

JILL TO AL JANUARY 15, 1945 (A) V-MAIL

Darling --

I'm afraid that my letters are getting painfully repetitious. About once a month it seems that Kathy gets a cold and I stew about that for a couple of days, and then I catch it, and stew about that for a week. I am now in the first stages but if my fondest wishes of getting to sleep early tonight are fulfilled, it will probably pass.

It's after supper now and Kathy is asleep, thank goodness. These days we must spend indoors are quite a trial. her nose runs and her temper is bad and mine is none too good either, especially when she starts flinging prunes all over the kitchen. Ahead of me yet is the rank task of cleaning the kitchen before bedtime, and it seems all the harder to get to when I am anxious to get to bed and read a new borrowed collection of the epic works of S. J. Perelman, as well as continue the second wonderful Victorian thriller I've been reading. This one is all about a stolen Indian diamond and very amusing and suspenseful, as well as being most literary.

I got your letter of Dec. 30 today, full of reminiscence of our first summer together. Much as I love the country and want to live in it someday, I have that feeling too -- that the dark city streets and city parks were a perfect setting of our romance. I wouldn't have traded the walking and swimming and sundae-eating and beer-drinking we did together for all the convertibles and swank scenery in the world. The thing is, when you do simple easy things like dashing out to a neighborhood movie or just walking through the city streets together, you have all your energy left for just loving and talking to the other person -- contrasted with the terrible effort involved in pursuing more fashionable entertainment. And therefore you can remember all the similar incidents so much better, than if you were all clogged up with Going Places. There is so much I can remember from that summer, and all the ones after that we were together -- like talking a walk in the hot foothills of Altedena with you, and lying down on the scorching sandy ground. I also remember your heroic dash down Telegraph Hill, banging a Chinese cymbal, in

quest of roast beef at New Joe's. I still don't see how people can live very long in San Francisco. In order to negotiate those hills you have to be both very young and very sober, and practically nobody there answers to either of those descriptions.

The news about the Seventh Army is very unclear. It seems to be the one Army still taking a beating from the Germans, but by the time this letter reaches you, that may have changed. I wonder naturally how close you are to the front, and pray, unheroically, that you aren't. It's a selfish prayer that I have for you, but I love you so damn much that I can't think of anything else to do. We've just got to have the rest of our lives together.

Kathy sends you a wet germy kiss and I send you a million of them. And now to bed, to restore myself for a much longer letter to you tomorrow.

OOOXXX

Jill

[drawing of buggy things]: Still life: infant and cold bacilli..

[stick woman with arms on head]: Horrified mother

JILL TO AL JANUARY 15, 1945 (B)

Darling --

I'm writing this under incredibly adverse conditions. It's nine-thirty, ordinarily an hour when not even the scratchings of a cockroach disturbs the literature-inspiring peace and solitude of this crummy nest. But somehow Kathy has caught my insomnia and from the bedroom is issuing the most frightful noises -- creakings and crashings of a bed being rocked back and forth by a near-23 pound dynamo, laughs, giggles, shouts, and an occasional mournful eeee-ee as she realizes her racket isn't getting her anywhere. The reason, I guess, for all this rioting

and disorderly conduct is her cold, which still oppresses her and me. We've spent five horrid days already breathing through our mouths, whining and refusing our food. She also sleeps lousily. When she does get to sleep finally, she wakes up around three or four and plays or, as light night, yells, whereupon I have to get up and give her orange juice in the freezing cold of night and then not get back to sleep again for a couple of hours. Despite the obvious hardship and injustice of one cold victim treating another, mine seems to be getting better -- at least, it has not yet reached the crisis stage of my being totally unable to breathe through my nose. I have been drinking all the orange juice which she refuses, which is a lot. She has to pick this critical time to start disliking the taste of the stuff. But these are times that try men's souls, etc. etc.

I did get two very nice letters from you today, the 26th and 31st. In the latter you again accuse me of forgetting to date my letters. You're right. I did forget to date this one. OK, TODAY IS JANUARY 15th.

You also see fit to question my fiscal omnipotence.

Question: If the bonds on one form are in my (A/s) name only, why have you signed it too?

Answer: I don't know.

However, I'll send them in and let the Fed. Res. Bk. sweat it out.

Thanks, darling, for taking care of it.

I guess I'm a dog to let my depressions of the moment creep into my letter and depress you too, whereas if I would wait, I know these moods would pass. It may or may not re-assure you to know that my moods are usually not governed by the circumstances of my own life, but mainly by political and military developments. Like now, despite the mayhem described above, I don't really feel badly or depressed, the way I must have when I wrote the letters you commented on. I feel sorry for Kathy when she doesn't feel well, and sorry for myself, but that's

different than feeling depressed or even very self-pitying. It's funny, when Kathy feels sick she doesn't act sick -- she just gets, if possible, more manic than usual and is consequently that much more of a handful. She's been playing violently all day long but she gets terribly touchy and is apt to turn from laughter to tears in an instant. Damn it, I wish she'd go to sleep. When she stays up this late she is apt to sleep until ten in the morning and it louses up the whole day, even though I like to sleep late too. I still would rather have a more respectable schedule, for I can get more done that way. And God knows there is always a lot to do around the house, repairing the damages wrought by her in her strolls. Yesterday afternoon I took her up to the Neugarten's apartment for a little while. They have great thick rugs all over the place and she was having a wonderful time running -- since she definitely has at least three speeds ahead -- up and down and throwing herself on her face, when she discovered that was a source of amusement to the grownups. You could see she was doing it deliberately since when a baby loses its balance, it almost invariably falls backwards on its tail... What a card she is. At the moment I'd give you the whole deck.

Here is a little article I thought you might be interested in, if only because it contains the sacred inscription of PWB.

Congress is acting its usual silly self over the manpower situation. I still think they should have had a universal manpower act years ago, but now, when the need presses, they insist on resorting to the most ridiculous makeshifts, like offering the work-or-fight alternative to civilians not in defense jobs. Hell, it's an insult to the armed forces. Can't they think of any other penalty? I don't think we'll ever have any sensible allotment of manpower in this country, and the unions are one of the special interests particularly at fault.

I should talk about patriotism, I who am still trying to find a painless way to get to San Francisco. I'm going over to school tomorrow or the next day to see if Mr. H., whatever his name is, in the booking office, can get me a reservation on the extra-fare

train. I could easily go by slow train, I mean easily get reservations, but I would much rather do it the other way. if I do go, it won't be for at least a month from the day I write you I got the reservations, so you don't have to worry that all of a sudden I am unauthorizably not here.

I spent last night, Sunday night, gassing about with my friend and neighbor Lettie who has the baby a little younger than Kathy. Don't ask me what we girls talk about. We just drape our legs over the furniture, eat candy and commune in that verbose vacuous way women have. I guess men have it too. We talk about men and education and other neighbors and men and books and men. The discussions on men touch on such interesting problems as, would you rather have a young man or an older one? Since we both married males of the former category, it doesn't seem to allow much room for discussion. It sounds silly and yet it is. But I would rather spend time with another girl than with couples, no matter how interesting the Couples (vulgar phrase that) are, since somehow I feel silly around married people without my own staff and prop. The people around here like the Neugartens and Klaus and his girl are so lovey-dovey and it embarrasses me to watch them. Diane and Oliver, who don't get along very well, are more tolerable, probably for that very reason. I don't remember us being very affectionate in public. Were we? Somehow I think people who consistently are, are trying to prove something to themselves or to others.

Thank goodness Kathy is asleep. Now I can start going to bed, to continue the delightful nap I started to take after supper, over the evening paper. Ever since the Christmas holidays have been over, I've been sleeping a lot better. The regular life and all that.

There is a whole case of beer in the house still, a lovely thing to behold. This friend of Rosable's who owns a brewery brought me three cases for my party. He was around Friday night to collect the empties but declined to take the full case back, saying I could drink that up too if I wanted. Beer is awfully hard

to get so I'd been husbanding it for him, thinking he would appreciate the beer more than the money. It's pretty good beer too, Embassy Club, even though I'd never heard of it before. I've lost my taste for drinking beer alone, however, and will probably wait until one of my satellites like Mac or Priscilla comes over before I make away with it. You seem to drink the damndest collection of foul wines and liqueurs. Do you think you'll keep your taste for Pernod, Glogg and Shaslik or whatever you've been drinking, or fall back into the American Way of Life -- beer and bourbon? I guess that will be one of the adjustments the psychiatrists and social workers are always telling us wives of veterans that we'll have to make. Yes, dear, I'll have your cocktail ready for you any hour now. A layer of black cherry brandy, a layer of Rhine wine, two shots of aqua vitae and a cherry, to be decanted from the shoe of a month-dead German. Oh sure, give the baby some. She was brought up on formula.

Now I have to pay the bills. Snarl, snarl. Why don't you have your allotment check made out in five equal parts, to the real estate agency, the various three utility companies, and Nedelman's delicatessen (fine wines, beers and pickles). That last name joint is the original inflator. They charge 12 cents for a pickle.

Enough of this trivia. I love you, which is definitely not trivial.

OOOXXX

Jill

JILL TO AL JANUARY 16, 1945

Darling --

I cleaned out One desk drawer today for the purpose, successfully achieved, of finding this air mail paper. I keep wandering over to Woodworth's for to buy some, and every time

I get there I have a hazy recollection that I have some at home somewhere, and why spend the money when I don't have to? So, on my trip today -- it is just a pleasant short walk hauling the sled -- anything longer would break my back -- I bought you a fountain pen and a book instead, which I'll send out instanter. Actually I think I'll try the pen first and if it is worse than the Parker, or rather Eversharp, I got you years ago which you didn't like but, what with various changes of points and miscellaneous servicings, has turned out pretty well, I'll send you the Eversharp instead. Pens these days are lousy affairs, unless you pay 20 rocks for a lifetime pen. But who wants a pen that will last a lifetime? It's just too morbid.

I got your letters of the 14th and 20th today, one of which cited the need for a pen. Ergo and etc.

You know, you said Dystal was in Washington but Laura says that now he is back at Coronet. I am sort of surprised. When I talked to him he sounded as if he had some moral compunctions about staying in OWI. Well, maybe his job there folded and he was anxious, anyway, to get back into business. I was interested in your analysis of him as being the constant observer -- and non-participant. There must be plenty of those jitterbugs around in various theaters and when they come back to the States they always sounds as if they'd prosecuted the war or the plans thereof single-handed. Ed Shils is back at school. I saw him in Stineways today, looking as grubby and intellectual as ever, but didn't speak to him as I don't think he knows me anyway. I hear also that Lepawsky is back from Russia.

I didn't do much today except take the baby out a couple of times, thinking the fresh air would dissipate our colds. Now I am completely enclosed in a wall of mucous membrane and doubt if I could hear the phone if it rang. Kathy is again up and rattling around in her bed, just like last night.

I am now smoking the last cigarette in the house. They are thinking about starting some silly method of rationing, viz., having people sign up at their local dealer. But what's to prevent

a person signing up at a lot of dealers. For instance I patronize several stores all of whom think they are my one and only. However, inertia would stop me from sin so maybe other people will feel the same way.

Speaking of sin I think we need Venetian blinds too but they are so expensive I hate to make the investment for this crummy joint, particularly since the windows are odd sizes and they would never fit another place. Anyway you can't buy blinds today, which settles that. I do remember to pull blades down now, anyway at least three hours after sunset. I get around to it. Meanwhile the neighbors are treated to the edifying view of my feeding the baby, feeding myself and cleaning the kitchen. By that time it's near bedtime and then I pull down the shades. So there. My God, you know Walter couldn't get a zipper wholesale. He's a big bull shitter. I got a letter from him yesterday thanking me for some records I sent for Christmas (two weeks after). For the fifth time he mentioned at great length his gratitude to you for the pipe. You really rang the bell that time.

I paid all the bills today and balanced the checkbook and feel proud and pleased. We have 100 bananas more in the checking account this month than last. How did I do it. Why, I simply drew out a like amount from our University savings account and transferred it to the checking. Wasn't that clever? Now I have enough money to go to California. It's funny but I spend just about 200 every month, fair weather or foul. And it's been foul mostly. However, I won't need any clothes until next summer when I shall again purchase a fabulous bathing suit which will just about fit Kathy by the end of July, as was last summer's experience. Darling, I hope you don't mind but I lent your tuxedo to Fritz Neugarten to wear at Klaus' wedding at the end of this month. It just fit him so it must be far too small for you now. He is a very meticulous fellow so it will probably look better after he gets done with it than it has for the past five years that it's been kicking around in garment bags. I sort of doubt that you will be able to wear any of your civilian suits anyway unless they can be let out and anyway, it will be lots

more fun to outfit you with a new trousseau.

How did you ever get in touch with that Didier publishing house anyway? I judge it's a new firm, from the attractiveness of their book and their conscientiousness, which you described. I don't think you'd learn much about the art of love from that book -- not that you need to know anything else. It wasn't that kind of a book. Not unless you wanted to start writing me paeans in the various styles of French literature. But you know me, pal. My tastes are simple, at least on the level of verbiage. Just a little praise, a little abuse, and you've got my heart in like a noose. Strictly from hunger, to quote Perelman. Speaking of Perelman, there is a commercial spot on WIND that some energetic student of current society could do something about. It starts out with the sublime lyrics that follow, to the tune of Hinky dinky parlez-vous, I think. To wit:

Everybody's going to the Tivoli

" " " " "

Everybody's going too

So why don't you and you and you

Let's all go (*to*) the Tivoli.

Then a female voice breaks in, with a note of hysteria that should land the owner up at the Institute, for my money:

"You can turn off that radio right now, John. We're getting on our coats and going to the Tivoli right now."

Says John, in that tone of amused tolerance (or is it tolerant amusement) so common among stalwart American 4-Fs these days: "Well, you certainly make up our minds for us pretty fast, don't you."

But do you think Miss Goody-Two-Personalities deigns to answer? No, she says, her ill-concealed rage mounting, "Don't be silly. This is what we've been waiting for. (Pause, during

which you expect a man to come in and present her with the Star of Kohinoor, mortgage free). THAT GREAT PICTURE "SINCE YOU WENT AWAY" IS PLAYING AT THE TIVOLI.

Announcer: "Yes, Since You Went Away is the greatest picture to blah blah blah."

But it's the overtones that curl my blood. Note the obvious monomania of the woman, the arrant submission of the male, who, in word, slavishly enters into the structure of the patient's dementia and even provides the means by which she can pursue it, so to speak, etc. etc. Take it away, Herr Doktor.

and now, to the tune of "pepsi-cola hits the spot":

Schizophrenia hits the spot

Two whole egos, that's a lot.

Twice as much as you'd get with one

Schizophrenia! It is more damn fun.

Your loving wife,

Carlton Beals, jr.

JILL TO AL JANUARY 17, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

Speak to me, dear one, speak to me (she said, agitatedly chafing his wrists). Did you or did you not get that fruit cake? Every day I get a letter from you (today as of Jan. 1), describing anew the goodies I sent, giving me the praise I so well deserve. But no mention of the Fruitcake. Jesus, do you know what went into that fruitcake? Love, labor, tears, blood, sweat, peanut brittle and several dozen Right-Way-Throat-Nose-Mentholated Droplets. So you'd better acknowledge receipt of same or I shall

start fast action against the P. O. I'm glad you got the packages with the books. The reason I don't send you war books is because I don't like them myself and never send anybody anything I wouldn't use or read myself. Croce is an exception because I know from higher authority he is an authority and after all, I don't want to drag you down to my level in every instance. I'm reading the Steinbeck book I got for you. It has Steinbeck's usual good writing -- I particularly like his nature descriptions -- and his usual Saroyanish love of the social outcasts. Both men are so self-consciously unconventional it oft times gives me a pain in the ass, to be a little unconventional on my own hook. Maybe it's because we ourselves are not much touched by the niceties, but I'm getting sick and tired of being hit on the head and told Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. And then having them waiting for the reaction, in a rhetorical sense.

I am neat as a pin, sharp as a tack, canny as a can and tight as a tick tonight. I purchased me a sitter and spent the day over at school, where I unsuccessfully attempted to get a ticket to the coast on the City of etc., and where I had lunch with Mac and dozens of other girls and walked around campus for a while, not aimlessly, since I had lost a just-purchased roll of scotch tape and was looking for it. Then I went to tea in the Social Science Building with George Huzzar. Then he walked me home and I drank five bottles of beer before Kathy's dinner and then he left, being no lover of babies. Oh, I forgot to mention, I attended one of Mac's classes with her, an English Lit one to do with Thackeray and Dickens. It was an interesting experience, the first class I'd been to in about four years. Now I'm convinced that adult education is the only thing to do and have. I am so much more interested in the things they talk about in school now than I was then, when boys were my main interest. Not that there's been much qualitative change in that respect - just quantitative, i.e., I am no longer a collector. I also found the teacher a little on the silly side, as all teachers are. I guess that is because the essence of getting a point over is repetition.

George is a funny guy. He is obviously bright but at the same time is adolescently anti-authoritarian and (or yet) is quite a

snob. I don't think he can be much younger than you or I but I have a feeling he is. He probably was a very precocious child and somehow those who were precocious in youth look like cases of arrested development in maturity. He always asks about you, liking you very much, I guess, but rarely has a kind word for Buss. They must have had some argument or other when Buss was in town. Jesus, Kathy is still up again another night. This is too much. You'd better come home and tame her.

Much love to you, darling.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 17, 1945

Jill, my Love,

I am in low spirits and in high hopes. I haven't had a word from you in at least a week, a thing which hit me harder after these many months than it did in the first months. I think I've become hopelessly dependent on you to represent home. Like in that famous New Yorker cartoon of the Island of Manhattan, America has shrunk for me until there is only you and then some odds and gods. The high hopes come from a hot tip through an unreliable source that a big load of mail is reported to have arrived at the nearest APO. This afternoon may see the big event, therefore, and all my hopeful soldiers will be lined up properly, with your letter alongside the factory in Belgium, the Russian offensive, the Luzon landing and our own Seventh Army capers. Thus ordered, I can salute them. turn about face, and report a bright future in prospect.

I've just finished eating a late and bad lunch of spam and canned corn with hot chocolate. The Army has a grim obsession with canned corn, canned tomatoes and canned string beans, on the vegetable side. No words can quite describe Spam, spelled with four letters and pronounced somewhat differently. I still eat Mom's Copocola at odd

moments and have a can of lobster and anchovies left for some great occasion. Roos is gone for the nonce. Tom is ill with a bad cold. I've been travelling a lot in the last couple of days, tying together loose ends of the company. There is snow everywhere of course, but the main roads are in pretty good shape. All in all, I prefer snowy weather to rainy weather, despite the cold. The scenery is better, for one thing. Most of the trees are gilded white and look like the Chinese sketches, thin, filmy, silver twigs and branches. The snow covers most of the scars of war too, unfortunately in many cases for the infantry and tanks who have mines to think about, or, for that matter, for anyone in territory recently occupied by the Germans. The best stroke of luck is to make a rapid advance so that the Germans have no time to mine very well and enabling the army to avoid the original mine belt.

I had a fine touch of comfortable atmosphere this morning when I spent a short while in a Red Cross Officers' Club. My life hardly touches on the ARC; perhaps, once every two months I drop into a club. But the occasions are nice. My purpose this morning was a haircut which I needed badly. While waiting my turn I just sat back comfortably and drank a cup of coffee and ate a cookie a French waitress was serving. The club was well done up with little tables and chairs, a ping-pong table, a bar, some magazines and books and some officers (not part of the decorations) relaxing to enjoy themselves like I was. In fact, I was so contented looking and without the strained appearance of the usual man waiting a turn at the barber, that another officer walking in ahead of me. With inspiring tact, I commented to him that this was the best way of waiting for a barber I had ever seen and that, if he wanted he too could get coffee served him and a magazine to read. He caught on quickly and was soon as comfortable as myself, even though behind me.

Sorry, darling, must dash --

As ever, thine Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 18, 1945

Dearest Jill,

I thought I had finally gotten a letter from you this afternoon, but it was only addressed by you and contained one by Johnny who is still well, I am glad to hear. Need I say more?

Let sensation be rampant.

VERSE I.

An enveloped developed

With a famous scrawl.

In it, "Corblimey! Stymied!"

nothing at all.

Why forward a friend's letter?

Can't you do any better?

I don't mind that kind of thing to ring

my bell when, hell,

There's other stuff with fluff and luff

from you, true blue.

But that chunk stops no chink

in my bleeding needing

For more of you. So pour it on.

Oh the chagrin in the grin

of a male without mail

Not even love in a paper glove

to ease years of yearnings.

VERSE II

[A Series of small drawings, with the caption: "Hi! I don't remember you, but your style, oh, kid!"]

VERSE III

[A line of music]

VERSE IV

A colored pencil drawing with "Peace, Joy, Coolness, Expression"

VERSE V

G-2 Periodical Report

A box labeled "Situation Map" à la manière de la Carte du Tendre, with various spots captioned: "Montagne de Harangue; Bois Bois Black Sheep; Xmas Rush; Frankfurt-on-bun; Failure to write; U-boats; Word of mouth; Rodcentre; shipping shortage; Pepsicola R.; Air mail; Postcard; P. O. Delays; V-Mail; Air Mail; Regular mail" and "Front line" outside of map.

I. Units in contacts - see attached map.

1. New Identifications:

a. "Xmas Rush" organized in brigade strength to meet out threat.

b. SS "Failure to Write" - panzer division reported

assembling, only imperfectly identified. Has done heavy fighting on

other fronts. No signs as to whether it will be committed on this front.

2. Strength

a. "U-boat" - PWs claim this division practically destroyed.

II. Enemy Operations.

1. Attempted by counterattacks N and S of friendly bulge beaten off.

Elsewhere generally quiet.

2. Heavy arty. fire from ey. suggests possible withdrawal of enemy

tank formations around Rodcentre to N. of bulge where potential

line of defense exists, Frankfurt-on-bun, Pepsicola.

III. Enemy capabilities

1. To close off "postcard" and "V-mail" salient and assume passive

defense positions, defeating our attempts to breakthrough and reach a decision.

P.S. To: Base Censor

Subject: Above matter

1. Section "8" already applied for.

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 19, 1945

Darling --

This is one of those hideous days that drags on and on, through

the dark labyrinths of the basement washing area, 53rd St. and the dentist's office. It is ten PM and Mac is here and I wish I were asleep. You know, one of those days.

Kathy sits on my lap in the dentist's office and looks down my throat and occasionally dabbles water from the pan at the side onto my chest. Perhaps she thinks she is doing me a favor. Yesterday morning -- I missed writing you yesterday for some reason or other -- I had decided she was a nasty little child and was all set to take the both of us to a psychiatrist but suddenly the skies cleared literally and figuratively, and she has been playing nicely in her room by herself, at the right intervals, and not being too nasty about playing with other people, at other intervals. I can only attribute her extreme peevishness of the previous week to her cold, the nose drops which probably produced insomnia, and the sudden although natural transition she had to make from a crawling to a walking animal. You know, all of a sudden they change. She is really a little girl now, no longer a baby. Her range of experience has increased enormously and she is capable now of making all sorts of demands that she couldn't or didn't think of before. As a result, a baby of this age is harder to handle -- first, because of the change within them, second, because the mother isn't prepared for the change and persists in trying to see baby habits in a person no longer a baby. Kathy has changed some for the good, though not much. For instance, now she is interested in some phases of the dressing process, such as putting on shoes and socks, and will sit quietly and watch or try to help me. She also likes to be hatted, and if I don't put a hat on, she'll put anything she can find on her head, including a diaper. And she's developing some embryo sense of vanity and now when I exclaim over a dress -- she had a dress on today, *mirabile dictu*, she'll go to the mirror and see for herself. She is, as always of course, a terrific showoff.

I cut out the ads from today's paper. I think the Mariners Map dress is the ultimate in something or other. Imagine if you can the merriment at that party, when one of the revelers, whom the crowd affectionately calls Ahab, finds the breeding grounds of

the Great White Whale over little Miss Atlas's left mammary!
How the gang shouted and stamped as they sailed out of
Portsmouth that night, with a Russeks model on every harpoon
and the galley full of lime rayon crepe to ward off scurvy.

I have not yet left off considering the pious tailoring Russeks
gives its Buttoner-Shad Shirter, I mean its Plaidersher-Sirt-
Suttoner, but when I do, you can find me in Field's basement,
making a pig of myself on some lovely reduced gabardine
mittens.

Which reminds me, Kathy has worn a great hole in her first pair
of shoes and I have to take her downtown tomorrow and get her
another pair, an ordeal which I don't especially look forward to.
But considering the durability of this pair, bought at the
neighborhood Kiddie-Kix, and that is the name of the store, so
help me, I shall no longer patronize the thieves. I'll probably
meet Mom down there and we'll got up north together then.

And so it behooves me to get a good night's sleep, which I hope
I'll spend dreaming of you. For indeed I love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 19, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

It's pathetic to see the downcast faces of all these men without
mail. Sgt. Villaneuve, the chief clerk, is a kind-hearted soul and
it touches him to the quick when he has to tell everyone who
comes in "No mail". He has acquired in the process the tact of
an undertaker and does it very well. I am included of course. All
my swearing hasn't brought me anything for over a week except
a Christmas card from Ray Hecock somewhere in Belgium and
an envelope from you with a card and note of John enclosed,
which was the subject of various flights of fancy in my
yesterday's letter to you. At any rate, you wrote that you loved

me which is enough and the very fact that you were in a condition to write on Jan. 3 is heartening. Otherwise I haven't heard from you since Dec. 22, 1944, black year of years. I hope mine is reaching you better because I am writing a lot, and do want you to hear often enough that I love you too, lest there arise any doubt that I am a changeable beast even though there be no doubt that I am a beast.

Roos and Wallenberg are off on a trip leaving me with somewhat more to occupy myself with than is generally the case. The day before yesterday one of our officers stepped on a mine while on a mission and now we are less him. He was wounded in the arms and legs but will recover and won't lose any limbs. We've got some cognac and I think I'll fill a little bottle and slip it to him in the hospital to put him in a good frame of mind. It's a lot better than chocolate candy, tooth brushes and things like that.

Last night we had a wind storm mixed with rain and snow. It was messy driving and this morning the roads were very slippery, but it has now cleared up somewhat. The news from Russia is the big rainbow of the moment. I imagine that Eastern Germany must be beginning to panic, bad cess to it. I'll bet you a fur coat against a convertible coupe that I'll be home before summer -- June 1, final purchase of either article to be made only in the company of the other party to the bet.

You of course don't know it but you have been on the verge of receiving a suit or a dress, etc. for some time now. I just can't get set to take the plunge by mail. What I do is clip ads out of miscellaneous magazines and newspapers that come my way, keep the clipping for about a week, debating it each day, then discarding it as unsuitable until the next one comes up. I haven't the faintest idea of what Kathy might be wearing, if anything. Anyhow, send her my love and give her a kiss for me.

All my love to you, dearest, Al

HE travels around but not so much, for it is a dull country. He has plenty of help in operations and people who like to drive; he visits Army HQ, also 6 AG, and writes more letters and reads more books. It takes him only an hour a day to manage all his company administrative functions, another hour for operations against the enemy, so he goes back and forth to HQ, holds discussions with Wallenberg and a couple of others, and plans special meals. For all of this, he appears to deserve something, so the Seventh Army decorates him with the Bronze Star Medal; for close support of combat operations, the formula was worded.



In Alsace: Hans Wallenberg (in the middle); Praeger.



In Alsace: Hans Wallenberg; Praeger.

Lt. Manning, one of his officers, steps on a mine, gets it in hands and legs, luckily not in the balls, which is the first thing one thinks of; but he is crippled for life. Al sneaks a bottle of Martell Cognac, the best, in to him at the hospital. They have no other casualties in this period. Casualties generally are few and almost entirely of the infantry, for the Germans are giving out of planes and artillery and their supply. They are not coming in waving leaflets, they

prefer to wave a white cloth and have the leaflet in their pocket.

The German prisoner of war talks volubly, answers questions readily, is surprised at the educated, perfectly fluent, but differently uniformed sergeant or officer who is interrogating him. But no one has gotten this idea of a sophisticated empirical morale test to apply to a unit. If someone had delegated De Grazia to the job, he would have made some progress in its invention. Herz, Habe, Wallenberg, Langendorf, they were probably the best German morale specialists in the U.S. Army, but not theoretical methodologists, nor had anyone ever suggested to them nor they to themselves that there could be a science of morale measurement that they might develop on the spot. (Fifty years later, there still is no development to register here; although the related sociology and psychology have advanced somewhat and in detail, the application to military conditions has not been made.)

Thus, if the average, quartiles, medians, and extremes of time of soldiers in a platoon and company were known, the resulting figures would help determine the breaking point. But numerous other factors count. Next to *Der Führer*, the loss of the experienced platoon sergeant is the most severe blow. He has held together the old and new men; he represents the tradition of the company and thence the army. The latest and present moment and predictable front experiences, geographical composition, experience of battle, food, supplies, ammunition, higher echelon leadership, background noise (home news, rumors, pressure along front) -- these and other elements enter the picture.

The German soldiers are in a worse way than the Americans facing them, from every standpoint, though, after a certain point is passed, comparisons are less meaningful, because when you feel rotten you feel rotten, and that's it. Look at the seventeen German soldiers taken captive by the Americans in the general area of the Bitche salient between the 13th and 15th of January, and then interviewed by Technician Third Class Irwin Y. Straus, who writes up a thorough account of them.

By occupation, they had been a textile mill worker, lathe hand, airplane mechanic, mason, merchant, hotel cook, rotogravure printer (he was full of technical advice), a railroad surveyor (so was he), a

coal miner, a baker, a fur tanner, a cutlery worker, and a professional soldier. They come from four different units, five, if only the one man could remember his own unit, which he does not. On the average they have been committed to action in this sector of the American Seventh Army for five weeks. Two of them are deserters, one a passive deserter, three were captured on patrol, five were picked up while guarding wounded comrades, four were surrounded with their unit on a hill they were supposed to defend -- "to the end" and "at all costs" were the usual words -- and surrendered with 23 others when apparently surrounded on three sides.

Several deserters, not interrogated, were led by a former Dachau concentration camp inmate, named Wessel, an anti-Nazi, who had been tortured and forced to work on war materiel, and finally was released only to be sent to the front. They were told they would be holding a bunker in the rear of the Siegfried Line, but "smelled a rat" when they found themselves exposed to American fire; they volunteered for patrol, hid their weapons and managed to turn themselves over to American soldiers. The second deserter, Kutzki, said, "I'm no Nazi, I want to be a free man, everybody wants to live, after all... It was quite simple, old man, I was on guard during the night, so I beat it, and reached your lines in the morning." He had heard of reprisals against families of deserters and other shirkers, but had no family, both parents being dead, the father from a bombing.

Sergeant Stengelhofen was pulled out of a non-com school, where they were told that new doctrine called for Officers to stick with their troops up front, then, after Phillipsburg was lost and the Germans counterattacked, First Lieutenant Berg was nowhere to be seen. That pissed him off. When there were no intelligence reports and no orders, and his squad leader went over the hill, he just stuck in his hole with a comrade and waited for capture. Corporal Eberhard had bad feet but had finally been drafted; he fell behind his unit marching near Stollingen and after wandering for three hours encountered an American patrol to whom he surrendered. Two medics stayed with two wounded men to care for them and two corporals, both in their late thirties, did the same with others when their company was relieved.

Sergeant Schlagowski, a veteran of Poland, Leningrad, and Southern France, said it was he who gave the order to the platoon on the hill to surrender, but so too said the other two non-coms of the group who were interrogated. Lieutenant Pottmann and his squad ran into an American patrol and, in the fire-fight that ensued, took one dead and two wounded before calling it quits as hopeless.

Of the seventeen, four said they were Nazis, seven felt hopeless but had belonged to one or another Nazi group, two said they were anti-Nazis, the others claimed to be apolitical. Practically all had fear of reprisals being taken against their families, withholding of mail, rations, living allowances and even imprisonment. Six had been forced to sign acknowledgments of the reprisals-system when they were brought up to the front. Several urged T3 Straus to tell his commanders that they must inform the Germans how to surrender without implying dereliction of duty. It was agreed that guarding a wounded comrade was the best means. (American propaganda was careful always to pretend that a German soldier would be taken prisoner under dire circumstances, yet the very fact of the propaganda itself denied that "dire" would always be dire enough for the Nazi police system.)

Seven prisoners had seen American leaflets, remembering most forcibly the colorful and signed-by-Eisenhower Surrender Pass. Others had been told of the leaflets by their comrades. A couple had read with approval "Frontpost" or an equivalent. Significantly, Wessel, the anti-Nazi, had seen six kinds of leaflets and identified four: "He who seeks shall find." It was hard to get hold of the leaflets when locked into a bunker by orders and enemy fire. Powerful Allied radio broadcasts, American jazz, mail from German PW's in the States, American prisoners of war working (voluntarily, it is presumed) among Germans, and civilians of towns that had fallen to the Americans and been recaptured: these all were positive propaganda for the Americans, one or more of the PW's said.

Bad news for the Americans obtained in the interrogations: despite all bombings, the railroad lines still operated with remarkable efficiency: three days and two nights from Vienna to the Western Front for the unit of one of the men; impressed worker gangs of Poles

and Russians kept up the lines. Moreover, a new item of hardware was in readiness, an anti-tank weapon, "Puppchen;" it will replace the excellent old Panzerfaust and sends a projectile accurately to 400 yards and effectively to 750 yards; it can penetrate ten inches of steel armor; it is aimed optically with automatic adjustments.

The men's clothing was inadequate and in poor condition; their promised winter blankets, boots, and clothing had never arrived. Wessel also said that his company counted now 56 to 58 men, had lost 8 dead, 10 wounded, and 30 by sickness (mostly diarrhoea); talk of surrendering was becoming open; they were last located at Pfaelzerhuetten. From one or another PW came items of potential use, of a well-decorated First Lieutenant, Giemann, who wears the Golden Badge of the Nazi Party, of another officer who is the son of a regional minister, and so on. The ex-Dachau inmate provided a roster of eight names from Dachau of Germans committing murder and other atrocities against the prisoners.

Soon now, most soldiers seeking to desert will try to disappear into Germany, even though they know that, if caught, they will be executed or put in a batch for the Soviet Front. They don't ask themselves whether they will win, they know better, but ask how to get home and what is the news from home; they feel as safe as the home folks with the air bombings and drastic shortages. Most of the children are in the countryside, here, there, and everywhere, it seems.

The enemy form strong small group bonds as they have always, but now it is practically the only one, and it cements fast, because they have either had much war experience or they are very young or old and docile. Casualties don't affect them as much as they disturb the Americans, who are not used to them. By this time they have suffered, proportionate to numbers engaged, ten times as many dead, wounded and captured as the Allied troops, not from the western combat but from the Soviet Front, and men who have known death and wounds and terror repeatedly are better masters of their fears and that is all-important at the front. (In the so-designated Rhineland Campaign, 8 February to 21 March 1945, that brought the Allied from the German borders up to the Rhine River, only 1,330 Americans were killed. 53,000 German prisoners were taken. The Wehrmacht suffered at least

twice as many dead and wounded in the same period. It was a worse period on the Eastern Front where German and Soviet casualties were very high. The killings of civilians of several nationalities, including Jews, were at a peak, as were their sufferings from invasion, rapine, bombings and displacements.)

Facing the German borders, General Eisenhower commanded 71 fully manned and equipped divisions and all the logistical and special troop support that was needed for them. His airplanes were myriad. By contrast, the Provence campaign from St.Tropez to Alsace took the same period of time, suffered the same casualties, captured the same number of prisoners, inflicted the same casualties on the enemy and conquered as much territory: the Seventh Army, too, disembarked to begin with rather than fighting from immense bases and numbered only 10% of the soldiers that served in the Allied armies of the Rhineland campaign. Obviously, the absurdly weak German Nineteenth Army of Provence and Eastern France had been stronger than what faced the Allies inside Germany.

The Allied commanders refused to believe in the German weakness. Their intelligence sections went on finding the enemy in force everywhere. The War was winding down rapidly, but they insisted upon foreseeing new large battles ahead. Only sporadic resistance was being encountered, yet the despatches were using the language of large-scale engagements, viz., to parody a typical bulletin, "The 1012 Inf.of the 217 Division met with stiff opposition in crossing the Main River and was forced to turn South, there to await reinforcements from 141st Combat Engineers."

JILL TO AL JANUARY 21, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

A large black cat just stalked by the window outside, a menacing item to one whose fate is already marked by a succession of head colds and faulty household plumbing. Apparently he didn't think I looked too good either because he just came back to take another good look at me, a kind of low

feline double take it was. I just said, "Hi, kitty," being the kind of person who would trade jokes with a hangman.

I can't possibly explain the low physiological states of Kathy and me. We eat well, sleep a sufficient amount, smoke no more than three cigarettes a day between us, drink one cuppa coffee, one bot. beer, feel sexy, play games and have fun. But our noses continue to drip, we cough at night and clear our throats by day, and fight over the Kleenex! A change of climate is indicated, although according to that old quack who writes the health column in the Sun (I read Everything), climate has no effect on the human frame within reasonable limits. Of course, who ever said Chicago kept within reasonable limits. Right now it is average winter outside, not very cold and not at all sunny. A nice day to listen to the symphony on. I was just lying down and listening to Rachmaninov's Concerto in C-minor perhaps? It's a rare experience for me to listen closely to anything but I found it a very pleasant experience. I shall have to do it some more. Kathy is taking her afternoon nap. She walked all the way down to the corner by herself this morning, with numerous stops and bypaths. Mom got her a pair of high rubber boots which she delivered herself in person yesterday afternoon. I was very glad to see her because the weather had been so bad we haven't been able to get together for several weeks. Kathy looks like a fisherman in her boots and is very pleased with them. I keep running into people who have babies Kathy's age, who can hardly crawl, much less walk. But these children seem to talk, according to their parents, so apparently there is some divine law of compensation at work, since our intellectual child can just about say Byebye and that with effort. However, she makes a lot of noise.

Some man is coming over this afternoon, a friend of Paul and Ann's, who is in town in business. He works for United Airlines, so maybe he can help me in my so far fruitless project of getting reservations to the coast.

The news of the big Russian offensive is wonderful although things still don't look so hot on your front. Wouldn't it be nice if

things got rolling again the way they did after the Normandy breakthrough. However, just the Russian news serves to take the edge off my mighty impatience, ergo the more cheerful tone of my recent letters. But God, darling, it is hard, wondering and waiting. Sometimes I wish I didn't love you so much -- I don't really. Loving you is the great boon of my life, I'm sure.

Kathy is awake now and I guess I'll have to stop this and attend to her needs, whatever they are. I'm trying to train her to go on the john again, but never seem to get there in time. So now I'd better.

All my love to you, sweetheart.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 22, 1945

Dearest Jill,

Your latest arrived letters are finely calculated to bring me like the wind into the office of the Chief of Personnel to beg for home-leave. My reaction at receiving them was, you see, therefore a little mixed. Since they are the first letters from you in almost two weeks I am in a sense overjoyed to read them and to find in them my lifeblood of home news, murderous social satire, affection and seething discontent. But still I am sad to know that you spent the last week of the last year in such gloom, illness and concern over Kathy. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. You will find my letters of that same accursed week almost equally bitter and unhappy. It couldn't be helped - that's Christmas when everything it should mean in personal & world terms is in shambles. And I know the news from the Western Front didn't make it any better. I hated that last week of the year and so did every man here. The weakest and saddest of the men got drunk as often as they could lay their hands on a bottle of Schnapps. I didn't because I couldn't, I suppose, what with having to worry about all the men, trying to anticipate the next

outburst in order to know how to block it, bracing up some by example and all that sort of rot. I've wished often I could have the EM's privilege of feeling to help with everything and kicking off the traces, knowing that only he has to pay for his actions and that no one is taking the cue from him. Now that that hateful period is over, things are a little better. The men aren't so nervous. The news from the East brightens every day a little. Perhaps it will end very soon. Perhaps a new leave policy will bring us into each other's arms unbelievably soon.

So I hope that you feel better now and that you do believe that I love you and someday soon we can start to be really happy. We've weathered everything pretty well so far, with a sorrow and cost measured only subjectively - great but not enduring, painful but redeemable. I am always your man even though my ability to make myself tangible to you and the solution of your problems may be pathetically small. Please go to the mirror and smile as if you were smiling at me. And tell me whether you look as full of desire as ever and whether your blue eyes are still friendly, willing, mischievous and wise. I'll believe you. And say whether it is not better and cause for constant rejoicing that we are in love after all this time, whatever the pain of it may have been.

I'm glad to hear Kathy is showing signs of genius, probably the company she keeps. It is more surprising that she preserves her good nature throughout this nasty war. That she obviously doesn't get from the company she keeps. Although I sometimes believe you have a habit of blowing your top exclusively in letters to me and turning a sunny smile on my young offspring. Incidentally, I think you are quite right about keeping her off the phenobarbital diet. What is the stuff doing around the house? Are you still on a prescription of it? I only took it once or twice, in Southern France one time when I began to get symptoms of nervous fatigue. It cured me, or rather, the resulting good night's sleep turned the trick. But it isn't the stuff one ought to take regularly unless ill, and if you are reduced to that, I'll reduce myself right now to demanding leave so that I can put you to sleep as a girl ought to be put to sleep, by natural means

only. Besides it's habit-forming. You were always taking too damned many pills anyway, Jill-pill.

I got the strangest collection of letters today along with yours. There was first your enclosure from Mrs. Singleton. That was nice. Then I got a Christmas card and note from Howell, as dull as ever with gossip that seemed to be from another world. Next came a letter from Aaron Zolst, an old high school friend of Bill Steinbrecher and myself. He is a staff Sgt. in the Glider section of an Airborne Division. I hadn't heard from him in years. A nice guy - terrifically bright with a successful childhood ambition to be tough. He'll probably be coming overseas pretty soon. Hurrah, the more fresh troops, the sooner we can get home.

I also got a letter from a British naval lieutenant whom I met long ago on one of my trips from Europe, Mike Holmes. He gave me a pretty damn good analysis of probable trends in British politics. I'll forward the letter as soon as I answer it or take the address from it. I haven't heard from him in a year or two either.

Finally I got the Christmas number of the New Yorker. Yesterday I got a letter from Martin Herz who is ensconced in Paris. He says to give you his best even tho you didn't send him a cake this year. He said also that he was sending me some books - help the boys at the front, you know.

That was all and that was plenty. I've got some work to do tonight and must send you now a reluctantly final kiss for the evening, but passionate, five minutes long, without my hands in my pockets either. And if you liked that, I'll wrap up a million more for you tomorrow.

All my love, my only Jill.

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 23, 1945

Darling --

Three luscious letters from you yesterday and I like a cad didn't answer immediately because I was off indulging my mad passion for murder pictures. Double Indemnity was the name of the opus and I hope you get to see it some day because it was very good.

Your letters were of the 3rd and 7th, one containing pictures you took Christmas day. Of the one grouped around the Nazi pennant I thought, he certainly is a tough-looking cove. But it's a good picture of you. The men with you are mere boys, are they not? And a charming array of females in the background. I didn't think that those pictures you see every day in the newspapers, courtesy of some ten-percenter, ever got to their nominal destination. And now I have a great raft of unhung pictures of you which I must someday get around to adding to the album I started a year ago of your life in the Army. I don't know how you'll feel about being confronted with the stark evidence when you get home, but I really do enjoy leafing through the works every once in a while and showing it off to my hapless girl friends at every opportunity. You'd be surprised at the quantity and quality of the photographs you've taken these many years.

I'm glad you got the fruitcake and the New Yorkers, which I quite forgot I'd sent. Your observations on the Ellington piece leads me to the less happy one that Kathy has managed to break most of the Ellington records I bought after reading that piece. However, they're easy to replace and after all, you've got to expect some damage from the little one. I'm happy to report that, for the first time in two weeks, we're giving signs of relinquishing our colds. We spent quite a good day today acting silly and cleaning the house. Kathy tries to help by pushing things like diapers around the floor and occasionally dabbling her hands in the dirty mop water.

Oh, I guess I haven't written you since I saw Paul's friend from

San Francisco on Sunday. He came for drinks and then stayed for supper. He was a nice simple fellow, one of the deluded employees of United Airlines, and had a lot to tell about the family back at the coast. He said that both his kid and little Paul had practically constant colds and that Paul was very delicate, which I was sorry to hear. Not big Paul, he said he was as rugged as could be. Ann and the baby are away now in the mountains, where they thought little Paul could strengthen up a bit, but she'll be back next month, by the time I get there, if I ever do. I certainly want to be sure Kathy is in the best of health before I take her there, since apparently San Francisco is no solution to the problem of winter colds. But Kathy, even with a cold, could hardly be classified as a frail child. You should see her stamping down the street now in her knee-high rubber boots, and white woolen helmet, looking for all the world like some super-baby, a child from another planet. People, especially middle-aged men for some reason, are always stopping and saying, what a beautiful little boy. I say, yes isn't he, and let it go at that. I don't know why everybody gets so confused as to her sex, because except for her singular sturdiness and aggressiveness (which people apparently don't expect to find in a girl) she isn't particularly masculine-looking because her features are delicate and her eyes big and moony-looking.

We had the worst time this afternoon. I decided to be patriotic and return empty bottles, so I packed four beer bottles and two white rocks in a shopping bag and we started staggering out of the house. In the hall I dropped and successfully smashed one white rock bottle, lightening my load considerably. We got to the liquor store on 55th and I went in, offering the remaining white rock bottle to the surly proprietor. He said he didn't sell white rock. I said, well you do sell Bud, but he said, well, take them back to wherever you bought the White Rock. My tiny lips quivered and we went out and got to the A and P. I went in, bought several hundredweights of groceries, and then offered by White Rock bottle. They didn't want it. I said, look, if I just leave all these bottles here, will you just throw them away from

me. They said no. So I left the groceries behind, being unable to carry them, the bottles and push the baby in her infernal machine all at once, and proceeded west on 55th St., where the neon lights of a pub beckoned me. When we got to about Woodlawn I discovered the pub said Berghoff, not Budweiser, so I turned around and, uttering obscenity after obscenity, parked the remaining White Rock bottle on the fence of the Catholic church. Then we got back to the A and P and I started to go in and get my groceries, and dropped one beer bottle, making a mess on the sidewalk. I went in, got my groceries, and then, under the cover of piling the groceries on top of the baby, I dug a fair-sized hole and stowed away the remaining beer bottles. Let the 55th St. Merchant's Association take it from here. From now on I'll drink Bourbon and water.

I want to take this opportunity to point out to you the evils to be derived from a light touch on grammar (and I'm the one to say). In your letter of Jan. 7 you say, "It makes me feel better to know that you must be relieved now that the enemy is in a tight spot. I know we here certainly are." When I first read that my hair rapidly divested itself of its last wave, with visions of you surrounded on all sides by an unfriendly armed presence. It finally came to me, however, that you were relieved, not tight-spotted. At least, I hope that's the correct interpretation. Your area is still the only one, according to the papers, where the Germans are having any successes at all. The Russian offensive is really the biggest thing that's happened yet in the war, don't you think. One hesitates to get excited yet, after the ill effect of optimism of last fall. But surely the Germans will never be able to recover from this great blow.

Yesterday I made Kathy that thing I was telling you about once, you know, putting all her pretty cards from you and pictures of herself and her cousins and her father in a kind of montage in a picture frame. I got a nice big picture frame from the dime store for a buck, reversing the scenic view of the city hall of East Frankfurt, Ill, which served nicely then as a backing. I wonder if people ever buy those things to hang on the wall, or all the purchasers are people like me, who just need the frame and are

too dumb to make one. Anyway, now she has a pretty something to drag off the wall and fracture her skull with. Helen Hawkins also sent her some cute pictures so she really has an artistic frame for her destructive impulses. I don't use the playpen at all any more, in fact, it's stored away in the closet to be lent out to Bea when she has her baby, along with all of Kathy's other stuff. When I want to get rid of her now I just put her in the room and shut the door. She can open the doorknob when she's in bed but still can't reach it from the floor. Then I leave her alone for an hour or so and when I go in again the furniture is all moved around and all the clothes are out of the drawers. However, I taped up the light outlet so she can't electrocute herself anymore. I was puzzled for a long time what to do about that, because she, along with 50 million other babies, is positively instinctive about putting her fingers in the outlet. I think she did once because I heard her give an awful yell and went in there and found the bed moved away from the outlet. However, she survived with no marks.

Oh, don't ever worry about my cutting my hair. It's just one of those things I talk about but never do, like some people sit around and contemplate the perfect murder. I did finally hack off about an inch on the sides by myself but can never get around to the back so it keeps growing longer and longer. As a matter of fact it looks like hell but every time I wash it I catch cold. It would be nice if I could send it to the cleaners but, like Kathy's snow suit and your sleeping bag, what would I wear in the meantime. As a matter of fact also, your sleeping bag is probably the best looking object of the lot. Kathy's snow suit positively stinks but there's not a thing I can do about it until next summer.

God, darling, what I would do to have you home with us next summer. Just think of all the fun we could have then, nothing to do but swim and eat and sleep. I keep telling myself I'm really a very ambitious wife but when it gets right down to it, that's all I ever want us to do together. However, if you eat enough there'll always be time for you to win the world while I'm doing the dishes, damn it.

This is a frightfully roundabout way of telling you I love you.

Always your

Jill

JILL TO AL JANUARY 25?, 1945

Darling --

I haven't written you since Wednesday and today is Saturday and I feel properly penitent. When that much time goes by I get the feeling that I'm so far behind I might as well give up writing you altogether. The ultimate in defeatism, you might say. But, getting to the reasons why I didn't write. Thursday I did the laundry and had a sore throat and was bored and didn't feel like writing and yesterday I went to see a doctor and the dentist (just routine) and went out with Priscilla last night and so even though I did feel like writing I didn't have the time. The eyes, ears, nose, and throat doctor, a dear little German in the neighborhood, said I had an infectious guitar and gave me sulpha and I feel OK now. It just had been hanging on for so long that I had decided to do something about it.

The dentist shunted me out with a bill. Priscilla came for dinner and afterwards we went to a movie, the name of which I can't even remember, it was that awful. The only notable thing was that we went all the way down to 63rd (we hired a sitter, another German lady this time) and when we got there Priscilla said, "Ah, naughty gaudy bawdy 63rd St., the boulevard of broken dreams." Then we split ourselves laughing.

I've gotten all kinds of incomplete mail from you lately, one half of a V-mail from the 12th, a letter postmarked the 17th which contained only page 3, which must have started with a haircut because you were talking about what you and the barber were discussing. Ho hum. And you are going to movies and reading stuff. So am I. I just read three novelettes by James Cain, my

first adventure with that gentleman so well talked of by lovers of mystery fiction and Americana too. Ghastly stuff, very ungrammatical. The characterization is on the Racy Love Stories level -- all the heroes have broad shoulders and a corresponding libido, the heroines are little blonde bitches and even when the plot concerns concert singers, it is all carried off with the lower-class swagger of the California insurance salesman (viz, Double Indemnity). You can have him, also Dashiell Hammett, despite what André Gide says. Me for Jane Austen.

I am cooking a hunk of lamb and waiting for the Neugartens to come and eat it. I am a good lamb cook, as you may recall, even though I do have to look up in the book every time to see how long to keep it in the oven.

I think I will make this a short letter because hunger increases the acid temper of my disposition and after supper I want to mail it while I go buy a paper. That old beast Kathy sends love. Sop do I. She has been kicking around the past two days with these little girls in the building, who take her sleigh-riding on the slope in front of the victory garden. Much fun for her, much fun for me because it takes her off my hands for a while. More later, after I see that the Rooshians are doing. More love too.

Jill

PS Your daughter is a pet and a love. This morning I found her walking out of the kitchen, carrying a pint of Seagram's Old Rockingchair in her tiny hot hands. It was quite a fight, getting it away from her.

AL TO JILL JANUARY 25, 1945

Darling Jill,

I'm sorry I wasn't able to write you during the last two days. I had a nice, if somewhat gloomy, letter of yours to carry me

through them; it was dated Dec. 30, and who wouldn't have agreed with you in vilifying the old year? Today, when I got back to where I could lay my hands on mail I found a letter from Jerry Kerwin and one from you, old pal, written in the first couple of days of this year. Your change in mood was already apparent -- you were more aggressive, more quarrelsome with me, making plans and starting several diverse philosophical arguments at one time. I don't think I can take the full brunt of your assaults tonight. Tomorrow I may have more time to write. Tonight's must be a trivial and hasty letter. I am fairly sleepy. I have lots to do in the morning. I have wet socks to change. But I'll think of you a lot anyway tonight because it was a very nice letter you sent me. I've read it several times already and enjoyed it very much.

I'm sorry I wasn't on hand to help destroy our apartment. As I've already written you, just about the time you called it quits to your polyglot guests, I was being aroused by an alarm which dragged me out in a surly stupor into the cold night. The dawn of the year was full of tenseness and rumours for us. Every one was expecting almost anything. In retrospect there was too much ado. But wars are always filled with an excess of ado and the actuality of events is generally the least expected of all.

There is certainly too much to talk about tonight. The Russian news is too grand to do justice to it. The other day during the time I took getting from one division in the line to another the Russians advanced ten kilometres nearer to Berlin. It's better to talk of personal things, like the very nice package I got from you today besides the letter, complete with Camels, shad and books. One of the pillars of my ego is that you have such fine taste in everything else that there must be something in me worth tasting too. You can picture me now drawing on a fragrant Camel and curling the smoke into the bright cold air of France - no more Raleighs for a long time. No cheap substitutes. Jill's man smokes in luxury and leaks shad oil into the snowy wastes.

I drew a bottle of "Three Feathers" rye today along with the other officers. I just tasted it and it is pretty good. I also opened

the shad and that was good too. Have I told you before about the blizzards we are having here. The vehicles must be dug out of drifts almost every morning. Driving has been mostly a great trial. Ammunition trucks have been having a hell of a time. One of our crews spent many hours trying to lay a phone wire and it was broken right away, so they had to go out again. And, of course, without a phone, there had to be more jeep and motorcycle trips. Seeing a motorcycle trying to get over snow is a hair-raising sight.

So it goes. And so I go. All my love to you, darling, and a kiss for my Kathy.

Al

P.S. I did get the financial statement from you, but I still don't know where the different deposits are, something I think you agree I ought to know in case you get a lapse of monetary memory slipping on spilt coffee beans.

Toujours xxxooo.

AL TO JILL JANUARY 26 1945 (A) V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

Perhaps I can get off a note to you in this afternoon's mail. Nothing much has happened and I wrote you last night. I got a letter from Dad which was interesting and pleasant. It amuses me to read between his lines, and see how he builds you up and plays down things which he thinks might annoy me. Your New Year's Eve party was a beer party, as far as he reported to me and you just had "a couple of beers" and "a few people over." You can't say my family is any divisive influence on us. You report yourself to me far more objectively than they do. It's been snowing all day -- it's a damn white world we're living in nowadays. But it's still pretty comfortable for living, much better than Italy where most of the houses were destroyed. Many of

the troops have found good housing for the time being where they can tack up large Eastern front maps and sit by warm stoves changing the tacks.

A thousand kisses to you, darling.

Your Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 26 1945 (B)

My darling only Jill,

I've just poured myself a glass of whiskey in honor of the order of the day announcing the cutting off of East Prussia. It is also to our eternal love. I am sure, though the reference is here a passing gratuitous one, that if we ever were parted by anything, you would always be the person I loved most in my life.

Conversely, therefore, I am committed to you like nothing else in this world, for I am not suicidal, even though my obstinacy sometimes inclines me in that direction. But back to Russia, we also just heard on the radio propaganda of our own station so pro-Russian that five years ago a college professor would be driven out of town for suggesting it to his students. The occasion was a radio program locally written between two characters called P-Ball and GI. The former asked what was the difference between Fascism and Communism. The latter answered that Russian Communism was a government for the common man, that granted there was only one party in both governments, the CP was the party for the people, the Fascist Party, the party of the dictators. Communism was on the side of the people, "letting them have trade unions," etc. Just try scaring men who feel the war in Russia in their bones by the Bolshevist bogey.

I've been reading the New Republic of Dec. 4, 1944 that came with your package yesterday. It was nice to see all the books of the year I haven't read. That on top of all the letters I haven't written. That on top of all the kisses I haven't had. No wonder

that sometimes I feel as I am constrained beyond endurance by this life and want to burst into a thousand pieces which will go flying everywhere at once. Life is so full and I am so famished. Perhaps it is natural with me. I might feel that way anywhere. By most standards I've gotten around. But "getting around" to me has so many dimensions. It is not a straight track. It is a physical and spiritual gluttony to the final exhaustion.

Darling, back to books, would you send me "Mahogany," by Alfredo Segre (L. B. Fischer: \$2.75). He's a good friend of mine, now back to being a private in the Combat Engineers in Italy but formerly working with me for a while. He was with me when I found Alberto Moravia and Elsa Morante wandering around the hills near Fondi in flight from the Germans. Later on in Rome I saw a lot of Alberto and Elsa. We found each other interesting. Moravia is a complete intellectual. Elsa, also a well-known writer, is practical but very feminine. She is an attractive woman of about thirty, with several locks of prematurely grey hair. She felt grateful to me in a probably irrational fashion ever since amidst the confusion of evacuating them by jeep one hot dusty day last year when I was on my way back from the front, I took precious time out to help her look for her cat which became terrified by the strange men and vehicles and took to the dense vineyards. She, Alberto and I had some interesting times talking over man and his world and I suppose they found some of my attitudes refreshing though later, when she did a little work for me she found that I was a little tough -- perhaps she didn't expect I was so consistent a character. But Segre is a tough intellectual and he didn't have much use for Moravia who was always tolerated by Mussolini and was highly paid. I am inclined to agree with him. Moravia was certainly intelligent, though.

I should write another letter tonight to whittle down the backlog. Maybe another drink and a little reading in between will help the impulse. I like not having anything pressing to do tonight. There's a 6x6 struggling in a snowdrift outside but otherwise things are peaceful.

May you have a million kisses planted on your fresh lipstick this

year -- by me. Perhaps the reason I smoke so much is that every time I think of kissing you I reach for a Lucky, any port in a storm. And a smoke is supposed to soothe the troubled breast.

Kiss or no, always your

Al

[Note enclosed]: A few odd things for your odd moments.

Love, Al

PS. The French picture book is for Kathy.

JILL TO AL JANUARY 28, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

I'm clear-eyed, pink-cheeked, red-lipped and webfooted, and all because of the magnificent Russian advances. It is a sad commentary on the degradation of our civilization when a well-brought-up young lady lets out whoops and hollers of joy upon hearing that two million Germans are fleeing in confusion and several score are shot down by their own Elite guard. But I agree with the flamboyant Ben Hecht -- that all Germans are murderers and deserve their lot. God knows that the fuddy-duddy State Department and Foreign Offices that will treat with them in the future won't give them one millionth of what they deserve. I have a strong feeling they won't give them anything at all except perhaps a diplomatic slap on the wrist. Bad cess to them all.

Today, Sunday, we spent in a peaceable fashion. In the afternoon Lettie and I took the children for a long freezing buggy ride and ended up at the Anchorage at the Windermere, where the elders had a bourbon, to the consternation of the other patrons, who are not used to the ordinarily horrific sight of women in ski pants with one large active little girl in tow. Lettie

left her bambino asleep in his buggy. Kathy unexpectedly acted like an angel. She sat on my lap a good part of the time and occasionally would get down and take a brief stroll around the precincts, inspecting the patrons who in turn inspected her as if she were in the pink elephant class. Then we came home all frozen and ate dinner and I have been cleaning up ever since.

Everybody and their dog, including Fritz, is working on the problem of getting me a ticket on the extra-fare train to San Francisco. You simply can't get reservations in advance, it seems, and while I could pick up a cancellation for the same day, it would be a bit inconvenient, to put it mildly. I don't know what I'll do. If something doesn't turn up this week, a reservation for 30 days in advance, I may keep the one I have on United which only goes as far as Denver and take my chance on getting a flight or a train the same day out of Denver. As I recall the Denver airport, it's not the homiest place to hang around. But I sort of have this now or never feeling about going out to see the family, for surely you'll be back within the year and then we'll settle down or whatever your will is, to making love and having peace.

I heard tonight over the radio that the Russians had entered the first Polish town that the Germans had invaded in September of 1939. It is in a way the end of an era although of course the real end will come when they surrender and will date from the rise of Hitler in 1933. Or if you want to go further in this fruitless science of datology, actually our lives correspond exactly with the end of one debacle and the beginning of another -- 1919. And God knows where they'll end. I wonder how many other generations of reasonably young people were, and felt, so swept along by history as ours is. And it's also amazing how relatively immune some people are to it, even in our time.

I'm listening to Lithuanian music now and boy, is it jolly. How can those somber Baltic peoples, with their greenish complexions or however they were described in my first crummy sociology text, get so much corny jive into their music? Oh now they're singing a song that's in a more appropriate minor mood.

Well, this is silly.

I love you.

Jill

JILL TO AL JANUARY 29, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

It's absolutely freezing in the house right now. It's about ten above outside, maybe even colder, and unless I keep the radiators in the living room on -- they are huge affairs on the ceiling, ranging from one side of the room to the other -- the house doesn't warm up until evening. But if I do put the radiators on, and they are right above where the desk is, the heat just about lifts the top of my head off (see Boyle's Tenth Law of Thermodynamics -- whereas complainant of the first part, etc. etc.). So when confronted with the choice between a hot head and cold feet, I choose the latter. Anyway, my feet are always cold. Like the apartment, they're too big to heat up with one lousy little radiator.

I cleaned the house this morning with much ill will to all. I hadn't slept well last night, probably because I'd been sleeping well almost every other night during the week and my constitution needed a change of pace. So there I went through the house, mumbling and muttering with hostility to one and all. You came in for your share. Shall I tell you why? It's about that group picture. In the first place (I said to myself) it is damn near impossible to get the family together all at one time in one place. Since winter set in I can get practically nowhere no time with Kathy. And everybody up north is always very busy, with their various playing jobs. In the second place, I don't think there is anything worse from an artistic point of view than a group picture. I have never seen one yet that didn't look like a conclave of goblins. I much prefer little folders with separate heads, poses and moods, preferably taken with a good candid

camera. And I discovered from our experiences of last week that Kathy is not a fitten subject for uncandid portraiture. She wiggles and hops so much that it's impossible to keep her in focus and to get her with four or five adults who also wiggle, hop and scowl, not to mention the dog who I'm sure you wouldn't want omitted, would be well-nigh impossible. Anyway, that's what I was thinking about this morning.

I was also thinking that I'd like to buy a pair of high-heeled lizard or alligator shoes and a new dress. The cleaner has shrunk up all my dresses because, like everybody else, he knows there's a war on. And he always shrinks them across the shoulders, a span which simply can't be reduced, no matter how much I might try to diet accomodatingly. Not that I could possibly reduce if I wanted to or if it were necessary, which it isn't of course (I still weigh around 120, fair weather or foul). I've gotten in the habit of eating before I got to bed at nights. It's a pleasant way to pass the lonely evening hours and probably a good form of sublimation. I make myself a sandwich of old pencil shavings or whatever is at hand and take it into bed, along with a glass of milk, and spend the rest of the night tossing cheerlessly on the crumbs.

I'm sending a package off to you today, containing my old Parker pen and other goodies. I decided that one was better than the victory model I'd bought, so I'm keeping the latter. I think you'll like the pen better now that it's had a new point put on. Now we have to go out. Kathy is up and roaring.

All my love to you sweetheart --

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 31, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

Every day is a holiday since the mail started coming in. Each

morning before lunch now I have all of the trials and tribulations of life on Ridgewood Court described me in painstaking detail. I worry with you about what to do with the case of beer, mostly I worry about not being there to help you drink it - will it last until I return or is it gone already; I worry with you about the history of la grippe that seems to be running through my family without me around to close the windows at night and tuck you away into my sack where things are really warm and I worry about someday your suddenly coming to the conclusion that your worries aren't mine, even though I give you every reason in the world to believe that they don't interest me. I believe if I were to tell you how interesting they are you would freeze up and that would be unhealthy. You would feel that I didn't understand you if I took it all gravely, a matter I am unwilling and unable to dispute but on which I like to maintain pretensions. I was, back to the point, charmed by your description of Kathy in the open air and Kathy with a cold, also Kathy doing a number of other things. You do a fine job of characterizing an infant, the Pulitzer prize for it by the vote of your devoted husband, better yet a good lunch in Bergdoff's basement the coming summer with me, I, as your husband, getting a like privilege, with an extra bottle of dark beer for being so nice as to bring you there.

But this is all nonsense. I just haven't anything to say tonight that doesn't concern you and how much you are to me. A slippery thaw has set in which will soon enough freeze over most probably, doubling the evil of winter. I sent you a box of most uninteresting books, most of them in German. Stack them away somewhere or give them to Kathy to chew on. I am smoking and enjoying your Camels, - nary a one shall pass through the black market. I gobbled the shad the first night. Seriously, if you are in need of a few packs of fags yourself, I can send you some. I don't think the situation will improve at home for you and we've been getting a pack a day lately. Of course, if you want my real reason, it is that I don't want you to go smoking my good pipes and getting Briggs and Renoir worked in unhappy combination into the wood. Thanks for the article on the Rome newspaper situation which came today with

your letter of Jan. 15. I think it was an excellent article that showed how complex the problem was and thus was far beyond the ordinary journalism which always is pegged to a sweeping dogma. And so to sleep. Always my love, darling.

Al

[in the margin, around the letter: I got a letter from Buss & one from Ed. Also a new New Yorker - best thing in bed next to you. Space for kisses, still. And one for Kathy, after she wipes her nose. The Russki are seventy miles from Berlin. Watch me win a convertible coupe. No jeeps accepted.]

JILL TO AL JANUARY 31, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Al --

You know what, it's been 3 below all day. I hope it's not as cold where you are now, or if it is, that it feels the way it does here. It's so dry, unusual for Chicago, that unless someone had told me the temperature, I wouldn't have believed it. I took Kathy over to Diane's this afternoon and left her there while I went to the nose doctor a little further down on Klubart. It's unbelievable how painless and successful these sinus treatments are. I'd always been brought up to believe that once you let someone fool around with your sinuses you're a dead duck, both from the pain and the ineffectuality of it all, but here I am, completely free it seems from the cold symptoms I've had all winter and which I had last winter but never did anything about. He's a wonderful doctor, a refugee, and when he puts these things about three feet into my head I hardly feel it. I've been three times and have to go once more. I am the typical medical advertisement patient -- grateful and dopey.

Speaking of dopiness I get the prize in another sphere of my wide activities. When I got our statement this month I discovered I'd sent the New Yorker instead of a check for 12 bucks for two subscriptions a check for twenty, that I had owed

Daisy. (I also sent Daisy a check but somehow had made a duplicate which I'd planned to throw away). Anyway they went ahead and endorsed it and now I am left with the complicated and difficult business of persuading them to give me the eight dollar balance back. They must think I am crazy but no crazier than I think they are, a big company like that trying to pass themselves off as Daisy O. Blum.

Yesterday I took Kathy downtown and got her a pair of shoes at Field's. We met Mom down there and went up north afterwards and then I got a ride back, with this friend of Rosable's, Joe, who has a brewery on Belmont. He had called me up the night before to get Priscilla's number so I mooched the ride from him. Kathy was very good in the store although she balked somewhat when they x-rayed her feet, a promotional technique which you may not be familiar with but which goes over big in children's shoe departments -- with the mothers, not the children. She had worn great holes in her first pair of shoes dragging her feet in the tailor-tot. These are brown leather and won't get so dirty and are simply enormous. In the x-ray machine about half of them only were taken up by feet. But I guess they grow into them or that's the idea.

I got your V-mail of Jan. 19 today. I can't understand why you've gotten so little mail from me because I always write about this same amount from week to week it seems. What does it average out to anyway? I never counted. I know I set a goal of a letter a day so that every once in a while I can skip a day with a clear conscience, like yesterday. If I were to promise myself that I'd write you every other day (which is probably how it averages out in the long run) I might start skipping to two days' lapse and that would be awful. I always seem to have a lot to do at night, or rather, leave a lot to do, specifically the kitchen, so sometimes I don't much feel like writing and cleaning too. Last night after I came home I washed my hair and fussed around with my face. You may be pleased to know that I've finally gotten around, after all these years of imminent danger, to putting

[in the top margin of page 2, where Feb. 2 was changed to Jan. 31: "Wrong date.

Was looking at 1944 calendar all week."]

burglar locks on the windows. It took a long time to put them on after I bought them because it's hard to work a hand bit, or whatever they're called, while standing on a chair, but today the realty company sent over a carpenter to fix the baseboards which had detached themselves from the wall after repeated collisions with Kathy's infernal machine, so I borrowed his bit which works on a drill principle and after that it was smooth going. He was a very nice old carpenter and I gave him some coffee and Kathy had a good time watching him work. She's such a voyeur.

I don't know if your bet of a fur coat against a car is a fair one to you. First because if you win you really won't win because I'll want to drive the car too and how are you going to stop me. Whereas you won't want to wear my fur coat, or will you? Secondly you ought to have odds because I don't think there is a fifty-fifty chance the war will be over in June. However, it's your baby. But wouldn't we have more modest stakes, like banana splits. I had one Monday night with Diane after the doctor and had a really bad hangover the next morning. In fact, I probably would have felt a lot better if I had consumed the same weight in bourbon. it was near zero that night too, no time for loafing around ice cream parlors.

Do you know I am a size twelve? Not that I want to encourage you in your mad scheme to send me clothing (oh no). Kathy wore a dress today, and yesterday too. Yesterday she also wore this suit cousin Frances had sent her last year when she was born, a very elaborate gold colored tweed with brown velvet collar from Best's. It must have cost close to thirty dollars. It has leggings and a top coat belted in back and a hat of the type girls used to wear at college when I was there. Sort of like a riding hat informal style. She looked cute but it was a little big. For everyday wear she wears overalls, a t-shirt, sweater and a navy-

blue overall type snowsuit with hat and scarf. If I could only remember to take Mom's camera I'd make pictures for you. I have film that size but can't get any film for my camera.

I have to go listen to a thrilling drama called Counterspy now. I'll be back later. Later ... darn, I got talking on the phone to first Mom and then Joan and not only missed that but Mr. District Attorney as well. Now Kathy is awake, making long distance calls on her telephone. You know, she discovered the mystery and fascination of the telephone quite a while ago and when she's up and about, it's worth my life to go answer the phone. She swarms about my legs pulling at the cord until I let her listen in, requesting whoever is on the other end of the wire to please say a few words to the baby. Then she won't let go and yells and yells when I make her. Several times I found her tugging at the cord trying to get at it, and also picking up the light extension and holding the junction plug up to her ears. No more of that, I vowed, lest you find yourself catapulted to Halsted St., compliments of Commonwealth Edison. So I bought her a lovely wooden telephone today, red and yellow, with a dial that dials with a clicking sound. Of course our phone is the other kind so she's one up on the adults. But she has a fine time holding the receiver part up to her ear and mumbling her version of my dingalingaling to herself. Smart kid you have. No wonder I love you.

Jill

End of January 1945 letters

