

THE Germans are retreating along the instep of the Peninsula rapidly, fearful of being cut off by an amphibious landing before they arrive wherever they are going. The Brits' Fifth Division goes after them. It cannot possibly catch up. The coast road, the main road, is one of the most precipitous and gully-clefted highways in the world. Every bridge, every traverse, every angle is now deftly and deeply blown. Then liberally mined.

The American Lieutenant fits Brown Roberts, Private Helms, himself and a jeep into an amphibious truck at the Messina docks and crosses the Straits. At Reggio's harbor, Italian soldiers -- you cannot call them prisoners since they are held not by guns but by a daily ration, but you cannot call them anything else just yet either -- are unloading ships and repairing bomb damage of the weeks past. They are revealing the mines that have been laid to hamper pursuit.



The Straits of Messina - Reggjo di Calabria.



The Straits of Messina - Reggjo di Calabria (after the landing).

Our people drive up the mountain and join the interminable column of trucks, artillery, and soldiers headed North. They slip in and out of the traffic when they can. There is a bottleneck every kilometer or so. He wonders why they are not cursed from the vehicles -- "ye bloody fookin' bastards" -- but no: unlike themselves who have a mission, to take over media and search for intelligence and useful personnel, the soldiers in line gain nothing by pushing ahead, and lose little by lagging. The precipices are frightening, the roadsides here and there mined. Weaving in and out of sight along the mountainsides ahead and behind are the beaded threads of a thousand cars.

The trip is going to be unproductive. It will take days to reach the next large city; in fact, it would be Salerno. A couple of hundred miles away. This day is the Fifth of September. The landings on the Bay below Salerno are four days off and the plan to land there is still secret. It will take another week after that for the Eighth Army to make juncture with the Fifth Army on the beaches. And the advance engineers are far from having cleared up the intervening obstacles. He turns back.

Better, he imagines, to go up to Catanzaro, a small mountain city of the instep of Italy. The First Canadian Division has been climbing the mountain roads in that direction, to protect the main column's flank and clear up Calabria. When his jeep catches up with the forward elements they are shivering from the cold. Some have found a Fascist warehouse containing blackshirt uniforms, and are wearing them under their cotton khakis. Some wear the stuff openly and play the clown. Their roads are blocked too, but rather quickly the jeep weaves its way into Catanzaro, a fine, decadent, depressed, undestroyed old town. They leave some propaganda in the town hall. There is no press or communication facilities worth seizure. Maybe a couple of amplifying systems and cinemas. The people are so happy to see the Americans that they need dosing with pessimism more than bucking up.



On the roads above Reggio di Calabria - refugees from the bombings.

He sees that it may be possible to get to the cities on the Adriatic and therefore turns the jeep around toward Messina to fetch the others. Italian soldiers are scattered everywhere about, most of them trying to find their way home and to survive meanwhile. (Upon the very day of the crossing, unbeknownst to Our Man, General Castellano and General Eisenhower had met in Syracuse to sign unconditional surrender documents -- why sign if the surrender is unconditional? -- and agree that the news will be kept secret until the Eighth of

September. The American meets a crowd of "prisoners" at one point, and a despairing British soldier in charge asks him how to handle their surrender. The prisoners know that they are supposed to be fed. That's one of the reasons they gave up, they claim. He says to the soldier, tell them to go down the mountain another mile to where a prisoner-of-war canteen and camp have been set up. (He recalls seeing it.) They object, saying that they are collapsing from fatigue and hunger. He exhorts them to the last mile and, with that air of distress, resignation and humor that is so Italian, they pick themselves up and amble toward the promised meal.

He recrosses the Straits to Sicily and arrives at the bombed house in Messina where he had left the others. He portrays for them the situation. Then the Italian surrender is announced. They listen to the radio stations broadcasting in English, Italian and German. What a mess! The Germans are furious at their betrayal by the Badoglio government and give every sign that they will take over Italy and every other place around the Mediterranean where Italian troops are standing. Within hours, the Lieutenant and Robbie are at the airport greeting an Italian bombing plane whose pilots are surrendering according to the plan. There are not many like them; the opposition to the Italians' surrendering is heavy; their actually joining the Allied forces is dangerous and unlikely. There is on the one hand the understandable fury of the Germans at being left to fight a desperate war alone, and on the other hand the equally understandable disgust and fatigue of the Italians at the disastrous course of events. They are less militaristic than ever, economically down and out, witnesses to their beautiful country's piecemeal destruction, and ashamed of their faith in the dictatorial figure of two decades, Il Duce, whose face still glowers at them on giant-sized posters pasted upon every wall and edifice. Nor are all of them pleased to change from cooperating with Nazi Germany to cooperating with the Allies. They have ten divisions in Russia, now trapped, more divisions perilously exposed in Yugoslavia, Greece, a score of islands, France, and of course in Italy itself.

The Lieutenant urges his comrades to take the route of the Canadian Division as far as it has reached, and then to proceed on to Bari where major Italian press and radio facilities require securing and

operation. They agree. This time the first team is made up of Robbie, Heycock, Laudando, and De Grazia. They have a tough trip. They overtake the Canadian spearhead and proceed ahead of it. The bridges are generally destroyed and at one point they have to retrace their route by many miles to find a smaller road that takes them through.

The territory is officially enemy-held but they see no Germans. "How does one know where they are?" one may well ask. You find the faces of people that seem to be most sympathetic and reliable, often female, because they are more disposed to help avoid bloodshed, also natives rather than Italian soldiers, because the natives of the mountains or of anywhere know who are passing and where they could possibly be going, and do a better job of telling what they are carrying, and how they are getting around than soldiers usually notice.

They finally drive down onto the plains of Basilicata, amidst the quaint neat *trulli*, the round white beehive cottages. There are many roads here and one has to stop and ask at every opportunity. One knows when there is an enemy about because the place is unusually quiet. It is like a Hollywood Western: the people disappear with a gunfight in the offing.

They enter Bari amazed at the completeness and normality of the City. As they drive along, they are noticed with rather more favor than astonishment. There are a number of Italian vehicles, civilian and military, on the streets. Italian soldiers are to be seen under arms. Asked questions, they respond helpfully; the experience is dreamlike. The team looks for the best hotel and finds it, Albergo Imperiale. It is new, undamaged, magnificent, looking upon the sparkling waters of the Adriatic. They are covered with dust, grimy, helmeted; their guns protrude; their radio is popping with static; the jeep is an eyesore against shiny civilian-type cars. They stomp in their boots over to the elegant reservations desk, already visualizing themselves immersed in gleaming bathtubs and dining at a splendid table, shaven, in clean uniforms. Not that they could be a match for the admirals and colonels and generals lolling about the lobby, dressed splendidly, like victors taking their leisure from a distant war. There is some curiosity about the newcomers.

More turn their heads, because Heycock is sputtering and

gasping in fury; his face is apoplectic red, and he is waving his tommy-gun around as if he intended to use it. In fact, he is saying so. The desk manager has just informed them that all the rooms are occupied, so sorry, Signori. The American does fear he will shoot up the place and tries to soothe him while trying to get across to the clerks that they had better get rid of a couple of admirals because they had every intention of spending the night in a comfortable suite.

At the critical moment, there floats upon the scene the familiar face of Sgt. Guetta, last seen in Tunis. All action freezes: as if a movie director had called "Cut!", while they exclaim surprise, greetings, and explanations. Guetta is here with Major Ian Greenlees, "good old boy," and Mr. Williamson of OSS, "don't know him," and another officer. They'd landed at Taranto with the First Airborne Brigade and are living not far away at a place less conspicuous.



Sgt. Guetta, Oran, North Africa.

"That's all very well, Guetta, but explain to these bloody fools here that we must be given rooms." "Sure I can," says Guetta, "the Director is my cousin." Two large rooms magically empty. Bellhops leap to carry the rolls and guns upstairs, and shortly they are precisely where they had hoped to be, in steaming bathtubs. After which they descend for cocktails in the fine barroom and go into the dining room to be served a dinner. Greenlees and Williamson join them and chuckle at having beaten them to Bari by way of the air. They had arrived two days earlier with the first reconnaissance platoon, and had discovered that the Germans were gone. The Italian government of Badoglio, a farce but for the symbolic presence of the King and Crown Prince, is in Brindisi. Harold Macmillan is soon to be there, maybe is there now. He is chief of British Mediterranean political policy. General Maxwell

Taylor also, the only American. They are all in a state of confusion. They are talking big about making major decisions, but events are beyond their grasp. The Italian armed forces should now be purged and supplied with equipment for battle on the Allied side; nothing is done, a battalion, a division, a corps -- something.

The Germans had been driven from Bari, following a brief battle, by a task force organized on the spur of the moment and led personally by an Italian general. The General had been shot, and proudly displayed to his new friend Signor Maggiore Greenlees his arm in a sling. At night there would still be occasional shooting here and there, but they slept well and had been busy and are "happy to see you" and "need you" and the rest of the advance Eighth Army team from Sicily as soon as possible.

Around the table now sat all the Allied forces there were in Bari and points North except for the aforesaid airborne platoon, which is commanded by a lieutenant. Greenlees is effectively the Commandant of the City, which is on the Front Line and in a State of War-- who with whom? -- without curfew, with electric lights, running water, orderly traffic, and ships riding at anchor.

Greenlees is admirably suited for majordomo of this mad scene. A rich literati. Handsomely tailored. Stocky, erect, large headed and curled to look like the bust of a Roman Emperor, crisp in speech and low of voice, elegant of manner, thoroughly conversant with Italy, longtime companion of Norman Douglas, who wrote superbly of his walks through Calabria and also the novel *South Wind*, about the Isle of Capri, where Greenlees also now possessed a villa. He should be in charge of the Italian surrender. He would squeeze out an effective political force for collaboration.



Ian Greenlees, Sir Edmund Howard (of Castle Howard, of “Brideshead” fame), Maj. Robertson.

Greenlees convinces the paratroopers to patrol and to drive around conspicuously in different formations, now wearing helmets, now berets, to give the impression of an occupation in force. As his comrades from Calabria arrived, so had a tank platoon from Taranto, and this helps greatly to give the population a sense of security and the beginnings of a new society. Then the propagandists had to let everyone believe, for they were asking all kinds of questions, that the Eighth Army was swarming northwards and eastward from Calabria like locusts.

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 2, 1943

Al darling -

Thursday

Gosh, the weather is lovely. Maxine and I are going to take a walk along the lake front at noon today. I think September is the loveliest month, in our climatic zone, anyway, don't you? It's warm but it's a lot crisper and the sky bluer than the summer months.

I had a long phone talk with Joan this morning to while away the long dull hours in this cage. My boss is away. I don't know whether it's worse having him around or standing the dullness of having no one at all in the office. He is one of these progressives who are also pricks, on the order of Al Lepawsky, Syd Hymen and T. Walter Johnson. Social climbers, I guess they are.

'Scuse my language, honey. I forgot that's a word that nice boys don't use.

Anyway, Joan is getting really starry-eyed and romantic over marriage, now that Tom is away. The way the two of us drool on over our respective husbands is enough to turn any normal man's stomach. I don't know if it's pregnancy or just absence that does it to us. At any rate, I'm quite convinced that being pregnant is one of the most amusing periods of a woman's life. It certainly has been a happy and animated one for me, despite such obvious causes for despair as your being away. You guys who think we gals go through nine months of hell for you and the baby are all wrong. I feel wonderful physically, despite an irritating concern over diet and the shape of one's ankles (if your ankles swell, it's very bad indeed, though I don't exactly know the reason yet). And of course, no longer oppressed by problems of career and status, and being constantly absorbed with daydreams over you and the baby, (i.e., Al and Jill and the baby walking, Al and Jill and the baby talking, Al and Jill and the baby taking a bath), my mental state is just wonderful. I thought you ought to know all this, if you haven't gathered it from my previous letters, or if you interpreted them by thinking, "The poor kid is keeping a stiff upper". Both Joan and I agree we want to spend all our time being pregnant after the war is over. Aside from all the other advantages, there's the obvious one of not having to mess around with the modus operandi of contraception. Of course, how I'll keep my figure and carry on this extensive program of reproduction is something only God can figure out.

Perhaps I'll change my mind after a while, when I get really big and can no longer walk and romp with Cooney, or when the baby comes and cries 24 hours a day. But I sort of think we are going to have a very healthy good-natured baby. I've been so lucky so far.

I guess all this is the reason why people think expectant mothers, and many mothers of young infants, smug. It is really hard to avoid being self-satisfied about the whole business. Especially when you have a baby as easily as we did. You just figure well, not everybody can have a baby, which is a little silly, I suppose, because people have them every day. But especially

when I'm with the career girls and the intellectual gals, I get feeling self-satisfied, because I know that (1) if they're not married, the one thing they want most is a husband and child and (2) if they are married, they envy my having a baby in the face of so many drawbacks, while they have to postpone it until after the war.

So you see, we were much luckier than we had ever dreamed of being. I called Juliet Hess yesterday, just to gas. She's having her baby at the end of this month and right now has hay fever, poor gal. Carl is still at the factory and bored, and John is still in Arkansas, and bored. His address is Lt. John Hess, 3602 Chaffee Drive, Fort Smith, Ark., in case you want to drop him a line. I know he still owes us a letter, but he'd probably be excited - and envious - to hear from you.

Last night I went over to the lake with Mary, Howard's wife. Howard was working but he left his car for her. She is very unhappy living with Aunt Lil. She's really a very queer girl, not at all the normal bleached blonde variety. I guess you find neurotics among all walks of life.

Everybody's well at home. We still don't know when the boys are coming back.

Whee, it's lunch time! All my love and kisses to you, honey --

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 2, 1943

Dearest love,

Letters came from you dated July 16, August 4th & 6th two evenings ago. They were all very nice & belied Mom's assertion that you are sassy, if not that you are fat. However, it does seem that 128 pounds is still very light. I think I could still toss you head over heels into Lago Michigano, given half the chance and the impulse. I seriously do not know my weight. I haven't weighed since America and don't really give a damn so long as

I manage to eat and exist sans maladie otherwise. I expect I'm about the same, though.

We are encamped as of two three or four days ago underneath some olive trees, alongside a vineyard and a hay field. There are several almond and apple trees around too. I spend my time getting food, reading some old London Times and other magazines, inspecting equipment, making repairs, and gadding about the country on odd jobs. I retire when it gets very dark, about 9:30 now, and get up about 6:30 or so. Everything is peaceful in anticipation of the next move. Yesterday I managed to get a few American rations from a friendly source some distance away but was almost ashamed to show them to my British officers & men, so superior are they to the British rations. You have no idea what dull, unappetizing cans are handed to the poor Eighth Army for consumption. If the soldiers of Camp Dix, Grant or Upton were faced with the things we eat each meal, they would rise in protest & march to the nearest PX. Congressional halls would resound with shocked speeches.

Happily, we are not without resources or money. I went out the other day and bought a turkey & a cock, both of which we shall consume tonight. We picked up a couple of rabbits, too, one day, but it looks as if Arthur is going to put his foot down and refuse to allow them into our flesh-pots. At present, therefore, there stand for roll call each morning, the officers, the men (a motley crew), a turkey, a cock, two rabbits, and a puppy plus, informally, the lizards of the land. Let us hope that Robbie, when he arrives this afternoon doesn't bring the civilian cook or an Italian prisoner. An MP detachment down the road has two dressed in British uniforms working about the place. When my British corporal Patterson started to order them about for rations, he was not a whit dismayed to find they understood no English. He believes fundamentally that everyone understands English, even tho they may not speak it. I suppose he has the proof in the pudding. Things get done.

Despite all liberality, I find myself with still some money from my June pay. I've not been paid for July and August yet. The pay

wouldn't be much, perhaps a \$100 for the two months. I think I'll send most of it home to you, when the opportunity arises, towards the purchase of a warm winter coat for yourself or whatever else you'd like.

I hope too to be able to send you more pictures soon. It all depends on a local APO and there isn't any American one about for many miles, if at all. I still haven't written Buzz to send you the records, but shall try to do so immediately. The nerve of the fellow. He knows very well that you have complete custody over everything I own.

Have you been receiving all those newspapers I've been sending you. I thought that they might interest Dad. The *Corriere* far outshone the *Palermo Sicilia Liberata* which Whitaker & Mimfee put out under more favorable conditions. (Miniffee was a former correspondent in Italy). I'm enclosing my final editorial with which I relinquished the job. As must be obvious, they keep me hopping & jumping - a diverting life I must admit, interesting enough and so busy as to not let me be utterly wretched for the want of you. But let me get a moment of air and peace and my mind shoots off into space like light, I fumble in my pockets for your last letters, I look about for a place to write you again, I think of something I ought to tell you (only to forget it promptly).

If war weren't so real, soldiers so homesick and the sun so hot, Sicily would be an enchanting place. It is quite varied with nooks and dells like famous haunts of mythology, towns high on mountain crests, and plains like Nebraska. The heat is no worse than that of Chicago during the summer, there is too much deforestation. It must have been an exquisite gem of a country before the woods were cut over many of the slopes. The people are more mixed than not. Blue eyes and blond hair are very common though in every sunny country blondness must be sought for to be perceived. I think I would be considered by them as the Germans consider the Nordic blonde, a "pure" type, that much of the population deviates from.

Under Fascism and to the Fascists, the Sicilians must have

been a horror. They just don't care a s-t for anybody. Probably their centuries of misrule by stronger armies have made them supremely skillful at avoiding any duty or obligation they don't agree with. And they agree with damn little. Amgot certainly has its hands full & we get some good laughs from their trials & tribulations.

Do you remember years ago when I explained Italian national psychology in three sentences at 55th and Ellis (while waiting impatiently for food, I think). Every word is borne out. Their impossible skepticism & realism is their most annoying and dangerous (to themselves) trait.

From the crescendoing clangor about the mess tent and the rising hum of conversation among the men, I gather dinner time is here. So I shall climb from beneath my mosquito netting and sit on my box at the improvised table of boards. If you could only be at the next box, life would not want any greater perfection.

But never fear. The Russians have them on the run in the East. All hell will shortly break loose from our side and one quiet evening soon, we shall sit on the same box and I'm not so sure I shall be able to eat or give a care, furthermore.

Best to the family.

All my love,

Al

P. S. Dearest:

My present address is:

PWB

c/o GSI

8th Army Hdqrs.

Central Mediterranean Forces

I wouldn't use it, however. The old one is more reliable under

rapidly changing conditions. GSI = Genl Staff Intelligence.

Love, Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 3, 1943 V-MAIL

My darling,

Friday

After all my griping, the news did turn good after all, with the announcement of the invasion of the mainland of Italy today. From the first reports, it looks to be the Eighth Army's show, and I hope and pray you are well, if you are with them. Whatever doubts and fears a new drive brings, at least it also brings the knowledge that you will be home all the more quickly. That wasn't very grammatical but you know what I mean.

I got a letter from Liz Evers and she also has good news -- that she's going to have a baby. She's not having such an easy time of it though, or rather, it's too easy. She started to bleed or something the first month, and so the doctor has made her stay in bed all this while. I guess she's going to have it a couple of months after ours. I'm awfully happy for her because she wanted one so much.

I got two V-mail from you dated August 14th. You're right about people helping if they were put in a position where they could. Of course, a lot of the civilians left are the bottom of the barrel so to speak -- like Janice's husband, and my present and former boss at Teletype. But the guys already in service who are not being used to their best advantage are probably dying to get into that enviable position.

I'm reading Athene Palace by Countess Waldeck, whoever she is. It's a very amusing picture of Rumania around the time of the Fall of France and after. Rumanian politicians are certainly a rare breed, according to her. It reminds me of the best line in Watch on the Rhine in which hero Paul Lukas looks sadly at the guy who's about to do him dirt and says, "I always claimed that being a Rumanian isn't a nationality; it's a profession." I took out a membership at the little rental library at Bway and Addison,

which is why I'm suddenly delving into the more popular letters.

It's a funny thing about this matter of Cooney's fertility. The girl who owns the dog that he was engaged to swears that Peggy is growing out of her harness, yet all the witnesses at that apparently unfortunate meeting could swear that nothing happened. I do hope it's true that she's with puppy, since any child of Cooney is a friend of mine. I took him down to the lake last night and you should see him chase the jack rabbits around Belmont Harbor. He sets up the most unearthly high-pitched yip and runs like hell after them. I don't think he got any, though.

Maybe I will see you this spring after all. The only thing is -- you're always too optimistic and if you say it's spring, it will probably be ten years from this winter. Gosh, that would be awful, though. But I'll love you then, too.

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 5, 1943

My Sweetheart -

Sunday nite

I'm writing this in the middle of listening to Mr. Anthony's program - Mom and I are sitting on the back porch - so if this letter hits a peculiar note of lugubriousness mixed with morality, you'll know it's not butterflies in my brain.

As a matter of fact, I am slightly redolent of lavender and old Ladies' Home Journals, having spent this Saturday night sorting out our mail to one another (by date, not by subject matter). Needless to say, it is a monumental job, & I have yet to cover Al to Jill, 1940-41. I can't even find the letters I wrote you in that period, & I dread the day when I do. I fear there are not that many rubber bands left to bind them, in this war-torn world.

Naturally, I couldn't read them all, or even a substantial portion of them. But the ones I did read from you were wonderful, & convince me that you're a master of letters. They also made me feel very sad that we've been apart so much; that seemed to be

the constant theme of sorrow thru them all. Mine to you were not exactly beautiful, & in romance couldn't compare to yours, but they were pretty funny in spots, I must admit modestly.

But it all left me in a sour mood of frustration, so about 11 o'clock I went for a walk with Cooney. It was one of those rank nights - a typical Chicago genre of night - damp, warm, malodorous, in which even the nightblooming flowers smell like corpses. I walked very fast all along the Drive to Irving Park & came back in a somewhat better mood. I find that when I'm in a poor humor, the best thing I can do is get tired.

Yesterday - Saturday - it was cloudy so Mom & I went shopping for bargains at Lincoln Ave. We got so loaded down with bargains we had to take a taxi home. Cooney came along & we even got him a little gem of a hair brush in Wieboddt's basement.

Today Mom & I took a picnic lunch to the rocks. The water was lovely & calm & I swam a lot. I think Mom had a good time. It's been a hard summer for her & Dad - all work & no Glen Park. Tomorrow the boys are coming home again & the rat race begins once more. Tomorrow's Labor Day & Doris & another girl & I are going on a picnic at Montrose. It seems hard to believe the summer is over already - it always goes so quickly. In less than 4 months now you'll be a Father (f-a-r-t-t-h-e-r). I'm pot-bellied, all right, but unless I eat too many heavy foods, I'm still quite nimble. But it's awful if I've had a big, that is, normal-for-the-DeG's dinner. I get kind of an interior claustrophobia, & feel oppressed all night, even in my dreams.

I don't know why I bore you with my alimentation, especially when the news is so good from everywhere. Mom said she heard over the radio that you were going to have Thanksgiving dinner in Rome.

I stopped work Friday & feel very happy, even to the point of ironing two dresses this evening. That so-and-so wanted me to come down Sat. A.M. but I told him coldly my family was going away for the week-end.

We all took naps after coming home from the Lake today - Mom, Cooney and I - & now I don't feel like going to bed tho it's late. Dad was playing at the Rodeo all day. Mom says she is going to miss me when I move & that she's going to have a fight with Dad so she can move in with me. Then she can go back & have a 3rd honeymoon (the second one took place after her Washington trip). I'll miss her a lot too but I'm looking forward to having my own place & making my own kind of mess. I hope it won't be lonely - after the baby comes, I'll be too busy to think of that, tho.

Gosh, the most awful storm is developing. I think I'll go hide under Cooney. Darling - I want you so much. Please stay healthy *[note on a water spot: rain, not tears]* & we'll have a marvelous time when you get back.

All my love

Jill

P.S. I've just emerged from under a blanket whence I dived when the thunder started really getting bad. It hailed! Can you imagine that!

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 6, 1943 V-MAIL

My Sweetheart,

I just finished another of my Good Works - in which I seem to be engaged so frantically these days - viz. sorting the letters you wrote me at Columbia. It seems amazing that we've been so breathtakingly, complexly and profoundly in love for so long, but there it is on paper. Of course - the first phase was more complex & I really think that the present stage is more profound, don't you?

Gosh, last night was a nightmare. I couldn't get to sleep so I turned on the light to read, & there was a bedbug. It was followed, during the next 8 hours, by a large family, with many generations represented. While this piqued my curiosity, I

naturally did not get much sleep and today, labor Day, felt a certain lassitude, which a constant cloud of Flit about my head did not help any. Various suggestions for this phenomenon have been offered - that they were brought in by the boys' friends, that I brought them home from the Circus, that they were in the walls for years, & waited for this damp September eventide to emerge and plague this loveless, husband-sick girl. A dirty trick, I calls it. Tomorrow we call the exterminator & Wednesday we'll all be dead, no doubt. But now I know hoe you felt in the field. Incidentally, I got your Air Mail of Aug. 10 - in which you'd just moved again. Your work certainly sounds exciting - what I can gather about it - so different from the original functions of the EMRBC. By now, I should guess, you're in Italy. I hope you've always near a place where you can swim. It must be divine in Mare Nostrum. Here it's getting cold. I went on a picnic today with Doris & it was really too cool to go in. The boys came home from Washington this morning. They had a fine time I guess, but again the silence is split asunder with the trumpet of H. James.

Darling, I'll love you always. And I miss you now so very much.

Always, Your Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 8, 1943

Darling -

The news today was the best yet - of Italy's surrender. Actually, nobody here much expected it, except Roosevelt, Churchill & similar characters in-the-know. But most of us had been pretty discouraged after Badoglio's initial rise to power & consequent failure to hand over Italy to us.

Maybe this will mean you'll be home this spring after all. The Russians took Stalino today, so I'm practically drunk with optimism. Anyway, I know you're safe for a while to come.

The president is going to talk tonight. There's a big bond drive going on, & he's speaking for that. Just now, Burns & Allen are

paving the way, & a rough road it is, too.

I'm knocking myself out trying to think of color schemes. My sister id rounding up the family to give us sheets & towels & stuff, & you have no idea how hard it is to make a choice among a variety of lush colors. Shall I settle for olive drab?

Yesterday, Mom & I went South & I signed the lease. The new address is 5436 Ridgewood Street, but I don't know exactly when I'll move in, as the family already moldering there is going to Tennessee &, not knowing when their transfer becomes effective, would like to stay on a week or so into October. While I'm being agreeable, it certainly louses up things for me. The amount of decorating at present rates that is included in my rent, incidentally, wouldn't refurbish a postage stamp. Oh woe, woe! Darling, when you come back, let's take Mike-the-baby & Cooney & go to the Rockies & live in a cabin like the Nichols' in General Grant National Park. I could cook very adequately on a wood stove, I'm sure, & you could read & fish all day. We'd store all our stuff here. And I'd never have to wear anything but blue jeans, or nothing at all Mom is at a shower for Katherine somebody or other who is marrying that boy Vic who went to h.s. with you. I made meat loaf & baked potatoes tonite for the boys & very good they were too. They are now engaged in a crap game with some friends. I would have gone to a movie but hate going alone. But I hate showers more, &, besides, wanted to write you. I saw the doctor today and he said I was fine, though growing too fast again. Oh woe again! I also went to the dentist, whither I was in an anguished state when the news from Italy came in.

Darling, let's pray it will be over soon.

All my love,

Jill

Jimmy Durante is on the radio now. I still think he's the funniest man alive.

Oh yes - I had a big day of shopping today. I went to V L & A,

which you may remember as being something only slightly more tony than Brook Bros, & there bought one (1) can of flea powder & (1) muzzle. Then I went to Ward's & looked for a pair of shoes for myself. I did end up with a not-too-bad-looking maternity dress from Mandel's. I'm sorry I told you that. Now you're depressed, aren't you?

Oh well, it will all come back. My figure, you, and Cooney's fleas, too.

Your loving

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 9, 1943

Dearest love Jill,

I'm really unhappy at not having written you in the last three days or so. It was the usual story of knocking about a great deal without benefit of postal service.

I got back from Calabria yesterday just in time to hear the big news of Italy's surrender. As I came riding into our camp clearing, Landando rushed at me with the words "Italy is surrendering!" Everyone was excited, though our means for expressing it are extremely limited. I was pretty tired after all the dashing about but enjoyed discussing the news and listening to the radio stations from all over Europe until midnight. As expected, the Germans had to announce the news, and at midnight they screamed out that they had been betrayed by the Badoglio government.

Most of all, this news means for us, darling, that it won't be long before we shall be together again, having a hell of a time with benefit of clergy. I thought many, many times of you while gadding about Italy, especially in the high reaches of the Calabrian mountains where the trees and bushes, and the vast spaces and silences are like those on the mountains we loved and enjoyed together in America. The roads up there are

crooked and narrow. In many places, sections have been dynamited & bridges blown. There is little activity against the enemy which is singularly elusive. On the heights, at 6000 feet, it becomes bitter cold, wet clouds beat about the vehicles, and one begins to think wistfully of the greatcoat he left in Algiers. The Canadians are up there and are putting any scrap of clothing they can find on their bodies. Some found a Fascist storehouse and were wearing fine Blackshirt uniforms beneath their khakis.

We took about an hour and a half to cross the Straits in the little invasion boat which can carry a tank, a truck or a squad of soldiers. From the heights on either side they look like black water beetles scuttling to & fro.

The Italians did not obstruct the landings in the slightest. In some places they came down to guide the landing troops through the mines. Here & there, groups of Italian soldiers can be seen trudging down the mountainside to the Prisoners of War camp. Three nights ago, a group wandered over to a building in Reggio where they wanted to report. A British soldier asked what to do with them. I told him to send them down the road to the POW camp (about a mile) but they were full of protestations. They had walked 64 kilometers & were ready to drop since they hadn't eaten in four days, they said. I told them they could get food at the POW camp but then they wanted to go to sleep on the ground right then & there. I finally said that you're infantry, and you can damn well walk another mile. They finally wandered into the dusk, with weary groans. The same thing happened in Sicily time after time. It's going to be very interesting now to watch for clashes between Germans & Italians. I don't think they'll surrender as readily to the Germans.

I wish I knew where I was going next, but I don't. There are several possibilities, all of them interesting. A number of PWbers are with the army that began to invade around Napoli this morning.

Vic led me to believe that they are now with Buzz in Washington, a sort of special invitation for a jamming session,

according to Vic. What madness pervades the DeGrazia household! and the people at home are supposed to promise us here a "return to sanity". I entrust you with the sacred mission of instilling in them a love for the arts and the nobler things, and you merely describe scenes of carnal orgy, of African jazz, nay, of physical atavism on Vic's part, and otherwise a general reversion to Nazi physical culture.

Do you know that I have received not a single picture from home yet in all these months. Priscilla ought to make another stab at bringing out your facial beauties. I don't think too highly of her last attempt. All those deemed worthy of the honor were much pleased by your photo taken last Thanksgiving in Texas & also with the one with little Joe. As a result, you have a number of well-wishers who are bent on getting me back to you in sound condition.

If you want me to write all & sundry, send me a detailed list of all friends, etc. with their addresses & I shall have a go at all of them. I'm much too lazy to get after the addresses by myself.

Your list of newly-acquired furniture sounds good. When are you going into the new apartment? If there are any particular objects to be had here, let me know. I may be able to send them home. Did you get the little ring I sent from Tunis?

We went swimming this morning, a fine bathe in beautifully clear water with a fine sparkling coast around us and the first of the tiny islands flashing on and off in the distant mist. Coming back, I plucked some blue and green grapes off the vines next to our camp - nice, isn't it, having a grape bowl everywhere. Often I pick tomatoes too, and lemons. All the joys of a war in a fruit orchard.

By the way, in re pictures, I think it's time Dad were made to pose for a photograph of some sort. Everyone's been silent on his doings. Has he been bearing up well under the summer's heat. Is he feeling pretty happy generally.

Whenever you're short of words, darling, or Vic & Ed don't feel like writing, send me along some domestic news clippings. They

work very well. I keep up with international events excellently, but have an unsatisfied craving for national, state & local news. Put the boys to work clipping the stuff.

I miss you ever so much, darling - with the fall coming on, especially. Cool winds always stir thoughts of you, flashing skirts, boulevards in shadow, the cold stately columns of the museums on Park Ave. & Boul. Mich. A cool breeze has the secret of life about it; the other day, when the trees started to bend and our clothing to whip about, everyone seemed to become electrified. They almost seemed to emerge from a stupor into high spirits, great laughter, and fine fellowship. We had a great time at our mess, and consumed much more wine than usual, and talked far beyond the normal period after supper until it was very dark and the cigarettes glowed brightly beneath the trees. Just voices playing about & shouts of ear-splitting laughter and the clink of glass, as Robbie reached for more wine. And so to bed.

Many full kisses, sweetheart.

Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 10, 1943

Darling,

Friday

Your welcome letter of August 17 came today, as well as four letters full of newspapers which fill me with an unwholesome frustration because I can't read them. You really do have a big job there. By now you must have left it and moved on to the next port of call. The news since Italy's surrender grows more startling and somewhat less optimistic every day. The Germans certainly are raising hell. Well, it's silly for me to discuss this with you, since by the time you read this, it's an old story and history has taken a new turn. I feel very foolish now, after my diatribe a couple of weeks ago in re our Italian policies.

Uncle Joe and his wife Ivy were over for dinner tonight and we had one of those old-fashioned dinners that, as I told Mom, we

haven't had since you stopped "going north" for dinners. There was pizza, spaghetti with sauce, lima beans en casserole, fried perch, beets en vinaigrette (I made those), spare ribs braised en tomato sauce, fruit and coffee. And freshly made bread. And I'm supposed to be on a diet! Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't eat the spaghetti or pizza, but the rest was enough to put the weight on fast. Uncle Joe is changing the color scheme of his club again - from black and tan to white. I guess Ivy's prejudices overruled the lure of gold.

Last night we had borscht, made by these twisted little hands. Very tasty. I guess that covers the food situation. Oh, we are now on ration book number three, and very cute they are, too. Instead of verbal designations on the stamps, they have little pictures of tanks, planes and guns, each one signifying a different rationed commodity, I guess. I'm not sure because we haven't started to use them yet. I was getting sick of my old book. It was so tattered and torn.

Last night Mom and I saw a rank double feature. They always are, and Mom is not such a one as to walk out in the middle of a picture. They were both about Washington - one with Jean Arthur and Joel McCrea, who is lovely to gaze upon, in a whimsical comedy of the housing situation. The other was too corny to mention or recall. Today I had a simply divine time. After a harrowing morning getting those touchy front teeth filled up at the dentist's (he had to give me novocaine to drill them the other morning, and I still barked in anguish), I went over to Michigan Avenue and had lunch at Rickett's with the Esquire girls. We are all going to a big (at least I hope it will be big - considering the lousy publicity it's had) meeting at the Stadium, featuring Henry Wallace and Orson Welles. I really do have a mad passion to hear Mr. Wallace, who is getting to be a regular little hero amongst us girls who have grown old and can't forget it with Mr. Roosevelt. Oh yes, the meeting is tomorrow night. Anyway, after lunch today I started wandering up and down the better part of Michigan Avenue, and saw a lot of pretty furniture I would never buy, and a shirt for me at Saks which I did buy. Then I ended up at that nice book store opposite Saks, lured

into it by some handsome old prints of fish (you know I have a made passion for fish in the pristine form). I ended up buying a print of a Matisse and the literary part of your Xmas present. The Matisse came under the heading of wedding present from me to me, since it was a sawbuck and the first picture I really ever bought that I liked wholeheartedly. It's impressionistic - mostly blue and pink and green - a dim nude figure and a bowl with fish in it, though you can't be sure. I don't know if you'll like it, but I have a wonderful feeling now after getting it - that I'm really developing some taste in painting and domestic art in general. At least now, I find myself liking some things very definitely, with no help or coaching from anybody else. In fact, my tastes are getting so definite I can't find any dishes in the whole damn city that I like, and that they have in stock in any practical quantity. You will probably come home to a house full of post-impressionists, and have to crawl into a sleeping bag with me at night, a la Robert Jordan.

In fact, I can't understand how I lived so long without developing some interest in art, though as I recall, in high school I occasionally went to art galleries. But it's only within the last six months or a year that I've taken really great pleasure in beautiful colors and forms. Can it be possible that one's sensory apparatus develops so late in life? Well, I didn't start getting hips until I was twenty. Maybe the love of color and form is all part of one's sexual development, and I still insist I developed late in that respect, despite all the late-adolescent post-office *[kissing?]*.

So now I am very happy, DeGrazia fashion, surrounded by a lot of books I want to read and pictures I want to look at. At present I'm reading Citizen Tom Paine, which is a damn good novel, the subject of which I need not tell you. I'm also going to read the potpourri I got for you, which means I'll be reading steadily between now and the middle of the month, when we have to start sending packages overseas. I also have to get our income tax declaration filled out by then, damn it. You know how confused I am about it. If you weren't in the Army it might be simpler (and more expensive, too), since you represent all kinds

of deductions, abatements and compensations in your present status.

You know, I'm taking all your books and clothes (with the exception of high school physics texts, which I think somebody ought to remove as being a fire hazard) with me, since I shall line the walls in books. You really don't have many civilian clothes, but I might as well hang them up, since there are three big closets in the new apartment, and I'm sick and tired of seeing your Mom's house such a mess. Between the stuff she compulsively keeps, like three enormous bags of rags in the basement, and the stuff she has to keep for us, the apartment looks like a rummage sale after they started rummaging.

I saw the doctor Wednesday and he said I was fine, or did I tell you that already?

Did you ever see Dad's sister in Licodea? Everybody is mad at you for not saying, because there were so many newspaper accounts at the time of boys seeing the old folks at home.

I wish to hell you were here so we could start living the Good Life together. I think one of my first steps on the road to a Good Life when you come back is to throw out this goddam typewriter. It hops and jumps and some day is going to ra'ar back and hit me in the eye. The only reason I put up with it at all is that I can write longer letters to you with it.

Cooney is winking at me in a most sinister fashion. I guess he must be sleeping, or doing it in his sleep, as he has just now started to run very fast, which looks pretty funny, considering he is lying down.

Well, sweetheart, I want to get this out in the ten o'clock mail. We all send our love to you, though of course, mine is a special love and really shouldn't be lumped with anybody else's in the whole world.

Your loving

wife Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 10, 1943

Dear sweetheart,

I wonder how you are this morning, darling. Are you ill-natured and funny? Would you object with horrid curses if I insisted on your company at the corner drugstore for breakfast? Would you remain in bed for hours with your eyes glued shut trying to imagine you were getting nourishing sleep? Would you finally allow the dog in bed to my great disgust? Undoubtedly you would, all of these barbarities. But do you think I would be slightly less unhappy for all of them? No, not a bit.

I'm sending you the first of several pictures in this envelope. One by one is safer for them.

Robbie & I must go out immediately to talk with several Italians who just flew in in a twin-motored bomber. But I don't feel you would object to my mentioning, even briefly, that I love you.

Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 12, 1943

Darling --

Sunday

This is one of those wonderful rainy Sundays in which one has nothing to do but write letters (to you) and read. In a way, this whole week hasn't exactly been outdoors weather, since the temp. has been bouncing around in the forties, but this is the first day I haven't had some kind of social, dental or financial obligations which takes me out of the house. Like yesterday, Cooney and I hiked up to Wilson Avenue and Sheridan Road to consult a battery of income tax experts located in a hotel up there. The line was long but went surprisingly fast -- until Cooney and my turn came. Apparently we were the first kin of a man in service that they had in the office, and you have no ideas what problems that presented. The man who advised me was awfully nice and it ended up with the government owing us nine dollars on our tax for this year. You see, the fact that we

paid up in full in March and that our last year's tax was greater than this year's (our income was larger since I was employed then, and now you, although your salary affords us more money than we had last year) have so many exemptions that our tax is smaller. Get it? So now I don't have to worry again til 1944.

Last night I went to that big Win-the-Peace rally at the Stadium with Marion and Jane Cates and some other babes. Senator Ball spoke, and he was good, and Wallace spoke, and he was good, and Paul Robeson sang, and he got the most applause of anybody, and the navy band played hot, and they were good, and Walter Huston recited a poem, and he was good, and Orson Welles made a fiery speech about American fascists, and he was good. In fact, everybody was good, but God, there were a lot of them. Actually, I think it's a shame that actors aren't politicians, since they seem so much smarter and certainly can talk a lot better. Furthermore, when they're liberal, they're really liberal, because they don't give a damn, like Welles. Wallace is, of course, a lovely man, but I think he's rather naive and he certainly needs some more lessons in rhetoric. He has some of Teddy Roosevelt's philosophy of economic society, which is commendable, but distinctly old-fashioned. Ball's a good man, incidentally. He's a Minnesota Republican, and unlike the rest of his party, isn't afraid to stand up with specific recommendations for a post-war plan. By god, the equivocation at the Republican party meeting at Mackinac Island last week would make Janus look like a two-year old. Those Republican bastards Gosh, darling, I wish you were here now. Mom is making apple pie and there are a couple of chickens in the oven, as well as baked potatoes. I really shouldn't tell you these things -- it must be hard as hell on your morale. As a matter of fact, my morale is not all it should be, since not even the pleasures of the palate appeal to me wholly with you away. I spend more and more time in revery, thinking of the things we used to do together and trying to imagine how you look and feel. As a matter of fact, it's not very hard to do. I can even remember very distinctly the way you smell, namely, good.

I try not to get sore at the world for taking away from us so much pleasure, and try to remember the compensation we have in your doing a goodly share -- at least more than you would have done at home -- in this struggle. Joan says we are going to end up with little lines of embitterment around the mouth, but I don't think so, since I'm not sore all the time.

Tell your brother in Washington to send me those Italian records or cough up with his share of the cost of them. He makes me sore, too.

I just washed my hair and look very funny indeed. This is a hulluva day to wash one's hair. It'll probably never dry.

The bambino is kicking like hell, and getting damn big, too. I hope he's a large baby, well, not too large for comfort, but big enough so that we can see him, anyway.

Dinner's ready. Wish you were here.

I love you so much, easily more than anything else in the world.

Your

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 14, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling --

Your letter, almost the longest one to date -- of August 28th came today, as well as a briefer one written earlier in the week. It was wonderful to hear from you, and to hear so much. First, let me set you a-right if you are a-wrong, for from your response to my letters, it sounded as if they had been rather quarrelous and that you were worried about me. Gosh, don't; I feel fine and always did, and my worst affliction is Vic's passion for swing.

I also got a letter from Mars yesterday. He said you had done a bang-up job on the paper, and that I had nothing to fear except your violent death at the hands of a jealous husband. At the

latter, I smiled knowingly. As a matter of fact, I get pretty swelled up at pieces of intelligence like the former one: I'm really convinced I've married, if not Superman (except for that arm-dislocating spill in the ravine at Blue Ridge you haven't started to fly yet) one of the most superior man of this world. I know that you can do anything you damn want to do, which is a nice thought, since I'd hate to be married to one of those occupational malcontents who come home and beat the baby after a hot day over the shipping clerks. Not that the day the time when you'll spend a hot day over anything is anywhere near; those damn Germans are certainly making it hard for us, you and I particularly.

If you are Superman, I am most certainly not Superwoman, since I just loused up a four-dollar lamp. It was wood, but not light enough for this mythical furniture ensemble of mine, so I started making with the paint remover and bleach before, à la House and Garden Magazine. So far, nothing has been removed or bleached, except the primary, secondary and tertiary epidermal layers of my hands. Oh well, I can always get new hands, but where are you going to get a new lamp these days? C'est la guerre, to quote that famous writer of light operettes, Victor Hugo. There was a story about a Lt. John Whitaker in tonight's News, saying he had landed in Italy and fought off a bunch of Germans practically single-handed, thereby saving the Fifth Army's beachhead at that point. Is that the same Whitaker that you know? This guy looked awfully young in the picture, and I should think the other one must be about forty, judging from his experiences abroad, which I gleaned from his book.

Yesterday Mom and I went downtown and got her a Christmas present from us, to wit, a good pair of shoes. I had gotten awfully sick of her slopping around in shoes that hurt her, and she would never take any money we gave her at various festivals for clothes for herself. She got some nice black suede ones. I also sent little Paul his first birthday present, a red corduroy jacket and hat, which he ought to look presentable in. Then we went to Joe (Uncle) and wife Ivy's for dinner. They live

around Kedzie and Madison in a small furnished apartment. After dinner, we went to inspect Joe's club which is being re-modeled from black to a greyish white, presumably the complexion of West Madison's master race. The grand opening was scheduled for later in the week, so we were all alone, which may or may not have been fortunate in the light of ensuing events, to wit, Joe set off the burglar alarm by mistake. The racket was awful, but do you think it brought a cop? You're right. We sat in his car for forty minutes, until the man from the burglar alarm company showed up, at Joe's behest, to turn it off. Meanwhile, cops from the Kegie station wafted by, but since they were all apparently either just going off duty or going on duty, we with our little bells tolling and they for whom they were tolling were worlds apart. I just adore the West Side, particularly on a dank Chicago day (the weather has been exceptionally dank lately, which ought to aid and comfort the enemy plenty). I hope I never go there anymore. Then we bought a pizza at a place Joe is acquainted with, and went to our place and ate it, and retired with an irritated stomach.

Cousin Joe Marsala, another rare bird, has been in town all summer practically, on leave from Hawaii. I cannot fathom the reason for this extended leave. It probably has something to do with some of his delinquencies in pre-Army days, although your mother gets very uppity when I suggest this.

The radio is on and the news from the Salerno area is depressing indeed. Italy is going to be a shamble before this war is over, since the Germans seem determined to make it a battleground for their own defense.

I don't see why I bore you with my traditionally inaccurate military-political prognostications. Better I tell you how much I love you and miss you! Keep yourself well for me, darling, a request that will doubtless give you, a man aware of his responsibilities, a violent case of schizophrenia. I have it too, in a way - I want you so much but -- As always, all my love -- Jill

Dearest love,

No letters from you for over a week, but I've been expecting some sort of delay sometime. Meanwhile, I've sent Dad a card, Mom a couple of pictures, yourself two pictures, a card and a letter or two, I believe. I picked up some postcards up in Catania some days ago and have sent them off to people like Paul, Daisy, Kerwin, Buzz, Hank and Evers. I felt very smug after all the virtuous activity.

The Italian situation is most difficult & intricate. No one knows quite where to jump. The Germans can't last very long, I believe, tho they fight ever so furiously. They can be outflanked from everywhere, they will suffer seriously from lack of supplies & communications, and their air power in Italy is nil almost, compared with ours. It's a funny war in some ways, people dashing everywhere, no one knowing who is where, landings here & there. One is consoled by the thought that the Germans wanted no part of it all.

I'm feeling in top form just now. For the past few days, I've done very little out of the ordinary job of living & seeing that the men don't go about beating each other's brains out or wrecking motor vehicles. Honestly, PWB seems to have collected the most undisciplined mob of officers & men to be found anywhere. They range from hillbillies to Hollywood prima donnas. They all go about "knifing" people, giving orders promiscuously, getting in everyone's way and talking very learnedly. Fortunately, our Eighth army group has made a coup which keeps the bulk of the frauds far away. We developed a good organization and I proceeded to beat some order into the motley assortment of soldiers that got into our hands somehow. They are finally to the point where they dissipate most of their wickedness in crap games which continue inside a truck far into the night. They are not at all dismayed by the fact that every night the money changes hands and there is no final victory. We've had no word from Algiers in quite a while.

I got hold of a book from Herz, when I saw him last called Tucker's People by Ira Wolfert. Not bad (because it talked about New York and old, familiar rackets) but not good, either. Now I

have in hand Wodehouse's *Indiscretions of Archibald* in Italian. But how I wish I had some good late periodical literature, some *New Republic* or *Nation*, *Time*, or the *New Yorker*. Needless to say, I haven't received any of the *New Yorkers* you wrote that you had sent. One battered copy of *Punch* plus our own innate stores are our only resources of humour. We manage to laugh like hell over nothing & the PWB, though. I've played a few games of chess in the last few days with Robbie, who carries a pocket-size chess set along with him & is forever searching old newspapers for chess problems.

I was perplexed when having my picture taken as to how to look, normal or "laughing boy". I remember your reproving me for not smiling in pictures, so I dutifully smiled. You must ask me if you want a picture showing in my expression that I appreciate fully the hardships & gravity of war. I like the Calif. picture with the helmet & wish you agreed - but no - "There's my Al, never a care in the world." I guess you're in the same boat. I'll never treat you as a mother. Not that I'm not understanding enough, but I draw a blank on appearing reverential & paternal. Maybe you don't want that either, so I'm on 100% safe ground.

We go swimming often in the ocean a few hundred yards away. The water is delicious, calm, crystal clear, with a steep beach that brings one into 10 feet of water within several yards of land. It is a pebble and sand beach, not pure sand. You will probably go into your favorite act of envious masculine protest when I tell you that we swim in the nude also. Tingling water all over - ah, joy! I know full well what this confession will bring. You will be taking me by the hand to all sorts of wild, wooded places for swimming in unashamed nakedness. And you know what disastrous effects such settings have on my libido.

The BBC news program just came on. Do you know that they always refer to the Russians as "Our allies" and play the *Internationale* frequently. Strange incidents to American ears.

I have several details to do now, darling. Take good care of yourself. With all my love, yours. Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

My Sweetheart --

Wednesday

I've just returned from a trip to the South Side, where I had lunch and spent the afternoon with Mac and a couple of gals, distinctly a generation after ours. The weather turned mild and damply fragrant, and it was very much like some of the September days we spent together, walking around that neighborhood the charms of which never fail to impress me. I don't know how I am going to stand such a constant dose of nostalgia when I move South. Everything about the place reminds me of you -- except the students, of course, who are mostly army people and in no wise resemble you when you used to trip around in your white beer jacket. Sitting around and drinking cokes with the club girls was fun too, though I can't say I knew any club girls when I was at school. We ended up at the U.T. about five, where the club girls, somewhat different from the ones in my day, had a couple of stiff ones with soda, while I had a coke.

Just about this time last year you were home on leave from OCS -- well, maybe it was a week earlier. I'll never forget that morning we went over to the lake about seven o'clock and I went swimming raw en pleine vue of some bored fishermen. Then we ate a lot and went to bed, and got up and ate a lot and leaped back into the double bed, which you used to swing out of the wall at the slightest provocation. I guess we were up so late the night before because we had a factional difference, which doesn't mar the beauty of this memory for me at all, since you're expected to fight the first year, and that next day was that much more fun for it.

Unlike most memories, which are painful because the experiences can never be re-lived, these contain a certain optimistic pleasure because there's no reason why we can't do these things again, and get as much, if not more, pleasure out of them. I say "more" because this separation will make our moments together in the future just that much more precious. Although, the way I feel now, I would gladly give up all these

Pollyanna-ish thoughts of future joys for one good kiss from you now.

I didn't get a chance to see Earl. However, I did run into Eric Rosenthal, whom you may remember. He is still disorganized, apparently 4-F, and still looking for a job. Those poor damn refugees. I wonder if men like him were as disorganized in Germany as they are here -- pre-Hitler Germany, I mean. I also bumped into Karl Hess in the downtown I.C. station, coming home. He looks overworked, which he undoubtedly is, but is the same self-less Karl, worrying mostly about Julie and John. John, he says, has had a lousy break down there, having a major who hates him and has blocked all promotions. The work is dull, too. All he has is Jane, which is something. Tony Maidment is a captain in some Tank Corps outfit - he graduated a class before John - and is company commander. So you can't blame John for being a bit sour about it all. I do feel sorry for him because it's so much a matter of breaks, and so little a matter of a man's inherent worth in a case like that.

Lorraine is here with her little girl, who is no longer very little. She's quite an aggressive type (pronounced teep).

Mom got a letter from Miriam today, which said, in part, that Jojo was eating spaghetti and meatballs, although the doctor has proscribed sauce, so far. She also said that Buss has heard, not from you but from a military source, that your outfit was supposed to follow the fighting units and not to go in with them, and therefore Mom was not to worry. The terrible fighting around Salerno has depressed us all, and I can't help being terribly selfishly grateful that you're not with the Fifth Army.

Darling, do you like the name Peter Joseph, instead of Paul Joseph, Paul Michael, Paul Stephen, or Michael Victor. It's my latest choice. I sort of like that name Peter, as it sounds nice either as Peter or Pete.

I ran into Bill Steinbrecher yesterday on Addison and he had just passed his bar exams and had been sworn in as a lawyer in Springfield. You'll probably hear from him about the same time

you get this letter, as he called up today, Mom said, to get your address and to ask me to the movies tomorrow night. It's amazing how one bumps into people all the time, by accident. I do like Bill's sense of humor; it's just his quality of bull-headedness and his devotion to the Adler-Hutch school that sets me against him at times. But generally speaking, he's good company, and gosh knows I've had a lot of bad, i.e., dull company in my day.

Sweetheart, I itch and must take a bath. Oh yes, I conquered the plague of bedbugs by spraying around the bed every night for a week. Now I just itch from the woolen underwear. I love the way you think that now that the weather is getting more typically windy-city-ish, your presence would be needed. Do you think I'm incapable of standing up against the blasts? If anything, I'd be good ballast for you now. But of course, your presence would be needed for other things, always.

All my love to you, dearest, forever.

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

Darling Jill,

We're moving this morning, so I got out of my hole a little early in order to write you a note, knowing that the next couple of days will be fairly difficult & busy. My alarm clock was the dawn fighter patrol which lives just down the road and comes over the camp at a hundred feet.

I am sorry to leave this bivouac. It was very well selected and we ate and slept well here. For one thing, I was able to get us some American rations which were a highly welcome change.

Last night was a somewhat moody night. I walked down to the beach and was struck there by something I had noticed on other occasions. When the moon is full and red and there is a long, rugged range jutting out to sea; when the waters are calm

with a faint lapping on the shore and a heavy, gloomy stillness in the distance, I get a sensation, undoubtedly stimulated by imaginary, literary accounts, that this feels like the end of the world were at hand, and everything were dying away into eternal stillness.

Later on, I had come back to camp and was sitting, smoking, with Brownie, when someone hit some dance music on the radio. Again I felt most unhappy that I couldn't be with you, even to do such a commonplace thing as dancing. I suddenly recalled, as I had not done in some time, what fun it was to dance with you and all the various times we danced.

Then I thought of how many millions of times I had kissed you and it seemed incredible that I could suddenly stop for a long time and not go completely mad. I suppose it is because those kisses, so delightful in themselves, were yet only a demonstration of a much more profound love which could carry on beneath all outward change. Still & all, the maddening thought that I cannot reach out to embrace you does produce at times a very melancholic mood, all the more bitter because you are so lovely to me and so much more desirable than anything in the world. I'll show you what I mean someday.

The dew is very heavy these nights and I've already draped my bedding over a bamboo pole, preparatory to rolling it up. The sun is beginning to show over the rushes to the East, the two little local boys who work in the kitchen are lighting the fire for tea, and Herbert, the little dog the Major picked up a couple of weeks ago, is snooping and rooting about. Whenever he is chased or frightened, he scurries into the canvas-covered hole where Arthur sleeps. He is an inveterate digger, and has effectively prevented Arthur's mosquito netting from having any effect by digging innumerable passages leading into the hole. He is terribly fat from overfeeding, especially with bully beef, and looks like a groundhog.

But I mustn't carry this letter into too many pages. I must get

ready to move, curse it. I love you, darling, and wish I were near enough to prove it.

AI

End of September (first of two parts) 1943 letters

