

JILL TO AL MAY 16, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling -- I am lying on the Midway virtually unadorned, except for a covering of tannic acid jelly (for sunburn, not contraception), sweat and ink (my civilian version of the Churchillian triad).

Well, I was lying on the Midway. The sun was too hot to get out more than one sentence and before I knew it yesterday had come and gone, with Jill left with one helluva sunburn and an aborning cold. But I shall not enlarge on that subject, since your unfortunate experience with my last, and, as they always are, abortive cold. I mean that was the cold that started on page one of a V-mail and you only got page two. Well anyway Kathy feels fine - the sun doesn't seem to bother her so much. It really doesn't bother me much either. Only the first burn of the season is painful and at that, it's not nearly as bad as some people get and as I used to get when I was a little girl.

I feel very virtuous. I always do when I'm tired or not up to par. In the first place I always work myself to a bone when I'm in a mood, figuring quite reasonably that I might as well scrub the floors, polish the furniture and clean out the diaper pail (ugh) when I don't feel good, because if I do feel good I'd rather be out having fun. Don't you think that's more logical than saving one's strength for unpleasant household tasks? Do them when you're weak and consequently weak-minded is my motto. Of course, this pre-supposes a rather high level of physical condition, i.e., even when you're not feeling good you're still feeling a lot better than most people, like the old lady in *The Man Who Came to Dinner* who looked a lot better than his nurse even after she had been dead three days. That's me all over.

And I also did that which I hate to do, even though my willingness to perform little tasks like that should be a measure of my distant love for you. I refer to packing and sending you, in two separate packages, so you can expect them like that, my pictures in the leather frame and some *New Republics* and *New*

Yorkers. You must admit, darling, that wrapping bundles is one of the world's greatest bores, especially if it isn't Xmas and one can't use pretty wrappings. And then standing in line at the post office. Ugh! Leave us discuss it no more.

But I got your V-mail of May 8 today (so complaining about having to pack something to send to me) in which you stated that you thought the New Republic would do more harm than good overseas. And why, pray tell? Dangerous thoughts for the boys or something? Really, darling, sometimes you startle me, which perhaps is what you're planning to do all along. And about that committee for a Free Palestine. I don't know what the name of it is any more, and when I spoke to this mother of a high school friend of mine last summer who is president of Haddassah, she told me that several of the committees working for Palestine over here were very suspect. Fascist-minded (using the term as people sometimes sling it around) etc. So now, although I hardly believe everything I'm told, I don't know. Anyway, as I said before, I don't know the name of any organization off hand, except Haddassah.

I was amused by the problems of Col. Weaver's wife, hauling men in to acclimate the baby. I use the gag too. Do you object to it on the grounds of child psychology or for other reasons? Actually it doesn't make much difference one way or the other -- the voices I mean. While the child does have preferences at this age -- I know Kathy prefers young children to anybody else, and also that it would be nice to have some one else, preferably a man, play with her during the trying hours between five and six, when I am too tired and would like to write to you before I become embroiled in the activities of the evening -- it doesn't make much difference so far as the sex is concerned. And the idea of sending a record of the father's voice is positively blood-curdling. It's like sending Daddy's wooden leg for baby to chew on. It reminds [*me*] of the story, very entre nous, of when Sam Kranes (you remember him -- the psychiatrist friend of Rosable's) went into the Army -- to Fort Bliss to be exact. He had records made of his voice for his children, to the effect of "Jimmy, this is your Daddy. Now I have something to say to you.

I am going away for a long time and I want you to be a big brave boy and take care of your Mommy and if I don't come back etc., etc.) Naturally every time Ruthy played it to the kids they would go into hysterics. Finally they moved to El Paso and I hope the warm Southwestern sun is repairing the trauma old psychiatrist Daddy inflicted on his kid. But don't tell this story to a soul. Bea told it to me in confidence.

Thanks loads for sending your signature. I got that letter yesterday. The Air Mails are coming along very well too, in fact the whole PO system seems to have gotten itself un-blanked up. I was sorry to hear about Martin's and that other man's injury. It seems astonishing that it could have happened to one of your group though it's probably not so surprising to you who have been there. I'll make a point of not mentioning it to Mom.

Kath is looking very sharp these days. I bought her a piqué sun hat yesterday and she looks exactly like Livinstone in darkest Africa. I'll send you a picture. I call her Kath in the hot weather. It's less trouble than Kathy. She's being quite a sport about waiting (and wetting) on the couch while I finish this up now. I guess that's because she took a whole can of soup at lunch today and this is holding her until I get around to giving her supper. She eats cereal for supper, poor kid. I had steak again last night but it wasn't very good.

I just gave Kathy her dinner and she is finishing up the remains of the bottle by herself. She looks very professional with her hands on it but in reality it is propped up by a blanket. It's not a recommended way of feeding a baby but she only had an ounce to go and I was getting mighty weary of holding her. I was up this morning at quarter to six and yesterday at quarter to five, getting her a bottle, and then didn't go back to sleep. God knows why she gets up to early. It wasn't even light yesterday.

Well, I love you anyway.

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 17, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Once again I'm sitting in the sun this time on the Steele's front steps. The object of concentration today are my shin bones, heretofore detestably pale. Harry Steele just took some pictures of Kath in her new fun hat. She is now dozing in her carriage. This morning came a wonderful package of wonderful gloves from you. They are all lovely though I think I like the two-tone sports ones best. The black lace ones are very sexy. I shall have to get a black lace girdle to match. Some are too small but will probably stretch in wearing. You underestimate the size of my extremities most flatteringly. I'm sure nobody else ever had a husband who sent so many nice things all the time. Don't think I don't appreciate your overall generosity, particularly when I hear some of the gals I know, sweating it out with penurious mates. I also got your letter of May 5 this morning, telling of a tasty meal eaten that we should have eaten together. Vera Miller and Peggy McDonald are coming tonight for supper. Vera is in town for a week attending the ILGU convention. She works for their New York office. The news of advances along the Sustow line is swell. But still the wait seems more than mortal can bear -- I mean waiting for you. I keep thinking that if you were here absolutely nothing would bother me -- sunburns wouldn't hurt, housework wouldn't bore, our apartment wouldn't be so damn damp.

As it is, and I use the present tense advisedly since this is a day later, I have a darling cold in my head. It is now full-blown, with sneezes and coughs. I interrupted this letter because Vera suddenly showed up and then I got involved in walking her to campus and making dinner, etc. During the night it stormed and turned very cold. I think I shall survive my cold and furthermore am taking measures to prevent Kathy from getting it. I keep a mask on when I go near her and Virginia fed her to night. In fact, I feel OK and will say more about the cold on page two. Vera is very happy in new York and has quite a responsible job at Amalgamated and a lovely apartment on 57th St. to boot.

She dresses beautifully now -- she always had good taste but wore clothes to suit her desperate 57th St. mood in previous years. Peggy McD came over for dinner too and they talked about life in their respective offices and I was thoroughly bored. But that's neither hence nor thence.

I had the damndest dream about you last night. You came home but I simply couldn't find you anywhere. I kept looking for you and you kept wandering off to see people in the Social Science building and I was very aggrieved. Then I found a simply hideous girl who had seen you and the suspicion dawned on me that you had made this terrible creature so I asked her her name and when she told it to me I said, "Oh no, you're not the one." Then I found this long book review in the New Yorker of a book you had written concerning your experiences in the war. The first part of it consisted of quotes from the book but I skipped over that part and just read the end of the review, which, I regret to say, panned you terribly. It went something like this: "Lt. DeGrazia may be very nice personally but his style is full of British affectations." Then you showed up suddenly and gave me hell for just reading the last, unfavorable part of the review and skipping over the first part. I can't imagine what subconscious store of aggressions I drew upon to dream up this awful dream because my conscious moments are just one big abyss of longing for you. It must have been the thunderstorm. I guess I was mad that you weren't here to fend off the terror of it. Kathy always wakes up when there is a storm. She isn't scared or anything but it's a nuisance to have her awake at three in the morning. I am always afraid that she'll decide she wants a bottle at that hour, but fortunately she went back to sleep again both nights (we've had them two nights in a row now and the weatherman predicts another one for tonight. I don't think this, really. It's not an oblique slur.

Darling, we still have the Riggs account of course. I'm not sure because I haven't gotten around to paying any bills for this month but our balance wavers around the 450 mark so you can plan your check-writing accordingly. I am sending you under separate cover another card for you to sign and return to me. It

purports to make our account in the bank at the corner joint also. Unk and Day both advised me to scatter the money around in several banks. It wasn't just my idea.

Kathy looks just wonderful. She is so brown now. And she eats a fantastic amount of food. When Virginia fed her tonight she misunderstood me and gave her five heaping instead of level, tablespoons of cereal, which amounted to about a full cup when you mix it with fluid, so that she got about three times the amount of food she ordinarily gets. But she took it all and seemed quite happy about it, in a dazed way. I hope the pictures come out well. It must be hard for you to realize what a phenomenally beautiful child you have. You probably just think it's big talk on my part. The funny part of it is that now she really doesn't look much like anyone. I think she's less delicate looking than you were as a baby and she certainly doesn't look like me at all.

Love and kisses from us [*with?*] a sneeze. Your loving

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 17, 1944

Jill, my darling,

I've had time for nothing in the last two days save work and reading a letter of yours which contained some seven pages and was dated May 7th, perhaps the fastest letter I've ever had over here. And I can remember the time when I used to think two days was an unbearable wait. I have committed the enthusiast's folly in praising someone's activity so much so often that when a really big act of adulation is required, no vocabulary of praise remains. Unless, of course, one goes Hollywood with "colossal", "supreme" and "gigantic", "heart-chilling", etc. But there were some beautiful pieces of prose in your latest effort. You have and are succeeding in covering Kathy's early development in epic style. I almost feel as if I

ought not to spoil the flow of fine literature by returning. Because I know upon my return you will immediately abandon all your weak-limbed literary sublimation for the more comforting physical satisfaction of your lusts. And I would be aggrieved if it happened any other way. There will be a great rush to abandon ill-begotten habits of whittling away wooden hours in all sorts of silly ways. I'll go back to a little reading on the street-cars.

I find that I am struck by a certain fundamental familial resemblance in Kathy's laughing picture which I can't place at all. It goes away, in fact, when I study her closely, but when I turn away and give it a quick look later on, I am again struck by this insensible quality.

You embarrass me by calling me kind. I always consider myself to be quite the opposite, as you have said also on some occasions. Perhaps common adjectives don't work and one must resort to complex theories of psychology having to do with split personalities and things. I was only speaking the truth in my observations on Dos Passos. For most of the things he finds evil in people, it is just as easy to find good things. The trouble seems to be that he has no idea of what part their traits play in the scheme of things. It is simple to see why things should go badly if people are all bad, or the opposite. It is another thing to see how the mixture of qualities result in a social system. But you remember how I chase dogs and assault little boys, so that I can't be very nice and kind.

I saw your clipping on Dewey and Osmosis and remain unperturbed by your sentimental appeals and such scurrilous writing. We shall see what develops. But I want it understood here and now that I shall stand for no sabotage of my right to vote on your part should we disagree on the final issue. As for the clipping on Mrs. Coen, I haven't seen it and there are no signs that the censor took it for a pin-up girl.

I read with interest your quote on the father's role with the baby and for all I can gather, it might as well be anyone as the old man, just someone who doesn't give him or her food. A couple

of billion people qualify besides myself. I'm afraid at her stage, the only pleasure involved would be a selfish one for me.

Yesterday I drove a good deal with Edmund Howard and a couple of assistant sleuths and the dust, glare, traffic, and general strain gave me a ponderous headache which put me to bed before my time in the evening. This morning I feel much better and, as you see, tonight I am able to beat off the sandman on one hand and write you on the other. As a result I shall go to bed feeling happy. The day was a busy one with a number of interesting things to do. Tomorrow will be the same. The attack increases my work in proportion as it proceeds. The Stars and Stripes had a press review on the papers back home and apparently the attention of all and sundry is focussed on the offensive. Perhaps now the time yet remaining between us will go much faster.

I am enclosing my application for a change of insurance. Despite all my efforts to have our useless administrative personnel put it through over a month ago, finally I have to do it myself. I'm sorry that I told you it had been done prematurely. I can say, however, that I had told so many people and written enough notes on the subject, that any court of law, if it were called on to judge the matter of a beneficiary, would say that, in fact and in law, the change of beneficiary has existed since I wrote you about it.

All you have to do with the form is to put my policy number on it (Mom has it, I believe) and mail it to the Vets' Administration.

I'll mail this letter now. Give Kathy a kiss for me. Be a good girl and I'll give you many thousands of kisses too -- even if you're a bad girl and wear low shoes always and burn roasts, come to think of it. I like to kiss you too much.

Love, Al

ALFRED contemplates D Section and asks what they are achieving. He expects too much, of course; he asks whether they are significantly helping the generals to win the war and exaggerates what they are not doing and what they might be doing.

As he views it, "D Section" is a fine case of muddling through; totally uninstructed and unrehearsed, but effective. It is hardly credible: despite all the different jobs he has done and all of the communal living, not once has anybody said, "Now here is what 'D Section' does, Alfred," nor has anyone had the temerity to propose that they hold program-planning conferences or engage in any of the dozen different procedures that were elsewhere employed and recommended in the new science of public administration and business management in America. A spy observing what he and the others did might correctly surmise that "D Section" provides liaison with political factions and lends them active support where suggested by top policy. An army, whether liberating or occupying, must deal with the many conflicts and political needs of the region. Its officers, not party to the obsessions of the top, need a continuous flow of balancing information, to keep their mental equilibrium, to feel that they are moving properly, even though in the dark, to feel real and alive in the middle of large events; they cannot be let to feel that their machine is driving like a great power drill into a mountain tunnel.

Further there is little way of their knowing the effects of an action in their totality by military intelligence alone. The waves of a military event go out in ever-widening circles and splash here and there against obstacles, or for that matter assist in the launching of boats into favorable winds under fresh crews. His reports are filled with snippets: an Austrian POW, back from convalescent leave, says: the Austrians are cracking up; a partisan passing through the lines says a good-sized gang of them is holed up near Lago Trasimeno; a letter of a dead German mentions a riot in Modena against the Fascist conscription drive; an Italian civilian says that two downed British airmen are hiding in a sculpture studio at Pietrosanta; the Badoglio Government is detested in Bologna, where Communist activity and organization are strong. Put it all together, it spells, it may spell, it may hint at -- well something, a something that might be useful in detail

and in the broad.

JILL TO AL MAY 18, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Just finished 2 V-mails to you. Please sign encl. card.

Irmie sent me these pictures. I thought you might like to see them. Darling, would you mind sending the one of my mother and us kids back? I have so few pictures of her and prize them very much. I hope this letter doesn't get lost.

I think I am saluting in one picture. I was always very fond of military and naval life and still am -- of one particular participant anyway.

I love you baby always --

Jill

P. S. Kathy has a round face and nice ears like me in my baby pictures but the resemblance stops there. I had a lot more hair at 5 mos. (if Irmie's right) than she does. She is prettier -- her mouth is bigger, her nose turns up. Isn't Paul a cute little boy?

AL TO JILL MAY 19, 1944

Jill Darling,

By dint of self-sacrificing abstinence at the table tonight, I ate little enough to not fall asleep afterwards. Ergo, a certain ability to get off a letter. On nights of indulgence, I curse the late dinner hour which doesn't allow much of an evening afterwards, though generally I think it is a fine thing. You probably won't believe that I have spent more than a modicum of time overseas pondering the advantages of eating a late dinner with you or an early one. One feels fresher after an early dinner but

on the other hand, the very feeling of a late orgy with a pleasant lassitude is an advantage. Then there is the matter of a lunch hour. If one eats around twelve, then a tea around five is practically unavoidable, indeed very desirable. Perhaps I am still young and conscience-stricken by a lazy evening. Robbie, for example, settles down to dinner with us around seven-thirty and doesn't rise from the table until eleven, except perhaps to move into more interesting company in another part of the room. The evening dinner table is his life. Such habits are certainly out of joint with the army which eats generally fantastically early, eleven at noon and four-thirty or five at night. The real reason for that, of course, is the conspiracy of the cooks to get their work over as soon as possible in the evening. Another thing about eating early is that there is time for a delightful snack sometimes later before sleep after walking or visiting or seeing a show. I think I'll wind up in neither groove, but doing either when we feel like it.

Since your letter of May 7 two days ago I haven't heard from you. I'm a little worried about the packages, the letters, the gloves and the candy-flowers business. Have you received them yet? I can't find anything nice to fill out the cardboard box with the cigarette boxes and doll, so I'll put in several books I'd like to have around at home. My own supply of reading material here is considerable. Plus the latest batch of books from you, I have a classic work on The History of Italian Literature by De Sanctis which has some thousand well-written pages, Beard's Republic, a lot of very interesting propaganda in Italian and a copy of Pane e Vino by Silone which I picked up today.

The state of contemporary literature in Italy today is pathetic. There is hardly a decent author. Silone is by far the best, though Croce of course in his field is incomparable. I imagine however that there will be a great release of ability once conditions permit. They are certainly getting a hell of a lot of experience on which to write books. I met recently a woman named Alba De Cespedes who wrote a well-known book which apparently has been translated in all sorts of weird tongues including English, though I must say it has eluded me. It's called

something like No One Turns Backwards. The system of education is the same quagmire. Fascism managed to root out whatever was good in the classical tradition of teaching and introduce a few of its own bad elements as well. Now, besides all the damage, the refugees, the bad inflation, the hungry students, the lack of school materials, the absence of books and the confusion of war, there is an almost hopeless ineptitude on the part of a great number of teachers, the dead weight of very bad methods which have become institutionalized, and all the conflicting political groups which stand in the way of reform. Our American situation is idyllic in comparison. It is difficult for one to imagine the impossible conditions for their operation. The students must memorize dull dates about medieval history amidst world-shaking political and military events on an empty stomach and taught by equally hungry, frightened, unequipped, and frustrated teachers.

How hard it must be for the people at home to feel what is going on in Europe. Tonight, after dinner, I looked at a beautiful magazine on American life which they are putting out for the Italians and I saw a magnificent picture of Boulder Dam. Then I thought of a plane gliding in over it and sending the whole thing crashing down as happened in the Ruhr and at Pescara recently and my heart dropped. Yet, as sensitive as I try to be when imagining things and events as other people see them, I don't remember feeling much when I read about those raids. So much of the best part of Europe is already a burst dam. There is nothing to laugh at in the churchmen's declarations recently on the destruction of whole cities. I don't follow them all the way through, but I think one should cross himself several times solemnly when taking upon himself such immeasurable ruin, and not look upon the whole thing as casually as if the works of man were tenpins bowled over by a strike.

Our attack in Italy is going very well. People are beginning to ask without apology: "When do you think Rome will fall?" I still feel that the destruction of the German armies in Italy might have far-reaching consequences. They are by no means mediocre forces, and the Germans would find it practically

impossible to replace the twenty or so divisions in the near future.

I went to the PX yesterday for the first time in a fair while to get cigarettes, candy and such. I also bought offhand a summer visored hat which when I finally saw it on me in a mirror, shocked and horrified me. It is an immense tall thing with an awning effect, awful to behold. I quickly set to tearing it to pieces and am having it sewed up an inch less all around. I don't think it will ever be anything to wear in pride. The person who designed it must have been stark-staring mad. Believe me. there will be a mutiny when all the officers who grabbed at the gaudy things in a mad rush see what they look like and have to face the jeering throng in them.

Each night, as the sun goes down, I realize there is an immediate reason for your being with me apart from all the ones I've named many a time. The colors of the water and land and sky are always different and the sunset is not just a sunset, but is a continual series of panoramas. I could never say after one night, "Well, we've seen the sunset together". We would have to see them continually, night after night, as long as the sun sets. Tonight's was especially beautiful because the sky and sea were exactly of the same color when they merged. The whole world was just one element of soft color, lit faintly by pink tints against blue-greys. The horizon was a curve rather than an angle, as quiet and dreamy and clean as your form in the twilights of our walks. Time and again, I will see you in the pauses of the evening and think of you as part of the colors and the peace, until I can finally touch the beauty as well as see it.

Give my laughing daughter a kiss for me, as always, your

Al

FINE words, fine ideas, but not the whole truth. I have already shown the Lieutenant's sexual dormancy for what it is: a lazing tomcat that

can suddenly spring alive.

Ian Greenlees dines in a fancy night club. Robbie goes along. Also the Lieutenant. A notorious Italian playboy, charming and suave, is at table, his relationship to Ian quite mysterious. But then too, an incredibly beautiful woman accompanies him. Alfred's buddies are not interested in women for their bodies. He is. After several glasses of wine, he is getting ready to climb over the table upon her. Pasta, quail, more wines, flambeaus, he has to call for help. Greenlees, he beseeches, sotto voce: who is Toni, who is Gloria, how are they related, she is smiling engagingly at me, what shall I do?

Greenlees merely chortles and gestures magnanimously, no problem, I'm sure... The Lieutenant goes to the toilet, stumbling over his third leg. Robbie, with him, has to laugh, watching him as he straightens himself out. Robbie, she is amazingly beautiful, don't you think? How would Robbie know: the lovelier, the worse, so far as he is concerned. Greenlees is murmuring to Toni, always murmuring he is, whether secretive or in anger or commanding, but when informing or discussing rationally he speaks in a normal louder voice -- they burst out laughing.

Toni laughs, they all laugh, the girl smiles, and he grins, too, because he can see that everyone is enjoying the proverbial spectacle of the deprived soldier with a few drinks under his belt. Amazingly, they all turn to him, saying, why not? of course! Gloria, the principal, after all, is herself laughing and obviously interested.

The party cannot break up soon enough for him, and he ends up in her apartment in the center of Naples, in her bed -- either Toni is supporting my evening, or she is, or she is an heiress or war widow or a super-courtesan. Whatever she may be otherwise, in the here and now she is the most deliciously curvaceous of any woman he would ever have occasion to envelop, delectably deliquescent. (Over the long run, I think I have so indicated, his tastes and female comrades lean toward the less conspicuously rounded). With all he has drunk and his sexual intensity, he is lucky to come off, and again in the dawn, and is too fast and doesn't play around enough. He probably should have been kicked out of bed, but there is something to the lithe body, the smile, the Americano, the stereotypical young officer, that even gets to

a sophisticated woman, to a sensitive woman, which perhaps Gloria is not quite.

Gloria is a pretty sight in the sobriety of morning, too, he is glad to see. He drops in on her once more; she has sweet eyes and swishes around smooth and curved like a seal; he brings her a carton of her favorite Chesterfields and a PX eau de cologne. Withal that she is cast in the ultra-feminine ideal and a decent gentle person too, he is not enthralled and anyway must get along. The Front is cracking and it is time to write some special orders to get him up and into Rome. "Arrivederci, cara Gloria!"

On the Eighteenth May, the Abbey falls to the Poles.

JILL TO AL MAY [UNDATED], 1944

Marked in pencil Fri-Sat 19-20 in Al's handwriting

Darling --

I really should be making formula and getting to bed, because I still have a stuffy head but your letter of May 11 that came today was so nice I must write you tonight anyway. Actually all your letters are nice but I just feel terribly friendly. Kathy and I had a nice day except that I discovered a long two-way stream of ants making their way into the cupboard so I must clean that out now and lay down ant-bane. We walked a great deal because my head felt better in the open air. Mac came over this afternoon with Jane Barry and I walked over to school with them. Mac is trying to get a job in the Meteorology lab over at school this summer and resume courses. I hope she does. I really enjoy being with her. She is such a lively girl it's positively rejuvenating to be with her. I do hope we won't fall out over the presidential race.

And, laugh as you may, I am in positive need of rejuvenation. I got a form letter from the president of my class at Smith gushing over our Fifth reunion and describing in dull detail why we can't all meet at Northampton this year. Imagine! A fifth reunion. Why,

most of my classmates, who are anywhere from one to three years older than I are positive matrons now, with houses in Westchester and Highland Park. Anyway a few of them must be that way now. And here I am blissfully running around in ankle socks, careening around corners à la the elder DeGrazia boys, shouting and laughing at Kathy. It positively gives one pause. I coincidentally got a letter from B. Hannah today too, my friend from Philly on the Ladies Home etc. I guess she feels the weight of the years too. When I saw her last year she had changed a lot since school too, physically I mean, but fortunately for the better since she is the sort of girl who looks much better dressed up careerishly and well-groomedly than sloppy-collegiate. (I hope people don't say that behind my back.) I'll send you her letter via slow mail because it's fun and she is representative of the best -- and few enough there is of that -- that Smith can produce.

The news is just wonderful from Italy and here too there are a few hopeful political portents -- the victories of Pepper and Hill in the South and that heel Dies' decision not to run again. Maybe we will be seeing each other soon again, in a reasonably decent country.

Like you, I'm not at all worried about our future together peacetime. I don't think much about what you're going to do although one constant remains -- that house in the country. And we'll be able to afford pretty much what and where we want, within limits. Paul could probably do a good job of designing a pleasant not-too-expensive house for us, if we wanted to build one. But where is the question. Like you again, I want the whole world. There are so many beautiful places in this country that one could live. The West is wonderful but I am nostalgic, without reason to be sure, for the kind of cold winter you get in New England, Upper New York and the northern Middle West. And ever since I read Mark Twain two summers ago I am bursting to see the great rivers of the Middle West, though perhaps it would be a better idea to travel around there than to bed down for keeps. I think I'd like to live anywhere but the deep South and the Middle Atlantic states, although what I've read

and the little I've seen of the tidewater section all the way down the coast intrigues me.

But I would spend my substance fighting against an impossible social structure from Maryland on down. So I guess the decision rests pretty much in the hands of the institution or person who decides to give us our income. Oh yes, I don't like this section of Illinois at all. It's much too flat and too pitted by industrial areas. Even if you did find a cute little place south or west of Chicago it would only be an island in the midst of desolation. You'd know you could never drive more than a few miles without hitting a drainage canal or a factory.

Darling I'm enclosing some of the pictures we took Sunday at the point. The little camera I have is absolutely no good at all. It does the damndest things to faces and figures although Kathy seems to have survived. Most of the pictures were of Virginia's kids and they looked so awful, although they are really attractive girls, that I won't bother sending them.

Darling, I love you so much and so does Kathy, or at least she would if she knew you and if I didn't keep telling her that "Daddy doesn't like little girls who won't eat their cereal ... Now what would Daddy think of a little girl who pulled her mother's hair, etc. etc." It's an insidious habit and I'll make sure of stopping when she starts arising at the age of reason.

All my love to you,

Saturday morning

Mirabile dictu, my cold is almost gone. But I stayed up half the night reading a book on Smith girls by a Smith girl, one with all the right ideas, it goes without saying. It was no enduring monument of literature but was of great interest to me for its insights into the fearful snobbery of an institution originally dedicated to liberal ideals. Also it contained accounts of the rather limited progressive movements on campus during the middle thirties, movements which I regret today I didn't participate in, although I was always a lone and voluble

supporter of Roosevelt. How come you didn't do that sort of things either at school? Was it because there were always such bitches like Adele Rose right in the middle of things and such dumb beautiful males like Hart? One thing that was again brought to mind, or rather, that I never fully realized until I left school, was the terrible almost fanatical hatred, or more accurately, scorn, that the very upper class girls had for Jews. I mean the girls that came from Boston and from the exclusive prep schools who constituted a powerful minority at Smith. I can understand or rather recognize anti-Semitism in almost all other classes but I can never figure out why these tenth-generation Americans, who never even saw a Jew until they got to college, should spend their substance in such a cold fury over the fact that they had to live in the same houses with Jews. A most unattractive one I knew at Smith came out here and met, for the first time in her life, a guy who was fond of her and kind to her. She was a first-family Bostonian and they were all very mean to her because she wasn't attractive enough to move in deb circles. This guy, one of the better Sterns from Philly, wanted to marry her but her family raised such hell that she is now still single and unattractive and unloved. I guess it's a well-worn plot but somehow still inconceivable to me.

I got your letter today sending me a picture of you with a lot of other men, looking very hard and handsome with all the elderly civilians in the background. I was interested in your little exposition of safety valves in the male of the species. Maybe women ought to have some such device. I bet that's why I have insomnia occasionally.

Oh the house is such a mess I guess I'd better do something about it instead of mooning over a typewriter and gnashing my teeth at the idea of all this healthy poundage of mine being wasted on the barren Chicago spring. Kathy is asleep in her buggy outside and I suppose I ought to look at her too. I love you terrifically and impatiently -- but I'll keep.

All my love, Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 21, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

This has been a dreary rainy day and I've managed to stumble through it, as one always does on days like this. It started out inauspiciously with Kathy waking at the hours of 2, 3, and 6 AM, crying madly for no apparent reason. I gave her a bottle at three since I couldn't think of anything else to do. She spent the day alternately fussing and laughing and by late this afternoon it became apparent she had a mild cold. I bundled her up and called the doctor, who told me not to worry and give her a little nose jelly which I did. She ate her usual huge dinner and is sleeping peacefully now, trussed up like a little mummy. I'm sure she'll be all right -- she has no fever or diarrhea but I feel badly because she obviously caught my cold. Virginia's kids spent the afternoon with me. The elder one helped me sandpaper and shellac the new chest of drawers. I've simply got to get finished with it and put our winter clothes away. I can practically hear the moths smacking their fuzzy lips. P. S. Next day. She's OK (the baby I mean. She's FINE.)

A special delivery man brought that beautiful box full of letters and stuff this afternoon. I tacked those nice pictures of the four big guys up on the kitchen wall, where they will daily inspire me to Keep the Kitchen Klean for Victory and Kook Kuddlesome Kookies for Freedom. The picture of little La Guardia was interesting, as was your interpretation of Jerry's Xmas card, which I couldn't have figured out myself, being unfamiliar with that particular literary allusion. In a burst of narcissistic interest I started to read the first couple of my letters to you after you left but didn't keep at it for very long. I was sort of surprised at how high-spirited I was, even in those first confused depressing days. I must be either awfully well-adjusted or awfully stupid -- you know that old saw -- "You can't fool me, I'm too dumb." It's funny that my letters had that tone because in retrospect, all I can remember is worrying terribly about whither goes I.

Darling tell me, do you think it's silly for me to think of taking a

course at school this summer. I'd like to learn something more about either the physical sciences or English literature. In the first field I'd be pretty much limited to math because the introductory physics course all have lab work and I wouldn't have the time. Ditto with chemistry, in which I'm somewhat less interested, probably out of complete ignorance rather than anything else. There's a course in plane geometry -- math 102 - - given at eleven that would fit in with Kathy's feeding schedule or, as an alternative, a course on selected English and American novels given at one. I guess the latter wouldn't be such a good time on second thought if Kath gets fed at two. Anyway, the assignments in math would be more fun to do -- they are so cut and dried, which is why I've always liked math. I can't think of any justification on a practical level for taking more math except that I like it almost better than anything else but got so damn side-tracked in the social sciences. But what do you think of the general idea of taking more school work? I know you're going to suggest Home Study but I know if I got involved with that I'd never do the assignments. Or I might take trig. On re-reading the catalog I see that it's one of the pre-requisites for Plane Geometry. I wish to hell I had gone to this school in the first place and had had the physical science surveys. Then I could go on to advanced work in any field that caught my fancy. Like bugs.

MONDAY

The prospect of so much intellectual effort must have wearied me because I suddenly upped and went to bed. And a good thing I did too, since I was up every hour on the hour, turning Kathy from fore to aft so that her head wouldn't get too stuffed up from being in the same position. She spent a good part of the night propped up on a grown-up pillow with her panda, like two characters in a bedroom comedy. The results today are that she is embarrassingly without a cold. I say embarrassingly because at noon today we took a stroll along 57th St. and who should we bump into but our doctor. He was with his wife, a good-looking girl I noted approvingly, and as he peered into the buggy he said suspiciously, "That baby doesn't look as if he had

a cold." And he didn't. There is always that confusion about Kathy's sex until she gets her clothes off. I guess it's because of my tailored tastes in infants wear. The day passed very discouragingly. I went to the Army store on 55th St. and bought a pair of huaraches that turned out to be too big and was talked into some blue jeans that are too small. Then I went to the dentist and he stuck in an inlay that doesn't fit and then I bought a pair of inexpensive summer sandals and after paying for them discovered I forgot my ration book. Then I came home and have been cleaning the kitchen ever since, with Kathy furnishing background music with her wails for dinner. I finally burst into tears and feel much better. I also threw a glass on the floor in temper and it didn't break. Sometimes I get just overwhelmed with self-pity but it passes rapidly. You know -- the usual plaint -- no Al, no sex, no fun, no movies, the baby crying, the kitchen dirty. But, as I say, the mood passes quickly. Anyway I got two nice letters from you today, May 11 and 13. Now don't ever worry about things happening to me. Like my finger. It was just a little infection from a hangnail I think. Everybody gets them. I just like to shoot my mouth off. And I will send you a cigar box full of bumblebees the next time you chaff at me for my brilliant scheme to distribute our monies among reliable banks. I do admit it was rather feeble-minded of me to send you two cards from the University bank. I had forgotten I'd sent you the first one until I got it all signed, sealed and delivered today. I still have the card you sent for the Harris Trust Bank. It fell down into a crack in the buggy and I just found it now. I'll send it off tomorrow to the bank with the passbook. All right, go ahead and feel superior. Just wait until you come home. I shall daily confound you with my superlative adaptation to Life in the Big City, as Vic would say. Speaking of Vic, I've seen neither hair nor hide of the family since the Christening. Mom has had a cold and hasn't been able to get down and of course, I never feel like making that trip north with our great hulk of a child. So we are at a stalemate. Poor Mom sees as little of

(continued from May 21)

Kath as she does of Joe almost but I honestly don't know what

the solution is, lacking a car as we all do. And now that Kathy gets so grouchy unless she can take a ride in the buggy every day, it makes it doubly undesirable to take her up there because she would have to stay in the house all day. What a genius she is. Tonight she held the cup while I spooned the cereal out of it into her mouth. But it looks as if all her strength were in her head. Joan reports that Mike can turn over now, back to front and front to back. She only can turn from front to back and then only when she is very mad at being put on her stomach since that position means she is supposed to go to sleep. But I'd much rather have her than that sodden little Irishman. She bites me now too. I think she is starting teeth and needs something hard like zwieback to chew on. I held her up to my face and she bit my nose and is always biting Panda's nose, poor patient creature that he is. I gave him a bath the other day and he looks like an old wet mop now.

Damn Damn Damn. I wish you were here but I guess there's not much either of us can do about it. When I read newspaper stories about men who have been over for years and years and have great louts of children they have never seen, my blood absolutely freezes. I hope that won't happen to us. Sometimes I get mad at you for being so damn wonderful. If you were a heel I could just go ahead and forget you and be very comfortable. But that's silly too because then I wouldn't be happy if I were married to a heel. This way I'm happy because I'm unhappy, or unhappy because I'm happy, take your choice.

I think I'll go mail this now and pick up the films from the drugstore.

You know, I was complaining before about having no fun. Well, I really do have some kinds of fun -- I must, because if I didn't I'd probably shoot myself, not being the stoical type, that plods through life doing his Duty, goddamn it. I have fun taking walks with Kathy and fun writing you and fun talking to Virginia. It's just that sometimes the fun-less moments get too concentrated, like going to the dentist and cleaning the kitchen all in one day. And of course all this mad legwork with the buggy is a poor

substitute for -- well, it's a poor substitute.

All my love and a million big kisses to you from us both.

As ever, Jill

Cartoon: dog, worm and turtle walking with stick woman running with a baby buggy toward a post marked "Stop".

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

Darling Jill,

I am munching one of your chocolate bars, having found our Sunday dinner insufficient to quiet all the pangs of hunger I aroused in only one dull morning. We had a little spaghetti and sauce (not a usual dish), some salad, two tiny potatoes, and a little seemingly already masticated chicken, two pineapple rings, bread and coffee. So much for the Sunday dinner. The news this morning continues to be very good and the Rome fever is beginning to afflict people. The weather is cool and I can't understand it; I thought it got very hot by now. It's probably worse in Chicago. I started to read the Morgue murder mystery you sent me last night, and found it very well written for that type of thing, though the author certainly goes out of his way to draw mean descriptions of all the people who are conscripted to be characters. Yesterday, I got two lone copies of the Chicago Daily News from last December and had a thrilling time reading about Pearl Harbor Day and various glowing pictures of immediate collapse on the part of our enemies. I suppose I shall continue to be bothered by ancient newspapers even when finally in your fond clutches. But if I have to put my clothing on in order to get the mail and find it to be another News, I'm not so sure I won't give a final mad scream and commit acts which will make rustic bungling out of the Los Angeles Times case. Hadfield loves the Telephone Booth Indians and has acquired various phrases from it. He drags me out of bed in the morning saying that he wants to make "stiff opposition" out of me and he

calls a number of the less-respected psychological warriors "telephone booth soldiers". Did I tell you I got a nice letter from Gosnell several days ago? He didn't say much. The Stars and Stripes has been playing up all the benefits our great legislators are voting us. All I need now is an old rocking chair and my future is secure.

If a man walks around ten years from now with a stooped back and a worried look, you can be sure he is not a veteran.

I continue to grin whenever I look at Kathy. She certainly has an engaging smile. But I imagine she is already changed considerably from her three months old pictures. (This is a horrible machine). I've thought of two more things to avoid. One, don't let her get too much sun this summer, and two, don't set her to walking until her feet can stand the weight. I'll bet you knew these things all the time.

I am getting dizzy from this terrible typewriter. A big, tender kiss for you darling.

Love,

Al

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

Dearest Jill, Evening (and a nice, cool one too)

After my badly typed letter of this morning (or afternoon, rather), I can't face a typewriter. Your letter of May 11 came this afternoon, dispelling already dispelled fears of mine about your and Kathy's health, and describing your gardening activities. I am more than ever convinced now that we must buy a piece of land to live on and cultivate. I can think of a number of pleasures I would gladly give up if I had you and other growing things about me. Another caveat - don't go driving your bicycle down the street recklessly with Kathy in a basket, or alone, for

that matter.

I visited Joe Ferla in the hospital this afternoon. He got shot up pretty badly, both legs, intestines & back, but he's coming through all right. He's a very nice fellow and I'm glad he's out of danger, though it will be two more months before he's on his feet. It is really a miracle that he's living, with all that was going on around him. He picked up a machine-gun bullet in the leg while lying hurt, but never lost consciousness. In fact, he dragged himself beneath the jeep while holding his innards together and then piled his equipment over his head. All the while going through his life day by day.

I'll be thinking of our cool basement this summer, remembering last summer and another summer here. I sure would like a good Atlantic Ocean breeze on my face. I'm feeling fine and love you very much.

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 23, 1944

Darling --

Tuesday

More pictures, with explanatory notes inscribed on the back. And a letter from you today, May 13, which has you committing slow suicide with my fudge. Darling, those weren't shells you found in the fudge. That was fudge. It got kind of hard in the broiling. And after your description of your swim, I was sorely tempted to buy you another pair of satin, GI colored swimming pants at that Army Navy store where you got the last pair and also where I was high-pressured into buying blue jeans yesterday. Today I took Virginia along as moral support and returned them. They weren't very nice about it so I decided to let the shorts, which as I said before were satin, go. But if you want some tell me dear and I'll go to Field's and get your heart's desire.

Kathy's been angelic today, the day that I usually fight my temporary and losing battle with dirt. She practically got down on the floor and helped me scrub. But she's spoiling her good record now by fussing before going to sleep. I find this a good time to write you. She's all fed, cleaned and dressed for the night and the potatoes for dinner are boiling away. I would have nothing to bother me, save a fire in the kitchen possibly, if it weren't for her reluctance to turn in. Today I brought her over to the lady next door, a former social worker and very nice, two kids, a husband a chemist and all that, who was being visited by a friend who has a five-month-old baby too. This baby was three weeks older than Kathy but wasn't as big. Both babies got very excited when they saw one another. Much arm-waving, strangled cries (I strangled them) and throbbing chests. This is the only baby I've ever seen darker than Kathy. She's half-colored, an adequate reason.

Gosh I don't think thumbsucking affects the teeth at this age. Maybe when they're twelve years old, but hardly now. Anyway it's worth the chance for the satisfaction the poor gypped little thing gets out of it. I wish I could still breast-feed her. I notice even now that when I give her a bottle with a slow nipple, i.e., having small nipple holes, she is much happier afterwards and the tendency to suck thumbs diminishes. Actually she doesn't do it an awful lot since she is so busy biting things and people all day long and also tearing up odd bits of paper, like *The Key Reporter* which came this morning. I'm sure this last piece of intelligence will cause you to cut her out of your will.

You asked me a personal question and I answer, i.e., after-lunch naps. No I am not in favor of them if you mean after-lunch, yes if after-dinner. I mean, they're a fine idea on Sundays winter ones I mean, when one eats a big meal in the middle of the day. (Don't think you'll get more than a carrot on summer Sundays, my day to howl at the beach). But on weekdays I hardly sit down to eat so wouldn't have a chance or enough in me to nap. Furthermore Kathy gets fed at two so I really wouldn't have time to lie down until after tea-time, which I did all the time the first three months of her life, when I was so tired.

Now I don't get sleepy during the day so don't bother. Anyway it's a waste of time for me because it takes me so long to go to sleep and if I do sleep in the afternoon it takes me an even longer time to go to sleep at night. I guess that exhausts the subject, and me too. I'm going to eat now. More later.

NEXT DAY

There is something sly about this two-in-one letter deal I've been giving you lately. It almost seems as if you get cheated if I don't put the letters in separate envelopes. Thing is, it takes me so long to get around to mailing a letter, since I very rarely run out at night now, that I might as well do this continuous stuff. It's eight-thirty in the morning now. Kathy got me up at six and I didn't go back to sleep. I'm going to have to get blinds or something for her room. I took the shade off (horrors, thinks modest Al) because it was so much trouble to get up and down, and as the days get longer she just gets up progressively earlier, the little fiend.

Bill came over last night for a short visit while I was painting the new chest. However, he skillfully avoided getting an antiqued finish, unlike the chest and me. He had just bid a permanent farewell to his current girl, who is Greek and whose family doesn't approve of her going with non-Greeks. Bill has the damndest luck with women and also the most catholic tastes. I guess he really likes girls though. He is so subdued and repressed I could never figure out just what his attitudes towards women were. But he still hardly comes in the class of predatory males.

My head itches and I think I'm going to wash it now. I have a grim day ahead -- I have to do a great mess of laundry. It's the same sort of thing as washing my hair -- I stall around for days but when I finally get around to doing it it turns out to be rather fun. I think I'll go to the movies tonight if I can get Virginia to stay with Kathy. I haven't been but twice since Kathy came, no great loss I assure you.

Did I tell you I got a card from Rosable saying she was going to marry Buster the 2nd of June? Jeepers!

Eddie didn't make the scholarship test at the University but he did take another V-5 (naval aviation) exam, the final one, and was one of four kids in the city to pass it. I think that's wonderful, don't you. Now he doesn't know what to do, he has so many alternatives confronting him. He can take ASTP, which will put him through school for three quarters, or go to the University for three quarters on his own hook until he gets drafted, or become a naval cadet or take the V-12, which is the Navy's version of ASTP, in the fall, when it is next given, the tests I mean. I told him if he wanted to he could come down here for the summer quarter and then go into one of the services, if he just wanted to see what college life here was all about. He didn't think he wanted to embark on such a temporary educational expedient. Of course the navy aviation course sounds most attractive to me, but as I told him, don't go by me. I'm just a submerged housewife. Frankly I don't think he'd have such a good time at school right now. There is certainly a poor selection of people he could hang out with, and I think that's an important part of school. Competitive athletics are practically nil and all Ed could do would be to go to classes and come home and study. I don't think that would make him very happy. While the life he has been leading has been hardly Aristotelian in its aims, I do think there should be a more gradual transition to the good than he would get by going to the University right off. Maybe I'm just a sucker for a good time, I don't know.

Well, I really must wash my hair. I love you I love you I love you

--

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 23, 1944

Dearest,

Do you recognize the typewriter? Well, I'm back enjoying the wide open spaces and I really do enjoy them. The camp site is very lonely at present, on its last legs. Dabby is still around and it was nice seeing his cheery puss again. Foster is still around and a British Captain Duncan that I had met in Naples. But how nice and peaceful it is here. I can hardly drag myself off in search of work, of which there is aplenty. Everything is lush and green, a voluptuous richness about it. Even the live stock looks fatter now that the war has moved away.

The first thing that happened to me last night was that I was made a member of our volley ball team and hauled off to play an Italian infantry company which is stationed near at hand, about a quarter of a mile, as a matter of fact. They had a good team and beat the hell out of us, four games to two, mostly due to the effective sabotage accomplished by Sgt. Wallace of our side. We weren't much in practice, either. Tonight we will play them again with a sub for Wallace. Tomorrow I should have big news to report. I drove a lot today, saw Herz among other things, and got satiated on beautiful scenery. Herz is on the offensive mentally, too. His morale is good, he says. But whose isn't. A person can take a lot when his side is winning, and the end of the war seems a little bit closer. I read a copy of Jim Clark's New Yorker which was dated in February and was new to me. Do you realize that I haven't had any New Yorkers since the end of January, and that that package of New Yorkers and New Republics never have arrived? or like me did you say they were on their way and then not send them. This has reference to the souvenirs of Sardinia, which, through an unfortunate shortage of wrapping cord and the great distance I have been from a censor, still rest in my closet, and may for a little time yet, until I get at them with renewed energy and materials. I would say that you can expect them some time after the fall of Rome. Of course, on the side, you realize that the fall of Rome is a fantasy, a verbal cliché that exists apart from the city itself. If I

had not been there some time ago myself, I wouldn't believe it existed.

Speaking of packages, I received one last night from Daisy Blum of New York, the husband of Walter, I presume. It had about thirty bars of Suchard chocolate and about ten cigars. You probably realize that that is what I think a gift ought to be, if in fact you didn't advise her strongly on just that point. The other nice thing about the gift is that it was unexpected. Whoever sends things in May? 'Your kind sister' is the only answer to that.

Duncan has a copy of the poems of Lewis Carroll and I spent an hour or so last evening reading things like "The Walrus and the Carpenter", "the Hunting of the Snark", etc. I find them delightful, more so than when I was too young and innocent to appreciate them. The introduction to Alice in Wonderland is the sweetest little poem on earth and I shall read it to Kathy as soon as she learns not to drool all over my lap and wears shoes. Now that's another thing, - you put that lil' child in shoes when she comes of age. None of this business of putting it off until she gets married, whatever your personal habits. I like to see new people, incidentally, because they are new subjects to be compelled to view baby pictures. I must admit that everyone has been surprisingly decent about looking at them and saying nice things. I wouldn't be amazed if some of them meant what they say.

I'm a little perturbed about the prospect of spending the summer in OD's. In the field, all the troops wear woolens. In Naples, they are in cottons already. Being a quick-change artist (or do you deny that -- I have a vague echo that you do), I am prepared for anything. Talking of clothing reminds me of my dream last night which might have well been true for all I know. I dreamt that lizards were crawling inside my pajama shirt. I never did wake up to investigate. There certainly are enough of the little bastards around. And to think that at one stage of my life, I forked over hard-earned cash at the circus to get a lizard that I might lavish tender care on. What with the multitude of God's

other creatures hanging, dropping, swinging, and house-building all over the place, I don't have to get drunk to get the sensation of the d.t.'s.

You probably have been informed in previous letters that I have a batch of pictures to send home. Well, all I can say is that they're in the developing mill and like all good army people and things they were rushed in to wait. Perhaps in another week, I'll be able to send you some.

You will notice, no doubt, that my address is unchanged. Let it remain 512. There is no difference in time, practically. A few hours can't touch the infinity of interest with which I receive your barest scrawl. All my love to you, darling, and a kiss for Kathy.
Al

ON May 23, he is back in the field with, this time, a remarkable driver, Alfredo Segre, a corporal in the Army Engineers, who has been a translator for the General heading a regiment of engineers. Someone had pried him loose on the plea of an emergency, and he must return soon enough. He is an author of novels and a political publicist, an American now, a refugee from Fascism, whether because of communism, socialism, Jewishness, or general opposition to the regime, Our Man does not know or ask. He has knocked around, a solid type, well-built, not talkative, ruddy-faced. (Much later, his book came to hand, *Mahogany*, a powerful novel of Central Africa.)

They proceed into the newly liberated area of Gaeta, a fine Bay that perhaps should have been a debarkation point in the very beginning of the Italian campaign. Elements of the Fifth Army Team are there. Men come running in as he arrives, a mine has exploded beneath an American soldier who, with several others, has been bathing in the sea; our men have pulled him out. They should get a medal for heroism, Lieutenant; put them in for a medal.

He does think that they are brave and deserve a medal, although he never thinks about medals and has no idea of how they are given out. But he never gets around to filling out whatever papers are

involved. He has to get going. Although he does not stress the issue, because it would only stir up indignation, he wonders mildly, deliberating, at how lucky they were not to be blown up, too, rushing in like that to drag out the crippled soldier. What would the medics do, creep into the waves with a stretcher? Medics have the highest casualty rate behind riflemen and Lieutenants. They die on these occasions, rather frequently in fact. Corpses are booby-trapped, too. What is foolhardiness? Should it be discounted or discouraged. It's a riddle; what's the answer? Lacking a firm answer, he lets the matter slip out of mind; so it is not a matter of filling out papers.

Pushing ahead, he and Segre drive through the collapsing Tyrrhenian Coastal Front. The Americans have taken to the Coastal roads with ponderous armor. The French Expeditionary Force, which accomplished the breakthrough, is sent into the mountainous area between the coastal roads and infamous Highway #6, so long blocked at Cassino. The "French" troops are mostly French-led Moroccans and Algerians, and a rough lot they are. The French have not been long in Italy and feel little sympathy for the Italians, a feeling that conveys itself readily to their colonials, who anyhow regard looting, rape, and the killing of unfriendlies (whether in uniform or civilian) as combat pay.

The Americans steer their jeep into the hills on a detour. (The country is the same that you penetrate by broad smooth Autostrada today.) It has suddenly grown quiet, few heavy vehicles, no firing to be heard. They move slowly, passing among swarthy helmeted long-gowned goumiers, often indistinguishable from the soil and stone when resting. They see a line of women at one village, then another at the next. Some are weeping. They hardly appear liberated. Is food so short here, he wonders. Actually, they are in line for medical examination. They've been raped. They need treatment. Some want testimony, also, that their virginity had been violated -- for when they would marry.

He is incensed, Segre even more so. Segre urges him to do something! He knows what to do. Get a report into "D" Section -- to Ian Greenlees, Edmund and Hubert Howard, Albert Spalding and the others. They would stick it properly into the Generals' hierarchy --

Alexander, Clark, Juin, who would not wish the Nazi and Fascist propagandists of Rome and the North to play the story, nor the Home Front press.

More immediately, he sights a couple of French officers at their command post, a cafe' table amidst bombing debris, and decides to speak to them. So that he might speak bluntly, he sends Segre off in the jeep to scout the village above, and joins the Frenchmen. Your attack was splendide, he tells them, pleine d'allant, vraiment brave, and so it was: unlike any of the Allies except the Poles, the French know the meaning of "toujours l'attaque." Too bad they had not spearheaded the Cassino operation from the beginning.

They speak of Paris before the War, and he speaks of women -- then, naturally, of these poor women being raped by their "goumes". They excuse themselves: "We know... But things are getting better. We just shot two of our men ..."

Segre is returning, his ruddy face swollen with suppressed excitement. He can hardly wait to get the Lieutenant away before exclaiming, "There is a couple from Rome in hiding, the farmers told me, in a shack up there. They are writers." He thinks he knows who they are. "Their name sounded like `Moravia.'" The name means nothing to the Lieutenant; Segre is a little disappointed.

"Let's go, then," the Lieutenant says. They drive up a steep path, in and out of woods, and must stop short of the hut indicated by a farm woman and climb by foot. The woman runs ahead yelling excitedly. They are, of course, armed to the teeth, and the pounding on the door and the sight of them might have been distressing. "Siamo Americani," says Segre, and a most complicated expression overcomes their faces, incredulity, relief, wonder, and, still, some fear, because these are the ones who had just destroyed the magnificent Abbey of Montecassino and were laying waste much of the country by land, sea and air.

Alfred looks first more at the woman than at the man. She is Elsa Morante, all right -- so she informs them -- wearing a shapeless dress and old shoes; her hair is a curly light-brown, uncombed, with intimations of grey, though she looks young. She has a smooth round sweet face, a soft buxom figure. Now that she smiled, with even teeth that parted in the middle, what she conveys is a mild and generous

soul.

Alberto Moravia, her husband, who is answering Segre's questions, is a head taller than she, well put together, save for a gimpy leg, a bit slumped of shoulder, of a satanic countenance that refused to transform itself pleasantly. His lips are tight, his jaw clenched, his attitude grim. When he smiles, he might be sincere, but you would never be sure. He appears to be retaining secrets. Apparently intelligent, he either cannot or will not express all he knows or feels. Just now, he has every reason to feel anxious and fearful, but now and ever after he seems to be expecting the worst, and to be suspicious of good fortune.

The Lieutenant hands him a cigarette and sits him down. Segre interrogates him further. Segre's feelings had been declared on the way up. At least some of them. He wonders whether Moravia had not been collaborating with the Fascists: how else could he have spent the war years in comfort? Moravia, partly Jewish by origin, had always rejected identification as a Jew, which was his own business, to the Lieutenant's way of thinking, but the Nazi lexicon had finally caught up with him. True, now, he might fall victim to the Neo-Fascists and Gestapo, but, before then, whose friend was he? The question is whether a person, particularly an intellectual, should be adjudged guilty for having subsisted under a totalitarian regime relatively undisturbed. Segre adduces no hard evidence. Nothing Moravia answers or says -- nor certainly his gentle moon-faced Sicilian -- could be fashioned into a condemnation.

Segre has only been with the Lieutenant for a couple of days and nights, but this is a lot of togetherness -- worth a month of café encounters. Much has been spoken and noticed. He gathers that Segre would like to arrest Moravia and finally even try him in court on the title of his first novel, *The Indifferent*, and on the basis of his several other works, too, that spoke against the Fascists only in ways that even ordinary Italians could employ, with words that only in retrospect and among the unknowledgeable or forgiving could be considered true anti-Fascism. Segre, that is, presents himself as a committed guy, whereas Moravia does not. And, Segre would ask, where were the denunciations of Nazism and racism during the increasingly terrible

years from 1932 to 1944, twelve years of silence?

Moravia had never been politically committed and could not put on a big act for our benefit. Segre wishes for more but would settle on punishing him for indifference alone. To their credit, Morante and Moravia do not defend profusely their thoughts or conduct; they do not plead a case; nor for that matter are they being accused.

The situation descends to this: They could stay hidden where they were and risk murder and rape, and French or American gunfire and strafing, or even a German counter-attack, bringing with it the Gestapo and, worse, the desperate Neo-Fascists, killers who find informants everywhere. But, if all went well, when Rome fell, they could manage the journey home. Or, perhaps with help, they could move with greater safety behind the American lines, and scrounge around as best they could until Rome was freed.

He broaches still another option; he can deliver them to "D Section" at the Palazzo Caracciolo in Naples, where, if they proved themselves useful, they might go to work for the Allied cause. He has little doubt that this would be the case. He does not want to hurt the feelings of Segre, who is right in his own way, if inordinately exigent, and who, although the true hero, would soon be back dogging it for some Engineer General.

Alfred has in mind a plan that requires trusting Segre. For himself, he is intent upon getting to Rome. But he can and does write a letter to Major Greenlees, explaining his action, to be delivered by Segre upon arrival, along with the report on the case of the raped women and other notes. He gives the Moravias, too, a letter, signed by himself, cavalierly authorizing them, in the name of the Commanding Officers of Intelligence, G2, Fifth Army (American), and of Operations (G3), Eighth Army (British), to travel by military conveyance from the battle zone to Headquarters, "D" Section, AFHQ, Naples. He figures that this trick, logically defensible were he to be called on the carpet about it, is needed, lest otherwise the trio might be arrested en route and disappear from sight; moreover, the jeep with them, would be returned, if at all, as a wreck.

Moravia jots a message for his relatives in the Lieutenant's ragged little notebook, finding space amidst a welter of notations

dealing with the Lieutenant's prior mission to Sardinia: "At Via Donizetti 6, our relatives, the Pincherle-Moravia's live (telephone 80592). Please, if possible, inform them that they are well, they will return as soon as permitted and they beg them to keep an eye on our house and to keep it ready for our return." This would be Via Sgambati 9.

They drive over to Highway 7, where the American II Corps is thrusting Northwards. There Alfred turns them South, wishes them well, and gets out. He catches a ride up and into the Anzio beachhead, which has finally burst open along this road the day before. He locates the cave where several members of the Combat Propaganda Team have been holed up, following the unhappy blasting of the across-the-line crew by German artillery and machinegun fire. They are eating rotten food, but deep in the cave Sergeant Harrari is playing fine music on the patched-up equipment. The food is bad. Shells have been arriving now and then near the mouth of the cave.

The Germans are covering their retreat from Cassino. The Front is degenerating, but as usual the Germans know just the right tactics for pulling out their troops before the clumsy and un-avid allied troops can catch them in a trap. Here is where the French troops should be used. The French are more daring than any of the others and are very ready to attack and pursue. But this is a bureaucratic army. They are pushed out of the way. You have to follow orders. Now here, you move up, now there, you move up, no, wait, not too far, and so on. It's a hell of a way to fight a war, he thinks, but then he is not leading the attack. Nevertheless, Allied troops are moving massively up Highway #6. There is little fear of air attack.

The Germans are first thought to be defending Rome, then it is apparent that they will do civilization the favor of not fighting through the City. They do allow themselves the right to retreat through it, and the SS and the Neofascists commit some barbarities before fleeing. Yet the absence of an enemy does not faze the Allies in entering and establishing a passel of offices.

AL TO JILL MAY 25, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

I shouldn't let the fact that there is a big attack going on interfere with the fact that my reason for being overseas is to write you letters. I skipped my prime duty yesterday in the time-consuming activity of seeing new things. Duncan and I rode hither and yon. He talks a lot for an Englishman and is quite a nervous type, perhaps because he married an American girl with lots of money who likes to be amused by chatter. He is comparatively new to the theatre, having been one of the Cairo boys who are an amazing (to use a polite term) crowd. He is beautifully equipped personally, do-dads something like Hans Habe's, nice map cases, pencil-sharpeners and things. But his enthusiasm is boundless, if somewhat exasperating. Like most newcomers, he is curious about all the little things happening around him. I suppose I amuse him too. It apparently struck him as odd that my most conspicuous equipment should be an automatic pistol and two bottles of wine. Maybe it is odd. I wasn't aware of it.

The weather is lovely, made to order for swimming if there was time, we were always near a beach, and the beaches weren't all mined. If I had a penny for every mine the Germans have lain, we could buy up one of the Finger Lakes and look for frogs for the rest of our life. You do like frog legs, don't you? Or would you rather spend your time chasing fireflies? I offer you this range of choice because I am fond of both activities. I caught a firefly last night. There are many of them around, even more than were in Glen Park when I was a child and stayed up to the wee hours for that purpose. Forster was full of explanations about them. He thought they were amazing creatures and tried to estimate their fire power or candle power. I put one in his room and I'm sure he didn't sleep out of wondering about them. They are the first he's ever seen. Apparently England is out of stock.

I picked up two little wooden frames yesterday in a pile of trash

the Germans had left out of their looting, and have put your picture and that of Kathy inside them. They show up very well and will keep much better that way. The picture of Kathy is the laughing one, of course. Harold Long, whom you may recall as my driver formerly, showed me some of his daughter who is now eleven months old and at least as fat as Kathy. He says she is dieting so that she won't put too much weight on her legs when she starts to walk. Duncan showed me pictures of his baby too. That shows the consequences of being a proud parent. With scarcely a respectful glance, the other proud parents go tearing miles to get their own pictures to show you in return. Weaver wanted to show me a whole book of pictures, but fortunately I had seen them.

This afternoon, I also wrote a letter to Ann telling her I had looked up that friend of hers named Nahl who is with an evacuation hospital and had had a pleasant time. She is a Red Cross worker, not the glamour kind that helps the boys' morale by a swish of the skirt but the working kind that does practically all a nurse does plus handling the PX and library for the patients and cheering them up when they feel down and out. She spent a good deal of time on the beachhead and always works well up with the army, not for one-night stands either. I imagine she is about thirty-five, unless the war makes her look older, and she used to be a librarian in Frisco.

You ought to see the flowers around here. That is the encouraging thing about fighting a war in the summer. Everything blossoms from the earth in this fertile land, no matter how wrecked everything is that man has constructed. It makes one see that, after all, the buildings and such are only superficial growths and that very little of the real earth is destroyed. The people who were on the land are wrecks. Most of them still in the region have starved for months. The Germans looted everything and chased them away, apart from killing a few and using some of the men for labor. Only wholesale raping and extermination escape the list of crimes. My friend De Sanctis had a good observation to make on the difference between the Allied-Italian troops and the Germans.

He has seen many of all kinds. When the former get drunk, they scatter in search of girls. The Germans, however, get drunk, form ranks and go down the streets singing marches and doing the goose-step. A funny group of people, very pathetic and ridiculous sometimes. They so love order. I think Dante should have had a special place in purgatory for them, for the crime of having abused the virtue of order to the exclusion of other virtues. It should be a region of complete disorder and anarchy, where frightfully complicated orders tried men's souls, where contradictory orders were always given, and where the execution of an order was followed by severe penance. I would add also that they must take orders from an insane devil, but they are already experiencing the penalties of that here on Earth.

The planes above sound good. There have been many over us all day, flashing against the sun. Someone has a scratchy phonograph going that doesn't sound so good. The junk the GIs pick up if you let them is awful. One guy yesterday had a mantle-piece glass stork with a leg and part of its rear end gone, and he thought it was too cute for words.

Many kisses to you, darling. I have a fine bouquet of roses here that I would like to give you. They remind me of you, anyhow. Give my best to Kathy.

Love

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 26, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

And I do mean you. The weather is wonderful today (storms this afternoon no doubt) and Kathy and I are all luscious and well-slept and yearning for male companionship, the yearning being restricted to a certain first lieutenant (who shouldn't fret about

promotions because his wife loves him all the same) in the European theater. Or is it Mediterranean. I didn't get to write you the past day or two because life has taken on the grim color of one long losing battle against bugs and mildew. I washed Wednesday and hung it up outside and then it rained and then I took it down and then I put it up yesterday and then it rained and then etc. etc. The mosquitoes and ants are taking over in our little cave, for cave it is. But that's neither hence nor thence. Let's talk about you. I got another letter from you yesterday which is now in the buggy outside with Kathy. It is morning and we *[are]* about to embark on a nice sunny walk to the Midway. Perhaps I'll finish this letter over there. Kathy is getting trickier every day. She can hold her own bottle now in a clumsy half-ass fashion and can pick up things off the tops of dressers when I hold her. This morning I out-foxed her by putting up our non-functioning window shade -- I have to take the whole thing off in the morning -- and she slept till eight. Now I know the secret of getting a good night's sleep. Wednesday night I went to the movies with Syb and Mac -- The Devil and Miss Jones -- an old picture but it had some good moments in it, considering how silly it was. And that has been my day or days.

I'm reading Virginia Woolf -- Mrs. Dalloway -- good writing but overwritten, full of delicate feminine perceptions which must give men readers a big pain in you know where. Did I tell you I read this book, Dangling Man -- by a U. of C. man. It has been compared to Dostoyevsky, oh my god. It is about a guy and how he goes to pieces between the time of being called and being taken, and the amazing and awful thing about the book is that the hero is such a shit and the author doesn't know it. He is like all the Milton Mayers around here, only less educated and therefore, if possible, more presumptuous. I refer to the hero of course, and it probably applies to the author too. Saul Bellow. Do you know him?

So much for my reading and so much for my life, which can be summed up as one vast abyss of disagreeable household tasks. And now that I have passed over the details so facilely and am left alone with you, me and my conscience, I find I have

nothing to write about (mostly I am straining at the bit to get over to the Midway) except to blubber on and on about how much I love you, how optimistic I am about seeing you soon, for the war really is going very well for a change, and how much you are a part of my every moment and hour. If you were here now we would like the New Yorker, which just came, and some sandwiches, and a bottle for Kathy, and go down to the rocks, which should be quite deserted because it is a weekday, and read and doze and scratch each other's back, and make the whole world green with envy, for there never were two people so much in love. I'll write more tomorrow, to you who are so richly deserving of a fuller literary output than this.

A million kisses --

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 27, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling (*in pen*)

Darling --

Saturday night

I've been meaning to write you all day -- note the abortive efforts made at the beach, where I discovered to my horror that my pen was dry. And what can be worse than six hours spent at the beach without anything to read (it takes all the faculties I possess to remember Kathy's bottles and at that I forgot her spoon and had to buy one on the way over), yet full of love and wonderful thoughts to convey to you. Now it is quite late Saturday night -- Fritz just left from having dinner and a long dull after-dinner conversation, and now my thoughts are not so wonderful and certainly not very well-organized. The first thing that comes to my mind of course concerns your miraculous child, who was casually lying on my lap yesterday over at the Midway when suddenly, with no preliminaries at all, she sat up, in front of God and everybody, including a corporal's wife who decided to befriend me for the moment, just as proud and

casual as you please. You have no idea what a great event this is and with what fanfare and shouting the neighborhood greeted the news. Yes, she just sat there, cross-legged like a little Buddha, smiling and tottering and immensely pleased with herself. She still can't change from a lying to a sitting position directly but the ease with which she suddenly sat up (they usually pull themselves up with much grunting and groaning) absolutely flattens me. And darling, she is so cute and friendly and pretty. She got another wonderful tan today (I just got red, moan, moan), especially since she took her long afternoon nap lying on the grass on a little blanket. I'm sure no one ever had so much fun with a baby as I have with her. I'm getting so that when I kiss her goodnight at night I just can't wait until morning to see her again and start out on another expedition with her. I'm so glad you liked her picture except that I object to your qualifying it with "she is pretty for her age." Of course, no picture does her full justice but she really is lovely for any age. God how I run off at the mouth. Except that you must know that my feelings for her are inextricably entwined with my loving you, the two passions heightening and re-enforcing the other.

It sounds as if a lot of Stouffer's boys are with you. I knew that Strang guy from soc. here, a big drip. And I heard about Spencer's majority too, via that strangest of media, the Pabst beer program (Groucho). They had some big contest for post-war employment plans and that turd was one of the prizewinners. Darling, I think I'll finish this tomorrow if you don't mind this continuous letter system I seem to be inflicting on you. I have lots to say but am too sleepy and headachy from the sun to remember it all. I am terribly mad that we can't have this summer together. I miss you more than ever before, an impossibility logically, I suppose. All my love to you.

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 28, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart --

I still have the letter I wrote you yesterday, thinking I would add and append to it. But today's been another busy one, with picnics at the beach and then the family -- Dad, Mom and Aunt Anna coming down about four. We had a nice dinner and much showing off of baby's clothes and equipment to Aunt Anna. Mom just loves to display the joint and its various workings. Kathy was in her usual good form and took to Dad with great glee and warmth. This is the first time he's ever picked her up and played with her. He's so solicitous. She got wet, which is her usual state, and he insisted we stop everything and change her diapers. Then, just before they left a little while ago, I hauled down the German first-aid kit from the top of the closet and Mom opened everything in it. We found some swell safety pins and of course the scissors, but Dad absolutely forbade me to use the pins for Kathy's diapers, although I'm getting very short on pins. No granddaughter of his would be defiled by safety pins made in Germany. So I ruefully put them away again, where they will probably stay until you come home. I'm sure no little girl have had a larger or more able-bodied crew of devoted men relatives to guard her interests. It really makes me very happy to have all the DeGrazia men stand in spiritual guardianship of her. Not to mention Mom, who quite overwhelms Kathy with her enthusiasm. Kathy was sitting on her lap this evening and I caught her expression, which was one of the funniest I've ever seen -- a kind of pained yet resigned surprise at this wonderful bouncing lady. Kathy is still unused to excitement, except the brand I offer her, which is not so much vocal as one of movement. She laughs her head off at the mad dashes I occasionally break into with the buggy. And today she had an interesting and apparently gratifying experience. The people who have the house next door, the backyard of which sides on the alley we use so much, have an enormous, loud-mouthed and apparently vicious Doberman Pincher. Actually he hasn't one millionth of Cooney's malignity in his soul but he is nervous, tired and rundown, and an uncontrollable barker. He was out in

the yard this morning when I brought out Kathy. I walked over to the fence with her and while usually he barks his head off at me, as well as at everybody else who walks through the alley, he quieted down and sidled up to the fence. He sniffed at Kathy with interest and awe. I brought her up close, he stuck his enormous nose through and licked her hand. She positively bellowed with laughter and even when he, in great fright, barked a couple of times (and his bark practically knocks down a full-grown adult) she continued to smile seductively at him. This little love scene would have kept up all day if I hadn't had to get down to the beach. I went down with Virginia's family again and Fritz and we ate sandwiches and went in swimming. The water was not appallingly cold because there's been an on-shore breeze blowing all week. It was lovely in fact.

I showed Dad your letter of May 19 describing the Italian educational system and of course he liked it very much. You do write the most wonderful letters, the kind that other people would send to the Times, or Time. But they, and you, are my private joys.

I went to a ghost picture Friday night, *The Uninvited*, very spooky and reasonably sophisticated in its silly genre. Tomorrow night, I go again to see a Bette Davis opus with Syb and Mac. I am suddenly making up for lost time and am being very frantic about the whole thing. I've discovered that if I go for just one feature I don't have to get anybody to sit with the baby, because Virginia will come down a couple of times in the hour and a half I'm away and she sleeps all the time after seven at night anyway. Your problem about when you should eat dinner - - shall it be early or shall it be late, will be automatically solved when you get home, because it's almost mandatory that Kath get fed first, around five-thirty or six, and the big folk later. But if we don't eat too much or too long we'll still have time to take in a show or a wonderful moonlit walk to the lake, if we can find an obliging neighbor or maid to sit with the baby or look in on her. And if we get a house some day we could get some unobtrusive person (I don't know why but I keep visualizing a Chinese lady with a cute little baby -- possibly because the Chinese have the

national stereotype of being unobtrusive) to live with us, in a secluded but pleasant section of the house. Then we would be quite free to spend our evenings in all the wonderful ways we used to spend them -- long walks and kisses under the trees, movies and hot fudge sundaes afterwards, sickening Bourbon with the Kelley's, and an occasional cocktail and dinner in town (what town?). It amazes me, all the things that being in love means. It means all those things you can never get with any other single person in the world -- of doing everything together and never being bored, of being able to talk about anything. and of never getting so irritated at the other that you don't forget it by the time you crawl into bed (which will be an enormous one, perhaps four-posted to make one nostalgic for the rural life one never had, piled high with soft quilts and with a reading light close at hand and untippable). Yes, we have this advantage over the satisfied (although they're really not) civilians -- we can plan and dream about one another and when we see each other again, we'll know so much about what we want and what we have -- which all boils down to having one another. And while so many others are bored and anxious to get out of whatever they're doing, we'll be supremely satisfied.

And speaking of civilians, that blight on the war effort, Dietz, popped around the other day. I really can't bear the girl and don't even feel sorry for her anymore, for she is so much like Bill now she can't be very unhappy. She doesn't work and still lives at the Windermere and apparently spends her times buying clothes and going to luncheons, although she has lost any vestige of attractiveness she ever had, which wasn't much, and since Bill doesn't work either except to take care of his investments, they should get some sort of prize booby trap for being the world's most useless people. Dietz doesn't even say funny things anymore and she is awfully thin, and kind of feeds on the lives of other people. She is so interested, pathologically I might add, on such aspects of existence as what I feed that baby, down to the brand name, and what my friends are doing, not in a catty way you understand. Just dopey.

All my love, dearest. J.

AL TO JILL MAY 28, 1944

Jill, my darling,

Your constant lover is short of time these days, even if completely yours as always. I couldn't write yesterday because I was running around like mad. Yet I got the devil's reward late last night when I arrived in the bivouac area to find three letters from you, May 1, 10 and 12 and a package of New Yorkers than which there is no better gift. Through dust-filled eyes and by candlelight, I read the letters and the cartoons of one New Yorker before falling asleep. This morning I got up, ate breakfast in the company of the same New Yorker and settled in a deck chair with a slope to port to read your letters again. Though early, the day is already brilliant and warm and one of the boys was tinkling away on the "requisitioned" piano while I sat there. The minutes passed by sweetly and I felt myself not very far from you, never far enough not to feel your words deeply, not to stir with a repressed excitement as my other life on Ridgewood Ct. unfolded itself. Now I'll write you and then be off again. The enforced leisure of some of the winter months is gone. The sweep of spring is here instead, holding great promises of Northern lands, our irresistible ally, like to returning swallows.

I finally wrote Anne, as I may have said in my previous letter. I searched high and low before finding her address. Oh, the hopeless curse of keeping bag and baggage together. A piece here and a piece there. I am the most-travelled mover in PWB, I think. My assignments vary like the colors of the sunsets. Still, I am happier that way - to get the war finished - to speed on the time, to fill my mind with a speedy film of impressions in place of the great gap left by your absence. I would like to see Rome, Florence, Milan, Paris and Berlin fast, and then you and America.

Of course, you weren't very nice in one of your letters. Damned if you didn't start over-generalizing again, after all these years, and even realizing it through a footnote. I'm going to pull down

your Vogue original and spank the most prominent part of your rear view. Probably on the very day you were told about Lost Weekend, I was also informed of it. But I don't have a copy to read.

Thank you for your very lovely and only slightly fictitious poem. I read it with great amusement and pride in your craftsmanship. I wouldn't think of sending you anything with a booby-trap in it, everything is a souvenir guaranteed to last and not to blast. You would probably laugh like the devil to see me prowling around strange parts with a dirty old piece of string. When something interesting strikes my crow-like eye, I scrutinize it carefully, then slip a noose around it, retire with the other end of the string to behind the nearest wall and yank. A couple of the boys fished out a G.I. and an Italian the other day who found the beautiful Mediterranean too inviting and tripped over a teller mine in the sand. But you don't have to worry about me. I'm very cagey about mines. And now, the faster we go, the less time the Germans have to monkey around with them.

I enjoyed the cartoons you sent me, as well as the brief article on the people in the Mazzine society. I think the resigning ones are fools. I suppose they can afford to be pettish and "pure of heart and mind", eating well as they do, and nothing being at stake for them, except some vague mental image they've created. It is always typical of non-functional, "ideal" groups that they split apart in the most absurd of fashions whenever any other member so much as eats garlic or looks as if he wanted to go to the bathroom rather than listen to the principal speaker. I recall vaguely Renzo Bianchi, in one of my classes. He looked like a 1A to me. His so-called "principles" wouldn't stand much here where the tea-room atmosphere of International House is notably lacking. The fools act as if men like Croce, Sforza, Tarchiani and Togliatti were delighted to collaborate with the King, as if they skipped in eagerly to kiss his foot. They are only now working because of the strength, not the "weakness" of their ideals. It was twice as hard for them to say "yes" to the government as it was for these babies to scream "no!".

But to get back to your love life, I agree that "Something Should Be Done About It". Since I am thinking of extending my European vacation for another two months or so, I suggest you take a cold shower and more exercises. Write more poetry, see a romantic movie. Shun the oyster and the egg. Practice singing on key. And don't think I don't sympathize heartily with the motto "I've given the best years of my wife to the army".

Well, dearest, I ought to leave now. Give my Kathy a kiss. It won't be too long before we can look back with pride on these lonely times. I love you, as always,

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 29, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart darling --

Honestly, you're going to come home and find not Jill but a piece of crisp bacon. I was down again at the lake today with Kathy, Diana and little Gwen, Virginia's five-year-old. We brought sandwiches and were having a very nice time of it until Kathy's feeding time came around and I discovered, to my horror, that I had brought everything for everybody to eat except her milk bottle. I broke some kind of a record by getting over to the 53rd IC in seven minutes flat from about 65th and the lake front, and there hopped into a cab who took me home and back to the lake. The cabby thought I was nuts naturally. As soon as I finish this letter I shall type up a list of Kathy's necessaries and cement it to the kitchen wall. I haven't missed a day yet at the beach without forgetting something and having it improvise. One day it was the nipple and I had to keep pouring the milk into the tiny water bottle. One day it was a spoon and I had to buy one and have an obliging lake front druggist wipe it in alcohol to sterilize it. Woe is me.

Tonight I go to the movies and tomorrow, which is Declaration Day, down to the lake again. Life has become one great holiday

all of a sudden although the ache for you persists through it all. But I suppose I haven't had so much fun in the conventional sense the first four months of Kathy's life -- I didn't go out at all in the sense other people know it, it's good clean fun. I dust the house cursorily in the morning when I get up at seven so the place doesn't look as if I neglected it too much. And I can rationalize my lazy days at the beach (which really aren't lazy since between feeding Kathy and seeing she doesn't get sunstroke I hardly have a minute to lie down) by saying they are so good for her. The apartment is really so cool during the day that she would have to wear more clothes indoors than she does out. That will be nice when the hot weather really breaks but now I'm afraid it will cause her to catch cold. We had hot fudge sundaes on the way back at Cunag's and they aren't nearly as good now as when we used to have them together. One might say it's because I didn't eat it with you but I think there's an objective element too -- there's a war on, end quote.

Diana is going to have her baby in less than two weeks, she supposes, but gets around well anyway. I hope it's a cute baby and looks like her, not Oliver. I still think he's an awful drip.

Well, darling, that's not much of a thought to leave you with but I have to go. I love you more than any little V-mail could every signify anyway.

Always your

Jill

P.S. I went to the movies and I am come home and it was just awful. I'll never go there any more.

000XXX

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 30, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling --

Today being Decoration (not Declaration, as I erroneously reported in yesterday's letter) Day, I spent it unproductively, guess where. The lake front. We had a very nice day -- Virginia, Hin, the two little girls, Kath, myself, many sandwiches. I met Laura down there and decided today that I liked her. Anyway I can't bear not liking people unless they are very awful, which she is not. What an erratic girl I am. I went in the water briefly and we ate a lot and then it got dark and windy and we all got very silly and performed wild and skill-less feats of strength. I think there is something about a strong summer's breeze that knocks one's brains about so that one is suddenly filled with a demonic pointless energy. Beware of when the breeze blows free. I shall leap on your back, pull your hair, toss the baby in the bike basket and ride away screaming, spirit little dogs belonging to Other People away and eat hot dogs in both hands. Beware of me anyway. You are the true and supreme target of all my wild energies (I shan't say aggression because I have nothing but love for you in my heart) and you'll probably have to keep your helmet on when I get in this mood. Unless of course you're in a similar mood, in which case I'll keep the helmet, owing to the difference in our bodily capacities. God how perfect life would be if you were only here. As it is, I am full of unjustifiable holiday spirit. Just think, I'm going to another movie tonight. All of a sudden life is so simple and easy with Kathy that apparently I have lots of time to do the things I haven't done for such a long time. I am sick and tired of beautifying this joint and will let it all go until the rainy weather sets in again. Let the ants have a good time for a while.

The promontory is fantastically and unattractively crowded with people. It makes me so mad, they never pick up the papers and garbage they make. You will be pleased to learn that I literally policed the little plot of ground we sat on, down to the last cigarette butt. Vicariously lived Army life has made me very neat. Hin is very neat anyhow, being a German. Isn't it funny the

way Germans are? Good or bad, progressive or Nazi, Gentile or Jew, they are all neat as pins, law-abiding, dainty as to feeding habits, humorous as a wake. Heaven preserve me from ever entering into any primary relationships with them. Ditto with the Irish, whose national characteristics are just as generalize-able and apparent -- they're just not very bright or reliable. I don't know if one can make any generalizations about Italian-Americans, do you? Even your father, who was born abroad, seems to me unique and wonderfully defiant of easy description. Sometimes people ask me what he's like and all I can do is mumble, Well, he's quite a guy. I really do have a great deal of respect for him even though I know him pretty well and can kind of intuitively feel his weak points, for I certainly can't name them.

I don't know how I got from the promontory to your father. The female mind at work, to toss out another horrid generalization at you.

My, I certainly love you. My head just reels at the wonderfulness of you and Kathy, and the good fortune of me at finding you.

A million hugs and kisses to you dearest.

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 30, 1944

My dearest Jill,

Unlike last night, when I couldn't get myself to write or really do anything save sit in glum impatience, eking out the evening and thus a part of the war, tonight I am enthusiastic about writing you a letter. It seems that, all things in the apparent environment being equal, there still remains some sort of inner impulse that unlocks the floodgate on creativeness, and that sometimes under the most impossible conditions I must write you and am irresistibly drawn into it. Perhaps it is because my

mind is more at ease about my resting place for tonight. My bedding place has been changed and this place seems somewhat nicer. Last night, I dreamt of an intellectual dispute regarding British people, of the difficult pronunciation of French words, especially "lait", for some reason, of you in a fashion too misty to remember and seem to have spent the rest of the time scratching a rash of flea bites. Dabby's fleas did span the gap between our beds. Now I've changed all my clothes, washed fairly well and am hoping for the best tonight.

Perhaps I am wrong, however, and the real reason that I am writing is that I have been poring over two of the latest batch of New Yorkers to arrive, and find in them countless occasions for remembering you and thinking of you. The women are cool, clean, and tailored. The perfume ads are beyond all reason, yet stirringly romantic. The humor is yours and mine to share. There is a spirit about the whole thing that I feel you possess too. It is not that the New Yorker is the only thing in life that possesses these qualities. I've told you of many, from sunsets to wines. But it is a rather persistent and fortunate element that helps bind me to the world I like.

Apart from the personal aspect, it is so superior to other magazines -- a matter I should be able to say after changing worlds completely and yet finding it just as tolerable as ever, while other publications have gone from almost to completely unbearable.

I wish I could buy you all the nice things that I find in the ads too. You probably won't believe me when I say that I try every dress that is advertised on you in my mind. You come out very well in practically all of them too. You always were a great clothes horse.

One thought leads to another, and I find myself thinking that I'd give anything to feel you in my arms again. Sometimes, when your own loneliness seems so great, I think you underestimate my own longings for you and feel that I don't deserve to have such feelings wasted on me. On the contrary, I sometimes think

that you have never fully appreciated how deep has been my involvement in you, how frequent my thoughts, how persistent my desire or how painful my unhappiness. Certainly, if you ever think to doubt this reciprocity, you can think again.

It is a quarter to nine by our time here and the sun is just set. I can hear the generator in the cave below and as soon as it gets darker I'll be able to turn on the light here. Supper wasn't very nice tonight, though there was considerable variety. We had a bad bread-ball which was french-fried, a wilted salad, canned fruit cocktail, canned grit potatoes, a sort of butterscotch pudding, coffee, and bread. I still have many chocolate bars which I eat at every opportunity. This morning, I had some nespole, which is a tasty fruit, much like a citrus apricot would be. I don't think I've ever had any in America.

My great accomplishment of the last couple of days was the mailing to you of the Sardinian souvenirs plus some books which I put in to fill the cardboard box. I never did tell you very much about Sardinia, for obvious reasons of censorship. It is a beautiful island, rugged and mountainous for the most part although there is a large fertile plain that runs diagonally up the island in the West. The mines at Igleasias and Carbonia are very interesting. Apart from the food, which of course has been inadequate during the war, the living conditions of the miners are excellent. No mines in England or America, to my knowledge, have such five quarters for the miners. Their homes look like modern American suburban apartment developments. Most of the miners are Socialist or Communists. The towns of the island are very clean, even most of those in the remote mountain recesses. I was favorably impressed with the people I met there who were concerned with politics. They had clear and intelligent ideas. Sassari is a clean, fine town, built recently on a grand plateau and untouched by the war physically. The men and women there were as well-dressed as you would find in practically any city of comparative size anywhere. The interiors of some of the town houses showed remarkable examples of adaptations of Sardinian art specializations to modern European architecture and decorating. I especially liked the

home of Berlinguer who is now under-secretary to Sforza in charge of the purging of Fascists.

Incidentally, darling, when you go next to some large library, see if you can get some novel of Alfredo Segre in an English translation and tell me what you think of him. He's been with the combat engineers over here for some time and did some work with me recently. He's a nice guy, good-looking, with a past something like that of Joseph Conrad.

I was mistaken about the lights. Candles will have to do. Anyhow, I wouldn't want to neglect Kathy just to read my letters. You must save time at least to kiss her often for me and make her realize that her father isn't deliberately trying to avoid her. In reality, he would like her to grow up to be a great beautiful girl, something like her mother.

Jill, my darling, you must keep dates straight. I have some six letters that state April, when they should patently be May, or March when they should be April. And on the day that you wondered whether I remembered our anniversary, you wrote April 11. Also, since my thoughts never run to the practical business of money any more, I was more amused than otherwise by your traffic escapade. You speed-fiend!

Love always,

Al

UNDATED GERMAN POSTCARD, POSTMARKED MAY 30, 1944

Absender: Lt. Alfred de Grazia

Meine Liebe Frau,

Having become very tired of deciding how to make my pile of personal belongings smaller, when at the *[über]* same time I know from long experience that that is impossible, I decided to

write you a card in the few minutes remaining before dinner. I'm sure, if you were here, you would get much more in my grip. You always did. Dabinette has fleas and I had to move my bed, too, to prevent the more athletic ones from attacking me. We're opening a can of date and nut pudding he got for Xmas at dinner-time. I haven't had any since the Eighth Army days.

Love to you and Kathy.

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 1?, 1944

[undated - June 1, 44 written in Al's handwriting, as on envelope; more likely May 31st - see ref. to Diana's baby]

Darling --

Two letters from you today, both of the 21st. I hope my mail only takes ten days to get to you. Of course, the lapse between mailing and writing should not be held against the post office. I share the universal vice of putting letters in my pocket and forgetting to mail them.

I shall abide faithfully by your commands -- not to make Kathy walk before her time, not to ride wildly with her in the bike, not to overexpose her to the sun. The first of these things I hadn't thought of doing anyway. She can hardly sit up. Besides, it's pretty hard to force them to do anything their muscles aren't prepared to do and I am of the school anyway of letting things alone. I haven't even thought of toilet training her yet, until she can sit up easily, and remain that way for extended periods of time. Incidentally, I take issue with you as using that as a criterion of comparative development, so far as she and Mike are concerned. I have an idea, possibly false, that boys are harder to train than girls. I know that's the case with bladder control anyway. And what little birdie gave you the idea I'd take her in the bike with me. As a matter of fact I did invest in a

perfectly enormous delivery boy's basket which the bike man practically welded on to our lovely bike, so that it has lost all vestige of its former race-horsey look. I kept rationalizing the purchase by telling people I'd use it for heavy packages like beer bottles, which would all weigh down the little wicker basket we had before so that you couldn't move the front wheel. However, yesterday at the beach on a secluded stretch of pavement I did give Kathy a little spin around in it. She didn't look very comfortable because it's not big enough for her to stretch out full length and she can't sit up under her own power yet so I'll postpone that little pleasure for her until she's a lot older. I've seen this woman riding her year-old kid around on her bike which is where I got the idea. And as for overexposing her -- she's had a lot of sunbaths already and has a lovely tan, the color of yours when you burn, not like mine, all freckly and red, but I don't leave her in the sun very long because she gets all sweaty and has more fun lying under a tree watching the leaves rustle. She loves a good breeze and gets very excited when she hears it.

Your mother's day plant arrived a few minutes ago, in the midst of a violent thunderstorm and me taking a nap, strange portents all. It contained a fond note from Army Special Services wishing me a happy mother's day and telling me it had been delayed en route. Thank you and Army Special Services very much. Did you know what kind of plant you ordered? I don't. It has two large purple flowers of a certain malignant beauty, more symbolic of matricide than matriphile to my sleep-ridden, lightning-struck eyes. Perhaps they are Venus flytraps. But I shall tend it faithfully, affirming my love for you and Army Special Services at every watering. On second thought leave the Army out. I am getting plenty sore at the death-like grip they are keeping on you. It just doesn't seem right. There are so damn many uniforms and civilians too around here and not one of them contains you.

I saw a perfectly awful movie last night, *Old Acquaintance*, an animated soap opera containing Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins, both awful women. I have decided that the former is a

large female ham and also very ugly and the next person who tells me I look like her is going to get their teeth blown down their neck. There's absolutely no feature resemblance, it's just the jaw and neck and shape of head and that's not enough to condemn me on. And I certainly can't understand the morality of the movies -- the constant renunciation of the Right Man, the self-sacrifice (and always such unworthy objects). Maybe I'm wrong, but through my eyes the population, as depicted by the movies and soap operas, is a race of strong-minded females suckers and weak-minded males Who Are Their Own Worst Enemies. The women in the case are always figuratively anyway, hurling their bodies in front of speeding locomotives to Protect Someone Else. Hell, I don't know why I bother to even think of it.

I got a letter from Liz today, who is sweating it out with the young Evers. I hope she comes out here to visit me this summer. She asked me to be Louise's godmother when Bill comes back. Isn't that nice? Oh, and Oliver called a while ago. Diane is in the hospital, two weeks early, and the baby is on its way. I hope she has an easy time. Oliver said she was moaning and groaning already. I am absolutely consumed with envy, if not of her at this particular moment, of all women about to have new babies. If you were here now, I'm sure I'd get pregnant again, even if I had to do it sub rosa. I read somewhere that a year between children was not too short an interval -- some new theory, probably strictly screwball -- but I honestly feel well and strong enough now to start it all over, and have another baby next January. Do you think we could have another one when you come back? I am positively smitten with the idea. This is a little more than an academic question because I have to see Greenhill in about a month for a six-months checkup and do you think I should get a diaphragm just in case?* [footnote: *P. S. Don't answer this question, on second thought. What a subject to bring up in a letter!] I think I have had an unusually easy time bringing up Kathy so far which is why I am so pro-baby still. Liz said she had to stay up every night with her baby and I never have had to get up for Kathy since I've had her, except one or

two nights to give her an unusually early bottle and then she went right back to sleep. Of course, the very fact that I would give her a bottle any time she'd ask for it after midnight would automatically reduce the chance of her doing any night-crying, that night anyway. And apparently she's too dumb to remember from one night to the next that she could get a bottle if she wanted it.

I think I will get Kathy up now -- she's taking her afternoon nap, and take her to the bookstore with me. I got this book of scripts from the Invitation to Learning program on the great books -- Van Doren, Tate and somebody else. It isn't worth reading.

All my love to you, my dearest.

Jill

You know, the Sun is running Mauldin's cartoons now. I thought this was one cute and relevant, if you hadn't seen it already. I love you I love you. Diane had her baby at three this afternoon, a little girl, six pounds twelve or something. Now when anybody has a baby I feel absolutely moist with sentiment.



Al with old men in the Sardinian town of Ozieri.

End of May 1944 letters

