

MORE snow is falling and the wind is rising. The fire in the Captain's hut burns warmly and he is sleeping soundly upon the toasts to the New Year. At four o'clock the guard appears with Sgt. Villeneuve to awaken him. G-2 Army has messaged an order to move back somewhere, but fast; the German attack has begun. (Of course the enemy will gain some ground; how much, nobody knows.) He calls the First Sergeant to reveille the troop. Pitch dark, luminous snow, faintest of lights. As he wades through the snow to find Major Roos, he snaps words into several doors. Roos is up watching the office junk being collected. The Captain will lead the convoy, the Major cover the rear.

Trudging back, De Grazia passes soldiers emerging like maggots out of black holes in the snow. Muttering, grunts, packs being tossed thudding, a couple of men sucking up coffee from a still warm tin of the night before as they dismantle the kitchen. The first motor revs up loud against the stillness of the village. He dumps his stuff in his jeep. Corporal Scott drives it to the edge of the village and begins to wave the vehicles into line. Not lights, but sounds; one after another, now several at a time, the motors sputter and catch, spewing filth from their exhausts onto the perfectly pure snow.

Sgt. Villeneuve has gone to tell the *Maire* (until lately *Bürgermeister*), that the troops are leaving.. *pourquoi...?* orders.. to where?.. I don't know.. But the Mayor and the people -- they are awake, hardly moving -- they know. They are staying. The Americans are going. Will the village see Germans again now? Will it be destroyed? Who will be denouncing whom? The soldiers are sorry to depart, and give their brief friends candy and cigarettes, what else do they have? A few francs, the new Allied franc, to be hidden until the next liberation.

The Captain walks up and down the forming line with a "Let's go," here, a "Come on, now," there and a "Morning," and "How ya doing?" everywhere. Tom Crowell's big trucks are the last onto the road, shambling out of the drifts with some urging. He loves Tom, whose mood is always just right, whose crew is so dependable. It's

guys like Tom who make war tolerable. The vehicles are bumper to bumper so as to see one another by their tiny slitted eyes. A damaged truck is hitched to a prime mover. Double check the line, Sergeant: see whether we're leaving some drunk or anything behind. There is no roll-call; every man is connected with another man or several men or a vehicle; so no one can be left behind; and of course here no one will want to hang back. He wonders who is out on a mission; whoever it is will not have a home to come back to; he may find the enemy in charge of things. He ponders sending George Glade on his heavy black motorcycle to the ammo dump to warn the men there. They are back a ways. He can send George when they know where they will be.

Finally, the Captain mounts his jeep, knowing that any lingering vehicles -- and these there will always be -- will fall in frantically as they hear the line beginning to move. His map lays unfolded upon his lap in the open jeep; it catches large flakes of snow that flicker in the glow of his flashlight. He doesn't know where he will be taking the troop; Advanced Army Headquarters will be moving somewhere at the same time; he understands that he should bivouac somewhere in Southern Lorraine, near a village called Herimenil. Good of G-2 to remember to tell them to get out! He pumps his gloved fist in the air and the column staggers out into the country. He feels slightly ashamed at abandoning the village. He feels exultant, too, at the flare-up of battle; the German attack is foredoomed, he knows, but there will be thousands of personal and collective accidents and tragedies now and millions more to come before the end, all to no avail, craziness. Thanks to Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, Ley, the Generals, the SS, and the millions of collaborators and minions who do their every last bit as commanded. At this moment somewhere behind him are lines of German troops advancing in the blizzard, who are miserably thankful that the murkiness will not let them be targeted by artillery and aircraft.

He can't see much of anything; but then who can? Certainly no enemy planes, if they can afford such in support of an attack anymore. What is not white is black, but even the black atmosphere is becoming

whitish, long before dawn. Already the word has been signalled along the line and other outfits are feeding onto the roads. There are problems: To go in the right direction. To avoid taking roads that dead-end into meadows. Also to keep to the road when circling around tanks and trucks that are stalled. He doesn't want to lose his trucks either, which will happen if some column cuts in or one of his own slides off the road and the others stop to get it back on. Too, recall the land mines: only a fraction of them has been removed. Stay to the beaten path; path? -- the snow fills in tracks as soon as they are laid. Traffic gets heavier, gets slower. It merely creeps. Plainly they are caught in a general retreat. The blizzard flourishes with the dawn. Cold in the open jeep, he wraps himself in his every covering. He uncorks a bottle of schnapps, swigs it and hands it to Scott. He takes out the salami that had cost his mother countless food stamps and been mailed him from Chicago two months ago. Slashes off a piece. Munching on it, he cuts a chunk for Scott, and guzzles more of the booze. The world is not so terrible, or, rather, it is twice terrible, but so what. Very slowly, they edge up to an absolutely congested crossroads. Four, or is it six, columns, tanks, trucks, half-trucks, jeeps jostling for position, snorting, jostling for advantage. Alone there, directing traffic, is a short stocky MP in a greatcoat, with his helmet down to his sweater-collar, his gloves flapping, baton hardly visible, boots shuffling in the freezing muck.

The Captain's jeep noses up to the intersection. He gets out of the jeep, walks up to the MP to say something about the weather and ask permission to turn the column upon a road half-right. The Private looks up at him, a gentle, patient face, swarthy, hook-nosed, its black lashes laced with ice. It is Fred Pera from the University of Chicago. Hadn't seen him in five years. "Hello, Fred, what the hell you doing here, brushing up on Nietzsche? (Philosophy was his subject.) The Private's thin lips smile. The soldiers can't shake hands, they just clap awkwardly at each other and exchange a few words. Want some schnapps? No, thanks. Go ahead, he says in his mild, musical voice, you can go now. The Exec waves his arms and gives his people the

pumping 'let's go' signal. It is daylight, after all, it is nine o'clock, but opaque white because of the blizzard. The convoy steers his way and files off to the West, solemn, hooded, like a funeral cortege.

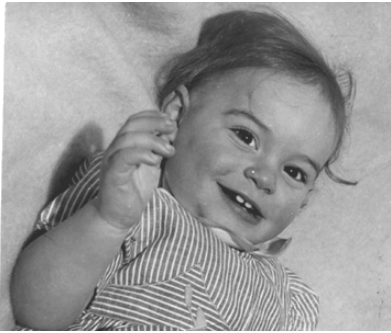
No one else has occupied the village of Herimenil, so they billet themselves on the population, Crowell with a couple of his men and the Exec billet in a large loft over a barn, quite livable -- it had been the master bedroom, in fact. Below, next to the stable, the family dwells; their cows smell sweet and warm. The soldiers set up their own army stoves. Crowell brews coffee. The pot will sit there fragrant from now until this town, too, is to be abandoned.

JILL TO AL JANUARY 1, 1945

My darling --

New Year's day is almost over. It's nine in the evening and this is the first chance I've had in two days to wish you the only kind of happy year we could have - a year that will bring you home again. I know I've been unflinchingly surly about this holiday season. But it's been a bad bitter year in many respects and at the end, it held not much promise for a better new one. And then, it seems that the older one gets, the less the promises of Christmas are fulfilled. At least, that's the way it's been with me - that every succeeding Christmas, with the exception of one wonderful we spent with your family when you were still a civilian in 1941, brings me farther away from the people I love. Of course the new addition, Kathy is marvelous compensation. I can't complain too much.

This is strictly not written from hangover. My party was a wonderful success, so said the guests of honor Rosable and Buster with whom I just had dinner at Morton's. I had a lousy time. I was terribly busy doing two mutually antithetical things, fetching drinks and keeping order of a sort. Many too many



Kathy, age one.



Kathy, age one.



Kathy, age one.

people showed up, including such uninvited notables as Dr. French of the Institute of Psychoanalysis (so what?) and Gertie Abercombrie. There were also three beautiful young Norwegian air corps men who had only and mysteriously gotten out of Norway six months ago. They made a big hit among the younger elements. But at two AM I announced that since everybody had had such a good time and I had not, why didn't

they go home so I could go out, which I did, to an anthropology party, where I took one big stiff drink on a very empty stomach, got a little high, admired somebody's baby who was up and went home, where I slept briefly and then bounced over to Lettie's apartment across the court and picked up Kathy, who had been spending the night there. We made a good arrangement: Letty got a sitter and came to my party, she put her baby in his buggy and our baby in his bed, and we split costs on the sitter. Thus Kathy spent an undisturbed night. But I still don't see why parties have to turn into such brawls. I wanted to do something nice for Rosable but I'm sure 50 people turned up, which is exceeding the limits of niceness. The house was just a wreck but I managed to clean it up all today without too much trouble. When I get this tired, I get new stores of energy and somehow manage to survive the trauma of a house stinking of cigarettes, herring and spilled liquor. Oh, Bill came for dinner and helped out quite a lot last night too. I cooked a tongue and served it cold, also salami and cheese. I am catching on to the hang of the hostess business except that I am prone to be surly with everybody under forty whom I feel I can afford to insult. Everybody brought bottles so I didn't have to buy much liquor and just got a lot of beer and soft drinks.

When the New Year came I retired to the bathroom and assiduously emptied ash trays, so I didn't have to wish anybody Happy New Year, much less kiss them. So great are the lengths of my irritability.

Mom called up at midnight, considerably less sober than I, and announced she was wearing bobby socks and Dad was sore about it. She is very cute and would have been a great asset to any party. Ed was home but left for Washington today, to spend several days of his leave with Buss.

Kathy spent a miserable day confined to her room, because I simply didn't dare let her crawl around until I have gone over the

floors carefully to pick up any broken glass that might have gotten around. I don't think people are very considerate at parties, but since I remember doing the same things at other people's houses, I guess the worm has turned.

The next day - I just had a good night's sleep and feel better than I have for weeks. My cold is gone, the holidays are gone, I did an accumulation of wash this morning and what more can one ask of this bitter world? And bitter it is, even climatically. The temperature has been around four below since last night and Kathy and I have been confined to quarters, although I did run out while she was taking her nap this afternoon to get groceries and, mirabile dictu, V-mail. The mailman brought me four letters from you -- two from Nov. 29, one very abusive from Dec. 11, and a v-mail of Dec. 19. I shall answer the abusive one first. If you will consult more recent letters from me, you will note a complete accounting of finances, together with some vouchers for bonds held in the Fed Reserve bank, which you have not yet returned me. You are probably walking around with them tucked under your helmet this very minute. I can't remember my little homilies on Life, Sex and politics but am sure they must have been brilliant and therefore unappreciated by such dull salami-eating clods as the man I elected to marry. Would you like me to send you another salami? Tell me how the Christmas one arrived -- did the paraffin keep out Mold and Decay? God, it must be awful to be in the spot of your friend whose wife wants to divorce him. You'd think that people would wait for after the war to present such unhappy pieces of intelligence to men in service. You may be sure that I'll never sue you for anything, at home or abroad, not even for the return of my fountain pen and razor. I really sort of enjoy abuse from you via the mail. I guess I enjoy anything you write.

I just burned some carrots, damn it.

Here's a card I got from Johnny today.

I was very interested in the ads you sent me. The kitchen is absolutely my ideal, both in layout and the homey looking furniture. The living room was nice too in layout although I could do with rather more streamlined chairs, couldn't you? Anyway it's hard to tell without color. But I love built-in things like that. The clothes weren't so hot -- terribly conventional looking suits I thought, none that I would be found dead in.

That Barracini candy was divine. I don't know what they mean by samples.

You described your nice bachelor's evening and the things you talk about in your letter of Nov. 29. In a way it seems that you're adjusting much better to separation than I am. I don't know if it's because of the initial differences in our personalities or whether that old saw about a man having many interests but a woman having only men and children as hers. Perhaps it's a bit of both. Anyway I know I have these simply foul periods of depression, usually starting around five in the evening and lasting until I get good and tired, whenever that is. And there's no use telling me to get an Interest -- you always were telling me that in one form or another since the first summer we met, when I was considerably less educated than I am now, incidentally. And having other girls around as a permanent set-up doesn't help, because women simply don't have the feeling of tolerant camaraderie that men occasionally can muster up. Anyway, I don't. I can stand things in a man that would drive me wild in a woman, because somehow there are all sorts of safety valves in the former case.

And getting back to some things you were saying, it's probably true that the war hasn't hurt your reading habits at all. It's given you a chance to read out of your field, for one thing, even if some crap seeps in. But then, think of the time any student wastes on crap strictly within the field. When I think of all the time I wasted reading introductions and footnotes to the study of

sociology, all ill-written presumptuous stuff, when I could have been browsing around with Jane Austen or Henry James, I could sneer, and do.

I'm getting awfully hungry. Maybe I'd better do something with those burnt carrots.

Darling I love you and think you're terribly smart. But on second thought if you're so damned smart why don't you come home. Will that man whose wife is divorcing him really get to come home on account of it? That gives me an idea...

A million big kisses to you.

Jill

JILL TO AL JANUARY 3, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling -

I don't know what perverse whim has seized me which allows me to sit by calmly while Spike Jones is rooting up the air waves, but there it is. I have the damned radio on loud enough for you to hear it and refuse to turn it off, although my soul wilts with the agony of his works. Were those records you used to kill me with Spike Jones -- you know, horsie keep your tail up, etc. I remember thinking you the funniest quaintest man on earth, the way you used to sing those lovely old songs to me in the early days of our courtship. Now I am passing the ancient lore on to Kathy, who likes anything.

We both just woke up from afternoon naps and I'm stalling around until my dentist's appointment at five, upon which she will accompany me. His nurse plays with her, or will, I hope. I felt rather sit-down strikish this morning and stayed in bed after

breakfast and read more of my fascinating Victorian mystery novel, the Wilkie Collins one. I think Wilkie is a pretty name, don't you, for whom I don't know. Maybe a dog. At lunch today Kathy took a head-long dive out of her high chair but amazingly enough, although my back was turned, I caught her before her head hit the floor. She was very scared, however, and cried a great deal. Then I put her to bed and cried a bit myself, out of sheer nervous excitement I suppose. I never say anything to her when these calamities occur. I mean, some women shout when something is going to happen, and others will murmur soothingly afterwards, but I am just frozen into silence and just carry her around until she shuts up, usually taking her into the bathroom and letting the water run, the sight of which distracts her and the noise of which drowns her out. It's funny but I think I am more afraid of fear reactions than I am of the thing I'm afraid of. I often wonder what I'd do when anything happened and I think I would scream or faint, but when the time comes, I just sort of freeze up. New Year's eve after I had gone to bed I heard a pounding which I thought was at the back door and I got up and saw a figure skirting against the dining room windows. I went back and got my damnably empty gun out of the desk drawer and just went around seeing that all the windows and doors were locked. Whoever it was, a drunken reveler no doubt, went on his or her way. Afterwards I noticed my hand was shaking at least a foot from left to right so I couldn't possibly have fired a gun, if it had been loaded. But I went back to bed and miraculously went to sleep, despite my fright. So I guess one is never really desperately scared, so that one can't do something, however silly, in an emergency.

Oh joy, I finally know the answer. You know, I listen occasionally to this fatuous program where they call up people and ask them the answer to silly questions, like Who started the first kindergarten. Now it is, what is the name of Don Quixote's horse and that I know, Rosinante, according to the magnificent

text you left with me. Of course, they'll never call me up but anyway, it gives me a fine feeling of security, knowing I would know if they did.

I wonder how things are with you now. The news, which is all about 36 hours behind, says the Germans are attacking the Seventh Army front, which isn't very pleasant. I pray that you are all right, darling, and know that you must be because I love you so much. AND HERE ARE A MILLION KISSES FOR YOU. I didn't mean to capitalize that but now it seems like a good idea.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 3, 1945 (A)

Dearest Jill,

I'm sorry that I couldn't write you the last day or so. Your only love was frozen most of the time and working like hell the whole time. When finally last night we could get comfortable & make ourselves a fire, I was tired far beyond the state in which one might write. I feel much better now, the afternoon afterwards. We had a good dinner of spaghetti, pickles (both rare delicacies), fresh biscuits (likewise) and hot chocolate. How can I help talking about food? It isn't something we can order at any minute of the day, or that we can walk into any hamburger joint to buy. During the long day yesterday, most of my eating amounted to your fragrant salami, cut off in chunks by partially frozen hands, and a bar of chocolate, another present from home.

The irregular mailman is running off now. Darling - a crude interruption to my projected song of love. You are still the most wonderful girl in the world and I would like to be frozen into a solid mass until I can warm up in your arms.

A thousand kisses to you & Kathy.

Always yours,

Al

P.S. Here are the pictures.

AL TO JILL JANUARY 3, 1945 (B)

My only Jill,

It seems that my life is so full of you not that I would ever, ever want it differently - though the pain of it be great as it is now, - for really packages and letters from you are too much - I feel your presence through every damned nerve of my body - and the corresponding vices of bitterness and rage raise themselves up and dance before my eyes when they ought to be beaten down and subdued to make this life tolerable. You can't realize fully how much I love you and miss you, because I myself have achieved an incoherent state on that subject. I'm sure if I were to analyze my letters, I would be thoroughly ashamed of the sparing and disjointed references to my supreme emotions and the ungrateful and lowly emphases on minor things. I should say more often what I never doubt and always feel, that you are all I want and ever hope to have, and that even in absentia you are as thrilling and lovely as any bridal couch, if not perhaps as our own unbridled couch.

How can I get back to the individual things I had reference to for what they are worth in themselves rather than for what they represent. There is that fruitcake you made, for example, and which arrived in perfect form today. I think your hands deserve many kisses for having wrought it. (I borrowed Fred's pen for this.) On the Bible it is the best fruit cake I've ever eaten. Tom

and Fred agree. I know it has in back of it many a frown on your flushed face and hours of purchasing, planning and baking. Perhaps my saying it is so good fails to completely repay you for your travail - just like with the baby - but I'm still bound to say it.

Another token of your interesting personality came in a package of New Yorkers - but still good. I have lots to read now - so much that I have the delightful feeling of being pressed for free time to read and damn the lighting; - our new lighting is better incidentally. The copy I read tonight, from July, had a Perlman farce - better than most - and an article on Duke Ellington, both of which I enjoyed a great deal. I am quite interested in jazz now because here we feel the full impact dance music excerpts. It is the Standout American cultural influence on the troops abroad - after mail and the Stars & Stripes the most immediate contact with home.

Your letter was from Dec. 18, and told me more of the marvels of the child we created and named Kathryn. Do you think she might get to recognize me by my picture? That's a large order. Even Edgar Hoover's bright boys need lots of training in that. I'm a very cocky guy, though. I feel that I'll win her over like her mother. There should be something in her genes that'll make her succumb. If all else fails, I can grow one of those bush mustaches with points sticking out that'll give me a comic attraction. Or my brass buttons will fetch her - they are still wearing brass buttons on the official uniform back home, aren't they. Oh, yes, I'm resourceful, all right.

I was irritated to read that you were going to have your bushy hair cut by some barber. I'm going to learn how to cut hair on my next chance and will cut your hair afterwards. Strange love.

Many tender kisses,

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 5, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

I just finished the pleasurable and extensive experience of reading again, at leisure, all the letters you've sent me in December, through the 24th, the last one I've received. Now my mind is a great big blur of affectionate remembrances. I can remember the cute little drawing you made on the side of one of the V-mails, of Kathy and me confined to sick-beds. You do those things a lot better than I can do, and I really believe Mom when she says that you and Ed used to draw so well in school. I also remember and shall some day honor your request for a super-duper reading lamp. Can I get myself a sunlamp on that sainted post-priority day, so I can always have that lobster flush of summer, which I deem so mysteriously attractive? I'm also glad you get an adequate cigarette ration -- they are still very short here, but I get along because I don't smoke more than three or four a day, and also because somebody is always giving me a pack out of friendship. Bea Neugarten gave me two of Chesterfields the other day, a brand which I seem to prefer, winning my friendship eternally upon the day when I'll be able to lend her all of Kathy's old things, because she (Bea, not Kathy) is having a baby this spring. And in reply to the business raised in your last letter -- what to do with the increase in your pay -- don't use it to increase my allotment, as I think I wrote you earlier and unsolicited. Like you, I think it would be best to buy a bond with it - either use the whole fifty for a bond deduction, or just buy a 37.50 bond each month and use the rest yourself. You might buy books and send them back to me when you're finished, or something. You might also send a bookcase (hah, hah).

Gosh, it's almost ten and Kathy isn't asleep yet. I don't know what the matter is. I took her temp. and it's normal. She is just too full of spit and vinegar. It snowed today and was about ten

degrees but seemed warm, so I took her out this afternoon in her little sled with the fruit box tied on it. I lined the box with a blanket and it provides a most satisfactory mode of transportation for her, although I puff ahead like an old husky.

I've been having a very female time of out lately. The night before last Mac spent the night and we sat around and had a couple of beers, and yesterday afternoon I was invited to tea at Marilyn Morgan, whom you may or may not recall as being a sexy blonde pretty girl from around 57th St., and Maggie Magerstadt and Betty Chapman were also there, also sexy blonde girls from 57th St. We had tea and then Maggie and Betty came home for dinner with me. They brought a big bottle of whiskey and sat around drinking it until 11 or so. I didn't drink anything because I don't care much for hard liquor alone and as for getting tight, well, I guess I've previously outlined my attitude towards getting tight in the absence of a protecting and loving male.

And both yesterday and this afternoon I took care of Liza Kerner while Diane buzzed downtown. She is seeing some doctor from the Institute of Psychoanalysis, as is Oliver. I guess that's a good idea -- if one person is getting treated in the family the other should too, to straighten out everything at once. But I do feel embarrassed, knowing so many neurotic folks. Those are the only one who seem to be left.

Me, I read a lot and frequently have black depressions in which I lie on the floor and let Kathy walk on my face, while I contemplate the radiators and [?] the ceiling. But otherwise I don't think I'd be disqualified from active service. I had the most wonderful time with that Victorian thriller I was reading, The Woman in White. It was about 500 pages long, and suspense throughout. Now I'm going to read the other one in this modern library book. I'm beginning to get my adolescent seat for reading back -- you know the way you do, when you read absorbedly

anything you can get your hands on. Of course I wouldn't feel the same way about non-fiction, I'm sure. Give me that old copy of Mannheim you used to press on me so constantly and I'd undoubtedly return to my old mind-wandering habits, where my eyes would fix with a glassy stare on the frontispiece and I'd eventually get up and look around desperately for a bottle of beer, else take a bath.

I got a very flamboyant Xmas card from Herz today. It was a picture of a German soldier reading a PWB leaflet in Normandy and on the back was a mimeographed legend describing same, and superimposed on the legend was in large black print, Merry Christmas from Martin Herz. The envelope had his name and address printed on it, so he must be making full use of PWB's printing facilities. He wrote a little note thanking me for seeing his mother in New York. Well, I was glad I had. It was fun talking to her about you guys, though a battle who would get the words in edgewise. These Viennese. Some drunken reveler from my party the other night rang, around one AM, the bells of all the people in this entry and now they are all sore at me, especially and including the over-excitable and detestable Viennese above me. I think they must think the Gestapo are coming, every time they hear a bell ring. That's very heartless of me, I know, but I really do loathe them so.

Kathy walks all over the place now. It really is the preferred mode of locomotion. She even pushes her kiddie car around, without getting inside of it, I mean, which she can't do unless I place her there. And she has acquired the typical toddler habit of taking her strolls with her arms laden with any debris she happens to fancy at the moment. The other day she picked up the whole huge unwrapped package of clean diapers by the string, and with much groaning and grunting, proceeded to make the rounds of the house. Do you remember how Leslie King used to stagger around, that first summer we knew him when he was little more than two, with those big cats in his arms

and then dump them into the nearest friendly lap? Well, she does that now, only not with cats. But she's always bringing things over to me and handing them to me, and then laughing like hell when I take them. Maybe it's a sort of infantile booby trap. I just went to let my bath run and found my library card in the tub, sopping wet. She's been carrying that around all day and I might have known where it would end up. It's lucky the toilet seat was down. I hope you're not going to do that when you come home, lean over the bowl and drop things in, chuckling with ill-concealed mirth.

I got a letter from Day and Wa, yesterday and he devoted a whole page to an encomium of praise for you and your pipe and your thoughtful etc. And here I have only one little line to say I love you and think you are the most wonderful guy in the world.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 5, 1945

Dearest Jill,

Connie Wilson, the company clerk, says that air mail is faster than V mail so I shall take his word for it. Anything to give wings to my words of love and if they can be legible as well, all to the good. If you want to ski, as you said you did a couple of letters ago, you should be here now. It is a rolling country and there are several inches of snow. The country roads we are on are slick and white and the air is sharp and clear. One of these days I'm going to hitch a sled to a jeep and travel that way for a while. It won't be much colder and may be less. Tonight is a quiet night. The sunset was beautiful and still, most unwarlike. I like this little village we are in now a great deal. It is very small and very poor but they like Americans and they are easy to get

along with. Tom, Fred and I are in a single large room on the second story of a two-story frame house inhabited by some poor family. I don't know how long we will be here, no one ever does, but we have made it comfortable or functional, which is synonymous with comfortable in our functional lives. I have things to read, Christmas presents left over to eat, and a warm bed to sleep in. The hefty madame of the house gave us a great round mirabelle pie this morning and we've been nibbling into it tonight. She is going to bake a chicken for us tomorrow night and I hope to hell I won't have to break the appointment. Petit pois aussi. Mais frais. I'm going through your New Yorkers one by one, reading them carefully and then casting them to the wolves, after marking an X carefully on the cover to distinguish the ones already read from the unread ones. That's always been a grave and frustrating problem in the past; I would give away the ones I hadn't read and keep the ones I read. You ought to know that I retain the right instincts by the way. I gloat over the advertisements and ponder whether they would be the thing to buy as a present for you. It's too difficult for results but I enjoy the pastime of fitting you with clothing and meubles even at this distance.

I haven't made my mind up yet on what my position will be towards your projected trip to California. Probably by the time I do you will have gone and bad cess to me. All I can say is that the idea seems distasteful to me but if I can't analyze the reasons more accurately, I'll discard the distaste. For one thing, I know the expense won't be worth the enjoyment you'll get out of it. The long trip won't be very pleasant, for either you or Kathy. You'll probably get into arguments with Ann as long as I'm not around and be unhappy amidst conjugal bliss despite any effusions of sympathy. On the positive side, you will probably be able to check off another month in a few shorter days of psychological time than it would be otherwise. You'll see Paul and family and exhibit Kathryn. There'll be less long

evenings in which to do nothing but file fingernails and see third-rate movies. Perhaps though the days when you get back will seem so much longer and drearier too, like those following your trip to NY, not right away but after a few days. My ability to decide is lessened, finally, by my inexact knowledge of your state of being, the preponderant weight for either side it may fall on. I didn't mention the relation to the war effort, did I? Oh, that The length of the preceding paragraph is a good measure of how little I have to say in this letter. The last days have been interesting and exciting. The New Year started off with a bang. I still am in hopes for an early decision of the war. The German salient is slowly assuming the proportions of a sac. Things may happen more rapidly now. When Budapest the beautiful is finally destroyed and taken, the Russians will be well situated too. But how many times has all this been said before.

I was very sorry that my brother didn't get to see me when he was in these parts. I suppose he couldn't get up here. I gather from Mom that he didn't even go to Italy. Roos' brother landed with his outfit right near here and they've been together several times already. They look like each other, an unfortunate thing for both of them. Roos spent ten years in Iraq and elsewhere in the Near East so you can imagine that he is kind of remote. I am second in command, a job the principal part of which is to shake him when he's dreaming. Despite the heterogeneity of the outfit, most of the men do their job well or better. I like the collection of hyphenated Frenchmen we have. In addition to the French men, there are French Arabs, French Spaniards and Corsicans, all of them by now partially Americanized. My favorite is Blackie Bouhana, a carefree character who resembles Vic physically and mentally except for being very dark - I think he's mostly Arabic. He speaks a rapid American slang that slays all of us in addition to this French and Arabic. The outfits that come from England are very perplexed at these men. It's a life they never knew. And of course they are all in

American uniforms and belong to an American outfit.

I have a bad dry cough that has come up in the last hour or so. I guess I'll brew up some Christmas chocolate and go to bed with many a kiss to you and Kathy.

Always my only love are you [*pointing with an arrow:*] quaint phrasing, no?

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 6-7, 1945 V-MAIL

Al darling --

Another day skipped without writing you -- yesterday, I mean -- because it's been such beautiful snowy weather I spent almost the whole day outdoors dragging Kathy around in her little sled. In the afternoon yesterday I took my skates along and went with this girl and her husband to the Midway, where I took one abortive turn around. My ankles are disgustingly weak and I just had to give up. I think I need better-fitting skate shoes, because I remember when I borrowed Ann's figure skates in San Francisco once, I did rather better than usual, although I'd never been on figure skates before. I'd like to get a pair someday, that day when I can also get your Little Wonder Miracle Lamp. But the trauma of yesterday came in the morning, when I ambled into Stineways to see what could be seen and ran into Christine Peck, of all people. She was in town, she said, on a stopover to Santa Fe. She said George was reported missing in action, which was quite a shock to me, although she seems to take it with equanimity. Diane invited her over to dinner last night and I went down too, a painful duty all around, and spent the evening with them. Then she walked me home and asked to stay at my place because she didn't want to go back to the Homestead

where she was staying. Naturally I consented with grace and this morning she left. I feel so terribly sorry about George but honestly, Chris is the queerest person alive and I really can't bear to be around her. She said he was in Italy when it happened, but got no details. Maybe he's a prisoner although she didn't seem to be very optimistic about it. It's awfully hard to judge people when tragedy comes. I know how it was when my parents died -- I deeply resented people expecting me to act emotionally about it, yet I think if anything ever happened to you or Kathy I would just want to crawl away in a hole for a long time.

Today I groused about the house for most of the day and then took Kathy for a walk down to the lake with Lettie and her baby in the late afternoon. The lake seems frozen over as far as the eye can see and I wonder how far you could really get on it by walking. I didn't try at all, needless to say, or is it needless? It is very beautiful. I love the promontory at all seasons except summer, when its essential loveliness is ruined by all the horrid people. Someday we'll have to get a lake of our own, or a sizeable hunk of one.

I got my latest letter from you yesterday, Dec. 29. You said something about their instituting a system of leaves, which gives me something to pray over now, even though I won't share your virtue of being over-optimistic. You note that I said virtue, because if the two attitudes are polar, I'm sure pessimism is the vice. I guess I'm not really pessimistic though, just depressive. I'm glad t -- I haven't the faintest idea what was gladdening my heart at that moment. Diane came by and I left this to go to the movies, where we saw halves of two films I can hardly remember now. Oh yes, I guess I was glad that you got all the packages. And your letter this morning, of Dec. 18, said you got the color pictures too. Wunderbar. You know, I called up the lady who took those candid shots of Kathy last summer and she can't get any more paper now to take any new orders., so I think

I'll take Kathy to a regular photographer in the neighborhood. It won't be as good as having a number of candid poses but anything is better than nothing. You'll just have to take my word for it that she is a most competent walker. Yes, she really Walks. She prefers it to all other modes of locomotion now, in fact practically never crawls any more. And all this has taken place just in the week since her birthday, or maybe it is two weeks. She can walk forward, backwards, turn, walk with me, i.e., holding my hand like a little lady, or without me. She also dances. When there is a swiny tune on the radio she starts jogging with her knees and swaying from side to side and stamping her feet. She was doing it this morning to our time-honored Pepsi-cola commercial. And guess what, she ate a whole lamb chop for lunch. I tore it up in little bits and although she only has five teeth, she chomped away, probably on her bare gums, until it was all gone, loving it all the while. Her teeth are really funny, by the way. The bottom two are set so close together, like mine, that they form a little V with one another, but the two top front teeth have a space between them, like Buss's, almost big enough to get another tooth in between. Then there is one other little tooth on the upper range, next to the right front tooth. It's funny the way she combines the dental characteristics of both families. Also, her two upper front teeth are very large, and white, while the lower ones are little, like mine. No matter how it sounds, the effect is entrancing. The dentist, who was looking at her teeth only casually, since I am the paying patient there, said that the space between her front teeth would probably disappear as she got older. I don't care one way or another, since she still is the best-looking kid around here and by far the most animated.

I just got a huge package from Paul and Ann, full of goodies of all sorts. They sent five home-preserved jars of the most exotic nature, brandied cherries and fruits like that, and a book for me, Ben Hecht's Guide to the Bedevilled which should be

interesting, and a fluffy toy for Kathy and a darling picture of little Paul, who looks more like Ann than like anybody else in the family. Paul, the big one, was a prettier little boy but I think little Paul will have more chiseled features. Oh well, you really can't tell. I think Kathy will never have exactly chiseled features. Her nose is a vast little button now, and her mouth is nice and big, like yours. So are her eyes, and in this cold weather, her cheeks get absolutely scarlet, so that altogether she looks like something on a baby food can. It is always a never-ending source of joy and wonder to me that this wish of mine came true -- that the baby looks like you.

I can't find anything to disagree with in your remarks on govt. in liberated Europe. That's another thing, after living with you a mean two years I find myself hopelessly under your intellectual spell, I mean, even before you start convincing me of anything. I find myself convinced by the things you might say. Oh, I'm not very clear. I feel just awful, having the curse, by awful meaning incompetent, bumbling, dull, lazy, irritable and so forth.

I'm going to take a bath now and I see if that won't clear the atmosphere for an afternoon of useful activity. All my love and kisses to you, darling, and Kathy sends hers too.

XXXOOO

Jill

[drawing of a hoop with a line]: _O_____|

A dead duck

AL TO JILL JANUARY 7, 1945 (A) V-MAIL

Jill, Darling,

I received a letter of epic proportions from you today, if three pages of finely typed V-mail can be called epic. I'm afraid that all the epistolary virtues in the world might find their way into V-mail without anyone noticing it. But screwing up all my interpretative and visual faculties to a pitch, I managed to find the letter beyond doubt a magnificent piece of work. For did you not in it dispose of psychoanalysis, define the basic motivations of the masses, describe in clinical detail the effects of drink on the young maiden (I'm afraid you're nothing else any more), and give an account of Kathy's brief tiff with fever which was a small-scale "Buddenbrooks"? Your letters now too bear the pessimism of two weeks ago on the German offensive. It makes me feel better to know that you must be relieved now that the enemy is in a tight spot. I know we here certainly are.

The weather continues snowy. It's been snowing most of the day, large flakes, and wherever the ground isn't icy, it is packed in snow drifts. I spent a good part of the afternoon stripping my carbine for a thorough cleaning. I'm afraid most of the time went to looking for a small but essential pin I dropped on the litter on the floor. Our cleaning is certainly more rudimentary than yours, you poor girl. It consists mainly of kicking the cigarette butts into a corner when there are too many around. Aside from that I only shake my blankets out. Considering the fact that I haven't washed my quilt since I got it when we were staying near Camp Ritchie, it is remarkably clean and neutral smelling. I suppose it's been sandy, wet and muddy so many times that it has been continually worn and brushed clean.

Back to psychoanalysis, seriously I think you're quite right in your statement. It is only for people without motivation who think they are missing something (the latter restriction is to exclude

the large number of people without motivation who don't know it & wouldn't understand what you were talking about if you brought the matter up.)

Someone dug up a movie for tonight and in the doubtful event nothing happens, we will be badly amused for an hour or two. I would so much rather be sharing your troubles in amusing Kathy. When I get home I'll run her little legs off. I don't think she'll last past seven in the evening. After that I can explain to you a number of things, if I can remember them, on bees, flowers and human beings. Just now I feel much more like human potentiality than being; a hell of a lot, I suppose, like the primordial slime when it was seething with the birth of the first organism.

Jim Clark stopped by yesterday. He is going home and says he will call you from New York. He deserves it, middle-aged, wife and kids, a good job done for 21 months, and a civilian through it all.

All my love, dearest Jill.

Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 7, 1945 (B)

Jill Darling,

I got your letter of Dec. 21 and am very thankful that our days of Christmas shopping are over. You had me worried for a time that you would never finish the task. Your final gifts seemed very adequate to me, though sending a cartoon book to Leslie King may be a little like gilding the lily. It was nice to hear about Rosable and Buster and in a smaller way of L. D. White. Katherine Steinz wrote me recently and implied pretty well that

the Political Science Department has a dank odor about it. I don't think White would ever do anything to correct that condition. I never trusted or liked him, and regard him in my unconscious probably as one of the three pixy old maids in "Arsenic & Old Lace". She also wrote that enrollments are picking up, what with medical discharges and the short pants brigade that falls in under RMH's new plan. It will certainly be hard for veterans to go to school with those kids.

I don't remember exactly what I wrote on that card I left for you that time, though I remember the time very well. Even so, I'm sure I meant it and still mean it. I wish I could get more "sweet" and less "sorrow" out of the sweet sorrow of parting. I've always felt very grim and bitter about taking leave of you. There is no doubt that you've caused me a good part of all the sorrows I've had so far. I know, for example, that if I were Ed's age and I were here in my place, I wouldn't be unhappy at all. Instead the only thing that matters particularly to me now is when I'll be able to see you again. Everything else happens in an offhand, irrelevant manner. It makes no difference one way or another. Incidentally, I do see beginnings of light in the leave system. The situation is very bad in the army. Not a man in our company has been over less than fifteen months. If they would spend less time sending movie stars and other irrelevant so-called Special Service personnel over here and perhaps less useless PX candy and use the space for giving men leaves, the situation would be improved. Not only that, but old armies can't be treated the same as new ones who are sending people home who have been over only a short while because there is not enough difference in the quotas or no difference at all. Something should happen soon on that. There are lots of things ailing some of our men that were originally 1A that have exempted a lot of those civilians like Howard, Oliver and others. If you think Ollie is batty, you ought to see some of the guys that have been banging around these parts for ages.

To deviate markedly, I assisted in the birth of a calf in the barn below this morning. That is, I stood by and admired the smoothness of the proceedings. The cow was down in labor, amongst a lot of other cows in a dirty drafty barn. And while Barbary ducks and chickens trooped backwards & forwards, she dropped a fine bull calf. Once the head came out, the rest occurred in a minute. The sac was broken and he lay there sputtering and blinking. The farmer's wife and the little boy were also there watching. The old man was visiting at one of the neighbors and arrived after the whole thing was over. The little boy enjoyed it a lot and let out a shout of glee when the calf started to move, almost running over it with the runners of his sled he was dragging behind him. The only human touch needed was a bowl of salt sprinkled on the calf's glistening body, partly as an antiseptic, I suppose, and partly to give the mother added incentive to lick him. At any rate, she lost no time and a few minutes later, he was stumbling around, brushed well and dried. Tomorrow he'll be running around and nursing with great lust.

We had the chicken dinner last night that I wrote you about the day before yesterday. It was pretty good for a change, though I'm sure you could do a better job of it, witness the fruit cake. I am eating the latter at the rate of two or three slices a day. It will be finished by tomorrow I estimate, with a final smacking of lips and a salaam to the West. Other Christmas foods remain and I don't think I'll be rid of the thought of Christmas until February at the minimum. They're only a bother when we have to move, but they're also a consolation because they make life less monotonous, moving times being generally characterized by an abundance of the lowest cuisine in life, C-ration.

I've just finished reading Cakes & Ale by S. Maugham, which if you haven't read it, is just as well. He is smooth but knocks himself out thinking of dull things to say, a not uncommon faculty amongst modern writers. In one of those very old New

Republics I read a review of a three-volume work on Greek "culture". It is no doubt most interesting and deep, but sometimes I wonder whether the time spent excavating ancient ideas might not more profitably be spent on exploring modern society, if the problems are approached in the same spirit of scholarship and not as a journalistic exposé. The classics have been a more unfruitful drain on the store of human genius than the priesthood and they have produced nothing that will serve to explain society properly. Only great minds can play chess with Greek ideas and what is left for the masses -- nothing, only their prejudices and glimmerings. Sociological data can be assimilated by masses of people, however, and that is another point in favor of sociological education in a democracy. You know, of course, that I am not talking about what you were handed as "sociology" in Smith College, or even what is taught at the U. of C., but of the body of data and generalizations I am convinced lie before us to dig up. Education on classic Greek culture has always been aristocratic education. Interest in sociology has developed with interest in the common people. The world has always been divided into "us" and the fuzzy-wuzzies. Each "us" group has studied the Greek classics and loved them, principally because they were so remote and couldn't possibly have come from "fuzzy-wuzzies". There is no doubt that ninety per cent of American Christians would be shocked into heathenism if they could know at first hand the dirty physical circumstances under which Christ was born -- the lack of plumbing, the unbathed people, the cold, the smells and the violence of it. It's just as well. We haven't yet any preparation for reconciling them to it and they would only be unhappier.

Gosh, it's cold as a stable right where I'm sitting now. There's snow everywhere. Mostly I like it -- everything is clean, white and pretty. The pines hang heavy with it and against the green it is like the pages of my childhood geography book.

It will be only months, months, do you know, before we will be real lovers again. Give Kathy a big kiss from me.

Always your

Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 9, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

I just finished a sizable ironing which I'd been putting off for weeks and feel properly virtuous now. And last night I wrote six thank-you letters to people (I don't know why I qualify to people since I obviously wouldn't be writing to dogs, or is it obvious?)/ I am a veritable font of good intentions. I also cleaned out a closet today, after the unhappy experience of reaching for a roll of toilet paper and getting hit on the head by a large wooden turtle that somebody had sent Kathy. Time spent in these introspective tasks will undoubtedly make a hospital case of me, one way or the other. I find myself holding long silent conversations with you when I am working thus, and it will be only a matter of minutes before I start talking aloud. It's funny the way you occupy so much of my thoughts. I wake up in the morning, usually despondent because you are not with me, and as the day wears on, I sink into a happier kind of reverie, planning for the days when we'll be together, apologizing half humorously for household blunders, or doing fiercely amusing tricks for Kathy which are also meant to amuse you. God, what a screwball your daughter is. It's ten PM and I just heard her sneezing and murmuring, so I went into her room, and there she was standing bolt upright in bed, with her hat on and beau beautiful Raggedy Ann dolls (did I tell you, Mom made her them and there is a constant fight on between infant and mother as to

who shall play with them?) clutched to her bosom. Apparently she's been playing for hours without my knowing it. She's sitting on the couch now watching me write this while we're waiting for her bottle to heat up. When she wake me up like this at night I usually give her some warm milk to speed her on her way back to sleep. After she has been asleep an hour or so and wakes up, she's usually absolutely uncontrollable, full of games and tricks and wild screams of laughter. I just put her back to bed with her bottle, flanking her with her dolls and hope she'll get to sleep now. Her nose is running, an evil portent, though her behavior is certainly not that of an invalid's. She has an insulting habit now, the minute you put her to bed, of waving good-bye and saying "Ba", as if she couldn't wait for me to get out of the room so she can return to her secret mischiefs. She is always saying the syllable "ba" now. Sometimes it means goodbye, sometimes it means we're both going out and sometimes it just means baby, or some such expression of herself. She's getting real mean too. When I am lying down and she catches me, she pulls my hair to make me look up, and she is always banging something against me. She also is always trying to grab hold of my finger so she can bite it, and now it hurts, with those five brave teeth of hers. It was below zero out again today so we didn't go out but amused ourselves kicking the garbage around at home. I took care of Diane's baby this afternoon for a couple of hours again. She's not nearly so amusing as Kathy and is inclined to cry in her mother's absence, unlike Kathy who is always grateful for a change. And it's useless to cite the differences in their ages because I remember five months ago Kathy was as great a comic as she is now, albeit physically more limited. Viz. the picture you have of her toting the beer bottle. Well, I leave you and these tales of your remarkable child to take a bath. Need I say I love you? Well, I do.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 10, 1945

Jill, Darling,

I would exchange your most sullen morning mood a hundred times over for these gruesome mornings without you. The littered room that greets my sight is enough to make the most hardened antiesthete wince. The snores & hard breathing of Crowell on my right and of Faas from the foot of my cot. So as not to think too much about it, I stagger up, much as you stagger, knock open the shutters on the dim light and stick anything I can find in my feverish cold desperation into the stove and light it. I get into as many clothes as possible, wash my face in a basin, brush my teeth, comb my hair and climb down the dark stairs. At the mess, I have a cup of coffee and whatever else I think won't insult my morning stomach and then I'm prepared for anything, preferably for going back to bed.

I promised to give a talk this evening at some evacuation hospital and I look at it exactly as I would giving a pint of blood. An honorable duty. I certainly don't like the idea of a Jeep on slick roads at night when I should have stood in bed. Though I haven't proclaimed loudly in the past the crime of not orienting & educating the soldiers, because I know what flops the army would make of the program, nevertheless I sympathized with the cries & now I feel when the inconvenience come as the natural result, I ought to take them.

I think I already wrote you of the last talk I gave and the discussion that followed a week or so ago at a neuro-psychiatric hospital. We had a fine session there and the patients worked themselves into a rip-roaring discussion over things like unconditional surrender. After an hour and a half, the commandant of the hospital got wound up in a furious exposition (he may have needed the talk more than the patients) and I called it off. I don't follow any set outline nor do I

do hardly any preparing. I like to see what develops in the audience and to take hold of that. Afterwards, I thought that those men were more intelligent than an ordinary college group though the educational level was low. Their minds were independent entities for the thing -- suspicious, cagey and aloof more than the ordinary college students'. And they had a wealth of sociological experience to educe salient points from.

Yesterday was a fairly dull day. The only untoward incident was the arrival of some troops in our village, we looking on smugly from our comfortable nooks while they searched for places to sleep. They finally went into tents, poor souls. And I might also mention that in cleaning my gun again, I got a piece of cotton wadding stuck in the bore and had a hell of a time prying it out.

Last night, Fred returned with several bottles of champagne, garnered from one of my mysterious sources and we drank them down, Tom doing most of the drinking. A second looie from a nearby outfit brought a large salami and we ate some of that too. I crawled in the sack around eleven, leaving Tom talking philosophically to himself next to the stove with his feet on my bed. I was awakened shortly by him monkeying with the radio dial and getting only terrible noises for his pains. I complained roughly and That's all I recall until the incidents of this morning's awakening which I described previously.

Now I also remember something slightly different about yesterday. I walked and did some roughing around in the snow drifts and woods to work off one of those groin aches that come from sexual non-indulgence. So much for my glamorous love life. It's all reduced to the Boy Scout adage of fresh air and plenty of exercise. I long for the day when I can lie back in lazy somnolence and soft decadence and feel any way I care to feel.

These newly arrived soldiers are fresh from the States. They look in pretty good shape. I'd like to find one from Chicago. He

must have been there only a couple of months ago. Our own men are busily engaged filling them with misinformation. They are avoiding certain areas because of "mines" when I know damn well there aren't any mines there. They'll provide some fun, I guess.

Give Kathy my biggest kiss, darling. I love you very much as always. Al

JILL TO AL JANUARY 11, 1945 V-MAIL

Dearest darling --

I didn't get to write you yesterday because I took one of my periodic flying trips downtown. This time the mission was to see if I could possibly get a ticket for San Francisco in the dim distant future. There was such a line at the ticket office I gave up, also because I had a dentist's appointment back south. This morning I called up but they can't give me any reservations at all on the fast train and I don't want to take a slow one, and as the airlines will give me a reservation but only as far as Denver I am in a stalemate. I'd sort of like to go for the month of March perhaps, because it will probably be one of the few times in the next decade or so I'll get to see Paul and vice versa, and also because it will serve to break up the long wait for you. But the trip will be difficult with Kathy unless I can get a good reservation on a fast means of travel. Well, we shall see.

To my great joy the dentist only discovered one cavity, which he promptly rooted up, with only minor discomfort. Since all my other trips to the dentist since I reached my majority have involved their taking everything out and reassembling with attractive gold filigree work, this last visit is a pleasant change. The only other note of medical interest is that Kathy has a cold

again, damn it. Fortunately today is her day for her monthly checkup with the doctor, so I'll take her over and let him worry about it. She is in good spirits but her nose keeps running unattractively all over the place. It seems to me that she's had too many colds this winter. It may be that this place is so damned cold at least half the day long. We've also had a terribly cold winter, though presumably the human frame should adjust.

I haven't got any mail from you for several days again but probably by tomorrow, a great batch should arrive.

This letter, which promised to be a paean of pure boredom anyway, was interrupted by the necessity of my taking Kathy to the doctor. He said she had a cold too, but advises nothing but drops. She now weighs 22 pounds and 12 ounces, a far cry from the monster she promised to be at birth. Mike Kelly weighs 28 pounds for an example, and I think little Joe weighed about 25 at this age. however, this is perfectly satisfactory to me -- it means it's that much easier to carry her. And she is perfectly built, with broad shoulders, little hips and big sturdy legs, not the least bit thin yet not too fat. The reason that she has stopped gaining so fast is that she is walking now.

The next day -- I couldn't write any more last night because Priscilla came to dinner and then left, and then came Joan and Tom, who is in town on leave, rather, furlough. He is back in the air corps, working as a mechanic in some field in the south. He was in the airborne infantry for a while but got a collapsed lung and they put him out. That or his c.p. affiliations might have been the reason he said, as the lung is all right now and may never do that again. He seemed depressed and thwarted and Joan is no close to attaining the ideals of wifely virtues than she ever was. Honestly, you'd think that the months and years of deprivation and loneliness would teach people something. If I am not taught, you are herewith invited, at the first breach, to kick all my teeth down my throat, gold inlays included.

This has been a rather tough day so far. Kathy has been very fussy and we can't go out, rather it's inadvisable on account of her cold. I get terribly behind in my housework when I have to jump up every two minutes to make her orange juice or soothe her when she starts crying. There's no point to letting her cry because it only makes her head more stuffed up. The house gets even messier when I let her out of bed and I have to keep picking things up. Then I started to take a divine nap when she was taking hers, and by gosh if she didn't wake up and start wailing all over again. Right now she is dividing her attention between the typewriter, which she yells to play with, and the radio, which is subsequently put on, wisely, very loud. Now she is jogging up and down in front of it, doing her best to open up the cover, keep it open, and tear out all the dials. d d d Kathy made those d's. They stand for Daddy, whom she loves dearly. Oh, I forgot to mention, in regards my discussion before on her weight -- she is also considerably taller than average, I should judge, seeing her stand next to kids her age or even older. She topped a pair of 13-month-old twins in the doctor's office by a couple of inches at least.

Honestly, darling, I've been trying to write this letter all day and Kathy just won't let me. Now I've put her to bed for the night but I'm so weary and disgusted I think I'll go out now before I eat to mail this and buy a paper. These days in the house are really awful. So, not to prolong my misery any longer, I'll do the unthinkable and finish a V-mail before the end of the page. Anyway, all the v-mails in the world aren't enough to tell you how much I love you in. I really do, too, love you that much, I mean.

Jill

AL TO JILL JANUARY 12, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Jill,

The mail is coming in well now, one each day in the last two days from you and two of your own inimitable creations today. I don't agree with you that your letters are repetitious and you wouldn't think so either if you could see me reading them. Either that or you must conclude that I am repetitious and dull. But I am really glad to hear from you from so late a day less than two weeks ago and to know that you are still paddling your way up the creek and show no signs of either falling into it or lessening your low monotone of curses as you go along. So be it as it always was, - I become angry when reading ads that say, don't worry little man, nothing at home will be changed for you, not even the top one percent of income earners, but I find it amusing and warming to know that Jill is as she used to be.

I got a letter from Ed today also describing his trip to Washington, his army work and hinting that he spent most of this time in Washington reading up on Stekel and Freud, a fine thing. I am, incidentally, immersed in the Way of all Flesh which you sent me lately, at the expense of several other light things I was reading before it came. It so happens that I was very anxious to get a long serious book. Somehow I've found myself with lots of short stories, essays and what-nots which are good only to a point and then become dull reading. Life is like a novel, it is long and drawn-out, and the short story is in its nature partially unrealistic therefore. But again, I desist and will not give with the theories, because you just wrote that I influence you intellectually. I don't think I do that; the only reason I married you was because it was the last hope of influencing you in any way, and, for some reason which probably has to do with your corpus, I was bent on that very thing. But my intellect turned out poorly and probably repelled you more than attracted you, if the intellect be defined narrowly.

I wouldn't worry about my safety, first because I am relatively safe and secondly because it does no good anyway. The only man one really ought to worry about in the army is the man in the rifle company; for the others danger is a matter of occasions rather than habit.

But now I must go to lunch, one of your earlobes and your throat, if you please, marked Spam. Give another kiss to my beautiful daughter. I would certainly like more pictures of her. Take care of yourself, darling, because I love you very much.

Always,

Al

(Second page in ink to be sure you read part of this letter).

It's later in the evening and we just had a film showing. It was gaudy and musical, pretty poor but all dressed up, Irish Eyes Are Smiling. There seems to be more professional Irishmen in Hollywood than in the Ancient Order of Hibernians. You're my favorite musical comedy star. [*in the margin: Afterthought - even though you can only sing "Stormy Weather".*]

I wish I would get some mail I've been reading your same letter for four days now without pause. If I read any more about Kathy wearing the beret, I'll be bored silly when I see it on her for the first time. But really, how I would love to see her. You must send me some more pictures soon. I believe the latest I have were from three months ago. She must be much more beautiful by now. And when in hell is the family going to take a group picture? It seems to me unlikely that you all can't find time to meet at a photographer's for the purpose. I asked for it originally a long while before Ed went into the army.

I need a haircut. My hair is hanging down my neck - but it's warm! I still haven't received the lock of your hair you were

going to send me. Here I've been overseas all this time & I haven't a single fetish. Oh yes, and while you're at it, you might waste a little of the perfume you like so much on one of your letters. Or dip it in a dry martini or something. Or dehydrate yourself and mail yourself to me. I'd mix you up well on my cot and I have an extra pair of shoes for you.

Always painfully,

yours, Al

AL TO JILL JANUARY 13, 1945 (A) V-MAIL

Dearest Jill,

This should be an occasion or something because this morning for the first time overseas I addressed a letter to someone else and wrote it to you, a not ununderstandable occurrence if one addresses V-mails before writing on them. Thus, Pvt. Edward will get an amorous note meant for no ears but your own pink ones. As soon as I discovered the misstep, I wrote Ed a letter with an air mail stamp in addition, asking him to forward the letter to you. Today has been quiet. I spent most of it indoors, away from the cold wind and snow. The army has issued a new gas or oil feed mechanism which fits onto the army stove and we had that set up in the orderly room today. The only trouble with it is that there is no place now to burn secret papers, an occupation which at times assumes fair proportions.

On the whole, I am physically fine but psychologically very very bored. Everything seems pretty dull in this life. One misses the contact with everything including the reasons for which he is fighting. That is the real significance of leave. A soldier gets repaid for a hell of a lot if he can spend some leave in America and can go back to the operations theatre feeling like doing a

lot more. I'm afraid most arguments by well-meaning people speak only of the soldier's viewpoint and neglect the very important advantages which accrue to the army from a good system of leave.

I'm gradually getting through the New Yorkers and New Republics I have on hand from last summer. It is surprising how little difference time makes in their reading, the true difference between comment and news. The light we have in this place is a lot better than in the last few, and my eyes don't bother me at all now. Which is fine, because I'm saving the glint in them for you. I'm sorry for once I'm not in the Pacific theatre, turning to the news. Being an old liberator, I would like to be in on Manila. The war is certainly being conducted there in handy style. One can even foresee a remote possibility that Japan will cave in before Germany. That would be one of the funniest tricks of all.

I sometimes wonder what is going on in my old clique in Italy. It's been already half a year since I left there. They haven't gone very far since then. I must write Mundy Howard or Robbie for the latest gossip. They've been doing about the same thing now for many months. I wonder if they are heartily sick of it. I wonder what would have happened if I had stayed in the film section. I understand they've done little, that Pallos didn't go very far under the difficult conditions, and that he wanted to leave but couldn't. I must write Jerry too. I know the radios are still going full blast and they probably have the same problems constantly recurring and still unsolved as we had when we first took over. Other than that, I am glad I went on this joy ride and I'll be happier when we plunge deep into Germany. I'll be happiest of all if a break comes my way and I can get home.

All my love to you, darling, with a long kiss.

Al

AL TO KATHY JANUARY 13, 1945 (B)

My Darling Kathy,

I have been considerably upset lately by my failure both to make your Christmas more merry and to add lustre to the important occasion of your first birthday, even to the extent of sending you a gift. Therefore, I have had recourse to writing you in the hope of mitigating my guilt, despite the existence of linguistic barriers, which I know you are sufficiently broad-minded to disregard. May I suggest, in this regard, that you employ your mother as an interpreter. Although she is responsible for all sorts of menial work for your welfare, she is still indebted to you for your contribution to her morale. And since she is a kind and beautiful person, I am sure she will not mind the chore.

The situation I find myself in already explains my neglect of your anniversaries. I am physically confined at present to the European continent, engaged in certain activities, which, though anti-social and unproductive, are generally considered justified, glamorous, and, at any rate, necessary. My milieu is so provincial, in fact, that I was not able to find anything in my world which might befit your discriminating tastes and limited needs -- you see, we are somewhat alike in this respect.

So I hope you will, in all graciousness, ignore my nonfeasance. Put it down to all friendship, for, though the human memory does not recall to the unicellular state, I assure you that I was the first man in your life.

Trusting that you will not have difficulty deciphering this writing, which was written under Arctic conditions, and that we will soon have a chat together under more favorable circumstances, I remain,

Most affectionately yours,

Alfred De Grazia, Capt. CAC, AVS

AL TO JILL JANUARY 14, 1945 V-MAIL

My Darling,

The news is as bright as my memory of you today. The Russians have driven twenty-five miles into Poland and have driven me that much nearer to my home. I had a dream in which I embraced you last night which is as much as I can ask for on the romantic side. Unfortunately, like in your dreams, we were either parting or meeting, I don't remember which, but I had none of the agony of parting. You were fresh as a daisy, I might add, for no sooner had I tasted a kiss when you were urging us off on some errand, or you stooped to fix your stocking or something. At any rate, you didn't appreciate a good kiss but were concerned with some silly thing around us, perhaps Kathy. That, I ought to add, was the most unrealistic part of the dream, because I have yet to recall a time when you weren't ready for a proper kiss, unless you were very angry -- but that doesn't count. So much for a too short dream, an unusual enough occurrence for me to recite it in full. Darling, when I sometimes think that in actually only weeks or months may be separating us, I go loco with desire, happiness, and exploding libido. I have gone some distance from the time when I would get out of hand if I didn't see you for days, but the difference is only apparent. I've gotten used to getting around with the dagger still in me. I always want you more than anything.

I haven't received my mail for several days. There just hasn't been any coming in. In that sense, I am probably more fortunate than you. When the mail hits, it hits for lots of us. When it

doesn't we are all in evil temper together, and the army postal system gets cussed up and down. I read a few of those bizarre Bierce stories last night from the little book you sent me. Several are enough for the time being. A man has murderous thoughts towards his parents only at intervals, and between time the tales grow boring.

In return for a part bottle of powdered coffee that Hank Dannenberg, or was it Buzz, sent me, I got six eggs this morning. I fried one of them immediately and the rest go tonight. The woman downstairs, a huge matriarchal female, also gave me two pork sausages, and later on left another big mirabelle pie in our room. So much for my digestive history which you look askance on. There isn't a hell of a lot to say, you know, -- I sleep well, and then I eat. I can't talk about my work which has gotten a groove for the time being anyway, and my sex experiences could fill a book with blank pages. I suppose I could describe the girls in these parts, but the few I glimpse are indescribable. I tell you what I read, and I tell you what I think, or as much as is not censorable or too long for writing. I'd describe the country, but this is very ordinary, not even blighted particularly.

Apart from that, I love you and Kathy very much and would like you for a wife and daughter.

Al

End of January (first of two parts) 1945 letters

