

JILL TO AL JANUARY 1, 1944

Darling, New Year's Day

The first of the year finds us even further apart than last - when you were shuttling across the Mohave a day late for our rendezvous & I spent New Year's Eve on a S.F.-L.A. Sleeper. But perhaps our prospects are brighter this year in the long run,



Kathy's first picture



Al

although that strikes me as rather mealy-mouthed optimism in the face of our current deprivations. Anyway, we do have one tangible blessing - an indisputably superior child. She really is a good-looking baby - even the nurse said she was the cutest one on this floor. I don't know whether it's wishful thinking but I think she resembles you - her eyes are very dark blue & will probably turn brown & she has your straight nose, long upper lip & wide mouth. She is nursing very nicely, although one can't tell much. I've only had milk for about 24 hours. I feel pretty good about having any at all, tho, after all my sputtering & tensions of the

past months, & I am still not very comfortable, although that will pass shortly. It is really worth having a little soreness to have such a handsome baby. I'm sure nobody else in any of our families was so pretty.

One of my neighbors forwarded your letter of Dec. 15 to the hospital yesterday. Gosh I'm glad you liked the books. They were the best selection of pocket books I could find. Most of them are mysteries & I don't think you like those very well. (I knew you didn't like chewing gum, but it's so hard to get here, everybody assumed that when the boys got those boxes they should be sent to you.)

I didn't get a chance to read the Oxbow Incident - anyway it's tragic & I was abstaining from the tragic mood pre-natale as I was already predisposed to tears at the drop of a hat. I read Pastures of Heaven about 3 years ago & thought it his best work, as well as a wonderful collection of short stories. It reminds me of Silone at his best (Fontaneara perhaps). I did get a chance to read The Turn of the Screw in one of your other books before I sent it off. It baffled me. How did you like it?

I haven't had the space to comment on the Xmas packages that came the day I went to the hospital. The stockings were lovely. I gave 6 pairs to Mom, leaving me 8 including the ones you sent before.

She was there when the package arrived & I couldn't, in any decency, settle for less. Not that she doesn't deserve it. She's really been wonderful, trotting back & forth at my every whim. But silk stockings!

The Baron Munchausen is of course adorable, & the handkerchiefs were perfectly timed - they're for a little girl, you know. In another year I shall be pinning them on Kathy's dresses. The pen & ink sketches are very nice & I'll have them matted as soon as I'm able. And I wish the Ovid had pictures.

I am about to be mangled again so I'd better stop. They are always thinking of new ways to keep you from sleeping or

resting comfortably in a hospital. However, no peace will be mine till I hold you again, so I might as well relax (tho I won't enjoy it).

I love you completely. Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 1, 1944

My beloved Jill,

The new year has started out as a howling banging affair. A wind blew up last night and even now twenty-four hours later is threatening to deprive us of our means of support. As I write, I feel that my eyes have run amuck; it seems as if the tent grows bigger and smaller, constantly. Very disturbing and very true. It does grow bigger and smaller and the wind comes in great breathtaking swooshes that leave one to marvel that the pegs are still grounded.

I spent a most bitter day and still have a few shivers left over. The rain, sleet and wind crawled into our very marrows. The army is perfectly miserable. Wretched soldiers, drenched to the skin, their tents blown down or the rain blown in, a sea of mud and a welter of newly created lakes, the sides of the roads raging torrents and snow in most places a few hundred feet up.

I went down to get some shells at the dump fixed up and found complete devastation. The crew were huddled in a little room in a stone manger looking on the hostile outside dejectedly and miserably. Not only had their records blown away but also their tents, leaving a pile of messy trash half buried in mud. The chaos revealed a cornet which was being reclaimed by one of the boys, and with an eager lip I tried it out. I suppose it was strange to play Stardust out in the open like that, with numb lips & fingers, but it was only a small absurd bit in the whole crazy-kat scene.

Hundreds of trees have blown down, many of them olive trees

and hardly expendable. It is a conspiracy of wind & rain. The rain softens and the wind gives the mortal blow.

It may be silly to spend this much space on the weather, but that certainly is the most accurate way of describing my day - one long losing fight with the weather.

Last night was spent in the tent. We drank a little rum & wine, opened and fried a tin of tongue which I believe Mom or you sent me, and sang a few songs. At midnight we fired our guns, adding to the general impression of a giant night battle with tommy-guns, rifles, pistols, BARs and even a machine gun which I could have sworn I heard. We came in and drank some coffee. I stayed up a while cleaning the guns and about the time I went to sleep, the wind began. Out of the daze of slumber I remember various articles tossing about the tent and scary blasts which one could hear starting in the trees far away and which came towards and through us in a final rush like huge breakers.

I didn't get any mail from you today, much to my disgust. I don't know whether I am a father, either. I love you very much and you were constantly in my thoughts all of last evening and today. Every day furnishes some new thing that reminds me of something we have enjoyed together. The longer I'm away, the more I can remember. The jam-packed years we were together are truly amazing. There is no limit to the reminiscences they provide. This, our separation, must have some effect on us - rarely is there like occasion to indulge so completely in recollections as a war separation affords. The chief effect would seem to be to make future enjoyment more intense - I'm sure that will be it and a frank dislike for intrusions and intruders.

If I could only make this tent stand still. It is most distracting and nerve-wracking. Surely, if one takes to symbolic signs, the year will be mighty and awful. It may be good, too, because I saw a beautiful rainbow in the midst of all the rigors today.

The news from Russia was almost incredibly good tonight. The

German armies are in full retreat everywhere. That is the best sign of the new year.

You would be of great solace and comfort to me tonight, darling. The place is very drafty and I am very disgusted with the clamor of the elements - as you see, my letter is a feeble effort. Keep yourself well, dearest, until I see you again. I want very much to be with you right now, but the thought of how much happiness we have to look forward to makes the price of a little longer not too difficult to pay.

I must return to my duties as Omar the tent-maker. With many kisses, gentle and burning, for you, my love.

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 2, 1944

(in pencil)

My darling -

Sunday

My last sheet of V-mail paper just fell on the floor, at the same time that my pen ran out of ink. But nothing shall stand in my way, & so I bummed the pencil off my roommate & resigned myself to this perhaps less efficient (according to Herz) mode of correspondence. It has the advantage, anyway, of my being able to write more. And today, for the first time, I really feel like writing, or rather, like engaging in any form of activity.

It's a nice bright Sunday out, with lots of good radio programs on, & so far the day has been very pleasant. Despite all my fears to the contrary - that I was 1) too high-strung, 2) too flat-chested, 3) that life on Ridgewood Ct. was too traumatic, 4) that life in the hospital too painful - I'm able to nurse Kathy, & she's actually gaining weight on home brew. I just can't believe it, or the sight of her going to sleep at my breast, with a smug satisfied expression on her little puss, instead of squalling in

contempt & deprivation. Maybe all the milk I've poured in me these 24 years is taking effect. She enjoys breastfeeding too - some babies don't - and I have to pry her off at the end of 15 minutes. Incidentally, contrary to popular belief, nursing a baby is not life's greatest joy.

While I'm proud of my current supply & know it's the best thing for her, I'm always glad when she's through so I can just look at her & fondle her. For one thing it hurts, for another you can't see the baby's face. In short, I prefer sex. But I hope I'll be able to keep nursing her for as long as one is supposed to.

Of course I only see her 5 times a day, at half-hour intervals, but then she is never crying or acting in any other fashion than angelic. Is this the rage type I expected as the result of our union? Mom said she wasn't even crying when they brought her out of the delivery room. This suits me fine - there'll be plenty of time for her to develop attitudes of independence with parents abstracted by politics & each other, there won't be much danger of her being beaten into a submissive type.

I wonder how long it took for the news to reach you. I hope not long. It must have been a bad week or so for you, just waiting.

Darling, I'm sending you under separate cover a couple of pages from today's Sun - the editorial pages, that is.

Cooney comes out of durance vile tomorrow. Poor guy - he must think the world has abandoned him. It seems like ages to me since I've seen him so much has happened since then.

Darling, I hear the supper trays tinkling. More tomorrow & all my love today.

Your Jill

Drawing: Two souls separated by cruel fate

[dog in jail] Bideawee home for ailing dogs.

[woman in bed] Wesley Memorial Hospital

P.S. *[this undated P.S. is in ink but belongs about here, probably].*

As no New Years Eve would be complete without a fight with my squire of the moment, I dreamt last night I had a fight with you. You wouldn't take me to see Oklahoma (which in reality I long ago lost all desire to see). I didn't get a chance to see how it ended up - they don't let you sleep long enough here to finish a dream.

AL TO JILL JANUARY 2, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

Again I resort to the Snoopers' Express in order to let you know quickly that today I had some good news over a bad connection to the effect that your confinement was expected in January and that your condition was "good". That by some voice from the Red Cross. I was a little surprised learning that, as I was expecting bigger news all the while. A later confinement, I understand from an inaccurate source, indicates a boy generally. Anyhow it says you are well, and I gratefully accept the tidings. You know, you are positively a menace to the prosecution of the war. Your husband just now isn't at all sure anything else matters apart from you. He wanders about vaguely in pursuit of his objectives, but is only nibbling at the many distractions of his environment. Between you and the baby, the Russians and the giant air raids, everything here seems insignificant.

I wrote you last night to say practically nothing. The first of the year, that most bitter day of the winter, is past and today was bright and shining. Some of the mountains look like great cakes of sugar, but cold.

I had a day off a couple of days ago and spent it partly with

Brown Roberts who looks like Tyrone Power and is in that Eighth Army picture. At his hangout I met a couple of Yugoslav partisans, both of whom spoke good Italian, and had a very interesting talk with them. An American Slavic interpreter sergeant brought them around and I gave them a good round welcome. "Any friends of General Tito are friends of ours, Sergeant," was the phrase which is a good example of how a cliché can sound very original. They had spent a good time in an Italian concentration camp and were most eager to get back to their country to fight. The younger boy was a communist of about twenty years of age, just a country boy, with a very healthy attitude towards people, the war, and the reconstruction. He didn't even want to kill all the Germans, which is the usual reaction of people who have suffered a lot at their hands. There were a couple other people around and the conversation grew highly complicated. At one and the same time, French, English, Italian and Yugoslav (Serbian) were being interchanged, not to mention Bohemian which one American found had things in common with Serbian.

I got two packages today, one from the boys and the other from Daisy, the second. The first included nice things like cigarettes and I shall write to thank them. The latter had 120 cups of Nescafe towards which my feelings are mixed. Now that rationing on coffee is gone, perhaps she doesn't feel the need for hoarding it so much. On the other hand, one of these days, I may be very grateful for it. But no letter from you in three days, how sad.

You can bet your life, my darling, that one of these days I'm going to get back and make you a very happy girl. I feel it in my dampened bones. I've had enough of your being continually beset with problems and unsatisfied desires - such as me.

Your Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 3, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling -

Monday

I surely hope the pajamas I sent for your birthday have arrived, because harrowing reports have been coming in of heavy weather on the Fifth Army front. I wish I could send my super-heated self too, knowing my darling's susceptibility to chills and his amenability to the thermostatic charms of this fair white body. Incidentally, this fair white body is as lean as ever - apparently I didn't gain a single pound except in my stomach, which gets flatter & tighter every day. Actually there isn't any fat there either - the skin is just somewhat relaxed. I guess all of that 18 or 19 lbs I gained went into Kathy & her bed coverings.

That one is very well, still eating like a horse (which kind of mixes the metaphor, as I am certainly a cow). She sends you her love and a bright smile, of which she is quite capable. I was nursing her in the middle of Jack Benny's program last night and she suddenly broke into a laugh. A precocious, if undiscerning sense of humor, has she. Vic & Ed came up with Mom last night, looking very sharp. Kathy was lying on her back in the nursery & apparently looking a bit strange, so they didn't rave as everyone else has. Mom is getting convinced that she looks more like you than me - anyway, I am talking her into it. I guess it's the wish of every person in love to have the child look like the loved one, rather than like themselves. Incidentally, next to you & Kathy, right now, I love the Russian Army best of all. Their advance to the borders of Poland is a thing of beauty. Maybe we shall have this spring together after all.

All my love -

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 3, 1944

Dearest Jill,

I am flush tonight, flush with five inimitable and precious letters from you and flush from a blazing fire. My driver and I have holed ourselves up for the night. We've got a room, a bleak enough one when we took it over, but we've made it snug and comfortable. The room next to this has a yawning hole in the ceiling from an artillery shell-hit, but we've managed to cram shut what remains of the door. The one window has been shuttered close, the glass having gone the way of all glass in this God-forsaken part of the world, and the fireplace, the notable feature which touched our hearts, has been made into a blazing glory. We heated a huge can of stuff which said "bacon and eggs," cooked some soup from an onion powder in a tin can, heated some coffee, broke open a box of crackers, and I can say that the beast within me is purring like a kitten. Given the writing of a letter to you and I'm as content as war can make me. I even found a candle to help me write this and to make this stone-walled, whitewashed, vaulted room completely medieval. There is a good-sized artillery barrage going on, happily one-sided, that makes odd things rattle but otherwise fails to disturb the fireside repose. From the window, if it were open, you could see the flashes lighting up their little segment of terrain.

I can never express my true delight with your letters. You know that you are the world's most eminent humorist. You may also know that you are a premier raconteur of past encounters entre nous which fill me with longing and passion and nostalgia for resurrected moments. Where my pen grows speechless, yours just begins. And yet you have the effrontery to suggest that I'm more adequate at expressing my love than you are. Some day I'll have to lay you flat on your back and make you confess that you are my mistress in these matters, unless my energies become diverted into other channels before the confession is consummated. How I shall indent your lips with hot kisses, enough to wipe out the dismay of every one of these many nights we've lacked each other.

Irv Lewis wrote me a letter which arrived today. He is likewise a father, is in some sort of amphibious training center in California and is pretty unhappy. Anyhow, his letter was very kind and I must write him a response soon. Two copies of Time also came, of Dec. 7 and Dec. 13. Long is reading one now in the light of his flashlight. Also this morning came a note from the local Red Cross man which I think is worth enclosing for your purview. It's kind of cute. The word "cute" reminds that I can hardly find the right adjectives to describe you in part of your moods - "cute" I don't like too well -- it's too common -- "delightful," "diverting," "capricious" and "devilish" are more applicable in certain of their special meanings. I think the combination of the four may hint at what I'm describing - my reaction, in case you're curious - is to laugh and then kiss you. What a beautiful fire - I wish you were here so we could stare at it hypnotically together.

Jim left for a rest camp this morning, and will be gone for a week. Martin looks like he ought to go, but his appearance is deceiving. Anyway, he was at one, several weeks ago. A rest camp, for your knowledge, is a secluded spot with bath that the army sends people to for rest, simply enough.

Honestly, I don't mind Cooney in the slightest, provided he keeps his place. He is most photogenic, beating you at that art hands down. Nor do I mind, perhaps because distance is what it is, any of the people you talk about and they are numerous. Even the janitor has acquired a certain appealing character at your pen. The world is certainly full of women with babies, isn't it? Now that you mention Rosable as having visited you, I'm surprised the baby wasn't a lot sooner. She is such a stimulating person. I shall be profoundly glad to see them all again or meet them sometime. What you have written in the past months has been a sort of masterpiece on pregnancy and they all come into it for bit parts with great charm and consistency. You have no idea how fine and clear a picture I have obtained of home all this time. I'm sorry that in my game, a complete picture would be an illegal one. But remember it all I hope to do and will recount it of an evening if enough ice cream

is proffered in bribery and you wear a long dress that covers your knees.

I found your diagram of the house highly gratifying and artistic, too. I dare not tell anyone the funny things you say, write and draw else they think me a braggart. It is very frustrating. Anyhow, the layout looks neat and is actually clear enough to get me around in the dark in its ideal state. But well I know what misshapen objects get strewn over the place during the daytime to trap the unwary night walker. I'll bet that at this very moment God knows what burden of miscellany the end table is groaning under. Your choice of books to get rid of was well made - a form of book review in the negative. Any of like ilk should be done away with in the same vein. Selling them, I think, for some reason is an utterly novel solution. I just threw away books I didn't want under the mistaken, but you agree plausible, impression that what I don't find an attachment for in the way of books, nobody wants.

If I were in the Navy and near a college book store I'd buy you an E pennant for excellence. I almost thrill to the superb manner in which you've conducted the campaign to become a mother. Despite what superficially appeared a static environment, you've done all sorts of interesting, useful and novel things. At least from what I've gathered you've had a rousing time of it and ought to be peacock-proud (a Time mag. word isn't it). I'm glad you did all those things instead of going into the WACS or some such activity. You would have been justifiably depressed and bored by it, I'm sure. For myself I don't like even those few women who got to Africa or even nurses, because I feel that they're taking unfair advantage of women-starved males. Few of them would stand a show against ordinary competition, but they can use their scarcity value to exercise their masculine protests.

The candle is getting low, which means that I can think about you much longer tonight but won't be able to write it down. I love you very much, dear Jill. Al

AMERICAN RED CROSS

January 1, 1944

Lt. Alfred DeGrazia

PWB

5th Army

Dear Lt. DeGrazia:

We, at this station, are to day in receipt of the following cable message for you:

"Dr. Greenhill's Secretary states wife's confinement expected in January. Condition good. Will notify upon birth."

Hope you will receive quick notification of the arrival of your "prince" or "princess."

Good wishes

George K. Hundley A.F.D.

American Red Cross

Fifth Army Headquarters

APO #464

JILL TO AL JANUARY 4, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling -

Tuesday

Today marks a week of very confining confinement. I celebrated it by having a very sexy dream about you last night. This is a classic example of the spirit is willing, etc. since my bottom still

feels like a half-truck ran over it. Since I presume you get my letters more or less in order, and that by the time you get them you have enuf sense not to worry over what I say, and since anyway I am well enough to be let out of bed today, let me relate to you my past woes. As compensation for having the healthiest most beautiful baby in the world, I have had the most freakish series of ailments in the world. In the first place, I absolutely couldn't go to the john at first, so they had to keep putting catheters in me, ending up by their leaving one in, in disgust & fatigue, for 48 hours. This had an odd pictorial effect - a hose leading from me to a bottle under the bed - sort of Rube Goldbergish, though it was by no means uncomfortable & took a load off everybody's mind, including mine. Then when I started to go, which I still can't do without an enormous muscular & psychic effort, the cut they made at delivery opened up. No cause & effect - Greenhill said he's never had it happen before, so yesterday he had to stitch me up all over again. Absolutely nothing has happened today - I can't understand it. Anyway, I am certainly getting my money's worth out of Greenhill, and despite all this fuss and flurry, I continue to rival Elsie the Cow in productive ability. Kathy has gained back all her original birth weight (8 pounds 7 oz) which is very unusual for just a week - it usually takes at least 10 days. I haven't seen her cry yet, though she has a number of other facial expressions & emotions. She smiles, frowns, laughs, sneezes & coughs (after which she smiles). I don't know where the hell she gets such a good disposition, although I have a good idea whence comes the appetite. I'm getting more certain every day that she is going to look like you. Her eyes are so dark that it's unlikely they'll remain blue (Gottseidank) and her hair & eyebrows are also dark - the latter are rather thick and well-shaped, like yours. Boy, is she cute! I'll have somebody take pictures of her when we get home. I was up a little while ago for the first time, the chief motive being to get this pen filled so I could keep writing you. It felt very funny. Then two of your letters (the 17th & V-mail, the 22nd) came. Gosh, I think it's awful about my mail not coming. I hope this gets to you in better time. So that you can learn without delay what a successful father

you've been. I laughed at your mashed potato reminiscences. I'll never forget how sore you were when you had whipped up a big batch once, and went to put salt in it & I had left the top off the salt cellar with disastrous results. Jesus, the things we used to fight over! High heels, salt shakers, shirts that didn't come back from the laundry. It was funny, but I don't think I want to fight any more because it might take up too much time from the active aspects of loving you.

I took a good look at myself in the mirror before when I was up (discretely pulling down the shades as per your teachings - see how good I'm getting!) and do I look funny! My beautiful big tail that used to compare so favorably with your other friends' has practically shrunk away, but my bosom is tremendous, for me. My stomach is somewhere in between. I shall have to eat many hog fudge sundaes in order to regain my pristine charms. It's nice to be on a gain-weight diet again, since I have developed a wholesome passion for the cereal - eggs - toast - steak kind of breakfast & can now indulge it. I shall feed you very well when you come home but don't know if I can oblige with martinis as gin is no longer available. How about an old-fashioned?

All my love to my only sweetheart.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 4, 1944

Dearest Jill,

Tuesday

With the news that the Russian armies have entered Poland, I'm prepared to wax optimistic tonight. I feel well too, having got me a warm stove and brewed myself a tasty cup of Nescafe. I expect to become a coffee fiend with the flood of pulverized caffeine sent me for Christmas. At the slightest excuse, I stick one of my trusty tins on the stove with water, dump in the powder and sugar and get my friends involved in a coffee jag.

I've just finished having a talk with Martin [Hertz] over said coffee about the German soldiers we're facing and as always the subject does not leave one as happy as before the matter was mentioned. There are so many approaches to the treatment of him, there are so many universal facets leading out of the some thousands of them a few mile away. In short, the whole of society is summed up in a man, a recapitulation of sociology which leads one to a bafflement which can only be saved by an individual sense of humor, and an individual orientation and self-ordering. What is the solution for the altruistic individual faced with frustration at the infinity of social problems and the strength of hostile opinions. It is first to try to save society but with the duty and social obligation always of saving himself. The last the intelligent individual can accomplish. The first he may be completely incapable of doing. If you've read carefully the preceding sentences, you can understand well why I've always seemed to prefer the wholesome person, "the rural" type, the Dannenbergs against the Bells. It's because they have the first adjustment before they build the second. They don't warp and destroy the second because they lack the first. They don't become "shocking" and radical as a means of personal adjustment - which invariably fails, of course.

Take the case of a man who, without knowing you, makes a crack against Mrs. Roosevelt, which is completely false and vicious. To shout him down or hit him, would be the just recourse. But one can't hit thousands of people. Yet the radical attitude would demand such a drastic solution for it does not admit of compromise. The case cited occurred with me the other night and of course I didn't hit the man because it was an officers' mess and there is a standard of gentlemanly conduct. Furthermore, I don't pretend to be a great iconoclast whereas if I were, I would have acted according to my principles - which is more than I can say for the "iconoclasts," self-appointed, who are just as inconsistent in their own way as the stolid people.

I read in your letter today about Dorothy Briggs and I think that another case in point. I think her selection of a lover utterly

stupid, though quite natural in view of her past ineptitude. It is a perversion, not a principle, or, if you prefer, a perversion of a principle. An attraction for a person because he has a social defect, and not in spite of it, is a perversion. People sympathize with a man without an eye but don't go seeking him out in order to lavish affection of him. I always remember Lincoln in that regard. "Because I want freedom for the negro, does not mean that I want to marry a negro woman." And yet, because the society of his time, as in ours, knew unfortunately only that type of "reformer" (is "pervert" too strong), his explanation and apologia was necessary.

And you added the bits about little Andy throwing popcorn on your floor and their somewhat shattered-looking household. Frankly, though Andy may be exceedingly cute, I would have made the brat pick up every piece and dispose of them correctly. Naturally, no rage would be necessary but I don't think it cute, justifiable or healthy. I regard it rather as a burden upon society, a demand which he should not have the right to make. I think you agree already, but, if not, I will some other time give you dozens of examples of that same sort of thing which are a curse to societies. Really I think "progressivism" and anarchy for the child are almost synonyms and as such are sheer rot. And that has nothing to do with the way a man talks. I'll warrant that Mort. J. Adler was a "progressively" brought-up child. The child's first responsibility when he grows up is to make of himself a well-ordered individual, to be responsible himself. I dislike people who go about adding their weight to the existing social problems, even though I sometimes enjoy the sparks they throw when they go off on their tangential journeys. I enjoy monkeys too, though it does not behoove me to become one. That, I'm afraid, is my attitude towards some of our mutual friends. And if that would lead us to be stiff-necked, to look only to God, so to speak, very well. Let us look only to God. There is no snobbishness involved. Any social esteem that might accrue would be purely accidental.

Probably to anyone save you and paltry few others, I don't appear to be communing with Heaven constantly. But actually I

spend a great deal of my time thinking about these things and trying to fit together the endless experiences which are upon me. That's the way I pass time in a jeep, for one thing, if I'm not breathing in the scenery or scanning the sky for planes.

The disgusting rain has commenced again, hammering down on the canvas with gleeful malice. It reminded me, in any event, to stoke up the fire, put the coffee back on and light a cigarette. What a silly letter this has been -- all of it directed towards the last paragraph where I can finally say that I love you. They are all that way. After each entry, the little voice pipes up, "Can I tell her now, huh?" and I say "No, jerk, wait for a few more lines. Got to make her think something of importance is going on, even if it isn't." But now there are enough lines and I can sit back and scratch my arms and write it simply, with finality, a little as if I were actually reaching for your lips. You have all of my love, darling.

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 5, 1944(A) V-MAIL

Darling -

Tuesday

Your letter of Dec. 18th came yesterday to the hospital & as always I was overjoyed to hear from you. I am writing you all V-mail too these days in the hopes that this batch will be more successful in getting to you than the Oct-Nov. ones. I am getting very tired of hospital life, of the sleeplessness & inadequate rations, but it has given me some time to ponder on the imponderables of parenthood. Anyway, it has led me to 3 conclusions, which I offer you, for free. (1) Parenthood has made me love you more than ever, if possible, & I'm so happy Kathy looks like you. It is better she's a girl because with my having that attitude, we might have had all kinds of fixations in the family otherwise. (2) It's hard to realize that you (me, rather) don't own the little bambino when she's so doll-like & helpless - that it's strictly lend-lease and at that, for a shorter time than

one likes to realize. (3) That if she gets spoiled, disagreeable or bitchy it will be all my fault, because I never saw any creature with so little of the original sin, any sin, about her. Now let them come make my bed! Bill Steiny was over last night with a large box of candy & the assurance that he would wait for Kathryn Gail till the end of time. He was very excited about the whole thing. I guess you are his first close friend who has had a baby at such close range. Kathy, unfortunately, always looks her worse in the nursery (I've been able to see her there too) & her best when à seul with me. She has a habit of turning her face up when she is lying over on her back so that her mouth hangs open & her lids look too heavy - I've seen you look like that, to my horror, sometimes when you were asleep & I marvelled that I could love such an ugly duck. Yet you are undeniably handsome in most aspects. Oh the curse of having a flexible face - or is it the shifting soul beneath that plays such tricks? And am I going to have to contend with not one but two Renaissance Italian souls? Sometimes I think that compared to the versatility & deviousness of all the DeGrazia strain, my clansmen are as dumb Irish harps. This is all in a complimentary vein, of course, since you must know that no other man could have kept me. I really think that for every woman there is just one man, ultimately.

Since space ran out, Love OOOXXX J.

JILL TO AL JANUARY 5, 1944(B) V-MAIL

Darling -

Wednesday

Another day draws to a close, one spent sleeping & triumphantly getting out of bed to go to the regular girls' room. I was supposed to go home tomorrow, but the nurse we shall have, Mrs. Thompson, a refined (from her voice) colored lady, has a cold, so the Dr. says I should stay here until she is able to come, namely Friday or Saturday. As long as I'm going to have a nurse anyway, I don't want to start putting burdens on Mom &

then risk have ideological conflicts between nurse-grandma & mother later on - Anyway, I still feel pretty weak though I'm disappointed about not going home tomorrow. I can't wait to see how little Kathy looks in all positions & moods. Darling, I could cry every time I think of how you are being cheated of knowing her now. I hate to say it, but it is the biggest [rool? role?] you're getting. After all, you know what I'm like - but she's unique & wonderful. Don't ever believe anybody who says they don't get interesting or need their father 'till they're six mos. old. However, I'll make it up to you by having many (anyway, at least two, more). But if it's your sorrow that you can't see your baby, it's mine, even greater, that I can't see you. Sometimes when I read about casualties, I wonder what in hell makes me think we're immune. And since there's no rationale I can find, under God or man, for sparing you - no objective one in our world I mean - I get scared as hell. And then I put the awful thought away, and return to our world of hopes & dreams of many springs together - first in new York, then Italy, California - in short, all the places we've been together or want to be together in. But meanwhile, I wish I believed in the efficacy of prayer - not that I'm an atheist - it just seems presumptuous. But if loving you with all my heart helps any, we'll be together very soon.

Your Jill

MARTIN F. HERZ TO JILL JANUARY 5, 1944 V-MAIL

Dear Jill:

First of all, let me tell you the story of your fruit cake (for which, many thanks!). When it arrived, Al, Jim Clark and I were standing around wondering what was inside. Then I looked in vain from whom it came. The package just read Marshal Field, Chicago. "Honestly," I said, laughing - "Al, the only person I know in Chicago is your wife. Here, have some of your wife's fruitcake." But somehow, we still couldn't quite figure the matter out. Kiddingly, rather than anything else, the fruitcake was

called "the cake De Grazia's wife sent to Herz" - and it was a great success. Al looked kind of diffident for a while, for there was a cruel irony in that cake: it came during the fortnight or more when all your mail was kicking around somewhere and he hadn't heard from home, and was fretful. That anonymous cake, however, was a success with too many others also. In a day it was gone. Had I known then, however, what I knew later - when Al's mail arrived - I assure you I would have skipped the smirk and offered him a bigger piece ...

Al is in swell shape. He is doing well, worrying perhaps about the whelping business and all that - congratulations, if they are in order by this time - but certainly doing all right. For a while, when he had those mail difficulties, he was perhaps a little on the refractory side and brooded quite a bit but now - also, since he has worked himself into a new job - he is blossoming out again. We have profound conversations every once in a while, about the war, people, and more specifically how lucky we are to have such unusual opportunities to get views of the war in all its social aspects, how fascinating the very irritating features of its organization are, how certain social misconditions bid fair to be carried over into public life after the war, how comfortable we really are amid the muck and filth surrounding us - for one can keep clean and dry if one knows the ropes and has the facilities, as we do. This morning, for instance, we woke up alone in the old tent - the others were away for the night - and found a little stream meandering through it, the while the rain was machine-gunning the tent. We had a whale of a good time making ourselves hot water, shaving together, while we were cursing in unison (with counterpoint the weather, politics, graft, corruption, stupidity, organized befuddlement and obfuscation of issues and the rank ineptitude surrounding us. Last night we even decided to write a little dissertation together...

That's all the room there is today. Best of luck. Happy New Year. Cordially,

/signed/ Martin

JILL TO AL JANUARY 7, 1944 V-MAIL

My sweetheart -

Friday

Oh boy oh joy - I'm going home today! This AM I almost thought I wouldn't because the cut opened up a bit, but the doctor said it would be OK & nothing to worry about - I just wouldn't have such a pretty scar. So although you'll come home to an unchanged face & figure, something new (besides Kathy) will have been added. I'm simply ecstatic over the prospects of having her all to myself. Maybe I won't be after she cries at night, though I don't see how anything but the song of a canary can emanate from her angelic puss. I'm still nursing her, tho my bosom doesn't seem so large & feel as before, and it doesn't hurt a bit any more. My only difficulty is keeping myself from falling asleep as she peacefully wolves away. She also gets feedings from the bottle, because she is your daughter & such a big pig. Not that the old lady doesn't have a big appetite too. I have simply starved on hospital food, & the past two days have also been taking supplemental feedings on ham sandwiches, thoughtfully supplied by Julie Hess. Julie is driving us home this afternoon. Mom will spend the night & the nurse will be there waiting for us. Mom combed the city yesterday & found a 2-inch porterhouse steak to slake my hunger. I'm going to have a gallon of milk delivered every day too, so maybe I'll be fat and sassy again very soon.

I am absolutely so overcome by the thought of going home I can't do anything but burble. I've never seen her undressed, you know, & that's a treat in store for me, providing she doesn't have six toes. They took prints of her feet for the hospital birth certificate & only 4 showed up on 1 foot. Maybe they'll be 6 on the other to make up. I'm not really worried, of course. I dreamt about you again last night but in the excitement have forgotten it. Anyway it was pleasant. The baby doctor just came in and gave me the formula - I guess I'm not so good because she is taking 4 oz. out of the bottle 5 times a day. He said she was fine & healthy though. Her little toes curl under like mine (or yours??) so he taped them straight. The doctor is at 57th &

Kimbark, very convenient. He's a pal of Greenhill's.

We all send you all our love. Tomorrow I'll have the typewriter & be able to tell all.

Your loving Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY (?), 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Darling -

My love, if I ever missed you, and that I did, the cold of this morning wrapped that already poignant feeling into a sheet of ice making it more intense, bitter, and painful. I saw old Vesuvius yesterday caked in snow and glimpsed it last evening on the way back actually erupting, with a bead of red running down a short distance from the crater. If the lava would only come near us we could do all sorts of things with its heat. For example, I could write more letters which depend on a certain digital flexibility and feeling of bodily warmth. Yesterday, through the agency of a friend, I had a roll of film developed, affording you, perhaps to your dismay, several more pictures of me in various stages of dress. One I had enlarged, the one with only a half of me showing, and will send it on right away in a separate package. The others I'll send in two separate envelopes starting today. Nothing striking, unless you like pictures of me.

I have still heard nothing about the baby being born. You mention once in the while the sympathy a pregnant mother gets, once the father is overseas especially. Even in the hard-bitten army, I find that the role of the absent father can take the prize in sessions of the most embittered bitching. But inasmuch as you do all the work and take whatever pains the process affords, I wouldn't use that dialectical weapon without grave provocation.

I have seen some disgusting Coca Cola ads with soldiers in remote places, including the Italian front, drinking Coke with

great gusto. We all go down on record here as denying that we have ever seen a Coke in these parts, or in Africa and Sicily for that matter.

You mentioned Borgese's new book some time ago. I would be delighted to get a copy and will send you many mail-order kisses as down payment, the rest when you catch me. I have already received Time magazine for Dec. 13, and am very happy about that present. A couple more friends from PWB have gone home with lingering illnesses. You married an exasperatingly healthy constitution, darling, as the photographs may indicate. My immuneness to dysentery probably comes from previous eating in bad but cheap restaurants during my formative years. And since no one seems to know what causes jaundice, I guess a jaundiced view on life scares away the real thing.

Probably by this time you've seen the Reader's Digest story on PWB., I hear Life Mag has one on the same subject. I've seen the first and it makes for to laugh, though it could have been worse. It's just that nauseating Reader's Digest style mostly, plus all those things it doesn't say. The organization is much looser and there are great varieties resident therein, in people and in work; it speaks through the whole of the theater and has as much diversity as the army itself has in the theater. Jerry is heading Tunis Radio, I understand.

All my love, Jill.

Your Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 7 ?, 1944 V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

Better a part of a letter than none at all, I found out yesterday when the second page of your Dec. 16 letter came all by its lonesome. It was nice to get it though and I'm hoping for the rest

today. No news regarding the baby? Won't it ever grow up? Is it waiting for spring, recognizing a good thing when it's in it? It was very cold again this morning and baby, you are missed as ever. I have toyed with the idea of writing you two letters a day, a V-mail of morning and an air-mail of night. I like to think of doing it but I'm afraid most of the time it would be physically impossible, not to add downright boring for you. I brought Dabinett on my milk route yesterday. He's been wanting to come along and lamenting being tied to details of supply and vehicles. I think he had a highly interesting time of it. Anglin arrived in Italy not so long ago and I've got him scheduled for the milk route the first couple days of next week. Herz, who wrote you two days ago, isn't feeling well and Weaver is down with the same. Life is grim. Last night we were tooling down the road in direction helmet and picked up three boys who were hitchhiking. They added just the right three voices to the chorus Babby and I were developing in duo, but also just enough weight to give us a flat tire. We had no pliers to wrench out a bolt in the spare and stopped a French car for the required object. International cooperation consummated, we moved along to the tune of the "Knoxville Whore" which this hillbilly boy rendered to perfection. The boys did help, though. We had no jack, so everybody just lifted the jeep in the air until the remaining man put the tire in. Babby always asks me to sing "They shifted the ol man's grave to build a sewer," a fine old English chanson which I learned with the Eighth Army.

The war is looking up these days. I never thought I'd see the time when the Russians would finally reach old Poland, or at least, not before we were actually on the continent in great force. I honestly don't see the Germans lasting much longer than a couple of months. How optimistic I am this morning. But I always predicted this coming spring as the end - witness \$50 bet with Dannenberg two years ago. I'm terribly, fanatically curious to see how it feels to resume old habits. I thought yesterday, for reasons unknown, of wearing a light blue shirt, and am most anxious to try it out and letting you rumple it.

Day and night I remain your Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 8, 1944 V-MAIL

Darling Al -

Saturday

Kathy's & my first day home has been quite a success, tho fortunately not a howling one. To start from the beginning, we drove home with Julie about 4 yesterday. Mrs. Thompson the nurse was waiting for us, having gotten the key from a neighbor. Everybody immediately jumped on me & made me go to bed, which naturally made me very irritable. I was beginning to think I had a baby just for the entertainment of Wesley nurse and then for this large & formidable black lady. For your daughter really is the kind of baby that women coo and gurgle over. She is perfectly formed & has a great variety of pleasant and amusing facial expressions. However, today I'm quite grateful for Mrs. T., because I feel still quite weak & tired. I have been in bed most of the day.

And Kathy has proved to be as good natured at home as she was in the hospital. The only time she cries is before feeding time. The rest of the time she sleeps. It is even hard to keep her awake while feeding her. She still nurses from me about 10 minutes, then takes the bottle. The doctor didn't know whether it was necessary to give her a 2 AM bottle, but she cried around that time, last night, so she gets that too. However, the nurse gives her the bottle then - I don't breast-feed her. I don't know how long I'll be able to feed her - the milk isn't rich enough for sure, & it may also be diminishing in quantity. It saddens me to think I'll have to stop. But babies nowadays are so big & voracious that mothers just can't keep up to them. Of course, if I wanted to risk a crying baby, I could ignore the doctor's advice & omit bottle feedings. But she would be half-starved. Ah well - I'll keep up as long as I can, just resigning myself to the sad fact that I'm no cow.

(Sunday)

Yesterday was still rather hectic, with Mom here (she had stayed overnight) & the local population still not used to the fact that they couldn't drop in to gape at the baby. Diane & Oliver got

past the guard but didn't stay long & seemed rather annoyed that they couldn't. Mom kept darting in and out all day in a raging snow storm, to accomplish such feats as applying for Kathy's ration book, buying a chicken, etc., etc. I tried to get Janice to drive her around, but Deety had to work yesterday. It was really a beautiful snowfall & a shame that Kathy couldn't see it and that I couldn't be out playing in it with you (although you're probably very sick of snow & cold by now) or that poor second to you, Cooney.

I'm listening to the Univ. of Chicago Round Table now - Leo Wolman, Jacoby & Walsh (a C 10 man) are arguing out on the political strategy of labor. The first two are in effect asking labor to cut off its balls. Walsh seems to be the only liberal in the fray. Sure the unions have made a lot of mistakes but I don't think any country has ever baited labor for as long a time or as intensively as this country has. Or rather, Congress has done so, only acceding to labor pressure group when it's deliberately against the public interest.

Darling, I've been tearing stuff out of the paper (the Sun - I didn't get the News in the hospital) the past week but never seem to get a chance to send it because I haven't found an envelope big enough. Today I'll get the stuff together & send it in a manila envelope I just found. After I'm up it will be easier to be systematic about it. I seem to be capable of only one thing at a time now - writing you. I'm so lazy I haven't even looked at a book in two weeks, or written anybody but you & the immediate family. It's so damn much trouble if I don't use a typewriter.

Your Air Mail letter of Dec. 23 came yesterday. I'm awfully excited about the prospect of [Hans] Habe coming to see me - but he'd better not talk about himself - it's you I want to hear about! I'll take revenge by bending his ear with details of the baby's formula if he doesn't stick to the subject. Darling, if you still don't like the name Kathryn, we can call her Gail, her middle name. I really think that is a pretty name, & hope you do too. Tell me right away what I should get into the habit of calling her. It's early enough so I can switch back & forth with ease. The

boys like the name Gail too.

Mom went home yesterday evening because she had a date with Dad to go to the opera, La Tosca. I heard it over the radio too. I went to sleep after her 10 PM feeding & slept pretty well for the first time in two weeks. Mrs. Thompson brings me all my meals & is really quite wonderful, tho a bit lugubrious in the manner traditional to elderly Negresses. I don't see how she does everything she does - Kathy cries & has to be fed at 2 AM (also 6 AM, in which I participate) - the baby's shirts (I'm sending her diapers out starting tomorrow), the formula, dusting & cleaning, my meals. I'll be glad when I'm up & don't have to be waited on.

Bea & Fritz got back from their N.Y. trip today & were over before. They are really the only friends I want to see, particularly since Bea can help out with the shopping until I'm out.

The war news is so damn good I'm afraid to get optimistic. At the time of writing, the Russians are 70 miles from Rumania & you guys are closing in on Cassino. I still don't have your SW Pacific maps - they're in Washington - & doubt whether I could understand the fighting there even if I did. I feel very good being able to keep up on 2 fronts at least.

I'm enclosing the pictures Bill took on Christmas day. The invisibility of the child is a credit to Russek's tailoring. My face doesn't look too healthy, I guess, but you may be heartened to note I'm letting my hair grow & that I cling fondly to the navy blue beret you or Buss wore throughout your European tour.

I'm also enclosing the tapes they put on the wrists of mother & child in the hospital, to prevent mixups? Isn't mine dirty? You may hereafter refer to us jointly as number 601, your jools.

I don't know how to tell you how much I want you at this particular moment in our lives, without making you feel worse than you must already do. This time which should be our happiest, & in a way is, is also our saddest - It's perhaps more unadulterated deprivation for you because you can't see her.

But darling, I'm so completely identified with you that most of the time I feel badly for you, & not for myself. When I start feeling sorry for myself, I just feel bitchy rather than any real & poignant sadness.

And for God's sake don't learn German! They might make you a Gauleiter when you hit Berlin.

All my love, dearest, forever.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 8, 1944

Darling Jill,

I like this typewriter, so nice. So big, so clean. Writing a letter seems easier on it. Yet it is as close-packed as any other typewriter, I think. I sent you off a V-mail letter earlier on in the day. It said nothing and this won't either. I feel singularly barren today, perhaps as a result of your having a baby, not that I have any late tidings to that effect. Really, with a semi-stationary front, not much contact with the interesting civilian population, and a ban on military discussion, there isn't a hell of a lot to say. I could go into long accounts of Italian politics, past personalities, etc., but somehow I feel unconsciously that a letter should be a contemporary affair and should not treat with events of even the near past, no matter how much remained to be said at the time.

Perhaps, in view of your expressed hatred of offices, I can describe what an army field office looks like. First there is the tent, dark green or camouflaged, and then inside, instead of beds, you have folding camp tables which hold hardly anything except a pencil and a piece of paper. If you are lucky, you also have a chair, barring that a stool or box or anything that will stave off collapse. With this table you must execute masterful maneuvers to open maps which are peers of anything Standard

Oil ever put out, including as they do every house or former house, and everything down to a machine gun in size. Every once in the while a wire crew comes in to put in a phone or take it out, which doesn't mean very much since it never works, except of course to add to the confusion. The phone is a tantalizing instrument, you must admit. Half the time you get a whisper, which leads you to bellow enthusiastically into the mouthpiece, rising in a great crescendo on the margins of comprehension and resulting in two messages at least, neither understood or correct. Or there may be three or more, depending on how many other units become attached to your wire meanwhile. If the other members of the "office" have not been driven to seek out the enemy in hand to hand combat by the confusion and concussion of the phoning, they are having a merry time with their maps and overlays. (The overlay, for your information, is a heavy, semi-transparent paper that when placed in a certain position on part of the map, will show you strange and interesting things that somebody in a different staff section has found out about the war.) The tent can hold one man waving a map and overlay about, but more than two is hell, more than a man can stand. One of the results of this map-waving activity is to camouflage the stove which is strategically placed in the center of the tent where you can't help tripping over it. Of course, the stove is well tended. Every once in a while, in this closed-in canvas, sealed from the frigid air, an attendant lifts the lid, puts a mixture in, and a great, thick, black and oily column rises and covers the tent down to within three feet of the dirt ground. The attendant is coal-black in the oriental tradition.

A few moments later, it is safe, though unhealthy, to raise yourself from the prone to resume work. Whatever you were doing need not lay as you left it however, because the clerk, profiting from the demoralization and cloaked by the smoke screen, has gone about putting what is laughingly called the "file" in order. That means sweeping off all the old piles of paper on the desk into a clumsy wooden basket labelled "in" or "out" - no difference. Some days later, when there is no comic

magazine or copy of the Stars and Stripes available, he may perform a ritual called "putting the files in order." He takes the basket and a handful of used folders, already used for three or four subjects in temps perdu, including Italian social security taxes, Fascist gioventu and the PWB vehicle record, and places the papers from the basket into respective files, putting most of them in the thin files and none of them in the fat files. In cases where the logic is inescapable, he makes the choice appropriate, such as incoming personal mail in the correspondence file, etc. Knowing how hard-pressed for time the clerk has been, very recently an assistant was solicited from a drilling replacement center.

The assistant might have done well if he had tried, but since he is little and ugly, he works like Goebbels to establish master propaganda plans. Today, due to the fact that the rest of us, forewarned, had seized all available vehicles and rushed to the front, the colonel was cornered by the new man who has prepared long extracts from the Bible which prove, among other things, that the Germans can't win. He wanted to shower the enemy with these convincing, powerful words. Out of nowhere, the colonel was inspired to state that it might turn out sacrilegious, if the Germans then used the leaflets for toilet paper, as they are wont to do with extra ones. Highly impressed by this reason, the fellow retired to a corner of the tent, muttering something about making the paper rougher or something. He is a holy terror. I gave him a note to someone down the line and he put it in an air courier pouch bound God knows for where. One can only say that he has a certain utility in applying band-aids to people who burn themselves on the stove.

Odd people come around too, visiting firemen from the occupation team, who want to get the smell of powder in their nostrils or to feel what an army is like. Or someone from Counter-Intelligence may call up to find out whether an Italian we have is a secret agent or is spying on a secret agent or just wants to become one. Our intelligence man can best answer that, but he is secrecy reductus ad absurdum and doesn't know

where he is himself.

Then the mail comes in, which doesn't disturb the lack of routine at all. A package is opened and the walnettos spill out. The caramel gets stuck to the desk or some confidential papers and they are forever confidential. When the unlettered ones begin to curse loudly and the din is too much, Herz gets up and delivers a fiery oration on the need for quiet. But by that time, it's late enough for lunch anyway.

You see what you shall have to contend with when I return, a nerve-wracked creature. Remember your marriage vow to stand by me through thick and thin. It was sealed afterwards by a dry Martini, and that, from these parts, is a most sacred seal. Are you storing up the raw materials for more and better ones?

Many kisses, my very dear love.

Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 9, 1944

My darling,

Won't news of you and the baby ever get to me? I won't say that I'm a nervous wreck. You probably would be surprised if I did. I go along normally, not even mentioning the matter to anyone. But that is part of framework I've built up as having considerable survival value in this bad world. In reality, my every cell is tuned to what is happening over there, and one of these days, if news is not forthcoming, I shall climb into the nearest amphibious jeep and head for home.

Speaking of births, I do agree with you in feeling sorry for Bill and Liz. I hope he doesn't have to leave her stranded in California at the mercies of the local transportation system and war-time bedlam. I guess you have given her the address of the Kings and others in those parts as handy places for dropping off

babies, passing week-ends, etc. We certainly possess deep wells of compassion, don't we, to be talking about other people's troubles.

It is a foggy night out, yet a very, very light one. The mists hold very fast the beams of the full moon. They came from the ocean, not the ice-bound razor-back ridges of the last, and are soft and pleasant. It is indeed a night for you and me. We together could make much of it. The Southern pines can whisper most seductively. It is sickeningly long ago since we walked hand in hand through parks, since we walked together along beaches and roads, since we crunched along side by side on the city sidewalks late at night when the noises had all gone. It has been too long since we finished the last blob of ice cream and happily, sleepily turned homewards to what we knew was waiting for us. How many more strange beds must I have before I finally sleep with you? How many holes and cots, real beds and board beds, jeeps, trucks, bunks and trains? The answer is, I suppose, in the past. Our separation is past its majority. And yet our love thrives and grows larger. It is with a tiny regret that I realize you are a creature of impeccable habits, as easy to live with as a good book, and that there is no minute personal fault for which I can forgive you and tolerate you. I'll be in a mood to forgive any boorishness and will be frustrated by complete compatibility. Would you please learn to bite your fingernails?

I enclose for your impolite consideration an example of what I mean by hateful advertising. I'm not really anti-civilian. I hate such noxious thinking. I get disgusted with some soldiers, too, who are always thinking of revenging themselves on society for oftentimes fictitious wrongs. All I ask is a certain soberness in the face of these events that are making our lives for us - neither hatred nor escape; nor drooling platitudes, nor profiteering - just sobriety.

As ever, you are mine, I am yours, and we are pals, Jill-pill.

Al-pal Love and kisses

JILL TO AL JANUARY 10, 1944

Darling -

Monday

I am sick and tired of scrawling from a horizontal position, so think I shall try typing from a semi-horizontal pose. Unfortunately, unlike your brain, my fingers are not making n-to-infinity revs. per minute, so it will probably take me all night to complete this ordinarily delicious enterprise. But that's OK too, as I have little else to do with my time these prone and prostrate days. And I am tired as hell of fuzzy thoughts and fuzzier grammar and spelling engendered by the weary track of my lifetime Kresge pen across the page (a butterfly should live so long).

Today was a delight, if only because it brought three letters from you, V-mails of the 23rd and 26th and that wonderful newsy long one you wrote Christmas day. I am overjoyed you got so many of your presents, though have sadly resigned myself to the fact that the fancy Field wallet sent in August is now serving as a bassinet for some dingy mackerel kinder. You must have been bug-eyed from getting and reading all that mail. My desk is full of letters from you which one of these days I must sort and put in a strongbox. Since I know I'll want to read all of them for the umpteenth time, in the Adlerian (Mort.) manner described by you, I keep putting it off, from fear of astigmatism. Which reminds me deviously: will you please ask me for the New Yorkers again so I can send my latest collection to you. The last one contains a review of Santayana's latest book. Mortimer reviewed it in the Sun yesterday and I'm sticking it inside the New Yorker so you can compare it with New Yorker critic Edmund Wilson's. Fadiman has left the New Yorker for some devious ends of his own.

I'm particularly glad you got the pajamas because now I can wear them when you get home, barring such accidents as your putting them in somebody's stove to pre-heat them, as you once did with your bathrobe. Incidentally, you certainly blackened my reputation as well as your robe by telling your school friends

that you had burned it by putting it in my stove. How the heck can I preserve the fiction of the wedding night with such stories bruited about? Now that we have a daughter, we're going to have to start building up that vast illusory world of sex from which we departed at such an early age. Your daughter, incidentally, is bawling away, having just crapped in her pants at the odd hour of 8 PM. Nursie is changing her with admonitions of "Don't be a baby all your life."

We have started weighing her before and after breast feedings, to determine how much she gets and ultimately, the reason why she cries an hour before feeding time. I view it all as a dastardly plot to wrench her away from my bosom. Not that I get any orgasms when she's there. It's just the only time I can curl up and be sociable with her, as she is far too heavy for me to hold and bottle feed at the present moment. When she feeds off me, we can both lie down and look cross-eyed at each other, similar to your and my habit of leaning on one another's foreheads when too much of the public is around to give each other a good wet kiss. That was certainly an odd and unpremeditated habit we had. I guess it grew out of your aversion to my face for the public, i.e., six coats of lipstick.

I agree with you about the relationship of love and letters. Love hardly dies on lines like ours. Sometimes I wonder if we'll be as articulate, as witty and as tender, when we see each other again as we have been in our letters. I don't think I'll feel like talking then.

I'm enclosing the letter from Paul and Ann I got today, but keeping the pictures of little Paul for a while, to show them off to Mom. I say show off advisedly, because I really think he is the cutest looking little boy extant, and feel somewhat competitive about him in relation to Jo-jo. I guess sometimes I feel outnumbered by DeGrazia's. After all, my family has some good genes in it too, even if they are not as smart, all told, as you and your siblings. Anyway, they were rich.

Isn't it fine about their great new apartment? I hope by next

summer we'll be able to accept their invitation jointly, en route to several months of fun and fornication (not separate categories logically) in the High Sierras. Speaking of dreams and desires, I had a scary dream of childhood last night, but never realized before they indicated a desire to escape. It must have been Kathy's crying that sent these little feet pitter-pattering on the Road Back. I also have a lot of dreams in which (before) I was too large and mis-shapen and (now) too weak to cope with events. I loathe this state of semi-invalidism, however normal it is in the course of things. My great desire is to be out dancing and drinking, preferably with you, if not with you, just with any twit, to re-assert my place in the world of functioning and desirable women.

In the hospital I got quite chummy with the intern, a Chinese American boy who is going to China after the war to practice. When he finishes at Wesley he's going into our Army. He was nice-looking in a very Chinese way, rotund and smooth-skinned. I think I liked him not only because he was the only male around and doubly interesting because of his race, but because his skin reminded me of yours --one of my chief sensual memories of you is your dark slick-skinnedness, making you masculine and civilized at the same time. However I, like you, shall seek no ersatz Al. I guess there's a lot more to it than outer boundaries of the person.

I have already figured that if I lose a year as I've often threatened to do and if we have a baby every other Christmas for the next four years, we can have a complete set of children by the time we're 28, namely, three. I don't think I could stand having four, although that is probably defeatist talk so early in the game. But couldn't we adopt one to round out the quadrille? Or square the circle, to put it more aptly.

My gosh, she's crying again for her 10 o'clock feeding (though it's only nine). What a dope she is -- she could have eaten a lot more at six and avoided her present woe.

To be continued tomorrow -- all except my love, which goes on

forever.

Jill

Cartoon of a crying baby and a dog with a question mark.

Caption: Kathryn Gail - a Noisy Frail

JILL TO AL JANUARY 11, 1944 V-MAIL

My sweetheart -

Tuesday

S' funny, but the original of your Christmas letter came today, a day after the carbon. I don't know what that proves, except that the ways of APO mail are mysterious & wonderful.

We all had a good day today. Gail (that's what the nurse calls her, although she disapproves of the name because it's the moniker of a much-married & unknown-to-me Hollywood lady) is consistently taking 2 oz from me & 2 from the bottle & sleeping, for the most part, in between, which should prove to the doctor when we call him tomorrow that I'm adequate for the time being. The nurse, incidentally, cows me completely. She just bristles with the norms of the upper Jewish bourgeoisie here. It's the funniest identification I've ever seen, except I find myself searching for a blood tie with the Rosenwalds or the Laskers, so I can establish myself in her eyes. She told me my place looked like a little doll's house. The way she said it, it could have been an outhouse ... But I'm really feeling better. I started trying on clothes today (no underwear, though -I'm just interested in superficals) and have re-discovered my black coat as an object of beauty. I didn't wear it all last year. I think I'll keep a pair of high-heeled black suede shoes & a beaver fur cap and voila, to put it sickeningly, a new ensemble. My figure is as of old, tho I'm a bit thinner. No wrinkles on the stomach either. Here I come, Narcissus! All right, you try hoisting around the sweetheart of Sigma Chi in your stomach for 9 months and see how you feel. I also feel like showering you with Hershey-

bar flavored kisses, biting your ear, washing your back, putting my feet in your stomach, and in short -- 5 lines censored.

All my love, to put it mildly,

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 11, 1944 (A) V-MAIL

Dearest darling,

Won't I ever get news! Three letters from you came today but the real news concerns you and all the troubles and pains you are undergoing within the space of some days or hours. My job has enough sobering qualities inherent in it so that the additional thought of my only love beset by an even more sober situation has turned me into pretty much of a snarling beast. Today was a hard one, unfortunately crowned by a slip-up in a shell delivery. The damage was done and I was in the hateful position of a man who made a promise dependent for its fulfillment on other people. I was really seething with rage. I suppose a few apologies would have satisfied some people, but I hate to give an excuse in lieu of fulfilling a duty. But that's the army, and any bloody fool who thinks a couple of weeks of handling a gem will give him the savvy is repulsive. You've got to "sweat it out" a few thousand times before you're in the army. It's a state of mind full of bumps and bad and good experiences. But I needn't say this to you. I did enjoy very much your letters and think, regarding your attitude towards the Germans, that you are right. And if you could hear the men talk here, you would think yourself a softie. A hell of a lot Mac and the Barry girl know about what goes on. They can't know how much I miss you.

Always your Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 11, 1944(B)

Dearest Jill,

I'm beginning to have Oliver's sentiments towards the Red Cross. Unless I get news today, I'll call them and press a little towards getting more news. I profoundly hope the delay in schedule means nothing.

I'm enclosing a couple of negatives for the pictures I sent, plus two cartoons from yesterday's Stars & Stripes. That paper goes right down the line to practically every soldier or group of soldiers.

Another article on PWB in Life showed up yesterday in Herz's mail. It was full of poppycock on the first page of it. We would just love to see some OWI "commandos." What the hell they could teach in three weeks wouldn't help them blow their nose. And identifying that organization with PWB completely is stinking publicity-seeking. Jesus, it makes for a laugh. The general tendency is to avoid scrupulously the placing of civilians, even though decorated in uniforms like correspondents, into army units. However, even though Heycock would puke at the thing, since his picture is on it, it would be nice to send him a copy of the article. Would you please mail him a copy or have someone else do it? to: Capt. Raeburn Heycock, Broadley House, Broadley Commons, Nazeing, Essex, England. Thank you; you are a very sweet girl and I would like to be married to you. I miss you most fiercely. More than ever, I think of you with deep love and burning desire. If I had a private room I would erect a little shrine to you. I would place one of your witty, thoughtful, intelligent letter in a frame on one side, a sexy picture of you in shorts and high heels and sweater on the other side, and just an ordinary good photograph in the middle and a little above. Then I would face towards the whole effect three times a day, kneel, and bless myself for my luck and you for loving me. That done, I would ponder all honorable means of getting home to you via Berlin.

I'm sorry I can't write more now, but you know how I feel. You

are my only love and will always be wonderful to me.

Your

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 13, 1944

My sweetheart -

I'm back to the same old stand, writing in bed. In a burst of enthusiasm I ate lunch sitting in a chair yesterday & also performed an exercise designed to reduce the stomach. As a result, I again feel like a horse kicked me. I really feel swell, that's the trouble, but have about an inch of cut that keeps opening when I'm not quiet. It probably is a blessing, in my case, since otherwise I would be scrubbing floors like Joan, instead of in bed watching my uterus recede. As a matter of fact, my stomach is practically flat, probably just because of all this enforced leisure.

The nurse & Mom, who was down and stayed overnight last night, wait on me hand & foot, too. Bernice does my shopping - even Fritz is recruited into buying ice cream. I do nothing but pour food & liquids into my face, & I must say, I have very little to show for it. Once in a while, Kathy and/or Gail gets her full ration from me (4 oz) - & even that's using both sides, which is considered cheating in some circles. Most of the time she gets the bottle too. She still is on the 2 AM feeding, but slept so late last night that the nurse is going to try & get her off it tonight, by the expedient of letting her cry from the time she wakes up (3, we hope) until 5, & then giving her her 6 o'clock feeding. Then, if she cries at 9, she can be bathed & generally stalled until the 10 o'clock feeding. I don't know if you're interested in these pediatric details but I'd rather tell you more than less. Anyway, she's your baby.

And a very cute one too. Mom is constantly amazed at the

dearth of fuss & feathers she causes - after Jo-jo. She really is so damn little trouble. This may be because of an originally strong stomach & general constitution, possibly combined with a congenitally sunny nature. The nurse says she won't always be this quiet. However, her needs are being satisfied right along, so she at least may be optimistic if not actually docile. She really loves to nurse too - I guess it's the flavor & texture of the skin. I always thought these babies who preferred bottles to breasts were nuts.

Daisy just called & said she got a swell letter from you. We had a nice long talk. I wish long distance didn't cost so much because we were always great at chewing each other's ears off over the phone.

Oh, and Kathryn's so pretty too. Everybody who knows anything about babies says she is just as pretty as a young baby can be. I'm no longer so struck by the resemblance between you two, probably because I'm so used to her face now. Tomorrow we take pictures - the nurse's husband lent us his camera & a roll of film. Wasn't that nice of him. You still simply can't get film for most common sizes of camera.

I got a letter from you yesterday dated the 20th. I agree with you about the optimism in this country, except, unlike you, I'm not only surprised but sickened by it. I guess that's because since you wrote, the latest & most acute indication of our blindness & selfishness has arisen -- the opposition to the President's suggestion for total manpower mobilization -- Christ, it makes me sore, & you know how long I've said "oooh, you pretty thing" to the labor movement. Now they & business reactionaries are united in opposition to any kind of equitable solution of the labor-tax-price problem. Everybody wants low taxes and most want high prices. If Englishmen had behaved the way we're behaving, they would have lost the war after Dunkirk.

Furthermore, it's a fact there's no shortage of food here. Anybody can get as much food as they want under point rationing. I always have a surplus of stamps & I like meat. Some

days, the stores will be out of items like chocolate pudding or certain kinds of meat or brands of canned goods, but if you set your heart on a certain, however, exotic, bill of fare, you can always get it by shopping around. And I'm talking about legal stuff, on the black market one could probably get a cow.

And everybody says you can't get this or that, like sterilizers & bath tables for baby bottles, & when you break a leg going downtown to get one, you find the stores are full of them & feel like an ass. Sure there are things that you can't get, like washing machines, but they're almost invariably luxury goods.

All in all, as a civilian in the United States of America this year of war 1944, I feel very ashamed for the behavior of me & mine.

This is hardly the way a new mother should go on - stars in the eyes & all that - but naturally I'm taking this war rather personally, & would either be patently not in love with you or a fool if I thought of nothing but Kathy. As it is, I just about read one paper & day & your mail - I'm getting so incapable of intellectual activity. I even listen to soap operas (one - a dog shouldn't have any more trouble). The nurse has a favorite that comes on at 2:45 when we're burping the baby. She brought me up on the past five years' installments, & now I listen as avidly as she, tho a sardonic smile still flies about these lips. I expect that will pass, however.

Will Jill kiss Al in 1944? When will this wretched couple, separated by the harsh quirks of fate, be re-united. Will she be able to confound the finance company? When will the baby burp? Ladies, if your hands are red and smelly -- etc. etc.

George Fielding-Eliot is also good for laughs. I'll send you one of his columns when I make up my little parcel of clippings for you at the week's end.

Keep well, my darling, I love you so much. Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 13, 1944 V-MAIL

My dearest Jill,

Yesterday afternoon, when I got back from the front, I found a message to call the Red Cross. I did so, and a barely audible voice told me that I was a father of a girl infant. He said both you and the baby were doing well and I could ask no more. I was somewhat disturbed by the fact that the baby was born on Dec. 28 almost when expected and not in January as I was informed by a cable from the Red Cross some days ago which cited Dr. Greenhill's secretary as its authority and by the fact that the final news took two weeks to get to me. However, the news was so good that everything else withered to insignificance. It looks as if I shall spend the future beating off suitors. That ought to be fun. When it comes down to it, I am just as happy with a girl as with a boy. Think how much a girl can accomplish with reference to the rest of her sex in comparison to a boy. She may even grow up to be like you, though I wouldn't think of impressing on her such a high goal for fear of causing her inferiority feelings. I think we'll make her an all-around girl, swimming, cerebation, and socializing. Herz has already asked for her hand but I've told him, with your presumed approval, that she doesn't want to have anything to do with an old foggy.

I am too happy about the great success of our lives to say much else in a letter, but since by now you are an old hand as a mother and bored with the whole thing, a few irrelevancies might not hurt. Three notes came from you this morning, notes by our standards, letter by others'. The Christmas card was very nice, the sentiments most adequately expressed. In one of the letters dated about the same time, to the effect that the main substance of your and my letters is a clothing for the sole desire to state our love. I have not yet received any mail to my Fifth Army address and really have no indication of whether or when you received the news or where I was. Well, here I yam, very well, thank you, eating enough to shock your one-helping soul, and thinking all the while most glowing images of you. You must

be most beautiful now with all your healthy living, delivered of the baby, filled with satisfaction for a job well done, etc. Send me pictures quick, dammit, since it must be pictures. And don't be thinking I'm crazy when you get one of those army cables which says queer things like "Telegram received, many thanks". That means I found out that the baby was born, but couldn't find a decent phrase to fit it in the range of selections offered us but did want to let you know as quickly as possible.

I'll be seeing you soon, darling, despite all warnings against optimism, and will get one of my biggest thrills out of seeing the young lady swathed in one of your super-suave garments for the infant. I'll even let her burp on me if you allow me to burp back. All love, darling, to you from your Al.

Would you give the baby a kiss for me?

JILL TO AL JANUARY 14, 1944

Darling --

Friday

Here goes another experiment in typing in an unorthodox position. This time I have the machine subtly balanced on my outstretched thighs, one unusual effect of which is that it tickles. Anyway, my typing can't be much worse this way than any other. I'm afraid that my eight years of sporadically teaching myself the touch system don't show very much, in a positive fashion anyway.

Two letters from you today, the 27th and the 29th. I am gnashing my already down-to-the-gumline molars at the ineffectuality of the Red Cross to get you THE message the day it should have. After all, I had the baby in time so that you could get news of it on your birthday. Incidentally, I got the first letter in ages from Johnny Hess today, in which he says on that subject: "Your gag of having the baby born on or very near to Al's birthday was a little theatrical, but effective. Not in the best taste, understand, but I'm sure some people will find it

amusing."

I loved your clipping from Stars and Stripes (it is that, isn't it). Sad Sack is as good when viewed by a civilian as a G.I. Anyway, I too laughed like hell at his misery, though perhaps I'm too involved to be classed strictly as a civilian. G. I. Nick was also very good and very funny. Curses on the OWI whose press releases in all the papers (don't send candy, it's perishable, do send razor blades, etc. etc.) were responsible for setting 120,000,000 civilian astray and causing embarrassment and disappointment to 10,000,000 soldiers.

On re-reading John's letter in order to give you a précis of it, as our French teacher in high school used to enjoin us to do, I find it will be five times as easy for me just to send it to you. After all, I am far past the stage of hoarding men's letters, except yours.

Today passed just like the preceding ones, with the notable exception that when our silly child woke up last night at 3:30 for her two o'clock bottle, we spitefully let her cry until it was within reasonable time of giving her her six o'clock one. Since she is not the noxious type which cries steadily, it was quite possible to snatch some sleep in between anguished yells, somewhat in the manner of sleeping in between labor pains.

We took pictures of her today inside so I don't know how they'll come out. She managed to present her most disagreeable expressions to the camera, to my annoyance. However, there's only about an hour in the morning when the sun streams in the apartment, and we had to seize the day, or beware of the dog - I always get those two Latin mottoes mixed up.

The days for me are so routinized and so free from responsibility, except for menu planning and check writing - that I feel and most of the time am half asleep. It's like the motion of a sailboat on a pleasant day. I'd prefer a more active life, but am not knocking myself out to achieve it as long as I can't. The routine makes the days go faster, the acceptance of it and the inactivity make me a great deal happier than I might ordinarily

be. My chief complaint is that it gives me too much time to be aware of the world beyond the oceans, and therefore to worry about the part you play in that world. That worry, and the never-ending, even mounting, sense of frustration at being removed from you are my twin *bêtes noires*. But the immediate environment is singularly free from difficulties and frustrations. I nurse the baby, sleep, wake up, eat breakfast, nurse the baby, shower and pretty up, return to the couch, read the mail and the paper and by then it's time for lunch. Then I nurse the baby, receive a few visitors, sleep, wake up, nurse the baby and eat dinner. Then I write letters, listen to the radio, nurse the baby, read a little and sleep. It takes practice to lead a life like that. At first I made telephone calls but I don't even bother to do that now. I feel strong as an ox and eat like one, but I just have to keep this up until I heal pretty thoroughly. I expect by next week I'll be up and out. I'm very lucky about Kathryn - so many babies have digestive ailments or colds these first weeks - and also about the nursing - while I don't give any more, at least I don't give any less and am able to contribute at least 50% of her food needs. I guess it's some kind of divine compensation - I had so many little things to fret about before she came. Needless to say, the presence of a competent nurse who is also a good cook and fairly amusing company in an Aunt Jemima sort of way makes all this Freedom From Worry possible ultimately.

I have some choice tidbits for you, gleaned from Dietz who was over last night. Gerty Goldsmith is or was engaged to a boy named Bob Freeleing, formerly of the law school. I double-dated with him when I was going out with Bob Cook and recall him to be fairly drippy. But he had to go overseas three weeks after they were supposed to get married, so they didn't get married and Dietz thinks they called off the engagement. Poor Gertie - she doesn't have a very flashy love life.

And Bob Cook is supposed to be coming home after three years in the Pacific. I wonder if he is still a virgin. I think the last time I saw him was with you at the U.T. and we discussed that fascinating subject.

Some of you guys should write to American publications commenting on the noxious quality of U.S. advertising. That Doublets throwaway was the acme of something, but at least it didn't claim that Doublets aided the war effort.

My cousin Frances sent Kathy a suit which is not only big enough for a four-year-old but comes from Bestand Co. and is so stunning that I'll either have to get one like it or just stay home in my rags and let her go out alone when she wears it. It is a mustard-colored tweed coat, belted in back like a boy's, legging and johnny jeep hat, with velvet trimming. I haven't a thing in my wardrobe as good. I am naturally going to store it away until she's old enough, since if I credited it, I'd probably spend the dough on myself and she'd end up with an outfit from Wards. She has also received \$25 from Renee, which I'm going to spend for stuff for the house despite Renee's enjoinder to the contrary, and a 15-dollar gift certificate at Saks, from a cousin you don't know. It's touch and go who'll benefit from that one. Those were the big gifts - as a matter of fact, I haven't bought her a stitch of clothing yet she manages to have a very full, in fact, lavish infant's wardrobe of things people have bought or knitted for her. I'll be darned if I'll buy her Saks clothing while she's still in the starkly simple phase of coverings. All she wears is a diaper, an undershirt and a kind of white cotton coverall, and then I complain to the nurse that she's got too much on and must be sweating. Well, quite reasonably, I figure that she must be fully as hot, if not hotter, than I am (plenty hot) since a baby's metabolism is so high. So is mine, however, so we probably come out even.

This typewriter is giving me sciatica in both legs. I love you but I love my legs too, and I know you wouldn't love me if I didn't have any legs, so what would be the good of loving you if I didn't love my legs too? But Christ darling I miss you, more than my legs at this moment.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 14, 1944

Dear love,

I missed writing you last night and instead read from Marquand's So little Time and thought of you the while. I thought of all sorts of things to tell you about the book and about funny references and Connecticut barns, too many in fact to write down. But it was pleasant enough imagining this conversation, with you as a sort of person to whom all asides and comments are directed. So much are you in my mind.

This morning I've got to leave right away. My first startling statement as I rolled out of the sack was "Tell dawn to stick her rosy fingers up her ---!" Just from nowhere. But the weather is good compared to a week ago.

I hope the little darling is coming along all right. I'm awaiting your first description of it all on tenterhooks as well as tenderheart.

The enclosed cartoons speak for themselves. That Mauldin guy is very good. I love you, darling. Take care of yourself and the little girl, too.

Your,

Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 15, 1944 (A) V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

Your most remarkable letter on the eve of childbirth reached me yesterday via the new address. It made me very happy and not a little amazed. It was certainly one of your finest letters and if the infinite can be multiplied, I was perhaps a little more in love with you after reading it. It had the assuredness and naivete of a soldier going into battle, a sort of beginning of a dawning that

you're already in it yet nothing seems to have changed. And you can't quite believe you're actually in it until you come out of it. Like a bomb or a shell, the crisis comes whistling at you and a moment later the crisis is gone and a certain exhilaration replaces it because you are still yourself. The letter was really wonderful and made me feel an understanding that was almost as close as the baby for what you were experiencing, though the intensity of the experience is beyond my powers. I shall have to hope that you won't look down on me with contempt for my inability to undergo the Grand Experience. Perhaps war is something devised by men in the battle of the sexes to have a compensatory trial for childbirth, a counter against their external triumph. Conscious as I am of the destructiveness of our game and the creativeness of yours, I feel very useless. All the more reason that all of this should end quickly and return me to where I can at least enter in constructive competition. And only incidentally, of course, to make love to you as you have never been made love to before.

Your loving Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 15, 1944(B) V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

The mails are just humming. Yesterday the letter written on the eve of the birth and today two written or rather addressed on the 30th of the month. I already this morning wrote a V-mail directed in response to the first. This one is to tell you that I am burbling all over myself with excitement caused by the rush of news. I gather there was a letter on the 29th that I missed. Judging what you say about the size of the baby I guess that it must have hurt a lot. Tell me all about it, if you haven't already. I can't really believe all you tell me, though, or even that we actually have got a baby. It just won't sink in, do you mean that you've actually produced a baby, B-A-B-Y ? And what a lovely baby, that sleeps all the time and has black hair and blue eyes.

Does it still? Those two letters have unleashed a flood of curiosity. I read them over several times immediately. Thank you, my lovely darling, for your feeding of the news to me so quickly. I'm sorry I wasn't there to sit by your bed and hold your hand for days on end. More, more, more, until I gag with news, my poor, beloved correspondent. Where in the world did you ever pick up "Gail," not that I have any emotions on the subject. I think it was just like you to give a name like that on the spur of the moment. I should be relieved you didn't call her "Jasper" or some such. I insist that you give me a full description of how you feel, look, etc. I am most deeply anxious that you should not be hurt in the least bit by the whole thing. I am very jealous of your soul and body. And thanks be to you, Mom, the doctor, Carl, and everybody else involved no matter how remotely in the final happy outcome.

I'm glad you got everything I sent home. I suppose the Encyclopedia will be forthcoming. I got your gifts too except for the wallets which must have a curse on them. Today a package came from Buzz including some scented soap, a carton of cigarettes and some chewing gum, none of them shortages here and now, but the spirit was there. I got Mom's letter of Nov. 17 thanking me for the candy. She seemed very happy about it and I'm very glad of that. As for my health and well-being, don't let it worry you for a moment. I'm feeling fine and am as sure of seeing you before long as anything in the world is sure. Explain to Kathryn that my jeep is hereby named after her and that it is a great honor, even though it may cost her a few kisses when I return. And as for you, my dear Jill, I am hard put for explanations. Kissing and kind words aren't enough for you. You deserve something especially sacred as being the most wonderful girl in the world. I must pledge all of my devilish ingenuity to making you happy.

In case you haven't been reading the papers, we are slowly moving ahead, through country utterly devastated, like Hollywood scenarios of the First World War. Yesterday I spent taking another visiting fireman on tour, this time a man from the British political warfare executive, London. He was very much

impressed by the views and our work. Really, to judge it by the Life and Digest articles is a great shame. I tossed out that silly duplicating machine in Calabria and also the business is very exciting and interesting, way beyond the articles. They drained it of color.

All my love, sweetheart and more to come.

Al



Cartoon by Bill Mauldin,
published in *Stars in Stripes* on
Dec. 31, 1943.

End of January (first of two parts) 1944 letters

