

JILL TO AL JUNE 2, 1945

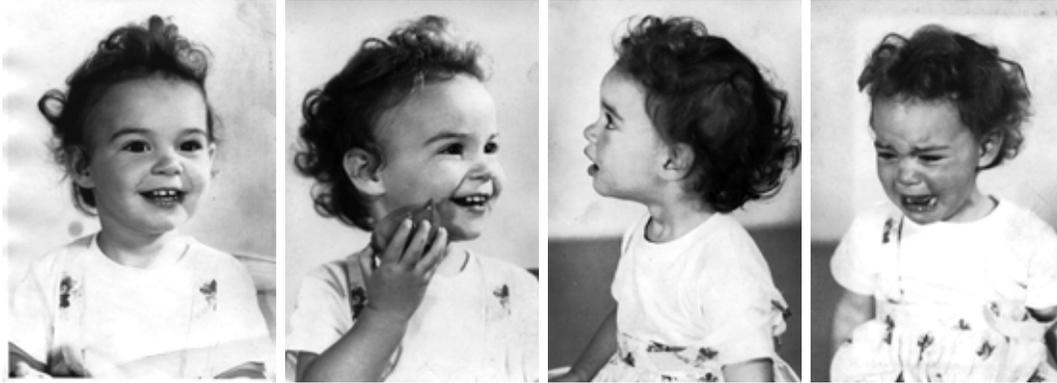
Darling -- Saturday night

I'll start this letter to you now, tho it's not my customary time for writing you, it being 7 PM and the dishes and all kinds of things loom ahead of me. But I'm afraid that if I wait till later I'll be too sleepy, as I was last night and the night before, both being blanks in the annals of our correspondence. These have been rather wearying days. Kathy is teething or something and is tremendously ill-tempered and alternates between not going to the bathroom at all (a euphemism, as you may have guessed by now) and having the G!'s which she did at frequent intervals last night, necessitating my arising at the weirdest hours to change and soothe her.

Nevertheless this afternoon I kept the appointment we'd made earlier in the week at a photographer, where, amidst much rioting and fussing, she sat for several, no doubt ultimately blurred, pictures. I took Joe along because it was my time to have him, and we hoped to get a picture of them together, but it was just impossible. They both wriggle too much, although he is a good deal more sensible than she. I don't know how many encomiums of praise you've read directed in his direction, due to so much falling on our child -- the only girl in umpty ump generations -- but he is without doubt the nicest little boy I've seen. He is smart, sweet, and when with me, the best behaved most tractable child, yet his apparent tractability is due to mere sweetness, since he is a true DeGrazia in temperament, a heller like Kathy. I'm terribly fond of him and get a little annoyed when the neighbors here pay all their attention to Kathy, whom they know and of course don't know him. Miriam is very casual in handling him, the way I am with Kathy, and that suits us both fine. This morning we met on 55th and went back to sit on the lawn on my block, while the two kids stomped up and down in the mud puddles, getting themselves properly wet. But we sat calmly by, on the theory that anything that keeps them happy and out of our hair is OK. I honestly don't see what good being anxious does -- they get sick or stay well according to their

moods anyway.

Kathy



Kathy is finally in bed and I hope this marks the end of an exhausting week, although tomorrow we will have to go up north for Sunday dinner. Buss is driving so that should make it easier. I did a hell of a lot of shopping this week, trying to get Kathy's summer wardrobe together, tho was spared the battle for meat because Mir got a little for me today, since she got to the market earlier. You should see the lines of people waiting at all the markets. Yet I still don't think it right for us to suspend shipments overseas for the next three months, as I read in the papers they were going to do. Our diet is still a lot better than anybody's else in the world. There are still a great many meat substitutes available, and for my part, I'm probably eating a lot better than before, because due to the meat shortage I spend more time trying to figure out a balanced diet for us both. One also doesn't eat so much and that is better too. I've lost some weight since I got back from the Coast and am just right now -- not all soggy the way I was. I got a letter from you the day before yesterday, dated April 20, but I'll be damned if I can find it now, although I usually keep your letters stacked neatly. Anyway you said you were going to Munich for the start of some new work. I guess you don't know any more about your coming home than I do. I heard from his mother-in-law who lives in this building, that Major Kepawsky was home, the lucky dog.

The precinct captain was over last night. There's some special

election Monday and he was telling me how to vote. The funny part is that I'll vote that way too. It's easy to understand the power of a political machine when even I (or maybe it's especially) am susceptible. Duffy is a nice guy, tho awfully dumb-looking, a big Irishman with overtones of Bugs Bunny on his phiz. But he always remembers to ask about you when he calls and he is very respectful to me, treating me like a respectable, intelligent member of the community, which of course I am, and he always says the right things about whatever there is to say about, be it full employment, the war or the peace. I know he's just a party hack and pretty small potatoes at that, yet he is either natively gifted or well-drilled by some of the wards higher-ups, who are very literate, like Barnet Hodes or Irv Levy. The election Monday has to do with judges (no choices) and bond issues (yea or nay). The latter all look very fine, as if Chicago were going to be one big beautiful city when the moneys are available, yet I can't help but think that this city is slowly choking itself to death. It is so damned run down -- simple things like clearing that playground we used to walk across in the cold of broken glass are never accomplished. The housing is, as you know, terrible, even for the middle classes. I think what stops Chicago is the fact that the people in it have no idea that life could be any better. I think it's a question of aesthetics as much as anything else -- and it's a quality that's totally lacking here, or in any city in America I've ever seen, with the exception of San Francisco, where even the slums are better looking than most 20-year-old buildings here.

Somewhere in this week's New Yorker I read of an American citizen's commentary on London -- that even in its battered and slum-ridden condition, a New Yorker, comparing his city to it, can't help feeling that he and his fellow citizens are victims of an unscrupulous real estate deal. Chicago and New York have that in common -- they grew up with never a provision made for the leisure or tastes of the inhabitants. Central Park and the Lake front parks have no meaning for the majority of people in both cities -- they are much too inaccessible. Much better would be a square of lawn and trees every few blocks.

Kathy, to return to the subject closest to my heart besides you, continues to amaze me with her literacy. She understands so damned much and apparently understands two-dimensional representations in books. She barks when she sees a picture of a dog and makes a buzzing sound when she sees a picture of a train (she has a lot of experience with Diesels and electric trains, ergo the buzz, I guess). This morning she got into bed with me and found a half eaten box of cheese crackers I'd spent the night with, and reached inside and put one in her mouth tentatively. Then she said, to my astonishment "It's good." She'd never used the word before and probably won't again for weeks. Apparently they store up a lot of language inside, much more than ever comes to the surface for a long time. She was delighted when she woke up from her nap this afternoon to find Joey in the bed next to her crib, and as soon as I got her up, she climbed into bed with him, and much giggling and jumping up and down ensued. They are very cute together and, without urging, she blows him a kiss when he leaves. She really can make a real kiss now, with much smacking of lips and sighs of "Mmm" afterwards. She found a big stick today and hit him over the head with it, and it was so funny to see this midget commit this unprovoked assault that he and I burst into laughter, and of course, she was all for doing it again and couldn't understand why I restrained her if I thought it was so funny.

I think I'm very lucky, having Buss and Mir so close by and Ed coming in on odd days. This deal Mir and I have is working out very well so far, and it gives me a sense of security anyway, having them close by. Even if I don't see much of Buss, I know very well that he'd tear down the roof for Kathy and me if I were in dire extremities. Ditto Ed, tho of course he won't be around for much monger. I don't know if he wrote you, but he took the tests for Navy fliers, and passed all of them, which is very good and unusual, and then the lousy Army Air Corps wouldn't give him a release. So as things stand at present, he'll be called in a few weeks for some kind of ground school or other. He was plenty sore about it, needless to say.

I'm drinking beer as I write this, and it's a pleasant way to pass

the evening. Out of sheer kindness, I buy this beer that Joe, that friend of Rosable's and mine, makes. It's not awfully good but then, bottled beer never tastes very alluring to me after the first glass or so. It's too fizzy or something.

That darn Kathy is still awake and fussing, some hours later. Every time I go in to see what's the matter I discover nothing is, except that she craves companionship or literature. Her first book is a masterpiece -- who-has-a-doll-and-a-painted-chair; who-has-a-train-and-a-woolly-bear, etc. etc. question mark. Next week Proust.

Isn't it a coincidence that we both read The Counterfeiters at the same time. What did you think of it? I forget what I said about it except that I must have been puzzled and somewhat appalled. Do I have to read Henry Esmond? Mac just returned it to me after borrowing it for an English lit course. I hope not.

I'm not reading anything at the present time for some strange reason. I mean nothing outside of the New Yorker and the papers. I'll have to get started on something right soon. It's a bad habit to get out of the good one of reading fairly good novels and stuff. I guess it's because I've had so little time since I've been home, or rather, have devoted so much time to the practical aspects of living. Right now I'm sewing a bit, trying to refurbish my summer wardrobe, since I have no intention of falling prey to inflation by buying clothes for myself this summer. It's bad enough that I have to get those fantastically priced small items for Kathy. I got a swell man's t-shirt for myself at the Army store here on 55th St. yesterday. They really look good with skirts and are a lot less itchy than sweaters. And men's clothes are a lot cheaper than the corresponding items for women, don't ask me why.

About once a month I get to wishing I'd married a 4-f barber. My hair is growing into the woodwork, it's so long and bushy and there's not a thing I can do about it. That is, I'm much too lazy to dig up a barber to cut it.

Well, it's about time I finished this long digression on the theme of loving you. I really do, too. I wish you were here so I could prove the point more fully.

All my love, sweetheart --

Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 2, 1945

My Sweetheart,

You oughtn't to feel as if I were conspiring against returning to your bosom, as one might imply from your letter of May 25. Granted you are in no position to see me drooling over your pictures and letters nor to catch the gleam in my eye much less to divine my innermost feelings, you ought to be reassured by my words. I have already turned down one tempting chance because it would probably have delayed my return. I am ready to turn all others down too.

I wouldn't worry too much about Ed, if I were you. I don't know his activities as well as you, but I believe that at his age a measure of intellectual insecurity over a period is a good thing. Especially since it will be sandwiched in before a period of regimentation and sacrifice, most probably. It will do him good to be a "dangling man" for a while. I think he must be learning and observing at a furious rate, however "lost" he may appear. As for advice, you appreciate exactly what the virtue is that is involved. I never could have said it so nicely, willingness to let oneself be pushed against the will. Though I don't think I can offer him a solution, I'll write him today or tomorrow.

Day before yesterday, Lt. Col. Culligan, whom I knew in Italy, stopped with us overnight. He is a terrific promoter type, very amusing and a good fellow. He discovered an ingenious principle of life and founded Capital Factors. It works on a most fascinating principle of extracting over thousands of miles of the

world the particular specialized facet of numberless individuals which are of immediate interest and use to other individuals. He puts them together and, voilà, that is his enterprise. Within the framework and axioms of capitalistic society, it is perfectly moral and indeed helpful, but its very facility and huge success make it suspect, an occurrence encountered often with devices that accomplish much with very little. Everybody ends a deal by splitting fees and feeling happy.

Later in the evening we saw a good Western and enjoyed it tremendously. It had all of the elements, a classic Western, and all of it was done just right. It was called Tall in the Saddle, yippee! Full of gunfights, chases on horseback, great glorious stretches of country, and a fine heroine (spitfire cowgirl) and hero.

There hasn't been much in the way of news on the readjustment front. We're sweating out the approaching quota for the army and for this company. I'll let you know as soon as we hear something. I have a job to do in Lyon and Paris, but don't feel that I ought to go just now. Orders of various kinds are in the mill and I don't like to leave the company for several days. I and others here were impressed in a way you can imagine by the French Near East affair. We were very happy to see the British step in. What I said previously about De Gaulle in a letter to you goes double now. Do you remember what the French excuse was to not join the other large powers in inviting the nations to the SF conference, that they would go as the spokesman for the small nations. (Here Hitler's grave gives forth ghoulish laughter.) We can't learn much about the North African revolts, but they are part and parcel of the new official French morality.

Time to do a little work before lunch. I'll finish this afterwards. Love and kisses.

We had a melange of spaghetti, tomatoes - stewed - canned corn, and spam with canned pineapple for lunch. Not very good, but I imagine you would be delighted to get any kind of meat at

home. Even the soldiers are now convinced that the meat situation at home is serious. The Stars and Stripes carries full accounts of the situation.

I finished reading Wright's Black Boy last night and am also as surprised as he is that he ever amounted to anything. I don't think he gives enough credit to his relative whiteness in setting him apart from other Negroes. He is probably ashamed to lay open that motive which he is emotionally so dead against but which can be so powerful in stimulating ambition. I'm just guessing, of course. Otherwise, the book is so objective, that only a hopelessly prejudiced person could help from entering into the spirit of it. I think, too, that he exaggerates the extent to which his young emotions differed from those of most young people everywhere, another case where a physical or social disability is credited with creating more differences than it actually is responsible for creating.

I haven't received any of the books you said you would send, but I understand that a large shipment of packages has been delayed and will be arriving shortly. I have enough to keep me occupied, however, miscellaneous reading, work, ball, movies, letter-writing, and unadulterated gold-bricking, none of it fascinating but all of it calculated to pass the time until I can see you again. All my love, dearest, and a kiss to Kathy.

Always Your

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 4, 1945

Darling --

That was followed by a long pause, while I tried to remember what day this is. I'm too lazy to go back in the kitchen and look at the calendar. Anyway if I don't fill in the above it's early in the month for your benefit, and the temperature is 32 -- a curse on

Chicago springs. Anyway it was clear today. Yesterday it rained steadily and we drove up north in Buss's car and spent the day with the family. It was very pleasant, although the noise created by three DeGrazia brothers and two babies was beyond conception. I honestly didn't let it penetrate to my consciousness the inherent gloom of the situation -- that you alone were not there -- and was cheerful withal, but last night my subconscious acted up and I had a sad and unrememberable dream about missing you and weeping long and loud. There's not much objective comfort I can derive from our present situation, even though the European war is over. You've said nothing in your recent letters (I haven't got any for several days now so maybe I can derive hope from that, perversely) about coming home and now everybody I see says smugly, well, your husband must be coming home soon now, and I shrug my shoulders, for lack of anything to say, in partial contempt of their ignorance. I think people must think I don't care any more, which is the farthest thing from the truth. If anything, and if it were possible, I miss you more than ever before. Fortunately I have a never-ending spate of housework, mending and ironing and shopping to keep me busy. Everything and most especially Kathy's toys seems to have arrived at the stage of simultaneously falling apart, and I seem to be constantly mixing glue or threading needles.

Laura Bergquist and Priscilla and Bill came over last night after we got back. Laura's been in Hollywood these many months as agent for Coronet. She says Dystal has ulcers and his wife is expecting a baby. She also gave out with a lot of Hollywood gossip which Aristotelian Bill and pragmatist me and housing authority Priscilla drank up like wine. They all send their regards to you. Bill sees a lot of Priscilla and they are a nice combination, both being great comedians in a small way and both being exceptionally nice people. And of course the family backgrounds of both are mutually pleasing to the families involved.

Joan interrupted this with a long rather dreary phone conversation and now I'm too sleepy to write much more. Kathy

sends you a big sweet kiss, anyway she gave me a lot of them tonight, and I am forwarding several. And for my own part I send you a million. More tomorrow, too.

All my love, Jill

P. S. -- the next day -- I got your letter of May 25 just now -- since I plan to go to the flicks tonight I won't have time to write again. Hope the dentist didn't hurt you too much.

Are these your 6 campaign stars? Africa, Sicily, Sardinia, Italy, France, Germany?? How many points do you have for service (I figured 64 + 12 for K.).

K. is in a bad mood. I got up 10 times last night to soothe her. I am writing this while waiting in line for meat. Rather, I am # 37 so I figured I could come home, write the great American novel & get back in time for a beef kidney.

I don't know what is wrong with Kathy, she is so bitchy. Bussy says teeth. I'm getting awfully tired of it.

The butcher is calling me, he wants to know where I are (paraphrasing Chloïe)

I love you.

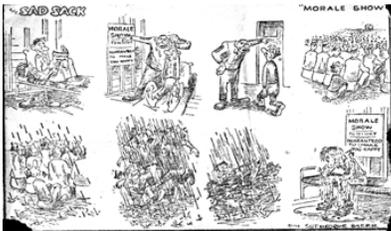
Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 4, 1945 V-MAIL

Dear Love,

With two aspirins, much fruit juice and lots of coffee, I should be able to stave off the jitters long enough to think this letter through. For once, I think I can say that summer is here to stay. For two days, it hasn't rained and the sky has been cloudless. I drove back home from Col. Quinn's party last night about two AM and all the stars were out, the road was clear and the air

was cool and sweet. It was a good party, attended mostly by intelligence officers, the latest and best in the series of social events high officers give to celebrate the victory and the associations the war made. There were more American women than I've seen in a long time there, several ARC girls, one or two DPs, and four girls from a USO show that's playing in Augsburg. They all worked very hard at dancing and being amusing. A band from an engineer outfit played and



“Sad Sack,” from the “Stars & Stripes.”

an EM did magical tricks which were astounding. I sat in for several numbers with the band and enjoyed that more than anything else, although the drums were too loud and I couldn't hear the piano chords or get in any subtleties in consequence. There was lots of cognac and some vodka and vermouth to drink. I tried a vodka martini and it wasn't very good. Col. Quinn at the beginning had declared that there would be no high diving into the fish pond before midnight but even afterwards I couldn't find anyone to jump in. I was willing but I needed someone with your intrepid character and where can one find that save where you are, standing alone in a world of fuddy-duddys. I didn't miss you only then. I did also whenever a silly girl said something in character. All of them seemed nice enough but so uneducated. One would think I would have lost my discrimination by this time, but it's sharpened, if anything -- starvation not only makes a man create ideal images of food, but when he finally sees the food again he gives it a much more realistic appraisal, sees all the details he didn't see in the period of gluttony. And when finally I turned to back here I felt that I needed your arms to rest my face against. I could have gone to sleep beautifully, kissing them. Instead, I read a few pages of C. S. Forester's Beat to Quarters. I got a recent copy of Coronet and see that Oscar has really changed the thing around. It's

much better now and if he can maintain the standard of the first, he should make it a grand success.

Nothing new on home-coming. I always love you and Kathy too.

Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 5, 1945 (A)

Darling Jill,

I received three letters from you today, one gloomier than the other. Although you went to great lengths to explain the reasons therefor, I wasn't entirely convinced of their adequacy. I am terribly impatient myself to get home and find the suspense almost unbearable, but still I can't feel any lack of hope or even gloom. I feel more like I did when I was a kid and was planning the trip to the country on a day that seemed like it took an eternity to come. It is much worse now because there is no certain day. That probably is what bothers you more than anything else. If there were a day, you could set your cap for it and the time could be clicked off in a succession of patient moments. I won't know, either, probably until shortly before I get home what that day will be. The first big batch of men, not from our group, however, were loaded on planes and told that within four days they would be at their home reception station, with only a few days' notice before leaving their units. I don't think there will be any difficulty in getting away by reason of my being a CO. When it does come, it will be pretty fast, and if I were you I wouldn't feel glum about the possibilities. You don't have to break any more limbs and you can keep your panties on, I'll be home soon enough. When you can't fall asleep, simply imagine that that very night orders may be coming through for me and that soon I'll be there to recapture the summer for you.

I have put into the envelope several bad pictures, taken on a trip to Italy Constantine and I made. The lake is Garda and is infinitely more beautiful in reality. I've got a place picked for us

to spend a summer there. The photos were taken, as you notice, shortly before I came out from under the mustache.

Nor have I written you yet on your wonderful gift of the three books. I can't imagine receiving a more perfect set of books at this time. I hurried to finish a funny book by Max Schulman on a soldier on a furlough and am ready to plunge into Mahagony, after reading the initial story by Katherine Porter on the grandmother. Did you have time to read Mahagony and if so did you like it?

There is no doubt that your analysis of Kathy's toilet behavior is correct. I have an idea though that when I come home she'll be so traumatized by events that she'll either get completely constipated or retire so quickly to the washroom that she'll be forever disqualified for the campfire girls. I think it's nice of her to wipe up things though afterwards. It shows that her independence is governed also by a sincere desire not to harm other people's conditions of life.

The weather has been perfectly wonderful here. I haven't been doing much with it save inhaling the breezes from our hilltop. I think I'll go out for a walk now before supper and watch the local yokels at work. Because of our commanding location and the fact that several of the men here speak good German, the whole territory has gotten around to believing the Commandantur is centered here. You can well imagine that we get a variety of strange requests and cases. And of course, the large number of Russians in the nearby camps feel that they are a form of auxiliary troops under these headquarters. Lena is liaison officer in addition to her other duties. The other night when Culligan was here I took him for a brief look through of the camp and we were lucky to come out on our feet. They are very impatient too with the waiting, but are in hopes of leaving soon, a matter of two or three weeks.

I'm still going out for some exercise even if I can send you nothing more now than lots of love and kisses.

You are always my dear love.

Your

Al

AL TO JILL JUNE 5, 1945 (B) V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

I've already written you one letter today but I am as afflicted with these long summer nights as you are, perhaps more so since I don't have a child who looks like you running around the place. However, your letters were a little on the morose side today and I'm sure you would appreciate another note. I got another this afternoon, making four for the day, May 24, two for the 27 and one for the 28. You're not doing half bad. I also got an ingenious idea for toilet-training Kathy meanwhile, which deserves writing to you. Since she likes pretty clothing, why don't you get her a beautiful diaper. Then when she musses it, she must part with it in favor of a rough tattered one. However, if she leaves home as a result, I won't take any of the responsibility.

I'm glad that Ed went after that Navy training. I hope he made it, even though I know it would deprive you of some valued company. Incidentally, I was already thinking, before you mentioned it, that you would be reluctant to renew the old crowd's friendships when you returned. They were all right before the routine was broken but it's hard to get back to them with the realization now made conscious that they are only a waiting device. You may call me either rude or sensitive, but I actually felt the same feeling as you. I half-thought: "Now will come again the stream of mentions of all those people in the Hyde Park neighborhood." Mind you, I like them and am glad to hear about them, but it's just a little as if I were to go through the Southern France campaign all over again. They are not painful memories, but best forgotten ones, time dutifully spent, not time

to be recalled. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? I think we comprehend each other very well. It must be nice having Mir and Joey around. Again I haven't any evidence, but I have the impression that Joey is a much nicer little boy than little Paul, although the future can easily change all that.

We are all on our toes here waiting for the next quota to be announced. It is already overdue and everyone is in a fine griping mood. There was a fine mail today and that just stirred up the impatience. There was also a delightful article in the Stars and Stripes about some California salon proposing a law to take care of war wives' illegitimate babies so that their husbands would never know they had them in their absence. All the men were charmed by the thought.

My windows are open as usual onto the night and the sound of the Russians singing down in the DP camp comes up clear and pleasing. They're singing some sort of choral in a minor key. Sounds like a cathedral choir. I love you again and always, darling.

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 6, 1945

Darling --

Today is the anniversary of D-day and I celebrated by riding Ed's bike from Addison St. down here. (There, I pulled all current events into one sentence; I should have been a newspaper reporter). It's a testimony of my physical condition that at no time during or after the ride did I feel the slightest fatigue, which is more than I can say for the jaunts I used to make three or so years ago, by the same route. Or it may be a testimony to Ed's bike, which is a great awkward thing, hardly jewel-like or is it watch-like in precision and perfection. Or it might have been Mom's cooking. She stacked the hugest meal imaginable into me before I left. Mir and Ed alternated in taking

care of Kathy for the afternoon. Ed says, and he truly is, he is a class A baby sitter. He really is wonderful with the kids. Yesterday he and I took Joey and Kathy to the Midway and he amazes me with his patience and stern-ness when the occasion arises. And last night I went to the movies so he stayed with Kathy. I only stayed for one feature -- it was a sort of a sweet movie called Sunday Dinner for a Soldier -- and came home early, bringing back two bottles of ale for us, which we drank rapidly and then regretted I hadn't brought more.

Ed got his order to report to Sheridan June 16, and then to go to some place in Mississippi. It's a shame he has to spend the summer months in the south but he seems resigned and glad to get going.

I got your letter of May 27 today. I was interested in your comments on Gide and was impressed by the same thing -- the type of male relationships depicted -- though in my simple fashion I just dismissed them all as a bunch of flits. However there is, as you say, more to it than meets the eye. I think you once told me that there is a lot more latent homosexuality among men than women. I guess men must seek and appreciate the company of other men because women are apt to be such pains in the neck, demanding and incomprehensible. Only a few hardy male souls can put up with it. (You are the prime example in my small world.) On the other hand, women only use the company of other women for lack of better. Only a few sea-going homosexuals really prefer it. Even if a woman doesn't treat with a man on a sexual basis, she can get along pretty well with the few isolated men she is just friendly with. Or maybe you disagree with me on that. But certainly the prime and valid example in my experience is my long-standing friendship with Bill Steinbrecher.

Oh, while we were on the Midway yesterday we met Earl Johnson, who said he'd just written you that very day. He is looking very well, somewhat thinner but sharp as ever. He was delighted with the younger generation, but who wouldn't be. They really are a pair of cards, rather similar in temperament, I'd

say too -- both very outgoing kids, with uninhibited rage tendencies. It's the funniest thing to see them express mild anger and frustration. They both wind up and growl, just like dogs.

Speaking of dogs, that damned Cooney nearly tore off my leg again when I was on the bike. He's a silly ass, but still the smartest dog I've ever met.

I have to go listen to Mr. District Attorney now whilst I wash the dishes. Be back later.

Boy, was that exciting. I'm a sucker for radio mysteries. I suppose it's an enthusiasm born on necessity more than anything else. They're a marvelous way to get through otherwise tedious chores, and almost every night there are enough programs on between 7 and 9 to get me to do the dishes.

Oh, I saw the proofs of the pictures of Kathy taken last Saturday. They look pretty good and I told her to make four of the best ones (only five came out anyway) into a little folder for you. I figure you'd much prefer a variety in the carrying size to one big one. They'll be ready in about ten days and I'll send them off post haste. The enlargements from the California ones aren't ready yet but I'll send them off post haste too. I didn't have any of the interior ones made up, getting your letter after I'd taken them to the druggist, but if these look good I'll go back again. It's a long tedious process at best.

In a way I'm relieved that nothing has been said yet about your re-deployment or whatever it is. At least it doesn't sound then as if you are being adjudged immediately as essential. Your present life of baseball and movies also gives me some ray of hope. What do they need ballplayers for? My God, wasn't Gaslight silly tough. That's exactly how I felt -- that they were all bats to begin with.

Kathy acted nicer today than she has in a week, at least. She slept without waking once last night, and today didn't get as

hysterical as usual. When I picked her up at Mir's this afternoon both she and Joey were splashing around the bathtub. It seemed that Mir had to give Joe a bath and Kathy insisted on getting in too, even to the point of fumbling around with her buttons to get her clothes off. Incidentally, she is getting much easier to dress. She is very vain and, even when she puts up a bit of a fight, will always end up by going to the mirror and regarding herself with great pleasure. Of course it's all my doing. The only way I could ever get a stitch on her was to comment long and volubly on the beauty of her person and attire. She tries to put her own shoes on now and it's quite a battle to get them on myself, and she has enough sense now when I'm putting on her overalls to stand with her hand resting on my shoulder (I'm in a crouching position, you understand -- she's not that big) and lift up one foot after the other. She enjoys having her nails manicured, though washing her face and brushing her hair is still a big battle. In fact, I never get a chance to do my own nails. As soon as she sees me with the file she sets up a holler to have her own nails done. The silly thing.

Sweetheart, I must go and take a bath now. My night. I love you more than anybody loves anybody and hope it's mutual.

XXXOOO

JILL TO AL JUNE 7, 1945

Sweetheart --

Today brought your fine long letter of May 18 from Strassberg, the first time I'd gotten a specific notion of where you were or are. It also contained a number of pictures which were interesting if not exactly heart-warming. My stomach doesn't stop turning no matter how many pictures of concentration camps I see. But it's a good thing to see and to keep from forgetting. I don't envy you being there, however. Goering's ass was funny too.

I'm not nearly so despondent over the matter of your coming home, now that I know that there's nothing today definite in your way, just the old Army snafu. I can keep hoping from day to day and month to month that I'll see you, this way. And the days do pass rather quickly, even in this interminably wintry spring we've been having. Today I did the laundry in a pouring rain -- indoors of course, and the clothes probably won't dry until next September. Then Joe came over for lunch and I had him for the afternoon. I can never get over his charm and the genuine camaraderie between him and Kathy, nor the affection he evidently holds for us both. Ed stuck around this afternoon too and helped me take a buck's worth of beer bottles back to the store, not an inconsequential amount of luggage if you know beer bottles. Joe, the fiend started to go to sleep in Kathy's room and proceeded to cough and laugh till he woke her up, then went to sleep himself, leaving her stark staring awake all afternoon, so that none of us except him had any sleep. Huge lunches and afternoon naps are the order of the day here, you'll be pleased to know. If you don't gain twenty pounds on our routine, you're an ill specimen indeed. I am getting a nice little double chin on it, though my rigorous house duties keep the rest of me fairly presentable. You should be happy to know about the big lunches -- both life with Ann and Ed got me in the habit. I am much ashamed of the old days when I begrudged you so much as a fried potato for lunch.

I guess it was stupid of me not to comment on Gide's method, which was excellent, now that I recall. Yet it had none of the tedious complexity of some of the flashback methods of presentation I've read in other novelists. Great intellectual that I am, I am now reading Eric Ambler's Journey into Fear, which is far from dull, unlike most mystery or spy stories. I haven't read much since I've been home -- too much excitement with the family and all.

Ed is over at Buss's tonight. Buss is going to New York for about ten days starting tomorrow, and by the time he gets back, Ed will be in the Army again. I'll certainly miss him, and so will they. I'm trying to lure Day out here for the end of the month. It's

about time she saw Kathy again and she said she would come sometime. Goodness, what would I do without all the family I have or have acquired. I still think it's a nice thing to have, even though I'm never very fascinated when I have to go to New York and see them. Your family is a lot more interesting than my New York one. I guess one reason is that there's not such a heavy chain of obligation involved -- particularly to be polite. All my family in New York are so damned touchy. I am very unlike both Paul and Day in having very little nostalgia for my parents or more specifically, for the parental roof. In that respect, I am somehow more grown-up than they. I've wondered about that for some time -- why I don't share their nostalgia and why I have so eagerly and cheerfully taken up with a new set of relatives and mores, and why, too, I never can honestly admit that I had, as they did, a very happy childhood. I think one reason is that, being by far the youngest, I was always on the edge of things. I was spoiled but resented it. But on family outings on the boat, until I got to my middle teens when experiences are no longer so significant, I was always rather excess baggage -- everybody else was giving orders and organizing things and I was always the ordered and the organized. A more docile personality might have had a very good time but I didn't. I don't think lack of affection or security had anything to do with my vague dissatisfactions with my family, because I never doubted for a minute that I was loved. Nor did too much discipline do it either, because I didn't have that either. It was just that I was treated like a baby and not given enough responsibility and was hardly ever old enough to participate in the carefree goings on of the older people. Hardly the sort of thing that would make most people unhappy but apparently freedom of choice is both my goal and by *bête noire*. But that's a natural kind of ambivalence to have if you've been spoiled, I guess.

I didn't mean to go on so about myself. Egad but you hit it with Liz. I don't know if I even had a glimmering of the insight you came through with so astutely although I always have been a little appalled by her conscientiousness and her admiration for people on the basis of their superficial ethics, viz., she admires

me because I appeared to keep a stiff upper lip when you were gone whereas another, more insightful person, would have just put it down to my temperament and let it go at that, and not made a tin god out of what is really only a particular kind of personality. You know me better. You know damn well that I squall when I feel like squalling but that I am naturally self-protective about my emotions if not my skeleton and don't ever go too far. On the other hand, I really do admire her because she is what she is because of rigorous discipline and more self-abuse than I care to think of.

Sweetie, I have to go mail this now and pick up the pictures from Cal. which I think are ready tonight. I love you a billion trillion times over.

Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 7, 1945

Jill, Darling,

It's either bed, book or write you, and "write you" seems to have it. It's fairly early yet, only about ten, and I don't get up before seven forty-five, and I've read a lot today too, finishing up Arrival and Departure in as little time as it took the hero to get off the boat. I see I spoke too soon when I wrote you that I had enough to read. I hadn't made allowance for my speed once I get my teeth into a book. Already there is a faint hint of a furrow in my brow as I brood over what I will read next week. Segre's book I finished up in quick time too in a malarial sweat, and I am left with the adequate Porter book before falling back on the second-rate offerings of the Special Services, whose books are a wonderful thing as a policy but no better than the Book of the Month Club in substance and you know how we feel about that, my little accomplice in crime. I don't know what to ask for now, or for that matter even whether I ought to ask, knowing how sensitive your devoted mind is to the least suggestion that your

virginity won't be tested during the time it takes you to buy a book, send it to me, and for me to read it (each step of lesser duration than the previous, he added mentally). You might send me that ugly volume of Thomas Mann you've treasured for so long. Besides its contents it will hold a place in my heart for having been one of the few books I was able to thumb through on your table, while waiting for you to dress, or go to the bathroom, or call down the stair to some man that you were occupied. You certainly had a mobile library with your Mann, and Mannheim, and your Parrington. It's no wonder you defended your third book so vehemently, considering it was one of the few you had. And it's a wonder I ever fell in love with a girl without a library considering that that was worth more than a fortune in my eyes. Was it your body? Am I like the poor bastard in Segre's book now, living years of isolation on the image of a pair of long, lovely legs? Or did I fall in love with you, and even as I think of it it becomes less facetious and more serious, because you only had a couple of books and I wanted to give you a book, my book, a lifetime of it, I felt I could fill your life with literature, that you could use it, that no one else seemed to be able to understand my books or deserved to understand them. I won't go on, because if I do I'll express myself too freely and you'll be a little sadder than I am still not with you and I'll be ever so sad that I can't drive over to see you in my jeep tomorrow. In these two years, I have often felt that if I tried to express with all the myriad words the depth of my desire and the barrenness of my existence, everything would become so forceful as to be unbearable.

I would like another book of Koestler too, if it is available, and perhaps you might ask Buss if anything significant is being written in sociology or political science these days so that you might send me it. And need I say that if two books come with one of your fruit cakes sandwiched in between, I would not say you nay. Indeed I would say enough to make you blush.

I emerged from those strenuous sessions with the two heroes of these two books with almost a feeling of "much ado about nothing". Perhaps each was worth the length of a novel to find

out what went on in their little minds. But Lasswell and Stekel write more convincingly and fairly well the same thing, don't they? In the one case a thought "germ" and in the other a malaria germ make their possessors balmy. Both are men of extremely bad judgement and lack of self-control. They make fascinating case studies, and my hat goes off to both. In a way Segre is the more honest of the two because he only settles the field he defined for himself, but Koestler settles a world on a case well-done, and although the sophistication of the ideas he gives out show that he undoubtedly could do a fine job on the wider field, he leaves too much for granted. I understand that some critics object to the book for having reduced a weltgeist to a child's misdeed. How can we ever hold an ideal, they cry, when it is born in smuttiness, and produced and developed by a series of miscarriages, as if the individual who holds the ideal himself doesn't come from a wallow of blood and unappetizing juices. Must an ideal be something produced by design, free will, with no apparent relationship to the organism that transports it, and must it be an immaculate conception with a life of sterility? No, and so the opposition to the point of the book has little to commend it. It is easier and more just to attack the book particularistically. Wouldn't it have been more meaningful if Bernard had had the same sort of experience and had come out of it ultimately the Fascist he was, for the experience itself was devoid of political significance, except by its actual occurrence, as the death of a politician influences events without intrinsic meaning. He could just as well become a priest, a martyr of the Church, or a chronic alcoholic, and the reason he didn't wasn't adequately brought out in the book. To do so, the author would have to describe the times more, the people the boy associated with, his education, everything that made the sapling bending to the traumatic wind a linden instead of a palm. In a fashion, the author says that when he makes Peter throw off his dependence on his analysis, that looking at his conduct through the eyes of the psychoanalysis (short course, half price) is only one way of writing his personal history, and that although he's not exactly sure how else to read his fortune, he had better reject that method. Then, as his final

justification, he rejects what he can't see in favor of what he sees happen, like Mott in None But the Lonely Heart, and goes off to fight dragons for lack of a more satisfying alternative.

Now that I have so thoughtfully furnished you with both a cure or some material for your insomnia tonight, I'll mail it off to you. Lt. Pregre came back from Paris with a bottle of perfume I'm sending you today. The choice isn't very great. All of France's perfumes are marked for export. This of mine consists of three bottles, small ones in one box, called "Indiscret", "Mon Image" and "Parfum N", a mysterious title which I though might be better for being emotionally undefined. They are Lucien LeLong and I hope you smell nice, although I always thought your odeur naturelle good enough to make me hunger for your ears. But then ice cream vendors get tired of eating ice cream.

All my love, dear Jill,

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 10, 1945

[Postmark on envelop]

Darling --

The postman brought me two objects of sheer delight today -- two pictures of you. They are really the best I've ever had during, and, so far as I can remember, before your entry into the Army. In the first place they're big enough and clear enough, and not just enlargements of snapshots. And you look very handsome and well-disposed to humanity, however it may have been a disguise for your true feelings, though I hope you were thinking of Kathy and/or me when they were taken. And they are much better than regular studio pictures could ever be, for so far as I can see, they're not touched up. I can practically lick the scar on your cheek. I showed them to Kathy, as I show all your pictures, and she seemed pleased, though as ever, it was a

battle getting them away from her. I shall certainly put them in large conspicuous frames. I don't think that showing pictures of you to Kathy and saying "Daddy" means much to her. In the first place, there's no way of her getting a real conception of what a Daddy is, and at best, her notions of familial relationships are vague. We are always saying to her, "Where's Ed" and she points brightly to her head. She responds much better when you ask her where her blankets or her chair are. But she was such a good girl today that I think it's worth mentioning. I think that in part her fussiness for the first two weeks we were home was due to strangeness and insecurity. It couldn't have been teeth, because no new ones have appeared and the period of toil and trauma seems to be over. I think I tend to over-estimate her toughness, because of the difference between her and little Paul's personalities, and he is such an obviously sensitive little boy. Kathy must be very delicate at heart too, but one overlooks it because of her exuberance and over-developed sense of mischief. She is getting into the habit of doing things she oughtn't to while looking at me out of the corner of her eye. I can't think offhand what is verboten in this remarkably casual household right now. Oh yes I can -- throwing things around are -- particularly if they are salt and pepper shakers when we are out having a coke. This morning we spent busily doing housework and shopping. Then this afternoon this gal Doris Bailey, whom I used to go swimming with when I lived at Mom's came down. She is at the University of Illinois and Ed knew her there too, so the three of us took a walk and had cokes. Then Ed came back and had a chop suey dinner here, me being too lazy to get in line for meat until next week, and then he left to spend the weekend on the north side. Buss also left today for New York.

I'm obeying your injunction not to show those pictures around. I hadn't much anyway. I forgot to tell you, earlier in the week I got a bond from you. Thanks loads. I was beginning to feel guilty that we hadn't gotten any for quite a while and I haven't tried to get any out of my current income because I have so damned many unpaid doctor's bills lying around.

I'd like to write more but the bath is overflowing. Anyway, all I wanted to tell you was that I loved you.

Always your

Jill

The next day -- Saturday night, to be exact

Darling, since I hadn't mailed this letter yet I thought I might as well add on to it, the paper shortage and all that. Kathy and I spent a rather strenuous day, this morning anyway, taking the bike over to 57th and Stony. Something was wrong with one of the valves and also, the man over there had promised he would have a little seat for her to attach to the bar. We started out in good order with her hanging on to the bar and me pushing the bike but she soon tired of that uncomfortable position. You understand that I couldn't very well push her in her machine and the bike at the same time so we left the machine home. Anyway after much toil and tear I half walked, dragged and carried her, all with one arm and pushing the bike with the other, over there. He didn't have the seat but fixed the valve, damn near blowing out the tube while he was doing it. Then we dragged ourselves back to Stineways' and had a nice lunch there. I gave her a full dish of chocolate ice cream as a reward, and then home for our much needed naps. She is killing me with amusement these days. She has today developed a very strong maternal instinct with respect to Raggedy Andy, and started to put him to bed on my bed this afternoon, carefully covering him with her precious blanket, making sure his head was uncovered, and patting it all around him. Then she shouts "G'bye dear" and runs off, and comes trotting right back to repeat the performance. She even brings her little chair over to the bed and stands on it, so that she can get in a better position to work. "G'bye, G'bye" she shrieks, and I think, My God, do I sound that way to her. I put them both to bed about an hour ago and I just went in there and she was still fussing with the covers and him. Goodbye dear she yelled at me as I departed. I wonder if it strikes you as funny as it does me. Almost as funny is the way little Paul refers to his

father as dear. He used to go around yelling "Dear, come here" and when Ann took him to his father's office one day he told the elevator man he was going up to see Dear.

This afternoon the people across the street, who really bore me senseless, had a little afternoon party for the various females in the neighborhood and I went for a minute and it turned out to be in honor of the Kentucky Derby, which I have thought less about in my lifetime than Kathy has of the Books of Zoroaster. Anyway there was seven people and each tossed in twenty cents and then lots were drawn for horses and Kathy grabbed one and it -- I can't remember the name -- won, so we earned a buck forty on the deal. Which was all right with me because somebody copped a three-dollar bottle of vitamin D stuff she takes out of the machine the other day, an unspeakably perverse piece of dishonesty. Ed was as furious as you would have been, in fact, it's the first time I've ever seen him in a black DeGrazia rage. Well, all I have to do is win another dollar sixty, or steal it, and we'll all feel better.

I just finished a very good spy story while I was eating dinner, Journey into Fear, and now that the mild depression of an evening alone with nothing I am in the middle of to keep me going. That's the advantage of reading nice long books. Maybe I'll go out in a little while and see if I can't find another Eric Ambler.

In response to a call I went in to Kathy's room again just now and found her still full of beans. I changed her, gave her a bit of milk and she found an emery board someplace and is now lying flat on her back in the dark, filing her nails. I will really have to be careful of my mannerisms and speech from her on in because she is rapidly passing into the stage of pure imitation. She loves to watch me when I wash and make up in the morning. She stands on the john seat and borrows an empty lipstick and puts lipstick on and when I finish off with a dab of grease on my cheeks she must always have a little put on hers. Fortunately I don't use much make-up or it would be an all-day job getting us both out of the house. I don't even use powder

any more because she dropped my old puff in the can and I haven't gotten around to getting a new one.

I think I will write a letter to Liz now. I haven't written her for a long time. I wonder what you are doing right now, whether some winged courier hasn't just walked into your billets and said, "DeGrazia, I declare you a free man!" I see where they are lowering the points for discharge. Maybe that means they will be correspondingly easier on officers, not for points, I mean, but for those intangible goods that make officers so damned necessary or unnecessary as the case may be. Do you know what I'll do when you come home? I'll never speak to another person except you and the family. Everybody else bores me silly.

I love you darling and here is one more good night prayer that you'll be home soon.

Love -

Jill

[note – unsure that this belong with the June 10 letter]

P. S. Kathy has 21 horrible suppurating mosquito bites from yesterday. I have about 9, but not anything nearly so bad. I think the Indiana countryside the dreariest yet. Whatever made me think I'd like a house in the Dunes -- And the people, mon Dieu. The natives are at best criminal types and the Chicagoans are cattle. Another score to settle with Chicago -- the terrible hinterland. The funny thing is that parts of Chicago are exceptional; like the Kenwood neighborhood, but then when you ponder how it is surrounded on all sides by illimitable stretches of slums, industries, and barren prairies, one's enthusiasm wavers. That's another thing I like about the West *[rest missing]*

AL TO JILL JUNE 10, 1945 V-MAIL

Jill, My Love,

How intolerable I am for not having written you these last two days. I guess writing is not only a function of time but also a function of having the time properly placed. The night before last I was tired from a hard day and last night I had over three friends from the Eleventh Evac. Hospital, the Major who had given me two fillings yesterday morning, named Leinweber, Lt. Casey, and his girl Lt. Winchester, a very nice person. Casey I met way back in a hospital near Caserta during the eruption of Vesuvius, a strange world, isn't it? Here we go following each other around. A small and a medium filling aren't bad for a half of a year, are they? I'm very lucky with my teeth. Several of the men have been having grave difficulties on that score lately, and the dentists over here are shamefully overworked. All of the Eleventh Evac. has been overseas for over two and a half years. They are dead tired and it is very sad to hear them talk about the hopeless situations. There is so little one can do about it. Even now they are pitched out in tents, living only with a modicum of comfort.

The Stars and Stripes today wrote that the number of those in the ETO with over 85 points numbered only around 250,000. That is indeed good news. It means we are indeed upper crust, the most fatigued of the lot, the droop that distinguishes. Keep your fingers crossed for the quota next week and God be with us. I took a beautiful route to Munich today, not the one that goes along the Autobahn but the one that cuts over to the Ammersee, which is shaped like one of our finger lakes. The country is very green from all the rain and is or seems to be very rich. One of the old dive has a motor boat tour of the lake with a refreshment point half way along the route, and we stopped there for a beer, my companion being George Glade who would make a fine soldier if he could only shut up instead of giving out a continual patter. I got back around suppertime, a little late. Lena fixed me up with a not too good mess, and up to now I've been working away at the day's accumulation. I got a

good connection through Paris and got a lot settled over the phone. I feel good in consequence because things are so much more efficient in a two-way communication than by cable or letter. And I hate to travel, even to Paris. Wally is leaving us in a couple of days to go North to join Habe on a good editorial job. I'm sorry to see him go, because though he has a difficult temperament often, he is so intelligent and capable. Yes, Roos and Anspacher have been transferred out. Chin up, sweetheart, See you soon.

Always your

Al

P.S. A big kiss to Kathy, through channels. I sure wish she weren't so illiterate. No letter for days.

P.S. We are not to be confused with any old PWB, there are numerous varieties & functions.

AL TO JILL JUNE 11, 1945

Dearest,

Here are some really nice pictures of a number of the men. It's a rousing pay night. Lt. Constantine is paying off and there's a barrel of beer on the table from which the payees are quenching their early evening thirst. Most of the older men are there. The man holding up his money & smiling in one picture is Williams, the mess sgt. The 1st sgt, Jack Taubert, is on extreme right of same. The tall boy on his left is Wiemert, a drawling humorous fellow from Maine with grey hair (only 24 yrs old). The big vehicle is the radio van and on the left is a half-track. The shots were made by Crowell from a window of the castle. There are some wonderful positions of relaxation in evidence, aren't there?

Nothing new today of readjustment, to change the subject. It's

been a rainy day and only now is the sun coming out in stretches. I just arrived back from HQ where I talked with Col. Perry and picked up a little mail that was at the APO for us. Nothing from home for me, though. Mail has been bad this last week. I hope you are well and not passing the time too onerously. I wish I could hold you in one long kiss during the time it is taking me to get back to you. But be as it may I love you dearly.



Payday at Schloss Strassberg.

Say hello to the family for me. One of these days I must write Daisy & Walter again. It's been some time since we've corresponded. Your Unk's paper isn't bad though the type impression is poor. The idea is sound anyhow.

A thousand kisses to you & Kathy,

Al

JILL TO AL JUNE 12, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

I feel very badly that I haven't written you for two days, and for very trivial reasons at that -- a movie Sunday night -- Laura, which was wonderful -- and a meeting last night. I am going to be working on some sort of poll on post-war employment that Ruth Shils and one of the [etc ?] from IVI have worked up. I don't know how or why I get roped into such things, except for my enduring interest in IVI or what it stands for, you know, community participation in stuff, because I loathe interviewing from the very bottom of my pale pink corpuscles. However I

went to the meeting, which was to train interviewers, and will reluctantly start to interview one of these days those hapless citizens selected by the sample. The poll doesn't look too good to me, rather, the questionnaire, but Ruth said even Buss had a crack at reviewing and formulating the questions so it must be all right. Anyway, I was about to say I got three letters from you yesterday, the 21st, the 29th and June 4th, the last a V-mail, the speed of which astounded me so that I am replying in this onerous form of communication. Your letters were all about your Russian maid and parties, and I'm thankful you're having a good time, relatively speaking, both for the virtue of it itself and also the fact that it signifies that you're not being very busy and therefore (maybe) not very essential. I don't know how to treat the news that the 3rd and 7th armies will be kept for occupation. Offhand I'm not very happy about it yet it may still mean that a lot of personnel will be released. Does anybody ever say anything about getting the wives over there? I wish to be the first, if so. Some days without you seems to be harder than others, and the past three days, since Sunday, seem to have been particularly hard. I guess it started with Saturday night my dreaming of you a lot, that you were in a camp around Boston, being held incommunicado as usual, and I was trying to get a plane to fly to you because we only had one Saturday night together. Needless to say, my eyes wouldn't focus when I tried to look up a plane company's number in the book to call, and the buses to the airport weren't running, and everything was snafu. It was very frustrating. I was in a bitch of a humor Sunday and thought to work it off with a long walk but didn't succeed. I felt better by nightfall because Ed came back and I went to the movies while he stayed with Kathy. Yesterday I took Kathy over to this playground where the University elementary school is, and there were a few girls I knew there, like Dan Smith's wife, and it is always very annoying to me to be practically the only service wife in any gathering. I met John Howe's wife there too, a dopey but pretty girl. As I've said before, it probably would be easier for me to get along if there were more people around in my boat, as around an Army post or on trains, where there are almost exclusively such displaced personnel as I, but around

here, all is peace and contentment and a goddam pain in the ass. The only time that life seems reasonably normal and full is when Ed is around because I can cook for him. He was here for lunch today and went home afterwards, and won't be back until Friday. And Saturday he reports to Ft. Sheridan.

2. June 12-13. This morning we left Kathy with Miriam and went horseback riding from the Midway stables. I've ridden worst horses but you know how stable horses are anyway, particularly in a big city at a popular stable -- miserable worn-out things, although some, like mine, manage to keep nice mouths through it all. Ed rode the hell out of his horse, a big rangy thing with a hard mouth, and brought it back in a sweat, which made them very mad, at me as well as at him. I tried to keep him from galloping but after taking a try at his horse, I realized that he was hard to hold in, particularly if you ride, as Ed does, with the reins flying. I guess there is no solution to this riding problem except to get one's own horse. You can't prohibit inexperienced riders from riding, and if they do, the horses will always get ruined. What made me mad was that they accused me of running too. I felt like saying, "Look, sister, I haven't finished paying the bill on the last time I gave a horse his head." That isn't exactly true either, because the reason I fell off was that I was trying to hold him in and therefore a little off balance when he shied. Incidentally, my shoulder doesn't bother me one little bit, on or off a horse. So you see, I didn't over-estimate my durability at all.

I stopped abruptly there and for no good reason, last night, but it probably was for the best as I'm sure I would have said something fiercely gloomy if I'd gone on. Your letter today, June 5, cheered me some, because you pointed out the possibility that it may be any day now. Well, as long as you're not stuck with occupation troops. My letters must be getting to you rather fast since I've only been home three weeks, I think, and yours are too. Your letter also contained some pictures you took in Italy, rather skimpy representations of your beloved phiz. No, I didn't have time to read Mahogany. Speaking of vodka (which you did in some previous letters) who do you think I saw at the

market yesterday. Bill King (we used to drink vodka at their place). He is in town on furlough for a couple of weeks and is going to go to some Midshipman's school in Pennsylvania. He looks very seamanlike in his sailor suit and is all tanned up. I didn't get much chance to talk but they're coming over some night, I guess.

Outside of that, not much has happened today. Kathy and I took a walk over to 55th and Cottage Grove to get a little seat for the bar on the bike, which she manages to stay on in defiance of gravity. We passed all the stores and places at that end of town we used to frequent in the old days and it threw me into a fit of gloomy nostalgia, from which I was revived rather suddenly by going into one of those kosher delicatessens around there and purchasing some herrings, salami and beagles (bagels!). I don't think that's the way to spell them but those are those very hard rolls shaped like a doughnut and indigenous to that end of town. The man gave one to Kathy for free and she ate it with relish, presenting a very humorous sight to all passersby. For one thing, they are hard as hell, for another thing, they are surrounded by the same sort of local humor as a batch of gefilte fish. God knows what atavism prompts us to like that sort of food, for, as you know, my clan, being as assimilated as baked beans, would recoil from such products as from smallpox. Anyway I had a nourishing if peculiar lunch of herring and chocolate milk and feel no worse for it. This afternoon we just messed around with the bike, practicing tentatively our sister act on it, and got ice cream cones for ourselves and the four little girls who sometimes surround us like tugs around the Queen Mary. Kathy handles an ice cream cone very competently but certainly looks like hell afterwards. Next time I must remember to buy vanilla. It's not quite so obvious.

Ed is coming down tonight and Priscilla just called up and said she and Bill would drop by, so I am trying to get this letter finished before the hordes drop in on me. I meant to tell you too, that George Peck was found in a German PW camp and is apparently OK. I'd heard it vaguely anyway, and then there was

some story in this week's New Yorker (which Oliver told me about) which mentioned finding him. Apparently he'd been wandering around when the writer came abreast of all these DP's and George leaped into the jeep and went forth with the writer in search of more prisoners, getting a good edge on, on the way. Very Peck-ish, I suppose I should read the story myself and not relay it to you so third-handedly.

I finished another Ambler story, Cause for Alarm, and didn't find it so good as the first one I read, Journey into Fear. But still way above average for the genre, I suppose. Anyway, it's fun reading adventure stories for a change. They make me so deliciously sleepy.

Kathy had been behaving very nicely these days, except that she wakes up at six thirty in the morning, driving me into a rage. It's not that I would normally object to getting up so early, it just seems so unreasonable in the face of her advanced age and also that I really don't have enough to do to warrant getting up that early. Tomorrow I expect a cleaning woman in, anyway she said she was coming in and then I will be busy. One always works twice as hard when they are here as when not. But the joint is dirty and I can find too many excuses, now that the weather is reasonably warm, for not staying home and cleaning it myself. Anyway I should line somebody up for when you get home, for then surely we'll want to be free from domestic worries. I take a wild guess that you'll be home by September. What do you guess? Again I'm trying to play safe so that we won't be disappointed. I was way off on the end of the war. I said August 1st.

Darling, I have to do the dishes now for the place is surely crummy. I love you very much and pray it will be July, not September.

Always yours,

Jill

This is edited by Steinbrecher's pen. The reason he is here, he

says, is in commemoration of your graduation from high school.

JILL TO AL JUNE 14, 1945

Darling --

My life can hardly be a sad one, the mailman bringing me two letters a day from you as he did today, and as he has been doing quite frequently of late. Your letters today were from June 2 and June 5, both pleasingly recent. Ed was down today, his last day on the south side, and every time he is here and I got a batch of mail from you, he snorts with a mixture of envy and disgust -- disgust that I should be the sole recipient of all these goodies. All I can say is, "Look, you're not married to him." He did say something to the effect that you and I must have a good relationship to write so frequently and I averred so modestly.

I walked him over to the bookstore this afternoon where he collected his last check and then we said goodbye. Kathy gave him a nice kiss unexpectedly, since she doesn't always kiss when you tell her to, and then we parted because I had to take her to the doctor. I felt a bit badly about seeing the last of him, because it had been so nice having him around and if possible, I am fonder of him than ever before. But them's the conditions dat prevail, as Jimmy Durante would say. I know that he is rather glad to get going, and to abandon his semi-civilian status for a while to come.

Your letters, whatever their intention, really have cheered me a lot, because now I know that anything can happen, and that you're not stuck for all time. There is a good deal more excitement in opening them now too -- every day I expect some word or other, some minor indication of what your status will be.

Oh, one of your letters contained a note to Kathy on Hitler's elegant stationary, and I promptly put it in her framed collection of mementoes of her father and family. I wonder if she will cherish her little collection of things her Dad collected for her

during the first two years of her life as much as I do. I think she will because I don't see how she can help feeling about you the way I do. Aren't daughters in the normal family situation usually influenced by their mother's opinion of the father? Kathy ought to be so enamored of you that she'll never get around to finding her own young man, and the two of us will be battling it out for your affections for the end of our days, with you the beneficiary, since she'll probably learn to make pie to get an edge on me.

Oh, as I was saying, I took her to the doctor for a routine visit and to our astonishment she had a temperature of 101 and a red throat, he said. The funny part was that she'd been acting and eating very nicely and normally all day. I took her home rather promptly, but not before I stopped at a drugstore for some prescription cough medicine he gave me. While I was waiting around for it inside, I noticed a small but active crowd outside around her machine and I rushed out, and there was Kathy standing on the corner of 57th and Blackstone stark naked. She'd climbed out of her machine and somehow shaken herself out of her sunsuit and pants I'd rather carelessly thrown on her at the doctor's. I rushed her in the drugstore, blushing furiously, for some silly reason, and dressed her again. Being a little ill affects her curiously, because she was awfully good tonight, ate her supper nicely and even took the awful tasting cough medicine with many a shudder but no screams. I think maybe she is nice when she is sick because I am nice then. I really must be careful not to get out of patience with her at times. One always tends to expect too much. Maybe if I go to bed early tonight I won't mind so much getting up so early in the morning with her.

I spent this evening in good works, putting new shelf paper in the kitchen. The only thing is that it takes me so long to do it that by the time I have the new paper on the top shelves it's time to start with the bottom ones again. That's the sin of living in this dirty city. I am so afraid you're going to come home and the place will be a mess and your letters piled up since November in the desk drawer. I have been buying a lot of asparagus lately so I can get the rubber bands they put around

the stalks for tying up your letters ... I am getting awfully sick of it, though.

Well darling, I think I'll go to bed now. All my love to you, as ever, and lots of big sweet kisses, as Kathy would say if she could say it.

Jill

AL TO JILL JUNE 14, 1945

Dearest Jill,

The disgusting state of the mails these days has left me with not a single letter from you in almost a week. I'm not quite on my way home yet, though I'm sure that I'll be way ahead of your modest and somewhat pathetic estimate of six months, and therefore am as much or more in need of your consolation, information and happy literary company as ever. The days go by rapidly and regularly here now. The last two evenings we've had movies, Conflict, with Humphrey Bogart being last night's dish and a good one. I think it rather unfair to psychoanalysts inasmuch as the obviously mutually antagonistic couple were regarded as a perfect marriage by such educated people. I think it's fairly easy to tell when two people aren't in love with each other, don't you? They make things uncomfortable for others. The other night, Pregre brought in a French officer with his mistress, a well-educated girl of about 28 who was dependent on him now, since he is in charge of DPs and she works for him. He is very jealous of her and she is completely muddled by the mixture of economic necessity and love. The French are certainly interesting people -- their minds are always galloping in some direction. The Poles and Russians you see around are much more ordinary in their actions, although sometimes you wonder about the Russians whether it is inscrutability or stolidity. Pregre came in last night from a trip to Strasbourg, bearing several cans of pâté de foie gras, a kilo of good butter

and some fine French bread. He also had a little bottle of Pernod which is extremely difficult to get. I am sending you the largest of the pâté cans and I can assure you, and Kathy too, that it is the most expensive can of food you have ever eaten. I had better say no more lest you beat and divorce me when I return. But I'm sure that you'll delight in its flavor and perhaps it will carry you through a couple of more late evening snacks. When I think of the times you used to keep me awake late at night, reading in bed, stark naked, wearing a pair of spectacles! Well -- when I think of them -- I want to do it again right now.

Always all my love.

Al

End of June (first of two parts) 1945 letters

