolving around the theme of me thinking up wild, unusual and frequently embarrassing things to do, and you unwillingly doing

them because they were embarrassing or because you would rather sit and read. And yet you could have hardly used the latter activity as an excuse against kissing under water. Or could you? As I said, this may all be a resentful pipe dream, although the concept more amuses me than fills me with resentment against you. Nothing could do that. It must be a dream because you are hardly a timid or frigid person by nature. Well it is true. You were always hard to get out of the house on nice days because if you weren't grabbing me for some reason or other (what do I mean, other -- precisely nothing) you were reading some silly publication or other.

Hi darling -- there's been a long break. I stopped this to eat and have Kathy eating, and then Mac came over accompanied by Sybil and another Mortarboard, Lucy Deans. We had a gay chatty beery evening, during which Kathy, untrue to form, politely decided to sleep. They just left and Kathy is still sleeping. it was rather fun to have the gals around, particularly since I wasn't harassed by much kicking and screaming from the infant department. I even made formula calmly while they drank beer in the kitchen. I always get caught like that -- the last bottle devoured, company and all. The air is soft and balmy out and I'm just in the mood for a walk in Jackson Park, with high, or rather, low doings on the greensward by the rowboat pond. And to think that we were married then. Romance never dies with the DeGrazias. Long live violations of City Ordinance 141-67B. Yes, m this will be a lonely spring but I suppose it develops one's character. And I thought I'd have to accomplish that dubious end by joining the Wac! What a silly notion.

I feel now that my character is developed out of all proportion to the need, and that I would give everything, including the possibility of a general court martial in the family, to have it weakened a bit.

Oops, Kathy's awake. All our love to you, darling --

Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 24, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

My last two letters pointed out that my itch led me into the embraces of the medical corps. I'm now leading a gold-brick's idyll. Unfortunately, I appear to have improved considerably over night and my days of lethargy are numbered. Come to think of it, I'll be happy because they wake us up at 6 in the morning, a beastly hour, and show a breakfast tray at us before my stomach has time to turn over once and while my mouth feels like the inside of a cattle car. I always like a reasonable period upon awakening to contemplate fully the hideocry of breakfast before plunging into it.

I ate my lunch tray at the sunny rear entrance of the ward today, gazing out at a noble and eternal-looking peasant family spading their orchard. There were two little children, a fat little tow-head and his spindly sister, the father and a grizzled old man. It was interesting to watch the unconscious, informal way the youngsters were learning how to farm just by being around and without knowing what was happening at all.

I've been reading more of Common Cause today and more of the This is my Post omnibus. There really are some very nice pieces in the latter - remember Perlman's "Kitchen Bouquet," his terrifying servants? Here was another piece that shows the primitive nature of Dreiser's work, a bad Treasury Report by Benchley who is best unwritten and many other things which I haven't read but hope to.

I got in touch with my unit this morning to hurry along my mail. I blissfully assume I have some.

For two mornings in a row I've taken showers not as elegant ones as at home, but real clean, wholesome fun. Yesterday the water was too hot. This morning it was too cold, but it felt good anyhow. There's no nasty tile to slip on, either.

We exchanged remarks about Barnaby recently. A frayed copy

of an October Life is kicking around the ward and it has about thirty cuts from Barnaby, the ones where the dog starts talking. They're wonderful. We must thumb through a volume together some day. Or get a talking dog. All Cooney is interested in is sex. He'd be a terrible influence around Kathy, that tender virtuous lambkin that can't walk yet.

Copies of the Stars & Stripes just came in and various odious comparisons of our effort and the Russians are being bandied about. Our front is no rest camp for the Germans - it is worse than most of the Russian for them - but it just isn't big enough to get going. A doctor patient just gave me a Feb. copy of PM to read. For some reason that paper bores me more than most. Perhaps I like the New Yorker type of luxury ad. Bergdorf-Goodman dresses and Peck & Peck sweaters remind me of you and I lick my chops at the full-page whiskey ads. Glamour - that's me - the chirping of a twerpy cricket at dusk, the hard labor of putting down an in-a-door bed, the jerking of a window shade from its moorings, chasing a dog off the bed.

All my love to you both. No kisses today because my beard would hurt you.

Your,

AL

JILL TO AL MARCH 25, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart darling --

Gosh, I still haven't mailed the letters I wrote you yesterday. Two more came from you today, March 10 and the second half of an opus you scrawled on March 14. Both have you playing chess in what you fear is a schlemiel-like fashion and on the verge of sending me a first-aid kit, which will be treasured along with the Italian major's star and the crummy old pressure gauges. Funny thing, the photographing machine must have

wavered on the first letter because a lot of the words were all blurry, like when you take a picture and the subject jumps. Is chess fun? Paul always wanted to teach me but I expended so much intellectual fire on learning a passable game of bridge at college that I never wanted to strain myself on chess. Would we have fun playing it? Somehow it doesn't sound rowdy enough for our tastes in mutual games, though I suppose if we can start kicking each other around the room over a mere jigsaw puzzle, we can turn chess into something quite lively too. I'm writing this before going over to Kerners for dinner. Kathy is lying outside in the now cold March air sleeping. She's such a good little girl (I say this every time she sleeps). She is getting right smart too -- cries when she drops her rattle although she has no idea of how to pick it up or how it got in her hand in the first place. You should see her stomach. Sometimes I think she is going to split right open, she's so fat. She's getting to look like Lou Costello, heaven forfend, twinkling eyes in rolls of fat and so forth. Oh, news! her eyes are turning brown. Today I noticed patches of brown round the pupils. The periphery is still a deep grey. Good thing she doesn't have one brown and one blue, like Siamese kittens. I think she is the prettiest baby I've every seen in real life and we could probably make lots of money having her pose for cereal ads. She has what the nauseatingly call a lot of personality too. Here she is now --

DEAR DADDY *** I STILL HAVE HICCUPS. MOTHER LEFT ME OUTSIDE AND MY HANDS ARE COLD. IT WAS AWFUL, WAKING UP ALONE WITH NOBODY THERE, HICCUPS AND MY HANDS SO COLD. CANT YOU GET ME A NICER MOTHER? THIS ONE IS ALWAYS WRITING LETTERS AND EATING BANANAS OR ELSE TALKING ABOUT EATING BANANAS, WHICH IS WORSE. WELL, I FEEL LIKE CRYING AGAIN. I LOVE YOU, DADDY

KATHRYN

MY MARK (made with big toe)

God is she yelling now. I guess the effort was too great for her.

More tomorrow. I have to get her ready to go out now.

All my love and many kisses,

Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 25, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

There isn't much to do here save eat, read and shoot the bull with the other inmates. My reading certainly has wide horizons; I even read some silly woman's gentle essay on Horace last night. Newsweek magazine, like the New Yorker, is published in miniature for overseas by Special Services. I liked very much the copy I read this morning. Its style isn't chronically painful like Time's. In the rapid way I read, I find it hard to recall who wrote what in that cumbersome omnibus. The Dos Passos selection I had read before and I regard him highly on the basis of it. Sometime I must read more of him. Not very cheerful though, is he? Hardly a Horace.

I took another cold shower this morning, three days in a row now. That should show that I have a strong enough desire to return to civilization. My impetigo is well on its way to disappearing, according to the latest communique, leaving me a fine, soft moustache and beard from ear to ear, one of the minor prophets at least.

The preponderance of talk in the ward concerns home. The Virginian across the way gets more nihilistic all the time. He was raging against all the little Hitlers in the army last night. He is really very humorous, despite his murderous social policies. Another lieutenant in the Rangers told how they caught hell in England for killing and eating five of the King's deer. I can imagine what a scandal there was. Some of those herds are very ancient, but to American Westerners, meat is meat.

I wrote Mom last night for the first time in a good while. I haven't had word of you and Kathy for several days. I should get some news today or tomorrow certainly. You never skip more than a couple of days. Seriously, when we are in each other's arms and there is no reason for writing, we must find some channel, other than libidinous, for the release of all this energy we spend on writing. I think we ought to write and illustrate a children's book, a book of humorous essays and a book on literary criticism. I may have to make my contributions in a straightjacket but it's worth it to bring out all your skills. You can see I'm trying to think of some excuse to have you around all the time. I can't just admit I want to do nothing when I get back except play with Kathy and make love to you.

I saw recently that there was some stink raised by that Mayer of the U. of C. publicity dept. (Gerson's cousin?) about his being drafted. Comical it is to see the unholy triangle of self-publicists dissolve on a practical issue - Coiller to intervention, Hutchins to isolation and Mayer to complete and disgusting pacifism. As if his set weren't shameful enough, he must justify it with an insolent, brash mouth. Remind me to spit in his eye some day, if someone doesn't beat me to it.

They just brought the dinner tray in and a howl of anguish went up. Will they ever stop feeding us bad spaghetti, fruit cocktail, apple butter and canned carrots?

All my love, darling.

Your, Al

AL TO JILL MARCH 26 1944 V-MAIL

Jill, my darling,

I want to say little else besides that I love you today. My unglamorous routine doesn't allow of much description. I spent a good part of the day dozing on my cot. My face is almost

completely restored to its pristine clarity beneath the beard, and that, by act of the doctor, is to be shorn tomorrow morning. I believe I'll be leaving the hospital tomorrow too.

I read some more of Borgese's intricate book today - his brilliance and erudition are striking - and have been glancing through Saroyan's *Man on the Flying Trapeze*. I read a short story, "Flowering Judas" by Katherine Porter last night. She is a superb stylist and thinker, hitherto unknown to me. Have you read any of her work?

Frankly, I am bored with reading and nothing else, especially since I have no one like you to discuss the reading with. I enjoy some of the insane conversation that goes on around me, like you would enjoy listening to a psychoanalytic interview.

Give Kathy a hug for me and take good care of yourself, darling.

Your

Al

JILL TO AL MARCH 27, 1944

Oh darling --

Monday

I don't like to seem to complain, or for that matter, to exaggerate, but last Thursday night I started making fudge for you and I haven't seen the outside of my kitchen since. Nor any fudge, for that matter. Oh yes, the first batch came out just fair -- that was what I made Thursday night, so Saturday night I doubled the proportions, thinking to make a good-sized box to send you. Well, first it was too soft and then I cooked it, and then it was all grainy so I cooked it (bringing us up to last night) and then it was too shiny so I beat it and then I poured it in the pans. This morning it was too soft so I cooked it some more, turning it out of pans and washing same, and then this afternoon it was still too soft so I cooked it some more,

meanwhile mulling over our past two months' bank statements, another little hair shirt of mine. The result: the fudge is so hard it is irrevocably stuck to the bottom of two glass dishes and a saucepan and we have 361.11 dollars in the bank at date of writing, not to mention twenty on my person and two checks, also on my person, for 33.33 and 1.53, the latter being a sum representing a bib purchased at Saks Fifth Avenue for Kathy by a distant relative. There is no point in telling you how much we have in bonds because they are exactly a year behind in sending them to me, i.e., the last bond I have is dated march 1943. Is this customary G.I. fiscal policy?

I am really in tears over the fudge, the time it's consumed and the disappointment you'll receive at getting a rather small amount of inferior product from me. But I absolutely refuse to hazard another batch. Thing is, I really ought to have a candy thermometer. You're supposed to cook the fudge until it forms a soft ball when a small amount is dropped in a cup of cold water but apparently what is a soft ball to me is something else to the editors of the cook book, or vice versa. This shows the extent of non-objectivity in allegedly objective disciplines and procedures.

I would have gotten very antagonistic towards you and fudge but the sweet first half of your letter of March 14 came today and you are so nice about recognizing the troubles which beset the woman with child that I shan't vent my natural spleen upon you. As a matter of fact, I'll try to make up for your candy-less package by sneaking in some books if I can get away with it. I got three pocket books today for that purpose and asked the bookstore to order a book by Grafton which you might enjoy if you like him. I don't know if they'll be able to get it soon and I want to get off what is left of the fudge to you shortly, before it gets worse. Now I know why polite people use fudge and f-u-c-k interchangeably.

So I didn't get a chance to write you yesterday, being busy as a bee cooking and washing clothes and one thing or another. I heard Churchill on the radio, though, above Kathy's screams. You should hear me swear at her sometimes. I'm sure you

would be shocked. But it's a good catharsis and I'm sure she doesn't know the difference if I call her a bitch or a bunny rabbit. His speech was interesting, getting waspish about his critics and detractors even as Roosevelt does. It occurred to me, as it must have in the past to many people, that a conservative British prime minister can talk about housing and social reforms as a matter of course while here, every last change in the status quo would be fought out and obstructed in the Congress and conservative papers as if Lenin were laying down his plans for social change.

What a bunch of slobs we are., Slobs is just the word I mean, too. A log of bumbling, self-satisfied, self-interested, blind slobs. Of course, the late news that the Supreme Court has okayed the rental control act or whatever it is is pretty good, but then our Supreme Court is a good deal more liberal than the legislative branch is now.

The news from Cassino is awful too. I guess it must be awfully disappointing to all of you, who have been there so long and have had so much hope built up at one time and another. I wish I could be as optimistic as you about the limits of our separation. I know it doesn't do any good to be otherwise but the time drags so. I clock it off by her birthdays and right now she seems awfully young.

It's a shitty life anyway. I never can do anything without being interrupted. I sit down to write a letter to you and she cries or the phone rings or something on the stove burns or somebody rings the doorbell. I never get an hour's uninterrupted reading done. Besides, even if I did have that hour I'd feel as if I had to write letters instead. That's another thing that bothers me -- letters. It's a never-ending burden -- you write, somebody and I even explicitly state that I don't have time to write, but they answer you and then you have to write all over again. Or they send presents, and that makes writing mandatory. I wish to hell people would abandon the whole practice of writing letters and sending gifts. I'll like my friends just as well if I never heard from them. It just constitutes a drain on one's time and resources. It's

OK to write letters to one's husband -- aside from all the considerations of affection involved, it fulfills completely the other function of letter-writing -- to get your day off your chest, so to speak -- to boast mildly, to set down the near phrase or observation you've made during the day, to express whatever deep emotions can get through the bars of the daily squirrel cage. But Jesus -- all this other stuff.

Kathy is fretting now and I can't say that I feel particularly friendly or sympathetic. I must confess that every once in a while I get pretty hostile to you both -- it's only happened a couple of time so far and of course occurs when she starts to cry, or what it really is, whine. Now that I am past worrying every time she opens her mouth, I just get good and sore every once in a while, quite irrationally I admit since she is before the point of reasoning with her. But it just gets me good and sore, to get back to the original point, that I have virtually no life of my own - - no moments that I can hoard from her, from you (because what's let over from her I usually use to write you or straighten out your [well, it's joint, isn't it?] damnable checking account) or my friends. And really, it's nobody's fault which makes me even madder. If you were here you could rush in the breach whenever I felt like this, which is rarely, I reiterate, and take over child, brush off friends, and tactfully leave me be (only by that time I'd probably be feeling so good I wouldn't leave you alone. So don't think that your absence could ever be a desideratum even in any small perverted moment in my life. *[letter ends here - maybe a page is missing]*

JILL TO AL MARCH 28, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

I just arose from a truly delightful and novel experience for me, a two-hour nap in the afternoon, and am now waiting around for Kathy to work up an appetite for her dinner. She is sort of awake -- yells and then falls back to sleep before I can even get

to her. I think I am losing that wound-up feeling I had for so long - now I seem to have trouble getting up in the morning, even when she is making the most annoying sounds, and, if I take the time and trouble, can really get some satisfactory sleeping in the afternoon. But usually I feel like doing something else so still miss out on my sleep. This is a much pleasanter state of affairs. It may be all very efficient to bounce out of the bed in the morning with verve and vigor and thereafter perform amazing domestic feats, but it is both symptomatic of a thin set of affairs in my nervous system and also hard as hell on it. I'd much rather be my sleepy lazy old self, even if there are three inches of dust on the furniture and a tendency to sub-human life in the kitchen. So maybe you won't find me so radically changed after all. I suspect my neatness vanished with my stomach in pregnancy. Anyway, I'm reading a good little pocket book which I bought for you but which you'll just have to wait for another day -- in *Hazard*, by Richard Hughes. It's a sea story, and you know how balmy I am over them, even though there are always semantic difficulties. This is somewhat more comprehensible than Conrad or Melville and the storm is even worse, if possible. He also wrote his best book, a definitely one-of-a-kind job called *High Winds in Jamaica*. It is about children and pirates and storms and may sound like a baby book to you but it definitely isn't since it has ethical implications far beyond what you'd find in most adult books and also a unity of action and plot which you don't find in most also. In fact, it's one of the best more or less contemporary novels I've ever read, but it doesn't come in pocket book size, sadly enough. Did I tell you that Irene Keller called me a few days ago. She was at the station on her way through to the East Coast with her husband who was going over again. The little girls are fine and she said she'd call me on the way back to Oregon, where they are living now. Did I tell you I got another letter from Liz Evers who is unhappy and having an awful time. Her mother is unwilling to have her and Liz unwilling to stay there anyway after the baby comes, and she doesn't know where to go as their finances are none too good. She wanted to live with me in New York but I wrote that I wouldn't want to make a change now for all sorts of reasons but why

doesn't she think about coming out here. Then in this last letter she said that she would stay with Bill's folks a while after she was able to travel and then maybe visit me. I hesitate to suggest a more permanent arrangement right now, not knowing when either of you or Bill will be back. You may very well come back sooner than Bill, in which case it would be rather inconvenient to have another young lady and infant living here, not to mention Ed and Vic, if everybody's plotting against my privacy are fulfilled. Oh yes, my nurse Irmie is coming to visit me in a couple of weeks. It's her vacation from that old lady she tends. Maybe I'll be able to get out more then - a dirty trick on her no doubt. I'd better go now.

All my love, dear. Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 28, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

Now that I am returned hale and hearty to the bosom of my companions and home cooking à la the 5th Army, I can resume the last week for the benefit of you, my love, who are attempting to fit all this scattered evidence that I am capable of transmitting into a ragged whole. The last week was a week spent in two hospitals ingesting sulpha tablets and applying ointment in a poor imitation of the flapper tradition. The results are now apparent in the beautiful infant coloration my skin now possesses, bereft of all beard, just as you've known and loved me. I only stayed at the hospital of my friends for a couple of days. From this evacuation hospital, I went for the next several days to one known as a station hospital which is more comfortable and has better books to read. Thus, for the last several days, as I wrote you before, I have been reading assiduously and happily, swapping jokes with the cronies in the ward, a long barrack arrangement with a stove at one end and a rear entrance at the other end, I being near the rear, sunning myself outdoors when it wasn't too cold, and thinking of you with

great affection a good part of the time. Yesterday, I was given my clothing, which they purloin from you as soon as you get in their clutching forceps, and took a long walk to where I found a PX and could purchase things like cigars in moderate amounts.

The food was generally very poor in the hospital and I was happy today when the Colonel stopped by for me and we could get back to Bartok's home cooking. My highest hopes were fulfilled. I had three pork chops, the first non-tinned meat in a week, and lots of mashed potatoes. I lit up a cigar soon afterwards, read the mail that had accumulated for me over the past few days, and sat down to write you, after building a fire in our tent.

It was the first from you in a week, mostly because I wasn't with the unit to receive it. They had tried finding the hospital but it was tucked away in a tiny dreamy town in the hills. Like you, I have abysmal confidence in your faithful writing, and regard each day without a letter as insurance for a happy tomorrow.

I'm glad you like that picture. If you think enough of it, you ought to have a better enlargement made of the print. I think you have the film also, don't you? I should have some more pictures to send you soon. I think certain unmentionable individuals drink all the developing fluid they find, and there is in consequence a pressing shortage. Weaver received today a regular portfolio of beautifully done photo portraits of his not too beautiful daughter. I envy him the many fine pictures though not his progeny.

I am a fan as well as a father towards Kathy's progress, as revealed in all the successive letters. I was frantically excited over the serial of the cereal. I even forced a little oatmeal down my throat one morning in a spirited if deluded attempt to influence her behavior psychically. In my case, a short gargle with coffee cleared the cloy. However, I must warn you against attempts to get too imaginative in transmitting to me the impulses of her personality. Although I cherish the thought of a dainty note typed to me by her very own little feet, I would recoil in horror at a box of cookies the dough for which was pounded

by her own pretty head. I am willing to believe that she is capable of being bounced around considerably. Well and pridefully do I remember the dizzying and breath-taking rides Buzz and I used to give Ed and Vic in their carriages at a tender age. Both the kids would gasp and shriek with gleeful excitement as we would careen around the corners, several howling companions in hot pursuit of our "stagecoach". No one can say that an occasional nasty spill was a bad thing.

Bill does seem fond of the baby. It doesn't surprise me. Bill is capable of having the best and healthiest enthusiasms. I hope he gets married sometime. His very happy balance is a handicap in that respect. He sails smoothly and quietly along without the ordinary tackings this way and that. On the other hand, he is much more complex than is apparent.

Don't feel too badly about devouring my chocolate bars. I got a whole month's ration of four Nestle's bar yesterday. Of course, they are gone today, so weak is my will and wild my appetite. I did give one bar away though. And don't let congress worry you. They are just as unhappy about their plight as you are, and it is somewhat early to call their actions irreparable. I think your idea of Ed moving down to stay with you is a fine one and will suggest the idea in the proper minds, namely Mom's, immediately. He should be very useful to have around, if only to keep some of your less reputable company from carrying off the silver while you tend the baby. And it would be much better for him.

Now the income tax. Pardon me while I pick my teeth and pare my nails. Ah yes, the income tax.

By all means, flagellate yourself with escapist literature, an especially delicious example is Wodehouse's Stormy weather which I read a couple of nights ago. I'm sure you would enjoy it, it's so silly and well done. I wouldn't at all recommend the sort of thing I read last night which casts great clouds of despair over the possibilities of the human race, Werfel's Forty Days of Musa Dagh. I couldn't put it down, however. I was fascinated by it,

despite its great length, I read it straight through in one evening and early this morning. It takes a great deal of talking about and I hope that someday when we are together you will read it and discuss it with me. Incidentally and apart from the main point of the book, it seemed to me clear that the reason why I love you so much is that you are a rare combination of both of the heroines in the book. The story itself of the self-defense of the Armenians against Turkish massacre is soul-tearing. I felt exactly as Charlemagne did when he heard the story of the Passion and in furious anguish cried out "Ah, if only I and my Franks were there."

I must make up my old bed, darling. I would love to have either you or Kathy to push me off my proper half tonight, tired as I am. As always, I live only in the thought of holding you in my arms again.

Yours,

Al/ Al

JILL TO AL MARCH 29, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Gosh, this is one of my lazy days. I slept all morning after feeding Kathy and just now, at ten PM, have mustered up enough strength to write you. I spent all afternoon making abortive attempts to buy a bottle of floor polish so Dotty could wax the floors. I'd get to Virginia's apartment and then decide it was too cold so I'd drop in (up four flights) for a chat. Then we would get into a perfectly enchanting conversation and I would finally leave. Only then, I would decide it was too cold and go home for a heavier coat. Then the baby and feeding time would trap me and eventually I would start out again, absentmindedly in the same coat. So I would stop by Virginia's to see if she wanted anything from the store because it was so cold and blustery for her to go out, and then, that time, I got absorbed

with her water colors. She has a full stock and a drawing board too. I painted a banana (from memory), a chair (on sight) and a fowl with a decorative tail. It's lots of fun if you don't try to be good but just be gay about it. I'm just afraid I'll get gripped by perfectionist impulses and, lacking talent, visual memory and imagination, will be frustrated out of this a-borning creative impulse. Virginia and I really have lots of fun together. She is neurotic as a bedbug and some 15 years my senior but we get as hysterical as kids together and also engage in some very illuminating discussions -- men, sex, children and art. Politically we are on the same side of the fence, but she is not as well-informed as I am, however well informed that is, so we don't talk much about that. We don't discuss clothes or interior decorating either as she is vastly disdainful of those aspects of the female existence. It is very nice for me to have such a vivacious companion so conveniently close at hand, although I am always seized with guilt feelings when I do anything so time-wasting as just talking. Well, I finally got the floor polish but by that time it was time for Dotty to go home. Anyway, Eddy called up. He was filling out his application for the university and wanted some help. Honestly, his teacher, apparently the liaison between the high school and the university, makes me just furious. She keeps telling him she doesn't think he is qualified for college and wouldn't even give her name as a recommendation, so that he had to go to some other teachers. It's such a stupid attitude. If he does act in ways detrimental to Lakeview discipline, certainly he won't be any less delinquent (and I doubt that he is to begin with) by her discouraging his only high-minded impulses. Those lousy public school teachers. I guess they are the same all over. I recall there was some doubt about my ever going to college because my conduct in high school was not of the best. Were they that way with you in high school too, or did you manage to bluff them?

Kathy is asleep now. She has been either laughing or crying all day long and I can't figure out what the matter is. She doesn't seem to be particularly hungry and has been awfully recalcitrant about taking her cereal the past few days. I started her on

strained vegetable soup a couple of nights ago, but she doesn't like that either very much, although it really tastes awfully good to my adult palate. I guess I'll have to eat the rest of the can for lunch tomorrow, and stop bothering her about it for another week or two. I guess she is still a little young to expect consistent behavior from. She did such prodigious things the first two months -- all the premature social behavior, the taking of orange juice from the spoon at one month and all -- that I guess the tendency is to expect too much from children like her. Right now she acts, I suppose, just like any other three-month-old baby, though possibly she is jollier than most. But for the time being her days of prodigious feats are over with. Physically she is still advancing by leaps and bounds. She's enormous -- great plump legs, swelling stomach, round pink cheeks. Her complexion is magnificent - a very even rather tan color except for the rosy cheeks, with no rashes or other blemishes. Her eyes have brown patches but are still not quite brown or any other consistent color. She grabs at things -- holds on to my blouse or hair when I pick her up -- and plays very nicely with some colored disks hung by the side of her carriage. She'll hold on to her rattle for quite a while but when she drops it can't pick it up. She still can't roll over or crawl; I guess that doesn't happen until about six months. It's funny to think it will be such a long time yet before she'll be able to crawl, walk or talk. She makes such expressive sounds that one almost thinks that she'll talk tomorrow. I wonder what they do for the ensuing nine months. It seems ridiculous that she's just spent it on her back or fanny, as the case may be. She seems so grown-up already in so many respects.

I finished the sea story I'm going to send you and liked it very much and hope you do too. I didn't get over to the bookstore today and so didn't find out whether they got the Grafton book I want to send along too. I think the weather is worse now than it's been all winter. It's so damn raw and windy out -- I don't think I've ever felt so cold or uncomfortable. I hope it's not like that in Italy; is your clothing warm enough when it's dry, and can you keep fairly dry? I always feel awful complaining when I think

how uncomfortable you must be, and men are supposed to feel the cold worse than women anyway. Less fat or something. You know, I can wear all the skirts and slacks I had before I got pregnant. I guess that means my waistline is back to normal. But somehow my stomach does not look as flat as before. It used to be almost concave. I think the skin has stretched or something. Maybe you wouldn't notice it. I also have a very thin brown line running down from my navel. It's very decorative. I asked the doctor about it and he said I'm lucky I didn't get it further up, that some women get brown pigmentation on their faces after pregnancy. The things one finds out.

It's time to feed the little one again. She won't even let me write a decent letter to you. I keep telling her of the dire fate that will befall her when you come home -- being smothered with kisses, bounced on the bed, faces made at her -- and she just laughs. She must be a bit dull.

I hope the same fate awaits me too. I love you so much, darling.

Always -- Jill

JILL TO AL MARCH 30, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Honestly, this is the life. It's been snowing all day long -- in fact, Kathy got her first introduction to snow (I assume she can see it now which she couldn't before) with Momma saying, "Shit, it's snowing." That ought to introduce some semantic confusion into her young and none-too-innocent life. I haven't been able to go out as a result and have been subsisting on eggs. Herself is cranky, lacking the pleasant stimulation of the moving baby carriage, and furthermore her appetite is poor, she seems nervous, tired and rundown, as they say on the radio. I think she may be getting teeth but can't be sure. She acts that ways -- gets mad when the spoon is offered her and while she still puts away a lot of food, I have to coax her. She slept altogether

through her ten (or, as it happened 12) PM feeding last night, not waking up till eight this morning. That in itself is a good sign, from my point of view anyway, since if it keeps up it means that I can start getting some sleep at night. Apparently, she gets enough food now, or her rate of growth is diminishing, quite naturally enough, so that she doesn't miss that last bottle. But I just wish to hell she wouldn't be so fussy. It just means that I am constantly forced to hold, change or feed her, to keep her in reasonably good spirits. I know she's not sick because if she were, she wouldn't eat at all, she'd be flushed and her going to the john would be abnormal in some way, which it isn't now. Considering that I didn't go out today and I had no cleaning to do, I got absolutely nothing done. I started to take a bath this morning and the man from the photograph studio came in with the proofs of her pictures, which I examined moistly. One is very good, the other isn't (there were only two). He'll have them ready in about a week and I'll speed it out to you. Then I got back in the tub and the city water inspector came to see if my faucets dripped, which they do vehemently. Then the parcel postman came with some magazines from Day -- she keeps sending me old copies of House and Garden, of all things -- and I again emerged from the tub, dripping and shining like Venus. Oh what a horrible morning, oh what a horrible day, every day is like this one, why don't I r-un a-way?

This afternoon came that little issue of Time and Mauldin's touching cartoon. That guy has a place all alone in contemporary cartooning. He would have the same relation to the culture that Daumier had, wouldn't he, if Daumier had been a little more sympathetic to his subject matter. I was looking through our Goya book the other night and it's really hair-raising. The sort of thing one should hide from the kiddies. I still wake up shivering from the illustrations to a volume of Edgar Allan Poe we once had, and this is much worse. The man sure hated his kind and one can hardly blame him, since though the degree of brutality was probably no greater in his time than in ours, it was probably less covert. But no letter from you. And I'm afraid your next letter will contain an optimistic report of the

March 15 attack on Cassino, which we know now didn't pan out. That's the trouble with letters written at a distance. History manages to screw them all up. But enough of this gloom. I only wanted to say anyway that I still love you and always will, that time and distance and the illogic of events have no effect on the substance of my love.

Always your - Jill

AL TO JILL MARCH 30, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill, XXX

Your letter of the sixteenth reached me tonight after I stumbled out of the jeep from a very cold ride. Being anywhere near a jeep seems to lower the temperature a good ten degrees. But there was your letter and a good steak sandwich and hot coffee waiting, and I read it as I shuddered before the fireplace. You can't imagine how much your letters mean to me. It was no coincidence that I had been thinking of you for two hours of riding. I always do that. You're my favorite car companion even in your nebulous state.

You can tell Kathy for me that she must stop all her crying in the midst of this great conflict. Doesn't she know there's a war on? And she can't escape the guilt by pleading a cause, for you proved that all she wants is sugar on her cereal or pie in the sky or something.

Our present camp site is better than the old. It has a good springy odor about it and there are a few cows about which I chased merrily around the field today. I thought I could get them to stampede a couple of the tents. But they pulled up short and looked as if they were about to chase me, so I gave the project up. I arose with the rosy dawn this morning to exercise a little before breakfast, an incomprehensible phenomenon. I saw a duck flopping about outside the tent and chased it across hill and dale with my carbine. But it was a tough target and the only

effect of the shots was to get people hopping out of their beds a few minutes ahead of time - not a bad thing.

I am sorry about all your paper work. Just to demonstrate my great happiness at getting home and my boundless devotion to my family, I will assume the total administration of your miscellaneous file. It won't differ much from total war. My life here isn't much simpler. I just have acquired a certain callousness towards forms and paper in general, and unless it bears pretty pictures or interesting reading I ignore it completely.

I was going to tell you that I had received a letter yesterday from Walter's brother. Just from a look at his unit I think I can give the whole story of what happened to the kid, but I'll see if I can check up more closely for any personal details.

I got a long letter from Ann yesterday too. Everything seems to be going along well with them, and again her offer of the extra rooms for any visit of ours seems awfully nice but somewhat out of reach at present. Perhaps we may be able to take them up on it, darling, before many months are up. I would love to slide down to New Joe's with you on my arms as of yore. I would do more than beat a single din on the gong: the next time I'll play a complete passacaglia.

Please call the U. for me, sweetheart, and find me Stouffer's address. I'd like to write him one of these days. I want to confirm to him a few of the ideas I once expressed on morale.

I've got to do a little work now. Take care of Kathy and yourself and I'll do what I can afterwards. I am as always convinced that my world lies with you and that any other sort of life would be a purgatory.

Love

Al

AL TO JILL MARCH 31, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

cheers and horrors! a four-page v-mail dated the fourteenth came in this morning as if to set up an impossible goal to my writing. You must have been at it from dawn to dusk. Don't you know that Thomas Mann only writes twenty lines a day, and yet, even if all the not so literary passages were culled and the many obscenities were omitted there must still have remained a page of sheer merit that would out-Mann Mann. Not that you were ever one to keep a glum silence in my presence, but still the sheer physical accomplishment of writing that much must have cost you a pound of flesh.

Of course, one way out would be to describe in detail my feeding habits, facial expressions, and attempts (very few) at friendliness as you describe Kathy's. I sleep on a cot in a tent which is on a slightly sloping piece of ground. As I sleep I slip slowly downward until by morning my legs are dangling freely over the end of the cot. At any time of the night I awaken, I can approximate the hour by the number of inches they dangle, thus giving me a crude hourglass effect.

Our camp is on a couple of adjoining fields, hedged by rough roads, bushes and rows of trees. There is a small brook that runs along behind the tents. Our orderly room and kitchen and radio room are in a farmhouse, which we learned this morning from an old paesano is haunted. But the curse, unhappily, is just another victim of the war. No one is properly shaken by it. A good local ghost needs a tradition-soaked population to put it in the proper mood. Transient soldiers can't be spoofed by spooks.

The air is our own midwestern air, full of damp springiness, a smell I love. There are a number of birds around, though I saw no duck this morning or any other edible fowl. The same cows scuff about the place every day. They lack the over-developed udders of our own because recently they have been used as draft animals in a sort of total mobilization.

A handsome, middle-aged dog attached himself to us today. He is white and brown, airedale and something else, a most playful but unkempt dog that shall have a bath as soon as the rain stops. It's been sprinkling on and off all day.

Two new faces are present. Duke took off for a short while and was replaced by a very fine gent who looks like a president of a university. And George Re whom I knew in a couple of places before, is staying with us for a while; he is a hearty correspondent with a thick short upturned mustache, absolutely original.

As you can see by my new address, I'm off to new pastures. They may be interesting. I know all the men in the work. They are the most congenial lot in the organization. They are British and a brief caricatured description would [?] them up as a combination of the Keats-Shelley and the British Intelligence types. I'm sure if you knew them you would be very fond of them.

It is too bad that you and Elizabeth Evers can't get together in a city of your mutual choice. I know you would enjoy each other's company and problems. But I think you're doing right to stay in Chicago for the time being. Apart from the matter of breaking up my happy imaginary home, after I've painfully memorized the layout, it would be hard on the baby to travel a great deal as well as yourself, especially on wartime trains. Then you would have to sweat out all of Elizabeth's baby problems as well as your own which would be another great trial. There must be at least a dozen powerful reasons for taking your stand. We'll all have a good visit together as soon as we can. Then Bill and I can bring up the babies properly while you and Liz dash off to Broadway.

I'm sure you must [*have*] been greatly impressed with the Russian news as we all are here. The German armies of the south have completely disintegrated. One can almost begin to hope that the Russians will be through the Carpathian passes before the Germans have time to recover sufficiently. After that,

a union with Tito's forces will be inevitable. You are probably right about our little war here. The proof, however, is in the pudding and the second front in its potentiality is like our happiness. Were great and tiny events ever so linked up as obviously?

It seems to me that I am always begging for magazines. However be it, please send me some nice New Yorker magazines and some not so nice new Republic magazines as well as any other interesting periodicals you don't want cluttering up the house. Perhaps you wait until you can get a request that won't make you blush when you present it at the post office. But I find it hard to say please without adding "darling".

Liv Hartly, whom, incidentally, we've made lake officer of a nearby pond, just lent me Beard's "The Republic" and will soon send me That book called The American. I have a couple of Italian books to read too as well as my German whenever I have time, so that at present I'm provided for on the literary side.

God knows when I'll fill the gap that you've left. There is a thing called rotation which will get me back if the war lasts more than the short time I think it will. Then I'll feel the compleat man, notwithstanding my awkwardness with the graces of life. It'll be a fine day when I can trace these campaigns on a sandy beach for you.

Kathy must be a great joy to have around. I'm very gullible to all your character analysis of her and as sure all those traits you describe signify a most unusually perceptive personality. You're right about not arousing her to a peak of ecstatic sociability. That sort of response, when it's exacted too often, will tire her out. She has no way of letting out that great burden of excitement. Like you said of yourself, she is bursting with that great benignity which she can't let subside properly yet. So I'll only send her a little kiss this time.

But for you who know how to handle me, there is all my love.

Al

EVEN when the Campaign ends, he hardly appreciates how terrible it has been; nor will he for a long time; nor will the rest of the World ever come to realize that it was worse than the Normandy landings, worse than the Break-out in Northern France, worse than the Battle of the Bulge -- more agonizing for all concerned, and with more casualties. That its fearsome rates may even have been worse overall than those of the trench warfare in World War I. Considering only the American case, proportionate to the number of men engaged, United States troops at Cassino and its 'left flank' engagements at Anzio suffer many more casualties over a seven month period than will be endured by American troops in ten years of war in Vietnam.

Over 400,000 casualties will have been suffered by the struggling armies during the Cassino Campaign. Two-thirds of the men of the contending battalions will have been eliminated by death, wounds, imprisonment, or disease. Six times as many Allied troops as Germans will lose their lives. He feels the folly of the campaign but is too young to understand the weaknesses of his generals and to criticize them confidently. Nor is he well enough informed about the true state of affairs; actually no one, not even some one of these generals, is sufficiently informed.

He does believe this: after the inexcusable failure of his generals at Anzio, the best way to break the stalemate is across the western coastal plain and hills, letting Cassino be isolated; for the Germans, although they could defend themselves there forever, could not break forth from there with sufficient force to cut and strangle the Fifth Army from the flank. He does not know that General Alphonse Juin has this plan in mind and will execute it.

Thus comes the last phase, a French attack through the mountains near the Tyrennian Sea and a Polish attack upon the Abbey's eminence from the East. The Poles, recklessly brave, suffer casualties beyond belief. Only this last French attack can be called

truly successful. Some would award General Juin and his two French-North African Divisions top prize for performance and effectiveness, from April through May.

But the "victory" at Cassino -- never mind who is left in command of the field, which is determined by the production quotas achieved by Detroit as against the Ruhr -- could also be assigned to the First Parachute Division of the German Army, granted that they are entrenched in a practically impregnable bastion. Outnumbered by the attacking enemy two-to-one, five-to-one, more. No air force cover. Probably no group in history has received a greater enemy barrage of fire -- ten, fifty, tons of high explosive per man? Casualties at sixty percent and more. Inflicts four times, perhaps ten times its casualties upon the enemy. Uses all of its weapons ingeniously. Builds bunkers and surrounding defenses indefatigably. Repels several major attacks. Counterattacks continually. Few are captured. When captured, they divulge little information. The units disengage in the end reluctantly, when the Army's flank is being turned on the West and they are repeatedly ordered out by the Army Commanders. Their high morale stems from their *esprit de corps*, their training, their belief in miraculous "secret weapons" to come. They are dedicated to Adolf Hitler.

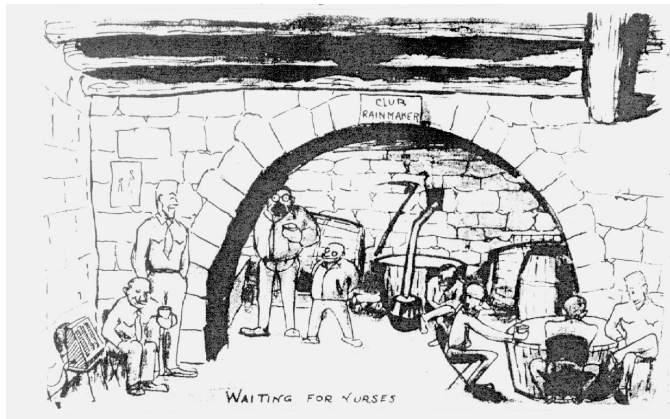
The better they are as soldiers, the more of Our Boys they kill. Furthermore, the longer they resist, the more time they afford to Himmler, Borman, Ley and the SS butchering battalions of Germans and East Europeans to kill innocent and harmless men, women and children. To their valorous delaying actions, prompted ultimately by heinous ideals, is owed the death not only of thousands of Allied soldiers but also of as many actual and potential teachers, scholars, writers, artists, scientists, and highly qualified citizens of Europe as they themselves numbered, some 20,000. These were the months, and year, during which two millions persons were murdered by the German authorities.

Still, so mad and absurd is the Inner World of Values, if the First Para Div were the German's weakest division, and its soldiers were uniquely less loyal to Der Führer -- in short, ideally Our Boy's kind, our kind, of German -- both friend and foe would ignore them or

treat their history contemptuously. So it goes.

The First Parachute Division and three other first class divisions had been negligently permitted to escape from Sicily where they could have been battered from a distance by artillery, naval guns and aircraft. The costly grueling man-killing campaigns of Italy might have been unnecessary. Hitler is criticized for having fought for Italy; but the Allies' most experienced troops were fighting here instead of on the French invasion front.

Our sprightly Lieutenant won't be around Cassino much longer, though. His half-millionth of the Allied flesh and blood is not much needed: with or without him the carnage goes on. He is not enthused over his part of the war here any more, doing what another guy could do as well, all was dulling clockwork, while in Naples friends in British Intelligence are beckoning.



A French medic drew the picture before a party that the Fifth Army Combat Propaganda Team organized in their cellar at Varaino. The blown-away wall permits a broad view of the interior. There can be recognized from l. to r.: Nat Getlin, “visiting fireman,” then Business Manager of the *New York Post*; Jim Clark, publisher, OWI office; “Tiny” a huge New Zealand Captain next to diminutive New Zealand Colonel. The others are unidentified.

End of March 1944 letters

