

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 5, 1945 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

I am now at a large camp a few miles out of Marseilles, having arrived at one AM after a fifty-hour train ride from Northern France which was only a trifle better than the Death March of Bataan. You can well imagine the horrors of spending all that time on a slow, crowded, coach train. But here everything is different, almost delightful. We are comfortably housed in barracks, the food is good, the atmosphere is cheerful, the country around can be seen for miles from the high plateau where we sit and has the beauty and magnificence of the arid country we used to see together in Texas. I have practically and remarkably recovered from a bad cold that seized me at that last camp, mostly through some sulfa pills I took, I think, certainly not through the healthy train ride!

It is doubtful whether this letter will beat me home for we are due to fly from here to Casablanca Saturday, which is September 8 (Eighth). At Casablanca we get another plane (C54 as I understand) which takes us to the States directly or by way of the Azores or Bermuda. Meanwhile practically every minute will be spent thinking of you. It is hard to contain oneself at times and even a day's delay hits one like a mortal wound. I've been trying to imagine the best possible way we could spend the next couple of months together and there are a hundred possibilities, all wonderful and still not quite enough. Nothing will be quite enough. But we will decide what to do in our own good time. The main thing is to see you and to hold you, to live with you, anyplace, all the time.

I hope you're not writing any more. I get no mail and my return address doesn't mean anything. I told the company to send any mail I get back to 5436 Ridgewood Ct. Please don't destroy any of it you get. Give my Kathy a big kiss for me. Does she realize that there's a strange man coming into her life? Love to the rest of the family.

Always your Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 8, 1945

Jill Darling,

I thought I would write you a note to give you the latest status of things. They aren't so good. We were all prepared to leave by air at dawn tomorrow morning for Casablanca, when a number of flights were canceled and a mess of railroad workers were pushed in ahead of us high pointers on a priority. Everyone is angry, disgusted and disheartened. Flights home cease tomorrow and everything afterwards is by boat. This means a delay of several monotonous days here and then a ten-day ocean voyage. I am especially downcast because I have had no word from you since the end of July and because you must also have your hopes up for my return about the fifteenth of September. The whole camp is in a rage over the army's incompetence but there is nothing we can do about it. If this happened in the States, we'd all be over the hill.

All my love and a million kisses to you, dearest.

Always your,

Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 9, 1945 (A)

Dear Love,

I guess I can write you a couple more letters now that our air shipment has been canceled and we're going by boat. This waiting hurts. There is nothing to do save read and reading only suffices to a limited extent in filling one's life. Believe me, waking up at seven in the morning and looking down the throat of fifteen enormous hours is not the happiest of sensations. And of course the potential alternative of waking up alongside of you makes the prospect even less happy. I would so much like to have some word from you but it is impossible. So when I meet you it will be with a news vacuum of two months. I hope that everything and everyone is well.

They say here that we will get a priority on shipping home, but the soldiers promptly scribbled "bull shit" all over the announcement on the bulletin board. It seems likely we will leave within a week and take ten days to get to the States. That raises my original prediction from September 15 to September 25, an eternity until it is actually accomplished. There is a small possibility of flying still which we are not considering seriously, however.

There are movies to see practically every night. I've seen the Boyer-Dunne picture Together Again, Bogard-Bacall for the second time, a Block and Sully variety show, and a bad film called Hitch Hiking to Happiness. Wilson played last night but I stayed away because I am in no mood for piety and idealism. We are being kicked around too much for that.

My reading has been very light. Two Ellery Queen mysteries, odd magazines, browsing amongst some books on social science and literature. They have a small library here, and now The Low Man on the Totem Pole.

They sell cokes and beer here at odd hours. The coke is good but the beer is bad. Once or twice a day, McDowell, a captain friend of mine, and I go over to the shack where they sell them and drink some. I could get into Marseilles for a few hours, but I don't relish the trip. Too much effort for the pleasure derived, and something might come up while I'm in the city.

Kathy's vocabulary must have increased tremendously since I last heard from you. I am all set to be stupefied when I first see her, one year and nine months old, inconceivably grown since I left her in your hands.

I suppose all my surplus belongings I shipped from Wiesbaden will have arrived before me, and you and Kathy will be garbed in outlandish costumes by then. Please, dear lady, do not make my home look like a barracks. I can strip any military garments from your body and do that gladly, but I won't have time to do the same to the whole house.

From my bare cot and gloomy hovel, I send you all my love and

a thirsty kiss.

Always your,

Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 9, 1945 (B)

TELEGRAM

MY SHIPMENT DELAYED PROBABLY WILL ARRIVE STATES
SEPTEMBER TWENTY FIVE NO NEWS FROM YOU SINCE
END OF JULY TELEGRAPH IMMEDIATELY WHETHER
EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING IS ALL RIGHT TO NUMBER
50 CANEBIERE MARSEILLE ALL MY LOVE

AL DE GRAZIA

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 11, 1945

Dearest Jill, Evening

You must be damned sick of receiving letters in lieu of me. But there is little enough I can do. I did send you a cable from Marseilles day before yesterday and you should have it by now and the reply should be on its way back. So it was described to me by the telegrapher. Tomorrow I'm making a trip into town to see if a reply from you has come in yet. I gave the address of the telegraph office in my cable as my return address. I will be very happy if I get some news from you. It's been so long since I've heard.

You can imagine my present state of mind here -- compelled to do nothing and filled with a thousand anticipations. They could never do this to us in the States. We would simply take off for home.

Besides sending the telegram, I had some coffee and doughnuts in a Red Cross Club and walked around the city for

about an hour, before returning to camp. Last evening I saw The Great John L. Sullivan and thought it was a good effort of Crosby. It remains to be seen whether he can hold a production company together. He's not the first performer who has tried. I guess I'll go over to see another movie tonight after I finish writing this. We have no electric lights here and it's difficult to read after dark, Abe Lincoln not to the contrary notwithstanding. Today and yesterday I've read Max Shulman's clever and funny Barefoot Boy with Cheek, and Smith's Low Man on the Totem Pole, which is even more clever and funny. Kathy will probably be more fun than anything, however. We are due to sail between the 15th and 17th and I hope it's a record voyage as well as a banner one.

I love you more than everything.

Your

Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 14, 1945

Jill Dearest,

We shall most probably be leaving here the day after tomorrow for the States and your patience will no longer be tortured by these constantly accruing delays. What a way to treat you, lifting you up and down, after all the waiting you've done already. It may be even harder on me, if that is any consolation to you, because I feel very directly these bastardly tricks of fate and incompetence that add days to our separation.

This afternoon, after lunch, I'm going to go into Marseilles to see if you've been able to answer my telegram. If the message went through according to schedule, I should have a reply today. I'm not too expectant, since the efficiency of the system is much in doubt.

My time is, as it has been for the last three weeks, split among bunk fatigue, reading and movies, with some beer-drinking

thrown in. I am very impatient with the last pastime, since the topics I want most to discuss, civilian life, no one knows anything about, and the people I want to drink with aren't here. Since my letter of two days ago I saw the movie Valley of Decision which was a fair combination of good and bad. It had something to say but was mealy-mouthed and romantic about saying it. Hollywood finds it as hard to take a stand on anything as the old-fashioned politician. Why can't motion pictures be as frank and real as the stage can be, not all of them but a few at least, even if the audience and profits are diminished thereby? It doesn't cost more to produce a movie. The large capital investment in film production which demands a maximum gate explains much. The foolish artistic inertia of theatre cliques (stage addicts are too small a group to be called a mass) explains it too -- never the twain shall meet. A picture like Valley of Decision, presented as it is and not in its very good potentialities, demands so much of the credulity of the audience, that it becomes doubtful whether it does more good than harm. The whole plot becomes linked together by leprechauns.

I hope I don't imply that I am an advocate of plot-murder, of living newspapers, of "slices of reality" dramas. I am as enthusiastic as Aristotle over a thematic, moral lesson as the basis of a play, but the lesson must be absolutely real, it must come about through perfectly understandable (or understandably controversial) developments unless certain illusions, facades, and symbols are pre-analyzed and pre-comprehended by the audience. A partial example might be in a kiss -- if an audience believes a kiss is only a kiss and is led from one extremity of emotion to another by the kiss as a precipitating factor, reality is shattered. If, however, the audience knows, though its prudishness deny the words themselves, that a kiss represents the full measure of passion, then the kiss is an acceptable link between two emotional situations.

I finished Low Man on the Totem Pole since writing you last, began Lost in the Horse Latitudes (the title is marvelously clear

to me), almost finished Beer's The Mauve Decade which is a fine through difficult work (his mind hops over the corpus like a flea), the August 11 New Yorker, as good as ever, and a book of de Maupassant's short stories. I was especially enchanted with the story of "Ball of Fat" and the tale of a man who began to love his wife again after tiring of mistresses and his wife's magnificent punishment of him. It's not only what she does but the cool, detached wit with which she does it that is so remarkable. De Maupassant and Beer are good to read together incidentally for a perspective on our own and French culture.

I must leave off writing and shave now. It's almost time for lunch.

I hope you are well and that Kathy is keeping you amused while this sad end of the family is trying to get home. If I bite your ear a little too hard it is because of a hangover from this period when I would like to bit everyone's head off.

All my love to you, darling.

Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 17, 1945

Jill, my Dear Love,-

Tomorrow I will be on a boat bound for home. That is the happy thought for today. I hope the nine days on ship go swiftly and then we can forget the whole mess. The ship is the Hawaiian Skipper and is full of high point casuals. You'll probably be able to learn from the newspapers when it will come in.

I'll try once more today at the telegraph office to see if you've been able to get a reply through to my telegram of last Sunday or Monday.

We've had our money changed and now possess precious dollars. I have charge of a contingent of some sixty men going

to Fort Sheridan for separation. I don't know whether I'll stay with them all the way or whether I'll be put on separate orders once in the States. I know one thing, that they're not going to hold me at Fort Sheridan one minute until I've seen you and Kathryn. I understand the ship docks at Hampdon Roads, so that my route home will be Norfolk - Washington - Chicago.

Last night I saw the farce Affairs of Susan and enjoyed it. Just the think to keep one's mind occupied pleasantly for a couple of hours. I read a book of three novelettes of Henry James - Daisy Miller, Author of Beltraffio, and another whose name has slipped me momentarily. How obnoxious was the society he wrote of, and he had the nerve to talk of his liking for realism in Beltraffio, of a zest for all of life, every particle of it! Now in my enforced leisure, I am reading a book of O'Neills plays, most of which I haven't read. He is so far above the run of successful dramatists today that one can't treat the latter seriously.

I'm not much in the news these days. The Stars and Stripes is worse than a five-minute radio newscast. The comment pages it contains once a week are puerile. It will be a great joy to get back to full accounts of what goes on in the full world, not to mention your estimable commentaries, be they over the breakfast table or the bar. You can't imagine how lonely I've been these many months without you. But I will set you down soon and tell you all. Then you will know that I love you more than anything.

Al

UNCLE CHARLES TO AL OCTOBER 5, 1945

TELEGRAM

JUST RECEIVED LETTER FROM LILLIAN YOU ARRIVE SAFE HOME CONGRATULATIONS FOR YOU SPLENDID WORK OVERSEAS AND REGRET I AM NOT HOME TO WELCOME YOU.

UNCLE CHARLES MILWAUKEE HOTEL

THE rage to return might have made smart travelers out of the men. Why organize a complex and universally disgusting system for conveying them home? The Army Command and Paymaster should simply have given the first hundred thousand men with the highest number of points an extra thousand dollars with their June pay and a permission, valid for three months, to go home if they wished -- and then let them get home however they could manage; double the number for July; and so on, raising the number to a half-million per month in October. Everyone who deserved to go home and wanted to go home would be home by Christmas.

Here is what could well have happened in most cases, and might have happened to the five men and the Captain from the Seventh Army Combat Propaganda Team. One hour after being paid off, they would have departed in the command car with a driver who would return the car. Stopping only to eat from their enormous picnic basket, they would have driven to Calais in a single day. They would sleep comfortably on the ground because of the crowd (unless local boys had set up cots and tents at a price), found a boat driven by an Englishman to take them to Dover (the crush of boats coming and going would be greater and much more joyful than Dunkirk), crossed over to Ireland, drunk Guinness and found there a ship bound for the Caribbean islands, landed in Cuba, played a few rounds of roulette while waiting for the regular launch to Miami, and, once landed in the U.S. of A., taken a bus, train, share-a-ride car or airplane for home. Elapsed time, fifteen days.

Misery of 15 days at a level of 2 on a ten-point Misery-Scale. Average fun level 7 on a ten-point Fun-Experience-Learning Scale. A hundred variants of this scenario would have brought the hundred thousand men home on the average in a month's time, a most interesting time, one should add, that they would forever remember favorably.

Within weeks, the free enterprise system would have brought in a dozen travel agencies and a host of carriers, especially if the Army and Navy had begun to release its contractors. The families of the troops would begin to buy their boys tickets, put pressure on the commercial carriers, and even call for their soldiers in cars and buses

and planes at incoming places like Halifax and Montreal and New York and Hampton Roads. The Texas State Legislature would vote a free ticket to Any Soldier, Sailor or Marine from Texas. The Pacific situation would be much the same. (Incidentally, I note my failure to mention the Japanese Surrender; it was a foregone conclusion when it came and barely raised a drinking arm at the Hohenhaufen bar.)

Instead of this happy mad Victory send-off Party for millions of men, the Army found the worst solution. Recall the jeering paraphrase: "There's the right way and there's the Army way." Score on the Misery Scale = 9.5; score on the FEL Scale = 1.2.

He would soon have been gone for 850 days from the United States. That is 20,400 hours. How much of this experience had been *pleasant*, how much *agreeable*, how much *tolerable*, how much *unpleasant*, and how much *distressing*? Please look again and see that I have a five-point scale here, ranging from best to worst. If I could get into his far-stored memories deeply, and could fit them to these five words, then add them up and figure what percentage they made up of the 20,400 hours, I might well comprehend this man's taste of war.

The biggest problem in becoming a statistician of his feelings over time is that no experience -- his, yours, or mine -- is likely to be encompassed under one emotion, and, worse than that, under one category of behavior.

For instance, he is riding in a jeep from his bivouac to a hospital near Naples, and enjoys the beautiful terrible eruption of Mt. Vesuvius (do you recall it?). His primary feeling is distress, but he is also feeling exaltation, a pleasant feeling. Or, to exemplify the second problem, he is talking sociably to others at dinner under the volcano of Mt. Etna; there are two tolerable if not agreeable activities going on here; yet should the activity and time spent upon it be accredited to eating or to sociability? This and other problems could be solved in a volume or two of applied sociological analysis; here, I may have gone too far already, and therefore I shall not construct the multiple ratings and the many graphs needed to cut in microscopically: *Sufficient unto the day is the evil (and good) thereof.*

We end up therefore with a table of his principal activities

overseas, the time in hours spent on each one, and the average feelings he had about each kind of activity.

PAINS AND PLEASURES

Activity	#Hrs	%Total	Feelings About it				
			Dis	Unp	Tol	Agr	Pl
1. Reading letters	200	0.98					X
2. Writing letters	500	2.45			X		
3. Sleep, comfortable	2200	10.78					X
4. Sleep, disturbed	4000	19.61		X			
5. Finding food, eating	2000	9.8			X		
6. Sick or hurt	250	1.23	X				
7. Personal hygiene	680	3.33				X	
8. Tending equipment	1000	4.9			X		
9. Reading manuals	170	0.83		X			
10. Reading reports	250	1.22			X		
11. Reading chosen works	900	4.41					X
12. Pure sociability	800	3.29					X
13. Administering troops	800	3.29			X		
14. Conducting operations	1700	8.33				X	
15. Necessary travel	1600	7.84			X		
16. Pleasure travel	500	2.45					X
17. Games & sports	50	0.25					X
18. Think,look,fantasy	1750	8.58				X	
19. Manual work	600	2.94			X		
20. Sexualizing	200	0.98					X
21. Anguish (misc. and extracted from above)	250	1.23	X				

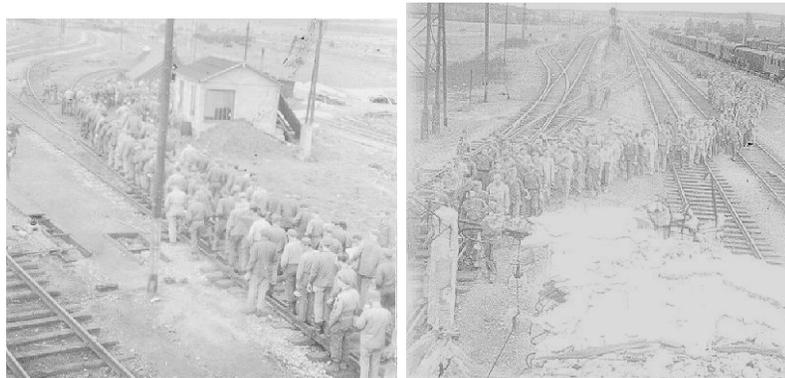
TOTAL HOURS20,400* ~100.00

(* Not included are the 11,992 hours of Army time spent before

leaving the States; "genug ist genug.")

I have not allowed him the sardonic victory of placing in the column a category for "Homesickness/Lovesickness," gnawing ailments that cast a melancholy haze over the total picture. Not that these are not tormenting and even deadly illnesses. I justify myself by saying that this dimension of suffering is reflected in the ratings of everything else he did, lowering them somewhat in agreeability.

However, more important, I have not included a category for "Pride of Cause and Nation." Now, he was no German who could wet his (or her) pants with pride at the salute and sacrifice to *Der Führer und Das Reich*. He suppressed all such extravagant expression and feeling. But he did obtain a continuous positive charge from fighting for the "good ol' U.S.A." and the "Four Freedoms". His war morale was never less than high. And that is why I am not letting him insert "Homesickness/Lovesickness" into the list. These positive and negative ions mixed in a fine ideological fog that overhung his thousands of hours.



American soldiers on their return journey waiting in chow-lines somewhere in France...

Note also that "distressing" periods must have been brief and scattered throughout the hours and months and activities. They could and did crop up at any time. Where they were intense and prolonged I put them

Home Front and War Front: September 1945

in a special category of "anguish." Any such anguish or distress was rapidly diminishing now. Yet, do not count it out!

End of September 1945 letters

