

JILL TO AL MAY 1, 1945

Darling--

This is the great experiment, whether I can type or not and it seems to be successful. In fact, the slowness of the pace I must keep will probably render for you the most accurately typed letter you've ever received from me. It seems I can use my right hand for such purposes if I can lean the heel of the palm for a fulcrum. I went to the doctor today, to have my shoulders rebound. It was a distinguished visit, in that the dress I had slipped on with relative ease was impossible to get off, and the ensuing scene with several puffing nurses and a doctor and me wriggling and bare legged was something out of a Coney Island peep machine. Finally they had to rip the dress down the seams and I went home in the car, fortunately, with nothing on but a coat and underpants. My arm needless to say is healing fine and my mind seems to have no more than its usual aberrations, which include, as you know, a singular lack of modesty. Oh, before that I went and had my hair washed in a beauty parlor, vulgar phrase that. My god, when I think of all the money I have saved by not having my hair done -- you simply must buy me a fur coat as a reward.

I haven't been writing you very much since my fall from grace and meanwhile the subject matter has been piling up like fury. For one thing I've gotten three letters from you in as many days - 15th, 17th and 18th. Your comments on the German lack of shame for their misdeeds only confirms my conviction of the monstrosity of their nature. We are daily appalled by revelations of conditions in their PW camps. And unlike some of the more quote civilized comments I've heard, nobody in this family was the least bit appalled by the treatment the Duce got the other day. We viewed the - in normal times appalling - photographs of his body with interest and detachment. Mrs. D'Angelo next door was distressed that they hadn't burned him alive - which might have been Dad's comment too. Today we are besieged by reports of Hitler's death but everybody is still pretty skeptical. Incidentally that peace rumor Saturday did, as

you may know, come through on the AP wires, and in the Hearst headlines, as the real thing. I was not entirely convinced but after an hour of listening to radio bulletins I broke down and had a great weeping fit, which apparently is the standard family reaction, for Paul later told me that in 1918 when there was a false armistice he remembered mother throwing her arms around the maid and weeping. I tell you that when you come home I shall probably flood the joint for days.

And Kathy is truly a child of war. Her first official word was spoken yesterday. It was: airplane.

Incidentally Liz's baby's name is Louise. I haven't heard from her since her first letter. God how I hope she will find some happiness someday.

Your letter today contained a very good picture, pictorially speaking, of you but I couldn't help but feel sad, seeing you look so stern and un-boyish. I know you hate allusions to your appearance but you sure don't look like the unseemly denizen of a beer jacket I once knew. Which is logically to be expected and even desired. I wonder if I look changed to you. I think I have changed too, though at what point I did it I don't know. I think I look sort of sophisticated now - my face is set or something, like jello.

My typing has degenerated because I decided it was easier to use one hand. I hope you are not annoyed by the shortness and current infrequency of my letters, or by the reason (which you probably are) - the careless way I dispose of my person. I will try to write more often in the future. Now I am about to read Ann your description of the Russian dancers.

Damn it, darling, I do miss you so much and feel quite able to cope with any advances you might make if you were here.

I love you, see.

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 2, 1945

Dearest Love,

I hope you won't mind this as the letter for tonight. Even with the considerable inspiration afforded by two letters from you today, I haven't the time or alertness befitting a longer one. That old war of movement, you know. It's getting to be more of a bowel movement, lately, one should add, with the Germans as the subjects. Bless the cartoonist from Frisco who captioned his effort "There ain't nobody but us anti-Nazis here." How could he judge our experience from so many thousands of miles sway. The moral conduct of the Germans these past years has been and is now involved in one axiom: "Do what you're told and pretend you can't see." A very distinguished lady whose castle I and some soldiers commandeered told me in her hour of grace before she perceived what an ugly sort I am: "I'm sure if you could only talk with the Führer, you would be in such agreement. She knew him personally. At the same time she had fifty French PWs housed in a room where they had been for five years, a hundred yards from the main castle building. Still she could ask for clemency and pretend not to see an issue in the war. I don't know whether it was her or the bad wine in her cellar that made me sleep so fitfully on the bed Carolus Quintus, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain and Austria, once slept on. Damn all beds that don't contain my Hillins Prima, anyhow. I think, despite some apparent adjustment I really miss you more than ever, because for months I've been sleeping less well. It all has to do with not having you, subconsciously. Nothing, well, practically nothing, could prevent my sleeping with you in my embrace, tête à tête, corps à corps et jambe à jambe. I am never happy with anything that doesn't include you. Sometimes things are pleasant, but that's all you can say for them. For some pleasure can tend to that romantic masochism, e.g. the Joyful painfulness of missing his lover, the "delicious black mood", but that I dislike & avoid. I don't need constant happiness (the test of the congenital optimist by the way) to keep going. I can wait a little more and when we are together again, we'll take Kathy and go off into the country. We'll get

someone to do the more disagreeable chores, stock up on good wines and food, and make Epicurus fidget in his tomb from envy, not to mention divinities like Venus, Bacchus, Minerva and Pan. And you will be before my eyes constantly like Botticelli's nymph rising from the bath and Kathy can play in a brook and every two hours she can come to me for reassurance and play, if she can awaken me. Is that enough, or should I go into more detail on what will befall you for months and years on end? Of your tired body crawling into bed at night and your tired body crawling out of bed in the morning. If you think Kathy is starved for affection, how do you think I feel? Hell, tell her to get in line.

Thanks for sending me those two books of Porter & Koestler. I know I'll enjoy them very much and waft you many a kiss as I read them. I practically finished the huge and delicious Thurber's Carnival in one hoagy July. After the rest, I have a book by Philip Wylie to read. Soon I will be having more time to read, I believe. Contrary to your black foreboding, and frankly to ours too, the Redoubt isn't turning out to be so redoubtable. The whole thing should be over in a very few days and we can stop to look up and about, like a ploughman straightening & stretching from his labors. Then the air will be full of reports & rumors as to who will get to see the old country & who will go elsewhere. And full of agonized screams, too, one should add. I hope to be smiling.

The news of the deaths of Mussolini and Hitler is very satisfactory. The details of Il Duce's demise are especially fitting, I think, and I'm sure there is more to Hitler's death than Doenitz gave out. Hitler probably died days before it was announced, and who knows in what manner. The transactions afterwards, the Alphonse and Gaston acts, must have been most amusing. Imagine Himmler reneging on Power. So much for now from your most loving husband. A thousand tender kisses.

Your

Al

IT wasn't his idea to call it "Schloss de Grazia," it was theirs -- some of the men -- and no one called it that to his face, because he would have been embarrassed. Yet he earned it in a way, because he had discovered it, and they lived very well in it for as happy a three months as the Army ever afforded them, one and all. It was there that he sat down with several of the most disgruntled men and penned a stern and demanding letter to the public columns of Stars and Stripes, describing the homesickness and physical and mental infirmities of all the men who had been away from the U.S.A. for over two years and urging the High Command to Do Something about getting them back. He signed his John Hancock to it and it was sent in but never printed. Nor was he arrested for conspiracy and radical agitation. The men were glad that he penned the missive, because nobody could think of anything better to do, and this was a show of solidarity that was not to be found in the manual of arms.

He had not snatched the castle from the enemy. It was more like taking candy from a baby. Literally. He was jeeping about, applying the *savoir faire* of six campaigns toward seizing just the right kind of billet in view of the battles damping down, and had seen from afar this sturdy Schloss. It had been built not by some Ludwig the Mad, King of Bavaria, but by a Sigmund the Modest. Grey. Unornamented. With a plain courtyard. It fronted for a tiny village. It might have been a private school. As a matter of fact, when he entered he was met by women who seemed to be teachers, and they explained that it was being used to house children safe from the Allied bombings. They were anxious, they said, to leave for their homes, now that the bombings had stopped over Western Germany. Very good, said he, I will provide you with the trucks to bring the kinder home. Then a door was opened for him to view a room. "*Heil Hitler!*" cried the tots as one voice, leaping up stiffly to attention from their tiny stools. "Remarkable," said he. "At ease." He murmured to the Matron, "I hope that you will stop all that." "Oh, yes, Herr Hauptmann," she exclaimed. And you can bet that it was their last "Heil."

He moved on Southeastward toward Munich, detouring to dip in the Ammersee en route, while his recce team captured the City's radio transmitter intact and the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the kingpin Nazi

newspaper. On the way through the city streets, officials of the Central Police and Post Office called to them, waving, that they were surrendering here and now. Actually they should have been waving surrender leaflets, because General Patch had asked for such a leaflet just for them; this was quickly turned out by Tom Crowell and given to the Air Corps; but the aviation armorers mis-converted the incendiary shells to be employed and they failed to explode in air. No matter: mere squads and snipers were the only German fighters to stick it out and they were propelled by an internal desperation beyond any appeal.

On April 28 Benito Mussolini, Godfather of Fascism, Falangism, and Nazism, is lynched by Italian communist partisans, along with his lover, Clara Petacci. The Americans feel that justice has been rendered, though the sight of Petacci hanging upside down with her skirts blowing to the breeze is disgusting to the Exec.

On May 1, near midnight, the German radio station begins to play long stretches of Wagnerian *Götterdämmerung* music. Soon enough, the monitoring truck has alerted Captain Wallenberg and the others. They understand that *Der Führer* has died by his own hand, with Eva Braun, and in his Berlin bunker, leaving to Admiral Doenitz the Keys to the Kingdom.

There is to be no Redoubt around Berchtesgarden, no more, no more. Roos has been transferred on "temporary duty" (TD) to Denmark. The Exec has become Commanding Officer in name as well as in fact; he will have only brief occasion to put into effect his ideals about the governance of a military company..

On May 2, two days before the German Nineteenth Army facing the Seventh Army, the German Armies in Italy surrender. The Captain takes Lt. Albert Constantine with him in a jeep and drives South. He heads straight for the Brenner Pass; he is emboldened from remembering passing through it as a student tourist before the War. Near Innsbruck they come upon an airfield with the first jet airplanes they, or practically any Allied soldiers, have seen. The air force personnel has fled. Here would be the Redoubt's doughty "air fleet." After traversing Innsbruck without incident, he turns into the Brenner.

Hardly a soul is to be seen. No fusillade pouring from the elite troops of the Redoubt above. Half-way through the Pass something

like a command car comes rushing at them. It roars by as he whirls in a double take. It was filled with German officers in full regalia. Too bad, he curses; but there had been no time to react. There hadn't been even a road block that might have stopped them from turning off and burying themselves in an Austrian village.

The next thing the American jeep strikes upon is an Army that is dressed for an Operetta by Franz Lehar. These are Czechoslovak troops, allies of the Germans, which could not be trusted for combat in Italy.

Ultimately they slow down as the road nears Bolzano, for there is a bad traffic jam of German infantry and artillery, managed by German MP's, who guide the American officers as if these belonged to the Wehrmacht. Not an Allied vehicle to be seen. Circling through the city, they eventually encounter several Americans leaning against their jeeps, spooning food from C-ration cans into their mouths. "How ya'doin?" "Ya really made it here from Germany? Damn! That's sompin." There isn't much more to say, it seems. Watch the scene a while longer; it gives you an absurd feeling, all these enemy soldiers with their burp-guns and artillery pieces marching hither and yon. Probably looking for places to bivouac. They can't seize Italian homes and buildings just like that any more, can they?

The Seventh Army officers turn their car back toward Germany. It is so silly: this German horde; they would give anything to be heading up the Brenner Pass. Yet all the Captain needs to do is to turn the head of his jeep and step on the gas. No one dares to interfere with him. He would have been blown away had he been here a couple of days earlier.

This may have been the first juncture of the Allied forces North and South: the Seventh and Fifth Armies; the otherwise uncontested claim of the Chronologist of the U.S. Army Historical Center is that on May 4, soldiers of an "Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the 349th Infantry, 88th Division" of the Fifth Army of the 15th Army Group (you remember them!), "establishes contact with the U.S. Seventh Army at Vipiteno, S of Brennero, on Austro-Italian frontier." The Seventh Army contact is said to be of the 411th Infantry Regiment



German armored train in Bavaria.



German troupes in the Brenner Pass.

of the 103rd Infantry Division. The Captain had no intention of making the record books, but he did talk about the strange encounters at mess when he got back home. Anyhow the main point was not in the chronology: Churchill's so-called soft underbelly of Europe took as much time to conquer as the bristling backbone of the Nazi swine.

A couple of days later C.D. Jackson shows up from SHAEF with Major Roos and asks the Captain to take them to Dachau. They proceed in the outfit's command car along the *autobahn*. On the way they come upon a bad truck accident, two huge cargo trucks entangled and tipped over, a couple of black guys prone maybe dying, their comrades around them wondering what to do. The Captain pulls over, stops a vehicle with hospital markings and nurses and officers. They seem reluctant to help. He insists they do something. They promise to send help from nearby and scoot off. He delays, talking to the men; it's a matter of internal injuries and concussions; their eyes roll out of control. Roos and Jackson want to get away from the scene. C.D. is irritated; their fault, of course. A third truck has promised to get help, the men tell him. We cannot move them, he says, and they agree. It would make matters worse. Best wait for the ambulance. Back on the road, he sits severely, disliking Jackson: these men have been driving

their trucks like crazy ever since the landings in Provence.

At Dachau, as you enter by way of the wide-open wire gates, you are confronted on the left by an enormous mound of corpses disintegrating in lime. Crowds of emaciated shamblers around not knowing what to make of it all, smoking American cigarettes. They cannot eat much, just soup like before; but the soup is thicker and better now, says one man, contentedly. When the Captain throws a butt down and moves to crush it out of habit, he almost steps on a man's hand bending to snatch it. He apologizes and gives him a full cigarette. As he had promised a French officer in Augsburg, he leaves gifts of tobacco and soap for two French political prisoners, Vincent Badie, a former Socialist Deputy, and François Michelet; they were out somewhere, scrounging around the town, helping themselves to such food and drink and clothing as they might come upon. A large fat SS guard has been uncovered hiding and is dragged past, being bludgeoned, rather feebly thinks the Captain, by the inmates. "Should I interfere?" he asks himself. He does not.

JILL TO AL MAY 3, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling,

As usual I seem to have more mail from you these days than I have time to answer it. For example, Paul and Ann are out at their weekly ice skating session, which I always look forward to because it gives me much free time in which to write you and here it is nearly nine PM and I hardly have started to write you. I had to get the kids to bed and Kathy picked this of all nights to stay awake endlessly, muttering oy-yoy-yoy in her bed (and don't tell me she gets that from my side of the family because everybody knows how excruciatingly assimilated we are) and to wet and soil thrice, necessitating as many changes of diapers. You can look forward to toilet training her yourself. She sure resists me. And I don't think it will be so long that you'll be wrestling with Little Toidey. From where I sit, our successes are staggering. I was always the gloomy one, you know, about quick



Dachau.



Dachau.



Distributing food at Dachau.

victory. Why, last night's paper said that the 7th Army actually didn't have any more fighting to do in its present location.

You can gather that I must be in excellent shape, to be able to put the kids away myself. And indeed I am. I don't know what new kind of therapy it is, not putting a broken bone in a cast, but it surely is superior. I have quite a lot of movement in my right arm except that I naturally can't raise it from the shoulder. The bandage is tight but I am used to it. If you are interested in the deal and at your distance how can you protest, I will describe it to you. It seems that the collarbone was broken off completely about an inch from the end, next to the shoulder. The doctor figured that it would either just swing around free until a new growth of bone intervened, leaving an unseemly bump, or else the loose piece would slide back into place by itself. So he left it unbandaged for a couple of days in the hospital, during which I couldn't move, and by gosh it did go back into place and that

was the end of it. The bandage apparently just exerts tension, to keep the whole works straight. My but it's fun discussing one's operation.

My three letters from you were March 29, April 13 and 20. In the last one you ask again about our finances. I've told you a million times if I've told you once that our bonds are in the vaults of the Fed. Reserve bank. Why must you heckle me, and me so sick? About income tax, well I'm just letting it go. Do you want me to age prematurely? You're a soldier and don't have to worry and I'm sure nobody cares about my lousy 300 a year. The interest on the bank accounts stand as yours because they're in your name. One one half percent or whatever the rate is of 9000 can't be very much. One and one half, I mean. Now please leave me alone. I want to sleep.

Oh, I finally got Ann to work the record machine and played that record Liz sent of you and Jane Mayer that you once sent to Bill. It sure was a sad rendition of I'm Confessing. It was funny to hear your voice, completely unrecognizable. You sounded a lot like Steinbrecher, very Chicago with hard clipped tones. I am so used to my family's relative drawls and your little brother's tough accents that you sounded quite different and unexpected.

Your second letter was about Roosevelt, whose loss we won't cease to feel for a long long time. Last night I went to the movies with the girls next door and the newsreel showed his funeral and we all wept silently and it seemed uncontrollably for a long time. The people of our generation owe so much to Roosevelt, perhaps even more than the older people, that only the callow, the smug and selfish can bear his loss. Everyone I've met here feels it deeply. I wonder how many other men in history were as loved and mourned. I can't think of any offhand.

I had dinner out with those girls and then we saw Meet Me in St. Louis which is a pretty good musical done in excellent taste. But dinner out is a gyp these days. The food is never as good as home and terribly expensive, worse even than Washington when we were there. So it wasn't such a thrill going out after all.

I'm starting to read André Gide, The Counterfeiters, very strange through probably in the French novel tradition with which I'm not as familiar as the English (or Russian, the latter being strange enough but I was practically weaned on them). It is the clinical dissection of emotions, the philosophy (so far) not going much deeper than aphorisms on love (unlike Mann, who is also very detailed but full of philosophy with a capital P, none of which I ever understood much of).

Do you believe Hitler's death? nobody here gives a damn at this point. It's funny - it used to seem so important that he die. I guess this explodes for all time the great man theory of history.

I'm getting right tired, pardner. That's the trouble with my little infirmity. Stuff like typing is so complicated that I run out of energy long before I run out of ideas. Anyway, and I might have said it before, I'm beginning to resent the whole process of communication via the mails. Now that the end is so close, it seems like such a mockery, having to write when we could talk.

I guess I'll finish up Nature's Way (spelled Serutan, backwards). Kathy was a very good girl today. We took a long walk, Paul II & I walking; Kathy sitting in his miniature express wagon, to which we have tied an enormous length of rope. If you so much as take a deep breath when you are dragging it, the wagon upends, tilting her out on the back of her head. Then she gets mad & cries but climbs right back in. The lazy little shit - she knows when she's well off. Did I tell you - her hair got curly and is really very pretty, bronzy brown, the color of mine. She's an awfully pretty kid now - she is heavier than in Chicago and it's more becoming. But she looks pregnant. We await her labor momentarily. *[drawing: Kathy's stomach.]*

I love you

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 3, 1945

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Schriftleitung

Fernruf

München

Meine liebe Frau,

And why not this letterhead for the fitting end to German propaganda? Johnny Anspacher got a copy of the last book they published too, and that ironically enough was Rosenberg's Myth of the Twentieth Century, back where their propaganda started. And as the hundreds of books lay there, thousands of freed prisoners and slaves stormed over the country hooting its prostrate form and sneering at those who remained in it. The Reality of the Twentieth Century, perhaps, one might name it.

It's all about over now. With the surrender of the Southern forces and the practically complete occupation of Germany, we might as well change to that V-E mood, if we can manage it. Personally, I don't see much to be excited about. The end is duller than the gigantic battles that occurred in the middle of it. It is almost difficult to get into a discussion on Hitler's death, so uninterested is everyone. I have an intimation that the surrender of Japan will be a much more surprising affair and more deserving of thanksgiving. Truman's hint to the Japs on the occasion of the surrender in the South, the Japanese collapse in Burma, our approach to the main islands, the heavy raids, the condolences of the Japanese premier on the death of Roosevelt, and the Russian pressure in canceling the treaty and in the statements of Stalin point to a jockeying for position in the Far East for a quick conclusion of the war.

At the moment, my visual perception here sees only rain. We are housed on a hilltop which sweeps a large plain with woods, towns and a couple of factories. We have a tower that is very high and we fly the flag there at half mast. It can be seen for miles and must serve as a constant reminder to the Germans of

the location of power. Our billets are very good. I found enough beds for every man, and we have central heating and even hot showers, not to mention electric lights. I have fixed up my room in a creditable manner. Next to my bed is your picture, atop a small table, and next to it is my trumpet. On the wall above the bed are three other beautiful women in small frames, Nefertiti, Veneziano's Maiden, and Kathy, with her pants showing. Below the bed is an ammunition case which I use as a foot locker and a barracks bag. There are drapes on the two big windows which look out over the countryside, there is this writing table, there are sheets on the bed, and there is the radio I am going to fix soon.

The weather here in Germany lately has been bitter. We have even had snow and sleet storms in the past few days and driving hasn't been much fun. It should pass soon, though, according to the latest local intelligence and be followed by a beautiful spell. The sun comes out, but it may disappear in a second, to be followed by cold winds, dark clouds and cold rain.

I got a V-mail from you today dated April 9, far behind the one I have from April 18, but still very nice to have. I think the gas company's letter and refund is deserving of reproach. There is a patronizing air about it that implies strongly a person's bad credit and then a paternalistic gift for being unexpectedly honest.

Another thing you said was that you liked "being scared to death" but that your demands are "very exacting". On the contrary, I think you are the easiest person in the world to scare to death and you love it. All I had to do was to make an unexpected wry face at you and you would jump six feet. But, of course, you may have become more sophisticated since then.

I am very happy to hear that you are sleeping well since you've been on the West Coast. I think that alone justifies your remaining there for a considerable period. The only thing I have against it is that it makes your letters shorter, no long complaints on the dark hours.

I wanted to ask you when you think Kathy is going to be properly trained anally and otherwise. Isn't she rather elderly to be going about revealing her contempt of society in such a forthright manner?

This room would do very nicely for the two of us, I think. It is very light and we could practically look out of bed into the valley afterwards. It is clean and very large and it even has a couple of copies of the New Yorker and a book on public opinion scattered around to make it look like our customary environment. I don't think these years have made much difference. I still want pretty much what I wanted before and it all begins with You. I cannot visualize any ambition of mine, no matter how petty it be, without you fitting into the frame somewhere, in the center or in the corner, like Hitchcock doesn't release a picture he directs without being personally in some shot. You are in every shot I take of a future preference, your tossing about, your long legs, your ideas, your habits, and you are always photogenic.

With many a kiss to you and Kathy, I'm always

Your

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 6, 1945 (A) V-MAIL

Darling -

Today is, for the practical purposes of our family's interests - you - V-E day. The news has come that there is peace among most of the Allied Western front. Yet it is bad, all the ways one feels and doesn't feel it. I have no desire to greet it with the tears of pent-up longing and *[feeling ?]* that came with the news of the false armistice last Saturday at this time. The thing happened in so many successive steps - a series of surrenders and also of false alarms. I think I wrote you several days ago that I had read that fighting had stopped on your front, when

later we found out it actually hadn't. Nor is there any great joy in my heart at the moment, though surely it will come, the beautiful realization that you are at last safe. For one thing, there is a hard core of horror at the bottom of all our stomachs. Not a day goes by that one doesn't read of, hear of and see pictures of the unspeakable evils of the Nazi concentration camps. One cannot pass them over when they are in the papers. One feels a terrible moral obligation to see it through, so that every paper one sees and has lying about the house exerts a horrible pull and pervading presence of evil. This is a foolish analogy but it reminds me of a long deserted road in the country where we summered when I was little. My father used to take me for a walk on it occasionally. There was a place in the middle where a house had burned down and I never could bear to see it. I would close my eyes when I walked by but I would always end up by looking back at it just as we had passed, and I would always end up sick and miserable at the sight. Well, there is that, and also the fact that you're not home yet, even though the European war is nearly over. I have been worried about reports of sending troops directly to the Pacific, although today came the news that the Army plans to release two million men in the next year. I am pretty hopeful that you will be among those men but they said it would take a year and that is a terribly long time. Well, this is what I guess I got for my selfishness in thinking that the European and the Pacific wars were two separate things in my cosmos.

Well, this isn't a very cheerful way to greet victory, but victory is not something black and white - one day the world is full of terror and the next day it's all sunshine. There is a long road ahead and even the diplomacy of peace is full of thorns. The one thing that can give us hope is that our military leaders are themselves so sickened and horrified by the German crimes and that their attitude has so filtered through our means of communication that the chances for the Germans' getting a soft peace are less now that peace is almost here than it ever was before. I hope the bastards spend the next twenty years starving.

I didn't write you yesterday because last evening brought sort of a surprise package in the person of Rusty Nahl, that Red Cross worker you met in Italy. She is back home on leave after 32 months overseas, and Ann had her over to dinner last night. I was very anxious to meet her, naturally, just as I am anxious to meet anybody who has seen you more recently than I have. She didn't say so much about you except that you were a great fellow (which I know) and that you looked well at the time. She is an odd girl. I can see that she must make a wonderful worker in her line but she talked a great deal, and in all the journalistic descriptive clichés of warfare, which we get enough of in the papers and magazines. But she has certainly seen and done a lot and deserves a great deal of credit. But since she didn't know much about you or your activities, I didn't find myself being brought much closer to you through her descriptive powers. I heard more about Joe Hope, whom I'm not the least bit interested in.

Both today and yesterday have been grey days and we've kept the kids in most of the time. Yesterday afternoon I took Kathy to the doctor with me because Ann wanted to clean the house and Kathy is not exactly a help. Kathy shrieked at the sight of the white coat and didn't stop bawling until we left, to everybody's consternation. He took the stuff off my shoulder before re-taping it and it looks swell, perfectly normal. Every day I can function more. Tonight I did the dishes. No further comment is necessary.

Kathy is really beginning to talk. She says "hurt it" when she is hurt and momma quite freely now, as well as airplane (the latter sometimes comes out as baby but I know what she means). What is more astonishing to me is the amount of language she understands. I can give her practically any simple command, like put it here, don't do it, no, put your coat on, take your coat off, let's get dressed, and she understands. Oh yes, when she does put something some place, she always says, There, with great satisfaction. She will open and shut doors upon command and is constantly stowing away things in drawers and closets, with enormous neatness. She is as exhibitionistic as a clown but

at her age it is still an agreeable trait. And you should see her fight Paul. He hardly ever can get anything away from her any more. She hangs on and makes a screeching sound almost exactly like Donald Duck and pounds him with her free hand and, as a last resort, bites. We don't approve of that but it is very hard to know what to do. It's definitely an undesirable habit but if we are going to let them fight it out, she should be allowed to use all the weapons at her command, considering the difference in their ages. I certainly prefer her to fight it out for herself, rather than to come yammering to me, which is what little Paul does with Ann. I can see now that for her age, she is enormously self-possessed and self-reliant. She climbs down as well as up all the furniture now and even managed to get out of bed (which has a sliding side) one morning this week, although she hasn't yet duplicated the feat.

I got a letter from you today, April 23, with a couple of not very good pictures of you in Heidelberg, and one very funny French joke, and another less funny and rather gruesome American one. I'm glad you warned me against Henry Esmond. For some reason I bought it (after reading and thoroughly enjoying Vanity Fair), but never got around to reading it. Well, we have it in our library, in case you ever want to re-read it and re-create for yourself the happy spring you spent in southern Germany.

I got a letter from Liz today which cheered me considerably. She is going to teach two courses in political science at Barnard, starting this fall - will take an apartment in New York and get a nurse for Louise. This is certainly the wisest and happiest course she could have chosen. She plans to go on and get her doctor's too. She feels it will give some continuity to her and Bill's life together if she stays in the academic world, and I know from my own experience that the only way you can have a happy life as a housewife, being a woman alone with a kid, is to have the future with your husband ahead of you. Otherwise one must certainly have some controlling outside interest. And teaching gives one the most free time to be with one's child. In another year or two Louise will be ready for nursery school. At any rate, the important thing was that Liz was

with her the first year or so.

Kathy just let out a fearful cry but apparently she was just talking in her sleep. Anyway she's all right. We took the kids over to friends Norman and Kay Kerr late this afternoon and sherry was served and Kathy got hold of some and drank it, so maybe she has a hangover. She certainly likes the taste of liquor. She used to grab the beer at home and lick the tops of the bottles under the sink, and now it transpires she likes wine too. I think I let her taste a highball once, thinking she would be so utterly repelled by the taste that she would never beg another glass off of me, but she liked that too. In fact, she'll drink anything. She gulps her orange juice in the morning like a hangover artist, and will lap up cider, grape juice, Hemo, lemonade, anything. Your daughter.

Well, it is bedtime around here again. Little Paul gets up so early and awakens Kathy with his cries in the bargain that if you don't start going to bed around here at nine, you never get a good night's sleep. The family is out with Norman and Kay now at the movies and I am grateful for the time alone to write you. They left their little girl (aged four) asleep upstairs so I have three charges now, and will abandon them all for bed shortly.

This is such a rough typewriter. My fingernails break every time I use it. How thankful I'll be for my hotsy totsy Royal when I get home.

Darling, I think I'll stop now before I break a finger. Not that I would know the difference, rugged teep that I am.

All my love to you, as ever,

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 6, 1945 (B) V-MAIL

Darling -

No sooner do I finish addressing one batch of V-mail (that I

wrote you last night) than I start on another. It seems that I've run out of airmail paper, which accounts for my sudden compliance with the PM's wishes. I didn't get to mail last night's letters today because today was one of those bloody Sundays. It started with last night. I fell into bed after I finished writing you & wafted off to sleep in no time, and by God, if an hour later, Karen Kerr (the 4-year old of Norm. & Kay) didn't wake up & start yelling, with understandable terror at finding herself in a strange house with no mommy. I soothed her (by singing - sic!), read to her & finally they came home. Oh, I tried to get back to sleep then but wasn't successful for hours. Then at six this morning I was awakened by my brother who informed me that my dear daughter was up & yelling her lungs out. I turned over & there she was, standing by my bedside. giving me a big smile, while defiling the floor from the other end. I gave her breakfast and tried to get back to sleep & couldn't, and walked around slaphappy til this aft. when I had a nice long nap during part of which, when she was awake, Paul took care of Kathy. Now I see even additional advantages to having a man around the house ... You know darling, in the great rush of events of the past week or two I forgot to tell you Kathy received that cute little Heidelberg student cap from you. She loves to wear it except that it is so flat it keeps falling off her head. Elastic doesn't do any good because she objects to it. The amazing part is that 2 men have recognized it for what it is - one the German friend of Ann's and the other a man we met in the playground today. The former went to Heidelberg & his forehead is appropriately gashed. I think privately that he would be a Nazi if the cause were not lost.

Tell me, darling, how do you rate? Are you considered a combat or a service troop (if you can speak of one troop). They said the service troops would go directly to the Pacific. You rate pretty high in other respects, don't you, i.e. length of service overseas and dependency? I wish I knew more vital statistics than I do. God how anxious I am to be with you again.

I love you. Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 7, 1945

Darling -

Today again came news of unconditional surrender, and while people are more prone to believe it this time, nobody here in S.F. anyway is getting out in the streets & screaming, tho we hear they are doing so in New York - unless that newspaper picture of Times Square was dug out of somebody's old New Year's Eve file. But Ann and I were downtown this morning with the kids (buying new shoes) when the headlines first gave out the news & everybody was hurrying along in normal fashion, many tripping over Kathy in their way. I guess I've told my own reasons for not getting excited or happy right now (although I was happy that they proclaimed a formal V-E day so soon - tomorrow they say - because then maybe the Army can go ahead and release you without a quiver. I certainly hope you're not considered essential from here on in). At any rate, my reasons seem to be a universal reaction, except in naughty gawdy bawdy Old New York.

Kathy, anyway, had a good time downtown today. We got her a fine pair of shoes, a full size larger than her last pair which were veritably falling apart. She has very wide feet, the salesman said. She behaved admirably while he was measuring and fitting them, sitting primly on the edge of the big chair and regarding the process with interest. After they were put on and she was allowed down, she examined them carefully, jumped up and down and was off bowling over pedestrians in the street. More damn people stop to talk to her. She has this big wide grin, you know, and it catches them like flies. I usually walk about 10 feet behind her, since it's exhausting trying to keep up.

This f-ing pen is out of ink again. I'm going to bed.

I love you, darling - please come soon.

Jill

May 8 - The next day - official V-E day & also the anniversary of the last time I saw you. Coincidence no? The latter is of more if

not equal significance. I hope we'll be able to celebrate the anniversary of the next time we see one another very soon.

OOOXXXOOOXXX

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 9, 1945

Darling Al -

Yesterday was V-E day. I didn't get a chance to write you much, except a postscript to the unmailed letter of the day before. I hadn't planned to celebrate the day -- in fact, I was going to do exactly the reverse - stay with the kids all afternoon while Ann went down to get a permanent. But the colored girl who sits unexpectedly showed up at noon & Paul got a half day off, also unexpectedly & the two of us went to a movie together - the world's worst in its pretentious way - Without Love with Katharine Hepburn & Spencer Tracy - I always think she's kidding -- her acting is so much a burlesque or caricature of herself. Anyway it was a double feature and we emerged bleary-eyed at six (don't ask me what the other feature was), and so was V-E day spent, in rioting and wild laughter. We had a rather late supper at home & went to bed comforted with a stack of New Yorkers, selected for the serial story on the Persian Gulf Command, which inexplicably fascinates me.

The newsreel of the movie we saw was devoted entirely to scenes at liberated (an ironic word in this context) concentration camps. I didn't think that they were well-handled, although any presentation is better than none. The whole works should be more carefully edited, like a March of Time, with some sort of discussion, i.e. that this obviously isn't faked-up atrocity stuff - and the audience should be spared to the minimum, much less than in these films. And they should be shown in every movie house in the country. And don't think I'm morbid - I wish I didn't have to see those things myself.

It's awfully hard to get tickets to the Conference and the girl who was going to get one for me hasn't succeeded yet. It seems that there have been much fewer plenary sessions than were expected. So at the present date of writing it doesn't look as if I'm going to go. I leave for Chicago next Friday. This morning we went to a very good toy store & I spent 7 bucks outfitting Kathy with a trousseau of toys to keep her happy on the train. It was tricky selecting them since I obviously can't take everything we both might want. She likes pull & push toys now, beads, simple things to put together, & objects or imitations of objects in daily use, like irons, razors & toothbrushes. I bought her a toothbrush the other day & she stands on a little stool on the sink when I brush my teeth now, she conscientiously biting her monstrous brush. She imitates little Paul now too, who shaves with light plugs & makes a buzzing sound, in imitation of his father. And she, despite her limited speech, has picked up some of his ghastlier habits - his screech of temper which I am beginning to sock her for (with good results so far, saying "stop it" sternly) and his unendearing habit of yelling "mine" to everything he sees. She's said "mine" several times today, to the toys I got her -- I don't like to see such embryonic possessiveness & have decided to ignore this word. She also says "hot" about coffee, radiators, etc. and has picked up a mangled version of little Paul's "I dropped it". (they are both continuously dropping everything). It's funny that the few words she knows are picked up, for the most part, from him, and, as you can gather, not exactly to my delight. He is a pretty child but rather spoiled, I think - more spoiled than he should be. At least I hope Kathy never whines the way he does. Quien sabe, with an eloquent shrug of my shoulders.

In sort, I am a little sick of whining kids, people, movies, in short, everyone but you. I haven't heard from you for a few days again and I'm particularly anxious to hear how the end of the war sounds from where you sit, and what you hear about your chances for getting home. It's funny - it's different waiting for you now than before, when the war was on. Now I feel like a travelling salesman's wife, no more the glow of reflected heroics on my face, but the bitter frown of a woman whose husband's

been away too long, in dubious circumstances - Well, it really isn't as bad as all that. Anyway, I love you.

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 9, 1945 (A)

[Note: Actually May 8 was proclaimed V-E day & this letter was written probably on May 8]

Jill, My Love,

This is V-E day and we must be duly happy. I keep telling myself that I ought to give more manifest signs of approving the event, but for the life of me I can't think of much else to do save to enjoy the laziness of our new routine, the comfort of our present billets and the various rumors floating around on who will be sent home and when. The last is like a close horse race, but grimmer. Now one report, then another. A directive came out today which hardly anyone falls under. They will probably leave soon. I'm not too worried. I feel I shall be seeing you soon, no matter how fantastic the thought of seeing you may appear to me. At times I want so much to caress and embrace you that I can hardly contain myself. What the last days on the boat will be like is difficult to say. I won't be the most normal of passengers, I'm sure. I will be stewing in dreams of long legs and a beautiful body, of infinite balmy nights and shady days, and of watching you delightedly in your clatter of action.

The formal end of the war has been somewhat of an anti-climax for us here, since the real war ended days ago. But since I found some wine and champagne for the troops yesterday, we turned the evening into a drinking party. The French soldiers, with hardly an exception, were amazingly drunk. It is rare that a Frenchman gets drunk and that is why this was so amusing. Most of those with us are young and they were acting up in a most ludicrous fashion. French Lt. Villanave got some fresh speckled trout somewhere and sent them up to me about two hours after I had eaten a gigantic chicken dinner, and they were

so good that three of us polished them off in a sauce of hot butter. That filled me up so much that whatever I drank soaked up perfectly. This morning I feel well.

I received a package from Mom last evening containing a variety of nice food, sausage, crackers, and fruitcake among other things.

I haven't received any mail from you in three days, nor have I written any. Most of the time I was on the road, driving very hard and far. I passed completely through a German army surrendering and the experience bordered on fantasy. It was as if the jeep were cloaked in invisibility and we could ride at will amongst the enemy. We looked down the barrels of God knows how many Schmeizers and field pieces. German staff cars passed us going the other way, their occupants behaving just as in the New Yorker cartoons. One gets to accept the incredible in war. Our first encounter was unexpected, a German equivalent of our command car, passing us. I assumed, since we weren't technically at peace yet, that it was one of our own, manned by GIs who hadn't painted it over yet. Instead, I received a prick of sensation and did a quick double-take to see a car full of Germans headed away from us. They were going too fast to do much about and they were bee-lining for one of our road blocks, so we just sat and laughed in astonishment. Later on we encountered more and more groups and passed a number of convoys. There is too much to describe in this short space, and I suppose the papers at home must be full of it. Now I have seen both the Italian and German armies surrendering. If I could only get you to wear shoes, my life would be completely victorious.

I wish I could send you some of the good liquor I've been drinking the last couple of months, but I understand that censorship or customs forbid or something. So all I can do is toast you time after time. Just now, for example, I have a couple of bottles of Pommery Champagne than which there is little better and which I would like to regale you with. Your standards of cigarettes and alcoholic beverages back home must be

similar to our standards in toilets over here.

From indirect sources, I learned that Jerry Ross went back to the States. I guess they are closing up the Italian show and turning it over to the Italians, for better or worse.

The mail's going off, now darling, & with it all my love to you and a big kiss for Kathy.

Al

AL TO JILL MAY 9, 1945 (B)

Darling Jill,

I might begin this letter by describing to you my very comfortable circumstances so that you can properly hate me if it isn't reasonably long enough. It was our fortune to end the war in the best billets we've had at any time during the war. No foxhole life, this. Hot water, lights and good toilets, not to mention a well set-up mess and a respectable bed. I have the radio in working order and a French babe is singing in a husky voice a ditty très tendre. I have just popped the cork of a small bottle of German champagne and am drinking it with some of the fruit cake Mom sent me. The windows are open and the beautiful night is coming in. The blackout is over. Nothing is lacking except that everything is lacking. Why can't you be here with me. How gladly I would trade any one of those bitterly cold nights we waited for a car or walked for what I have tonight, just to have you beside me, no matter how shivering or impatient you might be.

Last night we had overnight guests, Joe Ravotto, whom I haven't seen since before leaving Rome, and who is going to take over a big radio station here, C. D. Jackson, whom I haven't seen since Algiers over a year ago and who is on leave as business manager of Time, Inc., and a stooge of his named Halperin. We had a fine reunion and another good celebration of the official declaration that the war was over. My room looked

a terrible mess this morning. I got out of it as quickly as possible. There were numbers of empty bottles, of bread crusts, the remains of a large ham Pregre found somewhere, and of course butts all over the place, a real happy hunting ground for an American civilian. There were two other visiting firemen around, Walker and Kidder. Walker is an old friend of our group. Every time he comes up to see us in line of duty, he goes off on commando excursions and it takes furious cables from the Higher Echelons to get him back. Despite going to Yale and being in the newspaper business, he is extremely naive and we have a lot of fun kidding him. He believes the most fantastic stories. Lately though, he actually has been seeing so many fantastic things that it is unlikely that he'll ever get over believing anything.

[Penciled note in margin: 1/22/86. Walker went to Prague & was shocked by Soviet troop behavior]



Walker in Prag.

That brings to mind the gruesome business of Dachau. I suppose the papers at home are full of the atrocious evidence the armies have been uncovering. It's a good thing, I believe. Not only for those who don't or won't believe, but as well for those normal people who forget easily. I am experienced in the degradations that humans can visit upon themselves and upon other people. The sight of human bodies piled like cordwood by the hundreds is only another grizzly incident in the genera. One of the things I had occasion to remark upon seeing the camp was the endless stream of people who fall afoul of a corrupt

government. It seems that they could never kill enough to stop feeling haunted. The camp was teeming with humanity, great crowds of half-starved men, some of them hopelessly weak and beaten, others with plenty of fire left in them. While I was there, a group of them came into the camp, dragging along with them a big and stupid-looking SS guard they had found hiding nearby. Emily Post would have tushed at the way they treated their guest. I left some cigarettes and soap for two Frenchmen, M. Vincent Badie, a former Socialist deputy, and M. François Michelet, who was a leader of the French Resistance. Both were out at the time, taking advantage of their new found liberty to politicize, or perhaps simply to scrounge for food. Naturally, the Americans have taken immediate steps to assure the prisoners of food. Still, for so many people, with the facilities available, about the only thing that can be cooked, and for that matter the only thing many can eat, is a mushy soup. It used to be all water and no soup, now there is more soup, one man said to us. Cigarette butt hunting is still the favorite indoor sport. I made the unsportsmanlike gesture of stepping on a butt I had finished and almost stepped on some apparition who was diving for it. I consoled him by giving him a whole one. I don't envy the nations who have the problem of rejuvenating these men, spiritually and physically.

So much for tonight's communiqué to you from this peaceful front. I haven't heard from you in almost a week. Probably all the ships turned about in mid ocean when they heard the peace tidings and headed for Japan, no matter what their cargo. I understand that tomorrow we are to hear some news on the point system for getting home. Keep your fingers crossed and rub Kathy's head for good luck.

All my love, dearest,

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 10, 1945 (A)

Darling -

Life is full of disappointments. First the hot water heater went out this afternoon and I had hoped that would exempt me from doing the dishes & taking a bath, but the old man downstairs on Ann's behest came up & fixed it. Then I thought I would have the blessed evening alone, it being Ann & Paul's night to go skating, and then they came back with their friends and are now rioting in the front room with Martinis. Also, Kathy is griping.

Well, I put Kathy at her ease and everybody left, so all's well that ends well.

Today's papers had the Army demobilization plan. I don't know if it applies equally to officers & EMs, but I figured you had 76 of the 85 points entitling personnel to be eligible for immediate discharge. They said they would probably lower that latter figure as information on actual points held by personnel came in. Now for the first time in 2 years I'm optimistic about seeing you - & the whole prospect of seeing you becomes more of a reality. I know that one of the reasons I'm anxious to get home is so that I can fix up the joint upon your coming. And that objective can keep me awfully busy. Even if we do have to wait a few months more. I still can't get used to the idea that our waiting is almost over - it's more than I ever really thought would happen.

I still hope we can live in this, or some equally pretty city or countryside after your discharge, or whenever the war is over for us. But right now I'm anxious to get back to Chicago, where home is currently. It is inevitable that one gets tired of being with people no matter how much one loves them. At any rate, I am so well adjusted to being alone that I often crave it. I don't know how that fits into being married. I guess it doesn't, unless the conditions of aloneness are so arduous that one is perpetually grateful for companionship - which is hardly true in my case. I guess the solution in marriage is to have a big place & to regularly indulge in boughten chop suey dinners, for the diminution of the cooking function gives the impression of sweet

solitude. But I don't think I shall suffer from an excess of your company (& I hope you won't of mine) for at least 50 years, any way. And anyway, we both have the same solitary vices, reading. I think the past 2 years have returned me almost, though naturally never completely, to that virginal state of an insatiable appetite for books that one had in adolescence (I think Fadiman dwelled on that marvelous - if you have it - trait of the very young in some introduction he wrote). At any rate, I've read more, & with great selectiveness in some spots, these years than I did all through college & afterwards. André Gide points out that onanism is only a form of laziness & I think that reading of this sort is a kind of vice of laziness too - except that you use socially acceptable organs in pursuing it. So is letter writing (how inconsistent the girl is - one minute she complains because it's too much trouble & a poor substitute for reality, & the next minute this). Both are forms of self-immolation, a turning away from reality (I read only novels, aside from periodicals). But of course no moral judgement can be placed on deriving pleasure in this way - & if any can, the verdict must be good, since at least you've not hurt anybody & can accidentally derive some personal or social goods from it. And I'm grateful for the academic education I've had - even the Smithiness - because it has instilled some notion of literary taste.

And now for that loathsome bath (I have to - the sheets are clean). I went to the doctor today and he is amazed at my recovery. Next week my halter - really, it's only a bandage - comes off. I tried to make him take it off today but he's a stickler for form - I can do everything now - iron, the dishes & put my lipstick on with my right hand.

Darling, I love you & wish you were here to wash my back.

Always your

Jill

Kathy gives her daddy a big kiss. Why wasn't she twins. Then you would have had 88 points!

JILL TO AL MAY 20, 1945 or MAY 10, 1945 ?(B)

[Note: - The date appears to be wrong. This letter was written before she left SF]

Darling,

Here are all the pictures I've talked about for so long. I think they're good, don't you. Some of them should be enlarged though it's hard to decide how much (I'm afraid 8 x 10 is a little bulky for you. Suppose you tell me if you want any that size and if so, which - by position, participants and facial expression).

We've been sewing today and it's thrilling. Ann cut out a dress for me long ago but never finished it and now I am, under her competent tutelage. I went to the Blood Bank which is right on this block today but they wouldn't take me because my hemoglobin was a little low. I'm going to eat nothing but liver for 2 weeks and go back. It made me sort of mad.

The kids have been bratting about and I am heartily sick of them both, particularly Paul since he partially (though not altogether) contributes to Kathy's sporadic fits of ill temper. I hope tomorrow will be nice so I can take her to the beach. In the evening they have company so I probably won't be able to write you again till Sunday. But I love you all the while and with all my heart.

Jill

The next day -

Just a few love lines before I seal it away - I really do miss & love you so much. No matter how I feel, the ache of not having you with me is always present, like some kind of internal bleeding. The other night I dreamt I cried uncontrollably, endlessly, because you were not here. I suppose that's how it is, at a much lower level, when I'm awake - that is, it never reaches the stage of constant tears.

Always yours,

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 10, 1945 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

I was most sorry to hear of your accident in tonight's mail, not only because it happened to you and therefore hurt me so badly, but because I am in no position to offer you more than a few words of sympathy. I gathered considerable hope from your statement that none of the injuries are serious, and trust, though with a slight doubt, that you haven't exaggerated the quickness of your recovery. You mustn't feel it necessary to be up and doing a full active job at the earliest moment possible. It is too late for me to advise you on the return trip. Perhaps you are already on your way to Chicago, for your letter of April 20 said that you would be leaving on May 18. You haven't really remained in California long enough for my peace of mind. It seems that no sooner did I finish sweating out the great voyage westward than you commence the return eastward, with an encumbering souvenir to boot. The only moral I can think of in reference to your accident is to beware of Boy Scouts. One can't very well advise you to take up crocheting. However, now that my mind gropes into the past I can think of another moral, to wit, wear your glasses. I'll bet you our first beer together that you weren't wearing them, and that's why you did not see the skulking little wood pests in time. I consider myself fortunate that you at least remember that you have a husband. It would be most extraordinary to stop getting letters because you don't know your old friends. I wouldn't know whether to be angry, sad, or to commence patiently to woo you from the beginning again. You can be sure that I would attack the latter solution with great vigor and with the advantage of knowing you better than yourself in the same position you found yourself in some years ago at 5800 Maryland Avenue, of a summer night. But seriously, I can't tell you how sorry I am that I'm not there to give you great and tender care. Damn the remaining time that stands in our way!

Just now, we have very little to do here. The day was long and lazy. There is a report going around that tonight the point

system for going home will be announced over the radio and there is greater excitement over that than over any news that I can remember in the last year save over the death of the President.

I'll write you how I stand on it as soon as I hear. I should do well. I hope to see you this summer, darling. Get well quickly and take care of yourself and Kathy until then.

All my love and many kisses.

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 11, 1945

Dear Al,

This is my first attempt at banging a typewriter but happy anniversary anyway. So there as we say this is the goddamndest letter I have ever written as you can see.

Paul Oppenheim

Dear Al, This is to wish you a very happy anniversary. This is my first attempt since high school to express anything on a machine -- but if the letters are slightly twisted, at least the sentiments are genuine. Happy anniversary to you.

Bea Whittington

Dear Al: Although we are very drunk we are thinking the most affectionate thoughts of you and after sending you a lovely cable aloha signed only by your loving wife. My stream of consciousness doesn't work too well when hampered by this contraption of the devil's own invention. Dogs are barking and babies scream at the rhythmic sounds of Uncle Lou's typewriter which one pokes with all the vehemence that a poor weak female can command. But we all have counted and recounted and according to the point system we figure you will be home before we can say the Arabic facsimile of "Jack Robinson" and it makes us very happy indeed. As usual, when I am drunk, I

talk too much so I will yield to the Senator from Missouri.

Happy anniversary to you from Ann

Dear Al:

I sincerely wish you a happy anniversary. I also hope that you will be able to come home soon.

Sincerely,

Nick Whittington

Sweetheart --

As you can see the family is assembled toute seule and toute tight. The young Whittington's came to town unexpectedly and we had cocktails and then I remembered this was our anniversary -- not that I didn't think of it before but Paul keeps forgetting to bring home the evening paper and I never know what day it is. I am the most sober of the lot, having, instead, an enduring interest in food. The chief topic of conversation seems to be the defections of Lou's typewriter -- you can see that I wasn't kidding when I first complained of it. For dinner we had crab cocktail, essence of shrimp broth, shrimp wiggle (at that, all the women in the party do the bumps), peas, some kind of white wine and coffee. I just did the dishes.

It seems a gyp that we never get to celebrate our anniversaries together but someday we will and that will be the day. I still think you'll be home this summer but I'm worried, I haven't heard from you in a week. But I love you a million times over. I really do.

OOOXXX

Jill

The next day:

P. S. Ann says you have enough points to either get home or buy a first class steak.

I love you.

Jill.

Kathy says "eye" "Idroppedit", "hot", Bear (for Bea Whittington) "hat" "nah" "yah", or reasonable facsimiles of same.

OOOXXX

Jill.

AL TO JILL MAY 11, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

It seems that I never hear crucial news from you fast enough. Kathryn was born and I had to wait to hear it. You announce that your shoulder is broken and that you fell on your head and here I wait patiently for more of the gruesome details. A fine way to pass my wedding anniversary. Nevertheless, assuming your condition is by now much improved, this anniversary will go down as much better than that of last year. I can actually think of it with some elation, because it reminds me that I am happily married (no sneers, please) and should have occasion to practice that fine state in the near future. Please get well, though, dammit (cajolery and threats, just like a mule). If anyone should get hurt, this member of the family should. But look at me, and stop laughing. As a matter of fact, I have changed lately. I have a mustache which will be evidenced to you in a picture or two soon. But I shall excise it before hitting yon bonny shores and will never let it accrue without your consent. Tom likes it and that's why I grew it.

The number of points for discharge eligibility have been announced as 85. Officers will presumably follow suit roughly. Do you know how many I have? One hundred and ten, my sweet. That ought to heal your little noggin. So far the program hasn't gone into full swing, but after all peace was only declared a few days ago. My principal objective now is time at home with you, not necessarily discharge.

I wrote Borgese a long letter this morning, taking to task in as gentle a manner as possible for his last article in Life which Dad

sent me. I think he is getting farther from the actualities of European politics all the time and his remedies are confused and unearthly. But he is always stimulating.

Would you be surprised if I told you that just this moment two beautiful swallows flew into my room and settled on a ledge near the ceiling? How pretty they are. They have reddish brown coats, dark red throats and white bellies and they jabber loudly. I wish Kathy could be here to see them. Last night, when I returned to my room from the outside, just one was sitting up there. This morning at dawn another one flew in to join him and they made a hell of a racket flying around and conversing in loud tones until they finally left by the open windows, to return only now. Peace, it's wonderful.

I went swimming with Anspacher, Glade and Kudrowitz yesterday afternoon at a nearby pond. There were some Russians already there and one of them had a water polo ball, which we borrowed for a while. It was lots of fun and needed exercise. The days are hot now. And so are you.

A passionate kiss and so long for now. Your

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 12, 1945

Al darling -

You're probably in receipt now of a congratulatory cable (our anniversary, remember) & a slightly frenzied letter from us all - I must explain about the cable. So limited is my imagination that I never really believed I could send one to you, & it took Nichol's, Ann's brother, to sell me (& also the confused operator) a bill of goods. Anyway, that's why I've never sent you a cable before - that, and my essential lack of sympathy for that means of communication. It's a sterile thing at best, & from my end, too frightening. Even now that the war is over, I haven't stopped worrying - although my receipt of your next letter (my last was

dated April 23) will stop all that. I have a superstitious fear of the fates, and of the virus [?] they can create.

We're all very tired today from the Whittington's visit. They stayed overnight, Nichols passing out in a sleeping bag on the living room floor. He & his wife are types too - small town or suburban young-married, ascendant financially, good & devoted to their children, but not terribly happy. His wife is fading from working hard with the kids & driving the whole team, Nick drinks because he is easy-going & doesn't essentially want to be driven. On Sundays he fishes. The American way. But dull or no, they are good people. You have to admire their integrity, their quality of being rooted. Instability is often as cheap a commodity as stuffiness. I suppose that essentially I have good feelings to every person who loves children - the Italian family next door, these people, your family (even if I didn't have other great emotional ties to them). Many of the more interesting people I know, my own family included - this generation, I mean - don't care much for them. It's hard to know why - selfishness appears to be the answer but it may not be only that. I don't know. I'm not sure about myself, except that I love being with large brawling families like yours and also, Kathy acts like a child who comes from a family that likes kids - even though I have been wearily getting sore at her all day.

Tomorrow we're going to Vallejo for the day to see Ann's mother & father, so I may not have time to write you there. But I'll be thinking of you a lot, even as I think of you every day. I'm so sure we'll have a happy life together when you come home. How lucky I am that I have that to look forward to - to live for.

All of which is very ungrammatical but another way of saying I love you.

Jill

Kathy sends her love & a big sweet kiss to daddy.

Sunday

The next day. We're back from Vallejo and the kids are both

bedded down, very tired but remarkably good-tempered. We had quite a nice time. It's about an hour's drive, through the hills of Marin County (we passed over the very spot where you lost your hat) and over the flatlands around the bay, past the vast shipyards. Ann's father is an electrician at Mare Island & he and Ann's mother & Grandma (all of whom ask for you) live in a temporary housing project. It's a strange sight - hundreds & hundreds of these little dwellings set down bluntly on the rolling pasture land. The bar hills swell all around. It's scenic - if you don't have to look at it all the time. But Marin is beautiful & green, getting the moisture from its proximity to the ocean. Paul says that by paying a relatively high price (\$1,000 instead of a moderate one, 600 or 700) you can get a really elegant parcel of land there. Figure on a \$5,000 house, which you most economically mortgage (instead of buying outright) & you have a swell place with cash left over. He says you also have to figure on things like septic tanks (about 200) & well digging - the latter depends on luck & costs about 5 bucks a foot to dig. The country is beautiful of course, all hilly wooded countrysides are, whether in Cal, Wisconsin or New Hampshire. The points in favor of this section of the country are easy weather for raising kids, marvelous roads for motor transportation, even if you worked in Berkeley you could live near the bay or ocean in Marin & still be an hour or less away - and proximity to a beautiful city. You can't say that for Chicago & you couldn't afford it in New York, Greenwich, Conn. & places like that are for the untouchable rich.

But mostly I am interested in getting you home first. The first batches of dischargees are already coming in, I read by the papers. I wonder how you'll stand. I hope tomorrow brings a letter from you.

Darling, it's bedtime. As ever, a lonely one without you.

OOOXXX

Jill

JILL TO AL MAY 12, 1945

RCA RADIOGRAM

AX818CJ Sanfrancisco 17/16 11 2150 MAY 12, 1945 10:43
(May12 B)

NLT Alfred Degrazia

1043313 aMNIGA

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY DARLING WISH YOU WERE HERE
LOVE

Jill Degrazia



Schloss Strassberg.



Officers' mess near Schloss Strassberg. The Ukrainian helper. Al with moustache, smiling.

AL TO JILL MAY 13, 1945

Strassberg Schloss

near Augsburg, Germany

Good Morning, Darling,

They say that a person with a head injury shouldn't be regaled with anything save light chatter. Even better, send them pictures to look at. So here are pictures. And if you ever get knocked on

the head again meanwhile, here is my exact address so that you won't have a bothersome discourse to make on our location.

I hope you are all well by now. I'm angry that I haven't heard how you're doing since your initial announcement. Perhaps we'll get some mail today.

Yesterday was another dull, sleepy day. I went swimming again and that was all. I don't have much to read, and am waiting for your books with eagerness.

The swallows keep coming in and going out the windows of my room. The flagrant way they make love is a direct affront to a lonesome man. A thousand kisses to you, dearest.

Always your

Al

JILL TO AL MAY 15, 1945

Darling,

My mild anxieties were ended yesterday by 2 letters from you, April 27 & 29 [*Note: unfortunately, these letters seem to have been lost...*] - both long and wonderful & welcome. I don't know why I didn't answer them straight away last night - I guess I was tired, a state that hasn't materially altered since then. But I was terribly happy to hear from you. One of the letters contained a couple of grim pictures of you - the one in the derby hat particularly made you look like an atrocity victim - & an enlargement of Kathy's. Now that I see it again, I realize it wasn't at all a good picture. She is a lot more symmetrical than that. But enough of this slander, we are all very beautiful people, with the possible exception of me, whose hair needs washing and who is covered with yellow paint, from trying to decorate a little Mexican chair for Kathy.

Ann and I were downtown shopping today and ran our legs off

bringing back various souvenirs (mostly from the Russian War Relief store, which has nice painted boxes and things.) I am in a turmoil of buying things and straightening them out, preparatory to leaving. In fact I expect to be in a turmoil for the next two weeks, what with departure and arrival.

The doctor took the bandage off my shoulders today & I feel as if I had been wrenched from the womb, all the security and dubious comfort of the wrappings gone. Now I find myself much less bold about swinging my arm around. He said I would have complete movement in it very soon.

I finished 2 novelettes by André Gide, written before the long one I read last week. They were very good narratives - story-telling for the sake of the story, a little mindful of both Henry James & Somerset Maugham, my limited literary experience being the only reason I can think of for making a comparison with two such disparate stylists.

Now I really ought to go to bed, to gird my self for the great mess of laundry I have to do tomorrow.

All my love to you, dearest, and please excuse this for being so short.

OOOXXX

Jill

AL TO JILL MAY 15, 1945 (A)

Jill, my Darling,

I wish I had more news from you. Only the one letter announcing your accident some days ago and nothing since. Now I am in Paris for a couple of days and I won't get your letters until the day after tomorrow when I get back. I hope you're all well by now and that the trip back wasn't too serious a problem.

I flew in here yesterday afternoon. The day was bright and calm,

and the trip was likewise. I met Martin last night after supper which I had at Pittman's hotel. Martin is in the middle of changing assignments, as who isn't. We talked with Dick Crossman & several other people for a while. C. is running for parliament in quasi-absentia. He'll probably make it, and be a damned good MP. Afterwards, Martin and I walked up to Montmartre and came back, went to his room, had a drink, and adjourned around one. Chief social even was several games on a pinball machine, but Martin didn't afford me nearly the competition you used to be. The ones at the VT were much better than these though. These paid off in slugs which of course went right back into the machine. The night clubs are closing around eleven these days. There aren't as many soldiers in town as before.

Paris is gayer than usual, since the Victory flush hasn't worn off, and many flags are still flying. I had the finest Martini with Pittman since our days together at an outdoor café which was very peaceful sheltered on the Faubourg St. Honoré. This morning I spent talking to people regarding our outfit and this afternoon I hope to get over to the other side of the river to see the Rodin gallery. There's a good French movie running which I hope to see also, perhaps this evening. It's called Les Enfants du Paradis, and the French claim it's the best produced in a generation. It was put out since the Liberation.

It's time for lunch now. I know you'll forgive me if I cut this short in order to get onto the streets. It's been a long time since I was here last, and it's fun walking around.

All my love, dearest, with a fervent hope that I'll have you in my arms again soon.

Always your

Al

AL TO JILL MAY 15, 1945 (B)

Dearest Jill,

Paris

If I haven't done much in Paris, at least I can write to tell you as much. My day here has consisted until now, supper time, mainly of a luncheon with Bob Merriam and a lot of walking. After I wrote you yesterday, I visited the Rodin museum where practically all of Rodin's sculpture is housed. Don't you think that is cheating humanity? Here you come for an hour to be dazzled and stupefied by a man's genius & the rest of the time live in poverty of him. His works, or any artist's works, should be scattered over the world to be seen by everyone and at odd times. Wouldn't it be bad if all the great mountains were in only one spot. All the waterfalls spilling over each other only in Cook County, Ill., & all the palms waving in Florida? It is silly, too, to think that I enjoyed Rodin more because there was more of him there.

About his work itself, I feel that he is a painter gone wrong. His efforts to create realism of a most violent sort from marble and scenes of passionate transience ought better to have been done on canvas. There is something too eternal about rock to make it portray a moment well. "The Thinker", yes; "Balzac", yes, but many of the other groups, no, "Porte d'Enfer" no. Dostoievski's temperament in stone. Il ne va pas.

Perhaps my attitude here is a general one. I see that I have been growing increasingly critical of the realists and romanticists, mainly in painting and decoration. Some day I must stop and reconsider this change & try to account for it if it seems to be consistent.

My pen went dry and I have to write with the very useful pencil you sent me. Besides Bob Merriam, I've met several other U of C people here this time, Al Lepansky, major still was at the mess last evening. (Bob says he's looking forward to getting to the states again & out of the army), a Col. Thompson whom you don't know & I know from Washington, a man named Borgen, brother of Frank Borgen whom I knew quite well, good old Major

Waples who is very much interested in forthcoming book publications in Germany, and Bob told me Hugh Cole, former history prof. is his boss in the Historical Section of headquarters here. Bob has been over here a year now, mostly with the Shaif historical section. He said Hart Perry is in Italy with OSS and leading the usual life of OSS there. Hart got his commission at Davis too. Deadman has been released from his PW camp near Munich. Hart's wife Beattie is a Red Cross morale building in a hospital back home. Bob's wife, Jane Wyman, is a WAC in an Army Separation Center from where she writes that she is getting combat fatigue second hand. That's all the gossip I can remember.

I'm going down to the bar now to have a drink before supper. I told a guy I'd meet him there. The nicest part about going back is the thought of your mail which must be waiting for me. I hope you are over all your ailments. You never can tell, you know, when I will be seeing you. And when that time comes if you're not in the pink, you don't stand a Chinaman's chance of survival. Here is a thousand kisses for a beginning.

And all my love to you and Kathy,....

Al



The freed prisoners have found a camera and are taking a "Class picture of '45 at Dachau."



Al standing by an abandoned German Messerschmidt fighter plane near Innsbruck. Notice one of the very first jet engines.

End of May (first of two parts) 1945 letters

