

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 17, 1943(A) V-MAIL

Al darling --

No word from you directly today, though Dad did get a couple more newspapers. I guess you haven't got much chance to write now that you're in the field -- not that you had much time while you were in the big city, or was it a big city. I can't say that scarcity makes your letters all the more precious to me, because even when they were coming in fours and fives, per weekum, I devoured them with the eagerness and joy of a man who has just found a three-inch steak. Don't take all of this as an implied reproof, because honestly and truly, I realize you do the best you can. The time is fast approaching for me to move, and while I look forward to being alone and/or with my friends, I sort of hate this business of buying furniture. I'm so young and indiscreet, or anyway, indiscreet, that I'm almost sure to get robbed mightily, and have already purchased a lamp (from Rosable) that I would give anything to see go up in a firebug's dream of glory. Anyway, I'm trying to achieve the objective of furnishing a place on nothing, so that we'll have no compunctions about throwing it away and going elsewhere after the war, and yet have a place that does not attract bedbugs and waterbugs. An impossible goal, I assure you. I wish to hell you were here to go over these minor problems with me, and relieve the tedium of it all with the traditional ways of relieving tedium.

As a matter of fact, you are very lucky to be where you are, on moving day anyway. I often wonder how you really feel about it all -- certainly I can guess from your letters, which are packed with information and impressions -- if I weren't such a poor guesser. I sort of think that life is not too bad for you, and that you're achieving many satisfactions, and that the one big horror of war is not having me (forgive this lack of modesty). I think that's the way I feel now, except that our positions aren't comparable. I've never really been in danger, of course, so I don't know how I'd feel if I were constantly confronted with it; right now, as I said, I feel that everything would be all right if you were with me, and so I naturally project my thoughts unto you.

Last night I went to the movies with Bill Steinbrecher. We saw a very good, delicately done, un-Hollywood picture -- The Constant Nymph -- a love story, you might gather. There were also a lot of good government films on the bill, like the Signal Corps' Report from the Aleutians. Now that's a grim place to be.

I do miss you terribly, and I say it not so much to break down your morale, because you must know by now I'm proud of what you're doing and hope you keep doing it until it's finished, but to assure you again and again of the place you have in another human being's life -- an enormous, immeasurable, unduplicate-able place, something like the relation of de Lawd to one of His chillun. And so you have all of my love.

Yours,

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 17, 1943(B) V-MAIL

Sweetheart --

I'm writing this on the heel of another v-mail I just composed for you, because tomorrow I retire, like Dr. Jekyll, into the kitchen, to bake and brew. God knows what the results will be; probably, like Dr. Jekyll, it will be I that will be transformed into a lower and more unattractive form of life, and not the conglomeration of nuts, fruits and etceteras that I had planned to turn into a palatable cake for you. Anyway, I do try and keep up my quota of mail per week to you, whatever that may be.

Social notes from all over: I am going to Carl and Julie Hess's for dinner tomorrow night, which should be fun, because Julie was always such an amusing girl, somewhat reminiscent of Betty Hutton, the girl who beats her brains out singing, don't you think? And guess what! (what a silly way to start a sentence in a letter, the reply to which won't be forthcoming for eight weeks). I got a letter from Glen Chang this morning, saying that they may well be coming to Chicago in a month, because Wah had talked to David Smart on the coast, and had gotten such a good offer

to do art work for Esquire here! I hope they do come, although Chicago's winter will be oppressive after California and Texas. And I wonder if they'll have any more trouble finding a place here than they did in California, because of Wah's race. I hope not.

Did you know George Steinbrecher was in Panama? Well, he is. Bill said he just wrote you, so you probably have picked up all that by now. The news from Salerno seems to be much better. I hope we'll clean those bastards out of there soon. Speaking of bastards, there was a man on the streetcar today, very drunk (the man, not the streetcar, though sometimes I wonder), who was yelling on the top of his lungs a long, repetitious harangue about how the Jews were ruining the world. He was sitting opposite me, and after about ten minutes of this, he presently rose and stood in front of me, addressing his remarks to me and the man sitting next to me. By that time I was in a rage, which was not abetted by the smell of his breath, so I said, "You'd better get away from us here," thoughtfully adding a continental touch, "You pig". So he said to me, "You may not like me but I like you, you're a Gentile." So I arose with great dignity, pushed him out of my way and said, "The hell I am, brother," and retreated to the back of the car, my face flaming red because actually I quail before such scenes and such demonstrations of my own, apparently powerful, emotions on the subject. It was all very horrid at the moment, but I laugh at myself for getting so mad at an ordinary stewbum now. But oh hell, I get so abysmally sick of this automatic, well-nigh universal, race prejudice, of which anti-semitism is only a special manifestation.

Well, I guess the whole trouble is that all the good people are in the armed forces and we who remain either are, or must consort with, the bottom of the barrel. If it's true, it's a nice thought, because when you guys come back, the country will be yours and you can push these jerks around like mad. With that gory thought, I leave you.

I love you, too. Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 18, 1943

Darling --

Sunday

Sunday night, and all is quiet, the boys being out on the devious business of young boys, and Mom and Dad having gone to the reception following the mating of Katherine Cassata and that boy named Vic. I am eating a pockmarked apple, very happy to be alone and undisturbed. I had the fortune to wake up this morning with a slight cold, my annual September one, so got out of the Cassata-Vic nuptials that way. I spent the morning walking the dog along the lake, soaking up the sun for therapeutic reasons, as I explained to Mom, and this afternoon went to bed with the Sunday papers, Cooney and the New Yorker, and promptly to sleep. A fine time I had, too.

Last night I had dinner and spent the evening talking to Julie and Carl. A wonderful dinner, steak, the first good one I've had since New York. Julie expects to give birth any minute now, and really doesn't look gross, for all that. I hope I'll be like that, and not a great tub of butter, like some of the women I've seen around here. Carl is working hard at his plant, which stamps out stuff for most of the major types of Army aircraft. They are keeping the same apartment they always had, but the management knocked a hole through the wall between the apartment and an adjacent one-room one, which will be the baby's quarters when it comes. I had a very nice quiet evening with them. Gosh knows neither of us gals are capable of having any other kind of evening right now. It must have been funny to see us sitting there, burgeoning with baby and contentment, because I guess both of us were cut-ups in the old days. If I recall, you yourself got rather soggy at the Hess's one or two evenings.

Not that I've ever had any thoughts on the matter, not being one to visualize myself dipping down into the Valley of the Shadow every time I skin my knee, but Julie tells me that Greenhill has never lost a patient in some twenty-odd years of practice. And that isn't just luck, I'm sure.

Yesterday's cooking was kind of a fiasco so I'd rather not talk

about that. Suffice to say, and this is the God's truth and to be taken as seriously as our marriage vows in front of Mr. Zabricky, Mom busted off a tooth, fortunately a false one, one the results. Cooney got involved in a football game of small boys today over at the park and tackled the ball carrier, to everyone's delight. If you'll cast your thoughts back to the affair of the green Finchley slacks, you'll know I'm not exaggerating.

I got a V-mail from you yesterday, in which you cadged a baby sheep off somebody. Mom says you should send us some next time. I've never eaten one. What's it like?

Carl gave me some short stories Johnny had written for me to read and criticize. I've read a couple so far, and they're not good and not bad, either. About Army life. He would do wonderfully well as a feature story writer, in the manner of H. Allen Smith, and should give up this desire to be another Thomas Wolfe.

Do you know I'm six months on the way now? You're probably not as sure of dates as I am. Also, you've been away for almost five months now, which is a damn long time for us. The time has passed rather quickly, and it will probably continue to do so, but I don't like this day-to-day yearning for you. I miss you in most everything I do.

I won't be sorry to go South, though I may change my mind after living alone for a while. Gosh knows, I change my mind about enough things, often enough. While I've been very happy with, and grateful to, your family for this summer -- I don't know what I would have done if I had had to plunge into the problems of making a home right away after you left -- I like privacy, too. Or rather, I get this feeling of a-world-I-never-made when I'm around other people's messes and problems for a constant period of time, and would like to go about making my own little mess and problems for a change. It's sort of Scylla and Charibdys - between living in a household not your own, and living alone, though not an intolerable situation, of course. I guess the only solution, ultimately, is for me to get married to some nice young man around my own age, preferably one who

is the father of my children, when the war is over.

Our child is getting increasingly active. Carl says both he and Julie will miss theirs when it hits the light of day, and I sort of have that feeling too. It's a burden, but a pleasant one, on your interior. Listening to Carl talk, I know you'd get a kick out of my delicate condition, so-called, if you were around. I'm sure you'd never feel a moment's trepidation about my well-being if you could see how it all worked, and how well I am and look.

I'd like to mail this before nine, when the Sunday mail goes out. So, all my love and many kisses to you, dearest one.

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 21, 1943

TUESDAY

Boo! You pretty, bright, scholarly, capable, worldly, comely, charming, sincere, able, beetling-browed, lean-linked, sharp-witted, kindly, beneficent, philanthropic, well beloved creature!
[This on a small piece of paper with a drawing of a woman stick figure, a baby stick figure, a soldier stick figure with a bottle, a ship, a camel and a plane]

[On another slip of paper, with this letter, a note from "Mom"]

Hello Babe: Thought you might like Sam Buonafede's address. A friend of mine (Josie Ferrara) gave it to me. Everyone is well. Love from all.

Mom

[On the back is the address.]

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 21, 1943 V-MAIL

Lovely one,

I'm only writing you this V-mail to hasten things. I'll write a longer accompanying one but I've been hither & yon for several days seeing no Americans to pass it on hand to hand & for that matter no organized British center of postal relaying. Rayworth Heycock is heading back & he'll carry them with him.

Contrariwise, I haven't seen a letter from you in three weeks or so. I think the situation may improve somewhat though. - I wish I could tell you all about the past few days in Italy. The country is in a most amazing state. I enjoyed thoroughly the "march" thru Calabria and found Catanzaro a very fine city, with scarcely a sign of an occupied city, nothing at all like Sicily. It was a grand relief. Then Ray and I drove through a country as striking as the windmill country of Holland, but filled instead with neat, white spired stone houses, with the rooms in cubicles. Now I am in a "Hotel Splendide" in a large city, the rooms of which are filled with Italian officers in smashing uniforms, a few British officers, some Italian civilians & myself. About a month from now I'll be able to sell the whole story. The whole thing is fantastic but I'm really having a very interesting time of it. The modernity of the hotel surpasses anything I've seen yet, and the difference between the Italian army as it is when the men are being herded along as prisoners during the campaign and as it looks here where it has been unmolested is remarkable.

I do wish I could have more letters from you, and I certainly wish that I could tell you I love you more often than can be put into a measly letter.

Yours,

Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 22, 1943

Sweetheart -

I'm writing this as an interlude in an exhausting session of

ironing, which is hardly the right approach to writing one's beloved. But, damn it, the ironing, a four-week's growth, must be done. And usually at night, after a day's shopping, I'm too tired to do it.

It seems incredible - the number of things one must get for an apartment & the time it takes. Part of the latter is the result of war shortages in materiel & personnel, the other part is due to my predisposition to gape at every article I see. Anyway, I got a bottle sterilizer - really just a big pot, like me - so now I feel very motherly indeed. I have yet to buy furniture & Maurie, the boy downstairs who trucks cookies about the city, is going to move me Sunday.

So I am encrusted with domesticity & the days rush by, much faster, I observe, than when I was working. Today I spent my last hour of agony in the dentist's chair - until after the baby comes, anyway. Most of the work that has to be done, & has been done, is merely replacing leaky old fillings with gold, but it's annoying & expensive, tho it adds materially to my value in this world, & is really quite painless. This afternoon I recovered from the trauma by walking Cooney over to the Lake. It was a lovely afternoon - sunny, warm & yet not sweltering. There were a couple of other lone females with dogs, & we chatted, like the baby carriage brigade, while our dogs played (the other 2 played, Cooney growled) under our fond glances. A nauseating scene.

I feel like bu[r]sting. [*with an arrow towards the "r": Vic's correction of my diction*]

I made beans & a very fancy, un-masculine fruit salad, for us tonite & we are all writhing in pain.

I got a letter from Diana today. She's in Utica, N.Y. Oliver is at a base hospital there. She didn't say what was wrong with him, tho. I also had lunch with Diety yesterday. She was, as usual, full of amusing tidbits of news. She'd been to NY & seen a lot of U. of C. people there, like M. Castleman. Now that school has started, the boys are home more & seem to be rediscovering the joys of literacy. Vic came home with an armload of books

last night, equally divided in subject matter between popular medical tracts like "Devils, Drugs & Doctors" (which I read & enjoyed at his age) & novels about trumpet players.

They are having a big war loan drive - the 3rd - & the New Yorker made the interesting offer of a cartoon suitable for framing for a \$50 bond (you can get it signed for \$100). I snapped up the bargain, naturally, & got a crumpled but funny George Price cartoon today. Next week the bond comes, I guess. I shall hang the cartoon in the kitchen when I move.

Back to the ironing board! Mom is at it now, tho her main chore of the evening is cooking zucchini, sauce, spaghetti & bread, just in case we have a hungry burglar during the night.

Encl. pl. find 1 (one) copy Key Kep's.

All my love, dear -

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 22, 1943

Dearest love,

I wrote you yesterday by V-mail and here I am again today, still ensconced in the grand hotel by the sea. It's called the Imperial Hotel and no one in the States knows it very well, since it was completed after the creation of "the New Roman Empire".

After leaving Calabria & Sicilia it is possible to give some few generalizations concerning them. Perhaps a comparison might interest you. The differences, however, shouldn't conceal profound cultural similarities, just as exist between the North & South in America.

The Silician is a tough customer to handle. The Calabrian is a tough customer. The Sicilian seems to have no pride, to be frequently servile especially amongst the peasantry, but in reality is the most anarchic representative of European civilization. The fine Italian hand is even more so the fine Sicilian hand. A common encounter illustrates very well one

trait. I was surrounded once when I stopped for information by numerous people. I asked a direction & then said nothing. Immediately twelve people began to recite the directions, all at once they all stopped. Two or three then said, "Now let one person explain." The mass shouted "Bravo," "Si", etc. and then every last man decided that he would be the one to instruct me. They have all mastered, also, the art of saying yes & then doing as they damn well please. Many [*amgots?*] were like clay in their hands as a result. When I picked the man that should have pleased them, inasmuch as he was very frank when he didn't like something, a very foolish British captain protested that the man was too pompous and arrogant, so incompetent to judge character was he even after many years of residence in Sicily & Italy. The story, you may be interested to know, has a happy ending.

The Calabrian is more uncivil, reserved & taciturn. Though Ciannelli, the movie star, may be a Sicilian, I would say that he is a good Calabrian type. Therefore, for governing small groups, I would place the Calabrians before the Sicilians, & for high politics and diplomacy the Sicilian. Nothing, however, should exclude the fact that both are capable of enduring great hardships & have too great a toleration for any social system that comes along save when it reaches to the personal level. I can say, with a certain amount of distant pride, that I knew the two most beautiful girls of Syracuse quite well. They were sisters, daughters of a good anti-Fascist professor, really delightful girls in their early twenties. The older, whom I thought more of, was about 25 or 26, I should say. They both spoke French well and were the darlings of several British Intelligence officers who were around for a while. The British male, you know, is a sucker for the Italian woman. That's why there is so much intermarriage between them. He is as restricted as she is and is overrun completely by her domineering ways. When the older one, Rosetta, first came to my office, she claimed Americans were "hard" because I was abrupt with her. I guess I was more frank with them, too, for one day I asked her about this terrible system of chaperonage. Knowing full well her answer, I said "Would you like to come with me to Naples,

Rome, etc.?" Her response was not a shocked "no" but a reasonable "no". She smiled & said her father wouldn't let her & that Sicilian customs forbade any such thing. But the fact that she had such a high level of rationality & yet chose to follow the mores is remarkable, I think, and is significant in understanding the combination of anarchism & conservatism in Sicily.

Now please don't send me another letter like the one after Algiers. I know you're interested in what women of other countries are like & that's why I'm writing you of them. If you feel so much as a twinge of jealousy, envy, malice or frustration, I shall never utter a word about the behavior of womankind, something one can't help but observe in passage. You are so incomparable in my mind & memories that anyone or anything else would be quite useless. How I wish you were with me now! We would have the most glorious, riotous time. You wouldn't get your beauty sleep, either - just enough to keep you alive & hardly enough food, because I'd be kissing you too often for that.

By the way, after running about the place (though compulsory) I decided that you ought to decide where we go after the war. You haven't had too easy a time of it these months & won't during the remaining months. If you think the cabin idea is good, it is fine by me.

All my love, darling, in cabin, apartment, olive grove and what not. Regards to the family.

Your Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 23, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling -

Thursday

I haven't been able to write as much as I've wanted to this past week or will for a few days to come because I've been fiendishly busy getting ready to move, & then worrying about when the hell I will move. I'm supposed to Sunday but still don't know when the other people's stuff will be out of the place. And then I'm

confronted with the problem of cleaning (the decorators won't do much) a very untidy place. And then buying out Sears Roebuck's bookcases. I've just packed what books I had out, & added to your books in cartons, they make a fantastic & impressive total. Our child will have a most favorable beginning in a home devoid of all distracting articles except books & bathinettes. I'm looking forward to moving, naturally. I always enjoy a change, tho I get neurotic over the immediate problems of packing & transportation. Actually, Mom & the boys will help a lot.

I haven't heard from you for a week, so I can guess that you are making a big move too. I wish I'd hear soon tho. I do so love your letters. Sorry to bore you with all this domestic stuff but it comes out of my ears in gushes.

All my love,

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 24, 1943(A)

My sweetheart --

Friday

Another day gone by of packing and fretting and fuming. AND eating too much because I've been in tempting reach of the kitchen all day. Right now I have to stay in the kitchen because it's the only warm room in the house. Last week the landlord's son painted the front steps in their entirety, and when night fell and the back stairs became too hazardous to venture forth on, we all walked up and down the still-damp front steps. As a result, this week, the landlord's son (the landlord is still away) refuses to stoke the furnace. So the house is cold. So I am cold. So I am damn sore at all this hoi polloi bickering and wish I were ensconced, at the moment, in a Park Avenue penthouse.

Anyway, I still hope to move this Sunday, although the place might not be clean enough to inhabit for a few days thereafter. But it will be warm. It's funny how depressed one can get from merely being cold and uncomfortable and sore-throatish. I think

that somebody once discovered, either empirically or via the armchair method, that if a man came into a house cold and tired and hungry and woman-less, and if you showed him a steak, a warm bed and a lovely woman, he'd still make a rush for the warm bed. Well, I want both -- the man and the warm bed, equally at this point. To hell with the steak. Of course, I'm writing this after dinner which may have something to do with my discrimination of the moment.

Sometimes I wonder how I've gotten along without you the past five months. When the smallest thing goes wrong, my thoughts turn towards you with the speed of light; usually they only turn to you with the speed of sound, or a P-38. I've always been so dependent on you, which I've freely admitted in the past as well as now, that it amazes me that I can take a breath without you. Of course, it hasn't been a bad kind of dependence, I don't think -- if anything, you occasionally would berate me for a sort of independence I manifested. I guess it was, and is, the kind of dependence that a woman should have on a man. I hope you have a sort of dependence on me, too -- to make your life just as attractive and pleasant as a woman can make a man's when you come back. I think that the pain of your absence has successfully cured me of any vestiges of a masculine protest that might have hung over after I knew I was enceinte. Still no mail from you, for a little over a week now. It really isn't such a long time, but I've been spoiled by your prodigious feats of letter-writing in the past. I know you have a good reason for not writing, and I just hope you're well and whole. I know this is silly and selfish, but tell me when you guess you'll be home. I won't really put any store by it; it will just be pleasant to hear, like Lenny and the story of the rabbits.

I got off your Christmas presents today, and also a couple of shirts you left behind and some New Yorkers, which I sent under the guise of a Christmas present to circumvent postal regulations. I hope you get them all in time. This will be a funny Christmas too -- funny is an ill-chosen word, I guess. The chances are that I'll spend it in the hospital, though the baby may change its mind and not come 'til New Year's Day, thereby

keeping Mama out of the local taverns the night before.

I got another letter from Liz Evers today, saying very little about her Condition, or about anything, for that matter. Bill is still on and off maneuvers. A Cousin Rose of mine also sent us the most divine blankets and comforters. I hate to use them til you come back, and will probably use your G.I. blanket instead.

Darling, I hope you're fine in every way and that we'll be together soon. Actually, these five months have gone by pretty fast, and perhaps the next five won't be so bad, either. Maybe it's just that my last days on Addison Street are rather drab.

Anyway, all my love to you, dearest.

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 24, 1943(B)

Darling --

You got the enclosed in the mail today. I don't understand a word of it. Do you?

They sent two, so I'll keep a copy of it for your files, so-called. You'd better plan to spend a year after your mustering out straightening out those so-called files. They're beyond this pretty head and puckered brow.

All my love to you, as always.

Jill

[no enclosure]

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 25, 1943

Darling -

Saturday

I'm finally going to move our stuff tomorrow, & let that be the end of that tedious subject. Needless to say, I'll be very happy to get it over with.

Still no letter from you today, but I had a talk with Mary Merrill (Diane's ex-roommate) over the phone today & we figured out that all the ships are being used for carrying personnel to Italy, & that you're too busy, anyway. Her husband, Charlie, is with the American Fifth in Italy. She hasn't heard from him for about 10 days either. (I should complain -- you probably haven't heard from me for months.)

Groucho Marx is on the radio & he's very funny, as usual. Remember when we used to listen to him Saturday nights?

Sometime I could gnash my teeth to the gumline (including the gold inlays) in impotent fury with your absence. And the thought of you & your duty doesn't even begin to quench my rage. Maybe after I move, I'll have enough to do to quell the fires. Meanwhile, I'm in a thoroughly nasty mood, sick of Addison Street, bored, wanting nobody's company except yours. Goddam it, tho - I'm so sick of taking crap from a lot of inconsequential people. I'd just like to see somebody I really love & respect for 1 minute, for a change - to wit - you.

I've no right to bend your ear with all this, except that I'm pretty sure that this letter will arrive with a batch of others in a far happier vein. And you alone can understand the frustrations of people like us - who don't exactly spread ourselves in affections & therefore find it doubly hard to live in a world without the one we've given our heart to.

My love to you, dearest one,

Jill

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 27, 1943

Darling,

Monday

Well, I'm moved - at least your 10 cartons of books which will be the sole adornment of our little home. Personnel is next: Tuesday (tomorrow) I go down to join Rose (remember her) in a strenuous bout of cleaning up what the decorators did not do today. Then Wednesday, the full complement of personnel

arrives - namely, Cooney. Today I stayed North & bought some bookcases which I'll have to varnish some day, I guess. Of course, none of this stuff I buy comes for several weeks after I buy it, so I'll be living pretty close to Mother Earth these next few weeks. Fortunately there's an in-a-door bed in the living room, which Cooney & I will share. Anyway, the boys & Maurie downstairs moved me yesterday with a dispatch that was a credit to their brains & brawn. I don't know how they ever loaded that small wagon with the astounding assortment of objects we own. It took them quite a while to figure out the combination, I know that. I took the P. C. down because there wasn't enough room in the truck for me & Mike.

Gosh I'm getting fat. I baked an apple pie tonight - my first. Mom lay on the couch & shouted instructions at me. It's pretty good but I don't think I could do as well unsupervised. I'm getting fat because a) we are going to have a helluva big baby, b) I eat too damn much. See pitchers we took yesterday.

I can't say that I wish you were here now because I know it wouldn't be much fun for you to live amidst all this domestic confusion. I don't mind it so much, if only because I know this is what I have to do. But you'd go insane. It's really even worse than moving from L. A. to Washington, D.C. But I do wish I'd hear from you soon. Curse the mails, the shipping, the enemy. Incidentally, I saw a marvelous newsreel last night of a Sicilian Fascist about to be led off to jail & begging for mercy in front of some of your boys. He couldn't have been better if he'd been hired by M.G.M. He looked like a Borgese, without Borgese's charm - an ugly inverted pear of a man, snivelling, gesticulating, toad-faced. I believe the tribunal was wholly British, tho one of the men looked French or Italian & very much like you.

Mom got a letter from Uncle Charlie today. He's in North Africa, or was, September 5th, the date it was sent. Mom did the wash today, & while I was helping to hang it, Cooney got into the yard with an enormous stick, about six feet long & very dirty, & started to wave it around in great good spirits. Mom did the wash again, poor gal! Sometime I think Mr. Scratch is in possession of that dog's soul.

Darling, I have to bed down now. All my love & a million kisses.

Jill

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 28, 1943

Dear Love,

I am annoyed and dismayed no end for not having written you in the last three or four days. My present workday consists of getting up at 8 and going to sleep at 1 a.m. I may or may not get an hour in the afternoon. It is all because there is a hell of a lot to do in Italy today, especially in this area. And the work is the usual combinations of frustrations and small victories with the old power game of politics played to the utmost by all sorts of groups. The area here is for all practical purposes an independent Italy with people in power striving to bend our ears mightily. The Psychological Warfare boys (a misnomer) came into the city with a handful of airborne troops. The Italians didn't quite know what the score was, and were still handicapped by the presence in high posts of Fascists of a very dangerous type. There had been some bloody street fighting after which the Germans left the town.

The situation is not yet corrected entirely, to put it mildly. Everyone is watching everyone else. But I think that greater correctives will be applied soon. As I read over the last lines, I realize how meaningless they must be for you. I know perfectly well what I want to say but can't write a single straight sentence.

The real pause that refreshes came the other day when Col. MacFarlane (British) brought me four letters, two from you of the 12 and 19 August and one from Ed of the 18 and one from Col. Mace of the 531st. Yours were superb. My eyes have red rings around them from peering through the gloom of your photograph. I can barely make out something lovely enough to make my heart flutter, in a very nice beach costume. One thing that stuck me immediately was my instant recognition of your waist. There could be only one body in the world like that and

that is yours. Strange and difficult to describe but I felt the whole of you all at once. Your correspondent hopes to renew a closer acquaintance soon. But I must ask, Where is the baby? No sign anywhere.

Then in your next letter you speak about a job and a room. You are leading the semi-compleat life -- I can see our life together will consist at first of talking to each other about mutual experiences until we collapse exhausted into each other's arms. I warn you tho that I exhaust easily. Your work environs sound very inviting, though your reference to them was undoubtedly preceded by another letter in which you described the usual feelings which accompany you so delightfully in pursuit of your career. But won't you ever stop working? My sweet young thing, I am in no position to execute a couvade.

The apartment sounds just the thing. It will be just like living in a foxhole again. But like "Teddy Roosevelt" in Arsenic and Old Lace, I shall undoubtedly be addicted to awakening with a start in the morning gloom, grabbing my helmet and dashing out into the street, yelling "Charge!" I bought a fine watch three days ago. It's a Swiss Riga for which I paid 35 dollars and is full of devilish complications. It is called a chronometrio or something, is "anti-magnétique" whatever that means, and can act as a stopwatch while we cook our eggs, time our kisses or run for a movie. It can also serve to keep you amused while waiting for me to get dressed; it is too big for you to wear, however, save around your ankle. Now I have two watches with me.

The reason I have to stay up at night is to put the paper to bed. It is a morning paper, damn it. The reason I have to get up so early is partly habit, partly breakfast and partly something to do.

Ed's letter describing the encounter with the drunk was amusing tho far from your polished humour. It is a great joy to me that they can absorb a little of your personality even if I can't. The more they deny your influence, the more they are influenced by you, I'm sure.

Reyworth Heycock's baby boy swung a scythe at itself, he has just learned from England, and loped off a finger. He just

mentioned it and that's all, though he must have liked to blow off a little more steam on it.

Arthur Galsworthy just dropped in so I'll stop now. I'll write a long letter tomorrow, so help me. As always, I think you are the most lovely girl in the world.

Al

JILL TO AL SEPTEMBER 29, 1943

Darling,

Wednesday

At last a letter from you, dated September 14. I got that silly picture, too & Eddie that postcard of the barges. It was wonderful hearing from you, although, in my present state of homelessness, I could have done with a little more sentiment & a little less humour. You'd better start thinking of me as a mother - a great, sentimental cowlike creature, for that is what I'll be. Right now, though, the rigors of moving have me whittled down to the bone.

Yesterday I went South early in the morning. The goddam decorators still hadn't touched the place, but managed to arrive simultaneously with me, Rose & a notice to pay \$5 or the gas would be turned off. I didn't have a cent, & had to sell myself to a currency exchange in order to get some cash. Then I spent a harrowing two hours buying cleaning stuff for Rose to work on, or with. The decorator left early because his hands hurt him.

[the next couple of lines are typed, and commented upon: "Your old typewrite. It doesn't work"]

Rose left early because her children needed her and there I was left in the midst of shambles. I continued doggedly & irrelevantly to paint the kitchen cupboards red until it was time to go to dinner at Maxine's, where I spent the night.

I arose early & sleepless this morning, rushed downtown, got my hair cut, saw the doctor (I'm fine, God knows why), had lunch with Mac, went to Field's, Stevens, Mandels, Carson's, the

Fair, Goldblatt's, Sears & Ward's, in the order named, bought little & that takes 2 mos. to deliver (these parlous times), then I dashed off to Julie Hess's, dropped off some stories of John's I had read, had a coke, admired her apartment, tore home to 1235 to find your letters which I didn't have time to read for 2 hours, because, in rapid succession, there entered your happy little home (1) an FBI man inquiring about Buss (who is apparently seeking greener fields in the gov't); (2) a boy from the Belmont Booster; (3) Vice; (4) the boy from the fruit man; (5) Ed; (6) a friend of my family's, that Frenchman Johnny Schmid, on his way to duty in the S. Pacific, who was in Chicago for an hour & took a cab from the station to spend 5 minutes with me; (7) the lady downstairs -- well, that's about all. Tomorrow morning bright & early I return to the red paint & the shambles - books in cartons all over the place, no place to sit, lie down, eat. I feel utterly homeless. I don't know what ever made me think we had any furniture. We have enough to fill up a small bathroom, & that I had a job shaking loose from your mother, who is under the impression, common among DeG's, that anything that is left at her house is hers, except books, which she doesn't read. I guess that was bitchy, but I'm a little tired of doing battle single-handed, and so are you, I suppose, in your own field.

I would gladly send you any magazines you want, but you know that the postal regulations are such that I must bring your letter to the P.O. specifically asking for them.

Johnny Schmid is an interesting case of a man who wanted to get in service. He's in his middle or late 30's & 4-F. He turned heaven & earth to enlist, & finally was taken in a most bastard service, apparently. He's in Navy tans, but under the Army, no insignia of rank & service but is the Master (that's the word) of a small landing vessel & gets about the pay of a major, he says.

Julie tells me Johnny Hess finally got the breaks. Somebody was looking at his records & suddenly discovered what a jewel he was, so they took him out from under that bastard CO he had, made him post intelligence officer, with a 1st & the promise of a captaincy in 6 mos.

Well, this is all the paper I can find. More later in the week.

Love, Jill.

P.S. Am enclosing some air mails, in case you lack stamps.

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 29, 1943

Darling Jill,

Probably my greatest fear in this war is that the absence of letters for days would make you feel for a moment neglected in my thoughts. I feel even worse when, as happened today, I received not one but five letters from you (August 3, 9, 10, 15 and 17) and there is no way to convey to you immediately the raptures. As you say, the pain of absence grows no less with time, and your letters snap me back into a past with you which is as delightful as it is despairingly just out of reach. Your words convey, as much as your waist in that photograph, the tones for which I think every nerve-end I possess is fitted. And even without your compliment to me of like substance, I can say of you that you are a wonderful wife. Never, from the first days I sought out your company, did I doubt that you were far and away sensible enough to be a mother too. I shall give you a wonderful present for making a soldier in the field happy when I return. I haven't thought of what it will be yet.

I also received Dad's letter with the picture of the boys and one from Ann with a fine picture of the little Paul. Ed looks more handsome all the time, and in the optimistic fashion in which Dad always writes letters, he gives both boys an A in deportment. That is hard to believe. At any rate, from the picture alone I'd almost feel proud of them if I didn't know them for the shameless scoundrels that they are. They are, in fact, fit members of the motley horde I have under me now, consisting of American, British, and Italian soldiers. They all incline towards wearing each other's uniforms, so that it is sometimes hard to tell who is who. Two puppies have recently been added to the third of the Majors which was in the picture I sent you.

They manage to f--- up all attempts at organization of movement very well.

Southern Italy is full of strange characters these days. Greeks, Yugoslavs, escaped prisoners, Italian soldiers sneaking down from the North and an Italian government which you have to pinch yourself to believe, all add to the general confusion. I think we are the first if not the only unit to draw Italian army rations, because we weren't near enough to our own depot to do anything about it.

Little Paul has improved much and deserves to be called a beautiful baby now, I think. However, they still photograph him in the nude which can't help but embarrass him profoundly.

It's late and I must get down to the newspaper plant. Adio, darling. I'll write you again tomorrow.

Al

AL TO JILL SEPTEMBER 30, 1943

Dear sweetheart,

Nothing particularly striking happened today. If I were to chart the rise and fall of my emotional level, the high points would be hearing about the sacking and burning of Naples and the planned sacking of Rome, the waiter who kept us waiting, the Adriatic as it looked from my window when the fishing boats were out this morning and as it looked this evening when dark greys and pinks hit it from the clouds, and the invariable sentimental surge when I felt the cool, strange autumn breeze and thought of us together walking some dusk-bathed street somewhere.

The low points would be getting to bed in the morning and getting up, the distaste I have for dealing with social problems when I'm not God-Almighty which sometimes strikes me, and the ride over to the press in the blackout when only occasional patrols are to be met in the street, and I'd rather be in bed anyway.

All my field gear is thrown in a corner of the room for the moment. It is a funny life, this, one moment working under the roughest of conditions and the next moment slaving away in most civilized surroundings. Perforce, little of what happens can be repeated accurately. For example, I know very well what is happening in the government of Italy today, the characters, their desires, the real conditions of life over a large part of the country, the pulsing popular movements. I know exactly what the armies are doing (or as much as G2 knows) but that would be outdated for you and is likewise not to be divulged.

You'll get the whole story someday over a hamburger and an ice-cream soda, if you'll stop talking of and to the dog long enough to listen (the ugly, little, black b--d, and you can tell him I said so). I am indefinably prejudiced against dogs at the moment because Arthur's Sicilian ??hound slicked up my floor this morning.

Your letters are so full of news about friends, I noticed. They ring a nice tone, sort of a "life goes on" business. It is rather hard to keep a friend the way I go. I've made many friends but on a "compulsory" sort of basis. Though I don't doubt but that practically all of them will be also peacetime friends. But that careless informal dropping in doesn't work in a war zone. People move because they have to. One doesn't see a friend unless he is compelled to go in his direction. Thus, I may have to fly shortly to a place where I'll meet Martin but would otherwise not see him at all. I much prefer the peacetime system where we used to decide when and if we saw fit to visit someone, and whether we proposed to share each other's company with others, thence to be united later on alone and be so much more in love for having allowed strangers to intrude on a sacred companionship. This evening my fine friend Charlton has shown up on the scene. He is a unique Englishman. He avowedly sets out to copy America in his life, and he is really very bright about it. I think he should make a good publisher some day with all his "American" ideas. He wrote a sparkling article for his paper one day "describing" the capture of Karkov in roof-to-roof fighting by an "eyewitness" observer. All he had

was a line saying that Karkov had been captured.

Good night, darling. With all my love,

Al

THE Lieutenant is brought an Italian corporal-driver-interpreter by Corporal Laudando along with a new Fiat, so that he can take in hand the Italian press. The Italian is quite handy but is arrested by the Italian Military Police for being absent without leave and disappears. Laudando finds out that he has been brought back by the Italian MP's to his outfit, and with another Italian soldier as guide, he takes the Lieutenant to the rescue. They drive into a large post, that looks rather more attractive than Camp Tyson, and pluck the man from his barracks. The scene gathers a crowd, of course, that has nothing better to do. They follow the jeep to the entrance, where stands the Commanding General and his Staff, more curious than angry-looking. The Lieutenant thinks that he had better pay his respects to authority, so he has the jeep pause in front of the General, salutes him, explains that he has been using the man, thank you very much, salutes again, and Laudando lets out the clutch and takes off.

He is supposed to supervise a large daily newspaper, the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, which now prints news of the King's doings. It refers to him as the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia and Albania. It is not an important article, but gives umbrage to Our Hero who has to show his authority and teach them about the new order of affairs: these unlawful conquests are not to be given any semblance of recognition. He catches some on the newsstands and the rest undistributed and orders them all destroyed, snatching several out of the very hands of the startled purchasers.

He hastens to remove his gear from the Albergo Imperiale, for the British Royal Navy is wetting its shorts to set up a sweet nesting spa in Bari. Of course, the port grows busy right away, and if they would spend as much time guarding the rapidly growing fleet in the harbor as in feathering their nest, they might imagine a German attack, for the Germans still have airplanes to the north and east, and on the

Second of December send in thirty of their precious few bombers to loose their loads upon the glut of ships, sinking no less than 19 of them, beginning with two ammunition vessels. One blasted ship carries mustard gas, that burns hundreds. But Our Man had been long gone from this awesome carnage.

Moved out of the Imperiale, he joins the rest of the enlarged team at Albergo Maggiore, a perfectly comfortable hotel in the center of the city. His seniors, the Brits, are, as indicated earlier, woman-shy, and Greenlees, in his flippant fey way, foists upon him the task of clearing the rooms of the hotel for occupancy by their growing numbers. Evidently a simple order passed along by way of the Italian concierge is not working. He discovers why, after giving the sternest of instructions to the Manager: a knock on his door introduces a beautiful young woman, smiling, call her Letitia: "*Mio caro Tenente*, I understand your problem, but surely we can arrange for a small room for myself, and even yourself, when you need it." No, no, *mi dispiace*, we need all the rooms. Many officers are coming, you understand. She understands: all the more reason for her keeping a little room. *Impossibile*, he has to say, suppressing all note of regret. She leaves. Another knock, another entrance, tears this time, beautiful again. And then the loud-voiced indignant one: accusations of cruelty, hard-heartedness, *ma*, more kindly, there must be a way out, no? No. He sneaks past them as he skulks down the stairs. They are packing, talking to each other in despair. He is pleased at his own fortitude in the face of the invitations and imprecations, but annoyed at having the dirty job inflicted upon him; they are, after all, humans, whores, so what, beautiful, courtesans, mistresses, prostitutes, still he isn't evicting disabled old ladies, no, but this is harder, no, they would do extremely well, if only they knew, in the coming days and months, getting rid of their money-poor Italian majors and soliciting the wave of bill-wagging British and Americans. So he breaks up as handsome a circle of ladies as was to be found on the Continent, despite every reason they could give for remaining, including connections with high officials, friendships with rich provisioners, promises from members of the police force, and, of course, free trips around the world whenever he could tear himself away from his work.

Hardly is this scene enacted when he is given the message from

Greenlees by the Front Desk Manager to the effect that the Committee of Italian Liberation from Fascism is soon to arrive and that the Lieutenant should carry on with them until his possible late arrival. And here they come, a dignified, formally attired half-dozen gentlemen, several of advanced age, looking forward to the occasion, believing Greenlees, the Lieutenant, their Team, to hold all directives needed to extricate Italy from its predicament.

He explains the delay; they are nonetheless pleased. A Signor Giulio di Giovinazzo, who seems to be their chairman, presents him with a remarkable photograph: it is of their predecessors of another war, World War I, in Bari, and sitting in the middle of the group is Major Fiorello La Guardia, now His Honor, Mayor of New York, as big as life. A couple of faces are the same, after a quarter of a century of Fascism. It is an excellent preface to the meeting to come and he begins to hear what they have been up to, wondering also whether he should not invite them into the salon. These are the people to bring democracy to Italy, not the monarchical idiots of Brindisi.

He cannot attend to what they are saying very well and is growing uneasy, because a half-dozen men in Allied battledress, without insignia, reporters probably, have burst into the small reception area near them and are berating the Desk Manager, who, his apologies and genius failing him, finally turns upon the Lieutenant and the men at the same time, saying "you will have to speak to the Lieutenant, please." They are indignant and pounce upon the Lieutenant now, who is generally irritated from his unusual labors of the day and is feeling an acute embarrassment before his Liberation Committee; they are shouting and demanding rooms from him, telling him that these people, embracing the Committee, to whom he is giving his undeserved attention, have damned well lost the bloody war and have no rights to be respected, and ought to be thrown out the door -- taking off generally upon a series of insults directed at them, not listening to him at all saying that the Hotel has been requisitioned by the Allied military and is restricted, and they would have to go elsewhere, but exclaiming at all the woes they suffered in fighting their way here from Africa, with an insistence upon the rights of journalists over the rights of the bloody Italians. In exasperation, glancing uneasily at his listening Committee and essaying a bit of psychological

warfare, he exclaims that "If these people had really wanted to fight, you might still be there," whereupon the burly self-chosen ringleader, shouts "You're a disgrace to your uniform, that's what you are," which is not a well-conceived description of a young man who is coming to think of himself as a one-man army and therefore becomes excessively inflamed, impelling him to shove, push and send the man sprawling and to escort brusquely the lot of them into the street, declaring "Get out, get out!" then turning to the Committee and continuing as if nothing had happened -- I am very sorry, but you know, *si capisce*, this is the way we behave -- and soon Ian Greenlees comes marching in and takes over the proceedings in the salon, His Excellency of Bluff.

Actually, had they spoken to the Lieutenant politely, he would have tried to help them out, or if they had expressed themselves indignantly to him, he would have still borne with them and tried to guide them to accommodations, even though as correspondents they were supposed to be taken care of by a special staff of the Army Headquarters and should not have to go blundering about like a gang of hooligans. But they had misinterpreted the situation that they came upon, and he had lost his temper, already high-strung from the day's events.

In any event he had put the incident out of mind, but that evening, as they sit at dinner, an American correspondent comes in, sweet as pie, asks for him, and is invited to sit with them, which he does, and then lets the cat out of the bag, saying that he going to tell this story that has been told him -- of an officer knocking down worthy members of the press, abusing them, denying them a place to rest their combat-worn heads, siding with the Italian enemy -- to the people back home and "the public will not like it." To which the Lieutenant angrily retorts, with more learning than prudence, "As Jay Gould once said, the public be damned," and this, too, says the correspondent, will not go down well with the people back home. The dinner party breaks up, the correspondent persists, until Heycock finally orders him out of the building.

The incident was not to be, as the Lieutenant believed, just another brawl. The reporter does file the story and the army censor scotches it. The Lieutenant's friends are not without informants, who

report that the ringleader and the others deny that they were drunk, as the Lieutenant asserted -- which would imply that they act that way normally? -- but do not want to press the matter, except that this American correspondent, whose name, they say, is McCarthy, wanted to take it up. Further, it develops that he is a correspondent who is regarded as most troublesome, an isolationist and Anglophobe, here masquerading as a friend, and, in fact, at a Press Conference in Washington, President Roosevelt took time out to present him with a German Iron Cross Medal for damage done to the American war effort and civilian morale. This, too, nonplusses the reporters, for the downed man is British and the American Lieutenant is backed solidly by his British fellow officers.

Still Army Headquarters likes to sacrifice lieutenants who make waves and he was lucky to be the only American around, hence doubly useful. Major Greenlees is delighted over the incident; he chuckles over it and recounts it periodically. He is quite fond of the Committee of Liberation and the American. In later years, while Director of the British Institute in Florence, he would embellish the story to match his whetted appetite for getting at journalists, until he had Alfred knocking the gang of them about; quite untrue it was, though a slight domino effect could be discerned once they had stumbled into reverse.

Only two other Americans of appropriate rank are in Bari at the moment and Army Headquarters puts it upon them to deal with the case. One is his new acquaintance Williamson from Delaware's Eastern Shore, who ranks high in OSS, though a civilian. The second is General Maxwell Taylor, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, who is looking into the local situation after returning from Rome. (He had landed secretly there to determine whether his outfit could take over Rome when the Italians would announce their surrender, but had been shown by the Italians that the Germans were reacting too fast and had already moved in two divisions. It was a dumb idea anyway because Rome would have suffered grave damage, and local Italian forces were poorly equipped, there as everywhere.) Williamson knows Taylor and introduces the Lieutenant to him in a chance encounter as they walk along the street. The Lieutenant gives him a Class AA salute, and Williamson says jocularly "Well, this doesn't look like a man who would go knocking people down, does he

General?" (Actually, among paratroopers, bulk is not highly esteemed for physical prowess, so the remark probably is off-target with the Number One paratrooper.)

Taylor is not as friendly as Williamson, but at any rate they strike a deal later on, whereby both the correspondent and the officer would return to Algiers; the Lieutenant is assured by his friends that he will only touch base in Algiers and they will get him back to the Italian Front soon, in the West where the next big scene is to occur.

We may suppose that the British correspondent principally concerned, last heard of relaxing at a bar in Algiers, also found his way back later on. The idea is that the Army could protect itself by pointing to some action, rather than a cover-up, in case the issue of the brawl were raised again. The Lieutenant considers the matter and decides that he would indeed prefer Naples and points North, where Greenlees and the rest of the team will soon be entrenching themselves.

He takes no chances on missing Naples, however, and decides to head over there right now, so cuts orders to Foggia and Naples and drives with Cpl. Laudando over the Apennine mountains by way of the town of Benevento. These fall to the Allies around the same time, as October begins. Laudando goes along with him, through the mountains and the town of Benevento. They encounter one destroyed bridge after another and it is tiresome, because they can get across gullies and stream beds only by searching for passage up and down the river banks and over fields and through woodlands. He is determined to avoid the land mines that he is sure lurk beneath the stream bed and the rubble alongside the destroyed bridges.

After one particularly trying detour, when they sank in mud far from the road and had to persuade farmers to help extricate the jeep, he tells Laudando that at the next blown passage they'll stay close to the bridge where they'd be sure not to get stuck again, and, as might be expected, the next little blown bridge is only a couple of hundred yards down the road at a bend. As they crawl up to it watching carefully the road for signs of planting, they are taken aback by an explosion; truck parts, tires, seats, and duffle bags go flying into the air from the channel bed.

They grasp quickly that it is not the Germans, but an American convoy, proceeding through no-man's land from the opposite direction, a Company of Combat Engineers at that, which had gotten to the bridge just ahead of them, and had let the half-ton lead vehicle carelessly go down upon the stream bed. Had they been Germans, of course, the amazed pair would be in trouble. So they laugh in relief at their own escape and at the crazy sight, despite that something bad has occurred, and the Commander, walking up to them, does reproach them, saying, "You know, there is nothing funny about this. Men have been hurt!" But he cannot be too nasty; their jeep has Army HQ markings and he would not want it known how his men had plunged into a probable minefield. The Lieutenant apologizes. They give the Engineers information on the terrain that lies ahead for them and wind around the mountains to Napoli.

There a German-planted delayed charge in the central Postoffice, Telegraph, and Telephone Building has just exploded, killing and injuring many civilians, and anti-German sentiment rises high, bouncing directly to America now via the press corps that has come in with the liberating troops; it relishes to tell of innocent women and children being hurt by rotten Nazis. The 5th Army combat propaganda nucleus has settled into a billet, and they check in and spend a day and a half exchanging information around town before heading back to Bari.

One of their men, Fred Faas, has been shot in the ass, a painful wound, taking long to heal. It happened at Salerno while he was stooping outside a doorway to take a shit. Charlton, too, has arrived via the route of the 8th Army from Salerno and is publishing the *Desert Rat News* again, so their departure is delayed by a bottle of Scotch.

They encounter a pretty little girl, Maria, daughter of a Neapolitan Viscount, who he knows is beyond his barbaric reach but who admires the Lieutenant and wonders why he doesn't pet her like he pets her cat. Laudando says he wonders, too. But the Lieutenant has all he can do to write letters home, what with all this dashing about.

The Brits of Bari find Laudando indispensable, and the Lieutenant realizes that he cannot hold him. But they will appreciate the Corporal's strengths and tolerate his foibles. He is a rough and

cheerful guy, who conducts himself with rare prescience and gentility toward officers, who is reliable in reporting on the state of the masses, and a genius at living off the country. He does get into trouble later on, but the incident can wait the telling.

They head East by North to return to Bari and strike en route upon the great air base of Foggia, that has been found untenable by the Germans, wrecked by countless air raids. The two men arrive at pitch-black night in a downpour, the field is empty, a British patrol huddled in one corner of a building. Our Man does not wish to be blown up by a mine and would rather sleep in the rain, so makes up a tent of sorts beneath a piece of wreckage. In the morning they go through the city. It is in poor shape as well. He assembles a cursory intelligence report for the Naples and Bari people. Then it is back to Bari and on to North Africa.



“Sad Sack,” the beloved cartoon from the “Stars & Stripes.”

End of September 1943 letters



