

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 16, 1944

Darling -- Saturday

I got to thinking so hard about the general problems of Crime and Punishment in the middle of eating my solitary dinner that I practically choked in my haste to get to the typewriter and blow off to you. As I may have remarked before, you seeing growing indications in the papers -- in news dispatches, letters to the editors and so forth -- of an attitude towards the Germans best encompassed by the word (theirs, not mine) "justice". Justice consists of selecting war criminals, so-called, giving them a trial in which all the principle of national and international jurisprudence are called in and weighed, and eventually the sentence -- probably consisting of depriving them of their citizenship papers -- is passed. You read things like in this morning's paper -- that the Allied War Crime Commission meeting in London, from which Russia is significantly excluded, has after a year's deliberations selected sixty criminals -- the names of all top Nazis not being mentioned. On the negative side, Time Mag presents and views with horror a news story about a Parisian minister who demands the death of all Germans -- a guilty people, he calls them.

I am of course inclined to agree with the minister, if it were feasible. (Oh, I might also add, by way of more evidence, that Klaus Ollendorff, a refugee from Hitler, was saddened to hear of six young French members of Petain's militia were shot for treachery). Guilt no longer is something to be determined juristically. It is folly to make the ordinary principles of "civilized" conduct apply to the utter degradation of the Fascists. Of course you might say that from time immemorial people have killed babies and raped women and if we hadn't set up some sort of orderly way of treating with some of their numbers, we wouldn't have gotten as far as we have. Which isn't very far, I might obviously add. But violence, to the degree that fascism has attained it, can only be met with violence. That's why we are fighting instead of making treaties. So why stop with an artificial thing called an armistice. Let the Frenchmen and the Russians

tear into the Germans after territory is re-taken. Who the hell should care what happens to them?

The thing is, I am more than ever convinced that each man shares the guilt of his neighbor and brother. All any of us can do in a lifetime is to lessen that guilt by some positive action. And since most sins today are political -- as a commentator on Koestler wrote in the Nation, the new hero of the day is the political hero -- political activity of the right sort should at least save some of us from hell, only throwing us into limbo. I know this sounds strangely Calvinist: pre-destination, in which a lifetime of good works may help but you aren't very sure even then; even original sin in that you are responsible for the evil of any contemporary. But the great deception of the 19th and 20th centuries has been tolerance, that there are good Germans, that there is a little bit of good in everyone of us. The fact still remains that pure evil does exist in the person of the torturers, the soldier who bayonets a civilian, the men responsible for military aggression. And it must be treated as such.

I think the case of the six young Frenchmen ties together some of these ideas I've been tossing around. Because they joined Petain's militia, they may not have been guilty of the crimes they were accused of -- treason I think was the chief one. But they had a choice in 1940 between two alternatives. One of them would have left the men blameless. Then the FFI came back. To be sure they didn't have to shoot these men but they felt like shooting someone and for all I can see, it might as well have been these guys as anybody else. While these men probably were not actively allied with the Nazis, you never know. In any case, it would have been positively detrimental to the collaborationist cause to have refused to join the organization they did.

As I read this over, I see it's very mixed up and repetitious and certainly wouldn't get an A from any English professor but anyway, you see I'm not exactly a member of "We The Mothers" don't you? I'm supposed to go down Monday and speak to the local chairman for Chicago of the Independent Voters about

writing publicity -- Jane Merriam called me up -- and Got knows how I am going to do it since I seem to be incapable of prolonged cerebration in writing though I'm rather good at stuff like slogans (as Jello is Mellow or Here's a Dish That's Really Swish, When in a Rush Use Gerber's Mush). No more than a few words at a time, that's me.

And I'm getting hotter than a pistol over the phone. I've been calling people to do some work for us in the doorbell ringing campaign and I got an old guy who sounded like Earl on the phone tonight and he started asking me questions like, if you're Independent, why are you all for Democrats and I gave him such a seductive line of talk he's practically coming to our meeting. He said rather bitterly, "If I can't get my wife to register after all these years, how do you expect me to help you?" I told him that there may be other factors than his personal persuasiveness involved in his wife's not registering. I still think that the ideal political campaign should be conducted by a battery of workers with good legs and well-modulated voices. That's all that's really necessary.

I'm really leading the gayest life. I went to a luncheon and shower for Maxine Biesenthal today -- she is getting married to a lieutenant in Texas -- and it was lots of fun. Of course, anything is fun for me outside of the beaten track of housecleaning and Kathy Karing. Virginia took care of Kathy which is fun for the latter on account of Virginia's little girls who play with her nicely. The luncheon was out of this world -- fruit compote in melon baskets, Lobster Thermidor -- Jesus. I wore my swish new corduroy suit and Laura Berquist and I were the only girls there without stockings. There were enough of us from the U. of C. there to talk about things that interest me -- like other U. of C. people, politics and New Yorker stories. Very gay and as you can see, it's done my spirits and consequently mind, a lot of good. Now I'm going to clean the kitchen and go to bed. That's fun when you're tired too. Last night I listened to the mice walk and it kept me up. I saw two mice or the same one twice yesterday during the day, screaming mightily and instinctively both times. If mice only didn't run so fast I wouldn't mind them.

And if they weren't such an awful color and hadn't such horrid tails. A tailless pink slow-moving mouse could win my sympathy, if not affection, any day of the week, but as for the rest -- ugh. I have set three traps and am hoping for the best.

Darling, I give you all my love and really have to go now. This is a fierce long letter, isn't it? And not nearly enough about how much I adore you and miss you. But that tomorrow.

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 17, 1944 V-MAIL

My darling --

Two wonderful long letters from you today, making my long vigil to the mailman worthwhile -- I lost my mailbox key and had to wait for him to hand the letters to me in person. And he was very late. Today is the Jewish New Year's and while he is a colored man, the post office was probably short-handed. Anyway, happy New Year and there were wonderful letters, the 2nd and 8th of September. I am glad you got what you call the studio pictures since they were expensive and it would have been a shame to lose them. Actually, they are just as candid and taken by the same kind of camera as the man next door's. The only difference what that they were taken under artificial light and printed on dull paper. But I don't think she touched them up -- after all, there were thirty and they don't do that en masse. The trouble with you is you can't realize what an angelic looking child you really have. She's a fiend though. You should see her crawling off after a dog, with the steady, rumbling and deadly treat of an M-4 tank. Priscilla had her down at the lake today, it being warm and summery once more, while I went down to talk to the IVBI chairman. He wanted me to work every day down at his office, patently impossible, so he said I'd better just keep on what I've been doing in the neighborhood. So I came home. What I do is bike the baby over to the park, leave

her with Priscilla, bike to the IC and then back again to the park to call for her when my business in the loop is finished. Very practical, don't you think.

I don't see why you say that I write more connectedly than you do. Look at the chaos of the above paragraph. I start talking about your letter and look where I end up. I'm reading yours and answering it as things strike me, you see, and a great many things seem to strike me today. After studying it all day, I finally just this minute caught on to the Mauldin cartoon you sent me. What threw me off was the fatigue uniforms of the scared Germans -- I thought they were FFI at first. Christ I hope they tear them apart -- the Germans I mean. I am still working on a rationale for my bloodthirstiness, which I probably appalled you with in my letter this weekend.

The perfume you sent sounds absolutely divine. I'll have to get a dressing table to put it on, like the grownups. I guess I'll never get over the idea that I'm just playing house. And thank you too for sending the bank check although I still think you should have kept it. I have to forge your name on it in order to put it back in the bank account. It's no good without an endorsement. I guess I'll be able to get away with it though.

Vic (to take up the subject of your next paragraph) is getting bigger and uglier every day. It will be a couple of years probably before his skin straightens out, which is really his only defect since I don't consider his imposing size one. He still screws around with his music and the boys and he's still abominably sassy, but will turn out fine. A personality like his will be immensely successful in a man so I guess we can all tolerate the boy for a few more years with that in mind. (continued)

The reason we don't drink vino here is that American wine just isn't worth the money. You really get a better buy with beer or hard liquor, despite the exorbitant prices on both those items. It's disgusting about our native wine industry -- you pay at least a dollar a bottle for inferior new red wine, which makes it practically prohibitive as a table beverage. Beer is about fifty

cents the quart -- too much, considering the volume of production but still, it's better than wine. Anyway, wine gives me a stomach ache. I've had a stomach ache, not from wine, for the past three days. I think it's from the lobster at that fabulous luncheon for Maxine.

Your commentary on cottage life was superbly accurate. I don't know whether I told you that I did finally see that place and felt, even if I didn't put it into words, exactly as you do. "Crowded rusticity" were your words and they were marvelous. No, I've given up the whole scheme and renewed the lease here. It was just a temporary fit of wanderlust. Liz is going back to live with her mother in Boston, which is probably the best thing to do under the circumstances. She has a job marking papers at Wellesley or Radcliffe -- I forget which. I got a letter from her this morning. Bill has dengue fever which is pretty awful, I guess. She didn't say anything about him being sent home, which increases the rottenness of the break. I don't know anything more about Bob's deafness than what I told you.

The tactics of the new airborne invasion from Holland have my complete approval. It's amazing how imaginative the Allies have gotten, now that they have sufficient weapons and men to carry out their plans. I bet Hitler's sorry he didn't carry out a similar attack on England four years ago when he presumably had the chance.

I had a half hour before my appointment this afternoon so I went to the Art Institute, where they had an interesting and I suppose lousy exhibit of the students' work. There was this elderly, brassy, well-dressed woman there with two young men, one an exquisite civilian, the other almost equally sharp in specially tailored Army private's clothes. Both were dark -- could have been Cubans or almost anything and spoke excellent French. The woman kept howling about how degenerate the paintings were -- they first stopped in front of some Rouaults and then later worked up to the Institute students' nudes. The boys kept laughing at her but followed her around like pet dogs. It was a fascinating trio and if I hadn't been in a hurry and also

embarrassed I would have followed them right through. She even complained to the guards about how degenerate the art was. I wish I could have figure out her manage, itself certainly nothing out of the Ladies Home Journal. I just adore wandering footlessly about downtown. There's always so much to see, between the window displays and the people. I think I could easily spend one afternoon a week in the Loop, particularly on Michigan Ave., not doing anything else but staring, and another perhaps riding my bike around the forties and thirties. Let's get a tandem and do it together.

I love you -- infinitely. I love you some more. OOOXXX -- Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 17, 1944

Darling Jill,

I'm not sure what combination of circumstances and evil impulse kept me from writing you for the last two days, today being the Third Day of Not Writing Jill (almost) in the diary of my conscience. The fact is, I guess, that my best times for writing, strange as it may seem, are in the morning first thing or at night. These last two mornings, I have had pressing things to do immediately upon awakening that kept me going until nine or ten at night, by which time I was too tired, too cold, and it was too dark to do anything.

But today was different. About noon, I lined up for chow and found that we had chicken and mashed potatoes. I found out it was Sunday and the day quickly turned into a holiday. We had a bottle of good red wine to go with it, ate very heavily, and afterwards I lay on my cot and slept until now (4:10) a happy and deep slumber save for some innocent dream about looking into my pockets for some bonbons for some children without success.

You, you lovely thing and my wife, wrote me two nice letters on August 29 and 31 which got to me yesterday and today,

respectively. They are the latest thing from home, the last one describing what must have been a fine afternoon at the Leddys. I always liked them. They are so overflowing nice, so typically a family group. Anna Jean is a very vivacious and warm girl. I'm surprised she isn't married yet or made a great to-do about it. The spectacle of Joey and Kathy mixing it up must have been very diverting. I'm very sorry I couldn't be there. It shouldn't be too long, though, before my chance comes.

In one letter, you mentioned getting some pictures. I sent you two envelopes of pictures, one containing most of the pictures I've gotten from home since I've been overseas. That was done before coming to France. I also sent you a lot of your letters for safekeeping at the same time. Did you get them? I don't remember your acknowledging them. A couple of days ago I was seized by a probably irrational impulse in some town and bought some children's ABC books and fairy tales, in French of course, for Kathy. I'm going to send them home to you. Someday she may like the pictures and learn some French from them. Meanwhile Mother and Father may amuse themselves.

This is the country for rain and mists. The mists sweep around the hills and across the roads. The country is beginning to look grey instead of sparkling. And the soldiers are beginning to look a little more harassed. Yesterday I got thoroughly soaked driving. Raincoats do a certain amount of good, but Jack Collins borrowed mine to go to an execution one day and I haven't seen him since. Yesterday, in my damp condition, I met a correspondent in a town and asked him if he had seen Jack. He said he had. Jack was walking down the street looking all dressed up. I said, "Do you mean he had a good looking raincoat on?" and he said "Yes!" Whereupon I swore loudly. I couldn't find him, but engaged several friends to haunt him. I should get it back soon.

Now that the chills are starting to creep, my ideal house is acquiring a great fireplace in my mind. I suppose it's necessary that some heat come from radiators, but not all of it. But heat there must be, chill Jill. And the bathroom must be big and the

kitchen big, and all the other rooms big, though perhaps not proportionately. And there must be ground around, lawns, trees, and a vegetable garden. And an illimitable place for storing half useful junk to get it out of the way. I want privacy and lots of light and a barrel of wine and thou. I want to feel immobile.

However, if this all gives you a picture of horrible insatiability and impossible ambition, I should add that I can accustom myself to anything, including the unswept corner of an elevated station, provided I can see you afterwards and have a hamburger and a cup of coffee with you.

For I am yours before anything else and always.

Your love, Al

P.S. When you buy Dad & Mom something for their anniversary, you might use the enclosed card.

THE campaign to reconquer Northern France may have paused on that fine autumn day when he and Pvt. George Glade had dropped off some artillery shells designated for a special target, and were picking their way in their jeep along a forest path from the gun site, pulling an empty trailer, crunching the colorful leaves beneath their wheels, and in this forest came upon a field of mushrooms, enormous, like elephant ears, freshly sprung-up. He laughed at Glade who had never tasted a mushroom. He was not sure of the species, whether it was poisonous, but loaded the trailer with them, brim-full, a hundred pounds perhaps, covering them with a tarpaulin, thinking the while of the Dad back home who might be just now with the daybreak pacing some greensward of Chicago hunting the mushroom.

They drove back to camp and went among the villagers, asking whether these were good. "The best!" they exclaimed. Some of the troops were uneasy; it was like offering them snails; an American officer is expected to be a very ordinary person with ordinary tastes. Let them learn! So the gourmets among the troop feasted upon them

and he gave a vast quantity to the villagers who had their most memorable treat in a long time!

Yet depression falls upon the Company's mood as Autumn advances into Winter. The slowdown is gradual, not some shocking crash into a wall of fire. It's almost like the normal human response to the seasonal withering of the world, but it rises from a higher level of wholesale despondency. By September 15 practically all of France except Alsace and Lorraine has been freed; three months later, in mid-December, a pocket of Germans still holds out around Colmar and Mulhouse in Southern Alsace, and Northern Lorraine -- where the Combat Propaganda Team bivouacs -- is still in enemy hands. The moment when victory could have been grasped passed unbeknownst at some point.

Where was our Lieutenant's outfit then? No one recalls. Epinal, perhaps, a modest city already foggy in the gloaming of fall. It was even before this point, however, that he was disgusted with the order to cut back on gasoline consumption, because it was so obviously a tactic, yes, a logistical tactic of war, that should have been in force from the first inkling that the Germans would break and close up to the North. Now it was too late to push on through, not really, but, given the deficient energy of Allied movements generally, a gas shortage could conveniently be claimed. For lack of gasoline and all that subtends from it, Eisenhower brought Patton's Army to a halt on September 22.

Alfred claims not to understand the delays, but of course cannot ask penetrating questions. The Rhine is to be grasped and held along its length, from Holland to Switzerland, why? Where are the countless engineer battalions each of which could build a bridge? Could not at least one Cassino-type, or Hamburg-like, bombardment by aircraft be directed at a beach-head across the Rhine and maintained until there would be a sterile zone of several kilometers upon which a large air-drop and infantry crossing could be established? Yes, this can be tried, but later. After all, there is a horde of enemy to be defeated and pushed back before the several points on the Rhine can be reached where, according to theory, proper crossings ought be made.

Who decided that there should be another six innings of war to

liberate France, overwhelm Germany, and organize the occupation? Though his indignation might subside, he was continuously irritated at the growing inaction. It was as if this dinosaur, heedless of its purpose and brainless, swelled itself up to a glossy weighty mass of millions of men and machines stretching like a mighty monster from the flower beds of Holland to the meadows of the Alps and slumped into its winter hibernation. Himself he is not at all ready to doze off. Nor are the Soviets; they are going hell's bells in deepening winter.

Words are found to explain why the front lines are hardening with the frosts on the ground. He examines his own G3 and G2 overlays that contain less and less of fresh movement, more and more of unit numbers and names. Logistics are the greedy preoccupation of the Seventh Army. The same with the other great armies of the Western Front. They are less agitated by the slowdown than by rapid advances; shouldn't it be the other way around? One should be grim on the attack, anxious upon a halting.

What is happening, he asks the Maps Clerk at Army Headquarters, and also Colonel Parry, his calm and methodical boss at Army HQ. He hardly ever exchanges a word with Colonel Quinn, Army G-2, who occupies another tent or room, the ultimate commander of the G-2 zoo, which consists of CIC, OSS, POW Interrogation, Signals Codes, enemy documents analysis, operations intelligence, and censorship, besides Combat Propaganda.

The Exec spends more time with Major Ogden who numbers among his other duties the censorship of his mail (that revealed hardly a sign of intervention, however, so cautious was the Exec), and must know him better than anybody but never mentions what of his words he has read. Ogden sat on his camp stool by his folding table, in the collapsible tent of Colonel Parry, round-faced, pleasant, a westerner, Utah, probably a Mormon, quiet-talking, twinkly blue-eyed, uncritical or at least suppressed, glad to oblige, but the Exec had little to ask for. Except the big question: why are we here and not there? To which they can respond less imaginatively than himself. The complacency is such that he half-believes the strategy of consolidation and finds himself writing to his wife that the War is taking longer in order to gather all forces together before attacking, a strategy sure to save many lives.

The Chiefs of G-2, of Artillery, and the others let the propaganda Team alone, exceptionally, happily. The Team reports in writing each week on operations, daily on personnel; also, the Exec conveys orally stories of interest, that there are pleased German customers for their propaganda leaflets, or some bit of news about local French politics, or a prisoner's interview protocol that is remarkably informative from a political standpoint. Then some small talk. Mess Sergeant Williams meanwhile picks up rations at the Army HQ Ration Dump. Sergeant Roger Villeneuve, Company Clerk, or PFC Connie Wilson, his assistant, picks up the mail. The Lieutenant forms his opinion of what if anything is happening along the Western Front, and of the seemingly ever-active Eastern Front.

He has lost interest in the Italian Front. He has exchanged a letter with Clara, has heard from John Reynor that Gianni's mission across the line failed, nothing from "D Section." But then, soldiers do not write horizontally, they write vertically, to home. He hears what he wants to hear from visitors of the Mediterranean Theater; there are enough of them. There is no front in the Pacific Theater for the Yanks to speak of, just a lot of islands and at the moment the great air-sea battles. He barely notices the miserable actions taking place on the Burmese-Indian frontier and inside China. He listens to the sounds of the Great Beast of the West slipping sighing into the rut, and hears respectfully its explanations for the slowdown, which might as well have been growls, grunts and squeaks. "Pausing to regroup and reorganize." "The Germans are bringing in troops from the East (an inexhaustible source of troops, to read the G2 reports)." "The Germans are setting up new divisions from the last of their manpower, " and presumably we are waiting for them to do so -- to commit new divisions against us? "They cannot last much longer under the immense air bombardments; Hamburg is a ruin." "We have to rebuild the harbors." "Our armored spearheads are short of gas and ammunition." "Our supply lines are too long." "Difficult terrain is being encountered in the Ardennes forests, the Vosges mountains, and the great barrier of the River Rhine." "The enemy resistance is stiffening as they prepare to defend the territory of the Homeland for the first time." No one would dare mention it publicly, but with the end in sight and the Soviet forces making excellent progress, why not leave

it up to them to defeat the Reich? Sit back and wait for the vaunted Soviet Winter Offensive. (Never mind the vaunted Allied Winter Offensive.)

Once the great drive has slowed, it becomes self-slowng; thousands, myriads, a million men begin to think, "Well, how lucky that I have come this far intact; I'm going to let the others push a little; I'm not going to press matters if SHAEF is not pressing." It is true, SHAEF was all too ready to enjoy the feeling of a steady ride for a few months. If Patton had been in charge instead of Eisenhower and Bradley -- would the mighty monster have been spurred by the glossy-booted conquistador to continue its rampage? Probably so, the Exec believes. However, since feelings against Patton are strong, and his own General Patch is well-liked, he can make only the mildest of insinuations.

So SHAEF is snug and the troops are making themselves more comfortable. The propaganda trade is booming, because all of the Allied artillery is at the Front, more is arriving all the time, and more and more of the enemy units are being identified for mental massage. It is obvious to Alfred that his Army is continually being reinforced. New unit designations appear on the G3 overlays daily. He passes them on the road, or meets them. He speaks to the men when they are locked in a jam or at a tent where the Red Cross is giving out coffee and doughnuts, silly people, as if the troops were starving refugees. It's about the only way a dog-face can exchange a few words with an American broad; the French colonial troops forthrightly bring their own whores.

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 18, 1944 V-MAIL

[Postcard. Little boy sitting on a bench with cup of tea in hand. Caption "Il n'y a qu'une chose qui manque ... c'est vous!"]

Dearest,

This should do for your amusement and Kathy's appetite. She can eat it while you read a longer letter in relative safety.

Lovey

Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 19, 1944

Dearest Jill,

It is a cold morning, and only the middle of September too. I must take steps somehow to find some more warm clothing. It's sort of difficult with all the installations spread all over France and not much time to go scouting around. The bad typing here is due to the fact that my fingers are cold and aren't very accurate. I'm waiting for the cook to get some coffee warmed up so that I can feel more mammalian and less reptilian. I got a good night's sleep last night, mostly by the process of lying down after supper and forgetting to get up again. Two letters of yours came last evening, August 28 and Sept. 2. I did get your check and now you must tell me whether you got it back. In answer to something else in the letter about making fun of you, I don't remember what it was, but send you many penitent kisses anyway. I see that you are gathering all your energies for studying Italian by Linguaphone. I ought to tell you, I suppose, that I carried to Europe with me the very useful grammar which accompanied the set and therefore that you ought to get a replacement from the Linguaphone company. Mine I lent to Ian Alexander in Sicily, and though I've seen him since, I've never thought to ask him for it. I might write him now on the chance that he still has it. Did I tell you that Oscar Dystal, the same one you knew before, is going home for a while and promised to see you in order to tel you obvious facts like I'm all right.

I must write other people. I've practically abandoned all other correspondence. First thing, I'll write Dad. He's due a letter. I can tell him about some gigantic mushrooms I've picked which we're going to eat tonight. He's an old mushroom hunter from way back. I used to like to go along on those mushroom hunts

mostly because they were really nice walks in the woods and a chance to eat a fine thick steak broiled over a wood fire. Now I like mushrooms so much, and I know you do too, that there is the initial attraction to add to the others. The woods in this part of France are littered with dead plant matter and are sopping wet, just the perfect environment for the growing mushroom.

Now it's time to eat breakfast. I'll finish later.

What a horrible, skipping letter this is. It'll make Pamela seem like easy reading, if you haven't already carried the book back in disgust. I once read a Machiavelli's History of Florence that was that way too. I'm still reading Beard's Republic & struggling through André Malraux' La Condition Humaine, which is somewhat beyond my French for easy reading. I'd certainly like to do some organized reading for a change and for that matter, some loving. I'm feeling sexless, almost. If only you were here.

All my love. Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 20, 1944

Angel -

I approach this letter fresh and glowing from having just read for the first time four virginal (i.e. unphotographed) V-mails from you of the 8th and 9th of September. They contained many loving references which, in my unkempt weary state, I more than appreciated, a fauvist portrait of me naked under a raft and, most noteworthy of all to me, the announcement that you were billeted in a room with douche bowls. I'd like to have a picture of that too. The mailman brought this treasure this afternoon but as I was out on a long wearying walk with Kathy and Diane and her baby, I didn't get a chance to read them until now, evening.

Here are some pictures that a relatively strange girl took of us in the middle of last summer. I didn't get them until just today.

Kathy must have been about seven months old then and for some reason, I look a lot like the way I did in pictures taken of me in puberty, before I had braces to suppress the spontaneity of my smile. I think they are rather good, don't you? Kathy seems a log bigger to me now. Today she wore a cute little red and white checked dress, new from Wards, which increase the adulthood of her appearance. And guess what! Today she said "Mamamama etc." She said it while eating some jello at lunch and has been saying it ever since if I say it first. The evolution of language in a child is amazing. Apparently first they say these things at random. Rather, there is this basic sound that all children make --mmmmmm-- when they are eating something good, which of course holds over into adulthood. Then the pleased mother excitedly repeats what they say and from then on it's just one long game of follow-the-leader. But since mamama is part of our language, even though she said it accidentally, for all practical purposes Kathy started to talk today, don't you think? And isn't it wonderful? What a sassy kid. I wish you could see her. She's so damned spoiled by all the adventure and company she's had. If you walk out of the room where her playpen is she sets up a howl, and if you shut yourself up in the kitchen, to avoid pouring boiling water on her when she is crawling free around the house, she sits behind the kitchen door, an unfriendly growling presence, until finally she either pushes open the swinging door or else is thrown into ineffectuality by her enraged cries. She has learned how to open the door of her room too if it isn't firmly shut. her bed is right next to the door and she stands up at one end, fooling with the door until she finally gets it open, after which she alternately laughs and howls with rage until you pay some attention to her. While I am often irked by the fact that she demands so much of my time, apparently you either have one kind of baby or the other -- the kind that just lies down and won't budge for a year, like at least three of her contemporaries whose mothers I know, and who complain about that -- or the kind like her, the vivacious, responsive and demanding child. The latter kind is harder on the mother, of course, but makes wonderful company and, if not thwarted too much, probably end up by being the

most creative and well-adjusted personalities. It will be very interesting to see how she reacts to the fact of your presence and ultimately, to a second child. It will probably take some careful handling to get her used to even taking a subordinate role when you come home. Gosh knows I haven't tried to spoil her or to neurotically over-indulge her. But the very fact that I have taken her around so much this summer -- to our mutual benefit and pleasure I might add -- and also that she is so attractive to so many adults and children in the neighborhood who consequently pay a lot of attention to her, has of course "spoiled her for solitary play for long periods of time. She's good enough in the morning until about eleven. Then, if I want to spend the rest of the morning home, I simply must release her from playpen and bed if I want any quiet at all.

I wouldn't worry about the expense of taking your doctorate's if that is what you want to do. In the first place, won't the veteran's administration pay for your course work if that's necessary? I certainly think that if you do decide to take it, you shouldn't get involved in doing a lot of odd jobs and part-time work which would overburden you. We do want to have time for fun together and anyway, we shouldn't have to worry about money for quite some time after you come home. I feel exactly as you do -- that it should be love, love, love exclusively for quite some time and then, if we start to starve, we can do something about it then. I can't think of anything you'd do that I'd disapprove of, short of running a bakery in which I was the baker.

Last night Laura came over for dinner and then we went to a district meeting of IVI with Jane Merriam. Jane has a full-time job with them, organizing the 8th ward, poor girl. Bob is in France with the infantry but she doesn't know where. The meeting was of the pep, rather than organizational variety and therefore rather dull although I was fortified with a Little Blue book of some stories by Ambrose Bierce that I'd found at the dime store earlier in the day. We stayed late and had a beer afterwards to wipe out the horrid memories from our tender female souls. You're coming to a fine country, dear, where the burden of political activity seems to rest on gals like us. The

great decisions of state will be decided at chintz-bedecked dressing tables and campaign songs will be sung by female trios giving out with "MMMmmmm". Try a fourth term. It's good!

I have a mountain of bills to pay which I'd better get to. More tomorrow, dear old pal o'mine.

I love you truly --

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 20, 1944

Darling Jill,

It is true that I love you and it is as true that the war is winding up in Europe, two facts which make life easier these days. I am in a period of great impatience with inefficiency and waste and you know what that can do to one in the army. In addition to everything else, it can make one want to get out and do something well, or simply to get out. It's partly being a helpless lieutenant I suppose, though I'm sure it would be the same as a major or a private. I think I'll become a precision instrument mechanic after the war to recover some lost feeling of efficiency. You can see why I'm driven to the point of becoming a ruthless, efficient businessman after the war, worse than Walter, not even giving my relatives a bigger rate of interest. Oh the pleasure of not treating with people you don't like or at least of washing one's hands of them come the five o'clock whistle, oh the joy of firing incompetents, oh the thrill of exercising your own judgement, oh the freedom from the wretched uncertainty of ideas, always ideas, always bad ideas, always trite, mal-informed, half-baked, and from children doing men's jobs, amateurs doing professionals' work, and finally the delight in doing a neat job completely, seeing it through, not letting it escape one, not watching it be confounded, altered, coordinated, merged and generally ----- up. This will probably all disappear in the fever of getting my hands on you again, for you

are certainly the complete occupation for the young veteran, but you get the point, or at least the sources of this emotion.

As my skilled reader, you undoubtedly realize that what has just happened to me is that I have moved my stinking bedding roll for the thousandth time. So here I am body and baggage, in a room in a big house of brick and wood, not half-bad, but who the hell cares. At least I am so much nearer the wistful figure of the Fuhrer. The country is beautiful, yes, all country is beautiful, barren, rocky, verdant, flat or hilly, but I'm getting to where my finger reaches into my throat at every new mile. Give me back my home, mad geni of the world, and you can roll all the sweet hills into the red tongue of Vesuvius. You can leave me with a Krazy Kat landscape and my world will still be saner than yours.

And I need a bath, but never see a bathtub. There are many rivers, if you like ice water, have soap and towel, aren't in a hurry and don't want to get really clean. Each day I am more surprised at how clean I am still, despite fairly dirty work, and abominable laundry condition, and sub-standard sanitation generally. I guess it's as you used to say, that I am naturally repulsive to dirt. But I would still be content to pass half the day in the bathroom scrubbing your back, if it would make you happy, or doing anything else what would accomplish the same.

Jack Collins interrupted this letter by bringing in my raincoat and we ate supper together here. He told me that Brownie Roberts went back to the States, and that he is probably going back too. Sounds nice, doesn't it. I hope I can say that with reference to myself sometime.

After supper I had just the thing the ads recommend for ill-temper, Ovaltine. Lt. Isenberg, a very kindly gent who once dwelt in the Belmont Ave. Smorgasbord section and who is now working with me, produced it. He had gotten it as a Christmas present last year, and was just opening it now. You can see how little time means to us, and since there's only one of a good thing usually, no one is in a rush to consume it in order to get another.

But anyway, I am now full and serene, and sleepy. All my love to you, darling.

Your,

Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 21, 1944

Darling --

After a day spent singularly non-politically, I find I have very little to write about in commentary upon my life. The days are becoming truly autumnal -- warm, a flawless blue sky and high winds. Kathy and I went over to the Midway this afternoon to enjoy nature's handiwork, where we met an old man and a vigorous two-year-old police dog. The latter had a red ball she was singularly fond of. So was Kathy. Kathy would crawl over and grab the ball and the dog would gently take it out of her hands with her monstrous jaws. Then the dog would play for a while, finally returning to place the ball at Kathy's feet and it would start all over again. It was truly the dog-infant relationship you read about in children's books, and it seems that only these huge formidable-appearing dogs are capable of them. I certainly wouldn't want Kathy to enter into competition with Cooney for a red ball or for anything else, for that matter.

The next day -- Bill Steinbrecher dropped in as he was in the neighborhood and we sat around and talked and listened to records. He said he's gotten a letter from you recently. Anyway, by the time he left at ten I was sleepy and went to bed. And a good thing. This has been a most trying day so far. The cleaning woman is in and I have been jumping around like a mad woman, corroborating my theory that I always work harder when she is here than otherwise. We have been moving furniture around and pondering the disposal of a lot of books not in bookcases. It's an endless process. I take the books out of their cartons, thinking to better their lot and mine, then I find

we have no bookcases to put them all in so back again into the cartons, and thence to the closet they go, to attract mice and dust. I found a mouse in a mousetrap this morning. Maybe he is the last of his clan living in this apartment, please God.

Kathy has been confined to her room during all this activity. I finally moved her playpen out of the dining room into her room, hoping to habituate her to solitary play behind closed doors. So far, the closed door has only served to conceal a most unfriendly Presence in this house. But she really must get used to being alone a little while if I am to get anything accomplished these busy days. VI is still working on a publicity spot for me that won't require too much of my presence downtown. I have to speak to another of their men tomorrow. Tonight we have a meeting here of the neighborhood workers. I hope to hell they don't smoke too much as I only have three ashtrays. Maybe I'd better get some more. And then, of course, I'd like to learn Italian -- a few words anyway, before you come home. All very cogent reasons for my un spoiling Kathy very fast indeed.

I'm going up to Mom's tomorrow to leave Kathy while I go downtown again. We are all working on the problem of what to give Eddy for a going-away present when he enlists some time this month. Rather, he has enlisted (in the ARAF), he is just waiting to be called.

What do you think of the enclosed cartoon? Very worldly stuff for the News and they've already printed some indignant letters from readers like "Are you nuts? Why are you running Thurber's stuff? It makes no sense at all - An Indignant Soldier" etc. etc. But I, a calm civilian, thin it's very funny.

I'm so sleepy. This afternoon nap habit is most pernicious. But I hope you get it, or keep it if you have it, so we can take many pleasant snoozes together for the next forty years or so.

All my love to you, darling,

Jill

P.S. The mailman just brought a package of divine smelling stuff -- that imposing bottle of Renoir perfume. We both agreed that it smelled very good and it was wonderful of you to send it (I think -- he kept his nose out of that part). Thanks loads.

P. P. S. He also brought a copy of The Key Reporter which I am not forwarding.

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 21, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

Monday

I've just come to the peaceful, sunny end of a couple of hard days. The night before last I drove all night with some shells. I finished by yesterday afternoon and promptly searched out a lush, peaceful field next to a fast stream where I pitched camp with my driver and took a nap. I had a good night's sleep too, to the sound of the babbling brook and feel normal now. But it was extremely cold that night of driving, and I was in a black mood against everything. We got lost several times; one time, I found it out on the edge of a blown road. I had to do a great deal of the driving, since the driver is French and not very experienced. Yesterday morning, as I sat peacefully contemplating the countryside, I noticed a very large tree moving towards us and had to wrench the wheel from his sleep-constricted hands. We had been saved dietetically from C-rations by some delicious fresh milk and some captured German cheese. A little while ago I was able to pick up a cot and I've promptly set it up in this field in the sun and I'm writing you on it.

I've been having a fine time lately thinking about you and home. Whatever even keel I've maintained through this whole war has been because of the complete ease that governs my mind regarding the important part of my life that stayed home. You have been home, and not the home front. I can't drum up the slightest concern about post-war life because you'll be there and that's about all that counts.

I'm sorry I can't be kissing you for the rest of the afternoon.

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 23, 1944

My darling Al --

Sunday

Having just bedded down your sweet daughter at the unseemly hour of eight PM, I now find myself in the old quandary of duty and pleasure -- whether I should write you or make formula. As usual with me, hedonism wins out and I can spend a few minutes pleasantly with you, telling of my love and adventures. Kathy and I have been having a gay old time spinning around the city. We went up north to Mom's yesterday and then I went back to the Loop to see this man about doing some writing for the Independent Voters. He gave me some biographies of candidates to do which I am doing now. It is very easy, just re-writing stuff from the Congressional Record. But of course, as soon as I get something to do, I find I don't have much time.

Then I bought her some clothes, a blue corduroy jacket and overalls miles too big, the way you do for children, and some shirts and socks. It's a constant battle to keep her in clean clothes. Then I returned to your homestead and ate a lot, renewing my now week-old stomach ache. Bill Steinbrecher came over, or rather, I took Kathy over to his house to see his mother and father, who hadn't seen her yet. Then Bill accompanied us home. Since we got back rather late, we've been a couple of hours off schedule ever since. Today I took her for a walk on the Midway and have been on and off working and sleeping all day long. I've always got so damn much to do, it seems, but it's a good thing because I would be very unhappy otherwise. The news is not as heartening as it was a month ago, and doesn't seem to be bringing you home any faster. It makes me very mad anyway that you haven't had any rest or relief for so long, confirming my impression that the basic policy of the Army is snafu. How come Dystal gets to go home, anyway? The fat -- oh well, this may be censored. Does

anybody talk about rotating you, or anybody? Tell them your wife is getting good and mad at the Army, that your daughter is beginning to say da-da and has nobody to say it to and that there are mice in your wife's apartment. Maybe that will help to bring them around.

You know, I just started putting Kathy on her little johnseat about three days ago after her breakfast and it really works. She seems to have caught on right away and isn't at all scared or resistant. She huffs and puffs and goes and that's all there is to it. I had rather wanted to put off toilet-training because I thought it was so involved but I thought I'd try her out and it's simple as that. She drinks stuff out of a cup now except of course her milk, but she gives herself the bottle now all the time. How fast they grow up. I can sympathize with mothers who are always harking back to the days of their children's infancy. It does seem like only yesterday, etc. Except, the funny thing is, that I can hardly remember from one month to the other what she's done the previous month.

But formula making is always with me. More tomorrow, darling. And I love you always -- I love you, I do.! Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 23, 1944 V-MAIL

[date is best guess]

Dearest Jill,

I am about due for a V-mail. I don't think I've sent one in almost a week. Maybe I'll write another letter to you tonight, since there may not be much doing for the rest of today. This morning was very wet. I met two of my soldiers coming back to camp this morning as I was going out and they had spent a miserable night because it had rained most of the night and there was no place for them to get out of it. I can't say that things were pretty in the rain. They are very grey, the green of the fields is washed-out and the cows are wet-faced. About ten o'clock I

happened to be stopping in a town where there was an FFI unit and got a steak sandwich from them, together with some coffee I had along. They had a big kitchen crew that was running around making the dinner and taking nips from a huge demijohn of red wine. I had a tall glass, too, which did the double trick of fortifying me against the rain and loosening my unconscious block against speaking French glibly to a G-2 I saw shortly afterwards.

Two letters came yesterday, one from Dad and one from Ed. They said Ed was going to join the AAF in October. I am glad of it for I believe he might regret it afterwards if he didn't, and it isn't as if he is joining up to escape anything like college by doing it. The job he has is really just a puttering business, isn't it? Everything seems to be going well with the family. Ed drew a very funny and endearing picture of Uncle Charlie, limping, touched with malaria, and generally knocked about, charging heroically after the fair sex "with a pint of whiskey in one hand and a wad of greenback in the other". He is really quite a character, utterly disreputable but without a hint of real evil.

To your great burdens, I would like to add another, if you will. Would you please write the Illinois National Guard for a statement of my period of service in the 106th Cavalry, Band, Chicago, Ill., during the general period of September (appr.) 1939 to August 1940? The reason for my needing this information is that after three years of service, National Guard included, the army pays a slight additional sum to a soldier each month. If you will get me such a statement from the adjutant, I will light a candle for you in the Cathedral of Cologne and buy you a little present that is guaranteed to be worthless. Another thing - if you know the whereabouts of any old army papers of mine, look for the Special Order creating me a first lieutenant and send it to me, since I am without proof what I am anything.

But here is the end, and so ends the letter. I love you always and think of you all the time, if not you specifically, then of Kathy and of how wonderfully you have done with here. Give her a kiss for me and take good care of yourself.

Love,

Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 24?, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling,

Kathy and I just returned from a survey of the University. Today is registration day for the new quarter and somehow I got the idea I wanted to see what the new crop looked like. Not very good was the answer. We sat on the lawn in the middle of the quadrangle for a while and Kathy ate leaves and watched the robins. I didn't see a soul I knew except a belligerent young colored lad I had met the previous night -- last night -- at a party at Klaus' which I attended for exactly forty-five minutes. The colored boy incidentally was very bright, an excellent orator, but way off the beam so far as the claims and rights of labor and minority groups in wartime went. He didn't think much of the CIO Political Action Committee because it was just throwing in with the President without organizing the elements of a strong third party. I think that it's all right to try new political organizations when you are in the minority, i.e., on the offensive as the Republicans are now and as we New Dealers will be in 1948 or 1952 perhaps, but right now labor and all progressives would do well to hang on to what they have. And then, the prime consideration -- since what I said about the offensive role of the minority party would hold good any time -- is the war, which should be won first before labor tries to exert its old weapons of strikes and so forth. The colored boy didn't think much of the Communists, either. I guess that sold the fire-eaters like him down the river after June 22, 1942.

Let me see, where was I. Diane came for dinner and interrupted the great mind at work. We had a terrific dish for dinner -- ragout of oxjoints compounded of sauterne, garlic, mushroom, tomato paste and god knows what else. It tasted very good and

if it doesn't make me sick, will be the specialty of the house. We sat around and talked for several hours, reminiscing over those hectic days in 42 when you went in the Army and we lived together in name only, since she spent most of her time in New York with Oliver and I with you in Tennessee and Chicago. Do you remember?

Honestly, Al, that perfume you sent me is the best-smelling stuff on this earth. It's sort of on the Chanel No. 5 order, only not so heavy which makes it all the nicer for me, since presumably a blonde or whatever I am shouldn't go in for very heavy musky scents. Did you smell it first, or choose it among a great variety of scents, or what? You really are a genius sometimes at getting me exactly the right thing. Those gloves from Italy for instance. I wore them -- they are the ones with a string back and leather palms -- with my raincoat the other day and they were just perfect. Incidentally, a couple of pairs of gloves you sent were too small and I gave them to Mom, I hope you don't mind. I haven't worn the stockings yet. I'm going to dye them a lighter shade to match my shoes. But dark or light, they are still a lot nicer than rayons, which accordion pleats around my ankles distressingly. Actually, I probably won't wear any stockings for another month, when my sunburn will have faded completely. Go to bed, Jill. OK, Al. Christ, I wish I could -- with you, I mean.

Always my love,

Your Jill.

[in the margin] Kathy sends love too. And she will sing you a live love song if you ask nicely.

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 24, 1944

Jill Darling,

Another dull afternoon, with not too much to do, and that goes for amusing oneself too. I suppose I had better go out in about

an hour and return before supper. The weather is clearer today but definitely autumnal. The sweet summer is gone, with it all thoughts of cool swims in the rivers which now appear angry and cold. The shade is not cool anymore; it is cold. We make coffee more often and think more of building fires. The world is greyer, the war grimmer, and the specter of the coming winter is a little chilling. The news of hard fighting in progress over a large front dims the clear picture of early victory that seemed almost a reality a week ago.

It isn't a new thing, but when one considers the rations we've eaten since coming to France, he wonders at the persistence of appetite. We haven't been issued a piece of fresh or frozen meat since the start of the campaign, though I've had meat several times in restaurants. The rations have not gotten into any of the fancier varieties. I think the amount of fresh meat I've had in the last year is about what the De Grazia family used to consume in a week. I will have no pity on any relative, however intimate or remote, who sends me spam this year.

One of the more remarkable repasts I've had recently occurred on the night we left our last little village. We were the only outfit billeted in the town which had all of 800 inhabitants, two cafes, one with and the other without food, a butcher shop, an empty but open grocery store, a church, the mairie, and one long street with a little offshoot next to the mairie. Naturally there was some fuss in town over our arrival and though we didn't stay long, our soldiers became well-known characters in the town and our vehicles were recognized so that when one ran down the road to our camp at the village green at the end of the day there was slightly increased waving and broader smiles than for an ordinary passing vehicle. Toward the end of our stay, we found we had been innocent victims of a battle for prestige in the town, and that, momentarily, the social scale was graduated for the inhabitants in terms of the rank of the officer or non-commissioned officer they harbored in their homes.

On the day before our departure, Jim told me that I was invited to the house of his landlady for dinner that night, and I accepted

the invitation to go with him and Roos, not without some protesting since, as you may have learned before, I haven't been in a mood for "putting out" socially for a long time, and to talk French all evening would be an unwelcome strain for one whose present aims are to be let alone in peace until the war ends. I met Jim at six-thirty and we finally rounded up Roos some minutes later in the house of my host, the mayor, drinking Vins Mousseux. He immediately poured us a huge Pernod and in our haste, we had to down in two minutes what should have taken us two hours in a leisurely cafe.

We walked from the mayor's house to the other end of the village very rapidly, and burst in on our hostess with profuse apologies for being late. The master of the house entered the room and without breathing after the introductions, we sat down to eat. The host was a former regular army captain, short, sturdily set-up, ruddy and bald. He wore the old dark blue uniform, and he wore the French equivalents of the good-conduct medal, the before-Pearl Harbor ribbon, and several shiny badges which could only be classed as souvenirs. He delivered his thoughts with an assured voice, not the assurance that could be called grandeur or grandiloquence, where the speaker knows secretly that there are all sorts of other opinions but attacks in full frontal assault the massive opposition, but the assurance that is narrow and dull because the man is shut up in his box and doesn't know there are other ideas.

However, he was attentive enough, and in strict order of rank, he poured the wines for us. He didn't pay much attention to me but directed his best sallies at Mon Commandant, obviously enjoying the fact that he might practice his old trade of ignoring a lieutenant. The effect was completely lost on me, I can say in all modesty, because I was not only free to eat twice as much patés and saucissons as the others but by drinking heartily from my little glass I compelled my host to exercise his functions beyond the normal. I think the effect of this revealed itself much later in the evening when the captain, after I had had an emphatic verbal dispute with Roos and Jim, said with heavy and half-hearted humor, "The lieutenant is badly disciplined; he

ought to be court-martialed."

This wasn't his first exhibition of wit during the evening. He had earlier, during the salami course, told a funny story which he afterwards repeated because I had foolishly laughed so loud, and told many a funny tale about how the French had outwitted the Germans, a type of anecdote that has the gagging quality of C-rations after a year overseas. His most forceful attempt at humor provided the climax of the evening, and has, since then, provided us with an interesting point of dietary psychology. It was timed with the principal meat course which was laid before us obviously as the stew of a little animal. He said, "This is a cat that was killed by one of your American camions this morning." The stew was at that moment being passed to Jim whose hand was seen to tremble, visibly so that he had to use two to take up the platter and was confounded on how to serve himself until the madam helped him to a fine, large portion. Roos tried to pass it off as a joke and said, "That's not bad for cat" as he bit into it, grinning in a sick fashion. But I knew it was cat, because it had thin legs and was tougher than rabbit, though at the same time I knew it was a joke about it being run over by one of our camions. Ever since, Roos says it was a vulgar joke all the way through that still upsets him, Jim maintains a tight-lipped silence when the subject is brought up, and I am sure it was cat and say so to the eager groups of listeners who gather around to hear the story.

No one doubted that the next course was chicken because the bristly head was right on the plate. After that, there was more wine, the table was cleared, several more townspeople appeared before our dulled eyes, and we sat in the easy chairs to take our pastry and coffee. The butcher was there, stocky, forceful, his black hair cut to bristle size, and calmly aware of his important place in the community where a mutton-head is more seductive than Schiaparelli's Sleeping. His daughter accompanied him and resembled him well, a jolly butcher's daughter from the old school. A pimply young man and a not unattractive young couple completed the circle. Most of the talk went around me, fortunately, because it was the same old stuff

about how wicked the Germans are (I know it), how brave they are and what the latest news is (no one knows but they can guess for hours). I drowsed and watched madam, wondering at how stupid and pretentious she was. She was out to show us how really aristocratic an army captain wife's was. She was somewhat handicapped by the fact that all her molars were missing, and her strained, gay smile revealed first that phenomenon and then only in a minor fashion the amusing quality of her expression. Her black dress had elbow length sleeves which permitted her to flash her forearms in graceful gestures which, because of the great size and muscularity of her hands had more the quality of the threatening mailed fist.

I couldn't see the effect of the war in that home that night. No errors were mentioned, no pardon asked; they had no more sense of guilt for believing in Pétain at one stage than the Italians for believing in Mussolini. The war was a thing of blacks and whites, the victors being whites and the French being victors. The conscience is not a thing to be plumbed. It is there to be forgotten.

We left around eleven-thirty and stopped by the mayor who was still up for three glasses of champagne. I gave my tonette to his young boy, an earnest, quiet kid who may have use of it some day for piping the rats out of town.

Now it has commenced to rain very hard. What a dull life. It wouldn't be dull if you were here because I have a fine dry room with a bed that would suit two people if they were in love. But there'll be lots and lots of time for that. Many kisses to you and Kathy, darling, with all my love. Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 25, 1944

Dearest Jill,

It's a cold, damp morning. The sun is becoming only occasional around here. We are fairly comfortably housed here -- meaning

that I have a room and a bed. There's no plumbing in the house which is otherwise charming. The fireplaces are much too small. Only two or three sticks can burn at a time but still that is enough to take the edge from the air. It is funny that I can always write you in the morning, whereas one would think that evening is the more romantic time for writing letters. It really is too, but in the evening I usually have too many thoughts to write them down. Then in the cold morning I can write something that won't burn the Chicago post office down. It's good to vary the time too because you get the idea that I have more than one mood. John Whitaker showed up yesterday for establishing liaison or something. He said I looked thinner, which I don't doubt, for, despite three meals a day, there is something about this life that keeps one's weight down.

I am going to get a haircut and a shower this morning, no matter what else happens. I heard of a civilian who has a bath house in town. Yesterday, all the barber shops were closed, it being Monday, but in search of a heathen or apostate, I had a chance to talk around a fair-sized town and see the sights. I can almost get ecstatic over some of these central-European (this is the fringe of the culture area, I believe) architectural traits. So many of the houses are of that blackened heavy stone which looks imposing and unpretentious, like a Brooks Brothers suit, the windows are divided into panes, which heighten the romantic effect, and there are large tall chimneys set on slanting roofs of tile. The public buildings are in the same fashion, or rather, belong to the same period. And the streets are full of entrancing stores, not full of merchandise now but with enough to make one stop and look. You would enjoy very much walking around and looking at everything I thought as I wandered about. As it turned out, after I finished my futile search, I met Beaudry who is French-Canadian and we went into a French officer's mess where we ate the best pork and beans I have ever tasted, several helpings of them, drank lots of wine, had a cup of coffee, and from which we couldn't escape for almost two hours. The mess officer was a French female lieutenant who went around eavesdropping; she would fine five francs anyone she

overheard discussing shop, which I didn't have to pay since we spent a good part of the time discussing what a wonderful time one could have living in some ancient, classic, peaceful part of Sicily, like Agrigentum. Others offered parts of North Africa. I don't know. I wish I was limited in my tastes; it would be easier to be happy. But instead I can't decide between the snowy North Am. winter and the sparkling Mediterranean. The only thing I'm sure I want is you - please.

Kisses to You Both.

Your only, Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 26, 1944 V-MAIL

Sweetheart darling --

I have a big evening ahead of me -- formula and ironing -- so I thought I'd better write you before I ate and got involved, rather than to put it off until I was utterly exhausted. We had rather a restful day. This morning I worked on some writing for IVI while Kathy slept. Then this afternoon we both slept and then went to the Midway, where we watched some large rough boys play touch football. They kept moving over to where we were sitting and terrified, I would grab up Kathy and flee before their thundering feet. Isn't there any outer boundary to that kind of football or can you just keep going until you hit a natural barrier, like the lake or the Rockies?

Kathy makes a variety of syllables now, and can imitate certain noises, like a laugh resembling a machine gun, an accomplishment which will win her many friends in later life, as it has for me. Oh, we saw Mrs. Goff today. She always asks for you and says the baby looks just like you. She's a nice woman. Think of all the generations of screwballs she has catered to, yet she still goes her merry way, with her little black dog and laughing Chester, the colored hired man.

Every once in a while, like last night, I wake up in the middle of the night with a sudden heavy burden of realization that the war is far from won. I don't know why the hell I don't do my worrying about the war during the day. I guess I try very hard to keep it from intruding into my consciousness, or rather, I'm capable of thinking about it quite unemotionally. But then come moments like last night, and I am overwhelmed with sorry -- over the length of time we've been apart and are going to be, over the sure conviction that the optimism that has swept us all the past months is just so much b.s. in the face of German determination to hold out to the end. Honestly, all I can hope for is that you'll be rotated. If I have to wait until the end of the war to see you -- rather, if I have to think about waiting that long -- I could cry. And Christ, I see all these self-satisfied civilians around her and it makes me so damned mad. I'd like to spit in all their eyes. Oh sure, some of the guys are unhappy that they are 4-F but it doesn't change the fact that they are warm and comfortable and making money and can sleep with their wives.

Anyway, I have Kathy, who is much nicer than anybody else except you. She's getting more hair but it's still kind of straight and reddish brown, like mine only maybe a shade darker. And still no teeth. But on her it looks good.

Well, I'd better eat and listen to my crummy mystery program, while damping the wash. I don't mind ironing on a good radio night. It never takes me more than an hour or an hour and a half to do a week or two of the stuff. Of course, if I had men's shirts, it would be different. So.....

Darling, I'll always love you no matter how long I have to wait but for Christ's sake, try to come home soon. You can see Berlin on that European tour we're going to take some day ...

Always,

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 27, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

No one has been here to entice me into a chess game tonight, so I'll write you right away rather than tomorrow. Night is a bad time to write, I am more and more convinced. I think if you and I date and time our letters we'll find that the morning ones may be less poignantly romantic and more cheerful even if in a sour sort of way. The frustrated bower is the worst part of the war. Better to dream mildly in the evening and not give it the sharpness of black against white. Perhaps you're different. I don't know. In any event there is not the slightest doubt that any letter from you written at any hour and expressive of any mood is received with thanks.

Reading Mencken's *Happy Days* (which fell into my hands yesterday) reminded me of your letters incidentally. I find the charming style much more appropriately yours, the gaiety, the fast figure of speech, the fantasy. They are much more at home in your letters than in the book or than in any book. You must excuse my poor view of Mencken who writes very smoothly, had a magnificent vocabulary and can stir the same nostalgia that all families can stir in reminiscences. But it's not even Saroyan who paints an openly fraudulent child's world. The style and treatment are for letter-writing, not for literature. His mention of Freud too frequently for denying Freud's thesis about children makes one suspicious about him. If he thinks his book is realistic, he is silly. And I am silly because I'm enjoying it a lot. Maybe you can make more sense of this fragmentary book review than I now can. You can be sure it wasn't dragged in to flatter you. A letter a day on your virtues isn't sufficient to take me beyond the truth regarding them. I said years ago that you were wonderful and that was a lifetime subscription.

Tonight was eventful in that we got the first ration issue of whole meat of the campaign. Good beef roast and potatoes. You could notice the change where the fellows were eating and laughing longer and harder than usual.

Lt. Anspacher got a clipping today on the way points would be allocated in the demobilization scheme if ever the Germans are licked, or the Japs. I have something like 78 already on the basis of 1 for each month in army, 1 for each month overseas, 4 for each campaign ribbon, 4 for each medal (which I don't have at all), 8 for a wife, and 8 for each dependent (of which I have unfortunately only one). I think that's well above average.

I mailed you today, darling, those children's books in French and a little brooch, separately, which is a gold fish on a red background. I hope you like it. It cost me about eight dollars and it probably isn't worth it, but, what's the difference. I got a ram's head brooch, chrome on a green background, which I sent to Ann. It cost a little less.

That's all there is for tonight save my eternal love for you and Kathy.

Your

Al

ONE morning, the Lieutenant is eating breakfast at the small field desk he carries with him, when he hears a shot and the thud of a falling body. He springs out of the room into the hallway and finds Corporal François Bernard prone gushing blood from the neck. Who did it, he shouts, grab the son of a bitch! He imagined a fight and shooting. Top Sgt. Annunziata follows behind him, muttering disgustedly, for Christ's sake, take it easy. The Lieutenant lifts Bernard, stuffing a first aid pad someone has handed him into the wound, calling out to get a stretcher and a half-ton truck, and gagging on his breakfast of greasy fried bacon and powdered eggs now acting up worse than usual. Enter others, Pvt. Cook in hand, a befuddled look upon his usually silly mug. It was accidental. Cook was unloading his 45-cal. automatic after coming off guard duty and accidentally pulled the trigger, exploding a bullet that pierced one wall, struck the Corporal, and buried itself in the wall above where Our Man was sitting.

They rush him to the field hospital, but his spinal cord and brain are ripped up, and in a few minutes he expires. The several soldiers huddle a few feet away. Alfred assumes that he is Catholic, recalls vaguely the sign of the cross, and mumbles a few words of improvised prayer; some proper words should go with him, he believes, and an officer should administer last rites. The Americans are humiliated that one of their number should commit the accident, rather than the less skilled French.

A couple of days later Johnny Anspacher wanted to know whether Alfred was going to the funeral -- the Corporal's Mother would be there, crossing France through the newly connected Allied armies. He was surprised; he thought all the dead were promptly laid into a hole and covered with dirt, given a GI cross plus identification for possible reburial. He had no heart for it and asked Johnny to cover for him while he took off for the woods; she believed her son killed in action; so he was, like many another case of amicide.

Alfred was furious with Cook, an amiable sociopathic fool, and he brought the case to the Army Provost Marshal who fixed the charge as "negligent discharge of firearms" and sent it back for company level trial and punishment. That's not much. They decided to let it go. The idiot was liked by his comrades.

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 28, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Al --

The great Battle of the Fruitcake is on, and it's likely you'll be hearing about it for quite a few days hence. It really is a lengthy process, comparable only to writing a PhD thesis in my limited universe. First you do research, getting, as I did, the most complicated recipe one can find, complicated enough, that is, to give one a fine sense of craftsmanship and achievement, yet not so complicated as to require the use of esoteric or difficult to obtain ingredients, such as wolfsbane, sapphire or huck (the latter a word which I have evolved out of my own experience, as is the privilege of any intelligent person, comprises the scrapings of dark spots off the erasers on the ends of

mechanical pencils).

Anyway, I have my recipe. It is reasonably complicated, requesting, as I am only too happy to do, that the fruit going into the cake be mixed together and aged in honey overnight. I shall substitute sugar and Sauterne for the honey and age it two nights. Nothing is too good for our boys "over there."

Speaking of over there, I was over on 5 3rd St. last night, filling up on beer at Roy's pub with Priscilla Berquist, both of us grim object lessons in how the women go to pot when the men are away. A deft combination of the worst elements of bobby-sockism (we wore them) and college widows, we were the cynosure of all two eyes of the barkeep, a family man from the West Side. The cause for this flagrant betrayal of American Womanhood was that the Better Elements of the community were having a meeting at our apartment, discussing the tactics for Independent Voters. When the level of political discussion got down to a projected evening of fun, fund-raising and Keno, I uttered a strangled cry, muttered something about simply having to get a can of milk for Baby before the stores closed, and lit out of the house with Priscilla, who was sitting with Kathy early in the evening. Earlier in the evening, between the hours of eight and nine-thirty, this politically active neighbor of mine and I had gone forth in a howling thunderstorm, on the heel of Yom Kippur, to question some inhabitants of a disorderly building in re their status as voters. It was our first try at doorbell ringing and very enlightening. We found that out of about ten people we spoke to, most of whom were getting on in years, the old ones were, with the exception of an ancient physician who was very civic-minded and pro-Roosevelt, Republicans. The reason we thought they were Republicans was that they refused to tell their political affiliations whereas the pro-Roosevelt people were openly enthusiastic in his support. There were really only two of them, both young women. I thought my partner made a mistake in addressing one of them so heartily, urging her to assert her right as a housewife and to participate in our community group, since even to such an innocent eye as mine, she was neither a housewife, a wife at all, or the type who would

fling herself into community enterprises. She was, in my estimation, a very pleasant affable lady of joy. But better a Democrat and that than a Republican and respectable.
(continued)

Then all these other people who were also doing the same thing met at my house and from then on it was very dull. Tomorrow I am taking Kathy up to Mom and then going down to the IVI headquarters and doing some editorial work for them which is really more interesting to me than the meeting stuff.

Yesterday afternoon Kathy sat on the Midway while I did my best to avoid her grasping hands as I am very busy trying to get all the books read that I am sending you, so that we have Something To Talk About when you get home. We were sitting there calmly enough when suddenly about 5000 young men, scantily clad, rushed down the little hillock at the foot of which we were sitting, shouting, wrestling, kicking a large ball around and coming perilously close to us. I shouted myself, "Look out for the baby" and snatched her up, like a valiant mother out of a 19th century novel. (Kathy interrupted this with requests for her dinner -- now she's bedded down and peace reigns -- until I have to start supper and doing the dishes).

I haven't heard from you for a week or so now. I guess you're on the move again. Oh darling, when we will ever be together again. I wake up in a rage every morning, thinking how long we've been apart. Yet it's amazing how we can go on from day to day, carrying this insufferable burden of separation, yet managing to have a fairly good time, eat a lot, exercise and read light novels. I guess we're just not very neurotic, since the fact that we do survive in fairly decent fashion doesn't lessen the magnitude of our discomfort in each other's absence.

I'm listening to a hot mystery story now, starring a movie actor named Gene Kelly, who reminds me of you, i.e., he's dark, medium size, good looking and his front tooth sticks out like one or two of yours. What a basis for comparison! I love you. Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 29, 1944

Darling Jill,

I feel furious with the world. And why shouldn't I? Here it is twelve o'clock of a most beautiful fall night with the moonlight streaming through the panes of the window onto this deck, the trees waving their branches now to one side, now to another side of the moon, and the fire dying down to embers in the fireplace, the whole thing molded for the discriminating lover, and for one more night in this measured portion of nights I must draw my tattered old quilt around me instead of you. I wish everything were ugly so that I would not be reminded of your beauty but instead the world is tantalizingly lovely, full of things to see and do, full of silences and fine dialogue, its very disembowelment embodying the glamour and romance of an erupting volcano. And love is an appetizer that only makes enormous one's lust for life. While frustrated love induces stark famine.

Your letters of August 9 and 11 came today. You may think you are bored, but you can't be more so than I, or is it that I don't feel it or rather ignore the feeling. Because, despite everything, my morale is high and I know yours is too most of the time. Sometimes I ask myself why I am not dead with sorrow for not having you, and I get the absurd idea that since I am not suffering ghastly tortures, I am not worthy of loving you. Generally, however, I am content to make the best of this life with the deep and permanent conviction that the love remains unchanged, just as I cannot agree with those church martyrs who believed that they had to crucify themselves for the sake of Christ in order to show the depths of their faith in him.

I guess that Kathy needs some K-ration biscuit to lure out her teeth. Since she's shown all her other remarkable traits solely to you, perhaps she's saving the flashing smile for my return. I'll let her free of her bargain if I'm not home by Christmas, however, Her pictures are still doing wonderfully by me, incidentally. I've thought of giving one away to somebody like Buzz or Paul, but

can't get myself to part with any one of the whole lot.

My literary life goes on. I have just about finished Mencken's *Happy Days* and am somewhat sorry for the uncomplimentary account I gave you of it. I should break myself of the habit of judging every little scrap ever written by the standards of *War and Peace* or *Look Homeward Angel*. Incidentally the last is something that is infinitely better treatment of the same subject for my money. It could be a little happier perhaps, to soften Mencken's attitudes towards treating childhood harshly. I am also reading a fascinating book by Siegfried Sassoon called *The Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. I understand he ends up a conscientious objector post facto, you might say, and will probably like him less for it. Just as I instinctively dislike that Italian you mentioned in your letter who must be a complete idiot and worse. He would be disastrous in Italy. He is transparently that disgusting D'Annunzio type of Italian. The hopeless conceit of the man, printing a thousand copies of his crazy manifesto. Shades of the nineteenth century romanticists!

I'm going to bed and will finish this in the morning.

I got up late this morning and can't write as much more as I thought I would. It occurred to me yesterday, while thinking of something I could write you, that I never described in great detail Rome, Naples, Palermo and other places and what I did describe was filled with exasperating innuendoes and vague references. I'll write you more about those places one of these days, now that I can mention them specifically. I had a fresh egg for breakfast this morning. I had the cook make me mine sunny side up. If an army cook isn't told, he buries the egg in grease, breaks the yolk and fries it heavily on both sides, the end result approaching the dehydrated product he is always complaining about.

I must go now. All my love to you, darling, and tell Kathy that the last kiss she sent me was very, very tasty.

Always your -- Al

*Encl. Clipping from The Stars & Stripes, dated Sept. 5, 1944
with "Up Front" by Mauldin*

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 30, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling (darling) --

For some reason unknown at the moment I've elected to write my Sunday letter to you at the Bredindick's house, where I've just had breakfast , being too weary to prepare my own. Kathy is playing in the front room with their kids, affording me some unusual leisure during the day to write you. However, the time to write is counteracted by the difficulty of using their typewriter, one of those wallet size models so popular with the transient population.

Gad, it seems like days since I've written. I got a letter from you yesterday which Kathy ate before I had time to re-read it. It was dated the 13th I think, and said it was rainy. Damn it darling, I wish you didn't have to spend another winter overseas. It would be so nice to keep your feet warm for you this winter and come home from movies together through the crackling cold.

Kathy is crying in the front. I think somebody took her ball away from her. I hear a hideous pounding in the hall. It is she. Here she is.

Dear J s L

She made that J herself and also all the spaces in between. Friday I had her up to Mom's and went downtown to buy Ed a going away present. I also went over to IVI headquarters and did some work for them. Then I got back to Mom's and everybody was in great excitement -- Ed had gotten his notice to report to the University of Illinois this Monday. They will keep him in school until he is 18, maybe longer. I got him an

overnight collapsible bag for to take with him. Correction, that last is a collapsible overnight bag, not vice versa. Also, getting as superstitious as a southern mammy I had this dream Thursday night about a black dress so I went out and bought myself the very same dress Friday. It is the subject of greatest moral concern to me since I didn't need a seductive, frilly, low-necked black dress but Jesus, one can't afford to ignore such potent portents.

Dina, the elder of the Bredindick children, has been watching me type this with unabated fascination and somehow, I rather enjoy such an appreciative audience. She'd better learn the trade now anyway, since someday soon she will probably be writing or telling a bored or angry husband about a black dress she didn't need.

I'm just terribly tired for some reason or other. I can't think when I've led such an active life and it's beginning to get me down -- I'm not sleeping enough and my appetite suffers accordingly for some reason or other.

I spoke to Joan this morning and she said Tom was in the hospital with a collapsed lung. Maybe he will get a discharge too, but it sounds awful, doesn't it. Oh here is the end of the page. This is an awful letter but I love you just the same and hope you do likewise.

-- --- ---- and Kisss your JILL

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 30, 1944

Dear Love,

Must something always intrude to increase my feeling of your absence, generally acute anyhow? The BBC, of all things, has just struck up Jennie Made Her Mind Up, in a cautiously abridged version, but it was enough to recall our wanderings in California and the fact that you were always humming snatches

of it, pleasantly, though not with the best pitch in the world. But then you made great strides from your first toneless state. Witness how you outstripped Ringling's best seals after only two lessons. I must buy you a set a drums when I get back. Trumpet and drums are a good combination, or perhaps a bass fiddle. How would you like to play a bass fiddle. Then we could pick up some extra money Christmastime with the Salvation Army with Kathy passing the hat for Jesus.

Life has been full of little pleasures lately. The work has steadied down. We had a ration issue of hamburger meat today. There is enough to read. It hasn't rained since yesterday morning. One of the men got hold of a couple of films from Special Services, and with a projector Harold Adams has in his truck we put them on. One was Olson and Johnson in Ghost Chasers which I've forgotten since I saw it 36 hours ago. The other was Summer Storms, I believe, with George Sanders and Linda Darnell, and English film with English defects of make-up, dialogue, and characterizations, but with fine camera points and neat story details plus a very realistic sense of the nature of crime and the precarious balance that exists between good and evil. It has a setting in Russia at the time of the revolution but has nothing to do with it save very casual and clever points which bear on it. See it if you can, darling. What other good things have happened? I got a package of Lucky Strikes for one. I got a letter from you for another, dated Sept. 15. What a lucky devil Oliver is to have two such fine charges, even if I can't say the same for the charges. What is Oliver doing now? As long as he hasn't his wife to write, he might conceivably write me once in a while.

I finished reading Sassoon's Memoirs and find it the finest book I've ever read on war on the level it's pitched at. It's much better than Remarque, for example. I also picked up a copy of the Atlantic Monthly for August which is a very dull copy. Richard Wright has an interesting article in it on why he didn't remain a Communist. His forthcoming autobiography should be a good thing. I notice also in the mag that there are the usual number of worthless books being published. It seems that most

Americans don't read books, and the rest read trash

I think I'll stoke the fire & read some more of the world I'm
barred from. My heart is always yours.

Al

End of September 1944 letters

