



Jill and Kathy

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 2, 1945(A) V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

No time, no time at all to answer your enchanting stream of letters. One by one they come in, in military order almost, but otherwise as far from the military as any man could desire. I have been very busy on the whole, beginning a day peacefully enough, but then being swamped by some problem that begins as a snowflake and ends up as an avalanche. Then a twist or two, and it disappears. We just finished a summary court martial and the accursed has been duly given the needle. And it was a woman who did it too as was revealed in the investigation. In the country of "Cherchez la femme", you can count on her appearing anywhere. Now the man has a sentence and not even a woman who loves him because she threw him off like a worn glove when things became warm. I'm afraid telling you more now would burn the censor's ear. It's quite a riotous story, I ought to sell my services to Sam Slade of Father Brown. What a sucker this guy was. He committed the crimes for her and others the adultery with her. And the whole thing took place in the middle of a war and a howling blizzard.

Now you must be thinking again that repulsive thought: "He adapts himself so well to his environment that he doesn't mind this separation as much as I do." Well don't say it. I miss you more than you miss me, nor nothing you can say will make me

believe otherwise. Because it would be physically impossible. You have Kathy and all I have is my old sack, and dirty it is too. I hope it doesn't fall to pieces before I get home and have a chance to crawl in a tidy, inhabited bed. We were great bed-mussers, by the way, weren't we, in days of yore? Don't blush now when I can't even notice it.

This is the greatest day of the thaw I mentioned the day before yesterday. The weather has been glorious today. I threw open the window this morning and almost fainted from the fresh, spring air. It does stir the beast in one. As long as one is buried neck deep in snow drifts and otherwise strongly resembles an icicle, there isn't much of a chance for the juices in the body to stir, but with a thaw like this the dumbest, most sodden ox becomes a frantic young blood. I almost wish that it would freeze up again. It most likely will, too.

I'm glad you are going to send me more pictures of my growing-up pin-up girl. Do you think she could play an ocarina. I'm going to look for castanets and spangles for her. But it's you I love more than a man should have to stand. A deep long kiss to you, darling.

Al

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 2, 1945 (B)

Darling Jill,

You have already a V-mail from me today but that's nothing. I wish I had as strong a wrist as I have desire to talk to you & do everything else in the world with you. I repeat again my resentment that you should believe my life is anything but a desert without you. All things are short-lived and half-way. Nothing attains fullness, not even despair, for somewhere, sometime, that particular emotion took such a terrible drugging that it has never done a day's work since. I don't think it'll be too long before we'll be together again and in that sense the curve

is rising that our hopes are pinned to.

I'm sending you Mike Holmes' letter in the event you're interested. I wrote him an answer that touched the German problem in a manner that ought to make Vansittart look like a sissy. You can well imagine with what vicious satisfaction I read our monitoring news each morning. All the venom of a bad breakfast channels satisfactorily into the articles on the millions of Germans on the roads leading out of East Germany. Feel the misery in your bones, you Teutonic old men and women, you Jugend! Sweat out those miles! Discard your belongings! Fear the hot breath of the Bolsheviks on your backs! Too bad that the bloody Polish fields are too covered with snow to watch you, foot by foot. Now you can really feel part of Europe that you bragged you were solidifying spiritually. See what a fine reception you will get from your people in the West, just one, grand, united Gemeinschaft. But one's rude temper shouldn't get out of hand, should it? It would also take many pages to do full justice to the irony of the present situation.

Two of our men had a bad accident yesterday in a truck. Their brakes failed going down an icy mountain road and they tumbled over a fifteen-foot embankment. One only had a concussion and severe abrasions. The other broke both arms and a leg. The truck was demolished. We luckily got a man to the scene to stay with it overnight and prevent it from being cannibalized. Something is always happening, dammit. You spot something, get your eyes fixed on it and another thing happens somewhere else.

I would probably feel gloomier if I hadn't just eaten two soft-boiled eggs a farmer's wife gave me and wished it down with three fingers of Three Feathers. I don't suppose you would consider making me another one of those indescribably wonderful fruitcakes, darling, would you. Eating a slice of that is like having you run your fingers through my hair, and probably better for the nervous system.

2200 hours & the news.

So long, my love. Please give Kathy a big kiss for me.

Always your faithful Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 3, 1945

Darling --

I am about to embark on the excruciating experience of paying a dentist's bill that is too large, to my way of thinking. What do I do is my problem? Do I send him 25 cents in stamps or coin along with a strong note, enunciating my belief that twenty fish is too much for one filling? Do I walk into his office with humility and ask him if some mistake has been rendered? Or should I wait until his office is full of people and then burst in, crying, here's your twenty fish, you gonif, and let him have both barrels? It is indeed a problem.

I also have an apology to make to you, for not writing for the two days past. It seems that Klaus got hitched to his own true love Thursday night. It was indeed a pleasant little ceremony at Hilton chapel, with the bride in white, me in black and Fritz Neugarten, the usher, in your tuxedo and unable to contain himself every time I looked at him. Dr. Hayden read the ceremony and himself seemed unable to repress his giggles. Do you know him from school? He is a dear old man, full of progressive ideas on Religion and Marriage. Afterwards there was a magnificent blowout at the bride's magnificent apartment by the lake, with butlers, canapes and champagne cocktails, which I loathe. However somebody dug up the Scotch and this little woman had a time for herself and a time the next day, when I was unable to achieve sufficient coordination of the small muscles of the hand to write. Instead I utilized my typical peculiar hangover energy to clean the house thoroughly. By nine last night I was a dead duck and went to bed instead. This is the second big wedding I've ever been to. The first was when those people you knew in Beverly Hills got married, and that,

although large, was a pallid affair by comparison.

Fritz looked marvelous in your tux and is ever-lastingly grateful. I still don't understand how it can fit both him and you and suspect that it doesn't and won't fit you, because, as he gave me the dope Thursday night, he is 58 and weighs 138 lbs. Priscilla stayed all night with the baby, relieving me of the necessity of hiring a sitter, and was very mad that I didn't bring any of the Scotch home when I sailed in circa one. She sat up in bed and yelled, first thing off, where is it? Don't you know there's a war on, I retorted humorously.

And here is news. Mom called me and told me Buss and Mir are planning to move to Chicago, that Buss has a job teaching at school here. It must be something in the Army program because how else would he get deferred some more? They are going to have a helluva time finding a place to live. Bea and Fritz had been looking for a year for a new apartment and finally had to buy a house over on Cornell, where they are now ensconced. I'm going to start asking around for Mir but I don't know how successful I'll be, in view of the conditions dat prevail, as Jimmy Durante would say.

I got a letter from you yesterday, dated Jan. 7, a good long letter in which calves got born, Leonard White suitably damned and the virulent system of shuttling movie stars around blasted. I too agree with you there. It always makes me mad that turds like Kay Francis and Martha Raye get shuttled around all over hell and gone, with much acclaim, while ordinary citizens are doomed to their stations overseas for the duration and six months. Did the cow cry much? I often wonder if it hurts animal as much as human beings.

I did read Cakes and Ale before I sent it to you. I sort of enjoyed it because of his smooth style, which you remarked. I didn't know until afterwards, and until I had read Tess (about a month ago) that the old man in question was Thomas Hardy. Now I haven't the energy or the belief that it would be sufficiently profitable, to re-read the Maugham book to see what kinds of

licks he takes at Hardy. I do remember his considering him dull. I'm not courageous enough to call any great man dull. Hardy is depressing all right but his works are big and rugged enough to make him a great novelist.

I was so prejudiced by the sociology handed me at school that I can't go very far in an analysis of "sociological" vs. "classical" education. I do think there's a terrible lot of snobbery involved in the Adler idea of throwing the book (Aristotle and Aquinas) at students and expecting them to derive therefrom all possible rules of reason and action. On the other hand, there's so damned much bad writing in the social sciences. If learning is a process of assimilating verbalizations, how the hell can you learn anything if the verbalizations are done so badly? Oh well, we can take care of that when you come back. But take people like Leites, Shils and even Buss. Sure they know a lot and, in Buss's case, are really quite original, but a person just can't understand what they say. Their cerebrations are ponderous, their style of writing even more so. Oh well, you take it from here. I'm tired. Kathy has been fussy the past couple of days. I also. I'm going to take her out this afternoon and look for a pair of pajamas for myself at the local haberdashery. Mine are all wrapped up and I don't like girl's pajamas. Too small, even when you get them big. And it's been so cold lately, God, how cold. You'd think that winter would just be sick of itself by now and move someplace else, to the Argentine, for instance.

But maybe it's just as well the cold weather spins itself out so. For this time when the warm juicy air comes - if it comes late enough - perhaps you'll be home. For I don't see how the Germans will be able to resist much longer.

All my love to you darling, as ever.

Jill

P.S. Kathy says "Yes" and "Yah" but not to anything in particular.

Her other words are still "Bye" and "Mama".

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 4, 1945 (A) V-MAIL

Sweetheart --

Your darling musical daughter is being as nice as she possibly can be, lying on her stomach on the couch listening to the Sunday afternoon concert on the radio (I don't know what's playing because I tuned in late), beating her bare leg in time with the music. She just woke up from her nap. I should have been utilizing that time of peace to write you but instead I trotted up to Lettie's, to negotiate for our big evening together tonight -- chop suey and Summer Storm. The picture has been eluding me for the past six months, ever since you wrote me about seeing it. It completely skipped the Pic, which prefers Betty Grable extravaganzas and pretentious nonsense like Since You Went Away (all about the Home Front and the Brave Little Women, in case you don't know) to good B pictures, with heroic women like Greer Garson being brave all over the place.

DEAR DADDY HERE I AM ON MOMMY'S LAP AGAIN WRITING TO YOU. I JUST CAN'T SIT BY QUIETLY AND WATCH HER USE THIS INTERESTING AND EDUCATIONAL MACHINE WITHOUT GETTING MY TWO CENTS IN. I GUESS I AM NOT A VERY GOOD GRIL, I MEAN GIRL, AFTER ALL. HOWEVER I AM VERY INTELLIGENT. YAH. MOTHER SAYS I AM A BIG STINKER. SO IS SHE. IT IS SNOWING OUT AND IF I KEEP MY BIG YAP SHUT MAYBE SHE WILL TAKE ME OUT IN MY LITTLE SLED TO WHICH IS AFFIXED AN ELEGANT BARTLETT PEAR CRATE. Well, thank goodness the concert is on again and she has resumed her place on the couch and I can go on to making a little more sense, if not much more. Oh, I was talking about how pictures about heroic women give me a pain. Well they do. I guess that's about as far as I can ramify that thought. Except that there are a lot of complaining women and so I suppose that by contrast such ordinary frumps as Mrs. Miniver stand out.

Last night I stayed in and ironed and then, about 10:30 who should drop in but Oliver and Diane so I gave them a drink and

listened to their silly talk and went to bed around midnight after they left. I had a nice long sleep until about nine and stayed in bed after feeding Kathy all morning because there wasn't any heat and anything else to do. Now I am messy and the house is too and I wonder how I am going to pull myself together sufficiently to take her sleigh-riding. I have a vague pain in my stomach from the curse, which is also a deterrent to doing big things. But I'm really awfully lucky with my insides since it never goes beyond a vague pain and a savage disposition.

It's funny, the past month or so I've really been in quite a decent mood, no tears, no self-pity, although always the usual temper. I guess it's because of the Russian advance. Do my letters seem more cheerful? Jesus, the newsman just said Moscow says they're only 38 miles from Berlin. Can you blame me? I'm not even afraid of getting an edge on now because I just get full of good will, as at the wedding reception the other night, and not moody or insulting. My feet are cold. I think I'll go put socks on and go out and mail this. What I really need, more than Russian victories or you or a steak dinner at this point is Kotex.

This is a silly letter. But I love you anyway. A million kisses.

Jill

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 4, 1945 (B)

Darling Al --

I'm bending myself inside out leaning over the back of a chair (too busy to sit down as Leslie King always claimed) re-reading your letters from Jan. I got four today, the 17th, the magnificent one of the 18th, employing all artistic media to lay me low, the 22nd and 26th. I had to re-read all your letters of the past three weeks to get them into proper context, to discover why you hadn't heard from me for such a long jump (if any reason existed aside from delayed mails and the possibility -- though

I'm honestly not sure -- that I did write you less than average on account of the holiday. But that is only a possibility not a probability. When the mails are all in you can tell me then) ... and to follow your long train of agony through those mail-less days, the agony consisting exclusively, not in doubt of my love, but in the pain of creating sufficiently lethal barbs to hurl my way. Offhand I can't make a rebuttal worthy of the art you lavished on me, although never let it be said that I haven't been humorous on my good days.

Unfortunately I can't read music but it doesn't look like our lick, the only music we have in common. Maybe I will take it down to Lyon and Healy and, under pretext of buying or planning to buy a Stineway's Little Darling, will dash it off. I mean I can't read music by sight. I can with a piano, about three notes anyway. What do I mean? I guess I mean I can't sing by sight.

I said something funny today, in fact. Kathy was on her way to the bureau to pull everything out and I got there first and turned her away, saying, "Ha, Kathy, I beat you to the drawer."

Another sample of this rare wit, which I am at a loss now (being tired and hungry) to employ relevantly in my defense: Kathy puts her stocking on her head and I say, "Kathy, if that slips you are liable to get a sock on the jaw." Haw. It is jokes of this genre that put marriages of any genre on the fritz.

Feeling in such a card-ish vein as I do now (despite being hungry, tired, cold and full of sulfa, having made one more routine visit to the doc tonight) it is hard for me to believe what dreary letters those Christmas ones must have been, although I can imagine, on second thought, that they were. It was a lousy Christmas and let's say no more about it. I suppose if I'd had the sense to get treated then for sinuses I would have sounded a little better, though not much. Because probably Kathy wouldn't have been catching things from me and vice versa. That wouldn't have cleared the military much, however. But not to entirely escape the various moods of those days, I obeyed your injunction to go look at myself, and upon examination of

my eyes I found them blue, bonny, burning, bilious and bifocaled, just as you predicted. They were also fierce, flashing, fun-loving, fudge-loving and oh well, one can go too far.

I am getting just like you, with probably as much reason of a different sort. All the time I'm hungry. Yesterday I went out and got shrimp chop suey for Lettie and I to eat before we waffed to the movies, and I couldn't contain myself till dinner and had to eat a cheese sandwich an hour before. Then, after the movie which was very good, Summer Storm, naturally because you had recommended it, I had soup and a sandwich. This afternoon, after a fair lunch, Lettie and I had a BarBQ and coffee and fudge sundaes around five thirty and now it is nine and I am hungry again. I think it has something to do with sex, don't you?

That was a good movie. I can't find your letter telling about it, however. I wonder what you thought wrong with it. I can't think of anything but there must have been. It was a little slow I guess.

Today I cleaned the house. It's an awful job with Kathy. She keeps interrupting me and then, when I let her out of bed, she keeps rooting up things and then doorbells ring -- usually the milkman and the mailman -- and I wander aimlessly from room to room with a pail full of dirty water, undecided where to start first. No matter where I start, two minutes later I am back in the bathroom putting hand lotion on, and four minutes later in the kitchen, squeezing juice for Kathy or eating a sustaining bite myself. It's dull. Will you get me a maid after the war? Let's buy one and keep her chained to the kitchen table and lash her every morning instead of giving her breakfast.

Who says Kathy has a good nature (your gratuitous assumption of Jan. 22). She has a lousy nature, stubborn, aggressive, loudmouthed and impossible to train. She is also bright, fun-loving and original, which sort of make up for her faults. But you were the one who wanted a child with a mind of its own and you can't expect that and evenness of temper too.

She's so damned independent she won't even consider taking my hand when she walks. She just pushes it away or lets out a bellow, depending on how sweet she is feeling. And you try toilet-training or taking the bottle away from her. She will only drink milk out of a glass if I'm drinking the milk out of my glass, and only then if she thinks I want to drink the milk pretty badly. I put her on the can a couple of times today but she yelled after a while and promptly did it on the floor after I let her off.

I think I'll write more of this tomorrow. My foot is going to sleep. And I shall follow it shortly. I love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 4, 1945

My Darling,

It's a very quiet afternoon and I don't know what to make of it. The weather is dirty, chilly winds and rain, the remnants of the great snows still here and there, or wherever the careless boot treads - then the helmet rolls down the street and one is gazing with a certain lack of calm at the glowering sky. The arctic shoe-pacs are all rubber and slippery as the devil. I just had one of those rigorous, humorous arguments with the Madame downstairs that the Latins get so much fun out of. She was berating me because I wouldn't give them a couple of gallons of gas to make an essential trip to some town. It seems that the Germans stole all the work-horses in these parts before retreating, and now the government is giving a horse sale at this town. Several of the farmers want to go together to replenish the livestock herd. They have a car but no gas. But we are forbidden to give gas out under any circumstances to civilians. They are supposed to have an allotment which is probably sufficient to get the sous-préfet around in his car but no more. I fully sympathize with the vital need for work horses, but gasoline is something that is dangerous in more ways than one. There is

so much stealing of it going on, and just a lot of mistaken generosity on the part of soldiers who bleed for the obvious justice of so many cases. However, I can give them a lift in a vehicle going that way and may do so. Of course, the lady told numerous incidents in which soldiers sold or gave away gas and that makes it harder on anyone who wants to preserve a semblance of honesty. I solved that particular rhetorical dilemma by telling her to find some such soldier and get it from him.

The simple things really count in this war. It is won less by romantic strategy than by gasoline, guts, and organization. Our army ought to be trained better on the conservation of gasoline and materiel than it is. If Gen. Patton's Army hadn't cooked on gas in Normandy they might have gone farther into Germany. Of course, no one ever thought they'd have to get there so fast. We had the same trouble.

Back to my landlady, I told her I was going away for a couple of days and gave her my field jacket to wash. Then she gave me a piece of pie and I came over to write this letter.

This won't get to you in time, but a happy birthday to you, too (cf. your letter of Dec. 30). Many, many kisses and a solemn promise to buy you the best supper in Chicago to compensate for nothing now. I bought a bond in your name and sent it to you, not as a birthday present, but as a matter of course in solving the problem of my jingling pockets. But if you feel like spending a small fortune on your birthday you'll have a rising vote of acclamation from me.

Incidentally, when I last saw George Peck he was doing very nicely in Rome and showed no signs of undertaking anything more difficult than crossing the Tiber on a sturdy stone bridge. Beware, again, of the Christinian flight of fancy. It's entirely possible, but then again.

I've long been puzzled as to how to get rid of all those lovely young things that clutter up our house upon my return. It struck

me just now that I only need return with a pack of these wolves who haven't spoken English to a woman in a couple of years. That'll fix them in a hurry and we will be left alone.

Heycock sent me a letter from the Second Army which got to me yesterday. He had a daughter born last September. Arthur Galsworthy, whom you may remember from Africa, Sicily and the first part of the Italian campaign, received a son last Dec. 22, and is now a Lt. Col. He went up very fast, exactly the background that produces results among the English - Eton or something, Oxford or something, the Colonial Office and gentle suavity cultivated beyond imagination, plus the very preciseness so valuable in staff work.

He always looked upon Lt. Col. MacFarlane as an incompetent upstart. I would relish witnessing the two together now that the ranks are equal.

My hands feel very cold for some reason. It's probably because my heart is so full while I'm writing to you. I wouldn't like to search out all of the implications of that statement. I've never been a great one for translating the feelings of love into a pseudo-organismal system. Rather a plain unexaggerated statement that this life is a great bore without you, coupled with the angry wish that it would get on with itself, pass away, hurry along, vanish. What a nuisance & what a pain, all this waiting, hoping and longing. It's taken longer than we ever thought, but we've developed more patience than we ever thought ourselves capable of having too.

So - one of these days, I'll be yours in a much more meaningful way than these comic scratchings of a letter can reveal.

AI

[Little square design with a caption: you do not miss ME more than I miss YOU!!!

stick figures and NO NO YES]

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 6, 1945 V-MAIL

Al darling --

Another dank February day. This weather is really making me fall apart -- as soon as I get outside I start vibrating like the viscera of a harpsichord. It isn't really cold either. I must just be tired nervous and etc. The indecision is getting me down too. I want to get to the coast but I still haven't got a train reservation and don't want to take the plane one I have next week because plane travel is so uncertain. I guess I'll go in March. By then something should happen and then Mir can take my apartment until she finds one of her own. Eddy has a furlough in March too and so Mom is convinced by no means of logic, certainly, that you will get one too. In the first place I told her testily, `Al gets leaves, not furloughs... And in the second place, all this mental telepathic optimism bothers me. I too have days in which the air seems positively to vibrate with portents of good things -- I think yesterday was one of those days -- and when it gets to be about ten-thirty PM and still nothing has happened, except that maybe somebody sold me a box of Kleenex, I get even madder and more disgruntled than before.

I didn't do much today except scrub part of the floor and ended up by waxing myself into the phone closet, where I had to spend 20 minutes on the phone until the wax dried. Then in the afternoon I took Kathy over to Bea's house on Cornell. It's a huge old-fashioned 3-story job with all manner of fancy modern fittings inside. They're going to have to have about sixteen children to fill it up. But such are the conditions that prevail. We really have to build our own house some day. After viewing the housing in which all our contemporaries dwell I have all sorts of ideas for making a home a house. Like having the heating units in the floors. Do you know why people have rugs? So as to keep their feet warm. But rugs are terribly dirty and unsanitary. Ergo make the floors warm and then put down linoleum or some good-looking composition that's easy to keep clean. I also don't think houses should ever have more than two stories, and that includes the basement. As one who has fallen down more

basement stairs than I'd care tell, I'm all in favor of eliminating the basement permanently. Anyway if you have a basement you're inclined to install a rumpus room in same, and what could be worse than a room of the name and description, unless it be a can of Spam? Me, I'm going to have everything in the kitchen, including the ping-pong table, which will be in the shape of my spleen. I have not yet abandoned my now famous decorating project for Personalized Furniture, i.e., kidney-shaped dressing tables in the shape of the owner's own kidney, heart-shaped hassocks, etc. We're not going to have any woodwork or moldings or sills in the house of the future either. Everything has to be flush with everything else (and so will the owners, I presume) so as to eliminate dust catching surfaces. In fact, there won't be any dust because there will be great air conditioning devices, capable of sucking all impurities out of the air, including small children and dogs. Oh yesterday I did a good deed. The great Doberman next door escaped from his yard -- some harassed neighbor probably opened the gate and then got away in his rocket ship -- and I found him idling in front of our door, barking and goosing at passers-by. Running in front of him, with many a shout of ee and ah (since I am one of his most favorite goosees) I lured him into the front door of his house, where his owner, with tears of gratitude in his wee eyes, thanked me and invited me to step in and look at his photographs. I declined the honor with an audible yawn. God save me from camera enthusiasts. That dog, though, is a monster. He's bigger than hell and has a voice like a foghorn and barks agonizingly at the slightest provocation. Everybody is afraid of him and he in turn is afraid of everybody and furthermore takes out his nervousness in the vile habit before described. Yet the owner, a pudgy little man with no small neurosis himself, adores the dog, attributing to him all the virtues of Rin Tin Tin and Lassie combined. He keeps sending him out to trainers and the dog keeps coming back, still twitching, barking and goosing. Cooney may be neurotic but at least he looks like a 4-F.

The next morning -- I was overcome with the tedium of my own

utterances so I went to bed, to be further overcome by the tedium of Thomas Hardy's. He sure is a hard man stylistically speaking. However after the first 100 pages I expect to be carried along by the sheer enchantment of the plot. Hardy always manages to kill off most of his characters by the end of a novel, or at the very least, leaves them in utter despair. And speaking of despair, Kathy is yelling.

Well, I fed her and myself and put her to bed and now have a few moments to write in peace. I started to defrost the icebox in my desultory way so I have to get back to that ultimately. Not that there's much difference between the temperature within and without the box. It's snowing out now and must be pretty cold. I'm glad when it snows, however. Chicago is so damned ugly in the winter except for these few scant days of white glory. I hope we won't have to live in the city for long after you come back. Wouldn't it be nice to live among snowy hills instead? And ski out the back door. We'll both have to get skis when you come back. Mine aren't any good, at least, I'm no good on them because they're too long and tricky.

I think I'll go to the movies tonight again. Mac is coming over for dinner so I'll have company.

I've been trying to point out to Kathy the lovely utility of using a john seat to john on but she doesn't seem to catch on. It's awfully hard to tell how much she does understand. I don't see how I'll be able to train her until she does understand all manner of verbalizations because the method most people use to train children -- popping them on the can at the time you think they're going to go doesn't work with her. Being such an original type child she picks a different time every day to do. Oh well, it's not a very serious problem because I still have diaper service.

The news mainly is good -- reports have just come in that the Russians have crossed the Oder east of Berlin in strength. I can't believe, however, that the war will be over as soon as people think because it will take until spring for our Armies to really get going. Meanwhile we are being just as disgusting as

ever, stalling around with a manpower act. Don't you think?

Here it is the end and I still love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 8, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

It is a sad fate to have those free few hours now but to not have you along with me to turn them into really perfect things. I have just taken a long afternoon nap on a fine bed, the likes of which should be shared with you. The room resembles strikingly our room at the Biltmore that time. I would only need to hear the sound of irresponsible humming in the shower and a thunderous knocking at the door to complete the illusion. This morning I walked many miles, it seemed. I looked everywhere for something you might like but wasn't satisfied with anything. Anything made of cloth is out - terribly expensive & very bad material. Odd knick-knacks can be had but none really French - mostly Chinese, African, etc. & we can go there to those places for them. Books wouldn't do well for you. A little doll for Kathy was marked at \$25. Perfumes of any consequence I couldn't find. I looked far & wide for paintings but didn't discover any one I thought you'd like. The only thing would be to send myself, & the base censor wouldn't pass me. Martin lives down the hall. We saw a show last night. I've met several other old friends here too, Waples of the U. of C. among them.

I love you madly, darling.

Al

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 9, 1945

Dearest Jill,

I just got back from a long, tiring & cold drive and found several fairly late letters waiting for me from you. I can't possibly write any sort of a letter now, since I have several things to do right away and also have such a bad cold that I would like to go to bed and forget it. Also to forget that we are still far apart and that sometimes letters just make one feel more melancholy & lonesome. At any rate, thanks for your very amusing accounts of beer bottle disposal and child development and always my thanks that you love me and say so at the slightest opportunity. I hope I do too and say it as convincingly. I'm glad you're going ahead to have pictures taken of Kathy even if it does expose you to temptation in your own home, "live perilously" said old Teddy R., the silly ass. You seem singularly unaffected by my letter setting forth the arguments against going to California. Nor did I expect much else. Periodically, you get the feeling that if you don't see dear Paul immediately you'll probably never see him again.

I got a decent letter from Walter in my mail too. He said he was going to pass by Chicago and see you en route, but evidently he didn't make it, since your later letters didn't mention it.

I got a package from Paul & Ann too, full of salami, popcorn and waxed eggs. At least I think they're waxed hard-boiled eggs. I've never seen anything like it before. The best part of the gift was a fine picture of little Paul who looks like a wonderful child.

I'll fold up this letter now & set up my bed. It's good to get home to the company in many ways. Next to you, it's where I feel most at home. It has its trials and crises but everyone is in the same boat together. But that "next" is completely inadequate to measure the immensity of space between the two, you & the company.

You said you got my Xmas pictures. I remarked on how angelic the men looked myself. I can't understand it.

Good night, darling,

Always your

Al

THE Germans of General Blaskowitz, led by the XIII SS Corps, penetrate ten miles through the Saverne Gap and are stopped; his XC Corps cracks the American lines at Bitche, and the Americans begin to withdraw to a pre-determined position next day. Now it is proposed to abandon Strasbourg because our lines are too long. The Captain and his Team hate the very idea. Strasbourg is practically the heart of Europe, for Europeans of culture an amiable marriage of what is good between Paris and Berlin. The orders are handed down, to evacuate -- it's what the technical manuals of strategy seem to dictate. Even so, it seems absurd. The Team sends its amplifying equipment into the streets of Strasbourg telling the people to evacuate the City if they have anything to fear from a return of the enemy. An ignominious mission. From street upon street families begin to move out by truck, cart, bicycle, motorcycles and on foot. De Gaulle is furious, the Team learns from its French Army contacts. The French Army, to hear them talk, is on the verge of telling General Patch to go to hell, and move in to replace the Americans. It would be little less than a mutiny. The Captain would agree; certainly he would have done his best to justify them. De Gaulle finally prevails with Churchill and the White House. General Devers has to reverse himself and order the City held at all costs. The Captain's trucks are delighted to return along the roads leading out of the city telling the people that the City will be defended and that they may return. All of them are happy, and practically all turn back.

The attack makes some progress. Without being informed they would have been lucky to get away with their skins. A couple of battalions are trapped and lost. Some of the new infantry regiments take a beating. Unit affiliations and commands are shifted around like shuffling card decks. He is bewildered. Is this something new? It has gone on and will go on for the rest of the war, he believes. Somebody

upstairs looks at his maps and reports and decides the 398th Infantry battalion ought to be with the 46th division while the 14th special Recce Force Baker should be broken up into three components and sent to relieve the 14th, 779th and 33rd at Grundheim, Gonifsheim, and Weldburg. (I should quote from records instead of using these fictitious names.) In fact most of what is considered news is just this shifting of units around. He wonders how unit loyalty can be built, and experienced collaboration can take place.

What are the Germans up to? They have had almost no effect in relieving the pressure to wipe out the Ardennes bulge, though they have created a Bitche Bulge and it takes quite a long time for the Seventh Army at its leisure to move in upon this. Once the main line of resistance hardens, the propaganda to the Germans increases, with several themes: what's the use, you are not supermen but are being asked to do the impossible, you know now what you are up against, you never had enough backing for an attack, etc. Consideration is given other themes but in the face of obvious contrary directives, they cannot be used: "Surrender to us rather than to the Soviet Communists!" "Home-coming or Siberia Forever?!" "We observe all treaty obligations for fair and decent treatment of prisoners and civilians, unlike the Bolshevists." They would have been highly effective. But without the personal O.K. of the messages by Joseph Stalin himself, they would be also very divisive and prejudicial to post-war cooperation with the Soviet Union. (Or so it seemed to the psychological warriors then.)

The themes listed above that were actually used are for a stable front; strangely, propaganda against attacking and advancing troops is not prepared or even considered. There has never been such. One would excuse this by saying that there never has been a use for it, but here was a case and the Ardennes attack was another. Aside from the confusion of being under attack, and apart from the feeling of shame for considering that we might be retreating, there is the belief that the enemy is immune to propaganda when on the offensive, which in turn comes from the improper notion that the effects of propaganda are limited to cases of crushed morale. Actually the theory of propaganda holds that everyone is vulnerable under all conditions to symbolic manipulation. Here this most experienced of outfits had not, although

given adequate notice of an impending attack, prepared messages to be left behind by the thousands in all the positions that were being evacuated. What to tell them: Go slow, everything else is collapsing, your family needs you, you are facing unlimited artillery and mortar fire, panzer divisions just waiting to suck you in, land mines and booby traps by the thousands, we have been prepared (citing early HQ warnings), with the front loosening up take the occasion to turn yourself in (German prisoners are being kept now in and near Germany): such arguments would have been effective and saved lives and brought in prisoners.

The Americans are not as smart as they pretend to be, and no one higher up has had any experience or paid any attention to such matters. No one and not themselves certainly are asking penetrating questions. There is little concern for recovering immediately the lost ground. The Germans are over-extended, underequipped, undermanned, and can go nowhere, but pretend to be holding their insignificant gains. At Army Headquarters, the Joke makes the rounds that "The Bitche Bulge has become the Patch Pocket." The German Home authorities are desperate "*Sieg oder Sibirien!*" they paint on the walls. The Death Camps are going full blast, hundreds of thousands of people are being put to death, but the Captain's company does not know this. Death is raining from the skies upon German cities, also. The Russians are encircling and capturing more and more prisoners, and these have a shorter life span on the average of, say, twenty years, after surrender. The Captain's life is not uncomfortable even in the middle of the winter and at the front. Or have his standards been properly lowered by the military life? He has the fine rubber felt-lined boots that his toes swim around in. The food is getting better as the supplies pile up excessively.

Sex, too, peeks into one's life. Lt. Wallenberg casually mentions to the Captain that his landlady, a stocky hearty woman -- is he in with her, no beauty she, but then no beauty he? -- has a sister whom the Captain does not know and she wants to make love to him. Is she pretty? Well, not bad. Where do I meet her? At my landlady's. When? When you wish. Two days later. She walks down the narrow steps from the second floor. She is a peasant-plain, perfectly built, tight-bodied woman, several little lines encroaching upon her uncreamed

face, a thin-lipped tense smile: appearing to say, here I am, I offer nothing except I want you to make love to me. But a second visit is expected. Not at all, says the Captain. (He makes up his mind fast, and with his mind, his extremities.) Oh, but she must excuse herself. Her small son just broke his arm, and she cannot be wanton under the circumstances. They make another engagement. In the little room upstairs. She is stiff-backed. He is hasty. Perhaps she is happy. Perhaps she wants a clever, pretty baby. When they say good-bye, it is not to meet again. The troop moves on, and he does not feel like returning the compliment.

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 10, 1945 V-MAIL

Sweetheart --

I feel like a dog in the manger, anyway, a dog. It seems that about once a week, time suddenly gets up and leaves me, and lo, a couple of days rush by without my writing you. Since Wednesday night, when I last wrote, life has been a great rat race. At the time Mac and I went to the movies and saw a rather good one, When Strangers Marry, about murder naturally, full of what the manager of the Hyde Park calls German expressionistic technique. You know, a scream merges into the whistle of a train etc. etc. Oh, then She stayed overnight, and Thursday I did a monumental wash and as soon as I finished and was combing the last trace of starch out of my hair then Dieter Dux strolled in. I never seen him and why he should have picked Thursday afternoon to call upon me is still a mystery. But we took a walk with Kathy down to the lake and chatted about people we knew in common and not much else. Then that night I had good intentions to write you and go to bed but Lettie's husband was in and she was having a small party so I weakly succumbed. Not much, just air corps enlisted men and their wives and what could be duller. But yesterday I was so tired I just collected the laundry and ironed and went to bed and here it is Saturday, and I'm all full of excuses and penitence. Oh yes, during that time the phone was ringing merrily, miscellaneous

girl friends kept dropping in and the radio was on. Tonight I am going to the Chez Paris for dinner with Klaus and his wife and a little man from Breslau also (Klaus is from Breslau and I often think he should have stayed there). But again I exhibit my inimitable weakness of being unable to pass up an invitation out, although one can hardly blame me in this case, dinner at the Chez Paris being somewhat superior to hamburger chez De Grazia. I cannot account for this sudden and rather unwelcome surge in my social life, because although I like going out as well as the next one, I don't like it all getting bunched up. Maybe my reputation as a wit is the reason -- as I told you before I am turning into a great card, possibly as an exhibitionistic compensation for the sexiness I cannot with decorum exhibit in your absence. Which is another reason for your coming home soon (that and the sleeping and the too-many people), because nothing is worse than a female card, unless it be a male one.

I got a real old letter from you today, Jan. 12.. Maybe it was mis-dated because somehow it sounded more recent. I hope you like The Way of All Flesh. It's one of my favorites. Jeepers, I don't really think you try to influence me intellectually and anyway I like it (A Woman's Reasoning). I wish you were around to influence me, beat me, kiss me and feed me. I have a stiff aversion to food these days, a kind of somatic hangover (my own concept) as the result of eating too much last week. And chocolate milk shakes. I've had one every day this week. Kathy and I share them. She knows how to drink from a straw and we have races. She also can climb stairs up (not down) and sit down in mud puddles. Her snow suit is not a pretty thing, as the war correspondents would say. (As the armored columns of Yank doughboys rolled in on her shell-pocked roads today, St. Vith was not a pretty thing.)

I have a lot more to tell you but I think I will save it for tomorrow, since I must get to brushing my hair so that it will hang lank and lovely into my 3.50 bowl of soup tonight.

Boy do I love you. Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 10, 1945

My only darling,

The best sympathy is that of mutual suffering, and so I have contracted a cold which is at least as bad as yours and Kathy's put together. I sniffled through all your correspondence of the last two weeks this morning in my room, whilst I casually and dully flipped aspirins into my mouth and tended the fire. I think I am better this evening than I was this morning, though the full import of today's restorative rituals will only become evident on the morn. I took a nap this afternoon also and in consequence, the day passed swiftly and more tolerably. Your letters, aforementioned, were a superb lot, full of sublime passages and snapping wit where they counted while the main running descriptions of tua vita con la piccola are simply beyond the just desserts of any man even though he love you as much as I do. I must admit, however, that I can't think of any better way to exhibit your talents. Appreciation of a superficial talent comes easily and therefore is cheap, but a complex talent, like a complex science, demands a long apprenticeship in appreciation. That is why, if a love has any depth at all, it should not diminish ever. And it becomes impossible to fall out of love, because to do so robs one of the person who best understands oneself, and all judgments of him are made by secondary standards. To speak of the sexual act as the consummation of love is absurd. It is only the introduction into one facet of another person's character, though by such a sneering definition I realize I am hurting the significance of it socially and therefore and also psychologically.

Before a glint enters my eye and I go off the path I was on originally, I want to make more specific references to some of your remarks. Probably because you are so intelligent for a girl with such a body, you catch on easily to 'types' I create only weakly with a pen, as for example Oscar Dystal, and states of mind which are generally only hinted at. For a girl surrounded by 4Fs bobby-sockers and garrison soldiers, your rapport with my environment is remarkable. When I think how trite and

ghastly a home front civilian can become, I am amazed that I am so lucky to have you. One shouldn't take such a business for granted. How could I know that you would be the nicest correspondent I could desire when that was exactly what I needed for a couple of the most dismal years of my life. What connection has this miracle with that of the physical attractiveness you have for me? The immensity of the fortune is baffling. To half-baked observers it must never occur that we could still really be in love after so many months of this. Over here where we have many examples of it, we know that it is true, but I'm sure that those who have avoided implicating themselves in the world-war are incredulous and may believe you are putting on a front about loving me.

Your comments on detective stories have my blessings and cheers, and I whistled loudly when you put the Steinbecks in their places with the taking down of their pants in public in order to see everyone blush.

You know I was to Paris again for two days or so. We set out before dawn one day and were tooling along the highway at a great rate by the time the sun came up. The weather wasn't too cold and the inside of the command car was comfortable. We arrived in time for a late lunch which was very good and well served. Our people have a very nice set-up there. In the first days, we used to holler bloody murder because we were treated so rudely when we went in and so the general gave orders all around that we were to be granted a number of indulgements. I got one room and Tom Crowell, who was along, another. My room was splendid, a fine comfortable bed and a great private bath. I almost was able to swim in it, but I contented myself mainly with lying back with my nose sticking out and feeling wonderful. There was a fine bed lamp and the New Yorker was read properly thereunder. What unimaginable luxury. They had hot water practically always, too. In three minutes, one could draw a steaming tub two feet deep and the length of the human body.

I already told you that I attempted vigorously to do some

shopping, but without success. The only thing I bought in Paris was a book I found in a small bookstore on Rue de la Seine which contained short biographies of the representatives of the French Parliament in the middle of the last century. Someday it will make a footnote in my study of representation. The lady who kept the store must have been quite astonished at selling a book that probably had an appeal to a dozen people in the world. She had so many prettier and more general books around that she could reasonably more expect to sell. I looked for a painting to buy you but honestly I saw nothing at any price that you would like or that I liked, almost the same thing. I was perfectly willing to concede a point and get something only you would like. I saw one exhibit of a man named Kisling, recently deceased, and thought his stuff ought to have died with him instead of being foisted on the public. How naturalism loves to excuse itself for sloppiness by calling it more real. This man had an obsession for tiny chins and giant eyes and was bent on portraying humanity as such. Despite his super-ocularity, the eyes had only the character of a mature rabbit's. Although he perhaps did not realize it, this probably was connected with the lack of chin. Other shops had large paintings in abundance, making up with their size for the inadequacy of the interpretation and the lack of attention to detail. If you can get Kathy off her little butt, avoid the state laws on the subject, and put her to work with a large brush and canvas, we can really do business here in Paris.

I'm going to get a couple of more aspirins now. If you could only kiss me I would be instantly well. All my love, dear Jill.

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 11, 1945

My sweetheart

Sunday

Alone at last on another perfect Sunday afternoon (as perfect

as any Sunday spent outside the circle of your arms) with the snow softly falling outside and the symphony on the radio. Kathy is meditating her sins in the bedroom. She awoke a few minutes ago in a bawling fit so I put her back to bed after some preliminary rocking and cooing. For the first time in days I have a few hours ahead where nobody shall disturb me (I hope). I had my long Sunday conversation with Mom and Ed (who is in) on the phone and my inevitable surprise Sunday caller. And today it was really a surprise. Who should call me at the crack of dawn but my old and beloved friend from Smith (and Philadelphia, you may recall) Betty Hannah Hoffman. She was in town between trains and taxied out here and we spent a hurried half-hour together. She was on her way to S. F. on an assignment for the Ladies Home Journal on which she is still sweating out her excellent brain and person.

And last night was the Chez Paris. It wasn't much fun, but worth going to a place like that once in a decade just to remember how awful big night clubs are and the people that go there -- and worse yet, the floor show. And the food. We had a martini made with Cuban gin which is just like synthetic shellac and a bad expensive roast beef dinner and stayed for the first floor show and then left. It was early still, about ten thirty, so we dropped in on the tail end of a Russian movie at the World Playhouse. It was called Two Soldiers and dealt unsteadily with the siege of Leningrad. The heroine was quite awful, several hundred notches below The Girl from Leningrad in appearance -- it goes without saying that the comrades and their ladies can't act. Then we dropped Klaus's friend off and they brought me home at the respectable hour of midnight. Strange coincidence was that who should be sitting at the next table from us at the Chez Paris but Dystal. I spoke to him a bit and he asked me to send you his regards. He didn't say anything about the OWI and I didn't ask him. He was with two women and I spent a pleasant evening trying to figure out which one was his wife. I don't think he had much trouble figuring out my status since, between the food and the floor show, I looked unhappy enough to be the prototype of the languishing war wife. There was this man Zero

Mostel who has been given a great deal of publicity as a new comic but I thought he smelled.

Damn it, Diane and Oliver just dropped over and interrupted the sweet succession of my thoughts. Bill and Priscilla and perhaps Laura (who now works directly for Dystal and what a small smelly world it is) are coming over in an hour too. Laura is moving permanently to LA to take over Coronet's West Coast office. And now finally, after the most complicated maneuvering, I too have a ticket to the coast, joining the general exodus. It's for March 9 on the slow train (but not the Challenger which is awful) to San Francisco. Fritz got me the reservation and I really think I have made up my mind finally and for all time to go. I might as well. The trip itself will be gruesome -- we only have a lower berth between us -- but once we get there, life should be very pleasant in Paul and Ann's new apartment and Ann just wrote that we'll be able to take off three or four days to go skiing, leaving the children with her folks. That I would like fine. The only thing that gives me pause is if you were to come in on short notice. Still and all, it's easier to pick up train reservations at the last moment than to get them in advance (I wanted to get the Westbound ones well in advance for the very reason of giving you ample notice as to my arrival and departure). So if, after March 9, there looks to be any chance of your getting leave, you'd better cable me pronto and I'd come back to Chicago and wait there for you. Mir can have the apartment while I'm gone. She's going to have a tough enough time finding one of her own as it is. I don't know how long I'll stay of course - - that depends on a variety of factors -- whether you come home, how ell I like it, when I can get a reservation back.

Kathy climbed up on the couch this morning, completing the cycle since she has long been able to climb down. I took her out before lunch because it was really beautiful then, sunny and not snowing, and allowed her to play with four other little girls, the youngest of which was two and the oldest four. They all love her very much and are constantly bunching up around her and kissing her. The two-year-old knocked her down in one of these excesses of emotion but Kathy didn't cry. However, she did

when the two-year-old, henceforth to be known as Joanie, tipped the toy baby buggy belonging to one of them. It made an awful racket and by some process of memory or identification (since Kathy knows well what it's like to be in a tipped baby buggy) Kathy viewed the scene with alarum and commenced to bawl mightily. Then I had to take her in the house. She doesn't exactly play with these children. She just follows them around in a desultory fashion, watching them and then going off by herself to stamp her big rubber-booted feet in the puddles. She likes to bend over and put her hands in the water too and then view them uneasily. It's almost impossible to keep mittens on her. She's just about as big as Joanie and they are indistinguishable from the rear in their blue snowsuits, but the older child naturally can handle herself better. I like standing around watching the children very much. I guess it fits in with what you were always saying was my bug's eye view of the world. I like Kathy very much too (aside from being hopelessly infatuated with her because she is your and my child). She is a good companion and understands a lot.

Kathy is at large again and I'm afraid there won't be much peace left to write you in. In fact she's yammering now to get on my lap. I love you, my darling, and always will.

[in pencil] Your

Jill

(I can't find my pen again)

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 11, 1945 V-MAIL

Jill, my Love,

My latest Christmas package arrived today, a conglomeration of things from the block with a card signed by two parties named English. I'm sure you weren't consulted in the selection of the gifts because some extraordinary things flowed and fell

out. I suppose it is hard for many civilians to realize that the army furnishes us with things like toothbrushes, vienna sausage, tooth powder, hard candy, and joke books but that it does, and that's about all it furnishes us with. However, one is always happy to get a package and everyone likes to hang around while it is being opened. Now I must write a note to my pals - they called me "Al", who are they? - and thank them for the kindness and the trouble they went through. While I'm on this subject, did the boys ever receive those two German knapsacks I sent them a long time ago? I think I shall send Ed a couple of pairs of GI shoes and some other GU clothing that is surplus for me and that he probably would appreciate in his present condition of servitude. I wish I could send you my P38 automatic which would be a much more effective weapon than the empty one you possess, although sometimes I feel positive that the only result would be that some fine morning when you did not promptly produce Kathryn's orange juice for her she would blow your head off, and I wouldn't care for that one bit. So perhaps it is better that you have only a hollow tube to wave at threatening apparitions - or waver at -, and trust to luck and a good stiff knee to the groin. A knotted clout is also recommended.

I have set up the picture of little Paul next to my bed and find that he is one of the most beautiful and charming looking little boy I have ever seen. We have certainly a fine trio of youngsters from coast to coast. I guess we'll have to do a really superb job on our own boys to come to put them in the running against our two nephews.

My bad cold took a terrific beating last night and is well on its way out. The snow has practically disappeared for the nonce in these parts and is replaced by cold rain every now and then during the day. I have finished reading Sam Butler's Way of All Flesh and agrees with you so much as to suggest servialism. It is very fine. Incidentally, there are remarkable similarities between Somerset Maugham's life and works and the setting and attitudes in The Way, cf. New Yorker profile on former, Part II. For your info, incidentally, lots of soldiers read lots unless

stationed at a base in a city or engaged in actual fighting or keeping warm and alive.

I'm getting a little impatient again with our lack of movement. I don't think it'll be long before it's all over here and you and I will have the warm earth and sun to ourselves, but time seems longer when we aren't forging ahead with the others.

Many kisses to Kathryn and you, darling.

All my love for always,

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 12, 1945

Darling Al --

A day finally spent at peace with the world. No visitors, no phone calls (outgoing or incoming), no nothing except a great spate of cleaning after which my back is bent into the shape of a gothic S, whatever that is. All in all, a perfect day for meditating on the great news that is coming in of the three-power conference in the Crimea. I think the thing that impressed me the most was the fact that France will be included in the future conferences and also in the occupation of Germany. I don't know why exactly but I think that's a portent, a good one, for the future of democracy. Perhaps because France won back her freedom on the strength and free will of the masses -- and that in itself is a sort of definition of democracy. And then there is the negative side -- that those among the Allies who distrust democracy also distrust a strong France and a strong Russia. But we shall have both and it is a good thing. I haven't heard or seen any more than what's come over the radio but the peace terms for Germany sound suitably harsh.

Maybe I will be in San Francisco in April when the Allies will meet again. I'll send Kathy over to beg for Uncle Joe's

autograph and perhaps he will take her on his lap, like J. P. Morgan's midget, and croon her a Rooshian lullaby that will resound through all history. And perhaps not.

I went to the movies last night with Priscilla and Bill. It was an opus called The Woman in the Window, a melodrama of murder, and it smelled, despite my prejudice in favor of the genre. But it was an early feature and I was home by nine, so no great harm was done. Today Kathy and I spent rather miserably doing the afore-mentioned hard cleaning, with poor Kathy getting in the way all the time. We also spent it pennilessly, it being Lincoln's birthday, a fact I was not apprised of until I arrived in front of the bank, expecting to draw out a satchelful and walking away with three cents jingling in my jeans instead. I bought a roll and sighed philosophically.

I also got a leetle V-mail from you, dated Jan. 31, my latest. It was full of good things, such as a promise to take me to the Berghoff for dark beer, which I love fully as well as you do, and as I do you (no, not quite). Oh, that case of beer is all gone. But it was light beer anyway. Don't worry, I won't smoke your pipe. Thanks for your offer of the cigarettes anyway but it is herewith graciously declined because I don't smoke enough to mind the shortage consistently. A pack always seems to turn up here or there.

I got a long funny letter from Day today. She is going skiing in Vt. this week with Walter, the lucky dog. She always has funny devastating things to say about the family which, if you knew them better, and God keep you from that, you would find amusing too. Like our cousin Beatrice Stein the opera singer, who changed her name to Carol Cordell and wears dresses cut down to her navel.

You got a card in the mail today asking if you were interested in hospitalization or accident insurance but I threw it out just now. You're not, are you? As for myself, I figure insurance is just one more thing to worry about and I have enough troubles with the monthly bank account and stretching curtains. Anyway the

things that get wrong with me insurance doesn't cover -- the drippy nose, the ringworm from swimming, the bites of Cooney and the bruised shinbones.

You and your German books. Why don't you send something home I can read for a change. I got wonderful books of George Grosz drawings which I'm charitably going to present to Paul for his birthday. But he's very good and can hardly ever be found in this country. Maybe you could find a book of reproductions over there. The Nazis of course blacklisted him 25 years ago. He's really the first anti-fascist artist and aside from the political stuff, has a talent almost on the level of Goya.

Say, what are you doing with the fifty bucks? You never did say what you were going to do. I'm just curious. Still solvent.

I really wonder if the miraculous will happen and we'll have this summer together. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a whole summer with nothing to think about but each other and the pleasures of life? We could swim and sun and I would cook vast quantities of food for you and we could buy bikes and cycle down to the lake several times a day with Kathy and a case of cold beer in the baskets. And maybe when it got too hot and oppressive we could take a trip somewhere and live by a cool lake. I know I would be perfectly happy with you all alone at all times. Because I love you that much.

And now I gotta take a bath. I really do love you though.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 12, 1945

Ma chérie,

Your latest words had wings, indeed, all done in by arriving here eight days after you let it drop loosely into your nearest P. O. Box. Scarcely a week ago, then, you were as sassy as ever.

Perhaps you'll get this equally fast & we will have established an all-time record for rapport. The wedding must have been something. I'm sorry I missed not going. As for the tuxedo, you seem to insist on my reacting to its loan - to the point almost of my believing Fritz has actually absconded with it. How do you know it doesn't fit me? You haven't had your arms around me in years. Besides, I'll get into the damned thing if it kills me, so don't get generous. You had better give me an accounting of what clothes I have left. I don't want to feel like a brand-new civilian - I want to feel like an old, threadbare one, if you can call my nice old clothes threadbare. I hadn't worn that tux much at all. Nor have I put on any weight at all. In fact, though I haven't been near a scale in ages, I'll warrant I've lost weight. Anyway clothes are adjustable apart from size - Dad wears my coat, I used to wear Buss' jackets, etc. Fritz may look swell in it but I'd look even better. So much for the tux. (Oh, P.S. just as a gag, I turned to a couple of the boys sitting around and said "What do you think of a 4F borrowing your tuxedo" and the answers were very profane. The consensus seemed to be that it would be OK if he were buried in it). But I'm really not serious. He was quite welcome to it.

The news about Buss is very interesting. I'm glad that he's going back to the U. Let me know any more details when you learn them. The University will be like old times when I get back to give it a gander before galloping into the hinterland. (Do you notice my handwriting changes? What do you think is the significance of it?)

Re the marriage & the Rev. Hayden. My best recollection of him was as a solitary bystander to a dispute between him & the University janitor as to the ethics of poisoning the school pigeons. The pigeons were there too, but they were dead. I sympathized with the janitor, having been shat on on occasion, but I also sympathized to a certain extent with the Rev. Mr. Hayden, part of whose aura was a flock of pigeons who came to him for feeding each day.

Last night the lady below gave three of us a supper of rabbit

stew, french fries, salad string beans, roast duck, blanc-mange, wine and coffee. The old man told me stories about when he was a prisoner with a lot of Russians near Leipzig, and the evening passed well. The cooking isn't too good in this part of France, though. I wish I could eat some of your roast lamb instead. And you too, little lamb (I believe you've called me that several times in complete maldescription of my sinister potentialities). Too many parentheses (or is it "thesis") in this letter (Don't you think?).

(XXOO) Love

Al

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 13, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

What a typewriter! I'll bet I'll be able to get a million words on this letter and you won't be able to read one of them. If you're smart, even though you can't read these words, you'll stop off at the biological science building at school and slip this under a microscope. Meanwhile, knowing you won't I can insult you at leisure, with a clear conscience that I am writing you at the same time. What do you mean by refusing to take a family picture. Not only do you have the presumptuousness to dictate what my tastes in pictures ought to be, but you have the obnoxiousness to get angry at me for asking for such a picture. One more crack out of you and I'll send for Kathy and we'll spend the rest of our life in the Vosges mountains undisturbed by the likes of you. And so you're buying high-heeled shoes. I suppose you want to get tired of them by the time I return so that you won't have to wear them because they've ruined your feet.

I wish we could get going. The drive of moving forward dissipates energies which otherwise get let off in disagreeable steam around here. Like a pack of hounds that quarrel amongst

themselves until they get the scent of the prey and then go running off howling in joyful unison. It shouldn't be long now. Last evening we heard the first announcement of the Crimea Conference. The batted 100% as far as I could see. I liked especially the unrelaxing attitude towards Germany. This was even tougher than Teheran. And the Polish business was cleaned up beautifully, to the face-saving of all. The San Francisco meeting gave me a thrill. I think it is a fine place to meet to do a fine thing right away. I am encouraged by the arranging of a peace during the war and not at all annoyed as some people would have me by exclaiming "Let's win the war first." Only a fool can think that the two are incompatible. If we go at this business strongly enough now, there won't be a moment's break to give any sort of reaction a chance.

If I suffer shock and fatigue in this war it will be because of the field telephone and nothing else. Trying to get a call through sometimes is a hard day's work, and then you must refer to everything in the most guarded tones, for "the enemy is listening". Not infrequently, when the call is completed (yes, some are completed before they are broken off) and you turn away, you suddenly realize that what the other guy said had about six different interpretations. Like your sending the wrong check to the wrong place there, here one gets his code names mixed up and may discuss the wrong operation blandly with a unit and hours later awaken to the fact that the reason for the other fellow's vagueness to your remarks was not 'security' but simply that he didn't know what you were talking about. And of course, it is futile to try to reestablish the connection a second time. Most of the time, really though, I am struck by what actually is accomplished in the way of communications in our army. We lay wire over everything. No path is safe to tread.

Welcome sight of aligned poles and taut wires high up, birdies perched on them.

Three cheers and a toast of Martel cognac with a mirabelle washer to the Crimea Conference. Book two seats for the San Francisco show. I may want to attend.

An extra kiss to you tonight for being such a contrary girl - but I absolutely refuse to sleep with you in your present mood. Until tomorrow.

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 14, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

Boy am I tired. I decided to be the gracious hostess to the newly-weds (ghastly term that) and last night had Klaus and Lucy and the Neugartens over for dinner. It seemed as if I spent the whole damned day in the kitchen preparing rather dubious goodies. I made something with shrimps because I didn't have points for anything else and it was real exotic and indigestible. This was my maiden effort at having more than four people over for dinner and I must say hostessing is a trial. But I must learn, for the delicious day in the future when you will decide to have Leonard White, Harold Gosnell and the cast of Tobacco Road over for dinner

I got an antiquated letter from you yesterday, Jan. 6, in which you expressed the droll sentiment that air mail was faster than V-mail. Not that air mail, kid. You also gave some cogent reasons for my not going to the coast and I agreed with them intellectually but the wheels are all in motion and everybody expects me and since we are both so lugubrious about the success of the venture it will probably turn out better than we thought. Anyway the important thing is that it will break up the time ahead waiting for you. I've even had qualms about taking up space on trains or planes in the Emergency, but I'm afraid I'm infected with the dog-eat-dog civilian psychology (to a small extent. I still haven't bought pork chops on the black market and don't think I ever will). But this is how I figure -- no matter how the trip turns out, I'll be coming home to a spring or summer of almost surely seeing you.

Jan. 5 (the letter above only before I said 6) you were talking about the fall of Budapest and yesterday, when I got the letter, was the day Budapest actually fell. Fancy. And today is Valentine's Day. I love you [*heart pierced by arrow: Al [heart] Jill*]

I didn't realize you had such a polyglot assemblage of men. In the pictures you sent Christmas day they all looked very Young American. Are you learning any French? And again, why don't you buy books in English that I can read? I interrupted Thos. Hardy to read a pocketbook, The Ministry of Fear, which has been pointed out to be frequently as an example of a well-written thriller. You know I'm very skeptical about the literary value and therefore the inherent enjoyment of mysteries, even though I love them on the screen. I haven't read much but it sure seems to be high-powered prose, if that is good writing. I'm not so sure.

I got a long letter from Liz today, my first in a month at least. She is not of course very happy. She too has been making the rounds of the relatives, Bill's, in upper New York State. As she says, she has had to adjust to so many people and places she's lost all her distinctiveness as a separate individual. It's for sure that I've been much luckier than she has, having been able to live in our own apartment in my own way. It would have been hard for Liz to do so, because of the housing shortage in Boston, which is probably worse yet even than here, and also because she feels a very strong compulsion to save as much money as she can now so that Bill will be able to go back to Law School. I think I ought to start saving money too, me and my irrational guilt feelings. But how can I do it? I always have to buy presents for people, particularly the family and so on and so forth. Besides you should quit betting and losing.

I love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 15, 1945 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

I ought to be able to write a fair letter before I am called away to a third rate movie we obtained today through the tender mercies of the local special services officer. It has to do with submarines, certainly not a subject of my own choosing. My only mail today or yesterday was a Valentine from Kathy. Naturally there are no Valentines in these parts. If I had been home I am sure I would have been reminded to cut out a little something for you. As it is, I am left with merely saying that you are my only Valentine, whatever the latter is, presumably something good. And I wouldn't have any other in the world. I am glad to know that you wear size twelve. I shall file that information away with other precious memories on how far you are from various crucial parts of your anatomy to other crucial parts. I had been thinking of you as a thirteen, probably a horrible blunder on my part for which you will never forgive me. Maybe you've been wasting away with frustrated love. I believe I have, actually. Nothing interests me much any more, not even food, an alarming thing when you consider it. My only conclusion is that I must get home within the next several months and recover my perspective on the world, from the depths of a double bed.

My conscience forbid my reneging on a request that I give some spare time to a couple of rifle battalions that someone thought were in need of education; and I was with them part of yesterday. It was no doubt interesting but fatiguing. For example, a couple of companies were crowded into a big, dark hayloft, and I had to stand up and talk them down. One common worry the men have is about the matter of unconditional surrender. A lot of them think that that may be making the Germans fight harder. I don't believe it does and make a point of telling them so. Some of them felt that we ought to trick Germany into surrendering and then beat her down, as Germany did with the Czechs. Another company was very much interested in the Crimea Conference. Generally the men agree

with its decisions so far as they understand them. I was asked to return, and if I am in those parts the middle of next week and nothing has happened meanwhile, I may do so. Too bad I dislike public speaking; that sort of thing is perfect training for a stump orator: never prepared, conditions always foul, difficult and unknown audiences. You are my perfect audience, toi seule. I would like to kiss you a million times and then spend months describing how highly I think of you.

Keep well, darling. Say hello to Kathy and to the family up North. I haven't written them in a long while. I just can't get around to much more than you, and don't want to.

Always your passionate - Al

(Yo to Amo! Remember Jerry Colonna on this)

THE French can annoy him greatly. We are all rather crazy, he thinks, but the French even more so. He perceives as early as January that they have won the war in their own minds and can't wait to get rid of their Allies (something that is not realized until De Gaulle quits NATO and sends a few more insulting gestures our way). But they are terribly dependent. The Americans give them everything they have including the reason why they can possess a fighting spirit. The Yanks rationalize the whole war for them. He begins to see how De Gaulle will lead France, on the path of its historical perennial delusions. (He knows all this but is far from revising his romantic notions about the French. It will take him many years before he can utter a new attitude and see the French for what they are and no more than that and capable of no more, but he is the same way for his own America. Indeed he expects and will expect too much from humanity for a long time to come.) How can the French, not to mention the Germans, deny the stupendous American power? (He could not know what the Soviet Army with its immense artillery assemblages and fleets of tanks must have looked like just then as they were moving up to the last great battles in the East; he would have thought them propaganda, just as the

Germans up to this very moment had insisted on the evanescence of the American hordes.)

End of February (first of two parts) 1945 letters

