

Dear Dordo: The World War II Letters of Dorothy
and John D. MacDonald

Dear Dordo: The World War
II Letters of Dorothy and
John D. MacDonald

*COMPILED AND EDITED BY FLORENCE
M. TURCOTTE, CAL BRANCHE, AND
NOLA BRANCHE*

LIBRARYPRESS@UF
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

Copyright © 2021 Florence M. Turcotte, Cal Branche, Nola Branche, and Maynard MacDonald

Copyright to the letters of John and Dorothy MacDonald and photographs is retained by Maynard MacDonald and the MacDonald family for the remainder of the term of copyright.

It is permissible to link to, download, and distribute copies of this work providing 1) no changes are made to the original text; 2) copying is for noncommercial, educational purposes only; 3) attribution is given to John and Dorothy MacDonald and to the volume editors; and 4) this copyright notice is retained in any copies.

This book was produced with Pressbooks (<https://pressbooks.com>) and rendered with Prince.

Contents

<u>Title Page</u>	vii
<u>Publication Information</u>	viii
<u>Copyright</u>	x
<u>Note by Maynard MacDonald</u>	xi
<u>Preface by Florence M. Turcotte</u>	xii
<u>Introduction by Cal Branche</u>	1
<u>Content Advisory</u>	30
1. <u>Chapter 1 - Early Days - Spring/Summer 1943, Letters 1-40</u>	31
2. <u>Chapter 2 - Between India and Poland - Autumn 1943, Letters 41-73</u>	91
3. <u>Chapter 3 - Between India and Utica - Winter 1943, Letters 74-87</u> <u>Letters 74-87</u>	154
4. <u>Chapter 4 - Carrying On - Winter 1944, Letters 88-109</u> <u>Letters 88-109</u>	179
5. <u>Chapter 5 - Being Apart - Spring/Summer 1944, Letters 110-145</u>	212
6. <u>Chapter 6 - Piseco Lake, OSS, and Ceylon - Autumn/Winter 1944, Letters 146-162</u>	290
7. <u>Chapter 7 - Homeward Bound - Winter/Spring 1945, Letters 163-175</u>	323
<u>Persons Most Often Mentioned in the Letters</u>	347

*Dear Dordo: The World War II Letters of
Dorothy and John D. MacDonald*

Compiled and Edited by Florence M. Turcotte,
Cal Branche, and Nola Branche

Published by the LibraryPress@UF

Editors: Chelsea Johnston and Laurie Taylor

Cover Design: Tracy MacKay-Ratliff

<https://ufl.pb.unizin.org/deardordo/>

Publication Information



535 Library West • PO Box 117000 • Gainesville, FL
32611-7000

librarypress.domains.uflib.ufl.edu • librarypress@uflib.ufl.edu

Names: MacDonald, John D., author. | MacDonald, Dorothy, author. | Turcotte, Florence M., editor. | Branche, Cal, editor. | Branche, Nola, editor. | George A. Smathers Libraries, publisher.

Title: *Dear Dordo: the World War II letters of Dorothy and John D. MacDonald* / compiled and edited by Florence M. Turcotte, Cal Branche, and Nola Branche.

Description: Gainesville, FL : LibraryPress@UF, 2021 | Summary: John D. MacDonald was a prolific writer, authoring 78 books that have sold more than 70 million copies. Many of his novels published in the 1950's were set in Florida, as were several of his 450 short stories and the well-known Travis McGee series. *Dear Dordo: The World War II Letters of Dorothy and John D. MacDonald* presents a collection of 175 letters that were exchanged between John and his wife Dorothy (known as "Dordo") between May 1943 and June 1945. These letters provide a fascinating and honest account of life during World War II from a husband in the U.S. Army and a wife on the home front. Through John and Dorothy's correspondence, readers will learn about John's experiences in the U.S. Army (based

first in India, and then, as a commander of an OSS unit, in Ceylon) and Dorothy's experiences as a supportive spouse back home in Utica, New York. The letters animate how John and Dorothy dealt with the personal concerns and themes of their lives, separately and as a married couple, and demonstrate the difficulties of wartime separation of husbands and wives. The letters also tell the story of a wife's efforts on behalf of her husband abroad that launched a heralded literary career that established a new twist on the hard-boiled detective novel genre of American writing. The letters compiled in *Dear Dordo* are framed by a preface, an introduction, editorial notes, and a glossary. These materials provide unique and essential context to the content of the letters. Fans and scholars alike will find much to consider and analyze in this collection.

Identifiers: ISBN 9781944455132 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: MacDonald, John D. (John Dann),
1916-1986--Correspondence. | World War,
1939-1945--Correspondence. | Married people--Correspondence. |
Authors--Correspondence.

Classification: LCC PS3563.A28 Z48

Copyright

Copyright © 2021 Florence Turcotte, Cal Branche, and Nola Branche. Note copyright © 2021 by Maynard MacDonald.

Copyright to the letters of John and Dorothy MacDonald and photographs is retained by Maynard MacDonald and the MacDonald family for the remainder of the term of copyright. Used by permission.

It is permissible to link to, download, and distribute copies of this work providing 1) no changes are made to the original text; 2) copying is for noncommercial, educational purposes only; 3) attribution is given to John and Dorothy MacDonald and to the volume editors; and 4) this copyright notice is retained in any copies.

Note by Maynard MacDonald

You must wonder how it is that I could resist reading it all until now; two reasons. One is anticipated pain. I miss them very much; indeed, love them more than ever. When things happen: be they insights, or news which is bizarre, or funny; usually my first thought is for the joy of telling them. Reading the letters is something that I always assumed would make me heartsore and miserable. And the other thing is Privacy. I felt that it was intrusive for me to read my parent's intimate correspondence with each other. It felt as though it would be a violation – by me – nobody else. Everybody else can read them, fine. Everybody else is not their child. There is a biblical injunction, “Look not upon thy father's nakedness,” which seemed to apply somehow, and of course did not when I read all of Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo without feeling like an intruder.

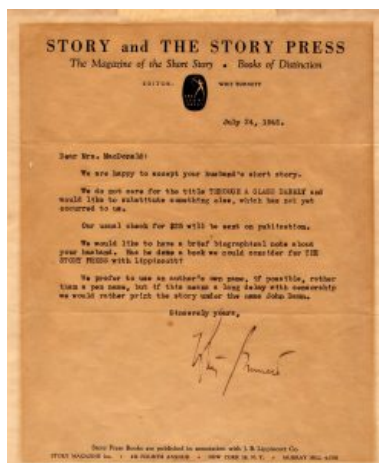
In May, something unexpected flipped in my head, or my heart. It was as if I had suddenly been given permission, and that this was to read the letters in a way that would be a far deeper experience than ordinary reading. So, I started on the journey and discovered that one can be heartsore, and yet, simultaneously happy. And I discovered that one can eavesdrop lovingly, respectfully, and that the result would be more love and more respect. I am glad I waited. Now that I am three times older than my parents were when they wrote these letters, age has become a lens of privileged understanding and experience through which I can watch these two marvelous young people unfolding.

August 2018

Preface by Florence M. Turcotte

The letters in this volume represent a portion of the correspondence located in the John D. MacDonald Collection, George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The content reflects John D. MacDonald's India-Ceylon experience in the U.S. Army in World War II, as well as the difficulties of wartime separation of husbands and wives. They reveal how John and his wife Dorothy (aka Dordo) dealt with the personal concerns and themes of their lives, separately and as a married couple. The originals of the letters herein are contained in four archival document cases in the collection. The entire collection is comprised of 199 boxes of material, with the personal and business correspondence series alone totaling nearly 80 boxes.

MacDonald was a prodigious letter writer, and this wartime correspondence with Dorothy reflects a commitment to written communication for both of them. It should be noted, however, that Dorothy wrote twice as many letters as John during the war. She let her frustration about that be known in her letters. War correspondence between those at home and those in the service suffered from irregular deliveries. It was not unusual for Dorothy to receive three of four letters from John at once, as did John from Dorothy. One unfortunate result was that misunderstandings could easily take place, as will be seen in the letters.



Story and the Story Press, letter from July 24, 1945

During the War, John D. MacDonald was initially stationed in Rochester, NY. His commanding officer saw potential in the young lieutenant and decided to take John with him to the India-China-Burma Theatre in 1943. MacDonald served as Ordnance Officer for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the pre-cursor of the CIA. His duties did not include intelligence gathering, however, and were primarily of

a bureaucratic nature. In February 1944 he sent a short story to Dorothy, who without his knowledge, submitted it to *Story* magazine where it was bought for \$25.00.

He arrived home after his discharge from military service in 1945, and when Dorothy showed him the check and told him he was a published author, he decided to become a full-time writer. He had always thought that writers were born with that talent; being published changed his mind.

That first short story, "Interlude in India," appeared in *Story* magazine in the July/August 1946 issue. He continued selling his short stories to magazines, and in 1950 published his first novel, *The Brass Cupcake*. By the time of his death on Dec. 28, 1986 he had written nearly 450 short stories, and published 78 books. MacDonald described his work habits in this way:

"How do I work? I get up at about eight-thirty and have juice and coffee and an hour of reading and then plant seat on chair. Take a one hour lunch break and then back to it. Knock off at three or four or five or six, depending on how

well it went. . . I have worked on and off for a year on a book, and I have done one in seven days.”

MacDonald is best known for his color-coded suspense novels (*The Deep Blue Goodbye*, *Free Fall in Crimson*, *Nightmare in Pink*, *The Girl in the Plain Brown Wrapper*) featuring the resourceful “salvage expert” Travis McGee. Early on, MacDonald and his publisher established this color-based system in order that readers might more easily remember the novels and whether or not they had read them.

McGee lives on a houseboat called “The Busted Flush” (he won it in a poker game), located in slip F-18 at the Bahia Mar Marina in Fort Lauderdale. McGee undertakes to recover for its rightful owner money or property of which the owner has been wrongfully deprived and has no other hope of recovering, taking half its value as his fee. The money is used to continue his lifestyle of sun, sailing, fishing and partying with beautiful women. The McGee character became beloved by those who wished to emulate him.

MacDonald fans sometimes conflated the McGee legend with the real John D. MacDonald. The author was not averse to cocktail parties and good times, but maintained a workman-like approach to writing. As a founding member of the Liars Club in Sarasota, he met with MacKinlay Kantor, Richard Glendinning and other writers every Friday afternoon to share ideas and unwind. MacDonald’s pipe, his cigarette lighter, and his trench coat became part of his signature look.



John D. MacDonald

MacDonald was a very self-disciplined and extremely productive writer. His biography, written by Hugh Merrill in 2000 is titled *The Red-hot Typewriter* for good reason. He was given the Grandmaster Award in 1972 by the Mystery Writers of America; The American Book Award (1980); the Ben Franklin Award (1955); and was Guest of Honor at the Mystery Writers of America Annual Bouchercon in 1983. Numerous other distinctions, including Honorary Doctorates from Hobart and William Smith College and the University of South Florida were awarded to him also.

The John D. MacDonald Collection was partially processed by Special Collections staff at UF upon its original deposit by the author in the 1970s. Additional processing occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s after the Collection was formally gifted to the Smathers Libraries upon MacDonald's death in 1986. In 2008-2009, the Collection was totally re-housed and rearranged to improve access.

During that 2-year period, when the materials were being sorted and described in more detail, we made an astounding discovery. We found a shoe box covered in contact paper and marked "overseas letters" in Dorothy's handwriting, and crammed full of air-mail envelopes.



As it turns out, this was a collection of the back and forth correspondence between MacDonald and his wife Dorothy when

he was working for the OSS in the India-China-Burma theatre during WWII. Each of these more than 400 letters were opened, flattened and put in an individual acid-free folder. They were then sorted in chronological order and filled four manuscript boxes just by themselves.

Fellow editors Cal and Nola Branche undertook the task of transcribing the letters into text documents. In many instances they needed to use a magnifying glass to decipher Dorothy's handwriting, especially when she used V-Mail and had to make use of every possible millimeter of space for writing.

During the initial period of sorting the letters, we of course paused to read some. As we did so, we found some references to marital troubles during 1943 and some of the letters back and forth were very intense. At this point, we realized that this story needed to be told. Not only did we have the juxtaposition of the Theatre of War/Home front perspectives, but we pieced together the story of how John, distracted and bored with army bureaucracy, the stifling heat and loneliness, may have become enamored of the British departmental secretary assigned to his unit.

Although we never found a confessional letter, his wife Dorothy, with an almost uncanny insight, noticed immediately when he began to sign his letters with just a "J" and not "love, John". She refused to play the role of the understanding and forgiving doormat spouse who overlooked her husband's transgressions. The letters back and forth got really interesting, as she showed a great deal of insight into her husband's personality and habits. A fair amount of guilt was heaped on for good measure. He had to grovel a bit in order to get back into her good graces. Their situation came to exemplify the struggles of countless other couples separated during wartime, trying to keep their families together.

The letters are presented in chronological order. The abbreviations ALS (autograph letter signed) and TLS (typed letter signed) or V-mail, telegram, etc. help give the reader a sense of the physical characteristics of the original message. Undated letters were inferred using the postmark on the envelope. John and

Dorothy agreed early on to number their letters, and that could be another indicator of possible missing letters, or simply skipped numbers. Some numbers were used more than once, and we attempted through the content or postmark to determine which came first. Of course, both of them pointed out at various times that they received entire bundles of letters at one time, going for extended periods without receiving any letters. Dorothy seemed to be particularly distressed when this occurred. Obvious typographical and spelling errors in the letters have been silently corrected, and curious uses of certain terms or expressions are left as is. The published letters are numbered sequentially in this volume by the editors, and are not the MacDonald's numbers.

As editors, we had to make some decisions about what to include and what not to include in the volume. There were more than 400 letters, and we decided to publish only 175 of them. Letters were omitted in some cases because of irrelevant material or pedestrian content. Because the letters were numbered sequentially, there is evidence that some letters were lost in transit, destroyed, or otherwise may not have made it to the archive. We have provided editorial notes when necessary and a glossary at the end to help identify a person referenced or to provide background information.

Every attempt has been made to minimize confusing distractions from the central narrative of the communication between husband and wife in order to let their voices be heard by the reader. We hope that you enjoy this glimpse into the lives of this extraordinary couple in extraordinary circumstances, realizing that similar scenarios played themselves out in the lives of Americans at home and abroad during World War II.

Introduction by Cal Branche

In May 1943, John D. MacDonald was assigned to duty in a New York State Military headquarters in preparation for leaving for India as an Ordnance Officer. He arrived in India in the fall of 1943. Dorothy rented an apartment at 8860 Main Street in Poland, N.Y. from April to late November 1943, when she moved to 1109 State Street in Utica. She lived there until John came back from overseas.

In order to understand references in their letters more fully, it is necessary to provide some important family background on John and Dorothy. For John D. MacDonald, the impact of his father's history on his own life proved to be very significant. But no less important was the influence of her parents' history on Dorothy's life.



Dorothy Prentiss MacDonald at age 31 in 1943.



John D. MacDonald at age 27 in 1943.

Brief Background of John and Dorothy

In the case of John one can find evidence of father Eugene's work habits which had a great impact on John's later life as a writer. Much of Eugene's success with several companies over 40 years, in particular Savage Arms Corporation, was the result of his "financial watchdog" reputation. He was a man who could be counted on to "put things right" in a business sense.

In Dorothy's case, we find in the letters a strong-willed woman who had not forgotten the impact of her father's premature death on her, brother Sam, and mother Rita. Her father had been very successful as a businessman, and his untimely death in 1926 from

typhoid fever was a shock. In May 1943 she was partially caring for her mother – a psychologically demanding task, often exacerbated when John's and her finances were in dire straits, which was quite often in the early years of their marriage and during the War.

In their World War II letters, references are made to events and people in the family history of both John and Dorothy which need clarification to make the letters more easily understood when such references are made. (See [Persons Most Often Mentioned](#).)

John

John's parents:

Eugene MacDonald (1888-1961) and Marguerite (Dann) MacDonald (1893-1975) ("Mergie" with a hard "g")

Omnipresent in the letters is MacDonald's father Eugene. It is useful to know that while he himself had accomplished a lot in his life, Eugene perceived that his son was a failure in jobs he had between his marriage in 1938 and when he entered the Army in 1940. Eugene had survived hardships as a youth only to find that his son did not seem to be cast in the same mold. (One can look at the list of jobs John had between 1939 and 1940 and find that he was either fired or he quit because he did not like a particular job.)



E. A. MacDonald circa 1946.

Although it was never published, Eugene wrote a 285-page autobiography in 1960, and reading it provides insight into his character and success. Eugene's childhood had been quite hard. His father, Hugh, was jealous and abusive of his wife, which caused a very rancorous and difficult home life. He worked off and on as a gardener and handyman but failed to provide support for his family.

Since his father was not a good provider, fourteen year-old Eugene got a paper route and then added a job turning on and off street gas lights in his home-town of New Haven, CT. In the summer he worked for the Winchester Repeating Arms Company polishing cartridges. Eugene hired another boy to do the paper route so he could keep his job at Remington Arms, and he still profited.



From a painting of Marguerite "Margie" MacDonald.

Young Eugene was given several Horatio Alger books by a teacher and the theme of rags-to-riches in the books affected him a great deal. This is reflected in

the autobiography: his life was a Horatio Alger story. He was very positive in his work habits, and was a “go-getter,” using the terminology of the times. Many of his paper customers thought very highly of him, and one went so far as to tell young Eugene that he was in a position to recommend him for appointment to West Point Military Academy. Another said he would help Eugene get into Yale University, but Eugene’s family commitment kept him from accepting these chances. He felt he was needed at home to help his mother cope with his father. He continued to take courses in accounting, shorthand, typing, and business law, all of which provided Eugene with very strong qualifications.

In 1906, Eugene and his mother and sister moved to Washington D.C. because of his mother’s ill health. He held several jobs there, including Assistant Chief Clerk to the General Passenger Agent for the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad; the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company where he became a trouble shooter in the field for the company; the Forestry Bureau; and in the Capitol Basement “mailing seeds and copies of the Congressional Record.”

His mother’s declining health forced a return to New Haven. Eugene found a job with the Winchester Repeating Arms Company in the Comptroller’s Office in New Haven. This was 1910 and he was now 23. He met his future wife, Marguerite Dann, at that time and, after saving to get married, they were wed in 1915. He was approached by the Vice president of Savage Arms in Utica, N.Y. which had purchased a plant in Sharon, PA. The plant made shells for the British Navy and gun mounts for the U.S. Navy. Eugene reported July 1st to Sharon and on July 24, 1916, John Dann MacDonald was born – on the same day the furniture arrived by train.



Marguerite and Eugene MacDonald with young John.



9 Beverly Place in Utica, NY.

In 1920, John's sister Doris Jean ("Dorrie" in the letters) was born. And now, at the age of 32, Eugene was successful and happy. A chance meeting in New York City with Mr. Wright, the President of Savage Arms, resulted in his being asked to

come back to Savage in Utica to help straighten out financial problems. He returned to work there in late 1926, and by 1927 they were living at 9 Beverly Place in Utica.

By the 1930's he had achieved way beyond what one might have expected given his beginnings: He was the Treasurer and Vice-President of Savage Arms, Inc. in Utica. During World War II he was an instrumental part of the war effort at Savage, and traveled often to represent Savage Arms with the U.S. and U.K. governments. Eugene MacDonald continued working at Savage Arms until 1946 when he retired.

Eugene had pulled himself up “by his own bootstraps,” and he felt that young John should do the same. There are frequent references to financial difficulties John and Dorothy faced with not much help, or begrudging help, from Eugene. The lack of financial security in John and Dorothy’s life is a constant theme in the letters.

Eugene noted in the “Easter 1950” section of his autobiography that John is a “writer of both pulp and slick stories,” but he did not seem to

understand that the writing, by that time, was supporting his son’s family quite adequately, and was allowing work on the family’s cottage at Piseco Lake to begin. John regretted that he never seemed to measure up well in his father’s eyes, even after his writing had become popular and respected.

In 1928, at age 12, John’s school career at Utica Free Academy was interrupted by a year’s bed convalescence while he recovered from a bad case of mastoiditis. It was during that year when part of the foundation for later writing was laid. He read constantly, a habit he would carry on throughout his life.



From left, John, Eugene, Margie, and Doris MacDonald.

WILLIAM A. CARR
 "Bill"
 Commercial Course
 St. Francis de Sales
*"Bill's" shy and so reserved,
 With high marks well-deserved.*

JOHN D. MacDONALD
 "Jack"
 College B. A.
 John F. Hughes School
 Dunham Debate IV; Science
 II, III, IV; Spanish II,
 III; Social Science IV;
 Classical III; Thrift Coun-
 cil I; Athletic Chest; Ara-
 demir IV; Academician
*This is that popular fellow
 called "Jack".
 Who finds no task too hard to
 attack.*



Yearbook entry for Utica Academy,
 1933.

It was in 1934 when Eugene MacDonald gave his 18 year-old son John a choice for the following year: 1) take a high school post-graduate course to help him prepare for college, or 2) take a trip to Europe. John chose the latter. A family friend, Harold Howell, was asked to be the chaperone. When John boarded the ship, he found this

two-page letter from his father in his suitcase:

"Dear Jack:

Just a few lines to let you know how much pleasure it has given mother and me to make your European trip possible, especially when we never had a similar opportunity. We feel that this trip will be a great experience and a great education for you, so naturally we want you to make the most of it.

- (1) Howell is to be the boss, not that we don't trust you, but rather because his age and experience will be helpful to you.
- (2) Make and keep as many new friends as possible on the trip.
- (3) Eat and function regularly, and if you do not feel well at any time do not hesitate to secure medical attention.
- (4) I think you should write your mother from Paris, Rome, Venice, Oberammergau, Amsterdam and London as soon as you arrive or at least once a week.
- 5) Be sure and attend a religious service at least once on each Sunday.
- (6) Take as many interesting pictures as you can, so that we can live the trip over again with you when you come back.
- (7) Keep a record of your expenditures as a training for your college days.
- (8) Don't worry about me as I will be O.K.
- (9) Get as much rest as is practical.
- (10) Keep your nose clean and your tail up and don't stretch your hat

and above all, be courteous to all.

The foregoing are not the 10 Commandments but rather the sincere values of fond and loving parents of a swell guy.

‘Auf Wiedersehen’. May your trip be all and more than you expected it to be.

Dad”

Dorothy

Dorothy’s parents:

Samuel Roy Prentiss (1885-1926) and Harriet Mariah Van Woert (Rita) (1884-1948)

Samuel and Harriett Prentiss had two children: Dorothy (1911) and Samuel (1912). Samuel married Evelyn Martin in 1933; she died in 1988.



Dorothy at center with crossed oars, 1925.

An examination of Dorothy’s family reveals why feelings of family position and class were important to her. Evidence of this appears in a book by Bard Prentiss, son of Samuel and Evelyn. He published a history of the Prentiss family going back as far the early 1600’s in England.

Samuel Roy Prentiss, Dorothy's father, attended Syracuse University and graduated from the Cazenovia Seminary where he met Harriet Van Woert. They were married in March of 1910, and Dorothy was born the following February.

Prentiss was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Hinckley Mercantile Company and also Secretary-Treasurer of the Prentiss Corporation, and a Director of the Vermont Products company. He was active in local civic affairs, served three terms as the president of the Poland, New York, Board of Education, and was quite successful as a merchant. The family's social and home life reflected that success.

Dorothy was 15 when her father died. She, her brother Sam, and their mother suddenly found themselves in a much lower social position than they had been accustomed to for many years. It was not until 1944, when the estate of her father was finally settled, that it became known that much of the wealth of the estate had been mishandled at the time of Samuel's death. Things might have turned out quite differently for them if more money had been available.

Dorothy received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Syracuse University and married Willard Teed in June, 1932 in Utica, N.Y.. The marriage did not last more than three months, and in the Fall she was back at Cazenovia Seminary teaching Art and French. Her interest in art continued throughout her life, and much later in Sarasota she was able to take further art instruction and worked hard at her painting. She was known locally as an accomplished artist.

In March of 1937 Dorothy met John D. MacDonald and they began to date quite seriously. On August 15, 1937 they drove to Pennsylvania to be married, but they kept their marriage a secret until they were married in public in April of 1938 in front of the family in Poland, N.Y.



The public wedding in Poland, NY.

From 1938 to 1945

After John graduated in Business from Syracuse University in 1938, he and Dorothy moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where John was enrolled in the MBA program at Harvard. They lived a very frugal life brought about by the fact that John was in school full-time. Dorothy, now pregnant, worked for the Kelling Nut Company.

She suffered convulsions in March of 1939, and the diagnosis was eclampsia. John Prentiss MacDonald was born six weeks prematurely.

After the birth of their son and John's graduation from Harvard, they moved to Fayetteville, N.Y. and John tried to find work in order to support his family, and to pay off the loan his father had given them for some of the hospital bills. They lived for a while in Massena, N.Y., known for its bitterly cold winters, to which Dorothy refers several times in the letters.

Because of his MBA degree at Harvard, John was qualified to apply to the Army for an appointment as a First Lieutenant in the Rochester Ordnance District (ROD) in June, 1940. This was his first successful job after years of failure. (The chance may have been provided by contacts which his father had in his work at Savage.) Because of his ordnance skills, MacDonald was one of a few whom Col. Bowlin took with him to New Delhi, India to serve in the India-Burma-Ceylon theatre in August, 1943.



John D. MacDonald, second row, right.

The assignment was in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which was a wartime intelligence agency of the United States during World

War II. Now a Major, the OSS assignments sometimes took John out of India on flights to determine the military needs of combat troops outside of India.



MacDonald at far right. Second from left in front is General "Wild Bill" Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

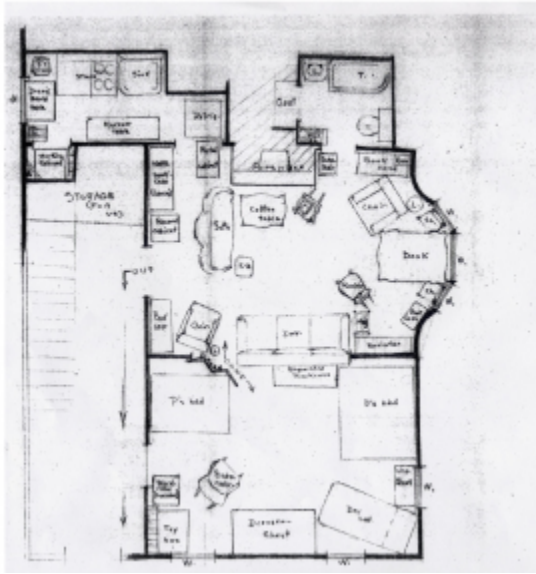
Meanwhile, back on the home front, Dorothy MacDonald rented an apartment with their son, John Prentiss, at 8860 Main Street, Poland, N.Y. She moved to 1109 State Street, Utica, in November, 1943.



Apartment building on Main Street in Poland, NY.



1109 State Street, Utica, NY. – 2nd floor apartment.



Poland apartment plan sketched by Dorothy and sent to John.



Penny, missing his father, would sometimes dress up as a soldier and hold a toy rifle as if he were in the Army helping him out in the war.



Penny, Bill Robinson and Dorrie, ca. 1944.

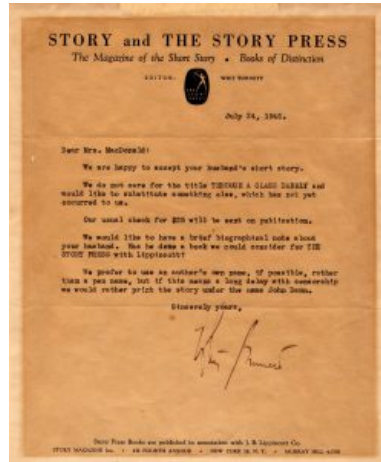
One of John's letters was a short story he wrote because the tedium of everyday life was too much to repeat in letter after letter. He titled it "As Through a Glass." Dorothy sent it first to *Esquire*, but it was rejected; then she sent it to *Story Magazine*, which accepted it. (The original title was changed to "Interlude in India" and it was published in 1946.) It appeared to MacDonald that India was far removed from the action, and the closest war came was via news and radio. By the time he was discharged from the Army he had served two years in India and Ceylon.



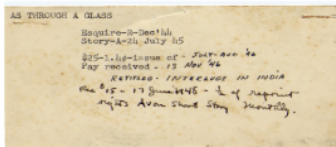
Life in India – officers often shared rooms.



Officers mess – JDM at far right on end.



Short story acceptance letter: *Story and the Story Press*, letter from July 24 1945



Envelope in which he enclosed his first story.

His discharge papers, 1946.



Discharged as a Lt. Colonel

1945 to 1947: Learning to Write

On audio tapes of MacDonald interviews he often spoke of this period as being one of great effort and of great frustration, until he began to sell short stories on a regular basis. He noted that he often had as many as 30 stories in the mail to different publishers at one time. A few years later he had his son burn “two or three million words” which had been written in this time frame, claiming that he was too ashamed of them to keep them any longer.

His work habits from 1946 to 1986 reflect, in kind, his father’s attitude toward work. John said: “Put your ass in the seat and begin to write, and then write, and write, and write” are words which he used to describe his writing habits.

Although he never sent it, writers and would-be writers who have

received rejections slips will empathize with MacDonald's feelings when he wrote this in 1946 or early 1947:

The MacDonald Treadmill

Dear Editor:

Don't be upset about receiving this form letter!

We would like to write a personal letter to each and every one of you, but the great mass of stories submitted from this office makes such a procedure impractical. Surely you can understand that!

If by any chance we have been unable to use your magazine, don't be discouraged. It may not be due to any particular deficiency in the magazine but instead to the fact that we haven't recently been writing the type of THING that you are.

Try again, won't you?

Affectionately,

John D. MacDonald

Fiction published by:

Doc Savage the Shadow

Dime Detective Adventure

Blue Book The Bombay News

The Dubuque Bugle Detective Tales

Short Stories

Also many minor publications such as Esquire, Story, and the Congressional Record.



Typical covers for pulp fiction.

MacDonald began to be published more regularly in 1947, and his output was staggering. He was so successful that many publishers began to rely almost solely on his story-telling ability by using his many pseudonyms to fill their magazines. Between 400 and 450 stories seems to be the most accurate count written between 1946 and 1950. He continued to write short stories even in the 1960's.

1947 To 1986: Novels and McGees

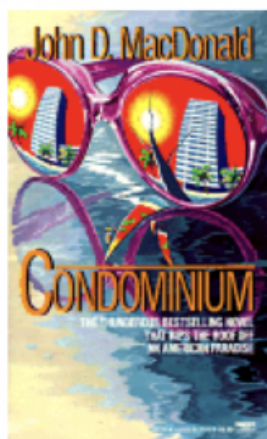
This was a most productive period of time for John; his writing was accepted more and more now that he was featured in Gold Medal Original Paperbacks. He was writing feverishly and beginning to enjoy the fruits of his labors.

His success introducing the character of Travis McGee brought fame and fortune. His production overall averaged out to one new McGee novel each year, but he was also writing other fiction,

including the best-seller *Condominium*, in 1977. The McGee novels – and several non-McGees – stand out in their time.

Condominium appeared on the *New York Times* best seller list for several weeks, and the lesson learned from his description of condominiums collapsing due to shoddy building practices during a hurricane led to the implementation of newer and tougher building codes in Florida.

Other prescient novels, such as *One More Sunday* (1984) foretold of evangelical scandals, examples of which would be Tammy and Jim Baker. And *Barrier Island*, (1986) predicted the impact of a hurricane on that area of Louisiana 20 years before Hurricane Katrina.



Condominium was a *New York Times* best seller.

The John D. MacDonald Collection at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries contains some copies of tapes made from MacDonald speaking to audiences on the art of writing. His answers to often-asked questions of authors are memorable for their clarity. He spoke as he wrote: carefully and thoughtfully.



One More Sunday was published years before evangelical scandals erupted.

Piseco Lake bound John and Dorothy together. It was her lyrical words describing the beauty of the lake that inspired them to gather the funds necessary to buy 200 feet of land in 1944 even though they were hardly in a position to do that.



MacDonald wrote many novels using this desk at Piseco.



View of Piseco Lake, 53 miles from Utica, NY.



Dorothy and brother Sam Prentiss on the porch at Piseco Lake.

John D. MacDonald died on December 28, 1986, after a short illness and heart surgery, with pulmonary complications.

Dorothy MacDonald died in February 1989. She had fought cancer over many years and through many operations, always coming back somehow to a relatively healthy state before finally succumbing.



A fan brings a bottle of Plymouth and a rose each July 24th to the grave site.

Epilogue

John D. MacDonald's assessment of war came in a January 1945 letter to Dorothy:

“How any two ideologies can exist in the minds of men and yet be so different as to cause the slaughter and misery of millions is beyond me. Maybe it is because deep down the basic nature of man is evil, thus making all groups of men, and all governments the mass expression of common evil, cruelty and hate. Thousands of men each week are making this their last silly little acts in this screwy world and it is impossible to translate those acts into something which means a greater good for all. We must kill those who would oppose us, even as they are saying [the same] to themselves. I guess the world has just gotten too small for a quiet short war. I am beginning to hate all evidences of “bigness” and “organization” and “regimentation.”

Content Advisory

This book is a compilation of personal letters between a married couple during World War II. Some of the letters contain language and depictions that are offensive:

- Negative depictions of people or cultures
- Racist stereotypes
- Racist language

These were wrong then and are wrong now. The content is presented here for historical accuracy with acknowledgement to support conversation and discussion for growth and restorative processes.

I. Chapter I - Early Days - Spring/Summer 1943, Letters I-40

#1. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Poland, NY
May 12, 1943

Darling,

Everyone's out for a little while, and Penny's asleep, so I'm going to take a shot at getting a letter to you before you get out of the country. Let me know as soon as you receive any mail thru this A.P.O- it would be so nice if we could keep in touch with each other as long as you're on dry land.

And that reminds me, I just talked to Rita and she said Jack Davis departed for the Pacific area a while ago, and his Mother received mail from him both from the West coast and from shipboard, (via air mail) on his way. I don't know what part of the Army he is in, but hope you can write to us before you reach your destination. If you can't, keep a letter started, to mail when you can, and write a little on it every few days. Your impressions and surroundings will change so rapidly you'll forget them if you don't.

It's awful that we were reduced to such a stupor from fatigue and misery when we had to say goodbye, that it was hard to say anything. I don't seem to be consciously inhibiting my sorrow at having you go, but it has been short in so far as to make me feel as if I were inhabiting ten tons of solid rock.

After saying goodbye to you, I drove for two hours and was so sick I had to fold up after reaching the city where we look for the

parkway. The car seemed to be looping along like that hobby-horse Penny had, and I with it, and every time I seemed to sway forward somebody hit me over the back of the neck with a tennis shoe! It was the first time I was ever car sick driving. Self-preservation may have kept me from preoccupation with my emotions, but next time I choose to weep.

I drove from ten-thirty to five yesterday, stopping in the Pine Hills area for lunch, at your favorite gas station, and to pick up your proofs at Fay's. The pictures from your camera are marvelous. I am anxious to get a couple of them to you if possible.

I've wondered and wondered what's happened to you – everything will be so different for you now, but at least you have one fairly promising companion. I think of you all the time, Darling, wonder what you're doing and how you're feeling, and hope we'll hear from you soon, and that you'll keep safe and happy. I think I know how you're feeling, and feel with you.

Didn't we have a good time in New York? It's a shame to have to live on memories when you're so young, but the memories of the six years with you are the best in all my life, and they'll do 'til you can come home.

I love you, Dordo

#2. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

May 13, 1943

Darling,

Come evening, and we don't leave the house alone a minute for hoping you might call. In fact, last night your Mother kept the receiver off the hook while I was tearing off to the mailbox and back. And Dorrie's hoping to hear from Bill because he's sick, and so when the 'phone does ring at night there's a great vibrant pause until we

find out who's calling. Maybe you can't phone, but it seems as if you shouldn't be completely shut off from the world quite so soon.

I rather expected to go to Poland tomorrow morning, but have to see some men about a car top. The estimate seems to be stuck at \$45 – you can imagine how I feel about that. All I hope to do is to nail one down somewhere, and have it put on later, because the tonsils are more important. But at least I can get one, and a black one too, I think.

All of a sudden I think I know how a soldier feels. He feels alone, and about to take on a battle, and nothing to look forward to 'til the fight's over. You don't realize how much like just one little person he feels, do you, 'til now. Sometimes he feels calm and brave, and sometimes a bit naked, but he never feels so much as if he were pursuing a solitary course thru the universe as he does when War really moves in on him. – I wonder what we'll all be like, when it's over. – Well, my friend, we're not "green troops" any more, anyway, after the last few years. But I'd like a chance to soften up a little again, sometime.

Your mother had her broach on when I got back – she's worn it on every dress and coat she's had on since Sunday. It's funny to have a little thing like that mean so much, but there must be something in a talisman – they seem to have filled some need ever since history began, from the Egyptians thru the Crusaders. I hope you don't think I was unreasonably absorbed in trying to find a little memento of our weekend and our parting, when we were leaving. It's just that a silly little thing to cling to has a kind of reassuring nature, – but there didn't seem to be time to find anything "right."

Hope you get hold of something to read. The news itself is pretty exciting right now – too bad you people didn't have a chance to pick up that radio. It looks as if you're heading for a very busy area of the world. Oh boy, oh boy, just let it be over soon.

Gosh, it's lonesome. Didn't we have fun last weekend?

We love you, Johnsie – Dordo

#3. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

Camp Shanks, NY

Editor's Note: Camp Shanks, a United States Army installation in and around Orangeburg, NY.

May 15, 1943

Dear Dordo,

This is being written on this paper because it is all I happen to have. I am still in the same place & expect to be here another 10 days or so.

The camp itself is tremendous – will accommodate 90,000 at peak capacity, but alternates between being a quagmire and a dust storm. I have walked so far each day that I am taking off some weight around the tummy. Up to now there has been a tremendous lot to do – but that isn't what kept me from writing. I didn't write before because I couldn't mail it – I am smuggling this into New York to mail to you.

I have been issued all my stuff now. When I go out of here it will be on foot – 1 1/2 miles to the train, wearing GI shoes & leggings – blouse, helmet, pack, canteen, gas mask, ammunition, and carrying my suitcase. I feel as self-conscious in that stuff as I did when I first put the outfit on. I go around covertly watching the task force officers to find out the professional way of hitching all that crap on. I have had to get the enormous army shoes for the mud hereabouts – 2 1/2 lbs. apiece.

The camp is very informal. There doesn't seem to be much Central Control. There is just enough, however, so that they put the bite on me. They have made me Commanding Officer for a unit of 502 men and 10 officers – really a battalion of 3 companies. So I won't be marching down the road alone. The men haven't arrived yet, but when they do, since they haven't previously been together in

companies, I will have to establish all company records, arrange for an inspection to determine what they lack, get all their clothing & equipment, arrange for their mess & pay – all in 72 hours. It seems impossible at the moment. Then I have to take care of their exercise and training, load them on the boat – be in charge on the way over & turn them over to the c/o at destination.

It certainly will be an experience. I have had 2 shots – typhus & tetanus – neither of which bothered me. The doctor, a Captain Weiner, was the coolest, snottiest character I've met in a long time.

I share a room with Albiani. Two cots – rough wood, board floor, pot-bellied stove in the ante-room. One light bulb hangs down in the middle of the room. Two closets made of plaster board jut out into the room. The latrine, which isn't bad at all – mixing faucets, showers, etc. is right out in back. The mess hall is about 75 feet away. Very informal – self-service, long picnic tables. The food tastes good & there is enough of it, but the trouble is that everything is boiled.

The other day, from noon to midnight, units marched past our barracks. After dark they sang as they marched – "Roll Out the Barrel," "Mademoiselle," etc. It was thrilling, somehow. They were all under full pack on their way out.

Nobody knows anything here about where they are going or when. It certainly is confusing. Some units hang around 2 weeks. Others are gone in three days.

We have to report 3 times a day, between processing, to Major Halpern about 1/2 miles away in a converted barracks. He is in charge of the TFRP – (Task Force Replacement Pool) to which I am assigned. A little utter confusion would quiet his office down from what it now is.

It is a good thing I came back in when I did – I was out of order being out after 12 without a pass. But no trouble.

Love, John

I am going to call you from NYC – if I can get the pass.

#4. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

Camp Shanks, NYC

May 22, 1943

Dear Dordo-

This is certainly turning out to be one hell of a place – the work I mean. It is now quarter of one Ay EM – and I have been up since six thirty this morning – with about five more hours of work to go. I thought I would knock off for a while and rest myself by writing this. It was certainly nice to hear your voice over the phone. I am sorry to have disappointed you previously. Got another letter from Tom (Dorothy notes here: “our ‘code’ name for Col B.”) – not the one I was expecting, but through Albiani. He now wants two cases of spaghetti and another case of liquor.

I am healthy, and I don't want you to worry about me. I am confident that everything will be all right. The only grief in store is that of being apart – but that gets worse by the day I've noticed. I am getting to be an honest to god officer. I have a first sergeant, three barracks, 111 men, company clerks, inspections, roll calls, leaves, and all the rest of the military bushwah. It certainly adds to one's self confidence to talk the language and, I hope, act the part. I haven't yet had time to break in my GI shoes, however.

I miss the pencil around. Kick him a few times for me, will you?

I love you and miss you very much.

John

#5. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)
Camp Shanks, NYC
May 22, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I expect that by the time you get this I will have talked to you over the phone. Thus I will stick in this the stuff that I won't tell you over the phone.

I have now had plague typhus yellow fever and cholera. None of them have given me anything except a sore arm. Let me tell you though, that you don't pay much attention to your own shots when you are responsible for seeing that 111 men all get the same series and get them properly noted on the service records, etc. Our men, a motley crew, mostly OCS rejectees,* and therefore, with a higher intelligence quotient than the average, arrived on Monday. They stood out in the rain and Fred and I took over. Then with show down inspections and service records and training and drawing equipment and setting up a non-com organization, it has really been hell. The weather hasn't helped a bit in that it has been hot and sultry. I have stood in more warehouses and signed more forms and traveled further in my big truck than I thought was possible. On Monday night we got to bed at about quarter to four and had to be up again at six thirty. Tuesday night we hit bed around midnight and up again at seven, and on Wednesday, we slept until 8, having gotten to bed at five. Thursday and Friday we have done better, and we have now gotten medical clearance and equipment clearance for the men and I am issuing them passes. The worst is over, as far as this staging is concerned. We now have a small bit of liberty, but soon we will be alerted, a perimeter guard must be selected by me and thrown around the barracks. We are then incommunicado and soon afterward rushed down to the boat. In order to go down there, Fred and I are each going to have to hike a mile and quarter under full pack carrying one piece of hand luggage.

I don't dare send anything to the laundry, everything is so indefinite.

Everything I have is gradually getting filthy. I will have to get a bar of laundry soap and visit the latrine and string a line in my room.

Great construction is going on at this camp all of the time. Road machines and clouds of dust etc. Just since I have been here the grass has come up amazingly. It is actually beginning to look nice around here.

Tell pencil that I liked his picture. Give my love to everybody, and save a chunk for yourself.

John

*OCS – Officer Candidate School

#6. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

May 23, 1943

Johnsie Darling,

Writing the first two letters to that temporary A.P.O. felt like putting a note in a bottle and setting it out to float, but the bottle was picked up sooner than I expected, and it's nice to know there'll be more letters for each of us, before the great Silence until you get where you're going.

I now have quite a complete diary of the two weeks in Utica, and our last weekend, and a daily one from the morning after I left you, so it's possible to recapitulate a little where you missed getting any letters. I'm keeping a list of the numbers of the letters and the date of each, because later it will be like check numbers, and might get confusing – you could keep a record in your little writing case.

Having you go is like a major operation. A profound sickness beforehand, then you come out of the ether with an unspecific ache

all over, and a sense of loss and shock and weakness as if part of you is gone.

People here are very polite – they don't ask a lot of unnecessary questions the way they did in Utica. Of course they don't know you as well, but they seem to realize that it's a matter of your personal safety for us to keep quiet.

But I get a gaunt feeling in the evening here, and it doesn't seem like home (I'm not letting it partly.) The harpies here are a poor bunch to be shut in with – OK to meet while hoeing or weeding, but not the type for a winter's evening. And of course there's not any real privacy, it's like a dormitory. I don't mind feeling temporary until I can feel that you're settled, too, then I can dig our roots into a little place in Utica, and try to make it seem more like ours. There's nothing like you, and Penny, and me, Darling. We're wonderful, and we're safe and warm and friends.

It sounds cliché to say it, but hearing from you when I thought you'd gone, was just like having the sun come out when you're so cold and stiff and cramped you'd forgotten what it's like. It's just so darned nice to know you're still in this part of the world and safe.

Penny has been swell here. He hasn't bothered me one minute, thru all the settling and confusion. He's got dozens of friends around the town, just from going to the store and the post office, and he is so interested in the farm set-up next door at Forrest's, and the garden and yard. He's entertained himself all the time, digging in the yard, riding his car around, and walking around under his red umbrella! He's good about not going out of the yard, and find so much to do he's as important as a politician! He has worn your "soldier hat" you gave him day and night, ever since you gave it to him, all over town, and keeps it on his bed when I take it off.

It's hard not having anyone to talk to you about you. It seems to disturb your Mother, and Rita just doesn't seem like a sympathetic audience, so there's just Dorrie in Utica, and Penny, here. Both limited, so I talk to myself about you!

Are you sure you have money enough, Darling? I can get along fine, car top and all, but what about you? I could send you a little, or

borrow some more from your family, and would be glad to do either. I want to feel that you have all you need, too – you’ve been so really generous with us.

Gosh! We keep busy, and don’t mourn, but it’s so different. I always appreciated having you around, lots more than most wives seem to, and didn’t want you to go, but it’s still queerer than I thought it would be to be alone. There’s nothing like the three of us – nothing.

All my love,

Dordo

It will be so nice to have letters from you to look for, and to read.

I can send you \$20 to \$25 with no trouble at all, and still hold out comfortably ‘til June 1st. Please say so, if you want it, and if I can wire, check, or money order to you, or if you have a blank check.

#7. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2 pp.)

Poland, NY

May 24, 1943

Darling,

All the inmates are in bed, and the sidewalks seem to be completely in, as it’s after eleven, but we just returned from Utica, and I want to take this to the post office tonight, as I don’t know when the mail goes out in the morning.

We passed 30,000 miles on the speedometer just a mile from “our house” on the Walker Road, and the little car still has half a tankful of gas which I guess is destined to remain in it for a while, as I won’t dare do any more driving until the ban is off. They plan to be very tough this time, and it would a shame to lose our A book. Incidentally, Peany, (the man who takes care of the car now,) discovered a crack in the left rear tire just after I got back from New York, so I had that vulcanized last week, but the man said he thought

the tire would last quite a while. Tops are still fairly plentiful, so I can arrange that by mail, and have it put on later.

Penny and I had dinner at the club with your family. We stopped and got pepper plants on the way to justify the trip, and Rita rode over and went to see "The Moon is Down," while we were at dinner. Dorrie was cheery and looked sweet, Nana was full of items, your Mother is still quiet and upset about you, and Popop was tired and pleasant. Dorrie had ordered the dinner which was very nice – steak, and we talked for a little while in the lounge. Popop was wondering if I had enough money, which gave me an opportunity to say I wasn't sure you have, so it's quite all right if you need some from them, and I'll enclose a blank check which you can use in a pinch in case you need twenty dollars from our account. Just let me know if you use it. (The family will wire it if you need it.)

I haven't heard a word from Rochester about the furniture, will jog them up this week. When it comes to Utica, I'll have the refrigerator sent right to Elmira, as your namesake is on formula now, (Evvie had a light attack of intestinal grippe) so they'll need something besides that tiny box.)

This afternoon, when Penny was taking his nap, his breathing sounded funny, and I discovered he'd gone to sleep with your pipe in his mouth, and was breathing thru it!

When I was taking a rest I was thinking how it's been with you only gone two weeks, (two weeks ago now we hadn't said goodbye) and I just couldn't see how it could be possible that there'd be more weeks, and months, and months, to go right on the same way. It's fantastic. Never leave me after the War, Darling.

It's hard to say we miss you in any other words, but all day and all night in a thousand different ways, we do.

And love you,

Dordo

#8. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

Camp Shanks, NYC

May 24, 1943

Dear Dordo,

A long, hot and dusty day, with thousands of men hiking up and down the road in front of the orderly room. For the most part they look very little like soldiers. The whole camp is sloppy, and discipline is not what it should be. The litter of papers around the place is sufficient evidence of that.

A Chinese officer has given Freddy and me a list of the dishes to order and a restaurant on Mott Street to order them in, so we are going to try and get away tomorrow and have an honest to god Chinese meal. Then we also have what Fred terms the best Italian Restaurant in NY to go to, it is called Luiginis. The food here has improved some, but not very much – maybe I have just been getting hungrier.

My transportation awaits, so I must be off.

Love to you and Penny,

John

No \$ needed. Thanks a lot.

#9. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Poland, NY

May 25, 1943

Darling,

Your two letters came this morning, and the first little one stuck to the envelope so it wasn't discovered until little Pee Wee found it – he's the great discoverer around here. But it was so nice to get them, and know you're well, if busy, and that you miss us, too.

I told Penny that after the War perhaps you'd bring him your steel helmet, and that picture you drew was all he needed. All day he's been talking about "when Daddy brings me his helmet," and what a hell of a fella he'll be then. I'd love to see you in action these days, it must be a great change from the R.O.D. and the rest of the boys still there.*

Today it looked like rain every minute, so we planted like fury, so the seeds would have the benefit of the shower. I spaded a big hunk of land for Rita's flowers, and expect to feel like a rusty hinge tomorrow. Penny worked furiously along with us, and sometimes helps quite a lot. Besides the peas we planted Sunday, we now have radishes, lettuce, parsley, carrots, beets, string beans, and broccoli, not to mention tomato and pepper plants set out. There are only one or two things more to plant when it gets warmer. It's been wonderful for Penny already.

Beginning tomorrow we'll be eating at our own house, which will be nice, and better for Penny. The kitchen is a cute, clean little place now. I wish you could see all of it, you'd never believe it could look as well as it does.

Letter from Sam today. All is well in Elmira, they speak of the baby as John with great ease now.

Darling, I wish you could have clean clothes! You're so used to all you need, and doing them yourself isn't very satisfactory, but I can imagine why you hesitate to send them out, even on the project.

I'll be anxiously awaiting every letter from you (they're very nice ones to date), and thinking about you and even saying a little prayer, all the time.

Salutations to Fred, All my love, Dordo

*R.O.D. – Rochester Ordnance District

#10. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p) Camp Shanks, NYC

May 27, 1943

Dear Dordo,

My mail, outgoing, is now going through the base censor, even though as you will notice, I am also censoring it myself.

Yesterday, I did my accumulated laundry. Dish pan hands. It is strung out all over my quarters. Very white, too.

Completed the last of my shots this morning. Strangely enough none of them bothered me. I have just had a series of lumps in my arms with varying degrees of soreness.

We are in the midst of the training program for the men. Hikes, calisthenics, infantry drill, training films etc. One of the other officers who has a small group plus a Chinese officer assistant has had eight years experience in the Army as an enlisted man so he is a considerable amount of help. It is nice to have someone like that around.

Not all of the officers have shown up here from my own shipment. It will probably be deferred for another short length of time.

Right now I have one AWOL and three men in the hospital. There will probably be many chances to either get them back or get replacements before shoving off.

The items which were bothering us – how to take them – are now in an official box labeled organizational equipment. And will go along in the hold. The letter said to take it or else. (Col. Bowlin – 1 case liquor & 2 cases spaghetti, 1 radio.)

You have no idea the amount of paper work involved in this thing. For example, I have to personally sign fifty passes each day – and that is only a fiftieth of the things to do.

Tonight I am going to see Crash Dive in one of the movies on the post. You also have no idea how attractive going to the movies can become. Since I have been here I have read only my serial in the post and that is all. No Russian or anything else – and no reading at night. But I feel very healthy.

I certainly hope that everything is going well. Address mail to me at APO 4016-x and I will get it within three days.

None of the men know where we are going – and they are certainly doing a lot of guessing. The wildest guess I have heard yet is Peru.

We'll take care of things. I must rush off – so Adios and love for now.

John

#II. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

May 31, 1943

Darling,

The post office was open for a couple of hours late this afternoon, and I went over with only the vaguest hope that there might a letter from you, since it is a week since I last heard from you, and we all felt pretty sure you'd gone. Imagine my surprise on getting letter number 5. It left me completely perplexed, and writing you now is just a shot in the dark. If you receive this, I'll be sorry I stopped writing to you before the weekend, thinking you had left. Tho your letter had no date on it or reference by which I could tell when it was written, I assume it was Monday or Tuesday (May 24 or 25) a week ago, and can't imagine what held it up so long, or where letter no.4 is. May I suggest a few things that will help us to keep a more chronological idea of your letters and your goings-on.

Please date your letters, if it's not against the rule. I think there's a calendar in your writing kit – anyway, you should know the date if you sign passes all day.

Be sure you keep a list of the number and date of each letter you send me, then when there's a gap I won't chew my fingernails to the

bone when there's a lost letter because you got mixed up. My last entry of that sort is – “No. 7-Thurs. May 27.”

I know it's hard to write at all when you're living out of a suitcase, and subject to sudden moves, but Darling, you've become so much more intangible, that all those little things have become much more important to keep you tied into our lives.

Not that you're not part of all the little routine things, as well as the occasions. Witness today: I finally got some towel racks, shelves, etc. up in the bathroom (Honey, I'll never learn to drive a nail! All that I do with my hands is no help – you ought to see the way I put the fixtures up. They're fantastic!) And Penny insisted I hang up a towel for you – so we did. Today was one of the days he talked about you a lot. He gets so homesick for the way you play with him; he really sat on your Father's head an hour at the Club and just mussed him up, and he's worn Uncle Bussis out entirely, I guess. He follows Mr. Forrest every time he sees him, and I feel so sorry for him – no man in his life these days.

He has a beautiful tan, and I even have one good burn (with a halter on,) to my credit. I have lost some pounds, too, in places that needed it. And Penny will never be any fatter – he just runs it off, but since he looks healthier now, I expect to call Dr. Gruppe about his tonsillectomy tomorrow.

Our garden appears to be flourishing. The peas are up, and tiny radishes and specks of green lettuce are showing. It's a good feeling.

All my love, Dordo

#12. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)
Camp Shanks, NYC
May 31, 1943

Dear Dordo,

Well, here we sit....We are practically becoming station

complement. One can maintain an attitude of excited expectancy for only so long – then it becomes dull. I guess it will still be a shock when we do move.

Had a very unexpected pass on Sat. P.M. Went to N.Y. Tried to phone, but the circuits were busy – tried at 6:30, 7:15, 8:30 and 10:15 & decided the fates were agin me. Remember my telling you about the Lt with all the service – His name is Lichenstein. His wife & sister & brother-in-law were in town & we met them & went to the Latin Quarter. I sure wish you could have seen it – a TWO HOUR floor show – what a spectacle! Caught the early show & an early bus back.

I am afraid that I am not writing very good letters. This terrifically long waiting period is dulling everyone in our group. Get hold of last week's *Time* & read the article on staging areas. – Damn good.

Love to all,

John

#13. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

June 1, 1943

Darling,

Are my letters to you censored? It seems queer that they removed that single number and left in your reference to getting passes for New York, and your criticism of the camp.

Anyway, Johnsie, I'm awfully glad to hear from you, and so glad you get to the city once in a while. A change of scenery must be about necessary to keep your minds balanced – life in an Army camp is far from normal, even for an officer. Your family is quite upset to think that as long as you're here so long I can't see you again, but I understand how impossible it must be to make any plans in advance. If you're there thirty days do you get a leave like Bill Robinson did?

For heaven's sake if you could only get as far as Albany for a few hours, please don't pass up any chance to come up this way.

Too bad all your faithful women relatives can't help you with your laundry problem – Heaven knows I took it on for life for the pleasure of your company, and it never was a burden!

I hope the picture of you comes. The snapshots we have are so wonderful I'm going to have some enlarged. Everyone from Elmira to Utica has at least one copy now.

I wrote the bodyworks in Utica and sent them a deposit so they'd hold enough canvas for a top for me, to be put on after gas shortage, etc. etc. Tonsils are on the bill for this month, and that furniture may come from Rochester collect – at this point both Mr. Watters and the storage company have decided to relax because you're gone, I guess. I'm glad you have enough money and hope you locate a finance officer for your June 1st share, or won't you get it until the end of the trip? If I don't receive a check tomorrow Mama will deposit enough to pay my rent, etc. so don't worry. If it's delayed over a week I'll wire Newcombe or better the R.O.D. to do something about it.

My letters sound like a domestic diary, but that's what our life is, and there's no use trying to compete with "Time" or other literary lights – it wouldn't be our story if I did.

If you were going to be in this country long, the set up here would be unbearable, but under the circumstances, tho I look forward to the privacy I hope to have in Utica, I can stand this for the good it's doing us to be outdoors this Summer. Rita has taken possession of me, more or less, for the present, but it is not annoying as I am completely shut in with what matters, and passive to all other things in the environment that might ordinarily annoy. Your letters, my diary, and my little bundle of financial information are carefully guarded – as for the rest it's like being in a dormitory.

Penny shouldn't be expected to rise to situations beyond his comprehension, like an adult, and I'm sorry that I was so impatient with him that he froze stiff. I always feel guilty when I'm unreasonable with him for responding as a four-year old will

respond, but don't worry that I'll spoil him – he gets more punishment now that I'm responsible for all of it. He hasn't needed much lately because he's been so busy, but I feel awful when he fails just when it matters most, because it's my fault, really.

I hope they don't take the daddies. Little kids need their fathers. He misses you terribly in his own funny little way, tho I don't suppose he always is conscious of what he's missing as much as of a sense of imbalance. But he calls me Dordo, and tries to be the Daddy and puts your things around (and I love to see them, too) and asks what you'll say about this and that, and tells the kids you're "at War" and says "when John comes home." He knows.

The other day I was fighting a screw about two inches long into a plastic wall, and I'd worn the groove out of the top and it wouldn't turn another turn, and he watched for a long time, then said, "Why don't you hit it with the hammer?" Ah me, it was all it needed! (There are some places where you're just a woman, and little or big, there's no use trying to be a man. Nothing but a man will do at times. Aren't you glad?)

Time for Fibber and Molly – he's teaching Molly to bowl tonight. I'm glad we can still read the same things, anyway, now that you're getting "Time."

Take care of yourself, my Friend, we want you back just like we sent you.

This is a hodge-podge of a letter, but you may rest assured that I am contented tonight, if a bit disintegrated.

Love to you, Darling-

Dordo

#14. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Poland, NY

June 4, 1943

Darling,

My brain says you couldn't have leave, even tho you will have been there a month Monday (Imagine!), but my silly heart says keep quiet and watch, and be where he can find you if he does. They must be cleaning out the Mediterranean or the convoy route or something for you birds, and I know how dull it must be waiting, Darling, but I can't help but be glad while you are on this side, because the way things are going, every delay should make it safer. This week's "Time" is very reassuring about improved submarine conditions.

We are going to see Dr. Karl Gruppe in Utica Monday at 2:45, for a preliminary examination of the pencil's tonsils and adenoids, and he will arrange for the operation then. I hoped we could dispense with this trip on the word of the other doctors, but he seems to feel that this is necessary. I just wanted to save the gas two trips will require. He will stay at 9 Beverly a day or two after he has them removed. He looks healthier now, and there's no use waiting for him to gain weight, he runs too much. It will be a relief to have it over with. We'll come back Monday – early evening before Pencil's bedtime.

You ought to have one book just to keep your eyes on when you don't want your mind to go around, on this long trip. A book of poems sometimes seems to wear best at a time like that. Why don't you get one book if you get to New York again – "Leaves of Grass," or something, for diversion.

It's a lovely hot day again, and we'd be thinking of Piseco soon if we could get there. But anyway, I have a feeling I'll be lonesome up there this year. I don't think I'll go up 'til I hear you've "arrived" somewhere.

Honey, I know what a vacuum you're in, with all this waiting. Live

a day at a time, like we do, – there'll be so much excitement when you get going – enough to tell your grandchildren for years.

Love from us,

Dordo

#15. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Poland, NY

June 7, 1943

Darling –

Just back from our trip to the great beyond, and what a workout it was!

Your mother phoned this morning that my check had come, and we (Rita, of course, Penny and I) met her and Dorrie at Morris' for lunch. We had a good visit, then went our various ways, and Penny and I discovered there's a lot more to a tonsillectomy than tonsils these days.

Dr. Gruppe looks like his brother in Fayetteville, except that he has no hair! He was a major in the Army until they discovered him harboring stomach ulcers. He made us an appointment for a week from today for the operation, but we had to go to Dr. Washeim and have a chest examination, (because of the danger of ether with recent respiratory infections,) and after stripping him there, and having a general rib-punching, and even feet looked at (built up shoes again), we had to go to Dr. Hall for chest and thymus gland X-ray! Ether has been found to be dangerous if the thymus isn't normal. These precautions were felt to be essential by both Dr. Gruppe and Dr. Washeim.

Then we went to Faxton for a blood clotting test, but by then the lab had closed, so that will be done the morning before the operation. We will be at Faxton at 7:30 a.m., next Monday, so we hope by Tuesday he'll be starting a new page, physically. Dr. Gruppe

prefers to work at Faxton. I'm going to try to get a private room so I can be with him all night.

Darling, I don't want to remind you of things you ought to do, but for Heaven's sake please write to your family immediately. They're beginning to get very touchy about it, and now that I think of it, it is awful. They did so much for us and for you before you left, and I could see sparks of resentment beginning to smolder today, and no wonder. They have seen most of your letters, but haven't any of their own, and of course they want to know you think of them, too. Don't forget to thank Pop for our weekend as well as the equipping and lay it on, because it's at a point where you've got to overcome some hurt feelings. You may say that you knew I was passing your letters on to them, and were so busy that had to do for a while, but make it a letter worth waiting for when you do write. (I wish I'd realized before!)

Say hello to Fred Albiani. Best of luck Sweetheart –

Love, Dordo.

Write to Pop and Margie.

#16. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2 pp.)

Poland, NY

June 13, 1943

Darling,

We've run the gamut of weather today – from sunny and mild to pouring rain, muggy sticky heat, and now a sharp cool wind. It's hard to keep up with it, and the effort accounts for the sleepy way I feel, I guess.

Or the let-down. Here we are, house cleaned, bag mostly packed, hospital waiting, and still in Poland! The little boy's cold was worse yesterday, and definitely not gone today, so Dr. Gruppe says we'd better wait until it's been all gone several days. It's such a mild cold

compared to most of the ones he has that I keep hoping it would go away. It's a disappointment not to get it over now that it has been so long delayed, but probably we can still have it done in a week or so. Nothing goes on schedule, does it?

I must confess I was looking forward to getting out of here a few days, too – we are more confined by the gas problems than I expected to be, and after Pencil began to feel better from his operation he and I would have enjoyed Utica for a change. Well, there's still time.

No one has heard from you, so I wonder if you're off. When I think you're gone, a cold, dark numb feeling creeps over me, and then hearing from you is as good as three-day spree. It can't go on forever, it would wear you out, and probably the sooner you all get into action over there, the sooner you can come home. It's just that it's impossible not to be happier knowing where you are.

Your letters while waiting have been swell to have, yet the strain you have been under have made them less loquacious, probably, than you'll be when you're in the midst of all the things you've been anticipating for so long. Of course, you'll be busy then, but all we'll know is what you'll tell us, so write all you can, especially about you.

This little information on your Reader's Digest subscription is interesting – you can receive that first-hand. And the Herald-Tribune had an article on mailing regulations today. We can send you 1st class, 8 oz. packages without request, so let us know the little things that would make you happier or more comfortable. Then we can send “parcels of uniforms and military accessories, [ordered by officers themselves], up to 70 lb. and 100 inches in length and girth, without approved request, or any 5 lb. parcel (15” maximum length, 36” combined length and girth) for which we can show your written request accompanied by the envelope with A.P.O. postmark from you. This doesn't have to be approved by your c.o., either.

I hope you get this week's “Time.” It's the best I've seen for quite a while. I read it all last night. Training my editorial eye to see what would interest you most, clipped out and mailed. Today while waiting for Dr. Gruppe to call me back I picked up “And So Victoria,”

which Rita had brought from the library, and now can't get out of it. It's a novel of English royal history, brutal, and God knows there are many other things I'd rather read, but I'm in for it unless my curiosity gives out, I guess. A movie and a book which is more escapist have a different value now; one doesn't realize that perhaps he is exercising more self-control than is necessary, – to get into another world for a while saves a lot of wear and tear on nerves, not to mention will-power. There's no use being a stoic if something less demanding (and more developing) is right there to fill in. I don't want to forget about you, but there are parts of this life that it's a hell of a lot healthier to forget.

We went to church today – it was Children's Day, and Pencil played with Gretta and Harvey all afternoon. It was so hot I felt like a white dress after church, so I dug out that very simple white one with some green stitching and buttons, that Rita made for the summer we were married, and it fits better than last year, so I'm not getting fat. We'll be subsisting on fresh green things soon, storing up vitamins and keeping our weight down. I hope your diet is pleasant, and will continue to be. Bob Forrest wrote that the Army "beans" of this war is Spam – that ought to make you happy – especially if I send you back covers of "Time" to keep your interest in it aroused.

Goodnight, my darling,
and Love, Dordo

#17. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

Camp Shanks, NYC

June 15, 1943

Dear Dordo,

There is a lot that I would like to tell you about the current arrangements, but I am getting more and more respect every day for the sanctity of Military Information. It is strange how, when it is

your own neck, you get so that you analyze every statement, spoken or written before you permit yourself to give out.

There are some WAACs in the camp here. It is really a thrill to see the kids march by. They use a slow cadence march, about 95 steps a minute, and about a three quarter step. They also march all the time at attention. It isn't really necessary, but their formations are so close that it makes it easier that they then are not walking on each others heels, as would be the case in route step. A WAAC officer told me that the gals could step out at 120 a minute should the occasion require it. Anyway they have much more spirit and group cohesiveness than the male units in camp. They stick together and all try to make the group look good. I might say, though, that this is only the case when the WAACs are task force outfits. I can't be as complimentary about the ones that are station complement. The task force units go right through the whole works, with the enlisted men wrestling the heavy barracks bags around, the enlisted men and officers going over the obstacle course, night marches, drill calisthenics, policing the area and all the rest. Anybody who says they are fake soldiers and lead an easy life doesn't know what the hell they are talking about.

The longer we stay here, the more little things keep cropping up which take time and attention to straighten out. Most of them are personal problems of the men, and could be handled by the non-commissioned officers, if I had a good group of those. I don't. So I am elected. I don't know whether I told you about this or not, but I found a man in the unit with the Pulitzer Prize for producing *American Jubilee* at the NY. World's Fair. Also produced about 50 shows on Broadway, and still fairly young, about 34 I imagine. A buck private, and going over as a draftsman. Named Albert Johnston. Salary about 400 a week prior to his army career. After doing a lot of talking to a lot of people I finally have got him out of this unit, where he is wasted and assigned to the Special Services. He wants to go overseas, but in his own field. He has a lot of ideas concerning front line productions which sound good. Even in this IBM key punch tabulating machine army it is very possible for round pegs to land

in unround holes, usually due to the incompetence and laziness of officers charged with the responsibility of assigning men to specific tasks and specific units.

Yesterday a man brought a letter to me which was personally signed by General Ulio and addressed to the man's mother. It told of the death in action of a brother in North Africa, well after Mr. Rommel's departure. It must be tough to breathe a sigh of relief when the fighting is over, and still get such a letter. Nothing much I could do about it.

We found a man in the outfit named Batattio with 20 years experience as a barber. Needless to say, he is now hard at work at a trade he likes. We were fortunately able to give him a pass to go home and get his tools. He will have an overseas goldmine.

One thing about this embarkation business that will interest you is the fact that while on boat it is impossible to get a bath until one arrives at destination. I assure you that we will be a very strong group of men.

The most discouraging thing about all this is the fact that army procedure is set up in such a way that it becomes possible to send overseas as casual officers and filler replacement enlisted men large numbers of undesirables and incompetents. It would seem to me that overseas service should be a privilege and an honor given to those who have performed satisfactory service. But this is the way it works – a certain theatre of operations needs, say, fifty quartermaster enlisted men in various ratings. The request goes through channels and finally gets down to a CO of a camp somewhere in this country. It just asks for fifty guys. Human nature dictates that he will give the fifty men in the outfit with the poorest records and the ones most likely to make trouble. It is unfortunate but it exists – and it certainly makes my job, that of training and controlling a group of these misfits no pleasure at all.

I am now beginning to feel like station complement. I am getting to know the guys who are around here permanently – and, would they ever like to get out!

Love John

#18. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

June 17, 1943

Hello –

What a surprise! Two cards and a letter from you today. This time I was sure you'd gone. From now on I'm going to give up thinking about it. I hadn't had a letter from you since June 3rd, and it was a week yesterday that you phoned and said you would write that day, if you could get something to write on.

Dorrie had a card, and one letter from you to your family, but not the second one you said you wrote them. They of course had your wire for money, so then I knew you were still here. Did you have to go to Brooklyn to get the money? Is your being there a military secret – you were highly uncommunicative about it for an uncensored letter. Were you there overnight – my card and letter seem to have been mailed on different days? (card Sunday, letter Wednesday) Could you date them – it would help our surmises considerably.

Bill has made Dorrie promise to stay in Utica 'til he's back, so I'll have her for company, anyway.

Penny's cold is about gone except for that adenoidal effect he gets. Some nice guys gave us a beautiful box for a sandbox, so he and his friends will have a place of their own to dig. He will probably have his tonsils out sometime this month. The flies are getting pretty thick.

I'm glad you find the WAAC's admirable. There has been so much horrid comment about them in the papers, and people here get so much rabid criticism of them from the boys who are in camp. Even Billy is bitter about them, and three boys in one family here wrote from three different camps that they're just a bunch of prostitutes. It didn't seem as if the officers could possibly be, and probably the

privates are just about like the privates in any Army – a mixture of the naive and the “wise.”

Your description of Army routine, in the case of assignment of personnel, etc., was terribly interesting. It doesn't look very bright for Sammy, tho – he's not the type to utter a sound if they give him the most obnoxious, unsuitable job in the Army. It looks as if he's going to get it by Fall – if he does, I may be teaming up with Evvie, for the sake of their survival. I'm glad you're showing so much respect for the personalities you're responsible for, anyway. Doesn't it make you feel good to be able to use your brains and your training to help them? As an individual you might not feel as if you could do much about winning this man's war, but if you can set one right guy off the wrong track, you've justified those brains and that training. I'm proud when I know you've done those things. – People – individuals, are what matter most of all, really, only people in authority seldom recognize it.

Don't worry about the phone bill – especially when you haven't written, it's worth quite a lot to know you're around, and there'll be a long time when the sound of your voice would be worth a couple of symphony tickets. Maybe you could even afford a call yourself sometime, if you think we're too saddled with debt – it didn't cost so much to call your family that night I was with you. (If there weren't this hospital bill hanging over my head, I'd have sent you money right away, but it does seem right to get it done this month if possible. I do hope that the check won't wait until the 7th of every month!) We might go to the early movie tomorrow night, but aside from that, there's usually someone near the phone evenings and weekends, and much of the daytime, weekdays, and if the phone bill is large a month or two, it is still our greatest thrill to hear from you directly; worth a sacrifice if it comes to that.

Goodnight, my friend John.

Love, Dordo

#19. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)
Camp Shanks, NYC
June 18, 1943

Dear Dordo,

Another hot sticky day. I have gotten tired of wearing khakis and then having to discard them after only one day, so I am now going around permanently in fatigue clothes, a grey green coverall – which can remain unpressed.

Had rather an unfortunate little incident yesterday when I was called by a fighting quartermaster major for not saluting when I left his office. He certainly was an arrogant overbearing fat rascal. As soon as I rank him, which I hope won't be over a year, I am going to come back and present him with the business.

The kids are shaping up alright now – good shape, not so many sore feet, and the delinquents are pretty well defined, so we can keep them on labor details. I have had the kids dress up the area by pulling weeds, realigning sidewalks and all the rest of it. The best possible thing for them to do right now would be to go get on a boat. The longer we stay here the more correspondence there is from anxious mothers trying to get their children out from under a foreign duty assignment. The weirdest case to date was a letter where one said that her boy was not fit for overseas duty in that he could not shut one eye independently of another and thus could not fire a gun. The ridiculous part of that is that all of the best marksmen keep both eyes open.

Saw a company of WAACs yesterday doing infantry drill in gas masks and fatigue clothes. They certainly look much more queer in them than men do – but, on the other hand they keep better formation in masks than the men do. This will have to be all for the moment.

Love, and I miss you. John

#20. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1pp.)

Camp Shanks

June 20, 1943

Dear Dordo –

Do I detect a note of complaint? If so, I assure you it is entirely justified. I will try to be better about letters – but please don't think that I feel so much apart from you guys. You are with me in my thoughts many times a day. There is no acceptable substitute in this life for the life we have had and will have together. I feel that this is another case where you need a little reassurance – Well, baby, you got it. I love you – but I probably avoid saying it in letters because it looks so darn unsatisfactory & insufficient on paper.

Also, re letter writing, we have had a bit of instruction to avoid regularity in correspondence in as much as that is a tip-off to departure when the letters stop.

I wasn't in N.Y.C. overnight. The cards were mailed from there & the letter from here. All our mail though goes through the postmaster N.Y.C.

I don't think I will take any action to track down or eliminate the rumors re my whereabouts.

You see, no matter what I do, I still have to let the men off on passes for 12 hrs. to N.Y. It would be so absurdly simple for any curious agent to find out all he needs to know – that trying to track down one rumor would be like trying to find out which straw it was that broke the camel's back.

If I had my way I would issue no passes for anyone to leave a place of this type. It doesn't make sense. As it is now there is no way to assure the secrecy of military information – so don't worry about it too much. Just keep your fingers crossed.

I hope you got my wire okay, & I hope it didn't overdraw you.

Goodbye for now –

Love, John

#21. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

June 21, 1943

Dear John,

I am reminded by the date that this is your family's wedding anniversary, so time out to write a belated card of congratulation. (Be sure and thank them for ck.) I'm beginning to wonder if you're going to be here for ours – just on this side of the drink would be comforting.

Your June 17th letter came today, thanks for the date. It helps me locate you in time and space. It was censored, but not cut anywhere. Again, are my letters to you censored? Sometime write me from your barracks, so you can answer a question or two – and speaking of barracks, where are the other two pages of that “four page letter [you] had written?” Sometime your life may be so dull you'll want to remember the little things of this “great experience,” and you'll be glad you had me to write to, and save your letters. Then, too, someday Penny will be a young man, and might enjoy reading about the things that are happening to you. Not to mention me, now.

Do you, necessarily, have to read of terrific action, and great events, to enjoy reading? I don't think you do, if it's about a person, just things about the way he lives makes good reading, if it's not too repetitious. At least I hope that's as true of you as of me and I think it is, because we're both interested in people. God help me, if you need blood and thunder in your letters, – our lives aren't up to their usual lurid standard right now!

We've had several hot days, and of course I hung around the phone quite a lot over the weekend, but today Penny and I really made the rounds. We went looking for strawberries around the Pinnacle, and worked our way down the front, thru all the trees we planted. Not many berries, but fun. After lunch, we walked down the railroad tracks to Western's Spring, and got wet feet, a drink, a

lot of watercress, and a beautiful wild bouquet. There was still time after that, so we went to the Bush Pasture, which is a big hilly place, with a brook, right in back of Forrest's fields. We haven't had any hot water here, for baths in this sticky weather, which has made keeping clean a tedious and dabbling process. But I discovered a good big swimming hole within ten minutes of the house (Penny time), so life took on new light today. I can't face a cold tub, but with a cake of soap, a little privacy, and a brook, we should be able to face a lot of hot weather ungummily! Besides it is a perfect picnic place.

You might make another phone call some time. Or if not, use the stamps. You can write us all about you – we're your friends, and since we know you so well, a few of the details wouldn't be amiss. I don't seem to adapt myself well to separation, when it's so uncommunicative. I'm not nagging – just suggesting a few points for those times when your mind goes blank. I know what a sheet of empty paper and a call to write a letter does to you, Pal, – but just think about the other end of it. (All we know is not what we read in the papers; I don't read 'em) – Come to think of it, (if you do) you know me, too.

And you know I love you,
Dordo

#22. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Poland, NY

June 23, 1943

Dearest John,

It was nice to hear from you today, – the letter you wrote last Friday. I'm glad you got some fatigue clothes, they must be more comfortable, as well as less strain on your cleaning problem. I hope the heat isn't too hard to bear. We are having our first, real period of hot, sunny weather, and I haven't groaned a groan. It's just delightful

to me, it seems as if I'd been cold forever, and have to store up all the heat I can before another winter of God knows what curbs on warmth.

A letter from Dr. Gruppe today sets the new tonsillectomy date as Monday morning, the 28th. I hope we make it this time! We will go to Utica Sunday night, and probably spend most of next week there. It sure dragged out until the last of the month, which is never the best time for us, but I still have \$25, which will undoubtedly cover immediate expenses. I wonder if the check will continue to come on the 7th of the month? Boy! I'll be paying the next to the last car payment – and we'll soon have a completely paid for car, bless its heart.

Today they announced the opening of a new supply route to China, via the Himalayas, – sounds like fun for you, Cheri. You must be anxious to get going on the job. It's so exciting to think about.

The farmer boy had quite a time yesterday. Mr. Forrest cut a lot of deep grass around here, and he was busy haying (Pencil) with a weeding fork and wheel barrow. He had on a sunsuit, and was lifting armfuls of the stuff, hugging it to his little bare chest, with his arms and shoulders covered with it too. It seems that there were nettles in the hay, or some week that lasted until bedtime, and the sting was agonizing. When I found out there was poison ivy near where he'd been, I was scared silly, but he is back to normal today, and at least I'll know enough to keep him away from the other horrible weed.

I am thinner, or harder, at least, and tanner, and my hair looks better than it has since I left Poland. I hate to think it's the Poland climate, but something has made it like it used to be when it was an asset instead of a liability.

I would like a picture of you, the way you look now. By the way, your pictures at Fay's aren't done yet!

After all the personnel work you're doing with the men, you should be able to iron out my mistakes with Pen when you get back!

Love, Dordo.

#23. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2 pp.)

Poland, NY

June 25, 1943

Darling,

Most nights when I write you darkness has come, and the whole town has quieted down, except for an occasional car passing or heels going by on the sidewalk, but on Friday and Saturday nights I have lots of company, and this part of the world is full of people. Just because the movies are across the street!

Yesterday was a rather disorganized day, so I didn't write, tho I got such a nice letter from you. It was good to carry around with me, tho, thru the day (mentally). There were kids around, and Rita has been quite a bit "with" me the last two days – probably because we're going away Sunday.

Oh God – what a problem she is! No sympathetic person could be around her and be indifferent to her, yet there's nothing you can really do. Remove one problem and you get another, and nothing is enough. It's going to be a job to get away in the Fall, tho I mention it practically every day to soften the blow. That's one thing I can't seem to make a day by day proposition; if you did, it would suddenly be all out of control – you have to keep gauging the present by what it will mean in the future.

It will be nice to get to Utica for a little while, tho I hate to have Penny uncomfortable so we can! Of course he won't be uncomfortable long, and I do hope it gives him some better winters ahead. He's been John all day today, or Captain MacDonald. He does miss you terribly, and in ways that he doesn't understand, but ways that give my heart a twist.

I hate to think there's so little real security connected with your position. When it's their own lives, you'd think discretion would come easier to people, but none of us is born and bred for the kind of world we're in just now, and it's hard to realize its dangers. Wars

more than anything else seem to make men on the scale of ants, to me!

Gosh, sometimes I feel frustrated, letters are such paper and ink things. I'd rather feel your fuzzy head, or look at your reclining frame from across the room, or just lay my face against yours for a minute. Sometimes when there's a lot to say, writing is like talking and gets a load off your chest, but there are times when you wouldn't talk. Companionship isn't more than 30% verbal, anyway. And on paper-!

The numbness which settled over me way back in April when we knew you had to go, is wearing off. I find I am no longer in a comparatively unemotional state, I can get mad at Rita when there's a situation about Penny, (I hadn't, up to now) and I feel concern about you when I think you're gone, in a different way, and I guess it all started when I got mad because you weren't writing. No doubt you were in the midst of some reactionary state, too, and that's why you didn't phone or write for so long. And there's no way to get our moods synchronized! "They" might say this is a new test of love – personally I'd be willing to give up testing and wallow in – if it were possible to.

This is an awful letter! I love you, Johnsie, I'm Sleepy. Dordo

#24. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Poland, NY

June 29, 1943

Dearest John,

What a relief! Out of that hot, noisy, and indifferent hospital back to your Mother's cool, sweet-smelling, quiet house! Dr. Gruppe came in at 7:30 this morning and said Penny could go home today, and we were out of there in less than an hour.

Pencil was a wonderful boy, and is now rolling around on "your"

bed, with a little fever, considerably weak with a tinny, flat, little voice from an empty, swollen nasal pharynx, and a little smile. We got to the hospital at 8 a.m. yesterday, and had his finger pricked, a rectal temperature, a capsule inserted rectally, and a hypodermic before the operation, which made the ride to the operating room just a relief. He said goodbye to us cheerfully, and the nurse said he didn't cry at all while he was gone. It seemed a short time until he was back, still under ether, laid over a pillow, spitting blood into a basin. He was very dreamy most all day yesterday, and of course their throats hurt terribly with that big raw cut in them, so he was pretty well doped, I imagine. But he wasn't nauseated which most people are after ether, and he didn't bleed much, so it must have been a nice clean operation. Dr. Gruppe said his tonsils were large and badly scarred, and he had the prize adenoids of the season – the largest he meant, – bigger than the ends of this two thumbs (the doctor's) together, (which must be big, as he takes out dozens a week)

He had a private room, and your Mother and I stayed with him all day – otherwise we might as well have been alone, as far as the hospital was concerned. Of course they are short of help, now, but that floor was particularly badly run, and last night and this morning we had about as little service as humanly possible, and the noise was amazing all night and all day. I stayed all night with him: it was so hot, and at 2 a.m. there was a very noisy blackout, so they closed the windows, pulled down the shades, and left us to swelter until morning. His fever was high in the night, so he must have felt tired when he woke up, but the noise was what got me. He's starved, now, and waiting for some jello, which ought to slide over his throat as easily as anything. I can't help but feel that with all that extra space in his nose and throat, he'll get much more air when he breathes, and have a much easier time eating.

He'll be in bed a couple of days, and then up gradually. We are very pleased with Dr. Gruppe and very annoyed with Faxton hospital. You know I'll take a lot of inconvenience if I think it's unavoidable, but

they're just lax and undisciplined – of which you know plenty, too, now.

Another contribution to this occurred yesterday afternoon. The car was parked outside the hospital with the top down, and when I heard a thunder shower coming, I went down to put the top up, and drive over here for some overnight things. It turned over once, then clicked out, and I knew the wiring was off, somewhere. I called one place and explained the details –that I couldn't leave the hospital for long, and had to get the top up before the rain. They promised to send a man right away, but waited until it was after five, then called back and said the man had to go home, and couldn't do it. Of course it started raining, and I started madly calling people, and when I finally got one that had a man available, they refused to send him because he'd get wet!

I said, "What kind of men are left in this country," and burst into tears! No one I know would refuse to help out in a situation like that, yet I couldn't get anyone, and when I was willing to sit in the rain and steer, it seemed as if half a man could drive, covered up, and push me. So the leather seats got soaked, and the man who came on at 6:30 came and got me, and the car is now getting repaired, I hope. Popop came and got us this morning. Nice time for the car to quit.

Seems like the guys who are fighting might as well know that they're fighting for themselves, and the handful of people they love, and have no illusions about the general mass they leave behind, from the start. I believe that's the way it's always been, anyway, and probably they fight better and more cheerfully for their own selves and their families. The rest of the riff-raff that stays behind and gums things up just rides along over the finish line – until the post-war reactions start.

This War is nothing, compared to the job that will come after, if it's to do any good. Only they can't draft people for that job. (There's always one kind of people that makes it better, like the nurse's aides – they're really doing a job, I observed, and are received with appreciation and gratitude. They look nice too! And work hard.) If only the War doesn't last so long that people lose their initiative.

All sort of abstract and not very cheery. Just to make you realize that the incompetence and stupidity you see has its parallels. Intelligence is a lovely thing, if used.

Penny's describing the operating room to Dorrie. I told him just what to expect so he wouldn't be frightened, and told him to look around and see all he could. He said "there were two with masks on, and one put a thing over my nose," and Dr. Gruppe was there "and had a light on his hat." So he did look around. Dorrie says he acts a trifle tipsy now, which is accurate – just pleasingly drunk. Probably from the drugs.

The car is back, and runs. Total cost for "towing" (he pushed me), new battery cable and labor, \$4.60. Nice work. Total hospital cost for overnight, \$16.10. Now for the doctors' bills.

Your pictures are here, and really look nice. Your Mother has two poses in a beautiful frame, that she gave Popop for Father's Day. I will enjoy mine a lot (Where's the beer hall picture of you?)

Dorrie and I were laughing about the surprise Jane Fay had when she was visiting Barbie Nelson, and Barbie walked into the bathroom and got into the tub with Jane, who was taking a bath. She said she and her new husband always did that. But what really struck us funny was to try to imagine what you'd do if I walked in and got into your bath. You'd probably slide down the drain!

Well Honey, the tonsils are gone at last, and those awful adenoids. He can't help being better, and more comfortable.

Good luck and better times to you, Darling.

With love from every one of us. Dordo

#25. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1 pp.)

Censored. Chicago

June 29, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I was probably within 4 miles of you on Monday night. Took the Iroquois out of N.Y. at 11:30 p.m. No stop at Utica.

You can guess the rest. Way beyond Utica – and probably a little north of Aunt Ann.

I am not mentioning this to a soul but you – & no more letters to anyone but you until I arrive at destination. I don't want everybody & his brother to know about this.

At present time I am a few miles beyond Toledo.

I'll write again – after I mail this at Chicago.

All my love

John

#26. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2 pp.)

Poland, NY

June 30, 1943

Darling,

Being here, and being more idle, makes me think of you more, or at least in a different way. I think of you as much in Poland – and sometimes with more desperation, but there are so many new – old reminders of you here, of the different times you've been here too, from the first few times I came with you, and the Summer we stayed here before you were in the Army, to all the short holidays we slipped into the last few busier years. Now, with leaves on the trees, and the front porch furnished for the Summer, and the eternal children's voices from the street, and the smell of green vegetables cooking, reminds me of the Spring and Summer visits we've made, and I wish you were here, too.

Not that it's Summery now! The temperature dropped from 100 degrees to 45 degrees during the course of yesterday. Probably you're cooler, and more comfortable, and I'm glad. Fifty-five degrees is too much, and now it's just impossible to get warm, out of bed. It's

a little dangerous for Pee Wee, and we're being awfully careful. Your mother had the furnace disconnected, and you know how it always get colder inside than out in this weather, so we haven't even given him a bath after the hours of fever and being drenched with perspiration. This noon Dorrie came in, telling about how she stood and shivered, waiting for the bus, (with a coat on). Pencil said, "Don't be a panty waist. – Why didn't you get under a tree?"

Every time he talks he surprises me with his new voice. He doesn't talk much because it hurts, but he has such a quiet, high, slightly nasal voice. Probably after a week or so it will be gone, but it's queer now. And another thing that's "bothered" me is that I can't hear him breathe when he's asleep anymore. I used to be able to lie in bed here, and tell whether he was asleep or awake, and tell how he ticked by the way he breathed, and now I can't hear him unless I bend right down over him.

The headlines tonight look good – about Churchill saying the submarine menace is licked, which means it must at least be much better.

We've wondered why there is so little Pine Camp Army traffic through Poland this summer. Your Mother just said they're using it for German prisoners now. A lot of Army trucks went through one Sunday, with girl civilians driving them, going North.

Penny's face is pinched enough so his ears look big and his tan shows so. His mouth is like yours, and he's sweet the way you are (neither of you hold it against me when I get bitchy!)

Margie is more like herself now, which is nice, but it has taken a toll from her youthfulness. The frame of her face shows more – not because the skin is tighter, but because her face is thinner and the skin looser, so that from the side a person who knows her well can see that Johnsie's going away has been a sock under the belt to her.

Incidentally, I have lost eight pounds, and not on Army routine. Just from walking to the post office, I guess. So you see, Darling we really do miss you – that's why it matters so to know all we can about you.

Love from all of us,

Dordo

#27. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1 pp.)
Cheyenne, Wyoming
June 30, 1943

Dear Dordo-

At this moment rolling over the Nebraska flats. Set my watch back from 3:07 PM to 2:07 PM at Platte. The good housewives of Platte have a canteen in the station with everything free. Coffee, cigarettes etc.-very nice.

Our reservations in Chicago were no good so, after much fumbling around we sat up all night on a day coach to Omaha, and this morning transferred to the Pullman sect. There are 11 of us and we had a fair time – I mean a good time. I wouldn't have missed it – even though we felt kind of green about it at the time because we thought we might have to ride all the way into L.A. (ghastly thought).

The scenery isn't as flat as it was; there are sort of rolling sand hills – but as far as prairie is concerned – it just looks like a bunch of oversize scraggly fields to me.

A little while ago I guess we must have made a picturesque & typical group. We were playing cards in one end of the Pullman – a lot of smoke in the air – and in the other end some soldiers around a guitar – & in the men's room some sailors with trumpets practicing their calls – blowing the corny notes right out into the faintly dismal scenery of Nebraska – Our next pause is Cheyenne – which I am anxious to see.

Adios for now – and I am enjoying this – believe me!

Love

John

#28. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1 p.)

Troop train, Ogden Utah

July 1, 1943

Dear Dordo,

Just pulled out of Ogden, Utah – spent the morning dusting through a bunch of brown and red rocks – some of them wind eroded to look like toadstools & water jugs & temples & sometimes nothing at all – but I don't have to tell you – you've seen it all – & the train people tell me this isn't a very pretty route.

Had to share a lower with Lt. Wagner last night – he is 1" taller & weighs 20 lb. more than I do. I guess you can imagine how that was. I was up at 6 to look at the scenery.

Service men on these western trains are limited to 2 meals per day – & shunted off into the poorest Pullmans & coaches. I don't like it at all.

Cigarettes are 24 cents a pack in Utah. Food is terrific.

We are beginning to slow down for Salt Lake City & I want to mail this – so goodbye & love.

John

#29. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Troop train, near Los Angeles

July 2, 1943

Dear Dordo–

Just headed thru Pomona & about 30 mi from L.A. It is my considered opinion that 75% of the U.S. is waste land. Can now see Palms & orange groves from the train window.

Of course we didn't come the best way possible.

When you write me, leave the X off of the A.P.O. No. from now on. I may get a new one. I don't expect to get any letters from you for some time – as they will have to all be rerouted.

I don't know what to expect at destination. Maybe an hour, maybe a week – but I think it will click a lot quicker than the previous place did. Had a berth to myself last night & finally got a night's sleep. (The train is about to stop – notice the improvement in legibility.)

Now I am beginning to wonder whether I want to come back this way, or the other way – I would sort of like to make it a complete job.

I will close this off now – so that I can get a look at the outside world.

This whole thing is making me as excited as a little kid – (and, baby, am I glad to skip that trip in the other direction – for reasons I can't tell you in any letter – but which you can probably guess.)

Love to you and Penny – John

#30. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

Los Angeles, California

July 2, 1943

Dear Dordo –

Just to let you know we have arrived and are staying the night in the nasty little shack pictured above. They have some jerk playing here named Martin in a joint called the Coconut Grove & the place is filthy with flowers and palms and patios & swimming pools. Our room is much too large and airy. The food is too rich, there is too much liquor and everybody is too damn friendly.

Love, John

#31. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

Somewhere in California

July 6, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I can't tell you where I am, or how I got here, but I will be able to write you a letter later that will give details.

I tried to call you on the 3rd. I wanted to talk to you very badly, not only because of the day – but because of the distance away. I tried innumerable times, but when they did finally get a line through it was impossible to make the Herkimer operator even understand the number.

The weather is absolutely wonderful here – hot days and cold nights – with never a cloud in the skies. A mist -liquid sunshine – that lifts around 9:30 a.m. Last night walking back to the barracks from the Post Theatre I saw more stars than I have ever seen before. I am beginning to wonder how I found it possible to live anywhere else but out here.

The Ambassador was wonderful for one night. That place has everything – swimming pool, gardens, tennis courts, golf course – innumerable stores & places to eat & even a theatre in the hotel.

All of my luggage is intact, but there is now too much of it.

Much love, darling, and I am sorry again that I was unable to get hold of you.

You can say so little in these letters that they sound silly – I am now under a hush-hush routine more stringent than the last place.

Adios for now –

John

Tell Penny he looks good without tonsils.

#32. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Poland, NY

Thursday, July 8, 1943

Darling,

You were really wonderful about writing from the train, and with all the excitement, it must have been hard to light anywhere long enough to write letters. Not to mention the one from the Ambassador – I really did feel so happy that you paused right in the midst of your first day there to tell me about it. You don't know how much something like that means now. I realized, being away from here a little while, that I'm too much with old people, and the week in Utica made me feel even stronger about getting away in the Fall; – your letter brought me closer to going places and having fun, and having seen the things you were seeing for the first time, it was as much like being with you as anything 3000 miles away can be.

I was glad to have you say that you preferred to leave from the West Coast, too. Your Dad and I feel that it must be safer, but it's reassuring to find that you do. Isn't California wonderful? I hope you got a decent look at it. Of course it must be browner in Summer, but the lovely Pacific and the mountains give it color, not to mention the people, and do I hear you saying you'd like to see more after the War?

It was a week ago today that your letter came telling that you were on the move. We were in Utica, and Rita phoned that she had forwarded one postmarked Chicago, which you can imagine set 9 Beverly in a turmoil of conjecture. Of course they gathered around with bated breath every time one came, and I shared them all with them. They will keep your whereabouts as carefully concealed as I, they haven't told a soul that anyone has heard from you since May 10th, and in answer to the daily queries, they always say "No we haven't heard a word, don't expect to for a while." They are your family and this whole thing has affected them more than you will ever guess. I was glad to be with them, and it made you seem closer to all of us to be together during the excitement of your trip. And

don't doubt that it was exciting, vicariously as well as in fact. It was so nice to know you were out of that camp, after all the suspense and discomfort, and having a chance to go somewhere, safely, and to see California.

I'm sure I was awake that night you were so near us. It was a horribly hot, noisy night in the hospital, and Penny only slept because he was so drugged. I didn't even try. There was a blackout at 2:15, and they closed the windows tight, increasing the heat, and making the night seem even weirder. I'm sure I heard every train that whistled thru Utica that night.

Then the day the letter from the Ambassador reached Poland (Monday), Rita called again, and I phoned the hotel immediately. They got Los Angeles as easily as they usually get Rochester, but you had gone. It would have been fun to say hello to you once more.

John, I can't tell you how proud your enclosure*** made me – made all of us. It was unexpected, and is a wonderful justification of the faith in your ability that is responsible for your being headed for where you are. I hope a copy goes to Rochester, but not until you are where it won't matter for them to know your movements. It is a wonderful thing for us to have, and Pop had Dorrie make several copies of it, tho of course he can't show them to anyone now. I feel like framing it, and Darling, it's just the nicest Anniversary present I could have – it arrived on July 3rd. How fortunate the C.O. had such a command of the language – he couldn't have brought out more desirable qualities for the situation that the ones he found you showed. It was thrilling to receive, and will be cherished always, because it says what I have always known. Sometimes I may have seemed to expect a great deal of you. You are apt to find that I always will, because you have and are so much, that it's natural to look for more from you than from even your contemporaries. And I know what you are, and can be, and love you for it.

Pencil is getting back on his pins, but has lost quite a bit of weight. I can't get over not being able to hear him breathe at night. He was wobbly longer than I remembered he should be, but his color is better now, and I'm sure he will eat and sleep better, as well as have

more resistance. The whole episode cost about \$67, of which I still owe thirty, not bad. Especially considering the phone bill was \$13.75 this month; two N.Y. calls are still not in. None of which was wasted resources. But having checking accounts go up to about ten cents per check for us is a blow.

All my love, wherever you are,

Dordo

***Enclosure from John that Dorothy refers to in her letter:

28 June, 1943

Subject: Commendation

1. Capt. John D. MacDonald, 0-397110, Ordnance Dept., attached to this headquarters from 10 May, 1943 to date, during which time he served in the capacity of Company Commander of a casual unit. This unit consisted of enlisted men who arrived from a station controlling mainly replacements. Capt. MacDonald took charge of these men and organized them into a cohesive unit in the most expeditious fashion. Processing these troops in a minimum of time allotted, he maintained excellent discipline among his men during the period indicated, and thereafter conducted an outstanding training program.
2. Capt. MacDonald exhibited the utmost in intelligence, cooperation, initiative, painstaking effort and common sense. These qualities, among others, were prominently displayed in an excellent manner, and a distinct loss is felt in that his services can no longer be made available hereafter.

Edward J Halprin

Major, T.C. Commanding

Camp Shanks, N.Y.

#33. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1pp.)

Los Angeles

July 9, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I certainly miss getting mail. I keep wondering is everything okay. I made an abortive attempt to phone you today – but gave up after an hour of excuses from the phone girl. You had better just skip the thought of my phoning.

It looks as though this would become another Camp S. I certainly hope not.

I am becoming as restless as hell. There is enough to do in the line of work if I wanted to look for it – but it certainly lacks stimulation.

I am sorry that this is such a short note – but I fail to find anything of sufficient interest to write about.

As I wrote the above I remembered your exhortation about the little things.

Well, at the moment I am sitting at a table on the porch of the Officer's Club. All I can see is a long line of yellowish brown barracks stretching across sandy dust. It is 6:30 here and the sun is still fairly high – but when it goes down night will come with a whoosh. I can see into the rather barren looking cafeteria – where I will soon be going to eat with Freddy & Smith. The porch opens off a mammoth room used as a dance hall. It has tables & chairs & couches & overstuffed chairs all along the wall –plus a juke box and a few pin ball machines. The juke box is in pretty constant use. The bar is on the opposite side from the porch. You can buy 3.2 beer, coke, or set-ups. In order to use set-ups you have to ask for it out of your own bottle which you buy & bring in and they label. In back of me is the damn phone.

Love to you and to Penny,

John

#34. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Poland, NY

July 14, 1943

Dearest,

Probably Friday, we will drive to Rochester. I will try to see someone in the transportation dept. at ROD, and get some final word on the state of our possessions, and whether they will be moved to Utica. Then I will go to the moving company and see whether I can get the refrigerator put in the back seat to take it to Elmira, or whether it could be shipped as cheaply. I will collect possessions from the Davidsons and Lutwacks, and try to see Mrs. Bowlin. I wasn't going to get in touch with her this time, as I didn't want anyone in Rochester to know you were still here, and where, but if Freddy has written her, it's probably all over Rochester, anyway. As far as telling anyone there what I know, you can rest assured that I have nothing but contempt for the way anyone there would handle what still involves your safety. Even Tom's wife.

I can imagine what buzzing around Rochester with Rita and Penny, on all these errands will be! Your absence does not simplify life, my friend, it fills it with petty obligations and divided loyalties, and unsatisfying demands. But I shouldn't say that to you, it won't help you any. But you know what I mean, and I can't beef to anyone who understands so well.

If you get stuck for a while where you are, I hope it's near some cities, where you can have a chance to get away once in a while. Incidentally, little fragments about Delhi in stories of China's fliers, and political accounts in "Time," sound as if it were a sort of refuge from all the Asian disadvantages, to homesick Americans.

Three War bonds from your pay have arrived lately. They're up to February, now. My next financial problem will be the car top, but your job is holding up remarkably well.

Pencil wears your soldier hat, and smokes your pipe, and asks if

you're taking good care of the soldier boys, and I go to sleep wishing for the reassuring curve of your back beside me.

Love, Dordo

#35. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

Los Angeles

July 17, 1943

Dearest Dordo-

I am incommunicado again, and this time it looks as though it would stick. They have alerted me and are holding my outgoing mail for delivery after embarkation – so, by the time you get this I will probably be afloat. It certainly will be a relief after all these long months. It has certainly seemed silly to yank me away from you on May 10th and keep me hanging around until now.

Enclosed is \$50 which was surplus to me. I sat in a small game & was fortunate. Don't get conscience qualms & send it to 9 Beverly. I want you to have and use as best you can for you & the Pencil. I read about mounting living costs in the papers & wonder whether the \$200 allotment is going to be enough. If you should start getting odd checks in odd amounts from the government, don't wonder about it. On overseas station they have a new arrangement whereby I can walk into any finance office -lay down any multiple of \$10 & say "Send this to Mrs. JD etc." & and in a daily cable to the office of dependency benefit the name and amount will be indicated & they will send the check to you – Good, hey?

This place is very interesting now that we are shoving off – it is getting as colorful as Camp S was when I first arrived.

Love to you, my darling.

John

P.S. No mail since Shanks.

#36. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

August 17, 1943

Darling,

Piseco – wonderful, beautiful, peaceful, lovely Piseco. I know I love it all year 'round, but when I finally get here, then it is impossible to see how anyone who loves it so much could bear to stay away from it so long.

I can't tell you, John, how much I wish you were here. For one thing, you're the one who wanted to come so badly last year, and looked forward to a vacation this year, so much; for another, with all the changes and disruption and confusion in all the world, and in our personal lives, it's somehow very wonderful to find this most precious place so unchanged, and so stable in its simplicity and its eternal living beauty. And now that so much has happened to us, if you could slip just one week of being here into all the weeks of Spring and Summer, it would give you a satisfaction and contentment that nothing else could give.

The moon is full, and is laying a sparkling path right across the lake, – the only real change in the set-up here is that electricity and a good radio make it possible to get music from WQXR to add to a Piseco evening. Not to mention good light to read or write by, – and of course a fire in the stove is keeping the real cold evening at bay, and the dampness from prolonged rains!

Our coming wasn't really auspicious. As soon as Sammy arrived in Poland bad weather set in, and Bard's chronic sore throat, and Penny's cold (as well as Evvie's unusually tolerant frame of mind) all becomes worse. They were packed to come up yesterday, however, in spite of Bard's being in bed Sunday, and I was applying pressure for them to bring all the supplies and baggage up alone on Monday, and come back to Poland for the kids, Rita, and I today, in order to have some slight chance to make recognition of their tenth

anniversary, the day after ours. But Sunday night Bard's cold became alarmingly worse, and yesterday Dr. Wallace called it "incipient pneumonia."

We just had to get out, it was too crowded, with a sick child for them, and not good for Penny whose own germs were bad enough. So I was the one to drive in, with Rita and Penny, and unload the stuff, in a teeming rain, at seven p.m., while they stayed in Poland and Sammy sneezed his head off in the cold and damp, and Evvie had a million things to do so that didn't contribute a bit to pleasure in their anniversary!

By tomorrow night Bardie will have had a lot of sulphathiazole, and I'm going out to phone them at noon, – if he's well enough to move, they will bring him in tomorrow afternoon to finish convalescing. It is warmer, less crowded, and more pleasant for everyone here, and since Sam has so little time (only the rest of this week) for his vacation, it's the only way they can do what they've looked forward to for so long.

It drizzled on and off all day, and I made many trips up the hill to unload the car (each step of the way under Rita's endless supervision!) But the camp looks so clean and so peaceful, and the power I have acquired of at least semi-detachment stood me in good enough stead, that it has still been possible to feel quite lyrical about being here.

You'll remember that Penny hasn't much reason to be impressed about coming, it was so long ago that he was here, so his delight with the camp and our sodden surroundings was based not at all on anticipation – but how he has loved it from the minute he reached here! Sniffing around like a little puppy, and expanding, and exploring, and exuding little boy pleasure in every movement! Tomorrow it may get more crowded, but I'm always foolish enough to hope I'll be even more inconspicuous in the confusion. If that happens, I'll spend every minute that is my own thinking about you, and wishing we can be together before too long!

You might like to know a little more about our anniversary, – or this end of it. Evvie was adamant about my getting away from

the hubbub, bless her, so Sunday afternoon I found myself in the car, pointed out the driveway, alone, and wondering where to go, since my only idea for observing the occasion was to get a little privacy to write to you. Somehow the Walker Road, and inevitably, the little house overlooking Utica, seemed the answer. It was sunny and windy, and I parked the car across the road on the curve toward Poland, facing the house, on that little driving-off place. I walked up to the house through high wet grass, (the wind made it a little too lonely) and took a whole roll of pictures of the house, and of the different stretches of field and city and hills seen from it. It was hazy, but some should be good enough to send you.

In the group of trees right around the house I found a tall young maple in front, lilacs on either side of the door, a willow drooping over the back, a sparkle-tree near it, apple trees by the shed, and a cluster of thick fuzzy pines at the rear! Just waiting for a little brick or stone house to be set in their midst.

Then I went back to the car, finished copying your poems – that project was the anniversary idea I had been working on, and somehow, writing a letter didn't seem to be the thing. If you can still think of those poems in their relationship to you and me – with all the promise and all the love they bear, if you can understand that they are so much a part of me as you are, and will always be, you can understand all that has been between us, and all that can be – and know that that is all I want.

So, I just wrote the little title page, sealed them at our house, and mailed them off to you from Utica – and I hope Uncle Sam left the postmark “August 15th” on them.

Soon we should be hearing how and where you are –

Love, my Darling Husband

Dordo

Hope you are still having such an exciting time that you won't feel that all this enthusiasm about Piseco is to arouse envy. You understand what it means to get out of the world to here, don't you?

#37. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Poland, NY
August 20, 1943

Darling –

A long time to go before I can possibly hear from you and it seems as tho I can't wait much longer.

That's a useless thing to say – what does one do when one can't wait any longer?

Well, writing helps a little, and one of these letters written sometime about now will be the latest news from home when you get it, because if you keep going you should be fairly near your destination around the first of September, and the letter on top of the pile may be written now. I hate to think of you wading through a lot of stale letters, but sometimes it seems necessary to tell you that life goes on and we think of you and speak of you – and miss you so very much. Your picture is on the radio (in front of the two windows by the porch door) in the dining room here at the camp, and every time we go by or in or out, or look out the window, there you are. Sam says it bothers him, but pleasantly, you know.

The electricity really makes life so much more pleasant. We can enjoy reading more; it's cleaner, and much more convenient for cooking, – and the little bedrooms are the only thing that look artificially bright without candlelight.

It's amazing how many of the camps are empty, and how much the foliage all the way up has increased and thickened, so that it all looks a little unfamiliar. I can't help wondering when it will ever seem to be a bright little stretch of shoreline, with the color of familiar care-free people, and boats humming around, and a vacation-aspect. One wouldn't expect to miss that, but the people whom we have often considered rather a nuisance really have a pleasant part in associations here (You too, Dear!).

Sam has brought some books on India, but they're not the war-

correspondent type, and I look to you for a more colorful picture of it. It's nice to know to what an attractive place you're going, and I hope it's as clean and cheerful as it looks. Dirt can be very depressing.

This is a place to which I come for short stays after long stretches of different kinds of living (from the viewpoint of a lifetime), yet it's a place where those kinds of living are either suspended or intensified sufficiently to give one a much greater view of what has taken place. This time it makes me wonder very much What's next? It's like New Year's!

Love,
Dordo

#38. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.) Poland, NY September 5, 1943

Darling,

Ah-h-h! Alone at last.

That really means something this time. It's been seven weeks since I've been alone, just a little longer than you've been traveling. You probably haven't had much privacy either, on the ship, tho there's no lack of privacy similar to that which certain family relationships create.

A week ago today we drove out of Piseco at noon and went to Elmira – it was hard to leave, Piseco did a lot for me.

It was nice to see the kids, and break up the monotony of the Summer, but it was pretty crowded here, considering the wet and cold weather, for such a long visit. Evvie's nerves aren't as calm as they were when she was pregnant, and although it was a diversion from thinking about you, it was a little tense at times, and I am

glad to be alone with our own things – if only Rita will not get too chummy, now.

We've been forced to eat with her since we came back because our gas all leaked out, but they're making an adjustment to that situation Tuesday.

Well – of all the surprises! Rita just called me to the phone, and it was Margie, to say that you had arrived. It would have been nicer, hearing it from you, but we are all glad to know that awful sea trip is ended, and now you'll be busy and happy in glamorous New Delhi, and we can stop wondering.

She heard in such a round-about way – perhaps there will be an explanation later for not hearing from you – it is a little disappointing. Bill from Bossart Co., or his wife, had just talked with Mrs. Bowlin, and she had had a letter from the Colonel that you arrived before they expected you, and were with him. It must have taken a letter some time to get here, too. She called Mrs. Albiani, and she had already heard from Fred, so we feel a bit queer, but there must be some reason (There'd better be!)

I was just going to mention before the call came, how happy I was to hear from you, yesterday – for the first time since July. It cleared up a small mystery from the day before, when two cards arrived from San Francisco, signed by you, authorizing the change to A.P.O. 4003 – to which, of course, I haven't written for weeks. I couldn't believe you were still around, but it was a relief to hear from you enroute. (Also another queer thing happened last week – another Capt. John MacDonald from Utica wired for \$15.00 from Alexandria Bay, and the bank took it out of our account; until we straightened that out, we were a little slap-happy.

Monday. Labor Day

On the subject of reading matter, Christmas, etc. As soon as you possibly can, let us know what reading material, and in what form, you want most. Tell me whether subscriptions sent directly, (especially the new “pony edition” of Time, sent first-class) or copies bought from newsstands of the different digests, would be better.

Of course, I will clip articles and stories, too, but you will know what would be best.

And books. Of course, we will only send you the best, and that will mean that you won't want to part with them when you return. Can you have them shipped back? Shall I send you book reviews and let you make requests?

We started back from Elmira last Monday. We spent three days in Utica apartment-hunting, but the situation is not good. I have more here than I realized – lacking mainly privacy, and city distractions. What I need badly is space, and city 3-room apartments don't even have as much as there is here. The new Veteran's Hospital has added more population for apartments, and Rome airport is a huge thing now, spilling people all over the countryside. I am making every effort to find a place, but will not move until I find one that will really be an improvement.

We came home to Poland's prettiest time of year, and found hot water – after a Summer without it.

Love, Dordo

#39. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

September 12, 1943

Darling,

A whole week has passed since Margie heard that the Colonel had written Mr. Bowlin of your arrival, and still we haven't heard from you. Of course, it's probably held up somewhere, but it seems so queer that Mrs. Albiani and Mrs. Bowlin have both heard so long ago, and all my trips to the post office have yielded nothing.

The event of this week concerns Penny. It was about 6:00 Wednesday night when they brought him in. I was out in the yard removing the last vestiges of finish from the coffee table, when I

heard such screams that I thought the kids were having a screeching contest and paid no attention to it. But Warren Palmiter came around the house carrying Penny and saying, "I'm sorry, Mrs. MacDonald, but he cut his foot on the bike."

I'll say he did – he caught it in the wheel or sprocket – he was riding behind Warren on a very heavy bike, and it took his shoe off and sliced the back of his heel right down to the bone. It scraped the cords, but didn't cut them, thank Heaven.

I carried him to Dr. Wallace as fast as I could, with a line of mothers and kids forming at the rear, brought out by the yelling. The doctor didn't sew it because he (Pen) was too scared, and upset, and there were too many people there, but he sprinkled it with a sulphathiazide powder and drew it together with strips of adhesive. He planned to clip it the next day, but decided later that drawing it together more each time it was dressed, and using more sulpha, would make a better scar.

It has really come along wonderfully, probably due to the sulpha, – and of course he heals quickly, anyway. Of course, he had a couple of fairly sleepless nights, but it doesn't hurt so much now, even when he moves it quite freely. He's been in bed, or on the davenport, or deck chairs ever since, and has been very good. He won't walk for a while, tho the doctor wants him to use it even at the risk of having it open some, to prevent the cords tightening. Poor boy – he was just getting in such wonderful condition after his operation – recovered and tall and brown. But it's so much better than it might have been, and seems to be free from infection so far, which is the main thing. He doesn't think that being a "pet wounded soldier-boy" is so interesting, now. The first night he had to have your three pictures around the bed, and told you about it.

Warren – Harvey and Gretta's 12 year old brother, felt terrible. They were bringing Pen home from playing with Harvey, and the two little ones wanted a ride. Warren's the nicest little boy I ever knew – a red-head with brown eyes and a straight back, who tries to father their whole family, and he is so nice to the little kids. Their

mother wants to pay the doctor bill, but of course I shan't let her even consider it.

In fact, I am taking Harvey two days a week for her so she can keep on with her work (making veneer for airplane parts) as she couldn't find a regular place for him. Her sister will have him the other days. Of course it is only going to last if and when and until I move.

We have had the most phenomenally cold weather for September, and her apartment has been about 54 to 60 degrees day and night. I'll have to tell you that I was over at her place one evening, early, and she had warmed it fairly well with her oven. When I went over the following morning, after our coldest night, I found both the front and back doors wide open – obviously so there would be no question about her having to come here!

It amused me, and warmed me. She would have been sick if she'd had to sit around in the cold, but she was not taking chances on missing the opportunity to be here. Our fireplace kept us very comfortable, and she stayed all night last night, – there was a “frost,” but today they started the oil burners in mid-afternoon, and she went home to sleep.

Love from Pencil and Dordo

#40. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Poland, NY

September 15, 1943

Darling–

Such a fuss!

For two days I have thought you were with the Colonel in New Delhi, and since that information was supposed to have come from him, by letter, we figured you must have been there almost a month by now, and couldn't see why some letter from you hadn't gotten

thru, even if a cable couldn't have, since both Mrs. Brolin and Mrs. Albiani were supposed to have heard it directly from India.

After several unsuccessful attempts I finally got hold of Mrs. Brolin by phone tonight and found that the information that Mrs. Bill Miller had phoned your mother was completely garbled!

You can imagine how relieved I am to get it straightened up. It shouldn't be a relief to find out you weren't there, but the whole thing seemed so phony, with all our rationalizing, that the facts are most welcome.

So I have haunted the post office, and all the time you were still at sea.

But Mrs. Brolin had better news, as a letter from the Colonel, written last week (Sept. 8) said they were flying to Bombay to meet you on Sept. 14th, which was yesterday. So we should hear soon – and from you.

Mrs. Brolin thinks we should hear in about 72 hours. You can't imagine what that means to us. I had had a long phone conversation with Margie early this evening, and called them back, and told them (Pop and Margie on the two extensions) all this, and they were glad to get it straight, too.

Pencil is much better and rides his bike furiously, but won't walk although he should. The doctor thinks his heel will be healed in a few days, tho it looks a little soupy now. Boy! That was a lucky miss – you will see the scar some day, and see how lucky.

It will be wonderful day when I hear from you – that you're at Hotel Imperial.

All my love,

Dordo

2. Chapter 2 - Between India and Poland - Autumn 1943, Letters 41-73

#41. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)
Censored – Chicago
September 17, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I am now safely ensconced “Somewhere in India” along with Fred and the Col. Made the last leg by plane arriving yesterday P.M. Got a cable off to you this morning. Couldn’t tell whether you had moved or not so I sent it to 9 Beverly. I figured that that way – everyone would know simultaneously.

There is no mail from you here. What cooks?

As yet I have no permanent billet and haven’t been able to unpack. Will settle down within next few days and get off a long letter. I have some extra money – about \$200 which I won wagering on the boat which you will get shortly. Have fun.

Will get off a relatively descriptive letter soon. Bought a sun helmet today and was issued a GI bicycle.

Felt quite odd riding back to the billet in my O.D. bicycle wearing my helmet. Everything so far looks wonderful – good food, work, people and quarters. Love to you and the Pencil. I sure need a letter.

Love,
John

#42. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

September 18, 1943

Dear Dordo-

I will try to give you the daily life as she goes on here and save all the impressions of the trip until I can get them down in carbon copies for appropriate distribution. Don't be afraid that they will fade away as I have scribbled a few of them on the boat.

I am not yet properly outfitted, but am well on the way. Stopped in and bought bush jacket material and shorts material from the British post exchange -15 yards of bush jacket stuff and 8 yards of shorts material plus some rubber soled shoes and two pair of high wool socks, all for 20 rupees, or less than \$7. The bush jacket is a semi-Hollywood affair like a blouse with an open neck, belted back etc. No shirt needed underneath. I am getting three of them tailored to order for a buck apiece - and 50 cents apiece for the shorts. In the little tailor shop the Indians sit on the floor and run little Singer sewing machines by a hand wheel on the end. They also thread needles while holding the needle between their toes. In fact today when Freddy went shopping in the market place he found a man slicing meat by holding the knife between his toes and pushing the chunk of meat back and forth against it with both hands - imagine trying to hold a knife that steady with your toes?

I sent you more money than I had previously anticipated - \$450, but don't worry about my having enough left. I get an additional \$90 a month per diem. My longevity pay and overseas pay added to that gives me a total of \$452 a month, so I will be able to send you some every now and then. Save a part of it for the post war binge when I hit the states.

My day - the bearer, Endar, comes and wakes me at 7:30 with hot tea, bread and fruit. Then I can get breakfast - if necessary downstairs in time to ride off on my bicycle and get to the office by

8:30. Lunch hour is 12:30 to 2:00 & I ride back to the hotel where we have our private table and Ali, our private waiter. Lunch is heavy – then up to the room to read or nap until it's time to ride off again. Work is over at five – then volley ball until your clothes are soaked until about 8:00. Then shower and dinner at 9:00. Then to bed when it seems cool enough.

Yesterday a very nice young Hindu from Kashmir, up in the mountains, came in at tea time. He has dealt with the Col. before, and laid all his bright wares out on the floor. I bought you what I think is a beautiful shawl, hand embroidered border on soft white ibex wool. He has a shop in the mountains and a worker took 9 weeks from dawn to exhaustion making it. I paid 100 rupees for it – or \$30, and when you get it, – about 4 months from now, I want you to see if you can find anyone who can tell, by comparative prices, whether or not I was stung. I also bought us the brightest tea set (18 rupees – \$6) imaginable – you will get that along with the silver bracelet I bought a long way from here – an antique – well – early Victorian, reconditioned, with a delicate thistle design lightly worked in gold (for less than \$5.)

All in all I like it here. There is a lot of malaria and dengue and dysentery – but I am being careful and feeling swell – except for the dread disease of athlete's foot picked on shipboard. More soon.

Love to you & the Pencil
John

#43. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

September 19, 1943

Dear Dordo–

This is a Sunday afternoon – and damned hot – in fact the word hot doesn't properly express it – it is blinding and there is no

movement at all – no traffic. We work Sunday mornings and have just finished lunch. It is very peculiar why, in this heat, you get an urge for hot heavy food. But believe me, you do – and it is the custom to eat it in quantity. I had Mulligatawny soup, curry of rice, curried mutton, veal, spaghetti au gratin, iced tea, mashed potatoes and vanilla ice cream – served by Ali in his red and white turban, white gown, broad red belt and bare feet.

The finances here are something amazing. A tin of shoe polish costs 75 cents. A bottle of scotch about \$20 and yet all the laundry etc. you can turn in is accepted at 90 cents a week. It is hard to think of their crisp little bits of smelly paper as money – so I guess one has to either lose it in a poker game or run out of it before realization sets in. These rag heads though have an eagle eye out for it.

I am beginning to speak a very Americanized version of basic Hindustani. It is sort of fun – but I don't ever expect to speak it due to the numerous clicks and odd gutturals used by the boys.

This whole place is filled with two items that are rapidly becoming very closely identified with the country, one – thousands of four bladed quiet fans that hang down from the ceiling and are almost as great a necessity as food and water-second- thousands of two-wheeled horse drawn taxis called tongas. Fare is 8 annas or 1/2 a rupee or 15 cents for a half mile.

Heard today that my mail is in another town and will be forwarded to me soon – You have no idea of the conjectures you can make about what has happened when you don't hear for two months.

Love
John

#44. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

September 19, 1943

Darling,

It isn't any use to try to tell you how happy I am to hear from you, but it's the best news I can think of until we hear you're coming home. Your cable arrived tonight, and Dorrie had them give her the message, then phoned me, as they sometimes have trouble getting us from Utica. I was beginning to be rather uncomfortable about the whole thing, after the false alarm via the Millers, and had decided that direct word from you would be the only thing that would satisfy me.

I'm terribly sorry you didn't find mail when you arrived. I was sure you'd find such a pile of letters awaiting you that you'd probably never read them all. Things have always happened to us so fast that we might either of us expect that almost anything goes in two months.

Penny's foot has healed on both ends of the cut, and yesterday he started walking. He was slow to walk, but I knew that once he started he would be hard to stop, so didn't rush him. He walks everywhere without help, even from church to the house today. Of course it is very carefully strapped, and he is a little stiff-legged, but it is so wonderful that he has had only this short time with it, as it just missed being serious.

I feel a little restless about the apartment problem, but don't see any way to press the matter. But I think it best to just keep living here as comfortably as we can, and keep hunting – eventually something will pop up.

Nana's birthday is the 29th of this month, and Pop and Dorrie's the next two months. Of course I will get them presents from both of us, but I thought you might like to communicate with them in some way about that time. If you can get any green tea, it would be swell

to send Rita some for Christmas – there won't be any here for years, probably. Coffee is no longer rationed here, you know.

(Editor's Note: coffee rationing ended in July 1943 after beginning November 1942)

You are there! It seems like a million years since you left, and once letters start coming I will be so happy. There is no one like you, no relationship like ours, and it makes a lack that nothing can fill. Sometimes I think "Oh, two years are like a wedge, driven in a human relationship," yet if the relationship is like ours, as close, and based on so much common feelings and tastes and desires, and developed in so much of common experiences and mutual respect and most of all, love, why shouldn't two years or whatever, be just a sort of waiting and enduring, and life be all the fuller when it's over. There are so many people one feels really close to in a lifetime, and it doesn't matter if they're not always around – they stay just as real, and just as unique, and just as irreplaceable all through your life, once they are an accepted part of it. Once you see your life in perspective, as I have done in this spell of comparative quiet since you left, you see that only a few people belong in it forever, and all the people and things in between are just part of the background and the color. You and I are the fabric. Nothing that happens can really take you away, because there's only been one John in my life, and he has been the strongest and the best and the most real. What is a year or two or more compared to the vividness and reality and the enduring friendship and love of a human being who is right for you? All the other things fall away in time.

I love you, my husband, Dordo

#45. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

September 21, 1943

Dear Dordo-

Rode off into the evening last night at 9:30 and saw Judy Garland in "For Me & My Gal." OK except for the flag waving - you have no idea how disgusting and discouraging home consumption movies full of war talk can make you when you are visiting them for purely escapist reasons. All of my reading material since I left the US has been pretty escapist except for four books -

Caribbean Adventure - Ivan Sanderson

White Sails Crowding - Ed. Gilligan

Blackout in Gretley - J.B. Priestly

The Killer & The Slain - H. Walpole

- all of which I enjoyed. I bought the last two in the pint size form English publishers are now forced to use. The first two were borrowed on ship board.

I am dying of curiosity to get my mail from you, The last letter I had is dated June 27th, you know. There should be at least three, & maybe four in transit.

Drove a staff car today & nearly got onto the wrong (right) side of the road once. It is very confusing to have the shift at your left hand.

There is a lot of dirt that I could tell you were it not for military censorship - but some is GI rumor & some is depressing so I'll save it until I get home & looking these letters over will remind me.

Love,

John

#46. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

September 22, 1943

Dear Dordo-

I have a little touch of upset stomach from the Indian food – so I have stayed in the room this morning. I have been going over your letters to me to determine what I am missing.

One of them must have given the dope re Pencil's operation. But you have averaged about one letter every other day since I left – thus I gloat when I think there must be at least another 60 letters for me in transit somewhere – please write with the idea that we don't get news except BBC rebroadcast over Radio India – we don't see magazines or newspapers less than a month old – that I am most hungry for personal news – but could also stand a little home front stuff.

In looking over the time I have been away it also occurs to me that I have drawn an even \$500 pay and sent an even \$500 to you – that is a source of great self-adoration to me. Aren't I wonderful?

Enclosed you will find a hand-made Indian silver knife (it comes out of the scabbard) which is a replica of the knife the Ghurkas use. They are the toughest little men in this part of the world – and all live up in the border hills. The little notch they sight with, and prefer to use a backhand forward scooping motion with it, catching the opponent just below the belt buckle. I have purchased a full size one which I will get off with the other stuff which I haven't actually sent yet. It is a Ghurka tradition that you never show the blade of the knife without drawing blood with it. If among friends you merely nick yourself in the arm.

It is possible to buy a can of grapefruit juice here for \$1.25.

My expenditures, fixed, for a month are as follows – (figure at 3.3044 rupees per dollar.

Room & board– 170 rupees

Bearer 30 rupees

Dobee (laundryman) 12 rupees

Waiter 12 rupees

Misc. services 10 rupees

Pay 830 rupees

What sort of stuff would you like to have me buy?

I can't think of anything at all that I need. If anybody insists on buying me a Christmas present – have them make it a war bond, and turn it over to you. There is no point in sending me anything because I may get it in six months and there is a good chance I won't get it at all. So please don't ignore this plea. Send snapshots, but that's all.

Take care, and write often. Please give the facts in here in which 9 Beverly would be interested to them, because it is too damn dull writing the same stuff twice.

Love,
John

#47. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

September 22, 1943

Darling,

Everybody in this joint decided to take a bath tonight, so while I wait for more water to get warm, I catch you up on what, if any, transpires with us. In the first place, great peace descended after I knew you were safe, and I am furtively watching for letters, tho I know it is too soon. Mrs. Bowlin gets some of her letters so quickly that it seems as if some of the ones that leave here via "airmail" should get to you, but no doubt there are many more things to be sent in your direction than in ours.

Last night I sat up until two, tearing the last of the back issues of "Time" apart, and I sent you some hodge-podge. Any suggestions for future clippings are welcome, – really timely stuff would be old

when it reaches you, so I have concentrated on the Departments, science, music, post-War, and so forth.

Pen had his foot dressed tonight, and it seems to look progressive. You would probably see quite a change in his looks in the six months you have been away. He is much taller, of course, and his face looks different because his nose is larger. I can't tell yet whose it will resemble, but it's plenty big enough for his face, – his right profile is very handsome, really. He won't look like such a little bundle as he did in his snow suit last Winter, his lines are long. He has the nicest hands, too, more like a small adult's hand, slim and strong, rather than chubby and sticky.

The farce (to me) about Pop's permission for Dorrie and Bill has finally ended. Pop can pull his head out of the sand now, since Bill has written to ask if he and Dorrie may be engaged. Permission granted, so your friend Dorrie is very happy. I assured her that you wouldn't have countenanced anyone else, once they were together again, and that pleased her, too, tho she must know how you and I approve of Bill as a very right person for the group, as well as for her.

I finally called Kay about her apartment, and they have come to the point of discussing their moving with the landlady, so it looks fairly possible that they will. Kay is going to suggest me as a successor to them, and I will talk with her (Mrs. Coonradt) about it tomorrow, so at least I will know whether if Tom goes, I could get the apartment.

In an article in the Post about India, by Edgar Snow, he spoke of the place of your present abode as the "mediocre Hotel Imperial, where the American Officers are quartered," . . . is it? Are they all there? Can you tell me whom you meet, if it's a social, rather than a military occasion? Don't forget that we know the least possible of your daily existence and surroundings, and quite commonplace things about your life there will be most interesting to all of us. Do you feel like staying for a long look or like dusting out on the first boat after the Armistice? Not that you may have much choice, but what are your personal reactions? If the correspondents can

express their view through censorship probably yours would be as discreet, and they are as pertinent to me.

Before I say goodnight, I'll tell you the compliment your son paid my cooking tonight. Having found a recipe by the Pepperidge Farm woman for cheesecake (which I remember you don't like), I decided to try it. It was an arduous procedure, and after the results were presented at dinner, Penny tasted his and said, "Mother, I don't think I like cheese cake." He started scraping the filling off the crust, which turned out to be rather crackery and brown, and said "I think I'll just eat the wooden part."

Much love,
Dordo

#48. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

September 23, 1943

Dear Dordo-

Another day and no mail - well, it should be quite a batch of data when it catches up with me. The mail orderly estimates another 6 weeks before I will have it all.

Enclosing a menu off of the ship. Don't be misled - it was almost good - thus making it 50 times better than the usual run. We got two meals a day, but there was a filler at noon, of stale bread, cold sliced spiced luncheon meat and cocoa made with water. Food was served cafeteria style for the company grade officers, and at the tables for the field grade boys. Colored navy mess attendants slapped the food onto the partitioned trays with too little emphasis on hitting the right portion, and too much emphasis on keeping quantity to a minimum. They always had an overstock of inedibles and a minimum of anything you could eat. Words are inadequate to

describe the taste of scrambled eggs made from egg powder, served cold.

24th Sept. 43

RED LETTER DAY – Received two letters from you – no's 40, 41 & 42, dated Aug 12 & 17th. You certainly make Piseco sound attractive. I would like to have been there with you guys. You are right about the feeling of inadequacy you get from living with people who are, essentially, strangers. It inhibits many forms of expression which do not grow rusty from lack of use.

Marguerite should have considered twice before she placed a call for you. You didn't tell me the most important part – did you get the apt?

Now for some instructions – as you know air mail is preferable to V-Mail. However we must plan on letters being lost every once in a while. Therefore, when you have something important to tell me, type out an original and two carbons, and stick them in three different letters. Then I will be sure to get it.

The radio was finally hooked up last night. It doesn't work so good due to noises in the power source – but we had London, Java, Tokyo, etc. When we can finally get the states we will be satisfied. You would be amazed at the paucity of things to do for amusement. A movie once in a while, read, exercise – that is about all, and working seven days a week tends to make it a little monotonous.

I'm mailing you under separate cover a copy of our weekly newspaper in this theatre. It is far superior to any other Army publication I have seen. I understand that the Army wanted our editor to come and take over the big paper in the states, but Uncle Joe wanted to keep him here.

I suppose that in every letter I ought to give you some local color, so here goes for today. There is a race in India called the Parsees (spelling questionable). They are the Jews of India. Small in number, you see them off and on in the streets wearing spotless white robes and black hats. They are originally from Persia, and handle a lot of the commercial business of India. They have the same knack of taking care of any indigent members of the clan as have the

Hebrews. Their burial ceremony is distinctive. Their dead are taken to a high Tower of Silence and placed up on there for the vultures to eat. We sat in another city and watched the slow circling of vultures high over the tower. The man in charge at the tower said that when a body is placed out there the birds won't descend until he claps his hands. Then the oldest, toughest bird comes down first and gobbles the eyes. The rest descend a few seconds later. Then, after about an hour the bare bones can be gathered and thrown into the sea.

Coming into an India port is like coming into no other port in the world. Sunshine usually turns other ports into bright vistas of blue water with white gulls wheeling around, and the dirt is not evident until the ship is within a few yards of tying up. In India, however, the bright sun cannot alter the brown water. There are no gulls. The ship is met by a peculiar type of bird slightly larger than a gull. It is brown black with hawk wings and a very small head, swallow-tail and something very unclean looking about it. Debris floats around in the water and the distinctive smell of India is faint but definite at least a mile out. Some Indians practically live in dugout canoes – I think they are called dhows – and dredge various garbage and stuff out of the filthy water. I watched an Indian on the garbage boat tied up to our ship grinding meal for his bread in a crude mortar while GI cans were being emptied into the scow so close to him that every once in a while a piece would bounce off of him.

Yesterday I saw two beggars that were sort of interesting. Once was so far gone with leprosy that what was left of him was being pulled around in a little bit of a cart by a small boy. You wouldn't believe there was enough left to contain the organs to sustain life. No legs, hips, buttocks, arms, – even one shoulder missing – no nose, ears, hair, and part of the chin gone. You would give him about one more minute to live, but another officer told me the same guy was being pulled around here months ago. Another one is interesting only because of his means of locomotion. He goes along in a sitting position with his legs stretched straight out in front of him, toes in, and soles down. He just raises his fanny off the street with his hands and slides forward about two feet on the soles of his

feet and then plunks down. Process repeated right down the gutter, through manure, dirty water and anything else you are liable to find in an Indian gutter.

One thing that is hard to get used to here is the attitude of the flies. They look and fly around like common ordinary house flies. But when they land on you and you brush them off, they get sore as hell and come buzzing back and bite like bull dogs. They get so damn belligerent that it is safest to treat them like bees or wasps. I think I have already told you about the dive-bomber, who circles above you, selects a spot of uncovered flesh and then screams down (actually making a whining noise in flight) and takes out a chunk sometimes as big as a pea. Fred H. bled like a stuck pig from a hole one of them made in his thigh.

As yet I have no permanent billet and have been unable to unpack. That is beginning to get very annoying.

Enough for now

Love,

John

#49. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

September 25, 1943

Dear Dordo-

This is a note which I am scribbling to keep busy while waiting to go out - I think - with Col. Seavers to have a drink at the apartment of a Britisher - a captain in a Punjabi regiment somewhere on the border. These Britishers really know how to live in this country during peace time - they still do all right - but you can detect evidence of the life that used to be.... four months of the year up at Simla in the mountains - peace time office hours 10 am to 12:30

and 2-4. Everything as cheap as dirt – and bearers to perform every single disagreeable physical labor.

26 Sept. 43

Well, I went. Because of upset stomach I could only take one drink. Had an interesting evening – with the Britishers (a Col & a Capt.) telling about the types of Indians in their command.

Rode over on my bike today and got my completed bush jackets – work type. The material for three tailor made jackets & 3 pr. shorts cost about \$5 and the tailoring charge was about \$5.50 for the works. That is one field where the prices have remained relatively constant. Home, the same deal would be at least \$50, wouldn't it?

I haven't had any additional letters from you – but I am waiting patiently.

Reading material is relatively scarce. I have found a book store, but their stock is limited. Just to make my mouth water, you might tell me our most recent acquisitions under the Book of the Month & the Reader's Club.

I am not in a mood for writing so I will end this & mail it.

Love,

John

P.S. The Britishers billet was in a cubicle off of a fine veranda. 3 stories up over a main drag. French doors open, ceiling fan going, phonograph scratching away – clouds of bugs around the lights and about three busy 4 inch lizards stalking and gobbling bugs off the plaster walls. On the floor one 32 yr. old leopard skin with head in which, for affectionate reasons, they had had a new set of teeth installed.

#50. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

September 27, 1943

Dear Dordo,

At last I have a permanent room – not with the Col. because it can't be worked yet – but the bearer just finished helping me get all my stuff unpacked. I am now sitting at my writing desk with my pictures, my books, my clock, eating my tootsie rolls (the only candy that didn't spoil).

I am going to take a chance and glue a small star sapphire to this letter in the spot designated here → (Editor's Note: there was a small circle about 1/2 inch in diameter just beyond the arrow.)

The letter may get lost at sea, or some eager soul may pry it off, but it was only 45 chips – \$15 and you ought to have it. Do anything you wish with it.

Give it to Marguerite for a Christmas present if you can't do anything else with it. Take it into the sun to see the star.

Enough for now.

Love,

John

Tell Penny that the little boys here wear silver bracelets on their ankles.

#51. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Poland, NY

September 28th, 1943

Dearest John,

Alone again. Perhaps all these interruptions keep me from getting

lonely, but it is awfully nice when Pencil and I get a few days or hours by ourselves. When we came from Piseco and Elmira the weather was so cold that Rita stayed here for quite a while, and after a slight pause to clean house, we had Nana. Harvey is here Mondays and Wednesdays, and Rita intermittently during the day time, or evening, so a pause long enough to think, or write to you, or read, is a treat. Perhaps that's as it should be, it's the way most people live, yet I think of these times as a sort of refuge, and luxury. And of moving, with hope.

I didn't have to be alone to get a kick out of your first letter, tho. It came early in the morning when I was getting a spark plug replaced, preparatory to taking Nana back to Utica, yesterday. The letters from the boat, and the cable, were reassuring, but this letter, even tho it didn't tell much of your trip or of you, seemed just wonderful. It's been a long strain, getting you there, not that I had much to do with it, but with your first letter that strain ended, and the promise of a slightly more normal kind of communication with you began.

Thursday I went up to Kay and Tom's, found the apartment all that I could possibly hope for, and had a long talk with Mrs. Coonradt, who owns it, and lives in the other half. If Tom is drafted, she will give me preference over all the other applicants. Kay understands what little chance I have of finding a place otherwise. Their place is so desirable that I should be most contented to get it. I am most fortunate to be first on the waiting list.

We about finished the Christmas shopping, and I am sending them off right away. Later I will send you a list, so you will know what to expect in case they don't arrive 'til April, or in case you don't receive what you think are all of them.

Penny wants to know if you'll bring your bike home. In fact, he asked if you'd come home on it! That reminds me – this morning we met one of the more sedate church ladies on the street, and she said politely, "My How he grows." Penny spoke up quickly and proudly, "Yes, and I have hair on my legs, too." Oh boy.

It will be fun to go to the post office now. Remember that everything about you would probably be new to us, and we won't

know unless you tell us. OH, Honey, I'm glad that trip is over... More soon..

Love,
Dordo

#52. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.) Poland, NY September 30, 1943

Darling,

I hope we will get some pictures of you in your new outfit, with props, - you must look quite British. Have the Colonel and Fred changed much? Do you room alone, and near the others? Did you grow fond of Freddy Albani on the trip, or find him difficult? He must think everything quite different from the way he started out after debarking the last time.

It was good to hear that you get per diem and overseas pay; I was afraid you'd find living much more expensive there. It was nice of you to send me the money (it hasn't arrived yet); things seem to be creeping up here all the time, tho I get along very nicely. This is the expensive time of year, tho, and the necessity for a coat, labor on the car top (\$22.50), and Penn's doctor bill would have made Christmas rather embarrassing, so a little extra will be more helpful now, especially. I probably won't have to use much of it even at that, and it will be more fun to spend together later. Penny's bills will all be up to date after October 1st, except for the foot, and he has had dressings every two or three days for several weeks. I can't see any end to them for a while, either, as it doesn't seem to have changed much in the last ten days, tho it is no worse. The ends are healed, but he is so active, the center, where it's deep, is very slow. We have to let him use it to keep it from getting stiff, so of course it opens up and suppurates, and the doctor has to keep a close watch on it.

I think I will resume the small payments to Pop, which I had to drop until the car payments were done, (because of the tonsillectomy,) as they are good for his morale, and keep whacking the total down a little. And I think I shall pay Margie the hundred dollars we borrowed from her, in larger chunks, as her situation is different. I can say that your accumulated pay made it possible, in her case, and I think the understanding was that it wouldn't be so long before we reimbursed her. I know Dad is planning to send you a check for Christmas, which you probably expect. They don't know how much either of us has, but seemed to take me at my word that you were most generous with our allotment, as they never offered to help when Penny had his operation, and the little chits that used to come from Margie stopped when you went. Which is OK, of course, only I'd like to know what goes on in their minds about us. Of course the only reason why all our relatives don't know how much money either of us gets, is because people only remember what you say comes in, and it sounds very well, – they never remember Rita's cut, or what we have owed for different periods, or how long some of our doctor bills take to pay.... Anyway, the contract for the car came a little while ago, and looked pretty good. I didn't realize that we had really paid off nearly \$500, with all the moving, and clubs, and commuting and sickness last Winter, on that contract alone. Damn good.

Life sounds pleasant there. I'd like to try it for a while, someday, but not because of a War. Are there many English wives there? Lucky dames.

Keep well, my darling, and keep writing, and good luck to you.

Love,

Dordo

#53. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.) India

September 30, 1943

Today I received your letter No. 37, dated Aug. 11th. It certainly is strange receiving them in such peculiar order. Sounds as though your coat would be attractive – I hope it's well cut. It's funny to think that when you were writing that letter back in August, I had been at sea for just about 15 days.

Our anniversary was not unwept and unhonored. It was just unsung.

Let me know how long this letter (not airmail) takes to reach you.

Got paid today – will empty my pockets and wire you what's left at the end of the month. It probably won't be too much... maybe 40 or 50 bucks.

Enclosed are some pictures taken about a week ago. Some are to show you modern construction methods in this country. Use a magnifying glass for detail on how they carry stuff. Every bricklayer has his woman to carry bricks to him. The others are of our evening volley ball. I have marked me with an X in picture No. 2. One shows our barber cutting our Col's hair on his sleeping porch. Note mosquito bars.

Last night Col B, both Freds, Lt. Col Sievers and myself had dinner at a Chinese restaurant as guests of Col Frank Merrill. You can read about him in "Retreat with Stilwell." He was also the guy responsible for the destruction of land lease stuff in Burma (It was well destroyed.) He has been over here for many years and has spent time in both China & Japan. Consequently he knows how to order a meal. We had crab meat soup, spring rolls (dough stuffed with vegetables & rolled up), fried prawns, baked rice with more prawns, and Sukiyaki. Wonderful. I stuffed myself. Enough for now.

Love – John

#54. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

India

October 2, 1943

Dear Dordo-

I hope you got all the cold dope from Mrs. B. You mention the ring the Col sent her. Well – don't expect jewelry from me, because my compatriots have boosted the price through demand way up out of all reason. Little bitty stones that sold for 14 to 20 rupees a year ago now sell for 300 to 500 rupees. It ain't sense – and unless I can get to some virgin territory – there is no point in wasting money.

I don't see a hell of a lot of point in Sammy trying for another job at this time. His draft board friends might catch him on the bounce between jobs.

Hearing that Sammy had spoken to a "Post War Conference" strikes me as being a bit amusing – no reflection on Sam, of course – but it is a bit like cardboard figures being yanked around on a stage by bits of string. More and more I realize that the flesh and blood of post war plans is in the heads of the guys in this and other theatres of war. No surge of "public opinion" of, by and for the people in the states is going to matter a damn beside the pronounced "public opinion" of 5,000,000 G.I.s when they get back on honest to God sidewalks.

I re-iterate my wish that you get out of Poland. I think it will be better for everyone.

I now have a new disease which I am trying to get rid of. It is called DOBI itch ... pronounced DOUGH-BEE. A dobi is a laundry man. Over here he makes the ink with which he marks your clothes out of the sap or gum from same very distant relation to poison ivy. Consequently you get it in the back of your neck and the small of your back where your underwear is marked. Lovely country? I have had to cover up the marks with adhesive and put a lotion on the little itching blisters. Albani got a swelling in the back of his neck about an inch high and three inches across. He can't raise his head and goes three times a day to the hospital for hot packs. Mine is

under control, however, Fred has hives and prickly heat to go with his itch.

So long for now. Love,
John

#55. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.) Poland, NY October 3, 1943

Darling,

Listening to “We the People,” and wondering if you ever get any American programs that used to be our favorites, thru the BBC. Jack Benny hasn’t started his season yet, but Fibber and Molly started last Tuesday, and Bob Hope, just back from Africa and England, started two weeks ago – with Crosby on his first program and Orson Welles on the second. Did the Col. get his radio?

There’s one Christmas present that I’ve ordered already, and I’m pretty sure you’ll get it, and I’m glad you can, as I know what it means to both of us to have it, – that’s the Pony Edition of “Time.” As far as your instructions about sending no gifts, thank Heaven we’d sent most of them before your letter came. Can you imagine any of us, but particularly Margie and me, consenting to such a request, if there was even the slightest chance of your getting them?

Speaking of war bonds, which you mentioned as your only desire at Christmas, – here’s a real surprise. I phoned Margie and she said Pop just bought quite a few bonds, and he included five thousand dollars worth for us, and for Dorrie! Quite a help some years from now, n’est-ce pas? That alone would secure Penny some kind of education, which is probably our greatest financial concern for the future.

I love the tiny knife you sent. Penny does, too, and I have let him wear it, but only when there was no chance of his losing or

damaging it. The rest of the time I've worn it. Penny is anxiously waiting the big one, – he has your interest in knives, but don't worry, I'll probably keep it under the eaves, or some such place, so he won't get it. At best my letters are repetitious, and there is so little change in our daily life that it takes a bit of thinking to provide anything to make a letter about. My literary abilities are so much less than yours that I thought a pile of letters for you to read when you arrived would bore you so that you'd probably read only the most recent ones.

Incidentally, I thought your literary ability was being a bit neglected before the letters from India started coming, but they are wonderful now. I've read them dozens of times, and will always enjoy them. A person who knows how well you can write feels rather a reaction to a very short, un-descriptive, uncommunicative letter from you, because it implies a lack of interest in the receiver. This isn't a reproach, either, it's the price you pay for your talent. Small enough price, when you see how most of us fumble with facts or thoughts... Let me add, when you run out of facts, your thoughts will always be interesting to me, it would be the best way to keeps us from being strangers when next we meet.

I didn't realize you were that hard up for home-front news. I will continue to cut up magazines, and will begin to look for items about what goes on in this part of the world to write. I blithely mentioned the "father draft" a number of times, assured that you knew all the latest Senatorial quarrels about it. They have already started drafting pre-Pearl Harbor fathers, altho Sen. Wheeler has made a desperate effort to arrest it, and a movement is started to have them take those under thirty first. Gen. Marshall testified before Congress that it was utterly essential.

I don't know how much the Censors will let me tell you about the trouble in the State Department, but Sumner Welles has found it necessary to resign, due to trouble with Cordell Hull, and Edward Stettinius has replaced him. Welles is now being given much more credit for a good job than he was when he was in office, but "Time" is conservative about that.

Many train wrecks, including the 20th Century and Philadelphia-Washington's best train, which latter Dorrie just missed. The Penn. R.R. worst hit. The sub War is on the pickup: the Germans have a new magnetic torpedo. Clifton Fadiman has resigned from the New Yorker and book reviewing to make more money. More later.

Love, Dearest – Dordo.

#56. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

October 4, 1943

Dear Dordo–

Received your letter of the 15th today. Before I opened it I knew that it would start off by saying “Why haven’t we heard from you?” I knew it would – and it did. I will be glad when I start getting letters in answer to my letters. I was 800 miles out in the ocean when you wrote the letter.

How the hell did our revolutionary forebearers ever correspond intelligently?

Paid my Sept. hotel bill – 94 rupees, or about \$30 for 15 days room and food. Not too bad, hey?

Prices outside are rough though, and getting rougher. One box of Corn Flakes for one buck. See ad enclosed. \$4800 for a Chevrolet.

You have probably read about snake charmers. Well, you see them on the side-walk here. The snakes are so damn dopey that the guy squatting and blowing his horn has to stop every once in a while and shake the snake awake. Very dirty, smelly, pointless procedure. I suppose there are better shows, but the sidewalk ones are terrible.

Love,

John

P.S. Tell Penny that, like the airplane pilots, he better get right back on a bicycle.

#57. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

India

October 5, 1943

Dear Dordo-

I will assume that by the time you get this the last letter from California will be old, old stuff. That camp was certainly something that I wouldn't want to do again. The ground was baked just as hard as concrete - & the camp itself sat right in the middle of what might have been an old lake bed. Mountains on all sides, but so far away that they might as well have been non-existent. The food was awful, and the last two days it was 113 and 118 respectively - in the shade. There was some nice station complement personnel, however, - a Capt. Chambers particularly. We remained on the alert an ungodly long time. I don't know what the hold-up was. It got to be pretty monotonous - only activities were staying out of the sun & drinking cokes & ginger ale at the Officers Club. No hard liquor or beer sold or consumed during an alert - & when one unit is alerted they alert the whole camp. Very good system by me.

It turned out that I was the Senior Officer of our shipment, after they all arrived - but, due to the fact that some were missing, I escaped the job of being in charge during the processing for overseas shipment - processing being shots, equipment, etc. for the 32 officers and 12 enlisted men.

Finally came the day and I was put in charge of the very large truck convoy, from camp to the port. It was exciting, and you can't imagine the mixed feelings I had riding in a staff car at the head of a long column of trucks heading for ship side. We hurried along through the crisp California sunshine and I tried to see and remember every little bit of Americana en route. We wheeled through the port streets and out a long curving causeway to ship side. There the scramble of getting men, barracks bags, luggage and one's-self on board.

That ship certainly looked good – that efficient looking gray color – & the rail already lined with men from advance parties of M.P. & K.P. that had gone down the day before. She is bigger than the last boat I was on. We had, of course, been expecting the very least in the way of quarters, so imagine my surprise at being guided to a cabin for four of us – two double bunks with adjoining private shower and bath, and a nice corridor opening onto to a weather deck outside – A deck and about in the middle of the ship. Very comfortable. The rest of my group were due to arrive at night, – & since I got there just before noon, I had a good chance to go all over the ship and get acquainted with the geography. That night I sat up on the boat deck and watched another convoy of trucks come in, long rows of lights, spaced nicely, reflecting across the water from the curved causeway. The next morning we shoved off...without the cheering crowds. The only formal farewell I had was the camp band playing beside the company street as I left with the truck convoy.

I suppose the best way to describe what is cooking is to give you a sort of typical day on the ship – Meals in the troop officers mess at 8 A.M. and 5 P.M. – with a sandwich at noon to fill in. Walk around the deck, read, play cards, etc. A vacation. The food is wonderful – they have a public address system which can be heard throughout the ship. Over it, all day comes an assortment of bugle calls, whistles, announcements and more whistles such as I have never heard. The boat deck is reserved for officers. There isn't a single female of any description on board. All other parts of the ship are waste (sic) deep with enlisted men. There are G.I. lines for everything.

I haven't been leading this normal life, however, because I just got up yesterday after an attack of flu. Sweat, fever, stuffed head, aches, pains, etc. I am now cured. Don't worry – I am really healthy.

Today we crossed the equator. That may not sound like much to you, – but, my friends, I have graduated from a pollywog to a shellback. This is a Navy transport and it is an old Navy custom to initiate everyone on board crossing the equator for the first time. All the officers had to line up – and this is what happened to us – inflicted by the Navy, and on the stern end of the boat deck in

full view of the whole after part of the ship covered with enlisted men – first some little men in costume kept jabbing us with electric pitch forks to keep us in line. Boy! One jab & you sure jump. Then to the judge who made you sound ridiculous over a loud speaker while your behind was being jabbed with more electricity and you still remained at attention. Then to an electric chair, where you were strapped in with people yelling at you “What are you?”, to which you tried to answer “A dirty slimy pollywog.” But the current going through you makes it very difficult to talk. Then you are jabbed over to a coffin which you lie in while they go work on you with wooden electric saws and paint your face and head purple and red. Then you are given some of the most vile-tasting stuff I have ever tasted, four different kinds of it. Then over to the stocks which you stick your head in and they removed large chunks of hair right down to the scalp. Then up into a little platform – still being jabbed with those electric things so that you dance all over the place. The platform hangs out over the deck below. You sit in a wooden chair on the platform, and they smear you with big brushes and a solution of sea water and flour – taking special pains to get most of the brush in your mouth. Then, – the big finale – they tilt the chair over backwards and you fall a sheer drop of about ten feet face down into a big wooden container full of salt water. You clamber out of this and slide down a ramp on your belly with assorted citizens, in costume, taking whacks at your posterior with socks loaded with sodden grain. You dive like a rabbit into a long canvas tube about 20 ft. long and 3 ft. in radius, surrounded by more citizens who beat at your outlines as seen through the canvas. Crawl out, one final spurt and you are free and a shellback. It really is an experience – it lasts only about 10 minutes and is an on a mass production basis – but I can say those were the busiest little old ten minutes I ever spent. I have now scrubbed the paint off of my sunburn, and had the barber fix my hair – “fix” in this case being a gray skull thinly covered with 1/8 inch stubble. I look awful.

#58. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Poland, NY
October 5, 1943

Dearest,

Writing to the tune of Dinah Shore, and waiting for Fibber and Bob Hope. I hope that by now you people have been able to get them. I don't write you about things you may miss, to make you homesick, but because I think you like to hear about them, and be reminded of them. And I don't write you about things we don't get, like gas, and apartments, to complain, but because I know you'd like to know what the realities are here, and don't need your news sugar-coated. We are well and happy, – as happy as we could be without you, and our days are full enough to keep the anchor from dragging, even tho they don't make exciting letters. I figure you'll want to know if Penny cuts his heel, or someone is quite sick, as long as I let you know in such a way as not to leave you in suspense.

So far, thank goodness, we haven't had any sickness to report, but there is something I've been planning to tell you which I think you should know and would want to, and which, now that the worst is over, should cause you no great worry. It may be that Pop has told you – Margie says he writes you every week. It's about Margie.

Just before we went to Rochester, (July 19th), she started bleeding, vaginally. As you know, there should be no cause for this. She saw Dr. Murnane immediately, and Dr. Parkhurst was consulted. Whatever they decided was the cause, we don't know, but they gave her a 3 hour radium treatment, and took specimens from the walls of the vagina to send to Albany and Buffalo, for examination for cancer. As far as we know, nothing malignant was found. She was kept off her feet for a week, no golf, etc. for a while, and suddenly they gave her the go-ahead signal for all activities. That is all I know, and I don't make any conjectures – she acts much better, and we hope that's all there is to it, but probably only the doctors know.

Perhaps she had suspected something before you left, and that's why she seemed so unlike herself since about February, but if that's the case, getting it out in the open, and having good care, has relieved her mind considerably.

I'm glad Pen was old enough before the War to have acquired a few of the wonderful little cars, trains, and gadgets he did. There isn't a toy, especially in the dime store, where there used to be such a lavish assortment, that will last a child two minutes. They're all made of paper, now. Penny has a few of the old ones left, tho most of the wheels are off, and as long as he really plays with toys, I'm glad he was born soon enough to have acquired some.

By the way, not one of your letters has been opened or censored in any way that I can see. They are certainly discreet, but I like thinking that every Joe in the army hasn't read them. Are mine to you censored?

Goodnight, Johnsie, and love,
Dordo

#59. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Poland, NY

October 8, 1943

Darling,

You silly old bear – Scotch-taping a sapphire onto a letter from India! But it got here! And it's lovely, and please can I keep it? I couldn't really tell whether you wanted Margie or me to have it, but you can bring me one if you'd rather I'd give this one to Margie now (for Christmas), so say the word. Watch out when buying that sort of thing, tho, as I read somewhere that the Japs had made a lot of (imitation) stones being sold to Army people in India. Not that I don't think the one you sent is real – it's lovely, and I'm sure it's genuine, and you've probably been warned anyway. The method of sending it

adds interest to it, to me – it was so startling to open a letter and find it.

I'm so glad you sent the Army paper. It is most interesting, and gives me a much better idea of what you would lack from the assortment of news we get. Apparently "feature" stuff, and semi-local news is what you don't get, aside from Time's excellent observations, analyses, and conclusions, – which later the Pony edition will bring you. I think the paper was excellent – it's about the same as we get for war news, and covers a good variety of other things – somehow it shows how much smaller the world is, now.

Of course we're wondering what Mountbatten's arrival will mean to your set-up, but of course you won't even be able to mention it, probably.

Much love from Pencil and Dordo.

#60. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

October 10, 1943

Dear Dordo–

Received two gadgets from you today. The first was your letter of July 9th. It gave me some dope re Penny's operation. That is the most explicit news I've had regarding it, in that I never did get the basic letter which announced the results.

The second gadget was the Xmas present – Time. Thanks very, very much. The copy you mailed me is the newest one out here at the moment and will, course, have to be passed on as soon as I have devoured it.

Today I went on a bicycle picnic. It was sort of fun, only it was just about 10 miles outside of town, and that is kind of rough. To top that, there was a tower 376 steps high with the stairs in continuous spiral staircase form. It was built a long time ago at the whim of the

daughter of a wealthy man. She wished to be able to see a nearby river, so up goes the tower. The countryside around there is full of the ruins of tombs. From the top you can see miles of that flat country with long rows of trees to mark the roads. The inside of the tower was hung with thousands of bats – which we had to climb very close to in order to get up and down. I went with a new man here, Major Willis Bird, and a Capt. Bill Brewster who is stationed in China and down here on temporary duty. Brewster took some pictures which I will get prints of later. Gen. Stillwell was there – looking very fit.

Enclosed you will find peacock feathers off a bird shot by Fred Lehner this afternoon. They are pheasant size, good eating, and hard to hit with a gun – don't feel sorry for them because of their beauty – they are so numerous that they are pests. The Indians don't kill any living things.

Also enclosed are some more pictures. Two shots of a three horned, three eyed cow, a local switch engine, and a tea plantation.

Enough for now.

Love, John

#61. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Poland, NY
October 20, 1943

Darling,

The more I look at your pictures, the thinner you look. Your bout with the flu on the boat must have really taken you down – don't lose any more. What a place to have flu!

This noon the news broadcast contained an account of the new Jap-puppet-head of India in Singapore. I suppose you boys have some very interesting information on all that, but from here it looks as if one more group waving a political flag in India won't make

much difference. But I hate to think of what it might be like for you if the Japs decide to retaliate for the air raids from New Delhi on Burma.

We are in the process of acquiring new ration book no.4 for food (it has some stamps in it which might be for electricity too, from the looks.) and a new gas ration book. I have to have the tires inspected, as we went 10 days over 6 months from the time you had them done, in order to get it. – We still are riding under the top you sewed! It might as well take the beating until it goes, so long as I have the new material.

I sent Margie \$25 from what you sent, and she returned it. I'll enclose her letter. What a mother-in-law! I'll get started in on Pop, now. It would be nice to get him paid up a little, tho I shan't overdo it as I know it's against your policy. I don't send them all your letters – if it seems wiser not to send one, the interesting parts are read over the phone to them. It's nice it's so cheap to phone Utica – we keep in touch easily that way.

Mother thinks the site of your bicycle picnic is described in "Passage to India," which I am about to read. I always get E.M. Forster and C.S. Forester mixed. Will send a condensed version of the latter's new book "The Ship," soon.

Lots of love – Dordo

#62. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Poland, NY

October 29, 1943

Darling,

This morning there were no very interesting prospects, but we had to take Margie downtown, as she was late. Coming back we happened to see an empty-looking apartment on State Street (runs from Oneida Sq. a block behind Genesee, and paralleling it for a

ways, you know,) so in desperation I got out and asked if it were rentable. It is, and I have 'til Sunday to let them know if I want it.

Everything about the place is what I was looking for except that it's absolutely filthy! It needs cleaning and redecorating thru-out, and the rent ceiling is so scandalously low that the landlord won't do a thing. That produced a fine quandary, so I fetched up Margie from the hairdresser's and we spent about an hour in there thinking what could be done.

It's on the corner of State and Cottage Place, a stone's throw from the place I didn't get, and is a second floor apartment, which I wanted, as I'd feel a little safer not on the ground floor alone. It has a fair-sized yard, and a garage – rare in that section, and has six rooms, bath, and front porch, attic and closets. The arrangement of the rooms is unusually nice, there are lots of windows and the sun just streams in every room, and from the inside it looks out on a well-kept apartment on the side and a cute little old church across the street. It's two blocks from downtown or Oneida Square, and a block from a good market, the library, and art school!

A good scrubbing for the wood work and floors and windows, and some Kemtone slapped on the wallpaper, and all would be well. If I can just find someone to do some of the work, – it's really more than I can do, and move, too. I'd have to get a gas stove (I know where I can – apartment size), but there's an instantaneous hot water heater, and there's a possibility that they'd hold it a whole month for me. The landlord is very much absentee, thank goodness, and the man downstairs rents it, and would be willing to take care of my fires. It has coal heat.

I really forgot to tell you the price. It's unbelievable for that location – thank God for rent ceilings. \$22.50 a month! So it would be 22.50 rent, 8 janitor, care of fires, 12 per ton, coal; 42.50 in Winter, 22.50 in Summer! Rentable on a monthly basis, unless I want a lease which it might be well to postpone until I see how it works, – but that isn't decided yet.

We hope to get together and make it final Sunday, and I will take steps to move as soon as possible if I get it. There will be plenty to

do! Margie knows the people downstairs, and they're OK, and out a lot during the day. So, Darling, here's hoping the next letter you get will inform you of the new address. Isn't that something?

Love, Dordo

#63. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

October 29, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I returned from my trip last night, which covered about fifteen hours by air, or about 3,000 miles, and about 13 hours by truck, which covered about 220 miles. I will not mention much about the trip on this sheet, as I want to make some carbons so that it will save some letter writing.

For many reasons including censorship and living conditions I couldn't very well write letters while away, so I now have a job further complicated by the fact that I have the grand total of eleven letters of yours to answer – but don't think I mind. Send thousands of them and I will answer every one.

At last I get the intimate details of Penny's operation. I have been waiting for that for a long time. Also I was pained to hear of the battery cable trouble. How is the darned old car anyway? I would like a minute description of its current status; tires, brakes, motor, squeaks, etc. And how is the Pencil about sleeping nowadays; does he still sound like gravel in a tin cup?

Your talk about the cold weather amuses me a bit, as it has just gotten cool enough here for me to sleep under one blanket out on the porch. The afternoons are still so hot that a bicycle ride of two blocks will leave you dripping.

I have giggled many times over Pen's comment on the cheese cake. If he does say anything bright once in a while, for God's

sake write them to me – and if he isn't too bright, send me some dull comments of his. Christ knows I have to listen to enough dull comments from people I don't even know. Freddy Albani is now a Captain. We are all very glad, as he is one guy who can be made a BG without my breaking any commandments. A definitely good egg.

Resume payments to Popop. We know what the angle is on that anyway, so it isn't like feeling it was going down a hole. If pop sends me a check for Christmas, I can send it right back to you in a quiet kind of a way. Maybe this damn war will put us in the upper brackets before it's over.

The Sapphire was meant for you. But if you can't think of anything to do with it, give it to Margie.

Thanks for the suggestions on what to buy. You are correct that I can't fill the list for Christmas, but I will try to gradually accumulate stuff. I sent a Moslem knife in the box that you might give pop for a paperweight and letter opener. It is as sharp as hell, with an Indian Jade handle and a Damascus steel blade. 21Rs and worth it. It is unusual enough to give him a lot of chance to create conversation when people ask questions about it – which they will.

My room is just down the hall from the Col. One of my roommates is a good guy and a chess player who was in my outfit at Anza and on shipboard named Capt. Fred Smith. About 36, with 17 years of service. The other ones are Lt. Haynes, a tall droopy Special Services officer from the aircorps who writes constantly to innumerable women that we can't understand how he ever met as he doesn't go out at all, Lt. Jerome Jacobs, a porky little Columbia lawyer who is in Army Insurance and will argue on anything at the drop of a hat, and Lt. Ree Rubira, a dopey ordnance officer who is not with our outfit – a permanent lieutenant.

Maybe I was an oaf about that Christmas present business, but couldn't you send stuff that would go in a regular envelope to get here on Christmas. On Christmas I may be out of this country on temporary duty to return early Jan, but nevertheless I can get some stuff somewhere near the time. As long as you have already sent

stuff, I am, of course, pleased – but I am not displeased in having made the plea for none, please.

I gather from your letters that you thought I was sort of unpleasant about that business about letting you know I had arrived. Let me clarify. I was unpleasant, but not about you or anything you wrote me, but rather about the damn length of time it takes to write to you and get an answer back. That is the rub. I haven't misunderstood anything you have said, and your letters are really good.

I haven't gotten a letter from Dad in a hell of a while. What is all this about bonds. It must be a good amount if you have to go look at them like you would look at an animal in a zoo. What cooks?

I am about writ out. I feel healthy, sleep good and am only slightly bored. Write lots.

Love, John

Dear Penny,

You are getting big enough, I guess, so that every once in a while I will have to write you a letter all for yourself rather than just little bits hooked onto the end of Dordo's letters.

I understand that your foot is all better now. It doesn't really seem to me as though you had a bad foot because I wasn't there to watch you limp around.

I took my bike over to the repair shop today and had the Indians clean it up, oil it and blow the tires up hard. They ride easier if the tires are hard.

I think I remember hearing in a letter from somebody that you have a new sled. You couldn't use it over here because it never snows. I was riding in an airplane the other day though, and saw snow on top of some mountains. They are too high and too far away to go to, and much too steep to slide on. In fact one of them I saw is the highest mountain in the world.

I won't ask you to be a good boy because I imagine that everybody asks you that, and you can be good without having to listen to people talking about it all the time.

So long.
John

#64. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)
Utica, NY
October 31, 1943

New address: 1109 State St.

Darling –

This was to be a letter of complete jubilation. We had our little half-hour, and we're still relieved and happy, but home front problems have intruded a bit already, thanks to the coal miners.

Mr. Devall phoned a little while ago and said we could have the flat on State Street. I'm to meet the landlord Tuesday morning, and he will go over the place with me and see what there is that he can afford to do. He will furnish paint if I will use it, and will hold the place until December 1st, which will give me time to get it in shape for moving in. The rent is \$22. Instead of 22.50! – I don't really see how the poor man can put a penny into repairs – he has a \$12,000 investment, pays over \$400 taxes, and there are only two apartments there – probably not over \$45 a month income from it.

He lives in Bouckville, and runs the hotel there. Mr. Devall is the man who lives on the first floor. He is going to take care of my fire, too, and seems to have quite a bit to do with the care of the place, but the landlord's being in absentia is OK with me. Devall had a motorboat business, which is now about washed up, because of the War, and makes about \$25-\$30 a day in Summer guiding fishermen up at the St. Lawrence (I spotted him for a French-Canadian immediately – all those guides look similar), or hunters in the Fall, so he will be around to do little jobs that I can't manage. It is a good thing to know a little about who lives below when the

Pencil and I will be alone there, and as I mentioned, Margie knows the Devalls.

The little hitch – and I hope it doesn't become big, is that they've frozen the coal supply to 1/2 ton per delivery, and Mrs. Anderson suddenly got very elusive when I called her, to order some. She knew when she promised to supply me that upon her word depended whether we took the apartment or not, so it wasn't exactly cricket of her to assure us and then welch on it. But there'll be a month to get it somewhere, and she may make good, and they'll have to do something about the miners in spite of the election, pretty soon.

We will make sundry arrangements tomorrow, see the landlord on Tuesday, and go back to Poland Tuesday afternoon to get ready to start moving. Friday I'll be back to work at the place, and from then on the month will fly, I suppose.

Aren't you glad we're moving at last? I am so relieved, and once it's done, the apartment will be very pleasant and convenient. We'll be moving in exact parallel to last year's move from Rochester to Albany. What a year!

What a year.

Lots of love, Dordo

#65. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

November 4, 1943

Dear Dordo –

There are two major difficulties inherent in writing a letter while supposedly on duty. The first is the feeling of guilt, and the second is the interruptions. I am proceeding nevertheless.

The saddest portion of this month will be those moments when I stop to count my cash. You see I have gone hog-wild on the clothes

department, in the absence of anything else to spend money on. According to a suggestion in Dad's letter, I wired him so he could send me \$100. That will more than cover it. First I bought a pair of chaplis. They are sandals – open toes! – I shan't paint my toe nails. In addition I have been measured for a tailored tan greyish gabardine bush jacket and trousers with embroidered insignia, and tailored cap and overseas cap to match. It will really be the nuts, and I will send you a picture when I get it in about 3 weeks. I am so anxious to keep it nice so I can wear it in the states & have people say – “What army is he from?”

One of the interesting little side lights on the trip was looking at the names and pictures on the sides of the bombers. It is a thrill to see the little rows of bombs, indicated missions, the little jap flags to indicate pursuit ships shot down – and the formalized stencils of sinking ships. These appear on the left side of the forward hull of the ship just under the cabin window. Then the names are really something – here are some examples:

HOT AS HELL (with picture of naked babe)

MY ASSAM DRAGON

LACK-A-NOOKEY

THUNDERBUG

BURMA ROADSTER

PHYSIC, etc.

Usually the names of all crew members appear on the outside hull opposite the place where they sit, stand, or curl up... and each motor is named for a lady friend of a crew member.

I am starting next Monday to take Hindustani lessons one hour each day. 1 PM to 2 PM.

Enough for now – Love, John

#66. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)
Poland, NY

November 5, 1943

Darling –

What a week this has been – After spending Wednesday at the dentist's and planning to spend the next three days working on the apartment (while the fire was going), yesterday was to be my only day home. It was an anticlimax to all I'd planned to do, to spend it in bed, but something, sick-headache or grippe germ that's prevalent, got me in the head and tummy. I took so much medicine there wasn't a chance to find out what it was, it went away so fast. Nevertheless, I would have spent a very quiet day today if it hadn't been that a man was coming to clean, and a painter to give estimates on the apartment in Utica, so I had to be there at the crack of dawn today.

The man never showed, so after eleven I went to Liggett's for some breakfast (no time to eat this morning, my anchor was dragging as usual,) and to call Margie. She was dressing to come down, and so I went after her. She said she wanted to be there when Mike, the painter, came, but it didn't mean anything special to me, except that he is her painter. I planned to do all the painting but ceilings and kitchen myself, and it seemed to me she was being awfully confusing when he was figuring estimates, asking how much to do the whole works, and stuff.

Well, maybe I was too tired to be very smart, but when she said "go ahead and do it all," to Mike, it really was a surprise! Whatever the landlord won't allow me on the rent, (and I figure 2 months, \$44, is the best he can do,) they will make my Christmas present! Now what could be nicer – there won't be a day that I won't enjoy it every minute, and the place needs it so, and it will be darling, once it's done.

So we hied ourselves out to lunch, and then to the wallpaper and linoleum departments of Sears' (bless 'em), and if we didn't pick out the smoothest "library-blue" wallpaper for the two main rooms –

plain for two walls, and figured for two, in a tiny old New England design, which turned out to be almost as cheap as ceiling paper!

I'd planned to Kemtone the old paper, but they (Margie and the painter) decided new paper would be nicer. His estimate for the job was \$115 – so you see it's quite a present. But think how it will last, and what it means to have a place we can be proud of. It covers two coats of paint for kitchen and bathroom, from top to bottom, and papering two rooms, and three ceilings, cleaning and repairing woodwork, painting 7 doors and a mantel white from dark varnish-color, painting Penny's playroom walls and bedroom floor, and several small items, like closets. Of course the landlord will pay for part.

All that work I'd planned to do, and now I don't even have the scrubbing! It will mean a lot just for the next two days alone, because I got out of bed too soon, and now will have a chance to catch up again. And time to get things here in shape before moving them. I'm thrilled to tears.

It is very warm, too – Both my half-ton of coal, and a half-ton of coke, came, so that's a start, anyway, and gave me an idea of how well the place heats.

We found a pretty gray marbleized linoleum with black and red and gay border for the kitchen, and black marbleized for Pen's playroom and the bathroom.

Now I hope there will be no reason why we can't just settle down there, and when you come home it would be a good base for mapping out future action. I'd love to have you see it.

Love,
Dordo.

#67. DPM to JDM (ALS, 6pp.)

India

November 6, 1943

Dear Dordo,

I sent one of these to EA & one to Sam & Evie—with pictures

Love, John

INDIA TRIP

The transport settled into Agra; the abrupt change of motor cadence awoke me from the pile of luggage where I had gone to sleep after getting groggy from staring down at the dull and endless expanse of mud villages and patch-work fields. First the usual yelp of rubber on asphalt, and then a crew member pushed open the door and we climbed out with the baggage into clouds of dust as fine as talcum.

We expected to shove off again immediately, but the transportation officials informed us we would have about five days to kill before a plane going in our direction would have available space. We received our billets in a tent, ate, and hiked off down the road out of the camp to a tonga station. Most of the tongas in Agra seem to be small dirty rickety affairs, with overworked discouraged little horses. Also, the Tonga drivers there seem to have developed a line of chatter calculated to clear the road, encourage the horse, maintain morale, and convince the passenger that they are doing one hell of a good job.

We had expected to see something which at least remotely resembled a city, but we were deposited in the middle of an overgrown Indian village. We were able to find one place that was in bounds where we could buy food, but after going in and looking around at the dirt, bugs and filthy waiters, we walked right back out again. It really began to look like a long, long five days. We walked over to the American hospital, and found a little boy walking home from school with a book in English, a primer, under his arm.

We were talking with him when a young fellow who spoke rather good English came along and entered into the conversation. We asked him what there was to do in the town. He then told us that the Taj Mahal was the one place there we must see on that very night. He said that on one night in the year the moon is full and brightest. During peace times people come from all over the world to see the Taj on that one night. It is an occasion of great celebration by the Hindus because it coincides with a religious festival that is celebrated all over India. We then asked him if he could recommend a reputable guide, and he said that he would be delighted to take us to the Taj himself. We were slightly suspicious, because it is very, very hard to find an Indian who is not trying to play some angle. An open friendly offer with no strings attached is not a usual by-product of the oriental mind. We arranged to meet him at his place of business at ten o'clock, and said goodbye.

We spent a little more time strolling through the streets, discouraging beggars about every ten feet with their interminable whines for bakhsheesh, and avoiding the merchants who feel that they are not doing their best for business unless they rush out onto the sidewalk and make frantic gestures toward the shop door, usually shouting "Very nice! Very nice!" An authentic Indian street is something that, once seen and smelled, will never completely leave you. It is narrow, so narrow that you can never seem to get far enough away from the buildings on either side. The sewage system consists of open gutters running down each side in front of the shops and houses. I say running, but it is usually stagnant, occasionally agitated a bit by someone running along and shoving the water with a broom. When he stops it settles down again. The bits of filth scattered here and there in the road and in the drains are malodorous enough to discourage completely any analytical investigation.

The shops and houses are built so that they have a sort of porch, about three feet above the street level and built right out to it, with no steps. These porches are only a few feet deep. There are, in many cases, no doors, so that you see right into the inside of the buildings.

The Indians squat on their haunches on these little porches and indulge in almost every commercial and domestic activity imaginable. They cook, eat, manufacture, sell and buy perched right above the drain, and about four feet away from you on either side as you walk down the road. The social classes jammed in these dirty hovels run from the relatively prosperous dressed in spotless white, down to people who are actually starving to death, with unbelievably thin arms and legs, and bloated bellies. In fact, the paper the other day carried the story of a feeble man who got some food from a charity organization in Agra, went to sleep on the outskirts of the town, and couldn't prevent the jackals eating the lower half his body so completely that he was shot to end his misery.

This is as good a place as any for an aside about jackals. A pack of them can make noises in the night that sound like a pack of maniacs on a very drunken picnic. Most people think that jackals are rather timid. True, they don't look very vicious – more like a wary little mongrel dog. But they are determined little animals. Ride through the country at night on a motorcycle and you will hear a vicious snarling coming at you from one side. Lift your leg high and speed up the cycle, because about two seconds later a jackal will take a vicious bite at the side of the machine. They don't fool. I would certainly hate to be lost out in the fields at night, alone with no light when the jackals are hungry.

At ten o'clock we arrived at our friend's place of business – his name is T.K.Goul – and found his private tonga waiting to take us to the Taj. It certainly was far superior to the public tongas. Better springs and upholstery, a good horse, and a lot of highly polished brass and silver. As soon as we got out into the highway we realized that we had become part of a tremendous procession going to the Taj by every means of locomotion....tongas, bicycles, gharrys, a few autos and a great horde on foot. The entrance to the Taj gates was jammed with parked vehicles and a bottlenecked crowd of Indians pushing their way into the grounds. The Taj is set up so that you don't see it until you go through an enormous arch and there it is about a quarter of a mile in front of you, statuesque and shining

and very beautiful. There must have been twenty thousand people there. It made a very carnival atmosphere, with a constant murmur of talking and laughing.

At twelve o'clock the moon was to be at its brightest. We walked around and Goul told us of the history of the place. I won't attempt to tell about that here because it is available in any number of books, and I don't know much about it anyway. The most amazing thing about the ancient architecture in India is the precision with which the buildings are made. Precision isn't quite the right word. We are satisfied to get good lines on a building so that from almost any angle the building is an artistic symmetric form, but when you get your nose about six inches from one of our buildings you are just looking at a rough stone block. With the old structures here in India, if you put your nose six inches from the outside surface you see delicate inlay work with marble and semi-precious stones that could serve as a decorative table top. That situation doesn't only exist at eye level, but over the entire outside surface of the building. You just walk around with a constantly increasing feeling of awe at the infinite patience and industry of those long-dead men who labored for months to inlay a few square feet of marble to be placed so high on the building that that no one will ever see it closely enough to appreciate it.

As the clock neared twelve, we began to hear shouts coming from little knots of people gathered around here and there staring up at the facade of the Taj itself. We joined one of the little groups and saw that the reflected moonlight was outlining in sparkling silver portions of the design on the top edge of the building. Goul explained that the Taj was so constructed that this phenomena would occur only on that one night in the year when the moon was most full.

(Editor's Note: missing last line or two of page 2)

....of old Agra which, by now, we suspected was out of bounds to military personnel. If it had seemed dingy and filthy by day, it was ten times as bad by night, with torchlight and holiday crowds. Goul took us through streets so small that we had to take turns

encouraging each other about continuing. We went down an alley so small that you could touch the buildings on either side simultaneously – then through a dark arch, down some stairs and into a minute Hindu temple to the god Vishnu. Hindus were kneeling and chanting before a bright jeweled image of the god. We had to remove our shoes. We gave the priest some money and he hung a garland of fresh flowers around each of our necks. It seemed so odd to receive flowers in that dark torch-lit place. We then went back out onto the street and sought a good place from which to watch the procession.

We certainly were objects of great curiosity. Despite the many years that Englishmen and Americans have been traveling through this country, it is still possible to accumulate a small crowd of staring Indians around you by just standing still on a street corner in the daytime. This attention is mild compared with the attention we aroused walking through the dark streets of Agra. Crowds followed us, and whenever we stopped, they would all stop. This was confusing because it was a crowd within a crowd. Our little group of curious followers could only keep up with us by using football tactics. Goul explained the mob scene by telling us that it was the first time in at least five years that any white men had attended the festival. We had been looking in vain up to that moment for some other comforting white faces, but we then gave up looking.

At last the procession came along. Huge floats, that would have looked small by American standards, filled the main street of old Agra from side to side; horses with solid silver saddle trappings and brocaded cloth blankets; groups of stick dancers who whirl and crack sticks together with great skill and precision and a minimum of broken fingers; sword dancers who waved sharp looking gadgets much too close for complete comfort; hundreds of people in costume just walking along in the light from torches and lanterns. At Goul's suggestion we bought some large garlands of flowers and were going to give them to the person representing the god Ramesh at the end of the procession. The whole procession stopped while we bought the flowers because they thought we wanted to place

them on Ramesh's float as it went by. This was more than a little embarrassing. It was even more embarrassing to discover that Goul had an even more prominent part for us to play later on. The ceremony was so arranged that the main float with Ramesh on it stops at a platform running lengthwise about thirty feet up the middle of the street, with a throng at the far end. Ramesh, and another one dressed just like him, gets off and walks along the platform and sits on the throne. Goul wanted us to take our flowers and go along the platform first and wait for Ramesh, but we couldn't quite see that. It seemed to us that those people had waited a long time for the celebration, and it wasn't our business to hog the show. Besides we couldn't be too sure about how they felt about our presence. Most of them kept smiling at us, and Goul said they were glad to have us, but we kept asking him again whenever we would see a few faces that weren't smiling.

We settled by presenting the flowers to the float when they were yet a few feet from the platform. Ramesh and his counterpart were dressed in white robes and wearing the largest headdresses that I ever saw. They, the headdresses, were at least five feet high and three feet across and roughly oval. They looked heavy, but I assumed that they were made of some light material so that they could be worn. Then I noticed that every so often they would support the headdresses with their hands and sort of wince when they let go again. The gods got off of the float and walked along the narrow platform to the throne, and then the pushing and shoving started. The Indians got in the grip of religious fervor and the nearest thing to their actions is the type of crowd which gathers around the goal posts after a football game. It wouldn't have been too hard to get hurt in that crowd, but we were permitted inside the line of guards who were keeping the crowd from demolishing the throne, platform and float in their enthusiasm. I noticed that the crowd was mostly men, and looking up, saw that the roofs, windows and balconies were swarming with women and children – so thick that in some cases it seemed like too much of a load for the roof. A cluster of candles was lighted and one of the participants walked the length

of the platform with it. The crowd surged forward to place hands in the flame of the candles. We did not know the reasons behind any of the actions. To us it was a tumultuous, orgiastic fantasy carried on in surroundings we had never seen before. After a while it began to have a dreamlike quality, a species of intoxication. It had some of the aspects of Macbeth's witches. The cluster of candles was then passed from hand to hand and disappeared into the recesses of a temple beside the road that we had not noticed before. Then, as the ceremony ended, Hanuman, King of the Monkeys, another participant in the ritual, handed Major Bird the bouquet Ramesh had carried throughout. The major gave it to Goul to give to his father. Apparently we had been more welcome throughout the evening than we had considered possible at any time. The Taj on that night and the festival were one of those, once in a lifetime, things. We were just plain lucky.

One afternoon later we picked up a guide near the tonga station and went on into Agra again. The guide was an old fellow who had been guiding for about thirty years. He knew what he was talking about, and outside of a few furtive comments on his part re dancing girls to sound us out on what we wanted to see, he behaved himself and didn't overcharge.

First he took us to the burning ghats on the Jemna River between the Taj and the Old Fort. Body burning is old stuff, but we did pick up a few more interesting facts about it. It takes at least 400 pounds of wood to burn a body. Some wealthy citizens use as high as 1200 pounds, but with the price averaging about 25 dollars a ton, it becomes quite a budget problem for the heirs and relatives. We watched a body brought in, a pyre built, the body washed in the river and the fire started. The mourners sit in a little open sided house facing the river and the usual location of the pyres. For inclement weather there are two inside pits.

We were standing around casually questioning the guide when all of a sudden he directed all of his attention to a small group of about four people coming in from the road. In the lead was a man carrying a small bundle wrapped in white. The guide asked us to follow along,

so we did. The other person held back, and we followed the man with the bundle along the steep river bank, with an abrupt drop of about ten feet into the dirty water on our left. After about a hundred yards of this difficult path we came to a sort of table of rock about ten feet across, and separated from the mainland by a two foot jump. We went out onto the rock table, and the man tenderly laid his bundle on the ground. He undid the white covering and took it off and there was a small naked baby about a year old and thoroughly dead, lying on little bamboo stretcher arrangement. It was a girl baby. The man took out a cloth and gently washed the body, with particular attention to the hands and feet. Then he replaced the white sheet, without tying it, lifted the little bundle, stretcher and all, and threw it out into the muddy river. The three component parts, baby, stretcher and sheet separated in the air before they hit the water. Enclosed is a picture which I took of the baby in mid-air. The baby disappeared and, in a couple of seconds, bobbed to the surface where it floated around sort of on its side in the exceedingly filthy water. In a couple of seconds a few huge green heads, like the heads of enormous snakes, appeared around the body and gently nudged it a few times. We suddenly realized the heads belonged to gigantic soft shell turtles. Their heads alone were as large as cantaloupes, but the water was so dirty it was hard to see their shells just under the water. In a moment they had decided that the little form was dead, so they struck with wide open jaws, tearing at the body. They dragged it under and it bobbed up again in a damaged condition. We had a few more glimpses of it in a broiling turmoil of hungry turtles and then all was still once more. It had taken less than a minute.

The father had watched the turtles come up to the body and take the first bite, and then he had turned and walked back the way he had come. We began to ask questions of the guide and found that this same treatment was given any body under twelve years of age, and also to those older persons for whom nobody would buy wood. I suppose that it isn't too bad an idea as far as India is concerned. It is sanitary and all that sort of thing, but it certainly is probably the most gruesome sight I ever expect to witness.

Following that little episode, we feebly trailed after our guide over to the old fort. It was the pride and joy of some character called Akbar the Great, and once again I will have to skip any of the history angle. The fort encloses a lot of square miles and contains mosques, palaces, rose water fountains, pits for elephants and tigers to fight, a gigantic Parcheesi board where Akbar threw the dice and small boys and girls moved around the board in lieu of pieces, moats, ramparts, battlements and the rest of it. It is really too much to look at, and so easy to arrive at a completely sated point.

The one part of it that will probably remain longest in my memory is the little balcony where Sha Jahan stood, took a look at the Taj about a mile away, and died. He was the guy that caused the Taj to be built, and, imprisonment by his son prevented his seeing it except once before he died. One wonders at the sudden rush of sympathy to the head on the part of his son.

Later in the trip we were to get a first-hand look at urban life in a famine area. It didn't conform to what I had expected. For some reason I had expected everybody to be starving, or at least damn thin. You really have to look close to see the results of the food shortage, but when you see it, it is really impressive. The streets in the best sections are full of bustling people, and all the usual sights of any large city in the world, but here and there you find only isolated instances of starvation. Due to the fact that all over India there are beggars who purposely starve themselves in order to make a more appealing picture, it is difficult to tell the phony from the actual. For an example of the phony – there was a little kid not over two years-old sitting stark naked with bloated belly and matchstick arms and legs on the sidewalk right in the path of all the passers-by. He had a little pottery jug on the sidewalk in front of him for contributions, and he had his hands in a praying position held in front of his face. You had to admire the genius of the beggar master who posed him with his little brown monkey face tilted up and staring through you rather at you. For an example of the genuine – there was a little crowd of Indians standing around an emaciated man on the sidewalk, looking as futile and helpless as only a crowd

of Indians can look. The man was obviously in a bad way, and would probably join the next group of early- morning corpses which the hotel washes off the sidewalk into the street with a pressure hose to facilitate the pick-up by the truck which comes around early in the morning to take care of such details.

There were many more very interesting moments and incidents on the trip that would take more time to tell than I have available. Among them – the urgency of the desire to get off of the ground when you are within a hundred yards of the end of the runway in a slightly overloaded bomber – the eager chewing and tearing of a bold bunch of vultures hard at work on a dead calf in the middle of a highway (see picture enclosed) – The piles of skulls and bones in the tropical undergrowth on a muddy trail that was once packed with refugees fleeing from the Japs – files of Indian workers carrying dirt in wicker baskets on their heads competing with a modern steam shovel not a hundred yards away – hornets so anxious to get at your food that they would bite the spoon with which you tried to brush them off – Army nurses complaining bitterly about the temperature of the bath water, and saying nothing about the fact that they were having to take the baths in a G.I. helmet.

It was a good trip.

#68. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

November 9, 1943

Dear Dordo–

I am at work early this morning, believe it or not, and am taking the extra time to write you this note, believing that I have sort of neglected writing for a few days. The weather here is beginning to get a little too chilly to go out in the morning with just cotton khaki shirt and trousers. Some of the people have switched to woolens,

which I may do soon. The only difficulty with that is that it still gets quite hot in the afternoons, and if you try to push a bicycle very far you begin to sweat, even in cotton.

With our good location here, and the good job I have, it is surprising how fed up you can become with the whole thing. You begin to get such an urge to be home. I think, about every other morning as I am getting up, of the difference between the arising procedure here, and the procedure in Stonehenge. I must be a chronic malcontent – I never completely appreciate things until they have gotten out of reach – and 15,000 miles is a bit out of reach. It is funny that with my usual morning grouch I can feel a yen for the AM routine.

I am thinking off and on of what I want to do when I get back. I think we have a tacit agreement that we will do a spot of motoring when I arrive, and use up a portion of terminal leave in so doing. However, from then on, everything is a blank. I can't seem to think of a job or an occupation that will be right, at least looking at it from here. I can only believe that a period of no work in the states will create a yen for activity – but have you ever seen it work that way – with me? One of my confreres, a pretty nice guy named Major Scott, was dean of the School of Cinema at the University of California. He is on a leave of absence, and I intend to cultivate him assiduously, because it sounds like it might be a good idea to combine the pedagogical life with southern Cal, provided the pay would be attractive enough, and provided I could get an offer. It seems as though it would be to the point to pile up enough pennies so that we could afford maybe less than I think I ought to make in order to get into such a position. (Just read the above over, and I am not interested in the Cinema end – just wanted to make that clear). Let me know what you think.

Love
John

#69. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Poland, NY

November 12, 1943

Darling,

It was wonderful to get three letters from you today – the first in exactly three weeks. We understand now that your cable was in answer to Popop's letter asking if you wanted money for Christmas, but I'm glad you cabled about something, because it was quite a long silence. Incidentally, he's having quite a bit of trouble getting it sent – he's tried everything, unsuccessfully, but the Red Cross. As you may know now, it's to enable you to entertain your cronies, at some time during the holidays.

Hmm – holidays! And now it seems we may not even know where you are at Christmas. – You know I've felt that we'd get thru them pretty well – since we know where you are and hear from you often, my conscious mind had everything under control. But yesterday Pencil and I walked thru the jiggety store and came unawares upon a counter of Christmas tree decorations, and my ole heart just melted and ran off the tips of my fingers and toes. (Not to mention what it did to my stomach!) No matter how you slice it, it will be a bit of a travesty without you, my friend.

Old Sweetie pie, my new landlord Mr. Kopal, from Bouckville, blew me down yesterday, when in answer to my calm statement that we had ordered \$115 worth of decorating done in the apartment, not to mention plumber's bills, and how much did he care to allow me on it, he answered that he'd send me rent receipts for December, January & February! Not to mention holding it in November for us! So it won't be a very expensive Christmas for Margie, after all!

Margie and Dorie were both on the wire tonight, and thrilled to death over your letter about the trip. Mine hasn't come yet, but the mileage and a few names or pictures add up to Chunking, n'est

pas? They think it's a piece of really professional writing, and Pop is bursting with pride. So I can't wait for my copy!

Pencil was charmed with his letter. Said "I'm going to give Daddy a big hug and a great big kiss when he comes home." And tonight he asked if they'd let little boys "at the War." (War is often a place, not a condition, to him), and "Mommy, would you like to join the WAACs?" I said no, I'd rather take care of him, and he informed me he would be happy to join you at War if I'd care to go. Poor boy – I hope he gets something besides War to think about before he grows up.

The car is an old darling – 31,790 miles, no trouble, tires OK so far, brakes good, heater works, a little carbon on the big hill to our house on the Walker Pond but generally she purrs. And she's got the only Prestone for miles around in her, and Winter grease, and canvas for a new top.

Your comments on your post war plans in India were most enlightening. I take it the next time I move it will be California. In fact, from your longest letter of the three, it can be gathered that you were in fine fettle after your trip. It's a very sharp letter.

No doubt you know about the bonds now. \$5000, in your name, p.o.d. to me, and in Pop's safe deposit box, so you can't ever use 'em without some explanation, no doubt. Margie's face turned dark red when she tried to tell me why they were keeping them – I just agreed with her that it is safer, she can't help it if she's sensitive enough to blush at the implications. She had just said the night before (when Mrs. Lewis died), that if Pop left all his money for her in annuities she'd be offended at his lack of confidence in her, but he probably would anyway! (she said.)

Love, Johnsie
Dordo

#70. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.) India

November 13, 1943

Dear Dordo –

My mind has been wandering onto many strange subjects. One is money. In your next letter please send me a financial statement – you know – some of your inimitable pin point writing on what we owe, how much it's costing to live, what our reserves are, etc. Please don't think I'm checking up on what happened to the \$ I sent. I don't care what you do with it as long as it's something you want to do.

Also, I have been thinking of a promotion. I expect one in February. By that time I will probably be the ranking Capt. in the theatre. I think that at that time it would be just as well not to increase your allotment, but to empty my pockets at the end of each month as I am now doing. Thus you will get 2 checks each month – one at the beginning, and one in the middle. Since the promotion to Major carries with it \$95 – the middle of the month check ought to be a minimum of \$75 and a maximum of \$150, depending on how well I live during the month. For example, I have 365 Rs left now, and the only expense in sight is to pay for those clothes I bought, about 144 Rs. Thus I ought to be able to send 30 or 40 bucks Dec 1st, and if I had the leaves it would be \$125 or \$130.

I have also been watching these rag heads that sweep the floor of the ward and thinking what miserable, bootlicking excuses for human beings they are. Despite their rag bag odds and ends of clothes, though, they often have bold, hawk-like features which don't match at all. It is funny to see a bright eyed, old grey bearded pirate who looks like he should be cutting throats for a living, bowing and scraping and cringing before a feeble little PFC. They look like proud, independent people, and act like serfs for whom there is no hope. I get a minor twinge out of watching their little kids who have not yet learned servility. They are straight-backed happy little brown kids; they look you in the eye and laugh. There is no difference between the way they act and the way Penny acted at

the same age – but how soon and how thoroughly they learn craft, deceit and filthy ways. It's a screwball race.

Have finished my dinner – fish soup, indeterminate meat, creamed potatoes, boiled onions, salad, soggy cake, tea and milk. And also finished a chess game, which I won from a ward-mate with no difficulty. We plan a series of games for the morrow, all of which I will win. As I believe I told you before, one of my roommates is Capt. Fred Smith. He and I must have played 70 games of chess on the damn boat. I am much, much better at it than I was previously.

One of the fascinating things about India is the cooking. On busy street corners in the middle of the afternoon you can find peddlers selling from racks bits of nauseating looking matter, 90% unidentifiable. This “food” would soon put any white man flat on his back with amoebic dysentery and/or cholera. The same type of Indians as sell this crap are used in the G.I. kitchens throughout India. Left to their own devices, they would kill us all off, but, since they are subject to military supervision, the food is theoretically clean. The quality of food served in any G.I. mess is in direct ratio to the energy of the American cooks assigned to the kitchen. Busy cooks = good mess. Understanding the labor element, the next problem is materials. Despite the fact that this is supposed to be an agricultural country, there seems to be damn little palatable stuff raised. Some messes, in order to be on the very safe side, use canned beans and canned sausages to extremes. It is a trial to the guys who have to eat there, in addition to being a severe test of the ingenuity of the cook. Where I am staying, the food is all Indian. Before my trip it had gradually gotten to an almost 100% edible point. However, in returning, I found that there had been a change of management and a radical change in the quality of the food. The meals are all elaborate. A typical dinner may be a chicken salad, then soup, then fish, then a main course, then dessert, then nuts and candy. It sounds wonderful, and it is, for the first few times, but they manage, with great skill to combine variety with monotony. It's a good trick. I can't describe it – but all the food has the same spiced

Indian flavor. Even the inside of a baked potato tastes like burned curry powder.

The sugar is a trial. It is very coarse, like rock salt, and will sit indefinitely in the bottom of a glass of iced tea without the least chemical change. Also, it tastes lousy on plain bread with butter. The bread is another trial, because it is always heavy, grey colored, damp and slightly sour. When you chew it, it forms into a sticky mass of viscous dough. It is very tiresome, in that putting jelly or peanut butter on it, or toasting it seems to make no difference at all. The milk and butter are damn near impossible. Did you ever taste goats' milk? Well, this isn't goats' milk but their darn cows eat something that makes it taste like goats' milk. It tastes gamey, and can only be disguised by the coffee, which tastes like, and is, mostly chicory. Naturally the butter tastes of the milk, and thus always tastes slightly turned.

One of the things I am going to do most of when I get back is eat.

Another of the things I am going to do is take more account of time as it goes by. It seems to me now that I spent more damn time lying around reading trash when I could have been doing more interesting things. Not so much doing more as doing something. How you had patience with me I will never know. It seems as though I spent time like I had an infinite amount of it to spend. I know now that I was prodigal with it – in a pointless fashion.

I am mailing another Roundup and another Yank as soon as I can get to the envelopes. I think I'll send them regularly if you want them. Let me know, please. Have received a whole mess of confirmations of magazine subscriptions placed by Pop. I don't know when they will start coming, but once they do start, I think that I will be well taken care of in the periodical dept. – but I would as soon miss them all as miss Time.

Enough for now

Love to you and Pencil, John

#71. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Poland, NY
November 17, 1943

Darling,

There isn't much left for me to say about your trip letter – your family just burst with pride and enthusiasm, and you would love to see the pile of little blue-bound copies like leases or lawyers' briefs that Dad had made. And Sammy used words like “fascinating” and “vivid” and “realistic,” so what is there left for me today but I told you so, because it's wonderful description and good straightforward writing, worthy of the guy who wrote some poems I'll never tire of reading. What an experience, fair-haired friend, and you made the most of it by capturing so much of it on paper for all of us to share and for you to refresh all your memories with when life here is again commonplace. We are very proud that you can do that so well, and grateful that you did.

You certainly were lucky in popping along just in time for the festivities at the Taj Mahal, and that experience by the river must have been more than a little unnerving. Once you've held your own little offspring, and watched it grow, things like that take hold of your very insides. Seeing the bombers and riding on transports or living in tents must make you feel much nearer “the war.”

We stopped at the apartment. The stove is in, and Mike had the kitchen all done – a nice clean rather light blue halfway up, and oyster white above, with a lovely gray-blue floor in kitchen, hall, bath and bedrooms. He decided to paint the living and dining room woodwork instead of washing it, and it's so nice-looking – there are so many doors and windows that it shows a lot. He was ready to paper and that necessity hadn't arrived, so we tore around to dozens of wall-paper stores and finally wired Philadelphia for a new pattern. If they can't fill the order I'll have to get something else tomorrow; I took him enough plain blue to start on. – It just looks

like a different place, and was so warm and comfortable and clean and sunny and roomy!

Awfully sleepy –
Love, Dordo

#72. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

November 17, 1943

Dear Dordo,

As you have probably discovered from the outside of the envelope, I am now field grade. Bill Heindl brought me the news to the hospital this morning (which I ought to be out of very soon). So I haven't had a chance yet to walk around with the leaves on. Bill became a Capt. It is a good feeling after sweating it out for so darn long. It sounds so high and mighty that I don't know whether to believe it or not. Please call 9 Beverly and let them know, I will write them soon. I am also thrilled about the extra 95 chips a month.

I have received two letters from you since being in here. They came yesterday and the day before – dated Oct 24 & 25. I think the pictures are wonderful, especially the askew one of Penny in profile with the lake in the background. Why wasn't a closer-up one of you included?

Pardon me for making this so short – but it does have news in it, doesn't it!

Love,
John

#73. DPM to JDM (ALS, pp.)

Poland, NY

November 23, 1943

Hi, Old Sweetheart,

When we went to Utica it was a normally gray Sunday, but dry and not terribly cold. When it rained just as we went to eat, it was a bit sloppy for open-toed shoes and no rubbers or galoshes, but by the time we got out of the restaurant it had already turned to snow, and the streets were white in a matter of minutes as it was falling in big wet chunks that piled on headlights and windshields in a sticky mess.

As we left Deerfield the lights went completely out, so we phoned Margie that we'd be up there to sleep, but while I was phoning the man in the Ramp garage had discovered and remedied the cause. At first he'd said he couldn't, and that there wasn't another garage open in the city, and of course no service stations.

So we started out again, in snow already three inches deep. When we got to the same spot in Deerfield where the lights went out, we skidded across the road toward a telephone pole, but just missed it and the car coming toward us, and resumed our journey.

Thru the big ravine, up the hill past "our house," down the cut by the schoolhouse safely, then to the long slow rise that leads to that last big swoop down and up before the road straightens out. To be brief, I spent an hour and a half trying to get up that moderate climb. We both had terrible colds, and no hats or anything over our shoes, and it was half rain, half snow, and wind, so it looked like suicide to get out of the car. And not enough gas to spend the night in the car with the heater on! Of course there were many other cars stuck – some put on chains and made it, others turned around, but my only hope was to get to the top of the hill where I could turn around, and return to Utica.

At long last a huge lumberjack, coming down the hill, and full of beer and sympathy, decided to help me. He left his car where his lights would cover both ditches, and helped me turn around in the middle of the road, then followed me into Utica like a guardian

angel. He even offered to share his beer with us, but I told him we needed all our faculties after our daiquiris, anyway. So we ended up at 9 Beverly cold and wet, after abandoning the car at the bottom of that hill and walking up. Thank heaven Pencil was there already.

Of course the movers wouldn't tackle the roads yesterday morning, so they changed the date to Wednesday. We did some errands in a merciless wind and on streets that were a glare of ice, and did a few half-hearted things in the apartment, then took Pencil back up to your mother's and started home at seven P.M.

The hills had been sanded, but the level stretches weren't, and the wind was terrible. It finally blew me off the road, and the whole front end of the car was nosed into a ditch full of snow! I was rocking it desperately and futilely when a little skinny farmer came along and practically lifted the car back into the road. So we finally got home.

Tonight the mover called and he had contacted troopers and highway engineers and had decided he couldn't chance trying to bring a van over the Walker Road, so he wanted to send it by way of Herkimer – and I paying them by the hour – six bucks an hour! When I wailed about the expense, and suddenly realized that that would be over 20 miles so I could maybe pay per cubic foot instead of the hourly rate (20 mile limit,) he went up in the air and said he was sorry he took the job and what if something happened to his van, etc. etc. – Well, I finally called the Herkimer bus driver and found out that the Utica to Poland route via Herkimer has all bare roads, and when I phoned that information to the mover, all was cheery again, and they'll be here, via Herkimer, and 9 A.M. tomorrow. I dunno yet how I pay, tho.

Isn't moving something? It will take a lot to get me out of this State St. place. I don't feel like moving again without six months' notice!

There's to be a Prentiss family dinner Thanksgiving night at Unc's, and we're invited. There's a slight turkey shortage, but Unc got a huge one, and we're having it at night because of Bus and Tom having to work. The MacDonalds haven't mentioned their plans (possibly because of Rita,) tho we were just invited to Unc's tonight. – I shall be thinking of you, for altho you probably won't hear much

about Thanksgiving at New Delhi, you'll probably be thinking about cold weather, and turkey and stuff, and Cornell-Penn football games. (We never did get to one, did we? We will, yet.) I'll be thinking of you, and be very lonesome without you, Darling.

Margie says they want all the holidays to be "just another day" with you gone, and not have a Christmas tree or anything to remind them it's a day when they'd miss you more than ever.

It's up to the individual to decide what is right for himself at such a time, but I feel quite differently. Of course you would want the Pencil's Christmas to be as much like Christmas as possible, and I feel that by observing the little routines we're used to we avoid making ourselves and everyone else miserable. There's no doubt we'll have a lump in our necks all the day, but it seems as if you'd like to think of a tree with trimmings and lights, and surprises for Pencil, and Christmas music and all the old standbys being here, to know they're here to come back to, and that we'll find comfort in the routine and the cheery look of things even if they do make us miss you worse than ever. Somehow I like to keep my feelings about you on the inside – it seems quite important, probably because it makes us seem to belong more to each other.

A spot of motoring sounds like a fine post war plan to me. And being the wife of a pedagogue in California sounds like Heaven! We wondered from something Mrs. Bowlin said, if something was cooking over there. Evidently not for you, at any rate. And I have wondered whether the sort of life you're leading would turn you to an urgent desire to make money and live luxuriously, or whether the simple life with modern conveniences and a few books would appeal more. As far as I'm concerned, I'm convinced that with either of us life couldn't get very humdrum for long – possibly not even very settled, and with you it won't get boring. The job problem will be serious after the War, and contacts very important. Are you fed up with the Army? I think by that time you should be looking for something that will keep you interested and happy most of all, because it will be time to choose an occupation in which you can stay long enough to get somewhere.

Moving is going to take a nick out of the nest egg, as will Christmas and a new stove. I can't seem to save much out of my allotment, either – prices keep going up, and special expenses come along the way they always have, but after the first of the year I hope things will settle down so that any out-of-routine expenses can be carefully weighed against the post-war possibilities of the amount in question. And if Pencil gets in school I may see a way to increase our income somewhat. I am aware of the fact that it would be more fun to spend it with you than now, anyway.

I love you John,
Dordo

3. Chapter 3 - Between India and Utica - Winter 1943, Letters 74-87

Letters 74-87

**#74. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)
Utica, NY
November 26, 1943**

Darling -

We're here! And I'm sitting in our own living-room looking at our lovely new wallpaper and paint, and our own things looking really nicer than they have anywhere, except maybe the Portsmouth Terrace library, - but I think nicer than that, even. And no Hortense, no Mrs. Sexton, just you and Penny and I. As far as I can see this "will be so nice to come home to" forever so long.

The movers came, via Herkimer, at ten o'clock Wednesday - two hours on the road coming, at \$6 an hour! It took all day to complete the job, so the final bill was awful - for such a short distance - \$54. When it became evident that they intended to charge by the hour (when their limit for charging that way is 20 miles,) in spite of having covered over 35 miles to get to the job, Margie called Mr. Wood, and he said to have the bill sent to me, then it could be questioned later if Pop thought it should be, - he was in New York that day. Of course when it's someone else's money, it's easy to say "You might as well pay it," so I'll probably have to, for want of a man to bully it out for me, but otherwise they did a good job, and it's worth it to be here.

The men put up the beds and laid the kitchen linoleum for me, and they were very pleasant. It was after five when they left, so you can see we didn't get a lot done that night. We went up for the Pencil, and he was in bed, so your family dropped him off and took a look at the place yesterday on their way to the Hotel Utica for dinner.

We got up late yesterday, but got a lot done, only it looked worse at night than it did in the morning because I let Pencil unpack of box of toys from Albany that had been packed since April, and Rita and I painted and did things that made it look worse, as far as confusion is concerned.

You see, Mike didn't do all the painting that should be done to make it look its best, as it would have been too expensive. But he did the hardest part. However, my theory is that if I settle completely first, it will be easy to put off doing those things that are left, so I'm trying to get some done right away. After settling there will be furniture to paint, curtains to make, etc., but once the stuff was packed the awful part was over, and now it's here I can slow up a little, as the hurry to pack left me about ready for a little rest. And this part is fun.

The kitchen is completed, except for washing and putting away the dishes from Albany, but they don't bother me as they're out in the front hall and we're not falling over them. The living room looks presentable, and Pen's bedroom, but our bedroom and the dining room need lots of time. The bedrooms weren't painted or papered, tho I intend to paint the woodwork as soon as possible. The floors Mike did in a lovely shade of gray-blue, and I hope to have the paper changed before you come home, as it's not in good condition, tho it's not ugly in color and pattern. A plumber is going to raise the kitchen sink, change the faucets to new ones, and he may persuade the landlord to permit him to take a new sink and tub out of an unused bathroom downstairs and change them for ours, which are badly scratched and stained. I hope so, because it is all painted (a very passionate peach shade) and has black linoleum on the floor, and a new toilet, and would be very nice if those old pieces were replaced. We just got hot water this afternoon, and I saw the furnace, both

it and the hot water heater look very good, and we're getting a ton of coke Monday. It's wonderfully warm here – no cold spots in the place.

The kitchen is Piseco-bedroom-blue halfway up, and a gray-white above, it has a good looking gray and black and red linoleum, and I have red oilcloth around. It is light, well arranged, and a good size. The living and dining rooms are lovely. Warm white woodwork, and lovely blue wallpaper. All the dining room walls are alike, in figured paper, with a blue lining for the built-in china cupboard, but the living room has two figured walls and two of plain blue, and it's lovely. Painting the oak mantel and seven dark doors helped the most. Penny's play room is very cute in plain blue, with black linoleum on the floor. The floors that weren't painted were cleaned and varnished. The front hall is awful, but I'll tackle that later. The attic is fine for all undesirable items.

The best part is that it feels like ours. It's big enough and far enough from relatives, and attractive enough, to really seem like a home, and I want to stay here so badly that I'll have a fit if we can't. – At least until you come, – I guess we can, but one feels superstitious after moving so much.

This is probably the moving anecdote of this time – Yesterday morning I unpacked the coffee pot, put the coffee in the top and percolated it. No one noticed anything unusual about the result, but when I went to take it apart to wash it, there was a wad of very soaked faded newspaper in the bottom which contained, of all things – three very well-boiled narcissus bulbs! Mother had packed them there after I thought I'd packed the percolator for good. Well, I was glad the coffee was boiled.

Our garage is so hard to get out of that it will be easy to save gas, but in the months when you use a car most it will be all right. We're lucky to get one so near downtown, especially at \$22 a month.

I will give you a financial statement as soon as I get the desk things unpacked and perhaps a little more privacy. Haven't received \$50 you mentioned sending, but it will probably show up sometime. Rita is still here, and is really helping now. It isn't smart to let her grow

into the place so completely, as it assumes the shape of a home, but it couldn't be helped, and won't matter so much when you're away if I only have some time to myself in between visits.

It would be so nice if you could come and see all this before the "new" wears off, but it will probably look good to you, anyway. We miss you so terribly, and wish we could see you soon, my Darling. I like to start and end my days beside you, always.

More later, Love – Dordo.

#75. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.) Utica, NY November 30, 1943

Darling Major MacDonald –

Consider this a V-mail letter. I wouldn't write to anyone else in the world tonight, but I'd write to you whether you were a major or a captain. It sure is fun to write Major MacDonald, tho. Congratulations from all of us, Dear.

It was very nice when I discovered the wonderful news. We were having breakfast when Nana called (DeVall's phone) and said that Margie had to be at Dr. Parkhurst's downtown at 10 A.M., and had some mail for me. As Popop was in bed with a cold and she wanted to get back before the doctor came to see him, she wanted me to pick up the mail from her at the doctor's, as she wouldn't have time to come over.

We were going downtown anyway, so we rushed to get ready, and I left Rita and Pen in the car with the motor on to keep them warm, and went into the doctor's office. The waiting room was full of patients, so when Margie came out, we sat on a little bench in the hall, she to read the V-mail letter I had yesterday, telling what was wrong with you, and I to read the letter she had – no. 27 addressed to me at 9 Beverly.

When I got to “As yet I haven’t had any chance to strut around with my leaves” – I quick grabbed the envelope – and there it was, just as I knew it would be some day. “Look – he’s a major” – and Margie and I purred and cooed over it until we thought of Pencil, so we hopped across the street to tell the others. And is pencil proud! – And Margie! – and me! I drove her home and she took the letter up to show Pop right away. He was pleased, too, tho of a fittingly convalescent nature – he’ll be more so when he can tell someone. But your mother was just 100% delighted, – and gloating about your age, etc., of course.

When things are better organized, I will send you a list of what we are giving for Christmas, just for fun, also a monetary report. The \$50 check arrived today and will probably be consumed by Christmas expenses, but at least we won’t come out of the holidays in the red or stone broke, as usual. I haven’t got my fur jacket yet, but I am considering that my present from you, because I know you’ve wanted to be in the bucks enough to get one for several Christmases. – It’s a shame we have to spend our first comparatively relaxed Christmas (financially) apart, but it does make being apart a little easier, to know that each one of us has security of a kind and comfort, – of a kind.

It’s so wonderful you’re a major. There’s a couple of people in Rochester I’d like to snub now, but what’s the use, it’s nicer just being so happy.

G’night, Major, Honey,
Love, Dordo

#76. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

India

December 11, 1943

Dear Dordo –

I can well understand how Christmas stuff can kind of give you a bang. I (and my confreres) seem to have resolutely put it out of mind. By the time you get this you will know that it has crept up on us – but good.

Speaking of that trip again – enclosed are two pictures; one of one of the carnivorous turtles, and the other one of the construction of a funeral pyre. Notice the sling-shot on the rag head in the turtle picture. There has recently been a fad there in Agra – with hawkers selling them on the streets.

I have had something on my chest re money. From everything I can see, it is going to be possible for us to lay up a bit of cash for future times. All that is well and good, except for the gradual inflation that is taking place. Both the Civil War and the World War resulted in a period of very extreme inflation after they were over. I hate to think of cash being socked into the bank only to become less and less valuable in what it will buy. The only answer that I can see is to stick the money, all that over a reserve fund of, say \$500, into solid common stocks. Those, unlike bonds, aren't affected by the cost of living. Stocks are, in effect, ownership shares; and, if by buying one share of the stock of a company, you own 1/100,000 of that company, the value of your ownership will go up and down along with the real value of money. If eggs cost \$1 apiece in 1950 and \$1 a dozen now, and you pay \$100 for a share of stock now, you can sell the stock for \$1200 in 1950 – Follow me? I think stuff like Bell Telephone Preferred stock, and G.E. and Gen. Motors would be a good deal. Maybe every time we got up to say \$700 ahead, you could stick \$200 into one of those. Tell me what you think. I am enclosing the receipts for the cash I've sent so far.

You spoke in one of your letters about the educated Indian being nice and friendly. I suppose the educated ones are – but it's the half educated ones that are a curse. They are arrogant and snotty, wear Kollege Kut Klothies, and drive their cheap little cars exactly like the drunken kids home on their way back from a high school brawl. They delight in anything that makes them feel momentarily

“superior,” and they provide probably the most fertile ground for the Jap propaganda which is piped in here by every conceivable means.

I am about writ off, so I will end with fond expectations of a missive from you on the morrow.

Love,

John

#77. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

India

December 12, 1943

Dear Dordo –

In response to the acclaim I got for writing of my trip, I am going to attempt to get a few things down on paper from time to time. The difficulty is access to a typewriter. However, since Dad went to the trouble of having the other thing duplicated, maybe you can either get him to duplicate the one I enclose, or, as a last resort, type it yourself with copies to whoever you think has a stomach strong enough to be interested.

No letters today, and by next Sunday your latest will be a month old.

Please give me your opinion of the enclosed, and also if you would be willing to attempt to type and market (under your name for reasons I won't give here) any stuff I might send you so earmarked.

Love to you and the Pencil,

John

Fragments of the Indian Scene

I Cow.

Everyone is inoculated with some meagre school knowledge about the prevalence of cows in India. The expression “sacred cow” is a component of our language, kindred to “white elephant.” However, it is with a dull sense of shock that you finally begin to

realize the all-pervading effect of the cow after a few months in India. I can't speak as an authority; my comments on the beast are the result of the times it has imposed itself on my consciousness, rather than the result of any deliberate research.

The sacred cows, as differentiated from the rural, useful variety, roam about at will. I have always been secretly impressed with the beautiful indifference of the nice brown cows in the states, who can look through you with a warm brown eye, and chew along without excitement. Compared with the sacred cows, one of the U.S. variety is in an advanced stage of manic depression. They are as indifferent to threats of physical violence as an elephant would be to a rapist gleam in the eye of a gnat. The other morning I rode my bike over to headquarters, fell gracefully off of it, and was fixing to trundle it through the fairly narrow gate to a space to park it. One of the great iron grey sacred cows with its slanty oriental eyes was peacefully denuding our hedge of green leaves, and, as I approached, she swung her buttocks around so that she filled the narrow gate. I stopped short and tried, in gradually increasing crescendo, various commands in English and Hindustani. She didn't even look around. Then, adopting the more practical mental attitude of an Indian, I surveyed the foliage within reach, watched her eating speed, and composed myself to wait until she had to move along. While waiting I carried on a short sharp mental debate about the pros and cons of the prestige of the white race when confronted with the immovable wrong end of a sacred cow.

These nonchalant critters have no problems, no responsibilities – and, so far as I can see, no emotions. There are uncounted thousands of them who live a self-satisfied parasitic life, possibly sneering occasionally at less fortunate cows who weren't smart enough to be born sacred. These less fortunate sisters have to withstand the additional humiliation of browsing with little skin bags tied to their teats to prevent poaching by orphan calves, goats, children – and, I suspect, impecunious adults.

Years from now, when I am happily home in the states, if I should ever feel creeping up on me a furtive desire to return to India, I am

going to go out and find a well dried pile of cow feces, and, with great ceremony, burn it. I am sure the sharp acrid odor will drive the desire well away. It is the standard Indian fuel. I am always forced, somehow, to think of the man who had the courage to eat the first raw oyster. The first Indian to use this fuel must have been damn cold.

The methods and policies of fuel collection have intrigued me. In an Indian country village, as soon as some fresh fuel becomes apparent in the middle of the village street, a small boy will come running out to it and throw handfuls of dust on it. Then by turning it over with his hands several times, throwing dust on the exposed parts each time, he is soon able to bring it to a consistency where he can pick it up and run off home with it. There, one of the women makes little flat cakes of it, which are allowed to dry in the sun. These burn slowly and with a good heat – but with an indescribable odor.

Another collection method utilizes the little girls of the family. I have yet to see a little Indian girl who could walk and yet be unable to balance something on her head at the same time. These feats must be taught simultaneously. A woman and a group of little girls, each with a round shallow wicker basket on her head, go wandering off across the pasture land. The woman maintains a straight dignified course while the little girls dart off in odd directions, grabbing dried feces and placing them in the basket. It is odd to watch a little five or six year old girl go clambering over rough ground, stooping and picking things up and looking on all sides without disturbing the balance of a well-filled basket. They are gay and picnic-y about such an excursion, and remind me of nothing more than school children with their teacher out collecting wild flowers. The objects they find do not, of course, require the dust treatment previously described.

Beside fuel, there is another interesting domestic use of this substance; thinned out, and applied with a rude brush, it is used as an interior paint in rural villages to discourage, through its chemical content, the visitations of all sorts of domestic insects. It is thinned

with urine to give a proper ammonia content. It is said to be very effective – but I seriously doubt if I will ever be placed in a position to give testimonials.

In addition to these domestic uses, there are religious uses among the Hindus. Their reasoning is that if the cow is sacred, then any bovine excretion is also sacred. This leads to a practice among certain highly religious Hindu families of keeping a utensil like a salt shaker at the eating place. This container is filled with dried and powdered excrement which is sprinkled very lightly over certain dishes. I have the word of men who were guests at dinner with such families, that it is only the first dish so treated that is likely to bother you, and then, not too much.

Another religious usage is tied up with the religious ceremony of purification of a high caste Hindu after he has been contaminated by contact with one of a lower caste. When the head of the house in a high caste Hindu family goes away to another city on a trip, no matter what precautions he takes, it is assumed that he has been contaminated. Therefore, before he enters his own house, he must be purified. The ceremony of purification is less rigorous today in the larger cities, but, in the country, as in previous years, he must be plastered with the dung of a cow and must even partake of a minute quantity of urine from the same beast. Then, after being properly cleansed, he could return to his loved ones with all though of contamination removed. There is one distinct advantage to this system – except in cases of dire necessity, it is very difficult to tear a high caste Hindu away from the bosom of his family.

#78. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

December 15, 1943

Dear Dordo:

Eight AM and time to get a quickie off to you before getting on my steel horse at 8:25. Delayed a bit by the pen – please rush tips.

Got a long letter from Sammy yesterday and my 1st issue of *Time* – dated Nov 22nd. Sammy's letter was good – got a nice mental picture w/ him in a dark room with Bardie, globe and flash-light explaining why and when I went to bed. He said the same thing as Evie – that my letter to them sort of resurrected me from a land of make-believe.

Am having a Chinese dinner tonight as guest of an American Chinese officer – George Chow from S.F. We spent about an hour yesterday at tea time (which we spent in a coffee house) discussing “Chinese dishes I have known.” Expect to skimp on lunch today and really get in the groove tonight. Tomorrow night I must go to an official party which is held periodically so that British and American officers can drink Scotch together. Tell you later how good an idea it is.

One of my ingenious friends dreamed up a solution to the problem of Indians making a lot of loud talk at night outside his window. He procured some king-size firecrackers and, merely by lighting one and flipping it out was able to terminate even the most interesting discussions. The other night he was lighting the wick of one on a hot coal in the fireplace when it slipped out of his hand. There was a great scramble for safe corners, and then Wham! – and they had to spend quite a little time dashing around stomping on coals. Life is sure dangerous on the fighting front.

Love,
John

#79. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

December 17, 1943

Dear Dordo –

I think my family's attitude toward Christmas trees and stuff is a ripe example of unrestrained exhibitionistic pathos – in the traditional German manner – masochistic and distinctly unintelligent. I am glad you have a tree for Penny. I wish there had been some polite way to tell them that by being so silly they made a good stab at spoiling my Christmas. Such nonsense!

By the way – I am Officer of the Day on Christmas night. I don't mind a bit.

Went last night to a small dinner party at a private club – some Britishers and American officers – about 20 of each. Good food, liquor and conversation. It's a good idea. Corrects misconceptions on both sides.

Got a cable today from Mr. & Mrs. E A congratulating me on the promotion. Couldn't tell from it when it was sent. It's funny, to get it because the promotion seems like old stuff now.

Keep writing long and often, baby.

Love,

John

#80. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

December 19, 1943

Darling –

Setting: a sunny Sunday, a little warmer, late afternoon; a clean

apartment, with two occupants peacefully asleep, the radio bearing Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Haydn." That's the situation in a nutshell. Last night I tried to write a few cards, and managed to get all of them done, and this morning I started a washing then cleaned the front of the house in preparation for the Christmas tree. After a late dinner we were all sleepy, and I was bushed, so with one accord we took a nap. Pencil and Rita are still sleeping. When they wake up I hope to finish the laundry, get the Sunday paper from Oneida Square, and write eight Christmas notes. If Unc comes, we'll put up the tree; he offered to help, and I can't find the holder, so his help will be welcome. – All this will clear the decks, I hope, for some shopping tomorrow!

So you can see, the situation appears to be getting under control again – it's got to, this is Christmas week. Kostelanetz program, with Christmas carols – the same program we heard in 1941 and 1942. All we need is you.

The New York Philharmonic has improved immeasurably. I never felt terribly critical of it, they just sounded muddled, and a little sleepy. But today the effect of old Shaggy-brow really showed. They are much more alert, disciplined, crisply controlled, more like the Boston. The program was good today, and lying down, there was nothing to distract me from a single note. In the intermission, Carl Van Doren and Carl Carmer read from some Christmas-time letters and diaries from the Revolutionary War. I like American history, especially from that early part.

I wish we could feel that you'd be with us next year at this time. You'd like it here, and we'd be bound to feel glad to be near all the familiar things of years and years, at this time of year. I don't dare to think you will, yet I can't think beyond then without you.

Even if it makes you sad, Darling, remember the snow, remember the music, the lights, the crowds, and the little groups of two or three with a Christmas secret or a Christmas errand or a Christmas task, remember "over the river and thru the woods," and the snow against the windshield – the rhythm of the wipers – the hum of the heater, and the car radio bursting with Christmas songs, the

Catholic church organ and bells and voices thru the night and when you wake up, the bright packages, the smell of the tree, the dinner, the people, the wine, the toys, the surprises, Pencil's voice, Pop's wheeze, clean sheets, new clothes, long-distance to Elmira, fruit cake, Margie's little tree, bottles of perfume, -dark,- books - and don't forget me.

Love, Dordo.

#81. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

December 20, 1943

Hello Darling,

I'd love to know what you're doing now - so near the hardest day to be apart. I hope your packages come, but judging from the Colonel's luck last year, it doesn't look too hopeful. It's hard that there's so little we can do to make your day a better one, but it's the main thing I think about now, and since we can't even send a cable all I can do is try a little telepathy, and a little prayer!

The holidays have raised hell with the mail service. There hasn't been any from you for such a long time, and I'm sure you've written. You'll probably feel it on your end for some time - there just aren't the men available to handle it. Our deliveries come at all odd times, and the post office and branches were even open Sunday. - Just if you feel sure how much I'm thinking of you every minute!

This morning we had a blizzard, but it eased off by afternoon, and I just had to do some shopping. I went down after 3, and got home about 7, but got a lot of worries off my mind. Honey - you should see Grant's bookstore. I couldn't find one book for Pop there, and I had a long list of possibilities. Of course the publishers can't print as many, and people have shopped early, but it's unbelievable. We've always been able to get new books even after Christmas. The books

are looking dingy now, too. Poor paper, bindings, no margins, etc. There was one of the ones on my list at each of two other stores, but many things I mentally noted before I was sick are gone from different stores.

Something queer happened. Margie invited us for Christmas 6 months ago, 3 months ago, 1 month ago, and three times since the first of this month. The last three times she invited Mother with us, as it became obvious that she wouldn't (at first) and couldn't go to Elmira. I know they don't like outsiders, and appreciated the inclusion, but since it wouldn't be the usual routine anyway, figured they were willing to add Rita in with other War conditions like your absence, and lack of transportation possibilities for her to get to Elmira, and flu and pneumonia. Having the presents at a different time, and going out to eat seemed like a good way to avoid painful associations for all of us. Today after I went out, Margie came down in a taxi to say that they didn't think we'd better come there for Christmas because it's too cold at their house!

I know we've done nothing or said nothing to offend them, our relations have been particularly close lately, and I know it's just Pop – probably because he doesn't want Rita there, but it makes me feel very queer. It must have been very hard for Margie to come down and say that; she and Rita didn't discuss it, naturally, as it was embarrassing. After all the invitations, to tell us not to come the very last minute – and Christmas!

So now Pencil and Rita and I will have our presents by ourselves some time here, and I will make reservations for us to eat out at the Hotel, as I think the more we're out of the house that day, the better. Pop has been intent on letting the War make things grimmer for some time, but even if there wasn't a tree there, or you, or many presents, (I've had mine from him and Margie, you see), I took it for granted that it would be easier for all of us to be together, anyway. I guess I've taken too much for granted, but Margie has been insisting on having us for so long, even acting as if she would be hurt if we went to Elmira, (and, ironically, Evvie wrote that she thought the Macs needed us more than they, this year) that it can't be her idea.

I've tried to impress Rita that he just wants to celebrate "in keeping with the War," – she knows as well as I that it isn't the temperature of their house! – but she is sensitive enough to know what changed his mind. If it hadn't been for all the sickness I would have invited them here, but I can't clean the house and unpack the dishes and finish the shopping this week and be out of bed on Christmas Day, (my plumbing has been the latest thing to give way,) and they know Rita had to be here – she's not even up yet, except on the davenport, so I don't see why Pop couldn't accept it as just an unpleasant feature of a sad day – but accept it.

There's no use trying to be sentimental over some people – if they show a small sign of sentiment, like he has about you, it doesn't mean they're really any different. This is like the \$100 loan in Cambridge, tho, – really too bad to grasp, at first. It changes the complexion of Christmas somewhat. God! I know we're a bore, but how can anybody do a thing like that? You'd think they'd want Penny enough to put up with the rest of us. Rita's not that irritating, especially on a social occasion.

Come back, Honey, so Penny can have a real Christmas, as soon as ever you can. Maybe you shouldn't get this letter – maybe you won't. Or maybe from your infinite perspective it will all look silly. Your being the realist that you are, and my being incapable of subterfuge, I've written the downs as well as the ups to you, because it seems as if that's what you expect, and there's never been a down that you knew we couldn't have surmounted by the time the news reached you. The same goes with this one – we'll just use up our gas and keep busy calling on the Prentisses and viewing the bright lights and all the other people looking for a substitute for what they haven't got, downtown, and the day'll be gone and forgotten in a flash.

I truly hope yours has warmth of heart, and brightness, Honey.

Love, Dordo

#82. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

December 22, 1943

Dear Santa Claus,

What a perfectly beautiful fire opal came strapped to a letter! It's fascinating to look at, and all my life when people admire it I can say "My Husband sent it from India," thereby lending even more glamour to its myriad little lights. I think I like it better than anything you've ever given me – (except the poems) it has so much beauty in so little space, and you know a what push-over I am for a fleeting, evanescent sparkle. I never had one (a sparkle) I could carry around before, if it's not too expensive it shall be mounted – for that reason. I'm glad you like it, too, it makes it more fun to have. Thank you so very, very much, Darling.

Now I know why you were so non-committal about the sapphire, and it will be nice to give it to Margie at Christmas so she will have something really from you, too. Her mind has been on you every minute, and I know she really truly misses you because she really truly loves you, like I do.

Three of your letters broke thru the Christmas rush, and of course were more welcome than anything. Also, 8 "Yanks" and "Roundups"!

Last night Unc and Aunt Helen came, and he put up the tree. I had to hurry all day yesterday – to paint six frames for six prints, get the family fed, finish my household duties and shop from four to six thirty, get dinner, and after the Uncs left at ten, wash dishes, put Pen to bed (he had to help trim the tree, after a long nap,) and then frame two prints, and pack the Elmira box. At 1:30 A.M. I was too tired to write, so I sent clippings. The tree is so pretty – I do wish you could see it. One string of lights still functions, so there's a little color from them, and we have amassed enough icicles and balls to trim it lavishly. Of course none of those things can be had this year, except a few colored glass balls (transparent) which I didn't get. It smells nice here. Evvie and Sam sent us a huge present which is light

as a feather – everyone's taken their turn at guessing what it could be, but no one can even guess.

The little Pencil got tears in his eyes when your card to him came. He's a little teary with anxiety about Christmas, anyway – for fear Santa won't bring him a gun! (He will.) He doesn't weep or whine, but he's ragged enough so his face twists when he really thinks about it. He sleeps very poorly, and is a nasty shade of liver-white. I'd like to give him a transfusion, but it would probably poison him! I plan to take him to Dr Washeim right after Christmas for a general check-up. Gosh – three times he's gotten chubby, and been slapped down – before his tonsillectomy, before his foot, and now. He said he loves Santa Claus, and Daddy, and me.

Dorrie and Margie stopped in on their way downtown tonight. Bill has an unexpected four days furlough for Christmas, so Dorrie's won't be such a dull day after all. We'd all have had a better one except for my mother and your father, but without you it doesn't matter. I just thought we'd all like to be together more than ever.

I keep writing because I hate to say goodnight on December 22!

Love to you, Dordo

#83. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

December 21, 1943

Dear Dordo-

It gets very close to Christmas, and yet it doesn't seem like Christmas at all. As you can probably well understand, it would be much more unpleasant were I to be spending it in Dallas or Portland or Minneapolis.

Anyway, the news in this morning's paper made it look as though the war might be going well enough to get me back home for Christmas in '45, but nobody can tell. Russian breakthrough, double

bombing mission on Germany, Australian advance in the Islands, tank victory in Italy, new advance in Yugoslavia etc.

Am purchasing myself another Christmas present of a chess set. It is small and ivory, and each piece is fitted into its own plush slot in one of two drawers built into the sides of the board. The playing surface is ebony and ivory. Very nice thing – and a bit on the gaudy side.

I enclose a few more pictures. Five to be exact. The man with the goatskin full of water is the guy who waters lawns and dusty paths. That hide full of water is very heavy. Then there is one of a sidewalk barber. It is said that all kinds of strange and unusual oriental diseases will attack any GI who ventures to patronize one of these curbstone artists. Also, it is best not to patronize the old gal in another of the pictures who is squeezing sugar cane and selling the juice to passers-by. The press looks a thousand years old. Penny will probably like the elephants working. The last picture is a snare and a delusion. I can get many people to testify that there is no store that clean in all India. The explanation may be that it is an overexposed picture of one those small dark dingy dirty corners.

Love

John

#84. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

December 24, 1943

Ah My Darling-

I'm listening to Bing right now – the night before Christmas Eve, and Johnsie – guess what he sang! He did – “LeiLani” right out of a clear sky! Silent night would have been enough, but of all the songs and all nights – LeiLani. How did it ever happen? I feel as if you ‘d

asked for it – I do hope they re-broadcast this program for you way over there.

But maybe you won't have a towel around your neck, like I did – and it was awful handy. He didn't announce it, and it caught me so unawares. I had just sat down in the big blue chair by the fireplace, across from the tree, to write you and to listen. (He's singing "Silent Night" now.) I just turned out the light and listened. He picked a lovely theme song, honey.

Things are little more under control now. Grandma isn't coming until tomorrow afternoon. The packages are all mailed, cards sent, and most of the presents bought –

tho none wrapped for this section yet. I just washed my hair at the risk of my life, the house is cleaner, and the six pictures framed. Tomorrow will be a busy day, tho.

Pop came home from New York this morning, with arthritis in his foot. I sent him a Coronet the last time he was sick (same number I sent you) that has a very sad article about arthritis in it. He needs spanking, but not in his foot. To think that your wife and child couldn't be there for Christmas when you are away, because he wouldn't endure Mother for a couple of hours!

But Sammy was sweet. I'm sending you the special delivery letter we got from him today. He was so nice to Pen when he was here, and he just couldn't bear for him not to get a tractor, when that and a gun were all he wanted, so he had a last minute inspiration, at great effort to himself, and Pencil will get a tractor of sorts, after all.

And a gal in the supermarket was nice to me tonight. We haven't been able to get butter for over two weeks, and I'm getting quite used to margarine on bread, which once would have been unheard of. So tonight I didn't take my ration-book and they were selling half-pounds of butter! But the girl gave me mine without points and said to bring them tomorrow because it's so cold, so I wouldn't have to go home and get the book. She'd never seen me before. Nice girl, nice butter, too.

Perhaps I should tell you that Margie and Dorrie came down to amend for any wrong done by withdrawing the Christmas invitation,

last night. It is all very hard on Margie because it undoes so much of the generosity and kind thoughtfulness she has done to build up a feeling of real relationship between us. It only made the whole thing worse, because she completely ignored the fact that she had said it would be too cold for all of us, and urged me to come and bring Penny, now that Grandma would be here to stay with Rita, thereby removing all doubt (or anything I had said to Rita) that that is why they asked us not to come. I love Margie, and I hate to see her put herself in such a position out of loyalty to Pop, but it is such a boner to invite us so repeatedly, then suddenly make it so obvious that we're not wanted. She couldn't back down yesterday and ask Rita to come and sit in a chair with a blanket or something because she didn't want to argue with Pop, I guess – he must have been very definite. But she shouldn't have asked us to come without Rita – before Rita! After all the hurt that's been caused already. It is really an insult to Rita, and at Christmas and when she's sick, – and I can't leave her and go there after she was asked not to come – can't they see? Ah why couldn't Dad be civil for just a couple of hours, even if it killed him, rather than not have any of us together at Christmas. I wanted to be with Dorrie and Margie, and Mother's being here shouldn't really make so much difference, especially when it was practically unavoidable. It's just courtesy to include her.

I'm sending you a pin-up girl. She's been stood up here on the desk for several days, waiting for something to be mailed in, and I've grown very fond of her. Put her where you'll see her often – she's sort of companionable, like a pin-up girl should be.

Take care of yourself, Honey, but stay on the ground if you can. We do love you so much.

Dordo

There's been no quarrel about Christmas, or even sniffy-ness. Margie just left word when I was out for us not to come, and when she came yesterday she came only to say she hoped we weren't hurt, because she'd been worrying about it. But I can't sustain the offense to Rita by going there now, without her – it just isn't done, and I don't know what to do.

#85. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

December 25, 1943

Dear Dordo-

So this is Christmas! I have just reported in as OD and I am now patiently waiting for time to pass between now and tomorrow morning at 8:30. Were I not OD, I would be going to the entertainment that Joe E. Brown is giving (one time only), but other than that, I wouldn't know.

They make quite a bit of fuss about Christmas here - I mean the Indians do. They are only baksheesh hungry, of course, but it does make it sort of nice. An Indian band serenaded the GIs in their barracks this morning, giving out with carols in the traditional oompah, oompah, fashion. One of the sweepers came in and hung leis of yellow flowers around our necks this morning. There is a large Christmas tree in our dining room, and on the table under it this noon there was a large stuffed pig head, with turnip tusks, etc. I enclose a menu.

Last night I opened my two packages, and found JP Marquand's book and Hindus book from you, and a package from Rita with soap, ashtray, sponge, and bookmark. Please thank her for me and tell her that strangely enough (due to lack of request on my part) all of the items were darn welcome. And of course you are responsible for this letter being short. I have brought Marquand along and am anxious to get at him.

Spent last night going around to my friend's rooms on a campaign of saying Merry Christmas and drinking their liquor. By the time I ran out of friends I had a pretty nice package, so I went back to bed.

Love, John

#86. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

December 26, 1943

Dear Dordo-

Well, I spent a long quiet tour of OD, and got well into "So Little Time." I am really enjoying it, and glad that you read it before you sent it. I got the biggest kick out of Jeffrey trying to be nonchalant and doing all the wrong things at Minot's Club. Why did you stamp that one with our stamp and not the other one?

Had the afternoon off, so Fred Smith and I got our bikes about 2:30 and went down to try to get tickets to "Coney Island" – six thirty show. That failing – weren't early enough – we set off on an exploring trip. Went miles and ended up in a crowded slum section. We were peddling along when a British lorry stopped and an MP (American) hopped out to tell us that we were out of bounds and in the brothel section. He further informed us that his orders required him to take us to the Provost Marshall's headquarters for a prophylactic. That seemed like such a grim gift from Uncle Sugar on a warm Sunday afternoon, that we talked him out of it, which we wouldn't have been able to do were we GIs. Anyway, he guided us to the quickest route out of the forbidden territory – and away we went.

Suggestion – when toys appear outside the playroom, and are not being played with – place on high closet shelf for one month. Will probably relieve situation and also lengthen desirability life of the toy. (Shouldn't he be in kindergarten?)

Glad you like the apt. so much. Letter I got from Dad was practically lyrical about it (inside).

I forgot – today on my bike ride I went whizzing silently by an Indian woman who was walking diagonally across the road with her back toward me. All unconscious of my presence, she spit through her front teeth just in time to smack me on the pant leg just at the

knee – and me in pinks! She was one of those scrofulous (?) looking creatures who do heavy physical labor, and wear dirty red saris. Good thing she wasn't chewing betel.

Love,
John

#87. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.) Utica, NY December 31, 1943

Dear John,

It's a nice day for the New Year's Eve people, and looks as if tomorrow would be more pleasant, too. It seems to be much warmer, and I'd surely be wanting to do something celebrative if I could. The bug that was hanging around yesterday really took hold last night, so it looks as if I'd have to lie low for a few more days, tho I'm dressed and slightly restless. Intestinal grippe and bladder irritation – if only Dr. Murmane had given me enough sulfa I'm sure this wouldn't have happened.

It's just as well, tho, because it gave me an excuse to avoid any more inter-family tension. Margie called up via DeValls a little while ago and invited me – just me – to go to the Club and the movies with them tonight, and to Open House at the Club tomorrow. Since Rita was well enough to be out for Christmas dinner I couldn't very well leave her and Penny to spend New Year's Eve or New Year's alone. She is my mother and a guest here, and even if she is a poor sport about staying with Pencil anytime, it wouldn't be kind or even courteous of me to ask her to be a sitter on a holiday, like that. I just can't understand Margie, unless having committed herself to that course of action once she thinks it's more casual to continue it. Of course Rita wants all the prerogatives of a member of the family and all the courtesies of a guest, but this sort of thing sure puts me on

the spot! They know how I feel about Rita, but I've never given her any reason to know that I feel that way. It would offend and hurt both of us for me to show the irritation that I often feel – and do no good. After all, she's all alone and utterly insecure except for us, and the fact that she's a spoiled little fiend sometimes, gives me no excuse to be discourteous or hurt her in any way that the integrity of my own family doesn't demand. As far as you're concerned, and as far as possible as Penny and I are, there are some limitations that I'm tough about. But it isn't necessary or desirable to be rude now. So I didn't even tell her I was invited.

I like Margie better, but this is confusing and a headache, and it's impossible to see any reason for her to want to snub Rita or embarrass me. So the home front has its problems, petty as they are, and I think I'll join the WAC's and send Pencil to India – he's dying to come and help you win the war, anyway. Once Rita's gone this will end, but I don't feel the same about Margie now. Oh well, it's all in the realm of the superficial, anyway.

As for more cheery subjects, the postman just brought two more letters from you this afternoon, which was a lovely surprise.

It's queer to have New Years on our doorstep and not even know yet how you spent Christmas, but the mail service is improving so we should know soon.

The party you attended for big-wigs sounds like something to tell those elusive grandchildren about. Things like that make me realize that Uncle Sam could have done much worse by you!

Love, Dordo

4. Chapter 4 - Carrying On - Winter 1944, Letters 88-109

Letters 88-109

#88. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 1, 1944

Dear John,

There's been a growing urge to write you a New Year's note all evening – suppressed several times because of the hopelessness of saying anything coherent. I don't even feel coherent.

Pencil was asleep and Rita reading, and when 1943 began to go I stopped reading and had that minute all to myself, and you, – before the whistles got to her consciousness. It's been impossible to visualize a thing about 1944, and us, except to keep on waiting. Naturally, I avoided thinking about even its beginning, tonight. But when it started to be that breath-holding minute, when the hand slips over the 12, it was just like waiting for a hypodermic. You know there'll be a minute of hurt, and you hold your breath and wait – and then it's over.

In that minute, all my thoughts were with you, yet I couldn't visualize your face, only your smile, but that was comforting.

There's never been such a quiet New Year's Eve; I remember every one (that counts). The first time, when 1937 went, I had just reached our little apartment on Waverly Avenue, in an ice storm, and you were there waiting. A year later we saw 1939 come in Boston, on Memorial Drive, pleasantly. Next time we were in Elmira, spending

a rather stiff evening drinking Bard's Town, just before we went to Massena. The next year it was the swell party the McGraws and the Porters had, – and you and I spent a quiet evening in the library with Heaton the year after that. Last year was really quiet and we barely managed to stay awake to say "Happy New Year;" – we didn't really need to, we were together.

This year we didn't even have it on the same night! And it wasn't much fun, but it wasn't bad either, there was no bitterness, and our being apart is on such a world-wide scale that it really brings us closer – so many people were alone tonight, no matter who they were with.

Except for these things it was just another night. Pencil moaned in his sleep, and Rita was quiet, people and cars went by, and I read "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," which is one of the books you will want to read. It's nostalgic, and wise. I thought I understood you well, but because of one little incident in this book I understand you better – one of my blind spots is cleared up, and it's something to which understanding has been sought and never quite found, Pure profit.

Just another night. But now it's 1944.

I love you, Dordo

#89. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

January 1, 1944

Dear Dordo–

I can't think of anything brilliant or intelligent, or even sensible to say about the fact that here is 1944. It is sort of inevitable, and not exactly a cheery occasion. All it really means is that there is one more damn day which, when gone, will be one day less to spend in India.

My beginnings of a big evening last night panned out very, very

poorly. I was sleeping peacefully at the time the year changed. It seems that I got hold of just a wee bit more liquor than I should have prior to the evening meal. We had a table upstairs where we were going to sit and watch floor shows and stuff after dinner, but half way through dinner I had to go take a walk which ended up on my sleeping porch where I laid down for “just a few minutes.” I woke up at 2 a.m., and took my blouse off. It had some advantages though. This morning I felt relatively bright and cheery, whereas my companions of earlier in the evening were dragging themselves around with a faint green complexion, and dashing off this morning to the coffee house at every possible excuse.

All sorts of screwball events took place last night, but I heard about them all on a second hand basis. The funniest of all is well worth repeating. Movies are not continuous here. Lt. George Chow of our place was at one of the movies, sitting in the balcony waiting for the lights to dim and the show to start, when a GI came in calmly, staggering only a little, and carrying another soldier over his shoulder. The one being carried was as full of life and pep as a rag doll. He carried his burden along the little aisle by the low railing across the front of the balcony. He lost his balance and teetered for a few minutes while everybody in the balcony gasped – then he located what he thought was their seats and dumped his friend in the one and sat in the other. It turned out that they were the wrong seats, so he sighed, picked up his friend, again, and walked out of George’s line of vision. We can’t figure out any reason except the fact that they guy was just one of those calm single-minded drunks – and he and his friend were going to the movies no matter what.

I believe that I told you that my Hindustani lessons were interrupted by my little visit to the hospital (interrupted before they started). Well, they start again on Monday. Smith and I have picked up a little bit, of course, without formal instruction. I can now give the right kind of greeting to Muslims and Hindus. Muslims get Salaam malikum. (To which they answer Malikum Salaam) And Hindus get Jamas Jiky, which they answer in kind. Maybe I will learn from my teacher what it means. I am amused when I think of filling

out forms at some unknown date in the future, job applications and the like, and putting under languages – Hindustani. That really ought to startle a few of the boys. It is surprising and vaguely disconcerting how few of the men on duty over here make any attempt to learn the language. I suppose that Americans are notoriously poor linguists, and that they don't want to do anything they can to remind them of the fact they are in India, but on the other hand, it passes time, and may have some possible future value, and makes life a hell of a lot easier and more interesting while here. The fact that my roommate will also be learning will be good in that we will have a chance to practice. Already we use Hindustani terms in our chess – example: torkarna – checkmate (or matkarna), literally it means “a condition of being not able to do,” which is exactly what a checkmate is.

Love, John.

#90. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 3, 1944

Dearest John,

I'm glad you got a nice chess set; I've always wanted you to have one, and one that has filled so many hours for you will always be nice to have. Won't a life filled with mothers and wives and sisters and daughters be strange to you people who have lived so much in a masculine world? Of course, in a city such as you are in, there are probably office and Red Cross and social encounters with women, but those you can shoo out when they get tiresome, and post-war relationships with women will probably seem a bit overwhelming at first, because they'll be women in such a different perspective than you will be accustomed to.

Which reminds me, I'm sending you a Vargas calendar, which will

probably strike you funny. But they're about to become collector's items, unless the Post Office department and Eskey get a better understanding, – and it might be worth something to you for bargaining purposes with some G.I. or one of your friends, if you don't know what else to do with it!

Boy, the Russians certainly are pounding it out. Over the Polish border tonight. I should think the Germans would be plenty uncomfortable with the Russians really heading their way, and the Western front about to open, and the RAF giving it to them from above. Where have they left to go? But I know Germans. They are just like Hortense, they'll get the last word yet. Things sound better in your part of the world, too

Next letter should be your Christmas letter. Christmas is already seeming far away, and I'm trying now not to think about the next one, because we just don't know what this year has packed in it.

Love, Dordo

#91. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 7, 1944

Darling,

Your bicycle ride sounds interesting. It will be interesting to hear what the brothel situation is there; I understand that religious views make common solicitation more or less unnecessary. I suppose anywhere that there are foreigners it is just another way of earning money. The Christmas begging must have been nauseating and sad.

Jeepers, I didn't expect you to be casual about being a major. We aren't. We brag about it lustily. The \$75 arrived, and is banked, also the Christmas checks are. I'll feel relieved when you get my financial report, whatever your reaction. It's hellish difficult to be spending

your money with you so far away. Misunderstandings can occur so easily.

Re misunderstandings, I said something the other night in a letter about my letters being boring to write. I didn't mean that it bores me to write you, but that the subject matter is often boring when one writes every day, so that I feel that you will find it pretty dull love to write to you; you are my only Friend.

Very good suggestion about the playroom. When the Christmas tree is gone, he will be dragging things out again, and we will have a Rule. He's absolutely got to find a playmate, but kindergarten is next year, unless I can find a half-day Nursery school. I was too young when I got to college, and I'm going to send him to kinder- when he's five, and first grade when he's six. That will only hold him up one year behind where I was, and that not being enough I feel that the time might come when it would be to our convenience to keep him out of school for a semester or so, for purposes of travel, which will knock off some more time. I don't want to hold him back until he's too advanced for his grade in school, and bored with it, but a little more maturity helps after they reach high school and college, and one year later at the start will be better, I think, especially for a boy. What do you think, you've had "age" trouble," too? Just a few times in your life wouldn't you like to have had an equal footing in maturity with some smug upstart who affected an attitude of superiority just when he was doing the same job with more preparation to do it than you, who were reaching to be doing it at all? I seem to have taken a lot of beating psychologically from kids who weren't my mental equal, just because they'd been around a little longer.

Would you rather pick up a wedding ring for me there or some other time, or have me get one? I feel bare without one. Do you wear yours?

Love, Johnsie, Dordo

#92. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY
January 11, 1944

Dear John,

The President is going to speak on the radio in a few minutes, then Fibber McGee, then Bob Hope. I'll start this now, then if anyone says anything good, I'll add it on.

I have eyes and ears out for job possibilities in the future, because it will surely be our greatest concern for a while when you get back, and former contacts may be of some help. Today I was wondering why the publication field wouldn't be one of the best outlets for your talents. Of course, it's like teaching, financially – at first, but you have literary talent and business training and experience, and magazines nowadays are so exciting due to the change in communication, that they aren't as apt to let one get in a rut as one might have before radio, plane, and camera-influence on civilization drew the whole world together.

Nothing very new in the President's address, except proposed changes in the draft laws. Hope was good, his best was an ad-lib, after he badly jumbled a gag: "they make me work with a tooth brush in my mouth, you know." Fibber had income tax trouble.

Love, Dear,
Dordo

I liked the Ernie Pyle thing especially.

#93. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Utica, NY
January 15, 1944

Dear John,

Eight letters today. Never got them like that before, all these were sent "Free," and arrived in order, the last being mailed just eight days ago. The pictures are a good addition to the collection, I liked the guy feeding the children, and Pen liked the animal pictures. Even the postman must have been impressed this morning – he hasn't rung the bell since Christmas, 'til today.

Your premonition of change and mine must have been simultaneous. I have felt that the change in top command would lead to changes for you, and I'm convinced of it after an announcement on the radio tonight that Mountbatten may by-pass Burma, and attempt to take Singapore and other nearby territory, and that there will be action directed from India on a much greater scale. It will be torture in a high form if we cease to know where you are.

We have been lucky to know so much of your whereabouts so far, and to know that you were comparatively safe. I think in a time of change, anticipation is the hardest thing, and I hope you know what's cooking for you as soon as possible. Of course it would be interesting to know if what's being done now is temporary or permanent, but we never know that, except that nothing in Uncle Sam's army is permanent.

Your description of the Indian countryside is so vivid as to make it seem familiar, I think my subconscious must have felt that abandoned circus ground comparison because even the pictures make it look that way, and it couldn't be better made sensually acute in one's imagination.

The Poles having thrown the border dispute into the hands of Britain and US is some business. It looks like the worst imaginable mess. We heard a fair program tonight on the radio, a Washington interviewer discussing the State Department with Edward Stettinius, Robert Murphy, and a broadcast from England by John Winant. I imagine tomorrow's papers will be very interesting, with more dope on the Indian situation, and changes in the State Dept., and the Polish problem on the fire.

Goodnight, Major MacDonald, Dear,
Dordo

#94. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Utica, NY

January 17, 1944

Hello –

Every station on the air has the program for the 4th War Loan drive, now. I wasn't going to listen, but DeVall's radio was loud enough so I suddenly recognized old Bing, so I got him just in time – two pianos, in orchestra, and Bing singing "Candlelight and Wine" – but corny, but I'd listen to him sing anything (even "Drink to me Only.")

Do you think I should buy a few small War Bonds? Of course the money isn't as available that way, but it also puts it where it's comparatively safe from impulsive spending. The dentist, and a little balance on Dr. Wallace's bill took ten bucks away today. Someday soon I'm going to spend a little money on liquor. I don't even know if gin can be had anywhere, but there's a little Puerto Rican rum left, and there may not be later. I still have the better part of our store of "spirits" from Albany, except for a little rum tippling I've done when flu lingered around, but about wedding-time it may be necessary for a little more hospitality.

Another mess in the papers tonight – the Russian news item about two British officials meeting Von Ribbentrop in Cairo for separate-peace consultations, printed in "Pravda." Of course, it was denied, and labeled German propaganda, but the fact that the Russians bit on it was hard to explain. In fact, I never heard so many guesses. Vander Cook had the most logical-sounding guess – that among the Soviet officials, as among our own, there are the stupid, the isolationist, and the British-hating, who, like ours, might give

credence or publicity to such a rumor, in spite of their being a minority.

Good night and love,
Love, Dordo

#95. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 24, 1944

Darling,

Today was the Pencil's first school day. He was terribly excited about it, and I'm sure he had a good time, but since we encountered a screeching fire truck on the way home and he immediately became a fireman for the rest of the day, I couldn't find that many details from him. Anyway, the trip over and back, with him along one way, takes less than 20 minutes on icy walks, so it's convenient.

Well, 40 minutes minimum daily outdoor exercise will be a considerable improvement in my schedule, as well as his, and getting back here at nine gives me a handsome start on my work. Probably if I can't find a real kindergarten to send into next year, he could go on there until ready for first grade, but I hope to locate an all-day school, so I can get some addition to my activity that's remunerative or educational.

Living here so far gives me the impression that if we settle in this state, (for a while, always assuming our "settling" to be temporary) when you get back, we could do worse than Utica. Of course we could do as well, meaning Syracuse, but I think we would like it pretty well with you here. – Only it would be nice to be warm more of the year. Gosh – I wonder and wonder what will happen – and there's not even a good guess in view!

Love, Dordo

If we're poor let's not live in the city, but if we aren't, it would

be more fun. If you're poor, social competition is one strain that can be avoided in a town, and I don't think I could talk take much of it except on an equal financial footing with the kind of people one wants for friends. That spoiled Rochester – all our nice friends were beyond our means, and I'd hate to ever go through that again. The only alternative to that is some class of educated people, whose work isn't very remunerative; there's some compensation to that – in the upper bracket you always find people who got there on someone else's money and have nothing else. – All badly said, but you probably understand the point.

#96. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 29, 1944

Darling –

You are the sweetest guy. No one knows how much I appreciate your reasonableness. In places where other people might or might not feel like preaching or being contentious but would think they should be if an opportunity presented itself, you never are. That's a very rare quality – honestly. You're reasonable because you're intelligent, and you're sweet because you're reasonable, but also because somewhere deep in you is a lot of plain good-nature, and it's a lovely thing.

You're a pleasure to live with and a joy to be married to, even 14,000 miles away. And now that you have received my financial statement with such good grace, I'm not going to run out and go on a spending spree to celebrate. It does seem as if the money goes pretty fast, and Dorrie's wedding is going to set me back in various ways, but I want us to have as much as possible when you come back, too.

Your sympathy about Christmas was welcome, and I concur with

the suggestion about future ones. It's a shame it had to happen, though – I'm as sorry as if it were my fault.

We've finally had news about Jap treatment of prisoners, and it's nasty. Don't get yourself captured – but if you ever should, have faith in your healthy mind and body, and our constant and faithful love for you, whatever happens.

Good luck and comfort to you, my Darling –

All my love, Dordo.

#97. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

February 10, 1944

Darling –

After I wrote you last night Mr. DeVall got the new fire built, and the plumber went home, and at eleven o'clock another leak started, so poor Mr. DeVall had to dump the new fire, and it was really cold when we woke up this morning. We stayed in bed 'til nine, then I put a heavy sweater on Pen and everything I could think of on me, and gave him breakfast in bed. By 11:30 the job was finished, so we finally warmed up again. This place heats fast, once the boiler's started.

You'll think it's awfully run-down, from my tales of the roof and the plumbing leaking, and all we've done to it. It is, in a way, but it's so light and comfortable, – Margie said tonight, “Dordo, I love this place. I like it better than any place you've ever lived, even Stonehenge,” and I feel the same. I want you to live here a while when you come back because it seems to be such a happy place.

When I shivered down after the mail there was the nicest surprise. This package from you! So near Valentine's, and my birthday, too! The necklace is lovely. It's so unusual, and so exquisitely done. I've worn it all day, even with a sweater, but it will be stunning over the new black dress. I'll wear it to Mrs. Wood's

party tomorrow. How they ever got the gold on over the silver in just the way they did is amazing. It's even more beautiful in artificial light. I've got it on the desk to look at while I write.

And the slippers came, too, and I love them. Pencil thought they were enchanting. They fit perfectly, and you know how I love the things to wear on the feet. Those darling points at the heel and toe.

I made a terribly noble decision about them, tho. I want Dorrie to have something really from you for her wedding, and have already written you about that, but since you seem to be expecting to be away from headquarters for so long, you may not get the letter until after the wedding, (three weeks!) and if you sent something then, Bill may be gone by the time it gets here. So even if it's not something for Bill, I think there should be something tangible from you for Dorrie at that time, so I'm saving them. If I don't hear from you that you've sent something by the day before the wedding, I'll give them to her from you for her trousseau. They'd be stunning with some of the white satin and fluff she's been getting.

Margie had your star sapphire set in a very beautiful heavy sterling silver pin, and it looks so nice. I wished I'd sketched it for you – I will. She thinks a lot of it. – I hope you don't think I don't appreciate these things, passing them around, but you probably intended that they should be, and I seem to be doing very well, too.

It gives us pleasure, more than you can realize, to have tangible things from the other end of the world where you are, and you've sent such nice things. (Poor Col. Robinson's wife has such a collection of useless junk!) We're proud of you, and proud to say "John sent it."

We've had a few bare years, when we had more wishes than objects of beauty; – it's nice to have a few beautiful things to store against the future, whatever it is to be. You've never known me particularly as a person of artistic inclinations, but you seem to remember very well that there is pleasure for me in lovely things. That is nice – especially in this grim time. It makes of you a discriminating and sensitive husband.

Love,
Dordo

#98. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

February 23, 1944

Dear Dordo,

A new roommate, one of the hordes who are constantly drifting through this grand central station, brought with him this machine on which I am writing this. Someday, somewhere, somehow I have got to own one of them. It is a Hermes Baby, a Swiss make that weighs only six pounds, and yet has all the gadgets and a standard keyboard. It is very attractively designed, and works damn well. They used to sell them in Macy's before the war for \$55, and now the board of Economic Warfare has taken over all of the importations of them into the country. If I can find one on the black market here, you can expect not to get any additional cash one of these days.

I have been getting veddy literary on occasion, and have written a few small pieces to amuse myself. One of them is based on the ever current social and sexual problem here in India of the American officers with the little gals who were not socially acceptable before the war, and still aren't to any great extent – namely the Anglo-Indians. It has intrigued me a bit, not from a personal experimentation point of view, but from the point of view of watching my compatriots wiggle into and out of the throes of their illicit alliances. It is both pathetic and amusing. I will send you my story, which couldn't be published, mainly because it isn't good enough, and partially because of its subject matter, as soon as I can get a decent copy made of it. It may give you a bit of the additional local color.

I have tied up and stowed away the first hundred letters from

you. Please don't think that because I don't mention stuff, I'm not interested.

Outside we are having a steady cold rain. My poor old bicycle stays outdoors in it and the damn seat absorbs water like a sponge rather than shedding it. Fine system. A plane has been sort of blundering around in the murk out there. Hope he gets in safely. It has suddenly begun to occur to me that I am going to find it damn hard to talk very much about beautiful India when I get back. It gets hard to even talk about it in the letters when you get as damn sick of it as I am. Maybe I am in a mood. I don't know. Anyhow, more later, and all my love to you and the Pencil.

Stamped with JDM "Chop"

#99. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

February 26, 1944

(Editor's Note: with 4 page enclosure of short story, not included here, to be published as "Interlude in India" in 1946)

Dear Dordo,

Enclosed is my small untitled story of the American officer and the Anglo Indian girl. I tried to give it a "typical" sound. Let me know what you think. I think it's too awkward and too melodramatic. Maybe Esquire stuff if Esquire gets much cheesier.

JDM

#100. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

February 28, 1944

Hello –

Well, Mother must be well over the Walker Pond Road by now. We took her down to Baggs Square, and she rode home with a boy from Poland. Next week I'll have Nana, it's nice to have a breather in between.

With just a few changes, Rita wouldn't be as difficult to entertain, but she seems incapable of making those changes. If Sammy doesn't get a commission, and is accepted for induction, their contribution to her support will end, and some change will probably be necessary, but there are lots of things I'd rather give up than our separate abodes. I can't see how Evvie will get along, however. Well, there's still a chance that he can't pass the physical for either. A five-man commission appointed to investigate whether the draft standards for physical exams could be lowered, reported very firmly today that they couldn't.

I called Margie this morning and got a load of utter consternation. Everything about the wedding has been so well-planned and under control, and Saturday night Bill called to say that all furloughs following this week's exams have been canceled! (Including his.) He has Saturday and Sunday free usually, and plans to try to at least get a pass for Monday, but the Major was out of town, so he couldn't see him to make any request until today. The fact that this sudden change has come at the end of an exam period, has all of us scared that the boys will be moved somewhere else on the weekend. Bill says he'll go A.W.O.L. Monday if he can't get a pass, but if they are about to be sent somewhere, that might not be very practical. This surely means that they won't have any honeymoon, and might mean no wedding, or having the wedding suddenly changed to Sunday, or not ever getting to live in their apartment which Bill has so faithfully

cleaned! Dorrie is in a terrible state, as you can imagine, and it has taken all the fun out of life for all concerned. Probably Bill will have some sort of decision from his Major tonight to phone Dorrie, but the man may not be able to do much for him, since the order already affects all of the boys, and therefore must have some purpose, – I hope a decent one, and not just somebody's whim.

Reading this over (Pencil is in my hair), I'm not sure I ever made it clear that Bill expected to have the weekend, plus a full week's furlough, which he planned to spend in their apartment with Dorrie, before she started her job. They were going to spend the night of the wedding in Syracuse, and go to Boston the next day. All anyone can do now is to cross their fingers.

It seemed queer that they didn't marry last Fall, when everyone expected them to, and things looked a little more like a bird in the hand. I thought they were very lucky to have the opportunity to plan so far ahead, and have everything work out so according to Hoyle, but since this thing has been happening to couples for months, all over the country, they took quite a chance. Not that that makes it any better now.

Air mail postage will probably go up to eight cents next month; if that happens I think these little missives should be mailed every other day in one envelope, don't you?

Love, Dordo

Radio news tonight is that a Jap attempt to invade India has been repulsed. Ambitious little screwballs, aren't they?

#101. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

March 6, 1944

Darling,

Everyone is planning to write you a play-by-play description of

the weekend, but by the time it is over and they're rested up, I'm afraid lots of the little details will be forgotten. This is the first chance I've had at it, and my efforts to type are a little queer, I never felt so as if I was typing with mittens on, – I aim for one key, and come down three to the left. Writing would be worse. All I want to do is have enough resistance left so I won't weep at the altar. Between getting the Pencil to and from school, and keeping an ice bag on Mr. DeVall's appendix while his wife gets lunch for the mob at 9 Beverly, the interruptions may keep this from being little more than a start.

There was a nice letter from you this morning, and the short story, which I think is very excellent writing. I think I'll send it to Eskey, just to see if it takes. In particular, I think you have created a fine sense of atmosphere, – of making it possible for the reader to identify himself as sympathetically with both characters, and also you have left unsaid just the right things, which seems to be the hardest thing for a new writer to do. All the implications are there so vividly without a superfluous word. It seems to me to be enough detached from the average War-situation which has been literally exploited, to have a fresh interest, and yet the situation is one so familiar from the standpoint of the human race that it is "sympathetique" – with all the charm of the different garb of locale and color. It seems to be a particularly marketable thing, and since that seems to be one of the tests of success that is tangible, why not submit it to the test, since the opinion of completely prejudiced persons deems it capable of surviving!

The weatherman has done his mid-March New York State best for the weekend. Clear, sunny, and damn cold. In fact it has been ten below zero both mornings, and this morning when Big Bill came for Billy, he said all the pipes at 9 Beverly were frozen again, and no water was available for washing, shaving, etc., until the plumber came.

Perhaps if I try to be chronological, it will be easier to remember things. The festivities started with the Robinson's dinner at the hotel, Saturday evening.

That was the older generation's night. The dinner was wonderful, roast beef in slabs being predominant, and sparkling burgundy, which is my favorite drink, flowing as fast as we could drink it.

Penny is crazy about Bill, and thank heavens Bill is about him. He had planned every minute of Bill's time, and just stood and held his hand every minute he was around. Sunday morning before Bill went to have breakfast with the families, he made him march all over. Bill was in the other twin bed, of course, (in your pajama top – saving his for the ride back,) and he certainly didn't get any extra sleep after Pen woke up the two mornings.

Sunday we had to dress in a flash for the Hickey's luncheon at the Fort Schuyler Club. You probably received more toasts and good wishes than the bride and groom. Everywhere people asked about you, and Dorrie and Bill talked about you constantly, and of course I did, and we all wished and wished you were there.

Tuesday afternoon –

Well, it's legal now. It was a wonderful wedding and reception.

Jane and Hazel and I stopped to pick up Penny, then we went to the rehearsal on Sunday, and Mother went up with Nana. Pen was the greatest concern at the rehearsal, of course, but he was very good. He took a look at the little pillow he was to carry the ring on, and said "Aw, I can carry that under my arm." So we rehearsed marching to the altar, and he got there, and promptly sat down on the kneeling bench (for the bride and groom). After which he stood and kissed Bill's hand all during the discussion of the service. Mr. Fiebigger had a very nice service, tho his manner at the rehearsal was pretty heavy. He got to the "Now I pronounce you man and wife" part, and said "Now if you wish to caress the bride at the altar, you may do it at this time." It doesn't look so funny in print, but sounded pretty obscene. A lot of trouble to avoid the word kiss. All the ushers were taller than Tom, who was placed on the end. In the middle of it, Pen, who likes him, said suddenly, "Hi, Shorty."

Bill's post-war dream is to start a construction company, with his father his contact man, you as financial wizard, and himself as a technical man. I think his ability and his father's whole set-up

have been greatly underestimated by all of us. It was nice to have him here, for both Penny and me. I'm so glad Dorrie didn't marry someone else. No one would ever love her or understand her, like Bill, or be nicer.

Bill wore a big smile, and looked at Dorrie as if he could eat her up all during the service, and Dorrie looked like an angel, smiling at him. Only silly old Dordo felt like weeping going down the aisle, tho Dorrie did admit having to think of roast beef all the way in. (I told her about Clark Gable thinking about a big steak, just before we went in.) But Penny MacDonald nearly stole the show, just by looking so cute and handsome, and being so unconcerned and good.

The Reception was perfect, except that the punch was mostly water. But there were all the nice people there, and everyone had a wonderful time, and the flowers and clothes were beautiful again, and there wasn't a note of anything sad or unpleasant. Betty Hegburg's mother caught fire, of course, but they got her out!.. She was standing right in the center of the room, surrounded by people, and apparently someone lit her cigarette, and her veil caught fire. When I saw her, you could see a woman from the neck down, and her whole head was surrounded with flames. The veil must've been a DuPont acetate product, like the johnny seat I set fire to in school, because it practically exploded. She wasn't hurt a bit, except by someone who clouted her on the side of the head a little too enthusiastically, to put the fire out.

Heard Lei Lani on the radio today, and it reminded me of a guy with green eyes, whom I've loved ever since the first time I heard it with him. We gotta get you back, Baby.

Love, Darling -
Dordo

#102. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.) India

March 11, 1944

Dear Dordo –

I got Sam and Evie's letter as sent by you yesterday, also yours asking where the hell am I. Right here, chum, beginning to stew lightly in my own juice in a sun that is already pretty hot to go out into. Sure seems funny to read of your scraping ice off.

I certainly am glad to hear of your feeling better – in fact feeling almost well again. There really isn't any reason why this coming spring and summer shouldn't see you get into real good shape.

Mail service is apparently staying on the same mediocre level I have been complaining about. Every day begins with hope, however. I know you're writing them – I just ain't getting them. I expect a whole batch to come in at once one of these days. I am particularly anxious to get all the wedding accounts.

My bearer went away for a while, 15 days, substituting his brother, a guy who does so many things wrong I begin to think it's a gag. Dirty sox in with clean ones, two left shoes, brass on wrong, and all in one day.

Last night was Lehner's little birthday party – and once again we went through the stiff routine of Canadian Club plus Chinese food. This time we had with us a black haired smoothie named Maj. Sylvester from China and a Major Laybourn that I think I told you about before – anyway he was one of those who lucked out with Uncle Joe.

Nothing much seems to happen outside of the work. Sort of eat, work, eat, work, tea, bath, change, eat, read and talk, then bed... punctuated once for someone's birthday or something... plus also the rather gruesome feeling of watching the weather get hotter and hotter. It sure is a lethargic damn life outside of the salt mine.

Take care of yourself.

Love

John

#103. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

March 15, 1944

Darling,

I pick the nicest times to go out. I wanted to see "Cry Havoc," a Bataan picture with Margaret Sullivan, Ann Southern, Joan Blondell, etc. etc., and since I had to get a sitter for four clock to go to the doctors, it seemed like a good thing to go tonight, so I stayed down and ate all alone at the Chinaman's. It seems incredible that there should be a crowd anywhere tonight, but there were people standing for tables, there. It was a little lonely eating alone and going to the movie alone, but it was no movie for the Pencil, and there didn't seem to be any use of digging someone else up. I guess if I can't be with you I'd rather be alone most of the time.

But it sure is lovely to get indoors again. If it's like this tomorrow, Pencil stays home. He went to school today, with no ill effects. Apparently the vitamins I stuffed him with helped. – He loves Charlotte, the sitter. The other day he was inquiring about the ill effects something might have on me, and said, "Well, if I didn't have you anymore, Charlotte could take care of me." – wishfully!

Thursday 3/16

Spring's approach in India must have the same effect on one's morale that it has here. Really, I've never seen Spring appear so remote for so long. That's not your difficulty, but monotonously bad weather of any kind has the same effect. We've really had a reasonable Winter – no blizzards that left us buried for days, and quite a bit of pale thin sun.

It's almost a year to that fateful Saturday afternoon when you walked in with that sad look on your face. The Civic Chorus recital is tonight, and last year your Mother rehearsed all winter and then couldn't go to the recital because she didn't want to be away when you were there waiting for your orders. A year apart! I never would

have thought it possible to get through a year even as well as we have, and now a year is nearly over, the end is not really within anyone's ability to predict.

Day after tomorrow we'll have our 7th year, of which Uncle Sugar has had one – probably one that had the greatest possibility of being our best, but who can tell? Except that we'd have had less financial worry and more reasons for happiness in our environment.

My anchor's been dragging, physically, for so long that the balance between things to do and energy to do it has been just about equal. But that situation is greatly improved. A blood count yesterday shows that I'm about halfway up to where it is desirable to be (from where I started) – boy! last Summer certainly didn't build me up! And doubtlessly the turn of the season, plus continued liver shots will do the trick much sooner than it took to get started.

Next weekend Sammy's physical is due, and it would be easier for Rita while that issue is under fire if she were invited over here, probably. Not that I want to, but last night while eating Chinese food I remembered that the last time I had any, was when Sammy brought some one night when we were sick, and thinking what a nice guy Sammy is made tears, – and probably his mother feels the same way about having him probably drafted. Gosh – in the last week they've tightened things up so terribly there's very little chance that they won't take him. Sammy would be just dogged and faithful being a G.I. as anything else, but it would be pretty nasty for him to be in bloody combat. He's not much of a killer.

The pearls are really breathtaking. They have such of light in themselves – I never knew how much lovelier real ones are. I'll taken to be appraised soon, and let you know the results. Pop and Margie have their 30th anniversary soon – too bad he's not the type to want to observe it fittingly – the 30th is the pearl anniversary. It would doubtless be possible to profit more elsewhere, anyway.

Salutations from one dripping world to another –
and love, Dordo.

#104. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

March 16, 1944

Darling,

I have to go to the Surrogates Court in Herkimer and copy an inventory that was made of Daddy's estate, minus real estate, at the time of his death. It seems that some Herkimer tax attorney, as local representative for the State Tax Commission, has discovered that no appraisal of Daddy's estate was ever made in case a "transfer tax" should have been paid.

He wrote Mother and Unc, as executors, seeking their cooperation, in January. They ignored the first letter, he wrote again – politely but firmly, in February, and Mother doodled over it, then threw the whole thing into Sammy's lap at the last minute. Unc hasn't done anything about it, and obviously won't unless forced to.

In the meantime, Sam has gone to some effort to gather the facts, but too much of it is in Unc's head, and too little on paper. We'd throw in the sponge, and let Unc take whatever's coming, except that since Mother was a joint-executrix, and guardian of our interests(!), she might get fined or jugged if she continues to ignore it.

Unc doesn't answer either Sam's letter or the tax attorney's, and has been very scarce since it all came up. The inventory showed the total value of personal property to be \$63,138.03. Also real estate (in both his and Mother's names, fortunately) in California (Rancho Santa Fe, & oil properties) and Vermont (lumber tract – huge), and New York, house, camp, etc. Mother says, plaintively, that she doesn't see why she should pay the tax, since she "gave Unc \$14,000 worth of Dad's life insurance, \$15,000 worth of her own stocks, and some of her Vermont Products (lumber) dividends" which were \$3600 apiece! But of course she hasn't a thing to show for it!

That's over \$100,000 vanished into thin air. Isn't that lovely? – As

Sammy says, “our chief concern is to see that the State transfer tax attorney can’t raise the devil with Mother.... As far as E.H is concerned, we know he didn’t get rich on it and if he saved his shirt on Mother’s money, which we don’t know, there isn’t much we can do about it now, except mess up family relationships and raise a bad smell” – with no satisfaction thereby.

But anyway, Mother passed the buck to Sammy, and he’s passed it to me, after spending a lot of time and hiring an Elmira lawyer for advice. After I get the inventory, I will try to find a lawyer to arrange for the two of them to be executors – since his boss, now dead, handled lots of Daddy’s affairs, then I will talk to the guy who stirred it all up – the tax attorney, and last – armed with some facts, I’ll work on Unc.

It may be grim, but it’s certainly dumb, not to have things talked over, written down, and if possible jointly possessed, in a family. And then a woman should have an impersonal advisor who knows the law, to watch her relatives. Honestly, I’ve always thought the shock of Daddy’s death paralyzed part of Mother’s brain; I know it now.

Sam is very philosophical about being drafted. He’s flunked the Navy eye test for a commission four times recently, in spite of all he’s trying to do to correct this condition, so that’s about out. He says he won’t “get” asthma when he’s examined for the draft because he’d “rather go, and get thrown out (of the Army, for physical reasons) then nobody could ever put a finger on me. Also I would be able to join the American Legion. Then we could all go to the conventions together... Also. There isn’t any reason why I shouldn’t be there along with all the rest of the fathers I know.” Solid old Sammy.

Gee I’d like to see you, honey. A returning newsmonger from the Pacific says the boys think it will be a two-year war yet, if we’re lucky. That’s ducky.

Love, Dordo

#105. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

March 18, 1944

Dear John,

It's rather silly to convey sounds of mumbling and sputtering over such a long distance and such a lapse of time, because by the time you hear about it, the cause is far removed, and my mood is one of purist geniality, but I'll get it off my chest before going further, then I can get down to the more pleasant aspects of letter-writing. However, my friend, when one has one foot over the threshold of the dog- house, as you do, it is not the time to become patronizing. Your letters of late have not been conspicuous by their frequency, and it is most unflattering to find you taking it for granted that my only pleasure in life is keeping up a faithful one-sided correspondence with you. Even if it is.

By the process of some experience, evaluated and consolidated by thought, and laid on the line for convenience and safety in daily living, I have a sort of formula for my personal conduct. The result is that I appear to be most disarmingly simple, and without a doubt I am. You have never had to become acquainted with my potentialities for annoying and complex irresponsibility, but you should know that when her life is irritatingly monotonous, it is no time to assume that a woman is a faithful hound, sitting obliviously waiting for the return of the master, or for such fleeting notices he can spare. It's rubbing it in a bit too hard.

So DON'T TELL ME TO "BE A GOOD GAL AND WRITE OFTEN, DESPITE, ETC.ETC.," – SEE? Because I have an idea my life is just as grim as yours is, and I like to get letters just as much.

There are more subtle ways of handling the situation, without a doubt, but of course there's always the chance that you might get moved off "Per Diem Hill," and away to some forward echelon, and it would be unmitigated meanness to cut off your mail's volume in March and April, and find out in May that you had been sweating it out in some outpost since February. So I can't take that way out,

because I'm a softy, and I make excuses for you, and dream up experiences through which only the voice of the little woman (on paper, of course,) will bear you.

Perhaps it's just because it's Saturday night again. And cold. And snowing. But the people who go out on Saturday night don't get to hear Sinatra. And I do. Every Saturday night. The guy is sweet to hear, probably because he sings as if he had time.

Well, it isn't Dordo's War anymore. It looks as if Dorrie and Evvie will have theirs, too. It is the worst for Evvie. I don't know what she can do. No doubt she doesn't either. There are ways in which it will be good for Sammy, – until he goes. The training, and having someone else take the responsibility, will be a change that he can welcome. This, Baby, is going to empty the country but good, of men. The boys aren't fooling this time, they're going to take every man that's left, who isn't decrepit or feeble-minded.

I wonder who among our friends in Rochester will be left. Sam's letter you enclosed started me thinking about them. All the ones with the gold will have no reason for a deferment, it seems. There are a few I'd like to see in a G.I. uniform – Anstice, and Richard Smith of Skaneateles, who's let them defer him and take fathers because he's busy making pottery insulators for __'s sake, and Carl Leland.

Did I tell you that Bill's and my conversation the night before the wedding disclosed the fact that Dorrie's bonds were not put in the parental safe-deposit box, as were ours. What does that make us? What the kids receive from Pop and Margie as a wedding present is also a deep dark secret; tho no doubt the occasion was marked by some sort of gift. Ah – Bill said they'd learned a lot from us, – I mean he and Dorrie. What a fine horrible example we must be. But he's desirous of duplicating the Pencil at any cost, – his devotion to our child is truly reassuring, when the little guy is at this particularly socially unpredictable age. Bill just loves him. Bill is full of love, thank God.

Pencil is better company for me than you would imagine. The little guy has the most fantastic imagination, and the tiniest stimulus will start him off on some flights of fancy that requires the

most elaborate living up to. I have to respond in character, of course, and I never know what will be demanded next. But it's mostly fun. All day today we've been Indians. You know, like the days when he was Ginna, and the time he solemnly announced he was "the little Lord Jesus."

Dordo

#106. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

March 22, 1944

Hello –

Honey, I went and did it!

Tomorrow's Pencil's birthday, and he just set up a howl for a dog of his own. It seemed foolish to spend much for one, and as if a mongrel would give much more chance of being a companion and watch-dog, too.

Well, we decided to take a look at the local pound. The cocker-setters were darling, all red, five – two females and three males. But they were at the end of the row of cages, and on the way down I saw a little pansy face and bright eyes peering out, which I wanted to see again before deciding, as the pups were only two months old, and that's pretty small.

So we went back, and there was this little creature with the bright eyes and the black mustache – about three months old, very tall, and colored like a Siamese cat, buff, with black around the face, ears and tail, with coarse, straight, semi-short hair.

We just couldn't resist her. She has a shepherd coat, only it's very thick wiry hair, and her tail is long, black, and she carries it curved up!

She's awfully smart looking, and acts unusually intelligent. She's

very playful, and yet has potentialities for a watch-dog, – she peeks out the second-floor window and growls at passersby!

Oh yes – she cost three bucks, (the cocker-setters were \$10), and if she doesn't work out I can exchange her for one of the puppies. But she's so darn cute I hope she does. We'll send you her picture. Penny had her named "Toppo" before we even saw her, so I guess that will stick.

They tell us Japs over the India border aren't so serious – I hope not. Wish you could be here for a piece of birthday cake.

Love, Dordo

#107. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

March 25, 1944

Dear John,

A week ago tonight I wrote a rather angry letter about the paucity of mail from you, and felt a little sorry after it was mailed.

Since then I've looked for a letter every day for a week, and received not one, until this – Saturday – morning – very similar to the last few, a five-sentence note scribbled at your desk, apologizing for not writing more. Can you imagine how that makes me feel?

It isn't that they aren't getting here; it's obvious as days go by that you're just not writing them. And if you do, it's not with any thought but obligation, apparently. You can't spare any time from your plentiful leisure, but dash off enough to salve your conscience from your office.

(Irony – Lei Lani for accompaniment as I write.)

I feel a little foolish, going on with my little daily effort. If they dwindle, it's not spite, but just because there is very little reason to keep at it as far as I can see. Your mind certainly isn't on us – why divert it, if it's not voluntary for your thoughts and your concern and

your longings to turn them in our direction, to be expressed by the little bit of time and effort a decent letter takes?

When you miss someone, when there's no possible means of communicating with that person, it's the most natural thing in the world to sit down and talk to him on paper.

Everything mocks me. Everyone misses her soldier, every soldier misses his girl, and so all the little events of the day revolve around the fact that friends, acquaintances, advertising-geniuses, movie script writers, magazine publishers, radio artists, and one's family, take that for granted. It gets a little silly, cutting out clippings, picking up books, garnering gossip and chit-chat to write him, finding your very place in life rests on the fact that you're here and he's there, and he is oh! so lonely for home and love and Shangri-la (of which it's assumed you're the biggest part!)

When he's 14,000 miles away, and every letter gets to be a bow to precedent, but he doesn't give a damn, really, about what impression you get.

I know that at times when you're quite comfortable you fall into a state of lethargy, and sometimes when you're not so comfortable you fall into a state of indifference to how your responses affect other people.

Knowing that is the only reason I'm making this solitary effort to assure you of just what impression you are giving. And to remind you also, that when there's so much space between us, and so much time between the inception of our communication and its achievement, impressions are a very serious matter.

A prolonged impression of a lack of interest, obligation rather than spontaneity, indifference to its effects, can only be interpreted as deliberate. If it is not deliberate, it is important that it should not be permitted to extend over such distance and at such a generally unhappy time.

Everything else is under control here. We had our first Spring day today, and it was wonderful. Toppy continues to be a completely charming and satisfactory addition to the family. Today I saw "Jane Eyre," which I hope to see again sometime; Orson Welles is

excellent, and the Wuthering Heights atmosphere is a good change. Spencer Tracy in "A Guy Named Joe" is still on my list to see, and I have a ticket to hear Dorothy Thompson April 4th. No matter what is depressing, Spring seems to have its usual release and its usual promise.

Love Dordo

#108. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

April 6, 1944

Hello,

Had to tear off a report on my trip to Herkimer for Sammy.

I have dreaded that for so long, and it was really mostly fun, even if I did have to go on the bus. It only took a few hours, so I don't know what all the fuss was about. I guess because it's the first time I ever took any action about Daddy's affairs. The lawyer was very willing to play ball, as long as we didn't insult him by ignoring him, and I think I've at least eliminated any chance of Mother's having to pay any tax.

The eagerness on the lawyer's part may have been due to the fact that the tax would be over \$450, of which he gets a percentage, and almost any percentage of \$450 would be worth writing a few letters. I fancy I left Unc a bit out on a limb, but don't think it's anything he can't take in his stride. It was obviously worth doing something about, anyway. – And I imagine Unc would go to great lengths, even to paying quite a large tax, to avoid having to account for the entire estate.

Just for the record, perhaps you are right about only writing twice a week. It wasn't my idea, though, – I was contemplating the rise in cost of air mail letters, which I later found doesn't affect APO mail; – not a decrease in letters, but in envelopes. (But boy! Did you jump at the chance!) However, I'm sure the quality of my

letters would improve if they were cut down considerably, – our life isn't sufficiently tempestuous to make good daily reading. There are two sides to the matter, tho, while I am eager to cut down on my efforts in your direction as long as you would be contented with a substantial decrease, I feel that no matter how often you wrote, the quality of your letters would remain the same. And I can't look forward to two a week, if there is any chance of having more. Just a glutton. This is just for the record.

I'm glad the Indian troops have finally accomplished something near Imphal. I'm also glad for the reassurance that you are physically safe, I hope you always will be. As for any minor change in your locale, I would accept it too, too philosophically. You sound as if you're going native or something. There has been a complete change in John, lately, about which why should I worry, (since it has a not-cheery aspect, from here), – John could go through a hundred changes in the years we'll be apart. Just as long as he gets off a boat someday and says "Going my way?"

Bing's really making with the music tonight, an 800- voice choir, and "Stardust," and bless his old heart, "The Easter Parade."

I can recapitulate a few Easters, too. Last year in Utica, Penny hunting the eggs we colored and hid in the living room, knowing that you'd leave any minute, and the year before in Rochester when you were O.D., and I'd just been out of the hospital a few days after we went to Washington. I can't remember the year before, in 1941, but I remember 1940 in Massena, and it was cold and windy, and we went to the movies in the afternoon with Sis and Busse. And 1939, in the hospital in Cambridge, looking out at the people walking by the Charles River, and an Easter basket on my tray, and 1938 in Boston with your family walking across the Commons in the wind near the pigeons, and your kicking Dorrie's shoes out of her reach under the table at the Statler. Remember?

Love,
Dordo

#109. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

April 6, 1944

Dear Dordo,

This is one of those hot lazy days. It is now about 4 o'clock, and I just cycled back from another HQ. The streets are pretty empty and bugs are droning and the old sun is beating down like mad. It makes you want to go off and lie in the shade and sleep – but of course you can't be on the grass around here – ground ticks, fleas, stinging ants, beetles, filth and all sorts of damn things.

My Saturday nights are usually spent having a late dinner at a hotel ballroom and watching the floor show and dance with a small group of regulars. We work six and a half days a week. Sunday afternoon off. Thanks for the wedding write-up. Will appreciate the pictures when they get here.

About my lack of writing – I am working on a long story. That's no excuse. Speaking of it being the 828th day of the war, it is the thirteen hundred and thirty second day of the war for me. How they ever expect me to accomplish a satisfactory readjustment into civilian affairs, I don't know. I am getting set in my unsound army ways, when I should be getting set financially. The tax business sounds dull.

Tonight I am playing bridge at a British private club with a British full colonel, an American colonel-sahib, and British officer's wife. It's Scotch (in bottles) night at the club.

Love

J.

5. Chapter 5 - Being Apart - Spring/Summer 1944, Letters IIO-I45

#IIO. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

April 13, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I can't understand you're not getting any for a week. I can understand your need for mail. You can also understand my periodic inability to write a line. I have thrown away some letters to you in the last month that really got as far as your name before the well ran dry. I don't want to be dull, but I want at least credit for being able to imagine how my lack of writing would affect you if you were to misunderstand me. I am in no position to successfully or safely absorb a Tirade which affects my security in your understanding, one of the few factors left about which you can use the word security. I felt guilty enough to suggest to you that you cut the volume of your mail. I don't feel guilty to the extent that I will make any promises about the quantity or quality of my letters. All I can do is to write something often enough so you will know I am okay, and write letters when I can. We are too far apart to carry on any heated discussion about it, so please let's let it drop, with you confident that you will get them as I can write them and don't accuse me again of deliberate negligence – it hurts.

You see, at the present time I can't seem to generate the least atom of interest, energy, enthusiasm or ambition about this assignment, the war, my postwar occupation, my pay, my

appearance, my friends, Hindustani, books, chess, the weather or anything else. It is possibly an unfortunate frame of mind – but I can't locate the cause and thus can't do anything about it. I just regret that I can't sleep a bigger percentage of the day than I do. I don't like to sit down and put my troubles on paper – I don't want to bother you with them, and I don't want to think about them. So bear with me and everything will be okay in a while.

Love,
J.

#III. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)
Utica, NY
April 16, 1944

Dear John,

The date reminds me to remind you that Mother's Day and your Mother's birthday will be approaching as you receive this, and I hope you will make a special effort to let Margie know that you remember her both times. She feels that you have shown very little interest in her as an individual for some time, I know, and if you stop to think of her as an individual, you will remember that she is an exceptionally pleasant one to have for a Mother.

The wedding month was an expensive one, and I hoped for a respite after that, but \$41 to the doctor, car insurance, and car repair, Pen's tuition, and such haven't changed the situation much. Don't interpret this as meaning that I'm in need, tho.

I've been told that I will be offered a job, teaching part-time at the Art Institute here. It all happened quite accidentally, when I took the kids to see an exhibit of marionettes last week, and the secretary found out that I had made them. They have been looking for someone desperately, and were alarmingly enthusiastic about

my possibilities. It would be interesting, no doubt. Quite a surprise, though.

You wonder how “they” can expect you to make a satisfactory readjustment into civilian life. Your post-War adjustment problem is no different than that of millions of guys who’ve never before had what the Army has given them; – from the ones who never had three decent meals a day, to those who never had the contacts, the travel, or the freedom from responsibility. It will make some of them, like the gas-station attendants who turn out to be super-pilots and super-heroes, and it will break some, whose response to their experiences alienates them from normal living.

You seem to consider yourself in a rather unique position. You’ve always had unusual good fortune, and your luck seems to be holding out exceptionally well, which has the unfortunate tendency to make you feel that you are a rather special person. That is just the time when you should begin to be very conscious of the opinion of those who know you best. That is just a time when your reactions fall from the category of special, as anxious hearts begin to wonder if you’re going to prove that you can’t take it. Being special loses its charm when simple, ordinary, taken for granted things become forgotten.

Obviously the freedom from responsibility or obligation to anyone but yourself has had the temporary effect of making you appear to be terribly self-centered, without any thought for the effect it’s having. But even you can’t stand alone. Your need to express love and respect and concern is as much a part of you as of any human – to receive it, too. While it may give you a sort of perverted satisfaction to deny the past and the future, you’re not big enough to avoid its existence..... Besides me, there is another pair of eyes that have the straightest glance I ever saw, which someday will be right on a level with yours, looking into them.

The thing that impresses me most in this world-wide mess is the duplication of everything. It keeps me from being sorry for myself, and should keep you from finding yourself very remarkable. From what I read between the lines of your letters, and elsewhere more objectively, it seems to me that the Battle of Per Diem Hill is

probably not a battle of guns and bombs and blood, but rather a battle for self-respect and integration against somewhat degrading living conditions.

You seem to have some misgivings lately about your own success in that respect. There is much that I think about it, as you can imagine, but little that I can say. It's your problem. After all, you are essentially intelligent, you are an American, and you are in the midst of some exceptional opportunities. It seems to me that fundamentally you will concentrate on the things that will give you the most lasting satisfaction. But you seem more impressionable than I expected you to be, and the inertia and boredom of easy day to day living has possibly given you what seems from here a less mature and more superficial viewpoint than we all thought you would get.

Naturally, I hope you do a good job on it eventually. I don't mean to sound unsympathetic, but you seem quite uneasy about John, and I don't want him to be one of the casualties of all this either.... Also my capacity for certain things I am missing now cannot be denied forever, and the idea of a bit of post-War fun and change has a great appeal.

The denial of one's need for change and color and comfort is too widespread now to matter. The few, who, like you, have found those things increased through this War are rare. But your picture of a life of security, travel, and leisure all in one sounds pretty wonderful. If that's possible to find in India, if it's not all insidious glamour and demoralizing climate, and shoddy people, India could be a much more interesting and possibly even a more comfortable place in which to weather out what I feel will be rather lean years in the States after all this ends.

I'd love to have someone else take over some of the domestic dreariness particularly. You've always had an unusual appreciation of how little that fulfills the capacities of a woman who has had some education and experience, yet sometimes I feel as if your only memory of me must be as being completely submerged in routine household situations.

We have just heard via the radio that Admiral Mountbatten's headquarters have been switched to Ceylon. Since you have inferred a change of some kind in your position, we will be very curious to know if the Americans constitute a part of that change. I have a feeling that you have very little control over your surroundings, and that however much I want you to keep control over how they affect you, even that may be taken out of your hands, if in the middle of your adjustment you are uprooted. Maybe it's up to God, after all.

All my love,
Dordo.

#112. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

April 24, 1944

Dearest John,

It is a peaceful Monday morning here, cold rain outside, and peace inside evidenced by the litter, on the floor of this room, which I've just cleaned – a chewed up candle, an old rope, a bone, the usual sprinkling of toys, boy and dog. I kept him home from school because he had a sore throat and a walk in the rain wouldn't help that any. It is a bit difficult, however, since the little man downstairs has developed very fragile nerves since his appendectomy, and since he sits there all day (his wife supports him nine months of the year), he hears every sound up here. Someday I'm going to blow up and suggest that he take up weaving, idleness being bad for the nerves. You can't keep a child absolutely silent; I do what I can.

Two letters from you arrived this morning, uncensored. Honey, I'm sorry if I had to blast you to find out what was causing all the peculiar tone of your letters, but up to the first of March, the tone was so contented, – or at least adjusted and busy, thoughtful, responsive, friendly, disarming, and seeking the same in us,

apparently, that I was as happy as anyone could be, without you actually here. Suddenly the whole thing changed, to preoccupation, indifference, the sort of evasive non- committal harshness, and the general effect of the whole thing was that you weren't interested in us, and definitely didn't want us to intrude on your time or thoughts. Truly, all we know about life where you are is what we read. What we read in books and magazines isn't very reassuring; there is nothing to counterbalance it except your attitude in your letters, and we have no way, except your letters, to even know the circumstances that affect your physical and mental well-being.

You know, John, that it would be better to tell me if you weren't happy. If that is the reason all this happened, couldn't you have counted on my sympathetic imagination if you'd made any indication of the reason? There is little we can give you now – it would be a pleasure, indeed, an outlet for some of the frustration here, to have had that opportunity. Perhaps sitting down and thinking about your troubles, and facing them on paper would be the best thing you could do, writing has always been an outlet, and it sounds as if you must do something about them. If you can't write them to me, write them and tear it up, – but you know I'm with you, Dear, as long as I know what you want, that and not something utterly foreign to that – as I was forced to assume. Tell me anything you can – anything I do while you're not here is only marking time for when you come home, but when you shut me off as you did, there seems to be no point to even doing that.

Good news from India today – the best yet. I loved the letter from you. Am sending a New Yorker today and mystery book. Look for birthday presents in time. Penny talks about you every day. We love you – that you have, it's yours alone, use it!

Dordo

#113. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)
India

May 3, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I continue to be fairly busy. The old Col. got up for a few minutes for the first time the other day. The weather is well over 100 every day. Fred has gone. It looks as though my billet would be changed soon. I may end up with a room to myself, which would be nice. Played bridge last night and lost three rupees. Three of us Americanos and an English girl. I, of course, was big loser. Urdu goes slowly. I found my pen.

I had hoped that this would turn out to be a long letter, that the words would come when I got to writing, but here I am at another blank wall. I am extremely unfond of myself and bored with myself of late. I am so devoid of any intellectual, professional or emotional interests. All things in life – including stateside – seem to have turned the same shade of gray. I feel you would rather know this than to have a try to write a bunch of gay chitchat that would ring false as hell. Remember the Rochester deal where we went to see a man. This is the same thing all over again only worse. Try to understand, even though I don't. I think I may tear this up. I feel as though I were in isolation, and, what is silliest I get the odd nameless feeling of having no past, no present and no future. I could weep out of pure sense of great loss.

J.

#114. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

May 4, 1944

Darling,

Last night they took all ration points off meat except beef steaks

and roasts. everyone's yelling "politics," but they love it. Probably if I'd known that was going to happen I'd have looked for a Great Dane! Our Toppy is going to be a good watchdog, I think – her ancestors were the intelligent, scrappy breeds, and she loves to bark. When I think of staying alone in this place this Summer I'm glad we got her. Egad! A man in a red convertible followed me three blocks trying to pick me up at 9 AM yesterday. I don't think I gave the conventional brush off speech, – after three blocks of serene silence I finally burst out with "You must be crazy – this early in the morning!" He turned the next corner.

They tell us that the gasoline will be so bad this Summer that cars will hardly run. Our last coupon's worth must have been the first step, as we have a new engine-knock. After taking off Elinor Clinton's garage door, then mine, the carpenter who put them on got intrigued with the problem and experimented with his car. He devised a Rube Goldberg way of driving in backward that has simplified the process greatly, tho I haven't used it after dark yet. I'm saving one fender for you, dear.

Hey – Ernie's going to India after he covers the Invasion.* Maybe you'd better stick around. I'd rather know him than practically anyone I don't know now!

Love, Dordo

*Ernie Pyle, prize-winning war correspondent. See glossary.

#115. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

May 6, 1944

Darling,

Some day I'll look back on these Saturday nights with a kind of nostalgia. They are all lonely, but they are all mine, passively ours. I always sit in the big red chair in the window-corner, and listen

to music all evening. I hear the cars go by, people walking – mostly couples, and tonight the window's open so the indoor comfort in outdoor restlessness are blended. Sometimes I read, and sometimes just sit, but Saturday night is a sort of suspended time, with things caught up and in order, and nothing pressing on the morrow. It would be nicer if you were six feet away on the davenport, relaxed and contented with a good weekend book.

The ad I sent you, for a collaborator, finally got me so curious that I answered it. The family thought it might be a trap, but it intrigued them too. I wrote a very conservative letter, just giving education, positions held, etc., and made it clear that I could contribute no genius, but only a kind of craftsmanship.

Yesterday when I was expecting Dorrie, he came. He is young and very badly a cripple, from infantile paralysis when he was two years old. He has been out of college, of which he only had two years of Business Ed. at Syracuse, ten years, and has been waiting for enough security and maturity to start writing. His name is Peter Ernhoff.

He has a poultry farm now, which is taking care of his family and gives him some leisure. He liked my letter best of the answers he got – there were a lot – and since he wants someone to criticize, polish, and type, he thinks he'd like to let me try it. He is conscious of the fact that his grammar is not what it should be, and that he is a flair for plots but lacks the education for getting them into final marketable condition. He wants to write short stories, and to do them from his knowledge of crippled and handicapped people, also from some people and events collected during a year when he ran away from home and bummed around all over this country for a year.

I don't know what will come of it, but I have room for a hobby of some kind, and it will be an experience that might help me to be of some use to you sometime. The guy really has plot-ability, but tho his conversation shows a good vocabulary, it shows a lack of academic education to a bad extent, and I don't know if his writing will have skill enough so I won't mangle it trying get it into shape. This is just a shortcut for him, borrowing someone else's education

and typing ability, but it may work. I think you'd be perfect for the job, but you might have too much individuality to be tied down creatively.

If it works, I get 50% of anything he gets for a story. He told me a couple of plots, one a Christmas story about a crippled little boy, which was fair, the other about a cripple of college-age, which was excellent. If it doesn't work, I can still learn something, maybe something which would be useful to you, too.

Peter is married, has a four-year-old child, and they've another on trial for adoption. That should eliminate any emotional complications, as long as his wife approves of his idea. It would be a more personal relationship than the average business relationship, but there are plenty of differences to stabilize it, apart from the fact that no one is looking for anything from it other than the initial situation.

Tomorrow I'm invited to the formal opening of the new exhibit – with tea – at Proctor Institute. If it rains there's a symphony and plenty to read.

Love,
Dordo

#116. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

India

May 7, 1944

Dear Dordo –

It is a stifling hot Sunday morning and I am in the office with so little to do that I've had a chance to dip into "In Bed We Cry" which arrived yesterday. The second half was in good condition but the first half was all messed up. I have pieced it together and all the pages are there but the front cover is missing.

It is certainly a very sad and wise book, earmarking the essential

difference between the way people are, and the way they would like to be – holding up a painful candle to rationalization and leading one into intricate and unsatisfactory self-analysis. I suppose that the weaknesses of the human spirit are always more maudlin than tragic. Who is going to say which is the better distillation of reality – the brittle sexual counter play of the book, or mortar fire at Kohima. Possibly a truly Grecian outlook would relegate both of them to a secondary mediocrity. Almost all things are affecting me masochistically, yet without the clarity of being able to feel a part of them. Enough of this tripe.

With love,

J.

#117. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

May 11, 1944

Darling,

Your unfinished letter of May 3 just came, and I feel so frustrated. I can't call you up, a cable is as slow as a letter, and you won't get this until probably June! Nothing on earth concerns me as much as wanting to help you, and there doesn't seem to be a thing I can do. I wish you had mailed the rest of the letter, tho. It's a shame you don't get as good mail service as we do from your direction.

You must've had a sort of famine of letters, too, of late. I'm sorry I got the impression you didn't want to hear from us, which your letters sounded so snooty for a little while that I just thought you were fed up with the likes of us, and had gone all-out for the British end of Army social life that India seems to offer. In fact I'm afraid one letter from me may sound a bit snooty, too – or harsh, when you get it, but it's because I had only a vague indication of what was wrong when it was written, and it hurt my pride to have you ask me not to

write, after you had so recently begged for mail. As a matter of fact, I thought perhaps you had filled the gap with personalities that have made us seem a little dim and remote. But it seems to be John you've lost – –

Naturally, Darling, it makes me sad to have anything wrong with you, but sensing it, and not knowing is the awful thing. So let me urge you again to tell me anything or everything you want to or can. Above everything else we're friends, Dear, and it seems as if anything can help you now, it's that. To know that there's someone who cares terribly about you and your happiness, and who wants to understand, and will if you have enough confidence to get it on paper and out of your system. You may feel assured that if there is anything tangible, I wouldn't make an issue of it. When it will be a matter of years before you can come home, I hope to have enough intelligence (and experience) to know that only a few things last, and that what might be today's troubles and problems will probably be changed or left by the wayside by the time we are together.

You've got to work this out of you somehow. It's just my opinion, but I think the two greatest releases one can find are love and creative work. Under the circumstances, love might bring you more trouble than joy if you tried to find an outlet for it there. (There aren't many loves one can live with, and I think we both already found the satisfying kind.) In fact, so much are love and creativeness akin that it seems seldom possible to completely fulfill oneself in both ways at once. But writing is such a complete outlet, in its way, that it might be well to try to overcome the natural lassitude that climate and malaise have brought, and sit down and beat it out until some of that burden is off your mind, and the tension out of your spirit.

It's like trying consciously to be your own psychiatrist, to work out a way of action that will bring you back to a more normal life. Your life isn't normal – but that's too, too common, – our generation is just taking a beating they didn't ask for, there. But some of us are more sensitive, less integrated, and some need to make a greater effort to maintain their balance. It seems as if to write is the best

way you can control your situation; the Army controls so much of your life now. A dilettante sort of adjustment would give you little satisfaction, while to get started on what has been burning in you for years would be a growing way that would always make your life richer.

Possibly writing for publication sets up an unnatural constraint between you and your self-expression. If you just wrote it down and sent it home, it might release some of it, and I could save it for you, because it might be useful to you later.

I don't know how much the climate has brought about your present state, but it must contribute plenty to it. Also, and I'm terribly serious about this, your physical condition may be much more responsible than you realize. Please don't think I'm a crackpot, but the average diet here shows a great lack of the vitamins that affect one's nerves, energy, and general well-being, and the food you get there must be deficient in things you're used to and need. If you can't get a steady supply of vitamins there, (especially the B group), please send me a request for some, and please take them regularly if you can get them there. They wouldn't hurt, and they might help. One's sense of well-being can depend entirely on just this, really, – I know.

Good luck to you, Darling, – someday this may all blow away through a change like those which have happened so suddenly before in our Army lives. I'm on your side, anyway.

Love,
Dordo

#118. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

May 11, 1944

Dear Dordo –

Lots of things received today – your number's 180,183,185, clippings from 7 Jan, billfold, picture of cat and about fifty pounds of magazines and newspapers.

The billfold was certainly handy in that a thief in the night during my last few days at the hotel removed wallet – the one I got from Woods. Net loss, about 200 rupees (one guy lost 1500), but it had in it AGO card, ration cards, immunization register, pay data card and all that sort of thing.*

I am settled in my new billet with a room to myself. Not too bad a deal – faw and kuss kuss. The bearer did all the work.

The nights are now so hot it is almost impossible to sleep.

Re mood – what put me off and continues so to do is something that will go better and easier via conversation than thru letter writing.

Love

J.

*AGO card – Adjutant General's Office, military ID.

#119. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

May 13, 1944

Darling –

Seems as if all day, over and over, the radio's played "So Little Time." It didn't bother me until tonight, when I stopped trying and let the loneliness come drifting over –

Maybe it's because this weekend marks the passing of the year; I never really thought we'd ever be apart a year. But we drove to New York on a warm Saturday a year ago, through storms and the silent parkways and along the gray River full of gray boats. And walked the steamy, moist, crowded streets on a Saturday night, like tonight, and in the sunny Sunday morning of a Mother's Day, like tomorrow.

And met Fred Albiani, who's rounding his year like a dream, completing his circle with uncanny timing. I hope I can see him, but it might be better not to. It could be so disappointing. After all, he's almost a complete stranger – he was vulnerable the last time I saw him, but if he's wearing his shell this time, especially if there are a lot of cackling people around, it could be just more frustrating.

When I heard you had to go, I thought I'd die. And the night I left you, and the next day, (driving back alone) was a sickness more real than I have ever known. In the year since, the superficial adjustment has been better than one could hope to expect, and sometimes you have been as near as you are tonight. But underneath all of it, you're terribly near – you're still part of my flesh and bones and the blood that warms me and the heart that beats in me and the quality of my mind and spirit and my body that is the flame and the light and the life, and is called love.

I've seen you wanting and hungering and naked and afraid for it, and warmed and blessed and folded in it.

We've never written love letters – it just isn't anything you can put on paper, and because of that sometimes the distance seems great, impenetrable, unyielding. But there are times of solitude and times among all people when all the miles are nothing, and you are just across the room, beside me in the car, – inside me, everywhere. It is because, tho we've never had our share of security or leisure or pleasure in which to enjoy each other and fulfill what exists, we've known each other deeply and totally, and completely, down to the last two per cent, the last “margin of safety.”

It's bitter and sad to lose, day after day, the touch of the hand, the cheek, the warm goodness of lips, the reassuring presence, the silent sharing, the friendly meeting of eyes, of thoughts, the tolerance, the impatience, the understanding smile – the aching, yearning hunger of body that nothing can satisfy.

Burning dry, like a crust, bleaching bare, like a bone – nothing to do but wait... But piled up hours, and a crushing load of days, and an aching void of years if it must be, don't seem to make the reality of you one bit less real; it could all melt away with one long look.

Time and space can numb the heart, can strain the flesh, and weary the waiting mind, but the core of the flame is as living and clean and sure as life itself.

Dordo

FABRIC...

It is a slow dull throbbing place where emptiness
Winds slowly upon itself, an endless bolt of heavy velvet
Black and lusterless, moving with weary undulations.
Sounds tremble through on padded paws, made somber
By gloom and the slow and steady weaving of the shuttles of
solitude.
Delicately jointed and cast and glued with fragile threads
The structure balances bleakly on verge and brink:
The bright careless flash of your voice
Would crash the house of gloom which weaves in your absence.

#120. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

May 20, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Received your 190 today, and no other mail.

As far as popular music is concerned, there is now a radio station that broadcasts US programs from close by which gives all of the latest tunes. The only catch is that I have yet to listen to it except inadvertently through walls from neighboring rooms. I haven't any great urge to listen to the new songs – I suppose that that is something that can wait. Don't hear Tokyo Rose, but I have heard a bit of Java broadcasts of classics.

I didn't get your ad yet on the collaborator. I think it is a fine thing, in that it broadens your horizons a bit. You and I both realize that you are going to need more than an empty home and fireside

to keep contented. Plan to do a good enough job to get some cash together.

Speaking of differences growing up throughout the years of separation, I am enclosing a photo and would like a frank opinion. It was taken yesterday.

The heat continues, the prickly heat also continues. My clothes are going to ruin from the dobi beating them on rocks, my antisocial attitude is slowly but surely eliminating the very few friends I have made over here. All in all, I would welcome a nice big case of amnesia in that I am so damn tired of myself. MacDonald, the complete mess, caught in a mass of emotional masochism with no apparent way to get out of it. I certainly didn't expect this out of the war. It is nonsense, and yet I feel that my inability to pull out is losing me everything I have had, including you.

With love,
John

#121. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

May 24, 1944

Darling,

Nothing much has happened to Pencil and me this weekend. We went to church this morning, to a Universalist-Unitarian church, and tho I don't think there were more than 30 people in the whole congregation, I liked it better than any we've tried so far.

What do you look like now? I haven't seen a picture of you for several months. Of course I haven't done very well by you there, one feels so foolish asking someone to take one's own picture.

Are we to have wedding rings someday? Everywhere Dorrie and I go with Pen people think she's the momma. We don't know why unless they look for the wedding rings. A boy at the USO asked her

last Sunday when she took him in there, if Penny was the child of her first marriage, because he heard she was married in March this year. She loved that.

Gee, I've seen a lot of uniforms today. They always made me feel lonesome. But I've never seen gold leaves on anyone as young as you.

Love, Dordo

#122. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

May 25, 1944

My Darling,

It isn't your habit to read a letter more than once, so this time, please read this one carefully, and think when you read it, so you won't misunderstand.

For nearly three months now, since a change in you first became apparent, and you soon acknowledged your malaise, we have tiptoed around it as if it were some horrible disease, or some fragile link between you and your sanity, until I think the whole thing has assumed grotesque proportions.

Perhaps you don't realize how much it has been with me, but knowing how close I feel to you, how little else I have to think about, anyway, and with what concern I would view so intense a condition were you here, you probably can deduce that with you so far away, of late I have spent my thinking moments with little else. It is obvious that it is something that affects you daily and unbearably, so it is natural that I should consider it serious, and you mentioned quite freely in your last letter that it is, indeed, a specific something.

I don't want to make an issue of being told more, or to force your confidence. Obviously to do so might, among other things force a restraint on your future letters. But all we have had for a year is

letters, and that may be all we will have for more years, and it is only through letters that we can maintain the understanding and mutual confidence we will need when letters are no longer necessary.

Recognizing that there could be several reasons for your preferring to talk about it, to writing – censorship, pride, lack of belief in your ability to put it into words, or your fear of my not understanding, I'm going to lay my cards on the table and say that it has got to a point where my state of mind makes it necessary for me to ask you to give me some indication of at least the nature of the reason for this situation.

I realize that there are problems in your new world, as well as diversions, but put yourself in my place, in the same old groove. You are someone I really searched for, and having found you, you are actually the center of my life, my axis, – as one's husband might well be. Now that you are gone, I am limited to the routine of being mostly confined to the care and the companionship of a five-year-old child. I do not resent this: I love it, but for financial and practical reasons it is not yet possible for me to take on some other consuming responsibility or interest, and while I feel that it is right and natural that he should have almost my whole physical time, the job leaves part of my mind and heart quiet and open. That is your part, and I've chosen that it should remain a big part, and I have chosen not to fill the emptiness with some real or synthetic stop gap. It seems that that is a reasonable adjustment between a husband and wife whose marriage is affected by something entirely beyond their control.

So that anything that affects you deeply must in time have its effect on me. At this point that effect has become uncertainty, – insecurity. I can't even determine what you expect of me because of it. I can't tell whether, in spite of telling me, you expect me to ignore it – which isn't possible, because of the change in you. Or whether you want sympathy, understanding and a sort of emotional stability from me. Naturally you may not know too much about it yourself, but you probably don't realize that you've got me out on a limb, – very unhappily, because you've let it become part of my

life and I don't know what it is or what to do about it. My life hasn't been very secure, -perhaps as a result my sense of security isn't very stable. Yours also seems to be none too sure now. I don't know how much you want my help, but it would help me to have some knowledge of whether what has upset you is the job, an individual, some misjudgment or mistake, a situation, an enemy, or some fear. It seems to be something serious enough to make you sick at heart and changed. You wouldn't want me to remain indifferent to that, yet how can I feel concern without trying to analyze it, and one's imagination can always run circles around reality!

It makes me sick to think that since there is a specific reason, the Lehnners and the Bowlins will know and tell it all over, and I haven't even the mental fortification of knowledge.

As for discussing it conversationally, how do you think we can go on for several years with any normal adjustment, with something like this awaiting explanation? And how could we ever meet, with the tension it will increasingly create to mar your homecoming?

We have been forced by this War to live a horrid, abnormal, frustrating kind of life. Solving our problems through the mails is harder, but magnified they would become, set aside until the War is over. We can only live this out one day at a time. We can't put off our life until someday years from now, building up tension and misunderstanding. This is our life. These days don't go on a separate record, to be totaled up after the War, it's still our life, even if most of it's on paper, and why should it not be as complete in unity and confidence as it is possible to make it?

So for Heaven's sake please try to give me some knowledge so that I can give you whatever you need for me as the right response, if need be to take it like a lady - with you - to regain the peace and understanding that has made the last year endurable, and most of all get rid of miserable conjecturing.

With love,
Dordo

#123. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

May 26, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Appreciate your reassurances, patience and understanding. Also appreciate your willingness to reassure me as to the attitude with which you would accept any news about me which might be unpleasant. I don't have anything unpleasant to tell you. If I did have, it might be easier. You say you would not make an issue of anything tangible. The only thing tangible about which you could and probably should make an issue happened a long, long time ago, and is so far lost in the mists of antiquity that there is no point in bringing it up. The intangible trouble is this – you spoke of the two greatest releases? Well, I have a version of the former, and I'm being good about it and the whole thing is bringing me nothing but quiet madness. I am the rat in the trap. I am Devon in "In Bed We Cry" waiting patiently for the temporary fever to pass away so that I can revert to the tried and true, but with the fever showing no sign of abating and with there being no solution to the problem in any direction. It is a deal with which I cannot use Devon's methods. They say all things pass and all things die. I wish to God I could look into the future. I think it is best for you to know this – we are adults and you should know rather than wonder what in hell is wrong with me. If I were being a bad kid then it would be easier because then the whole thing would be cheap. And if I were being a bad kid I wouldn't be in the dumps except from conscience and then I wouldn't be writing you this. Please remember the defenselessness of the human spirit from approaches of this type. That is to say, you don't go looking for trouble like this.

With love,

J.

#124. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

May 28, 1944

Dear John,

Another nice Sunday afternoon – I wish we could share just one of them with you. Big elm trees all around, sunshine, and the quiet peace of little things.

You are living in such a different life, and the attractive features that there are in your life are so far removed from the sources of our joys that you probably can't even imagine getting pleasure from the things we do. Your physical surroundings, your companionship, your pastimes, are all on a different scale. We must seem awfully like vegetables to enjoy being out in the sun, looking at the green hills, watching the leaves shimmer in the light, planting seeds in the ground, listening to the radio with the usual symphony, doing our un-world-shaking work, reading the Sunday paper, and enjoying the company of small fry – human and canine, and all of the usual run of ordinary middle class Americans. I hope you have enough sympathy left to remember how much these things have meant to you, so that you will want them again, and that we have enough imagination to realize that the world you are in is attractive, and interesting, and terribly important.

I don't think we could enjoy one day here if you were in great danger, and it is the feeling that you are safe and having a wonderful experience, and capable of taking care of yourself and us, that gives us the power of enjoying little bits of life instead of great hunks of it.

– Which outburst is due to wishing yesterday that I could let you in on the pure joy I felt just standing on our hill in the country, with the hot sun and the breeze, and the green countryside all around, watching the farmer plow our little borrowed spot of earth. I just kept thinking over and over – “What a wonderful thing this is, what an experience!” – And it sounds so dull, trying to tell you about it!

I guess I've wanted to do something about that place for a long time, and this is a sort of fulfillment of that wish, even if it won't last. We started up there with all our seeds, and little plants, and tools, to work yesterday, but since the earth had been too damp, it wasn't yet plowed. We had a lunch packed, so decided to enjoy that there, anyway, and while we were prowling around, the farmer came and plowed it. I like that place where we decided the garden should be, it's between the house and the row of willows and pine trees on the hill from the house, – sunny, and yet sheltered. I'll send you a picture of it. The farmer is swell, he is so interested, and knows every foot of the country around there, is willing to talk about it, and tho he doesn't smile, he hasn't the usual farmer sourness – he really loves what he's doing, – which seems to make a difference with anybody.

How anyone could ever sell that place, say anything of leave it! We've been there enough now so the first eeriness of it has worn off, and seeing humans working around there makes the difference, anyway, and after I dragged the barn door to cover the well, it lost all of its “abandoned” appearance, and you don't expect a tramp to crawl out of the cellar anymore! The house was originally brick – how terribly sweet it must've been, inside the rooms were an oyster shade of plaster, with blue woodwork, doors, etc. All the things that grow in the dooryard are wonderful to have around your house, I spoke of them last year – pine trees, willows, lilacs, apple trees, a maple tree, and one sparkle tree. And a valley in front with a city in it, and one at the side and rear with farm-covered hills! You could look for years for a place like that – if you had the money in your pocket, to buy it with, especially.

We picked up some terrific sunburns, but no one seems to be suffering. I expect to get a better tan this year than ever before. – If the darn car holds out. It awfully sounded like a new whisper of the same old knock was starting last night. I inquired about a new (reconditioned) motor a while ago, but it seems they don't have them anymore.

I'm sorry the manuscript came back from “Esquire,” but their comment is, I think, encouraging. I'll try “Harpers” next, then

“Story.” The only thing I can see that might be weak in it is the sentence in which Miller says “No matter what you are, you are also a complete bitch.” She was too subtly a bitch for such a blatant accusation, especially considering that he had considerable responsibility in the matter. If you think this is a justified criticism, you might send me another sentence for that spot, otherwise I’ll keep sending it as is. I think it’s really good, on the whole.

Peter Emhoff was here this week. He hasn’t started writing, yet. I hope he doesn’t turn into a terrible bore. The first glance at what his writing is like will be some help toward deciding if I’ve let myself in for a headache.

The DeValls have gone for the Summer, so now we can bang on the floor and turn the radio loud and cheer. Toppy has achieved a sufficiently fierce look to cause two grown men to question her disposition yesterday, which is encouraging. When one of them remarked about her, Penny said, for one of his usually obscure reasons, “You ought to see my Daddy.”

I wish you could know how much he talks and thinks of you. Not a day goes by without his referring to you, and you have a very real place in his everyday life. It’s good, you’ll be glad when you see him. He’s a handsome boy, and companionable, and all of us are very proud of him.

They have just had Bard to Syracuse to consider putting him in the Hospital for crippled children. The doctor advised against it, and I think it’s better, he’s not the type to adjust to institutional life just now, I think. He’s the one with a brain, tho!

Love,
Dordo

#125. DPM to JDM (ALS, 4pp.)

Utica, NY

May 29, 1944

Darling,

Today certainly started off with a bang. I arrived home after making the rounds of garages with the car sounding as if it would fall apart, feeling as if I'd like to shoot a couple of people, and found your no.116, with picture, which sounds as if you had reached a new local, too.

After all my blithe assurances of our happy stage in yesterday's letter, which of course you won't get until a week after this one, anyway, I began to feel slightly depressed, and when I took the car out for a few minutes, and found it with a beautiful skip in the motor, my bliss turned into cold despair.

This morning I decided to take it to a different garage, recommended by both uncles, so as soon as Pen was at school I drove over there. Of course it was closed. Most every place of business that could make this a long weekend, because of Memorial Day tomorrow. So I took it to the Ford place, which was closed, and finally to the Oneida Square place where it has been every time before. I thought I'd find out if my orders to replace the whole ten valve springs were really carried out, as the man who owns the place wasn't there when I picked it up last time. His helper, who is little more than a janitor, but seems to have more on the ball than the boss, suggested that I drive it over to the mechanic who repaired it the last two times.

I'd decided not to let them touch it again, but it looked like a good chance to check up, and though he couldn't promise much in the way of avoiding the trouble, I made quite a discovery. It seems that the garage man on Oneida Square has charged me exactly double what the mechanic charged him every time. That gives him a damn

nice profit for just driving it over to the mechanic's and back each time!

Just to cover certain questions about my intelligence which may rise when you read this, the first time I took the car to Oneida Square I did it because he was the only guy who would help me out that time the top wouldn't go up last Summer when Pen was in the hospital, and all the garage men couldn't go out in the rain. When it went bad again, I felt his mechanic might be responsible, so returned it to him. The third time, Bill and my uncles having assured me that if there are 16 valve springs in a car, and they start to go, it probably isn't the repairman's fault, I took it back and told them to replace all but the new ones. Also I checked with Mr. DeVall on the garage man, and was reassured that he was honest.

This is what I get because your father is vice-president of Savage Arms, I bet. Freddie DeVall is a little twerp who makes his living off the prosperous, and I know they tell people who the family is, (which immediately raises prices for me,) and I found out later that this man goes fishing with Fred frequently, and he was there when I brought the car in the last time. So he has doubled the cost of getting the car done every time, and this morning when I was talking about having to get rid of it, the mechanic found out what he's been wondering, and now Mr. Garage man has lost both a customer and a mechanic.

So far it has cost about \$56, and this time will be much less than usually, but it seems that there is little they can do about preventing a re-occurrence, and that makes me pretty discouraged. The car is all we have left of the old life. You know what it means to me, anyway – it's like losing an arm or leg. On the other hand, it's more than a luxury, it's an extravagance, if it can't be repaired permanently. So this is my last try, and if it goes again, I don't know what I'll do.

Money seems to have a higher than usual place in your thoughts, and you must have some reason for it. In which case I'd better be careful, or I'll become an extravagance, too. As a matter of fact, I've just started wondering if what is at the base of your sad state isn't some form of money trouble. For a long while I thought it was some emotional situation, and felt it might be a little indecent for me to

show the curiosity I naturally felt. It could be financial, though – that would be about as discouraging to you, if it were through your own lack of judgment, as anything.

If that's it, I'm not much help, getting \$86 doctor bills, \$56 car bills, putting our child in a private school, and earning nothing, and saving less. When you were made a Major I raised Rita's stipend to \$32, because her sickness and the rising cost of living made what she had practically shameful. If we didn't have the car, the \$167 left would probably keep us very comfortably, if we kept well, but I felt that with your promotion we could afford to have one thing like that which wasn't pure necessity. I subconsciously think, – and obviously so do others, consciously, – that since you have attained such a high rank, our standard of living should be at least as high as it was when you were here, but the fact that you have to maintain an establishment here, and live like a Major there, should dispel the illusion, if I faced it with thought. And we certainly could use a little nest egg after the War. I still don't think I'm spending money foolishly, either in large or small amounts, yet it goes so appallingly fast. So you see, Dear, if your trouble is monetary, I'm no one to pass judgment.

I've talked and thought much about getting at least a part-time job, but right now it doesn't seem to be at all possible to arrange it. It just isn't practical, to try to compete with war-worker's wages in hiring someone to do my job so I can earn the money to pay them to do it. If one could get reliable help, even, which no one can, there'd be little profit, as long as Penny has to be watched and tended all but two a half hours a day. I don't know of a single arrangement that I could make in that respect, except to have Rita move in with us, and I know how little help, and how much strain that would be. Besides which there is still about the same amount of housework that we've always had, and you know I haven't been a slouch in that respect nor had much leisure. When he gets in school full time, I thought I could get a part-time job, and though I think about it a lot, I stopped feeling urgent about it since it looked as if the War would be so long there'd be plenty of time for that yet.

I have enough time to think, now, so that I'm frequently making plans in my head about things to do, but I can't even get out in the evening much, sitters are more expensive here, and only one of them is very reliable; it's like Massena, the high school kids make so much extra work you wish you'd stayed home. So I've not studied Art, with the institute two blocks away, nor learned shorthand, with the business school one block away, nor set off for the West coast, nor done anything but think of things I could do – if. I don't resent being tied down by Penny, you mustn't think that, he's worth it all, and it's the last year or two that he's going to need so much care. I'm not too busy, I'm not too idle, – there's just a gap in my life, and while the job might keep my mind off the missing link, it wouldn't make me one bit happier, and while I'd like to earn some money to give us a little more leeway when you get back, I'm just too tied up now for it to be possible or practical. Anyway, this is the first chance I've had to draw a deep breath, practically, since Penny was born – five years, and after looking the situation over, it seems as if the best adjustment I can make is to get as much pleasure out of the little things Penny and I can do now, and have a little reserve for the time when the pressure gets greater.

So unless Peter Emhoff turns into a gold mine, my job isn't going to be the remunerative one in the family. If you have some project in mind that requires more from me than I am now aware of the necessity for, you'd better take me into your confidence, and I might be able to streamline things – perhaps something specific would make some difference with plans for next Fall, or make some other course of action more desirable.

Now for the picture – funny, I just wrote you and asked you how you're looking. Well, I love that old face so much it looks wonderful to me, Baby. No one else has ears that fits so neatly against the side of his head, or just that kind of crispy hair, or eyes any straighter, or mouth showing tolerance and determination and sensitiveness all at once, and they all match up so well and so familiarly, and so beloved by me, that even if the expression looks a bit weary and sick, it's every bit John, the one I love.

As for losing me, my friend, you must now have felt plenty of reassurance in recent letters. You will not lose me as long as there is the slightest indication that you don't want to. You have left some room for questions sometimes in your letters this Spring, so the misery has been mutual. Don't you find that there are damn few people who really give a damn what happens to you? I do. And if there's one person on earth who does, it's always there to hold on to when someone else, or just things in general, have let you down. You and I found each other when we were both in the same condition, and that's why I've felt it had to be lasting, – we were both emptied out of everything and everyone then, and what we found was laid on the very bottom – I think it's the last thing I could toss out of my life, – I couldn't, really, ever toss it out, it's too fundamental. You are too much like my own self, and I'm afraid we human beings find ourselves more understandable and more livable than most other people, ultimately. Only we can love ourselves, so the ideal thing is to find another self, because we need to love. – That's quite a confession, I hope you understand it... I mean I know you thoroughly, and I love you, because of the things I know, and because you're easy for me to live with, and easy for me to love completely, – without reservations, and over and over.

Did you ever know anyone who had such a world of wonder and sheer love as we had, for our courtship? Most people don't even have the time, or the opportunity. All those hours, day and night at the brook, in that little black Fordsie, living inside a big bubble – pure mist and rainbow and golden light, no matter where we were, or where we went. The bubble didn't break, and even if we had to step out of that, we know what it's like inside, and I think few people ever do. You can't repeat an experience like that, or replace it, and I honestly don't think it could ever be equaled or surpassed. But it makes everyone and everything different. Perhaps that's why you're unhappy, too, a little – your standards of happiness have a right to be pretty high.

I wish I could help you. It won't last, Darling, nothing does, – we've been so miserable, and Uncle Sam's army has suddenly switched

us into something so different that it's taken everything we could muster to get used to the change. I only wish you could get more pleasure out of what must be a very interesting experience; – and I wish you could find a means for getting out of this in yourself – it would keep you from ever fearing it again. At any rate, you are a living part of every day, here, and nothing will fill your place until you can come back into it yourself.

With love from your very loving wife, Dordo.

#126. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

May 30, 1944

Darling,

We did get the car back today. The man put in 10 more (total 26) new valve springs, and drained out 4 gallons of Prestone (and water) like a nice guy. We had to wade across the Memorial Day parade and walked just a mile to the mechanic's to get it because we couldn't get him by phone. Penny enjoyed the parade, but I'm saving my enthusiasm for the parades when about 5 million citizens, home, – they only make me sad, now.

This was our day to plant, and we got there at the approach of the day's heat, and labored through it. By sticking at it, a lot was accomplished, and we triumphantly started home. Topper, seeing me put the tools away, and gather up our belongings, went and got her harness and leash, and ran along beside me proudly carrying it in her mouth. Pencil got me sidetracked with a bird's nest, and when we finally started again, he and Top went ahead, while I hunted up the harness and leash – we never let her out without it.

I caught up to them at the roadside, and Toppy crossed the road to the car while I waited for Penny to crawl down the bank. I told him to hurry so we could get on the same side with Toppy before

a car came. Just then we heard one coming. She lowered her head and ran toward it – she’s been showing a morbid interest in rolling wheels when we crossed streets lately. It never swerved or slow down a bit, it just slammed into her, and rolled away leaving our sweet puppy lying there. Our little warm dog, with her eyes still open, and blood running out of her mouth.

I think it broke her neck, she seemed dead right away, but she was so alive just a second before, and when I picked her up she was just as warm and soft, and her eyes were so pretty, it was awful.

It’s awful to see anyone’s dog get killed, but when it’s your own, and with a child standing right there, and you fed it and loved it and nursed it through sickness, and scolded it, and been proud of it, you just get sick to your stomach.

I tried to do the right things with Penny. If I’d gone to get her, it might have been him crossing the road, so it was a relief there, but he was horrified, and I laid her on the grass and carried him to the car and got him quieted, then took her down the road where he couldn’t see her.

Honey, there was a woman driving that car, and she saw Toppy, and must have both heard and felt the blow, and saw us, – and she didn’t even stop. How could anyone be so heartless?

We got a shovel from the farmer and I buried her by the road, on the curve by “our house.” Lord! I hope she was really dead. I couldn’t do everything the way I would have otherwise because of Penny. We couldn’t stop there, and I couldn’t very well bring her home dead, – there was such a peculiar odor she must have been dead. There wasn’t any reason to subject Penny to any more than was decent. It will be awful to go out there again, but that’s probably the best thing to do. Poor Penny, she was so alive you can’t forget her. She was the same kind of pup that he used to be – an awful, awful lot of work, but so busy and bright and cute. In the evening she was lots of company for me, too. She was so big few people realized she was a puppy, but that black mustache was so cute, and she looked so fierce when she barked that she was a fine watchdog.

Thank Heaven when we got home there was a note under the

door from Margie saying they'd stopped to take us to dinner with them, and to come up for lunch at 6:30 if we wished. We were glad to have a place to go. I really think most of the horror has been taken out of it for Penny – I let him talk about it and ask questions, but tried to be as casual as possible and divert him after the talking was satisfied, and a little change of scenes, instead of coming right home helped. – I still keep smelling that smell, tho.

Pop and Margie and Nana were all lovely to us, and human companionship was very desirable, but as sad as I felt tonight, and as low as you feel now, I hope, and I'm sure we'll never get the sort of philosophy which says "maybe it was a good thing." – – – – Penny saw the dog get killed so he won't run in the road, – – – – it's raining all the time in India because it's a change from the sun, – – – – Bill's in the stinkiest division in the whole U.S. Army because he's an only child. Is that why the Scotch are called dour? – Well baby, you can still gripe, even if it's at yourself, and you just keep on griping 'til you get something worth smiling for.

Today we planted peas – rows of 'em, green and yellow beans, Swiss chard, tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, beets, parsley and onions. Farmers should get to bed early. How I wish I had someone to talk to tonight. If Dorrie or Mary were home I'd have asked them to stay with us tonight. Pencil's in my bed, anyway.

Gee, it's about time things started getting better for us –

I think about you all the time, and I love you, John,
Dordo.

#127. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

June 2, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I suppose that this is as good a place as any to tell you that I don't

think my number 119 was a very good letter. However, writing it has seemed to help in that it has gotten me on the way out of the gloom, but I am afraid at your expense. Your letter 193 makes me realize what effect my letter may have had. It was quite the nicest letter I have ever received from anyone. I recognize the difficulties of time and space and recognize the inadvisability of starting anything in correspondence when we cannot talk it over, but I have wrestled with this personal problem long enough so that I am afraid that for a while I became irresponsible and irrational and by the time I realized that it was not the thing to do the letter had been posted. You certainly got a fine bargain, Dordo, when you got me. I seem to be gifted with a combination of lack of emotional responsibility, sympathetic imagination and plain old every-day control.

Nevertheless, my little problem is still with me. It is like being a schizophrenic. The ultimate solution baffles me.

However, I do want you to know that I have enough elements of being an adult in me so that I can appreciate us – and that I would do nothing to make me ashamed of myself, or you ashamed of me. It is just an unpleasant fact that has come to me and I can find no way of ceasing to live with it. Most of my energy is directed to preventing it from tearing me into bits (that sounds too melodramatic).

Please write me what you think because I need your judgment. I never expected this to happen. I didn't ask for it, and I don't know what to do about it. It doesn't seem to be going away as I have been wishing for it to do for the last four months.

With love, J.

#128. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Utica, NY

D-Day, June 6, 1944

Darling,

There isn't much left for me to say tonight. They've been saying it all day – King George, Gen. Eisenhower, Gen. Montgomery, the President, and hundreds of newsmen and commentators, and I've listened all day until my head is whirling, but I couldn't go to bed without saying Salaam, and telling you that we've been thinking of you all day. It's hard to say much else tho – one feels inadequate.

I've wondered when and how you first heard it, and if all the news came via BBC, and what your reactions are, now that it's here.

It didn't seem as if there was any end in view without this even started, but now, with such an auspicious start, it looks as if you might get home – before your child is a soldier, too. And that puts the crowning touch of hope and excitement on this day.

We first heard the neighbor's radio at 7 A.M., just screaming loud, and I was furious, because it had wakened me twice in the night, but at 8 when we got up and turned on our own, we felt different. It's been on all day, and there has been nothing but news and progress, and church or martial music all day. People have taken it very solemnly, very reverently and prayerfully, and I haven't heard a single word in bad taste (except Red Skelton's program tonight,) or noisy celebration or lacking in dignity.

It seemed like a good idea to spend part of the day with the family, so we invited them to dinner. Pop was busy with some officers from Rochester, and Margie playing golf, so we didn't know whether they could, until five o'clock. Margie and Nana came up for dinner and Dad came soon after. We listened to the radio all evening. Very few of the regular programs have been on, but there have been across the country programs summing up popular reaction. (Like New Year's Eve) question forums, and hours and hours of description and analysis of every detail. It's all very interesting.

I could use some mail – haven't had any since the glum letter and pictures of last week, and naturally I'm wondering how you are. We had our first rain for many days this afternoon, so tomorrow we'll drive out to see if the garden's well ??? I hope all this shortens your abroad by months.

Love, Dordo.

#129. DPM to JDM (ALS, 4pp.)

Utica, NY

June 7, 1944

Dear John,

It's been a long wait, but I knew it would come. I knew it was so. I know you.

I don't know how much of this I'll send you. I'm just writing things down as they come to me; there will be different reactions later. The letter just came, and though the news was somewhat expected there is still a shock, even physically.

It's odd, – the decks were all cleared for it, – no appointments, no commitments for the day, no claims on my attention for a little while. A gray, very cold day, and time to let it soak in before Penny is back.

We are so alike, even if you don't feel that way now, we are, and I know what you've been going through. I know just how it happened. And the impulse to cry Weakling, and Selfish can't be given voice, because the knowledge of all the emptiness and longing and endless burden of love with no place to lay it down is too vivid.

Our circumstances are quite different, but the feelings are the same. We're both capable of a tremendous amount of emotion, love is in us and must have an outlet, and I know how easily in your loneliness, without a single person to claim any part of you, you could hang that awful load of human love around the shoulders of whatever person seems the most attractive and sympathetic. Because I am sure that that is what has happened, my mind is quite able to face it.

I firmly believe that the only thing either of us can do, under the circumstances, is to live one day at a time – one hour at a time, with as much personal integrity, as much consideration for each other, as much respect for our marriage vows as thoughtful, determined effort makes possible.

I believe that the circumstances of War and separation have presented us with a situation that only the circumstances of War and separation can see worked out, and since we have no control over these, it seems as if it would be better to control ourselves, and trust the God we know – the God who is love, to help us to keep on the beam so that as our physical circumstances change, (which they will do), we will avoid any decision or situation of permanent harm or disintegration.

Naturally, the greatest difference in our present conditions, rather than environment – which really doesn't matter in basic emotions, – is Penny. I have had his constant claims upon me, and a very deep love for him. You have missed both, and as he grows more attractive, more a complete personality, I wish you could know him. He is part of you, you know, it looks, in actions, and in devotion. I try to be rational about this, but I have a blinding fear that if I lost you, something would happen to him. In telling you this, there is no attempt to influence you, it's probably just because he is so much a part and product of our love. But such intuitions can be very real and terrible – and you will surely grant me one small psychopathic twist. I just want you to know that that is part of the apprehensions that have accompanied the knowledge of your emotional irresponsibility. On the other hand every sense of our unity gives me a sense of his security and living, and a sense of the deep enjoyment you can receive from your own part of him, all your life. This isn't in any way a threat or rationalization, – it's just part of what I feel and I wanted on the record. (Also that I want Dorrie and Bill to have Penny if anything should happen to me and you are incapable of assuring that he has the kind of home we had.)

I wish you would give me some indication of why Fred the major is being sent home, and it would be of great interest to know whether you also had an opportunity to come, and turned it down. I could appreciate your wanting to stay until you had achieved mastery of whatever situation exists, or of yourself. I must confess my wanting to know is partly a matter of pride. There is still a preoccupation with how much the Lehnners and the Bowlins know and will pass on

to others in Rochester. You know what one word will do there; there is simply self-protection in knowledge of what people know and think, and how armored one must be against their knowledge. And don't kid yourself about how much they can guess, and tell, if you've given them any evidence at all, either in this, or in that "tangible issue" of "long, long, ago." (How long?)

There is a measure of relief in all this, bitter as it may be. There have been evasions and contradictions which I hope you will sincerely try to eliminate in the future. I must add that, being human, there would be some satisfaction in knowing the circumstances of these things of which you write. I am quite sure the woman is British, – your late scorn for the American way, and preoccupation with things British, has been rather amusingly obvious, and I assume she's married – possibly a Catholic. But whether your affection is returned, and whether her husband is on the scene (I suspect he is the prisoner of War, – if so how could she be other than a bad investment?) is still a mystery. Apparently you see quite a bit of her – I hope you will not get yourself in a corner until you have a better chance to gain the perspective that only time can give you.

There is some reason to believe that you desire at times that I should make more of a life for myself, independent of view. I'm glad you haven't apparently admitted it to yourself enough to suggest it to me, because I don't intend to live one bit differently than I am. No long looks at the future, no dalliances, no artificial preoccupations, nor mental crutches. I intend to take one day at a time, and change my attitudes or needs or interests only in so far as the new day presents real and compelling ones. I'll take my chances on the old ones being enough, and it isn't compatible with life as we've known it, for one to find oneself empty if the old ones fail.

Perhaps I shouldn't be this specific – since you can always point out that there are measures of devotion, (and therefore measures of how one must react). But Darling, I have experienced something at least similar to your present condition, since you've been gone, and it is just possible that its intensity was lessened only by the

differences in our environment – your being alone and uncomfortable, my having Penny and familiar surroundings on which to ground my adjustment. In the first case I was able to leave the scene – that is why I really left Poland. The second case has just been pulled back onto the shelf of reason, but the circumstances still exist for the daily practice of keeping it there. In the first case the situation was wildly impossible of any resolution, and the only sensible thing to do was to go – which of course you can't do entirely. The second case is one of foolish but very active mutual attraction, and all the game of approach and withdrawal, until it got so near the edge of action that I've just spent some careful thinking and some tactical removal to avoid a situation that could only produce ultimate misery. We're not so different, Dear, we hooman bein's.

You see, once I made a solemn, solemn vow, that never again would I have any part in the real involvement of another woman's husband – no matter who took the initiative or what the excuses. Any man, upon whom any woman has any claim by law or by ethics, no matter how attractive, is just poison just as long as that claim exists. One's need can become great, and the desire for love, for sexual companionship, for man-and-women understanding, – or just the natural urge to flirt (which is grossly under-estimated), can lead to a place where everything begins to cut loose, – but I have a barrier -experience, and in the last analysis, that enables me to pull out. And I think you will do the same, in your own way.

You say there is no solution with us to the problem in any direction. I think it is possible for one to subconsciously choose a situation to which there can be no solution. Not to belittle the intensity of your emotion, but possibly its duration. If one subconsciously feels that the need is temporary, that its permanence would only bring permanent unhappiness, one might unknowingly avoid a situation where any direct action would be necessary. In other words, you can let yourself go now in a way that won't necessarily jeopardize your future. Coldly, is the only way you can have your cake and eat it.

This isn't even mental condemnation, and I hope it isn't wishful

thinking, in fact I hope it's true in this case, because if it is I can understand without unendurable hurt, and because I am truly fond of you, John.

Surely this is a result of the war, and your hunger is real, I know. But don't turn into one of those people who go through life tasting. You have a flair for it, but don't develop it, – you can't live on it. Get for yourself out of this the strength and the experience that will give you, John, something to begin with when the storybook life is over. Without oak leaves and Army pay, life will be the same here or there – get the things now that will be beside you and within you so that what is ultimately around you will bring you confidence and peace. I could not say this if I did not know that our love and our life were real, and always can be.

And one last plea, which sounds ridiculous, but since you instituted it at a certain time, you may appreciate it's truly distressing quality – I mean signing your letters “J.” Please don't. It's one little thing I can't stand, and you should know it, – now that the reason for the device is over, please write what is true, and sign it John. Please.

It is easy to “remember the defenselessness of the human spirit” to certain approaches, but it is also easy to remember that the human spirit is capable of building up some very fine defenses against approaches which it finally recognizes as distractive. The human spirit has its wayward impulses, especially when it has little within its grasp which it may serve, and from which it may seek a tangible response. But being human, “by continual adjustments of thought and experience” it withdraws from what can yield it only pain, and seeks that in which it knows will be self-expression and completion. You have left a great part of yourself here, as time, I'm sure, will show. There has to be something to fill your time and energies and to take up the emotional slack. As far as I can see, like any other sickness, this one will have to burn itself out, and like any other sickness only intelligence can keep you from permanent injury and protect others from you.

Love, Dordo.

#130. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

June 8, 1944

Dear John,

What a world! It is simply overwhelming – and even terrifying! – to stand in your own home under blue skies and green trees, and actually hear the war that's going on thousands of miles away at midnight around an Allied warship. A man with a microphone standing on a ship in the English Channel near France, describing the darkness, the lights, the men and ships and planes around him, while you hear German JU 88's and Messerschmitts flying low over the boat, hear flack and ack-ack and guns exploding, rockets, the gun crews yelling, a bomb exploding 150 feet astern, and actually hear the shots that brought one of the Jerries down, from a gun right next to the microphone – and did the man yell then! It's fantastic, and really out-of-this-world. I can't forget it.

Speaking of Invasion news – this morning I heard an interview with the wife of a 29-year-old paratrooper from Skaneateles, Capt. Frank Lilliman (I think), who was the first Allied soldier to set foot on French soil at the Invasion. His name was mentioned on national hookups all day, but what interested me is that he was the recruiting sergeant at Syracuse headquarters in 1940, and probably someone with whom you discussed your commission, if not actually the man who swore you into this Army. – If you and he could have seen ahead!

Sammy has escaped the draft once more. He has been invited to spend two weeks, expenses paid, deep-sea fishing off the coast of Virginia with Frank Miller. He will probably take one, then we will all go to Piseco. That will be something for Dordo – Piseco.

Considering that the other three are coming home, it seems quite logical that you refused the opportunity to do likewise. I hope that isn't the case, but if it is, that you still have time to reconsider,

while the colonel is still there. I am positive that your troubles would change color unbelievably if you could leave them behind.

Remorse is bound to catch up with you eventually – don't add a lost opportunity to that.

In fact when it actually comes to bidding goodbye to the other two, you will probably feel pretty desolate and forsaken. If you can't come home, why don't you plan to take a few days leave at that time and go to the hills, or some other place, for a little change?

Your family haven't heard from you much lately.

Love, Dordo.

#131. DPM to JDM (ALS, 4pp.)

Utica, NY

June 11, 1944

Dear John,

The whole world watches as men die in France; the whole world reasons that nothing can justify this except the right of those who fight and those for whom they fight to meet again and live in security and peace... What a mockery it is – hour after hour to listen, and to have lost one's own private reason for caring. No longer do we have our share of the world's hope and despair and pride, we view it, we sympathize, – we hope for them, not with them. Because we no longer share it with you. Because our private misery is no longer kin to it, but overwhelmingly nearer.

Our misery lacks the touch of pride the others have. The site of a tall, olive-drab individual no longer evokes the burst of pride, of union with the rest of them, – it simply hurts, and we turn away. All we asked was the security of knowing we shared your part in helping to end it, your anxiety to return. You were our biggest stake in its progress. But now when you think of it, it is probably with half-conscious regret that its success will bring to an end whatever life

you have made without us there, – at least you have viewed it with sufficient indifference to run yourself and us into the ground with your extra-curricular activities.

This whole War has been a picnic for you. Not for you the clean-cut danger, the fundamental fears and exhilarations of mortal combat. Nor had I wished that. For you the dissolute existence, the easy companionship, for a lone male in uniform, with plenty of leisure, a luxurious setting, and \$350 a month. And you fell into it body and soul.

Or did you? Darling – did you? Or did some basic dignity and honor, some fundamental decency, some deep-seated love and generosity keep you from losing all we had spent so long in building, restrain you from uttering the words and committing the acts that it would take years to efface?

You have been terribly wary of presenting me with facts – facts which are essential to any reaction other than confusion and despair. Unwittingly I have become a part of the situation, with 14,000 miles, torturously slow communication, and only superficial knowledge of a crisis between us. I said I wouldn't make an issue of it – to take any action is absurd and impossible.

But you show a supreme lack of imagination in not realizing now and in the beginning that every part of this would have profound reverberations in the human being to whom you have looked for love and trust and companionship until it has become a habit and a necessity for both of us.

It was a little naïve of you to say that you had nothing unpleasant to tell me, and in the next sentence say that (1.) there has been something about which I could and probably should have made an issue, and (2.) that you're infatuated with someone else in a situation to which there can be no solution! Ye gods!

Obviously you have gotten yourself into both situations through a certain emotional carelessness or feeling of temporariness. The eschewing of your wedding ring indicated your frame of mind. It is possible to understand, but that doesn't remove the necessity for you to think about how it came about, and to try and avoid making

a mess of so many lives. All the time you were leading up to it the consequences were as obvious as they are now... You always love to pretend to yourself that what you do is your own business – You're a mental isolationist, but you're not an emotional one, and no one can live in a human world independent of its creatures. You've always had a sort of scornful contempt for the familiar, the possessed. Your surroundings, your family, and now, I suppose, for us... Being loved by you is not to be glorified, – for long, not to feel endeared and blessed, – it's only to be tolerated, even belittled by relegation to the discipline-and-duty department, and seldom sought except when your self-sufficiency fails.

I really think your “temporary fever” is a sort of rationalization of a situation in which you have become disastrously involved. By invoking pity in and for yourself, you can reduce guilt and accusation. Truly, isn't it so?

Well, you have all my sympathy. I know how horrible you've been feeling. But I'm your wife, and don't want to be put in either the position of your keeper or your hen-pheasant. Can't you learn that no woman on earth can fill in the gaps in the way you eventually choose to express your love? She may give you all you demand, but you also need to give – to enrich and sustain and support her love. The soul wearies of having to rally itself, after a while the misery over-balances the happiness, and self-preservation takes over.

It took long to regain confidence after the Rochester deal. But I did, deeply. I would so like to know now, that you really have fought this, actively, instead of inviting more disintegration and heartache for all of us. People do. Darling, remember Joe? Why do you think he walked the streets at night, and beat his breast so fiercely? – Didn't you know?

These flights from reality, from “the tried and true,” – everyone has them. Usually we're only trying to get away from ourselves. But we are civilized enough to try to control impulses that only bring madness and trouble.

When I use the words self-control to you, I'm fully aware of what it means. It's taking plenty of that commodity to keep from putting

my fury and frustration into action that might be most regrettable. It even takes so much to guard against impatience with Penny, who so innocently has me completely trapped. – Penny who is hardly a reality to you, but to whose heart and mind you are so real. That's my fault, too. That every day he talks about you, that he prays for you to come back. – How even this could harm him, which was only meant to help him! And you.

Knowing you so completely, John, I truly believe that what you so restlessly have sought isn't basically related to love, except temporarily. Some lack in you is practically psychopathic, and the (lesser) lack of discipline, and the fear of maturity (as perhaps as it is expressed by your father, to you), has made you hesitate to search for it.

It seems to me that it is concerned with the disposition of your energies, particularly creatively. Call it work, self-expression, an outlet, career, or what you will, it is a need all people have, which frustrated or distorted means soul-sickness. We are living in a time when these things can be helped, a place where there is freedom to take our own way of bringing them about.

So it seems as if you would be wise in not trying to bring this to a "solution." You are not in normal circumstances, and your reactions are not normal. It wasn't love that got you into this, it was loneliness and boredom, brought about by a situation induced by War. You might find things in a horrible mess when it's over if you could do what you wish about them now. Most of our troubles have come from outside circumstances. Let's not increase them through inside weakness, we have too much to lose. It will all come back, I promise.

Many things will change before we see each other again, but all the days between have to be lived. Let me know what you know, that my judgments may not be too harsh, the pain no deeper than necessary, and the bitterness not too blinding when it is over.

Why don't you cease trying to be subtle and artistic about it, and try the coldly professional approach? Just lay the facts about both situations on the line, like a case history of someone else.

Right now you probably don't care a hell of a lot whether you lose

me or not. – Now is the time to be surgical, to do a thorough job with no hold-outs to crop up after the scar is supposed to be healed. I'll have to feel sure that I know what the facts are in any case – why don't you put them up to me when it doesn't matter what I think?

This time you say you're being good. (Oh if I could only hold that securely in my heart.) Why don't you tell me whether that's your idea or someone else's? Maybe it's impossible to be anything else. Or do you really want to be good? – I could believe it.

And as for a solution. It worries me that you have talked and talked about the future. What suggestions, what requests, what pleas have you made, how many times have you deplored the situation with someone? How much have you quietly suffered alone, and how many times has someone suffered with you? This can't all be in your head, what about all those long Sunday afternoon walks, those long languorous evenings? – I have a right to be told these things. I have a right to hope that you haven't actually suggested a solution involving someone else, or tried to bring one about, but I want to know how involved you have become. Your infatuation may be unconsummated, but is it undeclared? Anything but the whole truth is no use now, we've got to get down to rock bottom before anything can survive. But what is the truth? I don't know... I don't know... – Can't you see what this is like?

Of course the time element makes this little short of grotesque. It is 22 days since you first wrote me what I have alternately sensed and denied since March. I don't know what letters are on their way now, or how much nearer you will be too bringing yourself out of this when this reaches you, but I can't sit here and see our world destroyed in utter silence.

Since you are keeping my letters and I have all yours, someday the story will be complete. (Please don't lose or destroy them. If at any time their presence among your possessions becomes irksome, please return them to me.) – Write to me as much as you possibly can, it will help. I hope the story's end will make us proud of us.

Love, Dordo.

#132. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

June 13, 1944

Dear John,

I feel a new strength in you, and a greater confidence. I know that this time there is not deceit, and that what you tell me I can trust and believe, – as you gain the fortitude and confidence to tell me the whole thing, bit by bit. I am proud to know that you are doing what you feel is right, as well as thinking it, though I am still concerned about what has already been done. Isn't there a much greater feeling of release and confidence and new clean pride in taking the straightforward, honest, simple way with me, even though it takes more time and more control. Perhaps that is the one advantage of letters, we have time to think before the words are said, and time to leave out the words that crumple the spirit and shame the soul and sicken the heart.

If you find bitterness in anything I say, remember the last three months, when you gave little thought to what I felt or hoped about you, but in which I was very much alive to the continued absence of your person, and the growing absence of your interest. In particular, my last letter might sound resentful in spots, but I had just the day before read your letters to me through the Spring, and they carried such a supercilious attitude, they were so alternately snotty, evasive, disarming, and imploring, that it was a sad pastime. Two things stood out: first I wondered how I so quickly became aware of the change in you, because there was such a subtle indication of it in many of them, and secondly, the supreme cruelty of your continued indifference to what effect your apparent loss of integrity would have.

I could be specific, about their sometimes blatant callousness and affront, but doubtless you know the ones; I think sometimes you must even have offended yourself, then. So you see, if there is an

occasional trace of indignation, it isn't just from the discovery of this situation, but from an accumulation of hurt.

Don't ever try to "protect" me by not telling me anything which might have an unhappy effect. It just doesn't work, for one thing, it promotes deceit and evasiveness, for another, and if they were not enough between us so that I'd realize the existence of trouble there'd be no point in protecting me.

So don't apologize for writing that letter, but only try to appreciate to what extent a person would want to know the whole truth about a thing which so deeply affects his own life, and that of the other closest in all the world. I feel so helpless in this, in some ways.

I can still be objective about all this. I know what you and I have, and how much that very quality of mutual respect and mutual confidence can become a portion of the union of two people who have lived and loved until they are truly part of each other. I know the circumstances of your life, and my own, what our limitations are, what our needs are, and what our interests, ambitions, handicaps and desires are; and how high and how low we've been together, where we began, and how far we can go together, because of the similarity which binds us to each other and makes our relationship unique.

In only one point do I think you are not fully facing the realities in this, and my ignorance of the circumstances impede any judgment I may offer. You speak of the "ultimate solution" being "impossible," yet you seem to have some particular solution in mind. That seems to indicate that you have confused wishful thinking with the facts, and as long as that exists, you're not going to become independent of the vicious circle of your emotions. Eliminate the worry about an ultimate solution, and give time and circumstance a chance to help you. For once trust the gods who have done such a good job of giving you more and better than most of your fellow man.

If you really want to cease to live with this madness, avoid the things which bind you to it, put yourself behind a barrier of different associations, the old familiar pastimes that have saved you in other

situations where it seemed as if nothing else would ever matter, and maybe you might seek a new human relationship – some kind of a friend with whom you can pass undemanding hours – there's always one around every place, and people are the most diverting and distracting commodity available... And give some time to that other asset – the people who love you, and need you.

Peter came in the middle of this, and we put in our first four hours' work, mostly in just getting the details of a plot under control. I was able to help him substantially, yet it is nothing I could ever do alone, so I think we make a good team. I hope our combined efforts will always be as smoothly meshed as they were today, but we will probably have our struggles and our differences. He is a little slow in getting underway, but has terrible tenacity, and I think ability. – He's awfully good about the Little Interruption. He can ignore him unbelievably when he's at work pinning down an idea, and can be very understanding and entertaining with him when he is ready to relax a minute.

He brought me a copy of a thick manual, called "The Writers Market," put out by the Writers Digest publishers, which contains extremely useful and time-saving information. I think I'll get you one, and if you'd like it sent sooner than September send me a request for it.

I will not be teaching at Proctor this Summer, as they are limiting the variety of their classes until fall, but Penny will have an opportunity to go there four days a week, two hours a morning, which will help with the problem of getting him with other children. It's gratis in Summer. He has acquired a new friend in the neighborhood, but I have to be a bit careful about his accepting some of the companionship that is available in the neighborhood. – Can't have him contaminating the little Kernans and Hunters and Butlers, y' know, at school.

We're all actually praying for the ones who are trying so desperately to make this War short, and I find you slipping in along with the rest who are fighting for things they don't always quite understand.

Love, Dordo.

#133. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

June 24, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I suppose that by now you are wondering what in the hell has happened to me to prevent my writing. I have been a bit incapacitated for writing for about a week due to an attack of dust conjunctivitis which is likely to attack you in this place where dust blows around so freely.

I did not have a chance to come home and I see no chance appearing in the immediate future. As you now know well, Colonel B. had the heart attack that put him out of the running. Colonel S. went back on temporary orders to attend a course. Such things depend on drag and being regular army, none of which is possessed by MacDonald. Captain A. went home on the basis that he was overage and there was no suitable assignment for him.

We are living the life of gentlemen who are not finding the white man's burden resting too heavily on our shoulders. We use that damn radio about which you have heard so much, drink the local liquor, eat like pigs and go to bed early on the uncovered porch. During the cool hours of the morning it gets nice enough to sleep pretty well. I wish I was there right now with a tall cool gin and grapefruit juice in my hand.

I was so sorry to hear of the Pencil's dog. I hope you will get him another as soon as you can swing it. It is nice for a small boy to have one around. He will probably always remember that, and the memory will be dimmer with a succession of dogs. Too bad that I didn't get to know her.

Now that you have gotten through the rest of the letter, I will get

on to this business of which you are concerned and about which I have had more than an ample opportunity to think. First off, let me tell you that I am proud of your attitude and your whole approach to the thing makes me a little ashamed, but not self-pity – I have done enough wallowing in that to last me for some little time. I know that it would be easy for you to fall into self-pity and you would have damn good reason as you have and are getting a pretty lousy deal off of the bottom of the deck. You have been a good kid and it ain't fair to have this pop up when you have the problem of separation to contend with – and that is no joke.

I have your letter of 7th June in front of me. Don't ever be afraid that I will destroy your letters. I will keep them all and send them to you if they become too bulky to carry back.

I will do as you wish and live one day at a time and one hour at a time in the best way I can. You are right about Penny and of the fact that I am missing the best time of him. That can't be helped, but I don't feel particularly fit to give him much. I don't feel as if I had enough emotional security in myself to spare any even for a small boy that needs it.

There is nothing that anyone knows. They may suspect but I haven't been caught off base for the simple reason that I haven't been off base. I don't understand the reference to "tangible issue" but I assume it is something I wrote. I can't remember what I wrote.

Your conjectures about the subject were all quite correct except for the prisoner angle. Just a distant station.

I seemed to detect in your letter the veiled idea that you were willing for me to do something about it on a physical basis. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe I misinterpret. However, it would be impossible for me to do so. It just isn't on that particular plane. It is sort of on no plane at all. All difficulties are recognized and spoken of. All that is obvious is the conflict between the necessity of being together on the present unphysical casual basis, and the impossibility of perpetuating the situation. It is like a fever with no cause and no cure. I would like to do that if it would end the deal. But it wouldn't so it is much better not to meddle with fire in any form. I don't

intend to. Maybe I have reached an age of conservatism. Anyway, there is something there that can't be denied, avoided, cured, ignored, fulfilled or anything. It is a source of irritation and unrest. It is not good. But nothing will be done about it on the physical plane. I have now told you everything there is to tell. I know that I am being selfish, but please tell me what in the hell there is to do. You can take your choice and shove off if you wish. I deserve it. I am just keeping a good firm hold on myself to keep from doing anything foolish in other directions. The other party is being foolish in other directions by, against my advice, and saying that it wouldn't make any difference were I around or not, taking the Teed step.* It doesn't pin any responsibility on me but I think it's foolish. There is a god damn war on though, and it would take one hell of a long time for her so to do. Though I think she is honest. It is a mess. Maybe if you write me and tell me that I am a royal son of a bitch it will help somewhat. I still need you.

John

(Editor's Note: reference to Teed is Willard Golding Teed, who was briefly married to Dorothy. The Teed step is presumably annulment.)

#134. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

July 4, 1944

Dear John,

I had given up hearing from you yesterday when a brief stop here brought your letter via the afternoon mail. It had been a long wait, but I felt there must be a reasonable explanation as you have been considerate about unreasonable delays between letters. Your mind is not yet completely capable of projecting itself into the world you left behind, in either its outward or its intimate aspects, but that is

probably because you just aren't ready to permit yourself to think about home when it is still so far away, and shut out by so much conscious effort.

It was a most pleasant surprise to discover yesterday that Grade 3 tires are available for immediate release, and all I had to do was to get my gas-man to condemn two of ours to obtain permission to replace them. Of course one pays outrageously for the privilege of buying used or rejected tires, about ten bucks apiece, but it makes for a great deal of security, and since the family presented me with a check yesterday, there seems to be no more fitting or desirable use for it. The car I shall cling to with all the effort I can manage; it means so much to me, and even you will eventually be glad to enjoy its dusty green reassurance again, I bet.

You didn't say which letters you had received except the one at June 7, but you spoke of "so many." It isn't quite honest of you to issue a mealy-mouthed blanket statement like "your conjectures about the subject were all quite correct, except the prisoner angle," when conjectures might have covered several letters, – or to say "I have now told you everything there is to tell." That doesn't show much respect for my intelligence, and it isn't fair. It sounds like Roosevelt foreign-policy language.

Little things have great psychological strength in a situation like this. Small devices and evasions have no place in such a serious squaring up of the facts. For instance the letter which said there is no physical relationship now and that you don't intend that there shall be carefully side-stepped the past, and, small as it may seem, I am quite aware that you didn't sign that one: you typed your name on it. For God's sake, be honest. It is not impertinence which prompts my questions, I believe that you must get the shabby little details out of you to relieve this "fever." And there's got to be one person in the world with whom you can be honest, John. I doubt you have been entirely honest with this new, and untried, love. Our friendship is secure and tested.

How about a few facts: think over these questions, answer what you can honestly to me, and the rest to yourself, honestly. Given:

the woman is British, Catholic, and married to an officer stationed elsewhere. What does she do in New Delhi? Just when did this start, and how? Is it unavoidable that you see her? Has either of you made any actual effort to stop this? Has her husband been told what goes on? How can she get a divorce if she is a Catholic? Granted, her present marriage is unsatisfactory – has she been honestly informed of the facts that our marriage was complete, that it had no reason or motivation except love, that you didn't want to be away from me, that I love you and trust you?.... Surely she is in a position to get out of this – is she making any effort to do anything but try to fill the gap in her life by destroying a family, a man who is merely lonely, three lives so deeply a part of each other that this destruction would only leave them wizened and gaping for all time?

She will cling to you with all her might and main because you have foolishly permitted her to become emotionally dependent on you. She will use every excuse, every device, every rationalization to justify this... Well, there's no justification for it but War, and that's recognized to be totally uncivilized. – It's a common, cheap, cliché situation, begun with weakness and irresponsibility, and rendering little but pain and disintegration. She is as much an adult as you, surely as aware of the consequences of messing around with a married man, who was separated from his wife entirely by circumstances beyond his control, and she is facing a serious responsibility in continuing to have any part in trying to ruin something that was complete and lasting and good. If she doesn't wish to face this, she is truly in for a sad time. But you are not obligated to be a party to that.

I truly understand this thing, as any person of feeling understands any impulse or longing or need that drives other people to hurt themselves and others. – But mostly because I understand you, and your temporary loss of so much that you need. Yet understanding all of you, I expect you to become master of this somehow – in time, and to have much more confidence and wisdom (and understanding, Dear,) because of that mastery. You couldn't live with yourself any other way.

Self-pity for yourself I cannot understand, tho. Why should you be sorry for yourself? Few people have contrived this long to eat their cake and have it (- mine, too, Baby). Pencil and I certainly aren't liabilities. He's beautiful and intelligent and sweet, - many other men are crazy about him. I wasn't unwanted when you sought me, and I never will be. There has been no obligation between us - we chose each other, we knew, and we both still know that we are right for each other. That's why we have so much confidence in each other now. And you are being given the opportunity to work it out in your own time. What more could you want? Unless the thing is big enough to make you pity yourself for being mortal, - and a little more humble and willing to ask for help outside yourself.

Darling, I don't veil my ideas - especially when they are so liable to misinterpretation. I don't see how you could possibly infer from anything I have said that I am willing for you to do anything about the situation on a physical basis. Surely you have enough sympathetic imagination to realize the shame, and the unbearable, endless misery that would bring to me. Let this be firmly on the record - I would neither suggest nor condone any action that would increase the cheapness and weakness and shame of this already over-rationalized situation. You have been put to a test that thousands of your own kind in background, intelligence, and experience are meeting with integrity and active resistance. Surely we prefer to feel that you have as much maturity, control, and plain decency as they. Why should I ask for shame, when so many have men they can be proud of? No, John, - I don't want any part of the responsibility for any physical solution you might attempt. Something really sordid might end it sooner, but you'd lose something (and so would I) that could never, ever be recaptured.

You utter fool - don't you know that we have always felt that you and I were perfectly mated physically? How could I endure sharing you? How could I ever lie in our bed where you have loved every inch of me and I have known the thrill and ecstasy and the blessedness of your body, - how could I endure for one minute the thought of your touching another woman? Do you think we could

ever again “feel the earth move,” or be so completely suspended and submerged in love; so utterly blended in body and soul and mind as we’ve been, if you threw that on this pile of accumulated trash? If you have an atom of decency and judgment left, don’t toss that in, too – Save for me your clean, warm body, bring me your good, strong man-love, and I will give you back enough to wash away all the doubt and hurt and guilt.

If you’ve still got that, it’s all we need. We will always have the rest. All else is just War and a discontented woman and a lonely man – and separation, – it is only a sickness of the soul, and since you seem to recognize that, you will find a way to rid yourself of it. It’s a very old saying, but you might try thinking about it, Darling, “where there’s a will there’s a way.” You can do it, – you have the elements of goodness, you never had so much to gain by it before.

Love, Dordo.

#135. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

July 5, 1944

Dear John,

There are a few comparatively impersonal questions in the letters you received all at once that you didn’t answer. (Viz: about the short story). Sometime if you have a little free time, you might look through them again and jot down the items of query and dash off a few answers. We would all be interested in some sort of description of your new boss; you could designate him as Colonel Second.

As time goes on I find myself wondering who was the aggressor in your present setup. Your letters sound as if you might have been, – not making much time at first, and then having the whole thing catapulted onto you like a spoiled tomato. Yet you seemed so

firm in your devotion to me right up to a certain definite line of demarcation, that it puzzles me.

Many things are puzzling, and I get so tired of it and from it that my brain feels actually stiff. There are two things I left out from yesterday's letter which are really responsible for this one. I was too tired to cope with one, and to express the other. I don't want to replace the emphasis on the element of physical relationship, but they both concern it.

The first has to do with your statement of having forgotten what you wrote about a "tangible issue." Just to straighten things out I will quote from the original letter which referred to it: "You say you would not make an issue of anything tangible. The only thing tangible about which you could and probably should make an issue happened a long, long time ago and is so far lost in the mists of antiquity that there is no point in bringing it up." That is what I mentioned in another letter as having possibly occurred while you were at Camp Shanks. It may be concerned with the present mess. Anyway, you have something definite in mind, and since you have gone this far with it, it is only fair to be explicit about the rest of it.

The second, an explanation regarding both situations: I was prepared to hear that there had been physical unfaithfulness on your part, because you were so sick at heart. That is why I wrote what apparently gave you the impression that I "would be willing for (you) to do something about it on a physical basis." I was fortified mentally, and capable of receiving that knowledge if it is so in either case, but did not mean to suggest it, – so don't commit adultery for my sake.

What I wrote last night refers to deliberately attempting such a thing. Naturally my emotions would be pretty shaken if it were already so, but I have already faced the possibility, and if it is I promise not to use that knowledge against you in any way, either in the realm of reaction, retaliation, or judgment.

I well know how hard it is to spend these years in enforced chastity, and how some temporary circumstances might cause an act that might bring release, remorse, or even disgust, depending on

many things. It wouldn't be that knowledge I fear, it's what it would do to both of us if you lied to me about it for any reason. You've got to feel how necessary it is for me to know if this is hidden in your heart and on your conscience. Once such an ugly fact is out of your subconscious, the knowledge shared with the individual it might wrong, conscious reasoning and adjustment and love can do more to quickly right the wrong than a lifetime of concealment. And silently vowing to make up for it is positively vicious, it foments resentment immediately... People seem to be terrified of telling the truth sometimes, even when they are willing to face the consequences. You may trust me to take the responsibility for whatever effect such a thing would have on me, in that it wouldn't cause you further unhappiness or harm. In other words, I've asked for it – have you been unfaithful to me since you left me a year ago?

Love, Dordo.

P.S. Answer this honestly and completely and now – even if you have to get drunk to do so.

#136. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

India

July 5, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Should have written on the 3rd and tried to find time to do so but was pushed so much that I collapsed into bed by the time I normally would have written this.

The rupee is 3.3 to the dollar – not 30. My questionable position does not and will not entail any financial responsibilities. My expenditures, however, are heavier in the new apartment with Col. Barroll than previously. – 200 rupees for food plus service as against 300+.

Yesterday they – the Red Cross and Special Services – had a

carnival lawn party to celebrate the 4th, with bingo, fireworks, concessions et al. Went and milled around with the throng for some time. The Indian fireworks were particularly exciting – the rockets zipping off in the wrong directions, and the aerial bombs dropping back to earth before going off. The Indians took a very dim view of the whole thing. They did have hamburgs and coke, however. This country is becoming practically civilized.

Played bridge on Monday, again tonight, and again on Friday – concentrating on selecting opponents calculated to do me some good if I ever need it. Won 11 rupees on Monday.

Expect to make a trip in the near future. Will be gone a couple of weeks. As you can see by the papers, we aren't doing so hot in some parts of our theater and getting along okay in others.

My eyes are all cleaned up now. Bridge on Monday was a bit difficult at times due to weeping – but okay for tonight.

When I get a chance to go to the Post Office I will get a money order to cover a new pooch for the Pencil.

Enough for the moment.

With love,

John

#137. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Utica, NY

July 7, 1944

Dear John,

I've tried not to go off the deep end in my letters. You have no idea of the hours in between. It's getting worse everyday, until I think it's time you took more careful stock of your moral accountability.

It's unbelievable to me that you would go on, day after day, so utterly blind to the implications of this affair, to the selfish concern with which you have let it continue.

My love is as big as yours – bigger? I haven't been bad, but still I am alone, unable to face the competition on mutual ground, unable to see you or talk to you; and still you go on seeing this person, continuing to seek her companionship, prolonging a relationship which is dishonest and pernicious in its very essence.

Have you considered the effect that has on my state of mind (and health)? – Instead you pity John. John, who has everything – even someone to run to whichever way the wind blows. And you ask me “What can I do about it?”

A “jolt” you said. Do you remember what happened when you pulled something similar to this in Rochester? I had always thought my mind was as firm and strong as a rock in its balance – and it had met some pretty stiff tests up to then.

But then I looked over the edge... and it was so horrible I never want to do that again. But multiply that situation by the frustration of this, and the fact that you've gone so much farther in this, and try to realize what it means.

How can you remain so passive, and so unsympathetic? The quality of this affair is characterized by the needless suffering it has caused. Don't you realize that there are things you can do to avert hate and madness, to avert serious consequences to the balance I'm forced to maintain?

I'm not threatening, I'm scared simply because of the last time.

Fewer days with no word from you, less of the irritation of ignorance, less assertion of your inability to cope with the circumstances, assurance of some effort to control the situation – a small price for the wrong you have done both of us.

I need you too, you know, and if you were to give me what you can now – just enough of yourself for the few extra letters that would show that you realize what this means, and break up the tension, it would do something good for both of us.

Dordo

#138. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

July 11, 1944

Dear John,

There is so little I can do about this that it's distressing, but there is one thing I've felt I had to do.

In my experience it has appeared that the intruder into a marriage so often has no opportunity to know what the effects of the intrusion are until it is too late. Sometimes they just won't regard the obvious, and sometimes they really don't have any chance to find out. But it seems like an unnecessary injustice to everyone involved that this is so often the case.

It appeared impossible for me to do anything about it, not knowing the name or the address of the creature, but suddenly I thought of you.

You're smart enough and guilty enough to be fair about a reasonable request, so I'm asking you to please give the attached letter to the proper party. Such a thing might seem difficult to you if you could not see the letter or choose the time for presenting it, so I'm leaving it open, and asking you – as my friend, John, to give this to her when you think it will do the most good.

Let me know when you have done it.

Love, Dordo

(Editor's Note: the following is the letter Dorothy enclosed):

There is no possible salutation for a letter like this. "To whom it may concern" seems a little melodramatic, doesn't it?

You probably know a great deal more about me than I do about you, yet I must be quite unreal to you, or you wouldn't find it so easy to try to destroy everything I have.

John has written me of the situation between you. He feels that he has been honest and complete in his account of it. But there are many things I don't know. I don't know what kind of woman you

are. Or who was the aggressor in this. I don't know whether both of you sought the affair deliberately, whether one of you fought it, or whether it developed through some chance of unavoidable daily contact until you were both involved. I do know that you seem to feel no necessity for loyalty to your own husband, that you have consented to much completely uncalled for companionship with mine, and that you have taken no action to put an end to the affair.

John may be as responsible as you for the whole thing, and part of that responsibility may lie in his not giving you the complete facts, as he has somewhat failed to do with me.

Because, – if you are at all decent and honest and intelligent, – it might make some difference to you to know something of our marriage, here are a few things for the record.

In spite of any rationalizations John may have made to justify this, it is true that when he had to leave us he loved me too much to be anything but miserable about going. We had been married five years when he left, and economic difficulties had given us some very stiff times and trials, but our marriage is considered successful by us and by the others who know us intimately. It has been a complete marriage: we are well-mated mentally, physically, spiritually. We are so much alike, even in appearance, it always been a source of wonder to us and to our families and friends.

If John has in the past, or now, displayed a lack of stability, it is not because his love was not satisfying, it's another very strong emotional factor, having to do with self-expression of a different kind, and no change of loves will ever solve that difficulty. It's a matter of maturity and intelligence and effort.

If you wonder how, if our love is real, he can feel as he does towards you, consider the fact that love is an emotion, not a person, and he had a need which time and space made it impossible for me to fill. But marriage is not an emotion, it is a situation which excludes all others but the two involved. You must have known he is married.

I am ashamed that neither you nor he had the perception and the strength to avoid bringing this to open discussion, or the control to

stop it once it was recognized. – You see, each one of us knows now the poor limitations of your loyalties, your weakness, and the blind cruelty of your selfishness. It isn't a very inspiring emotion which destroys so much, is it?

This is what you must consider. John has loved me for over seven years, he still does, and I am a part of him, and much of his self is in me. We are the same kind of people, we have earned the right to finish our life together because we began it of our own free will, and developed it successfully through serious hardships, and our love and understanding have stood the test of time. Our separation was completely beyond our control, – we would be together now if that were not so. John has a son who loves him and is waiting for his return. He also has a wife who loves him, and believes that he has something here that he could never live again without.

I thought if you knew this it might help you see the viciousness of the whole thing.

Can't you take your share of the responsibility?

Very sincerely,

#139. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

July 13, 1944

Dear John,

I've been reading some of your letters again. God knows what for. It's a form of masochism, I guess, –maybe I'm looking for something. Some feeble spark of manhood, and what is commonly known as guts.

Looking back makes me wonder why in Heaven's name you were sent to Delhi, of all places. It looks as if that was the one way to exaggerate your weaknesses and undermine your virtues. Why not China, where there's a real job to do and decent men are doing it?

Dilettantism is the greatest threat to your success, and it seems as if the gods handed you a pretty big handicap, to have this War that is bringing discomfort, hardship, suffering and general Hell to a lot of people who don't deserve it, hand you a soft life, no incentive for stability, impressive surroundings, such nice plausible temptations, – – a fiendishly perfect set-up for middle-class snobbery and disintegration. The fact you have done worse than you have may be the clue to the reason for your being there. Perhaps you had to find out a few things completely on your own.

However considering that you were sent there, and what your reaction has been, it's probably just as well you didn't come home with the rest. If you can't stand comfort and privilege without the corruption of all our dreams, you should be given the sickening knowledge of all the surfeit and weariness and impotence of a mess of pottage.

Until you've run the gamut of your unseen passion for your greedy little English two-timer, until you're sick of the furtive exchange of bargain-counter emotions, contemptible violation of all the good things you ever had or wanted, you should stay right there and wallow in it.

Build it up, chum while you may. It had better be your last adventure of this kind or someone is going to conclude you're just a common, garden-variety philanderer, – a sneaking little Newcomb. I'm sick of this land-lease marriage, of making excuses for you, of stupidity, self-importance, rationalizations. I'm no divinity, but I want something better – from you.

We all expect something better. If you came home now, bringing this trouble, you might find it a little tough going down the receiving line.

First to greet you is Dordo. She's the one who quote "knew you when." When you were human, not a crown prince. When you have dreams, when you wanted goodness and love and a place in the sun; when you, John, were truly pure in heart. – You sure sold me a bill of goods. No other person will have as much faith in you as she had, no one else will ever so badly want you to (as the Americans say) "make

good” simply and sincerely for the sake of your own satisfaction and happiness. She wasn’t raised and educated to spend her life in the kitchen either, but you’ve never been able to give her any other life, and she learned something there. If you came home to her you’d find that she’d expect to meet you on a different level. The rewards of “a little money in the bank, kids in school, wifey cooking dinner – – – the ability to depend and rely on the attitude of certain other people – – – formula for security” (your words) aren’t very obvious any more. You might find her as lazy, as demanding, as eager for diversion, as much of a snob as you. – She knows the limitations of both of us, but she remembers when you had things figured out, – a way of life, – and now that your capacity for bringing them about is more developed, she sees you faltering and futile, and she is sad.

Then there’s Dad, – the one who thinks that at last you’ve put away childish things. Doubtless his disappointment would evoke some pretty stern judgment, – he had to set his course pretty early, and there wasn’t room for capricious impulses or he couldn’t have made it – but you’ve always said his justice is scrupulously honest. This would offend him.

There’s Margie, who, as mothers should, always hopes for the best for you. Wrong only confuses and hurts her. It’s not a mother’s place to pass judgment. But how do you think she’d feel?

There’s Dorrie, – whom you’ve always patronized a little, but she is a hell of a lot smarter than you are about many things, too mature and smart to make such a mess of her personal life.

There’s Penny. No, you’re not missing the best years of him, I’m sure that those are yet to come. You’re just missing the years when he would love you as a child loves, without disillusionment. He will be much more interesting later, and he will always be capable of intense love, – he’s made of it –, but he’s a positive little character, and wouldn’t be satisfied with anything but positive parenthood.

.... So you better go somewhere and wash your face and hands and pull yourself together before you meet your people again.

Sure, Baby this is a tirade. And you don’t like ‘em, do you? Or was it you who suggested that calling you a royal son of a bitch

might help? Are you going to sacrifice your own self-respect, the right to come home with the rest of them, the things you know are true, for physical comfort and a relationship that's eating your heart out? Or are you going to take the only obvious means of getting all sound again, and pull out? Maybe you're not entirely ready yet, but you'll never get any perspective staying there. You're only human – no one would expect you to get control of yourself under the same circumstances as those that led you into it. When the time comes can't you get a transfer to someplace where you can think of something besides John for a while, until John is healed and strong enough to see clearly what now only intuition tells them?

As ever,
Dordo

#140. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

July 14, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Today is a very hot moist sunny day – completely uncomfortable for everyone. The Indians seem to be immune to the prickly heat. I guess that is because they use oil on their bodies. They certainly are a scrawny puny looking bunch of people. They are painfully thin, naturally so, I believe. I don't think that it is the result of an under eating. I think it is a racial characteristic, helped along by the climate.

The city of Delhi is pared down to the minimum now. All the people who can possibly get away have gone to Kashmir or Simla or some other place in the hills. In the early afternoons, when the headquarters is humming away, the streets outside are practically deserted. Maybe you see an occasional sleepy tonga, but that's all.

The insect season is now well under way, with all sorts of flies,

mosquitos, beetles, crickets, gnats, etc. buzzing around the lights at night. The malaria rate goes up, as it does every year at this time. I suspect I will stay free of it in my present location, being on the third floor of a cement building in the middle of town. The mosquitoes that carry it are found usually at ground level near grass.

One of the other things which I hope I can avoid is boils. There is a lot of them around now, one Lt. I know having so many that they are keeping him full of morphine. It is probably due to some diet deficiency or maybe too much of something. It would sure be rough to have a mess of boils in this weather.

From the looks of the War in Europe in this morning's paper, the Russians are going to get the thing settled before we get a chance to get rolling through France. With those kids only 35 miles from the German border, there must be a number of very uneasy people in Eastern Germany. Maybe if the Russians knock off the Germans, they will be nice enough to give us some bases for use against the Japanese. You really can't feel that there is very much real solidity in the Japanese empire, but it is so hellish hard to get close enough to them to do much damage, except with the 29's.

Had a fairly new Life, through the mail yesterday, and had my pleasant anticipation of having something to read destroyed when one of the sweepers filched it. It's a poor country.

Love,
John

#141. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

July 17, 1944

Dear John,

I'm full of codeine from a two-day "toothache," so I may not hold out for long. It isn't really a toothache, probably, because the only

one it centers on is dead, but seems to be a cold or something affecting the facial nerve. Anyway, there is no place or anything like that now, – we’ve become a destination for refugees from infantile paralysis, very suddenly.

Saturday noon I had a wire from the kids that they would like to bring Bard that day, so he and Evelyn arrived in the afternoon, and she went back last night. She will return with John as soon as he is over a mild upset from hot weather or teeth, and they will probably stay until we leave for Piseco August 7.

So there goes the Summer. Because when we return the last week of August, there will only be one short week until school starts – (which is a problem quite unsettled at this point). But it is certainly unthinkable that I should waste even a sigh over the slight confusion of the next three weeks. There are now 58 cases of infantile in Elmira, and it was increasing at a rate of 7 cases a day.

Of course their first thought was that they just couldn’t risk any further trouble for Bard, and now that he is removed from immediate danger, they will be quick to realize that they aren’t any more willing to have John crippled either. He doesn’t have the contact with other children that Bard has, but I imagine Sam’s being in such a public position increases John’s danger, and of course flies get everywhere, and they are the worst offenders and spreading it, I understand.

The Southern states are full of it, and Buffalo is having a serious epidemic, but as far as I know there is only one case here. If it reaches here, we may be fortunate in being at Piseco during most of August, and if it is here in September I simply won’t send Penny to school. According to “Time” there will be a serum for it in another year or so, that would make it even more unfortunate to have it now.

Bard has been wonderful so far, he’s the homesick one, you know. We got him an Indian suit like Penny’s today, his mother thought it would be diverting. (Rita was here yesterday and today, returned to Poland tonight.) The two of them look so cute, with their full-feathered head-dresses, guns in hand, stalking down the street. They are just the same size, and there is a strong resemblance

between them, tho they don't really look alike. It's a relief to have a rest from machine guns for a day.

In your last letter you mentioned financing a dog for the Pencil. It would be wonderful for him to have so alive a proof of your thought for him. It doesn't look as if Mr. Woods is going through with his hint of getting one, and it would mean more than you realize for Pen to have a dog his Daddy got for him. His memory of you is completely of the time and affection you gave him. But something so tangible couldn't but be reassuring in your continued absence from his days and nights.

You didn't mention your trip in this July 8 letter, but if it is coming up, it means so much to have a better understanding while the silence and the danger of that goes on. You probably don't realize that I had just two letters in twenty-eight days until today, and considering the seriousness of the burden that has been added to our separation, it made it seem more difficult than necessary. I appreciate the kind of letter you wrote even more with this trip looming up.

I appreciate your desire to be honest with me. But can you be honest with yourself and say you did not seek it? I do not know under what circumstances it started, – I have asked you if seeing each other is unavoidable. But unless you choose to tell how it happened, I don't see how you could expect anyone to believe it was accidental. When two married people start breaking the accepted rules what are they seeking? People can feel the approach of this thing – I know – if you continued to accept each other's company when these approaches began, then it is still true that it was within the control of one of you, if not of both.

Knowing so little of it, outside its obvious degrading quality throughout the Spring, and of watching the change in your letters, one can still make a fairly approximate estimate of how it got to this point:

You were both psychologically ready for it, and when the capitulation finally came, it was so overwhelming that for a while you thought of nothing else.

Then each of you, finally aware of the judgment of the other, sought to justify the weakness that otherwise would make the whole thing cheap, by taking on the emotional responsibility for it by identifying it with the things which are lasting. But by thus convincing each other and yourselves, consequences immediately appeared. And now fascination, pride (the need for self-respect), and the associations and experiences you have now built up around each other, have you surrounded by a wall from which there seems to be no way out.

No way out but straight up or down, John.

I don't know what she's like – I don't care to. But she wouldn't be human not to welcome in her heart once it looked like a real emotional experience. If her marriage is a failure, how could she be expected to have the strength to resist what you represent? And because she was obviously in a starved condition, you look like the only way out to her, now, and the more you give her the more she'll need you, – the more harm you will do her to let yourself become more necessary to her.

And you – it will cost you just as much of yourself as you put into it, past, present, and future.

It certainly was perfectly set up for you, the whole situation, and because of that I'm willing to believe that it has some purpose in your life. Why you, so fed up with the upright and righteous example of your father, which is so lacking in love in all its expressions, were given everything you needed most, then suddenly snatched out of it, and put down in circumstances conducive in every way to this sort of situation, cannot be understood. Unless it is actually an opportunity to finally expel your resentment and frustration at having goodness and truth without beauty rammed down your throat from early childhood, an opportunity to learn, – at the cost of humility and hurt, which seems to be the most lasting way – that there is a God who loves us. – Could it be that in that mercy and wisdom of his, He gives us an opportunity through our very weakness, to find out our need for him, and through him to find our

strength, – the strength to “wait and hope and be good,” as you said, until we are sure what He wants us to do?

He made it necessary for you to look for help outside yourself. He made us both so helpless in this that only prayer was left. If instead of beating ourselves again at our trouble, we turn from it to faith in his judgment and compassion, and pray for help, I believe he will show us the way.

In all the darkness you were not made to wait alone, Darling, because all my prayers and all my love are with you every minute.

Dordo

#142. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

July 19, 1944

Dear John,

It was so very good to find two letters from you in the mailbox this morning. You can't know how much it means just to hear from you more often, and to have whatever reassurance there is about you.

Since my letters reach you so much later than the ones you write reach me, you will have to make allowances for the lag in my reactions. A lag which doesn't make them any less real, but which might cause them to appear a little behind the progress of your attitude toward the cheerier aspects of life.

Last week's letters were written during a period of 28 days in which just two were received – one mentioning a decision to take the Teed step which indicated to me the disintegrated aspects of the affair, and the other containing no information, good or bad, relating to the whole situation. So perhaps I can hope to have touched bottom last week. I probably failed even yesterday to indicate completely my appreciation of your long letter about it, as I am now very tired, especially after several sleepless nights because of some

trouble with a facial nerve which seems to be trying to scare me into the dentist chair. But it was a very fine letter, Darling, and I feel sure the John I love is very much alive, if a little lost yet. I think you are looking for help from the right source now, and I'm doing the same. You see, I love that John so terribly.

Will get oak leaves tomorrow... Do you know my status at the Valley Club, if in town could I go there? Got you a little change purse Monday, but your made-to-order one is probably far superior... Got a ten dollar reward for the Greyhound... Margie is sending more shorts... We'll try to speed some short stories pending the arrival of your books now en route... War news all to the good tonight.

Goodnight, my friend,
Dordo

#143. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

India

July 19, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Nothing much has been happening around here... a few downpours but that is about all.

Got your number 213, and if you'll hold the phone a minute I will reread it and find out if there is anything in it can use for some subject matter. All the things coming sound good. It is a damn long time since I have had any packages except those which have contained magazines, writing paper, clippings, etc. Reference my asking for less mail, I only did it because I was sure this everyday stuff was a burden to you and was interfering with your leisure. It wasn't because I wanted to get less. I think you straightened out the rupee situation before you got my righteously indignant protest.

Sorry the Pen has had a bad reaction from the dog deal. Hope E.A. gets him another soon. It will probably help.

The apartment is precisely 250 steps from my desk, so I am not getting as much exercise as I used to and as I should. It is too hot for me to go out of my way to hunt for it, however.

Anyway, through waiting, I got three letters from you yesterday. Comments follow:

a. Glad to hear that the packages are coming. I am definitely getting package hungry and want to get something, anything in a box that isn't either Ordnance publications or rations. Also I am definitely getting book hungry again. Please give with the books, though I don't know how I'm going to get them back with the new weight restriction of 10 pounds outgoing once a month.

b. Re the short story, you can proceed to try and market it but please do so under your own name, as the censorship rules and regulations are very vague. I hope to be able to supply you with more as time goes by.

c. Re your speaking of a termination date to my devotion, don't be silly. This damn thing has been like an overlay, like two things occupying the same space at the same time. Chez le pot, Syracuse evenings, the library in Rochester – all have a vivid place and make me very, very nostalgic to think of them.

d. I am sorry but I still don't get the reference to the "mists of antiquity" (damn cliché phrase, that). It sounds like someone else when you quote it. The only thing that I can think of that I was thinking of was possible the Rochester incident, and when I say "should" have done something about it, I was thinking how nice you were to do as little as you did. I remained a good kid at that time, but got damn close to not being so. However, a miss is a good bit better than a mile and in that type of deal. Anyway, you got me. I don't honestly know what I was talking about.

e. I don't have to get drunk to answer your direct question. The answer is no, and you know in your heart that it was and will be no. I am gifted with a conscience that magnifies minor sins, to say nothing of what it would do were I to be faced with a major one. In addition to my emotional disinclination to cheat in that manner, there is of late – 7 or 8 months – a physical disinclination. It maybe

has something to do with the climate. Anyway, I am cooled off to the point of being frigid. I hope that a temperate climate will effect some improvement, but honestly, at this point I not only feel no urges, I fail to remember what an urge feels like. Not only has all evidence of any urges, including nocturnal evidences ceased, but the applicable equipment seems to be dwindling. Maybe if I stay over here long enough, I can join the WAC. I am a neuter. It ain't a good feeling either. Don't think however, that that is the cause of my morality. I have too much pride to want you to feel that. Anyway, I don't want you to anticipate having to become too familiar with the ceiling on my return. It would be embarrassing for me to have to be expected to act like a sailor returned from the sea. I will probably need complete reeducation, in a gradual fashion.

f. No.217 is a very sad little letter. I regret having done all of this to you. I thought that I was doing better by you in a letter business. And I guess maybe I am but you haven't had a chance to start to receive them. I will continue to do better. Please don't talk of "the wrong I have done both of us." I repeat that it wasn't willful, and I didn't look for it. I would rather not hear that sort of thing from you.

g. Please don't think that I am being mealy-mouthed in my letters when they are going through censorship by officers I know. It makes it a little tough, and when I can talk in double-talk which you understand, it is all the better as far as my peace of mind in hiking around the halls here is concerned. In other words, it is the usual reticence to let others know your business. If they were being censored elsewhere, it would be different.

h. Referenced my typing my name, please look through past letters and see how often I do that. I seldom take the letter off the typewriter and find my pen and write my name. I usually just bang it off. Don't be too sensitive.

i. Reference your questions about circumstances and my going out of my way to keep in touch with my problem, it is not my fault that my problem is close at hand during working hours, being employed about ten feet away from me for the last six months. It

is sort of an uncontrolled proximity. I think that may explain a few things to you. Emotional dependency is non-existent.

Your confidence that I will come out of this okay is well-founded. You are right about the cake business, but the trouble is, it is sort of a poisonous kind of food to have and eat too. Maybe I will be left, as you say, irregardless of the solution, with more fiber, more understanding. As it is, I merely feel like the perennial adolescent.

Answering the things brought up really stretches this out into a letter. Can't think of anything more to say at the moment, except that it is damn hot here in my shirt is sticking to me. Also that there is a vague possibility of a change of station coming up soon. Temporary duty for a few months. That will probably make you feel better. And I don't intend to grow any green fungus on the back of my neck.

Love,
John

#144. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

India

July 22, 1944

Dear Dordo,

This morning's paper contained the cheeriest bunch of headlines that I have seen in months. Invasion progressing, riots in Berlin, attack on Guam, Russian drive, attempted assassination of Hitler, etc. It almost looks as though the house of cards was folding up after so many long years. It makes a return to the states almost a matter of possibility.

The news we get here isn't very recent. We can listen to the Army station, which merely reads the news out of the morning paper "The Statesman," or sometimes out of the previous evening's paper "The Hindustan Times." The British news is given in a bored off-

hand fashion with important items buried in the midst of a lot of tripe. Our best source is the bearer. He listens to the broadcast in Hindustani and then tells us what it was about. My Hindustani is not yet good enough to follow more than a few words here and there of the radio broadcast.

I don't know where to start. First of all – you have gradually shifted your point of view to where you are beating your brains out over a minor matter. That was evident from the letter you sent me to give to her. My relationship with her has never progressed to a point where it would be possible to give her such a letter.

In the words of the Indian, the whole thing is “bas” meaning finished. I never in word or deed or thought made any transfer of devotion from you to her. It is you I love and have loved all the way down the line. You provide me, through that love, with a core of stability which will forever prevent my going overboard. I want to see you, my darling. All this has been a slightly fogged bad dream. It has been a comedy of ineffectuality – with nothing said and nothing done – only the constant pervasive knowledge of the existence of an attraction. That attraction, merely through course of time and thorough knowledge of the underlying selfishness of the situation has faded until now, on both sides, it has gone merely to

(Editor's Note: some missing words here)

I don't want you to ever try to create or recreate for yourself any illusions about me. I am not particularly fair-haired in any way except that I have you. I don't feel quick or bright, or competent, but I do feel stable and, at the moment gay. I have always tangled myself up in confusions of intellectual honesty and dishonesty, being overly honest and hurting both of us in somethings, and being overly dishonest in others. I am on the level at this point. This letter is okay, but the unforgivable thing is that I could have written it a week ago and didn't, merely because I wanted to make certain that I had no fragments of this thing left in me. It is no question of tapering off, since no commitments have been made. As said before, it is “bas,” finished. I have no doubt whatsoever about your forgiving and forgetting (of which forgetting is the more important). Because

there is nothing to forget. You know my weaknesses better than I do (you have written me about all of them). At this point, Dordo I want you to be gay – please try. I want you to dig up a drink somewhere and toast the future. I am now over the halfway mark. Considering time as a road, I have been going away from you up to yesterday, and I am now on my way back. We can wait it out as we have waited out so many other things. I guess I'm not giving you a very good life on the whole, but knowing you I guess maybe the moments in the past and the moments in the future will combine to make the whole deal worthwhile. What I really want is to forget this whole thing now in letters and make out like it never happened. It is over like an illness. I make the unreasonable request that I want the same as you were when you wrote me that best letter. Let's both drop it – it should be easy, and when we are together again, some time when we have gotten used to each other again, and we are comfortable and relaxed – I'll tell you how foolish and insignificant the whole thing was. It was a mole-hill baby – not mountains.

I had a very quiet birthday. Slept during lunch, had a few gins after dinner and in bed by 10, after a bull session in the dark on the porch with the Colonel Sahib.

All my love,
John

#145. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)
Utica, NY
July 31, 1944

Dear John,

A good letter from you came Saturday. It explained some things which it would have helped us both to have had explained before, but it is your custom to forget that sometimes it is only through you that certain things can be known, and that you often expect one to

allow for them before you have imparted the necessary knowledge. However, I don't mean to sound cross, I just wish you'd remember to tell a situation so important in enough chronology and detail so it wouldn't be necessary to use inference and deduction. At the risk of being boring, a person who unfolds the story in enough order and detail so that its essentials can be grasped simply, does himself greater justice in the end, in any situation where he doesn't want to deliberately keep the person on the other end from going up blind alleys. In this case, the circumstances don't call for diversion – it takes all I've got to keep on the beam.

Today I got two recapped, used tires, and was able to select a couple whose rubber sides weren't completely disintegrating. \$23.40 for something they'd have given away a few years ago. But I'm so relieved to get them. The roads are going to pieces faster than the cars that travel them, and with every jolt I expected the blisters to pop. Our gas is pretty low, but we can make it to the lake, and there will be new coupons due before the return.

In my present stupor, it would be easier to answer your letter item by item, as you did mine. It's more like conversation, anyway.

Re: Your asking for less mail. You're damn well right writing to you almost every day interfered with my leisure. It used up most of the evenings, when they were the only time I had to myself. But they were the only time I can spend with you, and that comes under the cover of more than leisure. In fact, it is small sacrifice of so-called "leisure" to maintain whatever relationship is possible when a War has removed most of the normal outlets for that relationship. You had asked for mail, too, and when I thought you wanted it, it seemed pretty selfish to put any activity that might pass an evening by unnoticeably before the fact that you might be wanting the letter I could write. A little time in the evening of every day in the week is still damn little to keep a marriage that's worth keeping alive, and active, instead of a passive, thing. Writing to you wasn't a duty, or an obligation, it was a means of communication with someone whom I didn't want to replace, and the most constructive way I know of keeping you from being replaced by something less desirable.

There was a termination date to any sign of your devotion, definitely. (1st week in March.)

Last, but not by any means least, your answer to my direct question did me a great deal of good. One could have no real comprehension of your circumstances without regarding the possibility of tossing in all such a situation can demand. I loved you, but thanked God, to hear that you hadn't. It not only puts the affair, but also you, and even me, on a slightly more civilized level. I'm in this quite unwittingly, but as long as I love you, I'm in it, and the anguish of having to face such a fact could not but have permanent effects. Thank you for being so frank, too, I'd rather know that Nature was helping you to maintain your integrity than that she was making it tough for you. Somehow I am impressed that it is possible for me, in my discouragement, to believe that you can do this; but that belief is based on knowledge and experience, not emotions, because I can remember when I first knew you, and I can remember all the time since, when your conduct showed a natural refinement of emotional expression, and a decency under any condition. Can you not give me credit for realizing what our position would be when you return, tho? Can you not give me understanding enough to concede that I, too, am certainly in a position to need some sort of courtship, some sort of confidence and security before I could enter into any sort of physical surrender or completion? In this case, too, Nature would be on your side, – I am still entirely normal, and not enjoying spending the best years of my life in unwelcome virginity, but I have not ever, and probably never will, enter into any physical relationship that doesn't have full emotional justification.

I don't know why this thing evokes in me as much tenderness in proportion to the resentment it arouses, as it does, – it must simply be that love gives one a greater measure of understanding than the clearest reasoning.

Because I do,
Dordo

6. Chapter 6 - Piseco Lake, OSS, and Ceylon - Autumn/ Winter 1944, Letters 146-162

#146. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Piseco, NY

August 8, 1944

Darling,

Oh, goody, goody, we're here. It was some effort to get here, in spite of mailing much of the luggage, and paying a man five bucks just to bring the groceries in from Nobleboro, but it's worth almost anything. Riding along in the back seat yesterday, with the top down, and my head back, breathing great gulps of wonderful woods smell and watching the blue, blue sky full of great cold, white clouds, I wondered how much you'd give just for the ride in. Our awful heat spell, with unbroken days and nights of it gave all of us a better idea of what it is like with you, and more understanding, and when it broke yesterday morning, and got almost chilly, it was very convenient for the last minute rush. Last night was the first time I've shivered in days, and tho it got up to 80° outside today, it is quite cold mornings and evenings here.

Nearly every camp on our part of the lake is full now, and since I haven't been out of Utica except for the farm, since we moved there, coming up here is like a trip to the moon – everything shines. But my enthusiasm is paltry compared with the Pencil's. He sang all the way in, in a quiet little chant, "O, we're going to Piseco, we're going to Piseco" and I know just how he felt, because I felt the same way when I was a little girl, from early Spring until we got here.

Sammy came from Elmira Sunday, and we were sure glad to have him get out of there. Many adults have had and are having infantile, and some have died or become crippled. He's not in such a desirable position in as public a place as the library, and he had a fine case of polio jitters when he arrived, tonight even, he scolded me for touching an egg shell to an egg that was cooking over a hot fire, so you can see the phobia one gets. They don't know anything about what causes the virus to spread, or how to check it, so everyone feels as unprotected as the dark ages about it. I imagine we'll have Evelyn and the kids until the cool weather when we get back.

It is easier here with the kids, and I devised a way of organizing the responsibilities so that all of us can have a little vacation without feeling guilty or feeling as if we had to hang around because someone is tied down with the baby. It is simply for us to work together in the morning, have the biggest meal at noon instead of night, and then one of us takes the kids for the afternoon, and the rest have the afternoon completely free, as far into the evening as desired. On Rita's day with the baby, Sam and Evvie take Bard, and I take Penny, so she doesn't have too much. It keeps the families a little separated, with less of the whole mob being under the roof all at once, trying to be noble and get the others to go for a boat ride. It gives Evvie much greater freedom, and she needs a rest, and this Summer I could use some, too. We have one day of complete work, and two of complete freedom (from lunch on), one alone and one with a single older child. I enjoy Pen alone, he's good company and yet it's probably good for both of us to have one afternoon all my own, too. I wish you were here to spend those days with me.

I had dinner with Pop and Margie the night before the weekend, and Pop had seen Col. Bowlin for a couple of hours last week, so it was quite interesting. He told us what your job is, and said you are doing it very well. He gave a new view of some parts of the life there, perhaps what you would hesitate to do for fear of seeming to complain, yet it gives us a more sympathetic viewpoint.

Tomorrow is my day off with Pen, and we shall have a swimming lesson, and maybe a picnic on the warm gray rocks, and the sun will

warm our bones and brown our skin, and we'll read a book and stare at the mountains and the wide sky and wish you were home.

Love,
Dordo

#147. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Piseco, NY

August 15, 1944

Well, Darling –

It's seven years today. My little private celebration nearly pooped out, due to a whopping big storm, but it's 7:45 now, and the sun was out long enough to dry the sand and warm these lovely sprawling rocks at Point Charm. It has done its work now, and has just gone down behind Irondequoit Mountain, across the lake. There's still a small breeze so the lake is licking at the rocks, but quite a fog is spreading out from the lake, and I'll have to start home before it gets too thick. I've got a small fire, by my feet, – the wood is damp, so it burns slowly. Having been short-sighted in my supply of matches, it provides a light for my cigarettes, as well as cheer. Your field jacket is next to me, and I'd feel better if you were in it... In fact if you were in it, we have everything we need.

Thunder started roaring up from the mountains toward Speculator, and knowing the kind of sudden storms we have, I waited. I've seen some delovely storms here, with as brilliant fireworks as today's, but never such wind, and so much contrast. The wind from the East fought that from the West for an hour, and won, bringing wall after solid silver wall of rain down the lake, one rainbow after another – because a little sunny blue end of the Western sky never gave up, and black waves curling with white foam marching in a straight row down the lake – and clear across it, toward us.

It nearly blew the boat off the dock, once, and after Sam went down amid violent protests, and turned it upside down, we saw it pick the boat up and slam it across the deck into the canoe. It blew canoes off two neighboring docks, and a deck chair from Jennings and a bright red boat from Big Sand came bobbing by, all empty in the midst of the turmoil. Such heaving and twisting of shiny blue-black water! Sam and Mr. Glennister (the nice minister from Poland) got the lost boat just as it was about to be smashed on the rocks way over here, after the storm subsided a bit. Those mountains of water quieted just as suddenly as they came, the sun came through, and finally the sky looked safe, so I brought my lunch and came over here for the peaceful ending of the day.

It's the best time of the day, anyway, and everything is calm and lovely, with the little fire crackling and pink clouds and gun-metal water.

Seven years ago tonight we felt about as relieved as we had ever been. The strain was all over, and we were alone and had every right recognized by God and man to be alone.

I'm glad we made that secret year, all our own, and glad we had the fortitude and initiative and confidence to make what we wanted come true, then. I still believe we have the means of doing what we want most to do. Love really seems to be a force, a power in itself, when two people put all they have together. And it seems to be strong enough to hold you up if you need it sometimes, 'til something passes.

Sitting here tonight, in all this clear, lovely solitude, it seems as if today is almost a perfect symbol of the last year. I started out with big ideas this morning, then that crashing, awful storm came, that looked as if it might destroy anything in any minute, and just when it seemed as if the day was lost and spoiled and gone away in damp, exhausted, cold disappointment, the meanness went out of the sky and water, and the day (and the year) ended, clear, familiar, and sweet. I'm awfully tired, but the storm went away, and nothing was destroyed. I guess I never said thank you to God on our anniversary before, but I did, this year.

I wonder if you remembered August 15, and what you did, if so.

Maybe a year from today you won't quite have reached home, but I'm sure you'll have stateside in view, at least. Sometimes I don't see how I can stretch across another year alone, but if you're on the way to your return, perhaps it won't be so long.

I love you John – all of you, on August 15, 1944 –
Dordo

#148. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

India

August 19, 1944

Dear Dordo,

This morning they announced that General Patton is in sight of the Eiffel Tower. Looking at the map it makes us about as close to Germany proper on the West as the Russians are on the East. With Roosevelt announcing that the plans for the occupation of Germany are all set, it looks as though we might be subjected to a focus of attention and matériel at some date in the not-too-distant future.

The only new development that I can mention is the possibility of my having a change of job at some time in the future, in about two months. It is something that I have been gently angling for. It puts me in a forward area, and gets me out of this headquarters business.

With my new living arrangements, I don't seem to be able to save as much money as I was before. We are always having to lay in stocks of liquor and the colonel is always throwing parties. It isn't so good to be living with him sort of looking down my throat all the time, but a direct invitation to live with him is the sort of thing that you can't refuse. Anyway, the old bank account isn't climbing the way it ought to. If it doesn't hurry up, the deal I am working on will be impossible by the time I get the right amount. The correct amount now is Rs 3314 as 4, or exactly 1000 dollars. At this rate, I ought to

have it by Christmas. Please tell me the status of finances on the home front. Also let me know how many of those damned war bonds we have, and whether or not there are any missing from the bunch I got through pay deductions. The least we can do is to get out of this war with a minor nest egg. If I can come home by boat that ought to increase the nest egg, although coming across the country by train is no longer the profitable thing it was, due to changes in the mileage basis. The gravy train is all through, according to what I read in the War Department Circulars. That must raise hell with the boys in ROD.

Love,
John

#149. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)
Utica, NY
September 3, 1944

Darling,

This has been a terribly confused and hectic week, and tonight I am tired, scattered, cursed (physically), and not very bright, but through the whole thing has run one thread and one thought, and it's integrated enough to express now, so I'll say my say and fold up until a more leisure time.

There are seven cases of polio in town, one death already, and schools have been kept closed until later in the month here as well as elsewhere, so the reason for the confusion and unrest is mainly that having gone through the labor pains of saying goodbye to Piseco for the year and getting us all out, – to find myself so delighted to be home, – it suddenly seems quite undesirable that the only sensible thing to do is to immediately pack up and return to the woods. (Because of polio.) There are over 1700 cases in the state now, and the cool weather will end it so soon; it is foolish not

to eliminate the last chance of the children's getting it, for this short time, so we will be Piseco-bound Tuesday morning, – as soon as the camp is empty.

Your casual mention of seeking a transfer to a forward echelon has been eating its way into me until I can't feel casual about it at all any more.

My reaction is, simply, "Why ask for trouble?" If it isn't necessary, if you have kept, and can keep things under control where you are, why not play safe? It took me some time to get to this because I felt at a time not so long ago that you had to get out of there at any cost, to save yourself, and us. If you have weathered that storm, why monkey around with your physical security? I want you to come back, Baby, and in one piece if possible, and as soon as possible.

We have a phone! There never was a lovelier invention (except contraception). Even a wrong number ring is music in our ears. It arrived and was installed before breakfast one morning.

The garden is unbelievable – I can't believe I did it! Piles of summer squash, all the green beans, peppers, cucumbers, carrots and lettuce we can use, and row on row of wonderful corn to give away and eat all we can hold! Tomatoes are coming later, which is good, we won't waste 'em. I hate to leave the corn, it's perfect now, the potatoes will keep better in the ground, and perhaps there will be some late corn when we return.

With the beer Evvie and I are drinking I don't need corn. It's a good sedative, tho – I mean beer. (P.S. Don't worry about my figger!)

All my love,
Dordo

#150. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

India

September 4, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Hanging around this joint to get a bit more work done, and this seems to be as good as any time to get a note off to you. I haven't used this typewriter before. It is an LC Smith super-speed and is really fascinating.

You have indicated in one of your recent letters that you would sort of like me to write in a Pyle-esque vein. That is a hell of a lot easier to say than to do. I certainly have read enough of his strips to be able to practically recite Little Red Riding Hood as Ernie Pyle would have written it, but when you sit down to try to bat something out in his style, it is a different matter. It just won't come.

Today there was a Major General in for lunch. Security forbids my telling who it was, but I am certainly getting some pronounced opinions about the high ranking boys. I think that there has been too much publicity of late about the democratic habits of our high ranking generals. I guess they all read Life, and feel that they have to act the part. I don't think that Pyle, in his humane treatment of them, including his treatment of Omar Bradley, has helped any. Anyway, I got to lunch a bit late, as usual, having to stay around a while and get the last few buck slips in order before leaving my padded cell, and they hadn't started to eat yet. They were sitting around the living room drinking a beer before lunch, the general and his aide in my colonel and one of the other fellows who live with us. When I came in, a conversation was going on, so I attempted to melt into the background. The best thing would have been for my colonel to introduce me. The second best thing would've been for me to introduce myself. What happened was that the general hopped up with a most cheery smile and pumped my hand and said "My name is Doaks. Glad to meet you, Major." It would have been alright and

along the winning friends and influencing people sort of business, if a nasty little thought had not crept into my mind that he, while shaking my hand, was trying to figure out how many people I would tell about it. It is along the same line as that Lieutenant General getting me a drink at a cocktail party. I think the whole thing would be better if our generals would just forget what Ernie Pyle is writing about Doolittle, Bradley, Eisenhower, and Clark, and concentrate on being a little snotty to the junior officers. Maybe there is something wrong with me.

Ate dinner tonight in the enlisted men's mess. I can readily see what my men kick about. Spam. It certainly is unappetizing the way they fix it. It seems much colder and greasier than it ever was at home. The big trouble in this theater is that the Indian gets into the food business too much. You bring some energetic G.I.s fresh from cooks and baker's school and all primed to just serve up solid rations, and when they get over here there are always a few Indians standing around the kitchen. They soon find out that they can tell the Indian to do the less desirable chores. Then about three months later you find out that the once eager GIs have decided that the entire kitchen routine is something that is undesirable labor and Indians are doing all of it. I can't say that I enjoy having my food plumped onto a cracked enamel plate by an Indian who looks as though he washed once every year as part of his religion. I have yet to see anything that is improved by the addition of Indians, unless maybe the burning ghats along the Ganges.

About this kicking about food; we of course know that there are parts of the theater where right now men are getting along on K rations supplemented by whatever they can chisel from the Chinese in the way of rice. But it is sort of a Pollyanna philosophy to try to enjoy this food on the basis of what somebody else isn't eating.

The rotation policy at last seems to be working a bit over here. Lots of the people are going home who have been here over two years. Some of them well over thirty months. One of the nicest little men I met over here, who is now either home or just about there by now is Gene Laybourn, a Major of Ordnance. He is sort of an

oldish guy, a regular army sgt. He walked out of Burma with Stillwell and was noted during the walk for his ability to pull rabbits out of hats. When the weapons began to rust, for example, it turned out that Gene had a nice little can of oil in his pocket. Anyway, he got the soldiers medal for his dependability and resource on the trip. When I met him, he was visiting a forward area trying to pick a good spot to situate the Chinese unit to which he was attached as liaison officer. He was billeted in the same bamboo basha as I was, and I noticed how comfortable looking he had made his corner. I assumed that he had been living in the place for months until it turned out he had been there only for one month. He is probably one world's foremost gadgeters. Among his possessions – one flashlight with bulb removed and bulb replaced by small light fan blades, i.e. a portable electric fan; one razor built like an electric razor, only hand powered by a sort of scissor grip with the heavy wheel inside so after a few energetic pumps, the momentum would keep it going for long enough to get in a few long strokes. It was originally British, but he had taken the head off of an American one and replaced the British head. Also he had one old five gallon gas can which he fitted to hold fuel, a stove, eating utensils, toilet paper and numerous other essentials. He had lots of stuff, but he could reach into any part of his luggage without even looking and bring out what he wanted. The only time his neatness ever failed him was when he was showing some of his things to a fellow and tried to move his foot locker. The termites had neatly eaten all around the bottom and when he tried to lift it, the contents was left neatly stacked on the floor on what used to be the bottom of a perfectly good foot locker. He had a little over thirty months over here before rotation.

Am about written out for the present. You may get some letters from me in the future that look like carbon copies. In fact they are. Method – move the ribbon gadget to “stencil” and nothing shows on the front sheet. The letter gets written by the carbon on the second sheet. The only difficulty is that it makes the typing a little worse.

Hope you are still at the lake and having a good time and the weather is nice and I would sure like to be there too.

All my love to you and the Pencil,
John

#151. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)
Piseco, NY
September 9, 1944

Darling,

Circumstances this year have been unusual – Bard has been with us nearly 8 weeks, and Evelyn and the baby seven, and we’ve only had one outburst the whole time, which is pretty good for wimmin’, specially when there are kids to complicate the scene. Our apartment is small, for such a family, but we’ve done so well that we feel that with just our generation and our kids, we are capable of planning and adjusting to a system which would give companionship and privacy at the same time. Rita is the one element over which we have practically no control, her constant nervous tension and her emotional demands can’t be overlooked or reduced in any way we can think of. I steal time to be alone, like yesterday, when I went to call on the Andelfingers and found no one home, and had a whole hour to walk in the rain because no one knew I was walking (and wanted to join me). And tonight after they’d announced they were exhausted, and I got out just before dark came, to see the sky turned from green back to night blue, and whip along fast in the crisp September night air. They were handy to my sleeping child, tho, which made the opportunity.

That’s why if we (the kids and us) could buy that rocky point across the lake, and each have our own little cabin on it, we’d get just about the right amount of companionship, company for the boys of their own kind, privacy from outsiders (and each other’s family life), and share the basic responsibilities and expenses (garage, boats, water, etc.), increase the parental freedom (by sharing child-care),

and yet maintain our families as separate, integrated groups, with a civilized amount of privacy and control over our leisure. We could even divide Rita, which we can't do here.

Wahnahoo has cradled me for many years, and I love it, but a place that belonged to us, every board in its floors and every stone in its fireplace, and every ashtray and book and dish and candle were part of us, – that would be something! To stand on our land and look down Piseco Lake, and wake up and look out on our trees, and lay your face against our warm gray rocks, and listen to the rain drip on our very own roof, and “set” on our broad front porch and read a book or look at the view that is just a little different from anyone else's here, – to have one place in all the whole world that was your own and your children's, a place to come to, to be weary in, to be happy in, to wait in, to love in, to grow old in. We never know where we'll end up, we don't stay very long anywhere. Piseco is the only place we've always come back to, Sammy and I, and it's already part of the little boys, Evvie has come to love it more than Vermont, and what better place do you know? Rita thinks it's sacrilege for us to sit on those rocks and dream and scheme and take out our rope and measure off how many feet we'd need and scurry and worry about how we can get it before someone else does, when we don't even own our own homes. But it seems to me as if our chance of having a home is pretty elusive, the way we move around, and our chance of having luxurious vacations in glamour spots is pretty distant, but one hundred feet of land at \$8.50 per front-foot, to have for always, split between us (130 feet makes it about right – 65 feet per family on the lake, running back about a quarter of a mile to the road) – an investment of about \$500 apiece, to last all the rest of our lives, it's just wicked sit and wait until the War's over and they finish the road, and someone has grabbed it up, with never a chance in our lives to have it again.

We've found the perfect place, and I stand on our concrete block and feel like beating my head on it when I look over there, because it might be gone while we're being poor and careful and tied down, and if we had it, it would last as long as we, and our children would

have a lifetime of having it after us. I feel purposeful, but frustrated, as far as the immediate future is concerned, – if only Pen were a year older, – Evvie thought it was hopeless for them, but she just gave up, last week when her birthday brought in about \$25 in cash, and announced that she was going to salt that little drop in a bucket in the Burlington Bank and not use it for anything but that land, come hell or high water.

I'm a pretty willful creature, and this is the first thing I've wanted like this since you and Penny filled my biggest gap. A husband, a child, – and now some land. That's been coming on for several years, actually, you know. I don't want to sacrifice Pencil to it this year – (I don't mean to sound melodramatic, I don't want to sacrifice his sense of security to it) but the whole difficulty is that it's sure to be gone if we wait too long – now that we know what we want, exactly, it's got to be made ours before the opportunity is lost forever. And I've got to get hold of our half of the cost some way. – \$500 bucks, spread out over just a few years is nothing, but it's a hell of a lot in a year and we may lose the place before that – there's a lot of people with \$500 and an urge for something solid to show for it.

This isn't a plea to you, Pal, it's just explaining something. It probably sounds as loony to you as it does to Rita, you're so far away from it, – it's just that nothing that has hold of me as much as this has, should fail to be mentioned to you, and to let you know how important it is if you should return about when I've reached my goal, and should feel that we had more important things to do. I don't know if it will have to come via the milk-can nailed to the closet floor, Tree Grows in Brooklyn-style, or if I can dream up some get rich quick scheme by donating a year of my life to the cause, but I'll take the responsibility, and if it hits you the same way when you get home, you can participate in the effort to get some kind of roof over our heads. At least if I can get enough in love with an idea it may keep me out of mischief one more year, 'til you're back. – Anyway, I'm desperately serious about it, Pal, and you might as well know. The next item will be after an effort to get in touch with the

International Paper Company's Mr. Wilson and get this thing in more specific form. If Evvie can start with a farthing, I can.

Don't feel that we are at cross purposes, if you have plans, too. If you don't sympathize with this, it will probably be over by the time you're back, – if not, I'll kick in enough of myself to raise you \$500, too! Do you think I'm crazy, Honey?

An offer came in tonight's mail for me to teach puppet- and marionette-making at Proctor this year. I can't think of anything more boring in the "artistic" field, but will probably accept just for the "in." Dad says the new \$1,000,000 state-owned school to be built in Utica will have an art department, too. This job is of no value except as a means of affiliation with a very desirable spot.

How does this look – ROCKHAVEN.

Love,
Dordo

#152. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

India

September 10, 1944

Dear Dordo,

The mail situation has quieted down again somewhat, but today I received your letter, again making me jealous for not being at the lake. However, none of your verbal descriptions (not that they are not good) is much to give me the feel of the place as did the postcard from Rita.

You haven't been very explicit about the polio deal. Is there actually an epidemic? I haven't seen anything about it in the papers or magazines. How long does it last? Doesn't cold weather stop it?

Re my letters, I wasn't unconscious of 15 August. I wrote to you about that in the letter I wrote the 14th.

Your talking of a place on the lake intrigues me no end. I have just

added up my rupees in the bank and put them into dollars and find that I have 830 bucks. That would give just 100 feet of shoreline. How far back does it go? What are the taxes? Where does the money come from to build on it?

About writ out now. More later.

Love,

John

#153. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

India

September 14, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I don't seem to get around to this letter writing as often as I should, even though I am trying to be better about it. Today I got the first letter you wrote after going back up to the lake. I am glad that you went. The Time magazine I got today indicates that the polio deal won't be over until the end of this month. It will be far better to keep the Pencil up in the woods for as long as possible.

Got a letter from EA which I will answer. I wondered why he didn't write when he owed me a letter. I guess he got confused and thought I owed him one. Anyway, the little misunderstanding terminated our correspondence for about three months. Too bad.

Reference my change of station, I didn't exactly ask for it, but let drop several months ago, during the MESS that I wouldn't be averse to a change. It came through when I had become satisfied with staying here. It is just one of those things. All it will do for me is to make my living conditions more uncomfortable and maybe give me a new source or two of local color to fill up the letters with. I can no longer see anything interesting in Delhi to write about. It will be an experience to live in a bamboo basha for a year or so, I guess. I'm now sorting my stuff to find out what to do with what won't fit into

my luggage. I'm going into a combat area, but you can be assured that it will probably be strikingly devoid of combat where I am. I will have to rearrange addresses on all of my magazines and papers. I will get even fewer of them than I do now.

Goodbye for now,

All my love, John

#154. JDM to DPM (ALS, 2pp.)

Kandy, Ceylon

October 17, 1944

Dear Dordo,

After a long delay, I am at last sufficiently settled to write to you. The address up in the corner there will probably amuse you, and send you hunting for a map to find out exactly where it is.

Had a bumpy air trip down here, and have landed in the midst of the rains.

I suppose that it is now okay to tell you that, although I am still wearing the bomb, I am no longer in Ordnance as such. I am an Ordnance officer on duty with another organization. There will probably come a time and a place when I can tell you what that organization is, but not yet. Sufficient to say that it is an entirely new kind of work, interesting, and I will probably be too busy to do much else besides eat, sleep and work for some many months to come.

I had gotten fed to the teeth with the Theater Ordnance Office and with the same old faces and the same old line of bull for some time. My first opportunity of a change was within the Ordnance organization, at the tentative APO I sent mother. However I was to replace a guy who was going to take this job that I now have. He turned out to be not acceptable, and through a big freak of chance, I was able to land the deal that he was going to take. Colonel Barroll

is going to go back to the states to a big job, and he is being replaced by a man I knew in the states and whom I do not care for in the slightest. No, it isn't Colonel A. I didn't find all of that out until after this deal was all set, and I have been congratulating myself ever since for stepping out at exactly the right time. I left everybody with a good taste, with an excellent recommendation, and with a rating of superior on my efficiency report. With unpardonable pride let me say that that is as good as they hand out in this silly little army. There was another reason which had a little effect on me, and that was the fact that the TO for the office called for one full colonel, two lt. colonels and three majors. When the new man reports, had I stayed, I would have been the junior major, so you can readily appreciate the opportunities for promotion that would have presented themselves. I am not hot for promotion anyway. I am completely and blissfully satisfied with my present rank. If Col. A. had arrived a year sooner, I would probably still be a First Lieutenant.

Needless to say, I won't be subjected to the rather rough living conditions that I intimated I would be living under at the place I was originally going to change to. That won't hurt me a bit, as I have no knack for being comfortable in the midst of a sylvan wilderness. I don't like bugs, or cold showers.

I suppose there is one aspect of my job that I can tell you without revealing anything censorable. I will be my own boss, for the first time in two years. I will be a little old CO, with my own officers, enlisted men, buildings, compound, vehicles, supplies, etc. It will be wonderful not to have someone looking down my throat, telling me where to spit, when to use a comma, and all the rest of it.

To tell the truth, the business of living in that apartment with the Colonel wasn't too good. You had to cater to his whims and see that nothing was present to irritate him. He liked a very quiet life most of the time, and then a big bang up every so often. Also the living expenses were going up. They had to jump the rate fifty rupees the last month I was there. And most of it went into fancy liquor to pour down the throats of the people he wanted to impress, but who didn't matter a damn to me. Also I will be glad to see the last of that little

snake, Doug Knight, he turned out to be pretty unsatisfactory to live with, and almost 100 percent untrustworthy.

Being familiar with the way of bearers, I packed my own things in entirety. It is amazing the quantities of things you accumulate with no effort at all. Part of it wasn't due to me. I discovered that when my bearer had moved me from the Imperial, he fixed me up with two helmets, two gas masks, two canteens, two pistol belts, etc. etc. On my own hook, however, I had accumulated a mass of stuff. The biggest weight factor was all the books. I have not yet been able to reconcile myself with parting with a single one of them. I have pasted together the two that came in two parts, and will not part with those either.

The last night before leaving Delhi my favorite Chinese Restaurant owner gave me a free dinner, of special food, the main dish being a chicken which was completely boned and then sewn back up to look as though it hadn't. It was so tender that you could pull the meat apart with chop sticks. And anything free from a Chinaman is something to remember.

In your letters you refer now and again to something called the MESS. I haven't the faintest vaguest idea of what you are talking about. You'd better either elucidate or skip it. Preferably the latter.

This place is very hilly and beautiful, with a very even climate. In fact, the temperature changes so little throughout the year that there many lizards, snakes, leeches, rats, scorpions, centipedes, and all kinds of strange, slow moving bugs. I will have no use for the woollens now.

All my love to you and Penny
John

#155. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

Ceylon

October 21, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I am now really beginning to feel that I work here. I have reached my permanent station, have my billet, have unpacked all my stuff, put your picture out – laid out the books, and gotten the first batch of clean clothes back from the dobi.

I can't tell you where I am, but I can describe my room. There is nothing much on the inside of it, but it is my window that is important. The sea is so close that I could throw a stone into it with very little effort. There is a constant roar of the waves coming in which puts me to sleep every night. I can look from my side window down the beach and see the breaking crest of a wave run along the white sand. My view of the absolutely fantastic sunsets is only slightly obscured by some very graceful palms with their long fronds just a few feet from my window. All in all, it is a perfect setup for a beachcomber such as me.

I have put the woolens away again. If I stayed in Delhi I would've gone into them on the 15th of November, but here it is cotton time the year-round. I am glad that I came down when I did, so that I didn't lose my acclimatization.

In this job I am certainly needing more interesting people than the dull thuds who frequented the halls of HQ US AF CBI. It is refreshing to meet once again people who can discuss intelligently a bit more than the food, the weather and the bloody limeys.

More and more I am realizing that this change was just what was needed. Also you can relax a bit in that this isn't the assignment I originally wrote that I was going to get. But then again, I have a vague feeling that I've written all of this to you before.

Take care of yourself. Oh, by the way, I am sending you some cash at the end of the month. Here I have to send it by P.T.O.,

you remember, the same as the first money I sent you. I won't be able to get it off until the end of the month, and the government check ought to get to you sometime between the 24th and 30th of November. Sorry I couldn't make it sooner, but this is just to let you know that I didn't forget your request.

All my love,
John

#156. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1p.)

Ceylon

October 22, 1944

Dear Dordo,

This is a warm gray day, with the sun showing from time to time, and the sea quite calm. After lunch I intend to go walking down along the shore.

I am sending you some sarongs. I'm buying one and certainly will wear one around the room, as most of the people around here have them and say that they are the most practical thing for this hot sticky climate. I might as well give you the instructions now. As you know, a sarong is merely a tubular piece of material used as a skirt. It is the same width all the way down to your ankles and is much too big around the waist. The idea is to find some way of folding or tucking the material around your waist so that will stay up. The approved system is to grasp the material with both hands, holding your hands about 18 inches apart and holding the material taut out in front of you (you are already in it). Then, still grasping the material, sling your left hand in to your right side, at the waist. Hold the material there and then swing your right hand in to your left side, tucking a small portion of the cloth inside to hold it up, much the same way you would when you try to make a towel stay on. There are many other ways to make it stay on, all of

which are surprising because they work. It is the universal costume here for men and women, the difference being in the patterns, men usually wearing loud checks and plaids, and women, for the most part wearing plain colors, however you constantly see the reverse.

I am still being delighted with myself for the way all of this has worked out. It certainly was the smartest little move I ever made. I am delighted with everything. Of course, I have probably guaranteed myself being a permanent major, but what the hell, everything is relative. I would probably settle for being a second lieutenant stationed in Utica, if I had the choice.

One of the things I have got to get a line on around here is whether or not any of these coconuts ever fall off of the trees.

If so, do they ever hit anybody, and if so, what is the extent of the damage. The height they hang above you is certainly alarming.

Love,
John

#157. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

Ceylon

November 8, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I can now safely say that this is the nicest assignment I have had in the Army. I am my own CO and in charge of as nice a group of officers and enlisted men as you could want to meet. Instead of being in an isolated spot, I have a large flow of transients through here whom I have to feed, house, and keep entertained. Of course the only flaw in that is that my time is their time, particularly when they are brass. You could say then, that I have been on about fourteen hours duty for the last few weeks.

I think that I ought to tell you a bit about my room. I have a square room of medium size, with three windows. You enter at the top of a

flight of stairs and the window opposite the door looks out to sea. There is no window in the wall on your left, but in the wall on your right is a window that looks up the beach. Near the door is the third window, providing a cross ventilation system that brings the breeze whipping in from the sea directly across my bed. In one corner is the piece of furniture which makes the room. An L shaped daybed of very modern design, built to fit into a corner, and covered with gay pillows. There is also a fine maple couch, a big easy chair, some modernistic lamps and a few old Burmese lacquer tables about the place. You see, it was furnished to provide a conference room where I can entertain in private conversation the boys to whom I have to talk. It makes a wonderful setup for me. The only real trouble is that I have it constantly full of people.

In as much as I no longer have any need for my woolens, I am sending them back to you in a large tin box. Also in the box is a little table for you and some odd things. I hope to get it off soon. When it arrives, cut the lock off. It is a cheap Indian lock and I have lost the key, so this is as good a way to dispose of it as any I know. I saved out some woolens, but not all.

Probably the nicest thing about this here now job is the fact that there are people to talk to who are a bit above the mental equipment of a 13-year-old child. It is refreshing to find people who have more to say than the guys Bill met in the Yankee division. It makes me more than a bit homesick, since it reminds me of the Reids, Sammy et al.

All my love,
John

#158. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

Ceylon

November 11, 1944

Dear Dordo,

I certainly am grateful for this job. It is giving me a chance to carry on conversations with intelligent people for the first time in years. It is also so weird, and so full of amazing things that at times I feel as though I am probably actually in a ward at Bellevue, and everything going on here is just a bunch of segments of my diseased imagination. It will certainly mean conversation pieces for years to come.

Yesterday being a Saturday afternoon, and my work being pretty well caught up, when some people asked me to go along outside of town to a Buddhist temple and see an amazing little Buddhist priest, I accepted eagerly. It wasn't far, and he met us in the middle of his well swept yard in front of the temple and conducted us to his house. He is short and brown, with a long head that reminds me strangely of Sammy, but with protruding large white teeth which are ineffectively covered by a very long upper lip. His eyes are intelligent and he has very fine hands. The amazing thing about him, aside from the fact that he speaks and writes eight languages, is that he is a very talented and versatile artist, working in more mediums than I ever heard of one man working. I saw beautiful decorative oils in bright colors of stylized lush tropical flowers, painstaking watercolor copies of ancient murals of various temples in Ceylon... so well done that the texture of the stone on which the murals are painted is evident, fine brush drawings on silk in the traditional Chinese style, but with more movement than most Chinese stuff, a semi-Cubist presentation of a dancer and musician done in red and white triangles, Tibetan style drawings of the gods, in fact of the love life of the gods, primitive dark oils of native life, humorous drawings of his friends, pure surrealist that would

make Dali blush. All of this is done with beautiful line, excellent draftsmanship, painstaking detail and one of the most beautiful sense of color that I've ever seen. All his work is damn fine, but it is his versatility, his sense of humor in his work, and the complete incongruity of his surroundings that are impressive. He wears sort of a brown toga which leaves one shoulder bare, and underneath that you can see flashes of the traditional bright yellow robe of the Buddhist priest. One strange thing about his work is the sexual motif apparent in so much of it. In his abstract drawings he always inserts various womb shapes and manages to make phallic significance out of the most amazing things. He smiled a very childish and naïve smile and said "You will notice that sex is very important to me. That's maybe because, as a priest, I cannot touch a woman." I'm going to try and get hold of some of his stuff. A man has recently taken pictures of his work for the American Museum and the Met. I bet he will be big stuff one of these days.

After looking at his work for couple of hours, we went over to the Temple and found another amazing thing. A Burgher friend of his from Kandy named George Keith has done the murals for the inside of the temple. It is a small square building with the shrine proper and a small room in the middle, also square, so that the murals are on both sides of the corridor encircling the shrine room. Instead of the murals being in the traditional 19th century prissy English style, like in the shrine proper, they are in a strong, warm massive Picasso style, with considerable humor and gay colors. They depict the life of Buddha. The parishioners don't like them a bit, and would prefer the traditional crap, but the priest is adamant as he knows they are actually beautiful. You should see the scene which shows Buddha wrestling with the demons in his mind. The "soft" vices are very luscious bare breasted maidens, and the "cruel" vices are cubist faces, with angular green and black planes in this sort of design, for the next part.

It is all done with attention to the usual form of the east, that is doing things in a flat plane without benefit of perspective, also the shading is very delicate, so as to accentuate the hard outlines

of the persons in the mural. I think it was done about eight years ago, probably at the same time that Picasso's murals were not yet accepted. It is all so incongruous.

Well, you can see that there can be times down here utterly unlike anything in Delhi, or anywhere else in the world, I guess. I am as contented as I could possibly be, and still be away from you. You are a big old gap in me, honey, and I hope it gets rectified soon; and the password is still "TOO."

With all my love,
John

#159. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)
Utica, NY
November 27, 1944

Dear John,

It was pleasant to receive your letter, and know how well you are getting along. You certainly have had the breaks, but no one begrudges you them, and we are all grateful that you are not on the Ledo Road just now, with things going so badly there. I just hope post-war readjustment won't hit you too hard; considering the nature of your ability and luck, it doesn't seem that that will be worth much worry – you'll make out, I've no doubt.

Pencil's Christmas present from his grandparents arrived at 9 Beverly Friday, and we went up to get it – a 10 weeks old cocker spaniel, "a perfect blanket cocker," black, with white feet with polka dots on them. For a little guy, he is the brightest, sweetest thing you ever saw. He has a pedigree, Dear. He was raised in a kennel, and arrived with worms, fleas, and a cold in his eyes, but I expect to be able to cope with those. He's very sweet, wants to be held all the time, plays with Pencil, and doesn't seem a bit shy. I don't know what we'll do with him if we go away Christmas.

Nice world. Ceylon sounds at least diverting. In fact, tho I hate to mention it, a little too diverting. Not from my standpoint – I'm adaptable, still, Dear, – but your family haven't heard from you for so long that they are getting a little sore. Margie only wishes you'd write to Pop, but she hasn't heard from any of the many things she sent you, including letters, and you never refer to any of the things they write, in fact you give us all the impression that you are your usual self-sufficient self, and perfectly happy, not needing us in any way. But there are two sides to that – omitting the fact that you may someday need us, – as long as there is any relationship between you and the people here, you have to consider their need for you, apart from the lack of your need from them. Any human relationship is reciprocal, you know. Again I repeat, this applies to your family, I'm not discussing our relationship now. That can be taken up when it will do more good, I mean when you come home – I do not blame you for any adjustment you may have made to the pleasant aspects of your life now, you are one person in a million, most of the world is quite miserable, and that's no reason for you not to enjoy everything that life there presents, the postwar situation will probably be no better for you, so why not make the most of today, but don't forget the differentiation between transitory human relationships and the permanent ones.

Love,
Dordo

#160. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)
Utica, NY
Friday, December 1, 1944

Darling,

Since yesterday morning, Syracuse has had 30 inches of snow, and

it is expected to continue. This is our first real snow, a bit early, but thorough. Not as bad as Syracuse, though.

Baby, I have shoveled snow and coal all day, and if you don't want to come home after the war, it's OK, just send for us. I would like to sit on a beach with the temperature at 76, indefinitely. Last night Dorrie and Margie and Pen and I went to Joe's in a raging blizzard, and I even got them up Beverly hill – which had stymied other drivers, but I couldn't get through our own driveway, so left the car on the street all night. Added to having the thing covered with about a foot of the night's snow, the boys with the plow left it behind a good-sized bank they'd scooped up. The fire burnt itself out overnight, so I spent the morning building a fire with three coals and two pieces of wood, and the afternoon getting the car out. What particularly burned me is that the little parasite downstairs sat on his fanny while I struggled in the driveway last night (he sat in the window), while I fought the furnace this morning, and stood and watched me struggle with the car this afternoon, – after one of Penny's friends had shoveled 30 hours' snow off the walk and was paid by me. To top it, he gave me Hell for leaving the car out so the plow made a mess where he parks in front of the house! I was too speechless, – and breathless, to reply, but I long for the day when my papa's home to wither him with about ten choice words. There's no use of my trying to fight him, but you wouldn't have to, he's the type you could polish off in two seconds, – if he's still here, which I hope he isn't.

This is the pay-off. After I had done a certain amount of shoveling and rocking the car, a little dumpy woman I never saw before appeared from across the street, and said she's seen me and put on her things to help! She toted ashes and lent moral support until I was out. How can he feel to himself? Then I bought a pair of chains (\$6), and chawed my way into the driveway, shoveled out the entrance to the garage and I hope someone hits me over the head if I take the car out again this Winter, but of course I will. Probably tomorrow.

Just a little home front touch. This is being typed on my lap, so it's

a bit irregular, but for you that's better than writing on my lap. Your letter about the painting of the Buddhist priest came yesterday, and I appreciate such a detailed description, I really feel as if I'd seen them, at least if I ever do, they will surely look familiar. If you could acquire some of his work, it might become quite valuable, at least it would always be to you.

Here is another of those things which happen to people like me. We often do our marketing just before school lets out at noon, and since the market is between the school, and a busy intersection the kids have to cross, the policeman who guides the kids across the street usually stays in the store until time for the kids to come out. Penny and I have talked to him a lot, he's a young Italian, and we usually talk about food, or Pen. Well, while discussing spaghetti, and putting on weight, he asked me to guess how much he weighed. I guessed 145, and he proudly informed me that he weighs 200. He's shorter than I, so I expressed surprise, at which point he said, "Feel my leg" -and extended his thigh in my direction. I had to either embarrass him or myself, so I pinched, but did I feel foolish! - The anticlimax of that was, after I told several people about pinching the cop's leg in a grocery store, the next day, the grocery man told me he is a sex maniac!

Here is one on Pop. His clothes are absolutely falling apart. It's disgraceful what he wears on trips, and Margie is embarrassed to death, but he's down to two ragged suits, and he just gets ugly if she says anything about it. Well, one of the suits was at the cleaner's, and had been thrown into the bin for outgoing clothes in the basement - the plant is elsewhere - and an old man who was helping some carpenters down there needed a bag for his nails, so he picked up Dad's pants, cut the pocket out generously, and put the suit back! He cut all the wool part around the outside, so it would completely ruin them. Margie nearly died over that, but I think she took a chance when she let them have the pocket rewoven into the pants - he'll wear them again, I bet, and not for golf, as she intends.

Our puppy has been at Dr. McDonald's for three days, with the doctor unwilling to commit himself as to whether he will even live.

He had tapeworms so badly that he passed pure blood for twelve hours, and of course that makes it pretty hard to administer worm medicine. We hope he will pull through, we got very fond of him in the few days that he was here, and I think he is a very sweet and intelligent little dog. The lady from the kennel is going to be presented with the bill, since it is not cricket to send out a dog in that condition. He's had two days of worm medicine, enemas, and to top it, preventative distemper shots, – he ought to have a little chance to be assured that he is loved enough to live, but we can't get over there until the roads are better.

Ernie Pyle's book came from the B.O.T.M. Club. If you want it, send a request, if not it will be here when you get back. You might send a blanket request for some books, then if any good ones come along we'll send.

This seems to be the end of the paper, and news... Too, Johnsie Dordo

#161. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

Ceylon

December 5, 1944

Dear Dordo,

Am filling in time while sitting at a Colonel's desk, waiting for him – so I decided I had better make use of his pad to knock off a letter.

It makes me feel blue to realize that by the time you get this it will be close to Christmas. Close to our second Christmas apart. Anyway – we can be pretty certain that there won't be a third one. Next Christmas really ought to be something.

If I complained about being busy on this job during the last month, you can ignore it. I have never been as rushed as lately. It is really terrific. Quite on the dawn to exhaustion basis. The thick climate doesn't help much.

Things piled up to the point where Sunday I had to get a break, so several of us went off to a very beautiful beach – about 7 miles long – no rocks – shallow water and big waves – so big that you couldn't stand up to them at all. I spent about 4 hours in the sun, and have felt uncomfortably warm around the shoulders ever since.

This is a nice country compared to India. The people are more of a Polynesian type, with gay sarongs and clean appearance. They are more rugged looking than the Indians, and more on the golden brown side than the dirty black most Indians are. My writing has of necessity been a bit sketchy lately due to the fact that I have had to cover the island by jeep. After a while all the towns look alike, but I don't think I could ever get very tired of looking at the palms. This is sort of a quasi-south sea island, with palms, white sand, breakers, coral and all the trimmings.

I think my Colonel is due back now, so I will close this off for a bit.

All my love,

John

#162. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

December 26, 1944

Dear Johnsie,

So there is a Santa Claus. I didn't know his name was John, but since the old guy is the most traditional producer of miracles humanity has any familiarity with, that must be the answer to the Prentiss-MacDonald miracle-of-1944. The distant guy with the long white imagination and the big heart, rushing in to the lonely fireside with all sorts of wonderful shining joy for the kids, – big 'n little!

If you only knew what it means to all of us, including you. We can't tell you, but you'll know, Darling, when you come back. And you'll

never have a single doubt it is the biggest, the most lasting, and the most completely creative thing you ever did.

It isn't right for you to be so far away that you missed out on the spontaneity of wanting Rockhaven, and the spontaneity of our gratitude, but you must have had plenty of urge to make someone else happy to put so much imagination and sympathy – not to mention cold, hard- saved cash, into the deal.

You probably would like to know how Sammy handled it. Yesterday morning, after all the presents were distributed he handed me a rolled object, wrapped in an air-mail envelope addressed to me with your return address on it, and tied with a big red, white and blue ribbon. It contained a careful tracing of a geo. survey map of that end of Piseco, with “our point” indicated, and clipped to it was all the correspondence to date on the subject.

This letter to you of November 11, and Mr. Willson's regarding map and restrictions (OK from our viewpoint), were the last two, so I realize it is still unfinished business, but your instructions to him to present the signed deed on Christmas are sign enough of your efforts to have it completed and in the bag for the biggest Christmas surprise of a lifetime.

It is inevitable that separation alone should create misunderstandings, not to mention the influence of delay and inconvenience of communication, other personalities, and the unavoidable changes in the individual not completely static. Our separation has been a long one, and seems to be fated to be longer, and because of a sum of things, I had begun to feel that your heart and your mind had grown so far from us that you didn't care much what went on in my heart or mind. I guess I was wrong about all that, Darling. I should have known – we've always wanted the same things, we always will because we're so much alike, but a woman gets a bit literal (when she's alone, especially), and she has to be told in so many words that she is wanted and loved, and part of a man's life and his plans. I know you're the “big love” in my life, whatever happens, – the good companion, and I want you and our marriage always. You couldn't have set me right about your feeling somewhat

the same about me in a more convincing way, – until Uncle Sam lets you come home, at least. And since we have to be apart longer, having something so tangible and yet so much a part of our future, means more than I can tell you.

I wrote from Piseco that I've never wanted anything very much since you, and Penny, filled up the greatest needs in my life, but that wanting a piece of the earth that could be ours had become one of the fundamental urges, and wanting this particular satisfying hunk of rock and trees have become insistent and devouring. I never wanted anything so much, it's so perfect and would do so much for us.

We'll have a place in which to shake off annoyances, to get hold of things, to start in from, besides a place to have fun in. And such a wonderful place, John – the nicest place on the whole lake.

If we'd had to wait for it, I would have worked long and hard for it, but I honestly think we'd have lost it. It's so obviously the prize spot on the lake, and when travel begins again some war-bond-happy gang was sure to come along and leave us saying "If only –," all the rest of our lives, and leave me feeling if only, because I not only think it would be perfect for us, but I want it. And the kids want it, and I know you will.

It's a very sound investment, if it needs to be viewed as such, but it's buying a hunk of so much else. Maybe it's buying dessert first, but it's good nourishing dessert, and will make something fine and festive of the whole business of sustenance, and I think we're the kind of people who need more and want more than just common fare. But gee! It's a relief to have you so concrete about it!

Incidentally, it was a terrific surprise to read Mr. Willson's offer of 200 feet for \$1000. By actual comparison to dingy, crowded, road-bound, stone and mud strewn, stingy and shut-in lots all over the lake, that's absolutely giving it away. We thought we'd have to sweat and slave for years to get together \$1000 for half of it, and then find some hoodlums or war-made snobs all settled on the other half. Especially road-front instead of lake-front: that increases the

exclusive nature of the place by cutting in all desirable surrounding land.

In fact, it's such a buy that we're not mentioning it to a soul (not even our family or Margery & Gracie) until it's completely sewed up. We haven't had the MacDonald Christmas yet, and when we do, if I get the same present from Pop as the last two years, I'm going to see that Mr. Willson gets \$100 or \$150 and sew it up immediately. So Pen and I are rushing home tomorrow, in spite of invitations to stay, to have the MacDonald Christmas! (And get the mail, from Ceylon – I hope). It's terribly important now that you are in it, not to take a moment's chance on losing it.

You're probably exhausted after all this, Honey. But I've kept quiet about it in my letters this Fall because there wasn't a thing I could do about it without messing up Pencil's life and security, yet it has been in my thoughts day after day.

You certainly stole the show, Baby, and I'll never be able to tell you – you'll just have to come home and see, what it means.

We missed you so very much, and hope you got your boxes in time, and had a happy, comfortable day. I hope we never spend another Christmas apart, Darling.

Sammy is so full of post-war plans involving you it scares me, but I fixed you up a loophole if it doesn't meet your ideas for us, and he's big enough not to hold it agin you. He had to eject Harold Clarke from the deal quite firmly, and it's flattering to see the affection and respect he has for you.

You have a place here – warm and big, and I hope you come home to it soon, my Darling.

Love to you from every one of us,
'specially. Dordo.

It was generous and nice of you to include Sam and Evvie in the deed-part from the start, and they appreciate it deeply.

7. Chapter 7 - Homeward Bound - Winter/Spring 1945, Letters 163-175

#163. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1pp.)

Utica, NY

January 1, 1945

Dear John-

The nice long weekend is slowly ebbing, and the old routine will be among us again soon. We've been lucky to have such a pleasant holiday time without a complete family.

Saturday night we all went to the club for a very cheery dinner, then adjourned to our home for presents. The high spot of that was quite a surprise, for Penny, and quite a load off our shoulders, my friend. Pop and Margie gave him four thousand-dollar war bonds for his education. They did the same for Dorrie and for Donald. I am very happy about it, as he's going to be ready for school away from home sooner than we will be prepared to send him, probably, and it least it will ensure that whatever happens to you and me, he won't have to go through what Lou did, and Sammy. Of course it will have to be supplemented a bit, but he could work summers if need be, at least it won't strain our budget so much to see that he has what he needs to do it right. Please mention this gift when you write them, and please write them.

My check was for \$75, so I will have to dig up a little to go with it for Sam to send to Mr. Willson, as I have a \$50 coal bill, etc., but it can be managed by a small loan, I think, from some source outside the family.

We were invited up here for dinner yesterday, and overnight, so New Year's Eve was quiet. The family went to a midnight service, which I eliminated, as Mr. Feibigger weeps so much about the war. So when I went down to give the furnace a look at 8 o'clock I stopped in at a service at Plymouth for the men in service, then looked in on Margery and Grace and came back here with another attack of the disease starting. They're calling it "colic!" Nana and I were here alone at midnight. I remained fairly numb about the whole thing – a little glad to lay 1944 aside, and simply open-minded about 1945. There was little hilarity abounding anywhere here this year.

Blackberry brandy, aspirin and sulpha seems to have things under control this morning. We all slept 'til 11, except Dorrie, who worked, so we were too late to go to the Club Open House. It's raining and freezing, anyway, so no one cares, as we're going to the Yahnundasis tonight.

Pen saw a little boy at the club in a handsome tailored uniform. Dorrie asked him his rank, and he (age about 8) said he'd forgotten. Pen turned and looked at us, and said "Can you beat that?"

Love Dordo

What about a man from a New York bank – he keeps writing Dad about you.

Remember Honey – a there will be a post-war world and you'll probably be back here. Don't put yourself out on limb, but don't let all your bridges decay either.

#164. JDM to DPM (ALS, 3pp.)

Ceylon

January 5, 1945

Dear Dordo,

I intend to make this sort of a book letter – scribbling on it whenever I get a chance and then mailing the whole works together.

I am now getting your letters in batches at widely separated intervals. So there won't be much answering of questions etc. until I get the next batch. I am giving up numbering for the nonce until my existence becomes better ordered.

The other day out was at a mountain stream in the middle of some pretty wild country, and to kill time, had an amateur gemologist tell me how to hunt for precious stones. I spent a couple of hours going through the necessary procedures and finally went back to him with a handful of rocks. One turned out to be a most inferior moonstone, one was blue sapphire, not worth saving, one was dark topaz which I will try to get cut and sent to you one of these days and the rest were all quartz. I am delighted with the topaz, and even though it is semi-precious, I may get a 15 carat stone. You may get it in the raw. I will decide later

I am, of course, much intrigued with Dorrie's possible pregnancy. It would be a nice thing, though tough on her to have it without Willie around. Also I'm intrigued with Sammy's toy business – though what possible use he could find for me I can't imagine. This light is most bad on the eyes, so I will stop right here. Love to you from me for tonight. I would like to share your emptyish bed. – J.

8 Jan.

Most of the day today I have been having a quiet daydream to the effect that here it is January – and June can't be far behind. In June, when my bargaining power ought to be pretty good due to 23 months service, rather than wait for the slow process of rotation, and consequent chance of reassignment to some place where I am unknown, I will approach my powers that be with the proposition that I be made a courier to Washington for one trip. Then I can fit in 30 days leave – to go home with a good APR – and come back here for the remaining year which will terminate my foreign service obligations under the present set-up. It seems like the smartest thing to do. I think that if I could have 30 days with you, I could sweat out the rest of the deal.

Adios for tonight. All love. – – John

10 Jan.

Got back to home plate to find two letters from you – one after your receipt of the parcel of land, for which I can soon get the money off – the other complaining about my silence around Christmas time – which I hope has been satisfactorily explained. Also there was a wonderful picture of Penny – for which I am very grateful – plus nine books from you and a flask, which I wanted – and all sorts of little odds and ends of stuff packed in with precious Kleenex. It was a delight to open the boxes. Tell Margie I also got two boxes labeled from E. A. – pipe, food, books, game etc. I have started Rome Hanks and find it fascinating. I can't put it down.

I wish old grandpa Dann were alive so I could write him of the game I have seen. Wild hogs, pythons, leopards etc. The boys are constantly knocking off something large and wild. Some of them saw wild elephants the other day. That I am happy to miss. Cigarettes are getting short here. From the old Times I get hold of, I find that things are really rugged in the cigarette line at home. Hope you have some good friends in the drugstores of Utica. I have gotten hold of a badminton set from Special Services which has been set up and is providing me with some exercise of a sort, though it is too hot to play long. You soak through your clothes in a matter of minutes. Reference your request for a request – I hereby request you to send me at least one big new book a month. Will that do it? My best pleasure is still reading – but I can't bring myself to read anything on the political background of the war – or anything about post war.

As time goes by this bloody mode of living becomes more and more senseless. How any two ideologies can exist in the minds of men and yet be so different as to cause the slaughter and misery of millions is beyond me. Maybe it is because deep down the basic nature of man is evil, thus making all groups of men, and all governments the mass expression of common evil, cruelty and hate. Thousands of men each week are making this their last silly little acts in this screwy world and it is impossible to translate those acts into something which means a greater good for all. We must kill those who would oppose us, even as they are saying to themselves. I guess the world has just gotten too small for a quiet short war. I

am beginning to hate all evidences of “bigness” and “organization” and “regimentation.” All business. Enough for the nonce. Tell Pencil he looks pretty big to me and he better be able to talk sense by the time I get back. Love for tonight – John

12 Jan.

I can send a fat slice of the 1000 along when I send this. The rest is very temporarily tied up. Be patient. I hope the deal went through okay. Forgive me for not being more verbose tonight, but I just don't feel up to it. Love, John

16 Jan.

One of the things that is making me sad lately is how few of the personal possessions that I have that I set off from home with. Things wear out, or get lost, or get stolen, and every month there is a few less of them, with their place taken by not-so-good substitutes. You would be amazed at the way the climate gets into things and spoils them. You remember sending me the beanbag ash tray. Well, the moist climate corroded the metal so badly that about a month ago, while butting a cigarette, it went right through into the BB shot inside. You would think that stuff is indestructible, but not out here – –

I have found occasion to use the little first-aid kit that Mrs. E. A. sent. I cleverly dropped an open knife on my bare foot. It made me so damn mad that I threw the knife out the window, went looking for it, and cut the underside of the same foot on a bit of metal. Not only that, but I took a small slice out of my finger throwing the knife. I ended up with many bandages feeling vaguely like Laurel and Hardy. My sack is calling, so I will end today's chapter and collapse. Sleeping time is overseas time too, and goes much faster than waking time. Same old love – John

19 Jan.

This is being written in the small cold hours of the morning at an ATC operations office while I am waiting for my pilot to show up. Last night he gave me the incorrect takeoff time, so consequently I have a bit of time to spare. Only a short flight today, then work and

then fly again. It is a bit like those days up in northern New York state, only the busy little vehicle has wings instead of wheels.

Yesterday I sent \$700 to Sammy. I thought that that would be quicker, as he is in direct contact with the sales agency. I will send the rest, plus some more to you as soon as I collect an outstanding debt. You see, my total assets at the beginning of this month were 4600 Rupees. At 3.3 to a dollar, that equals 1390 dollars. After deducting my living expenses this month, and also the amount I have out on loan, I was able to send 700 immediately. It will no longer be possible to save money at any great rate due to the cut in per diem.

I have gotten also some late news about the theater headquarters which I vacated just prior to the change in management, which indicates that I did a very wise thing in leaving just when I did. After I left, there was a combination of two large headquarters, thus throwing lots of Ordnance officers into a large pool. I might have landed in the pool and driven myself crazy waiting for a suitable assignment. At least that is what has happened to a few of the boys.

As ever, John

#165. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 5, 1945

Darling,

I just tore up a letter to you. It was slightly maudlin and highly unoriginal. "Let sleeping dogs lie," she says - "You can't change anything now, " she says - "It'll work out when the time comes, - stuff the cracks and keep it painted and blame it on the War," "You can't get the things to do it with now." "Bend with it, don't beat your brains out," she says. So except for one comment, I shall confine myself to the news.

The comment being simply that as of today, the last letter from you is one month (instead of the former 6 to 10 days) old, and came 16 days ago. Your family hasn't heard from you in months – but you know that. We know you're probably alive, probably safe, probably healthy, probably having your generous share of good work, good play, good friends. Why should anyone be empty?

Of course there is a kind of fullness that can be shared, that spills over it lavishly in all directions, but it isn't a condition of Wartime. And there is the natural keeping of a place in your mind and heart for special people; – we do not need, knowing you, to assume that none of us is any longer special to you. But pride and the special place we keep for you makes us wish you'd be a little more positive about us! That's all, Chum.

This is the first time I've been alone for about three weeks it seems. What with Rita, Elmira, Christmas vacation, and general tearing around due to the season, I've pushed myself most of the time due to this recurrent brief infection Pen and I have had again this week, so now I am terribly tired, and would enjoy seeing no one, hearing no one, going nowhere, and curling up with “Strange Fruit” while Pen is at school, and tonight.

People seem to need their friends more now – you just decide to hole up and someone convinces you they're so low that nothing but a cozy evening out in the weather will help them, and you're off again.

Did you ever get the books I chose for Margie to send you? Or the fruitcakes from her? You never mention getting any mail from us – do you? Is the service much different to Ceylon – it's a little longer from there to here, four to six days.

I like “Strange Fruit” – it's good to read a book – I picked it up from a rental library on the way to my annual permanent (Nana's Christmas to me), and went through about half of it while having my hair cooked. They cut off so much of my nice long sun-burned ends that I look like all the other females. Evvie saw me just out of the tub and says I'm as thin as she, now – always a cheery thought, for me. (I mean it)

Pencil has a new album of fairy stories told by Gildersleeve – you should hear them. He loves ‘em. He has a little plaid wool shirt that makes him look about eight, too. He’s been so good for so long we’re all gasping. The other morning he reminded Margie of how you used to tie his “night-night” sleeves together. Today he asked if you had any hats when you “were a man,” and if he could see one of them.

We love you –
Dordo

#166. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)
Utica, NY
January 8, 1945

Darling,

Whatta guy!.... I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry when I finally got a letter from you this morning (so I cried), and found out what the excuse for your long silence was. My familiarity with the term dengue is limited to a familiarity with the word itself, but the dictionary wasn’t very encouraging – “attended with fever, eruptions and severe pains.” I hope you didn’t have too much of the latter – you left many questions unanswered which I hope future letters will cover a bit better. But I’m afraid none of us have written very cordially, if at all, recently, and you’ll probably have to work through a pile of disappointment and reproaches, or even no mail at all, before you get as much as a word of sympathy! – However, we are all properly crushed at this point.

But I’m afraid this time you didn’t get the benefit of the doubt, at least to the usual degree, because there seemed to be a long tapering off of interest and time as far as letters home were concerned. I’m not scolding now, but explaining our viewpoint – we are sorry if we misjudged you. It seems as if you were anywhere where you had sufficient facilities for medical care, there would

have been some means for the personnel who attended you to get word to us, if you were too sick to write, tho I understand that the usual duration of the disease is 4 to 8 days in its acute stage.

You shouldn't be fooled by the gripes that arise in the press about the helluva time the folks on the home front are having, going to the races, eating steak for breakfast, buying tools and gadgets, and smearing their hair with butter. Perhaps it is so, but we are not, and never have been that kind. We don't write you the little gripes, the great strain we feel, because it wouldn't be very interesting reading, and perhaps when we write of the gay things we try to do, it is with the thought that you are having so much glamour that we hate to be thought too dull, but it is not easy at home these days, and we have felt that not only were you having a better time than Bill and his friends, but also a better time than you would have if you were here. Therefore perhaps we have felt a little impatient with the fact that you had so little imagination about how much we need to know that we mean something to you – how much we need you, and word from you. This is something that isn't in my head – your family are much more bitter about it than I.

I would simply say, Honey, don't do it again, if it is humanly possible. I can't take it. You may feel "O Ye of little faith," but if you don't want me to slit my throat or run away with the milkman, get some word to us that you are going away, or going to be sick, or have some underling let us know that you still are aware of our existence. We on the home front haven't the fighting man's guts. We just couldn't see your forgetting us at Christmas.

Your own Christmas must have been rather disappointing, and I'm sorry you didn't get more packages, but there are a goodly number on the way, and I hope you get them, even if some of the Ledo Road presents may strike you as being a bit incongruous. We're very glad you're not there now.

We have been mostly sick for a week so we laid low over the weekend. Our friends and relatives thought a doctor was indicated, but I thought we should give the normal rules of health, such as rest and warmth and a light diet, some consideration, for a change,

and that seems to be the thing we had overlooked for the past few weeks. It worked pretty well, but your letter did more for me.

Your son has been jubilant all day. It isn't that he hears too much worry or conjecture, but he is sensitive to tension and insecurity in the atmosphere, and today he has been talking all day of when you come home – part of the time thinking up names for the sister he's going to get when you come, – a matter in which, I assure you, he has had no encouragement!

Get well, John, but not too well to come home.
Love, Dordo.

#167. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

January 13, 1945

Darling,

Sounds screwy that it is the nature of your job which keeps you from writing, but if you say so, OK, and I'll write to you whenever I feel like talking to you, or there's anything to write, whether you write or not.

We have all enjoyed your pictures so much. Of course you probably don't look quite as healthy now, but there is a look of contentment and relaxation about you that made us all happy.

That roster of names, and all those nice faces surrounding you, make "Major J. D. M., commanding" simply over-whelming. It must be quite a responsibility. They look like good guys – even the enlisted men.

Can you estimate the effect of your present status on your chance of benefiting by the "rotation" policy? Would you be on temporary leave, or due for reassignment, if you came home this year? Perhaps one of your capable looking captains will be ready to take over. Anyway, I hope you come. It has been so long I don't feel like being

a gentleman about it any longer – I simply want you home. We have spared you to Uncle Sam long enough – it's his turn now.

I applied for a loan at one of the banks to cover a small cash payment (\$100) to Mr. Willson to tie up the land until a more substantial portion arrives from you. I wanted to be sure you were sure – after all, it was October when you decided to do it, and in December it looked as if you might have at least waned in interest. But now I feel sure enough to go ahead – and so happy about it, Darling. It's the nicest thing you ever did, and may well be the nicest thing we ever had. It's such a wonderful place! And it's nice to know we can build some sort of shelter on it as soon as we want to, from the "readjustment fund." I won't repay the loan from money you send, it will be a very small drop in the bucket, but enough to satisfy the urge to make some contribution out of our "daily bread" for it.

We are due some loafing time, and I'm sure we can use it to good advantage there, or anywhere we can be together. As long as we still want the same things, all the hurt and irritation of this period can be wiped out. You are my favorite guy, and my best friend, and my truly loved husband, and I want you always.

Your Dordo.

#168. JDM to DPM (ALS, 1pp.)

Ceylon

January 21, 1945

Dear Dordo,

This is being written in an aircraft at about 8000 feet over the landscape I have become so used to. From the sky this land looks burned and brown and flat. It looks wasted. Even though any countryside looks dead and deserted from the air, it seems more fitting that this decadent dead land should look so. The world has passed it by, leaving only the remnants of kingdoms and swarms of

filthy ignorant natives. This morning there were a few white clouds marching by in random order, but now they have closed up the ranks so that it is only occasionally that I can get a glimpse of the parched land. Today I have a special plane assigned to me. The only trouble with it is that there are 21 seats in it – thus making me feel a trifle ridiculous.

One of the things that I have got to do soon is apply for a few days of leave. I need the rest as I am tired clean through. My bones feel heavy. I have it all planned, as I have been thinking about it now for a month. I want to take some of the new books and some I ration chocolate and some gin and vermouth and go to a place where I can sleep every morning – read on the beach in the afternoon, and whet my appetite for seafood dinner every night. The only trouble is that even if I do get a setup like that, it won't be a real rest. There is a sort of cumulative drain from being away so long that it eventually becomes impossible to relax completely. It isn't exactly homesickness. It is more of a growing fear of the changes that have taken place in all the familiar things. I feel as though I will have to get back, sleep 12 hours a day, get tight a few times and go to bed with you repeatedly before I will actually be able to unwind. It isn't a combat neurosis that I have, it is merely a being away neurosis. I certainly hope that the family and Pencil won't feel that I am being distant if I insist on your meeting me where I land and wending a very leisurely way homewards. I imagine that it will take some time for us to get over feeling strange, and it would be nice to be able to adjust our united front before I have to face the inquisition. Two years should really result in a fatted calf. I hope that the readjustment fund was not just a figment of my imagination, because I certainly am going to refrain from working just as long as I decently can. In case you are interested in mathematics, it is just about 623 days since I have seen you. I have tentatively set the date 15 August for seeing you again. That gives sort of a target. I hope it works.

We are beginning to get near the destination, and the scenery is getting more interesting – so adieu for now.

Love, John

#169. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)
Utica, NY
February 12, 1945

Darling,

We were up at 9 Beverly most of the day yesterday. Pop came in from a trip to Rochester and Buffalo, full of snow-stories. The main event of yesterday was my casual inquiry of Pop as to whether he had ever had a satisfactory description of the O.S.S., which reminded him that he finally encountered a private with a CBI patch on his shoulder in the club car on the train, and, having asked everyone else he could think of and never had an answer, he tackled the private, who did say just that it is an organization of "snoopers." That, added to the fact that the New York paper said Congress was again combining "Wild Bill" Donovan's O.S.S. with Army and Navy G2 and the F.B.I., leaves us with a fairly sure feeling that you are doing some kind of super-intelligence work. So we understand a little more about you not writing, etc. I hope it's safe. It must be interesting. We're glad to know this much, anyway.

Mr. Willson returned my hundred dollar check (now I can pay Dr. Brasted) for the deposit on the point, saying it is "not necessary and you can use this letter as your assurance that we will go ahead with the sale to you of a lot on the Piseco Lake as indicated in our correspondence for the price of \$1000."

"The only way to handle the situation, as I see it, is for us to meet on the ground sometime after the snow goes off next Spring, decide on and survey out the particular site, and then we can prepare the deed." So we are relieved, as it was so long since we had heard from him. If the money has to be sent in small batches, it would be just as well to get it started, so that will not hold things up once it is defined

and surveyed. We hope the snow will be on its way a month from now; a lot has gone this weekend, but more will follow, of course. –
To stand on our rocks – oh my!

Love, Dordo.

#170. DPM to JDM (ALS, 2pp.)

Utica, NY

February 28, 1945

Darling,

What I'm going to tell you you may very well know. In fact, you might be home before you ever get this, but if not, you might be interested in what's cooking here. Incidentally, I'm doing this in complete defiance of your father's admonishment not to tell you. That seems perfectly silly to me, certainly you have a right to know what's going on if we do, since it's about you, and I intend to tell you all I hear about it. It's certainly got us wondering.

Saturday night I met your family and Marion and Jane at the club, and when Dad came in from playing Bridge, he had quite an interesting story. It seems that Saturday afternoon, a Voice called Gordon Wood, and said that he represented "a local agency" who were investigating Maj. MacD. Gordon made the perfect reply – "What's he done?" After answering many questions about your character, home life, etc., all Gordon could find out is that it was an investigation regarding a government job, with very high qualifications.

Then Dad met Miles Jones in the Club, and he said, "What is all this about Jack?" Dad played innocent, and got the same story from Miles, who said he gave you the biggest possible build-up. We thought it must be AMG or something and wondered whether you had given those names as references recently, or whether they

had been taken from your file, from your original application for a commission.

Then last night a Mrs. Cahill, who lives where Barlows used to, and I don't think even knows you, told Margie that she had been called, and questioned at length about the family, and about me and my family! She barely knows me, but her husband knew Daddy, so he gave all the right answers there, and she said everything nice she could and added that everyone on the street thought the same.

For an overseas job, it doesn't seem as if they'd check so carefully on all of us, or for a routine promotion. The man told Mrs. Cahill that you are in line for "a very nice promotion" – that's all. It seems pretty certain that it is an FBI investigation, and it certainly makes one think of goldfish. In a way it seems like a rather haphazard way of getting facts. For instance, since the terrible quarrel last Spring between Dorrie and Miles about Billy, the families have been very cool, and anyone with a personal grudge could have messed it up. I'm glad they didn't talk to Lena Newberry about me.

I loved the story about throwing the knife out of the window. The weather hasn't corroded your sense of humor at all, anyway. I hate to think of you flying all the time, I suppose it would be better just not to think of it.

Dad bought \$5000 worth of bonds for us last year, but they are safely tucked away in their safe deposit box – I was allowed to look at them, so you can see that there will not necessarily be much freedom in using them. They are in our joint names. Then this Christmas he gave Penny four thousand (on maturity) in bonds for his education. They are in his name, spelled wrong, which I have to have corrected by selling and rebuying them this month. (60 days after date of purchase.)

I hope this new excitement means you will be stationed in this country for a change, because I would like you to be ours now, it is been long enough. I love you, Darling, and think you are the one husband in the world for me, also my best friend.

Goodnight again,
Dordo

#171. DPM to JDM (ALS, 1p.)

Utica, NY

April 13, 1945

Darling,

I couldn't believe it was really Friday-the-thirteenth until I went and looked. It hasn't felt like it. We have had a gorgeous week, and I have resisted an overpowering desire to just sit and soak up the sun, and have made a good substantial dent in my housecleaning. This afternoon, however, your letter and one for the kids seemed important enough to let up a bit, and now I'm on our little porch with the sun beating down on my face (and this white paper), and how good it feels. After a day of housecleaning I'm too groggy to write, but at least my weakest link has held up well, and it's such a relief. A little warmth and all that trouble goes away. I wish I didn't love New York State so much.

Your reaction to the news of President Roosevelt's death interests me. Do you, way over there, feel a great sense of depression and loss that everyone here does? They announced it when we had just started dinner last night, and like everyone else here, I felt stunned. The whole country has taken it very hard. It's odd that both the intelligent and the "little people" both had so much confidence in him, as well as such a personal feeling toward him. One can't help but feel that it will mess up the peace to have him and Willkie both dead, and that perhaps this will throw the lead to Russia at a bad time. Dorrie was so upset about it, intelligently so, and she was sure Dad would think it was the end of all. A right leader is pretty rare, when you think of all the people in this country, and none quite as able left.

Goodnight, and love to you.

Dordo

#172. DPM to JDM (ALS, 3pp.)

Utica, NY

May 8, 1945

Darling,

Isn't it a coincidence that just two years ago today you left Utica for overseas service – and now it's VE Day! That day, we knew so little of what would happen, and couldn't endure looking ahead to months of separation no matter how soon or how distant they would end.

We knew, of course, that today would be Der Tag when we turned on the radio for the proclamation at nine this morning, and when it turned out to be a day of extreme darkness and heavy, constant rain, a lot of people, – even on the radio, – muttered with satisfaction that that would keep people from celebrating! For once the disciples of Discretion for Discretion's sake have put the heavy hand on a tired country a little too hard, I think.

We can't but be conscious that there is more war and hardship and work ahead, and I think the majority have been nearer tears than rowdiness at this news, but six years of European war – can't there be a little rejoicing to have that ended? Having been firmly squelched – and quite without cause, – myself, my only reaction has been to wish that you were here, because I'm sure you wouldn't feel sanctimonious and smug about it, nor would you find it necessary to curb any normal sign of enthusiasm.

Margie's letter from you, received yesterday, gave us the impression that although your coming home has been delayed another month, it will be for good when you do come, and last night's headlines confirm it. My guess would be if they let you home at all, it will be for good, and that the only thing that would keep you there longer than you now expect, would be that the imminence of another V-Day would make changes in personnel impractical.

Anyway, with this word from you, it seems as if we had additional reason to be happy.

I talked to Margie yesterday and today and it was, in spite of all the past experience I've had, it was a shock to me that they are so bent on observing this day just as they observed the first Christmas you were away. When I suggested that we might all meet for dinner somewhere I was told that the family definitely didn't care to "celebrate." It seemed a little obvious to say that it seemed to me to be an occasion, not necessary for merry-making, but when people who had gone through it with common fears and loneliness and a mutual stake in it all might then simply feel an urge to be near each other. But I did say it, – and made other plans for the evening, feeling all day like someone who has been caught telling dirty stories at a funeral.

This afternoon when I went in Reid-Sheldon's, Mr. Sheldon said I was to call 9 Beverly. It seems Dad decided it wouldn't be too blatant for us all to have dinner at the club tonight, as long as six years war had ended. That was all right – his three women, like three sheep, finally felt free to draw a breath of relief and smile in public, now that the Master had finally consented to V-day.

Pen and I had dinner at Cross-Costley's, and had a fine evening until nine o'clock, and if I hear that any of my friends (including you) got good and stinking, they will have my complete respect.

It was quiet in Utica. Stores closed at three, bells rang for a few minutes, and the radio presented every notable personality in the world, I guess, with a comment and a dit-dit-dit-dah! I didn't catch the real mood of it until I was downtown for an hour, and there wasn't anything visibly different about the crowd, except their less than usually dogged expressions, but there was a breeze, a sort of whisper – something very intangible but quite exciting, over the people's heads. It was contagious, and I came home feeling as if I'd had three drinks, – much happier, much lonelier, and much more in need of human companionship in the same way that you reach for someone's hand under tension.

Darling –

I'm scraping along financially but can't hold out much longer without getting into the Piseco money – and that's sacrilege! I don't know what you can do about it, but in case you wonder where the money goes here is what I jotted down after paying bills the last month. Some items don't come every month, but there are always several items of that kind each month, so it averages about the same.

May 1:

Rent – 22., Coal – 14.25, Rita – 32., Oneida Natl. (loan) 20., Gas and electric – 6.21, Utica phone – 4.26, Poland phone – 2.94, Milk – 4.64, Reid-Sheldon (9 books) – 6., Life insurance – 11., Piseco (taxes, lights) – 8.75, Dr. Squier – 5., Piseco (on balance of 95.) – 50. Cash balance: 57.95.

Cash balance, similar each month, must cover: FOOD, CLOTHES {Dordo and Pen – who grows fast}, CAR, CLEANER (some laundry, all cleaning materials), DRUGS (incl. vitamins), HELP (sitter, scrubber, ash-boy, lawn), GIFTS (7 this month, also Church and Red Cross), RECREATION AND ENTERTAINING.

We could easily spend the whole \$50 on food alone! I really don't see any of these that can be eliminated and the others are minimal.

#173. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

A way station

May 16 (?) 1945

Dordo, Darling,

I get so tired of writing my few letters so full of excuses and apologies. I feel helpless in the grip of circumstances and plead constantly for your continued understanding. You have no idea how proud of you I have been and how much I cherish your stalwart backing-up in the face of things which are explicable, but not to you. However, the time is coming sooner and sooner when we can

talk all this out. I feel, just as you have expressed, that our love will be refined and strengthened by this absurd and unbelievable separation.

You probably have wondered why I wrote to Mr. and Mrs. E. A. last week and left you out. Time was most limited and I was missing a piece to the picture puzzle which I wanted to fit into your letter and which can now be done. Hold your breath, but when I get home in August, I will probably be out of the G. D. Army. It will mean that I will be a hell of a long time en route and security will forbid my telling you when I leave. I am sending you some money tomorrow by P.T.O. And when you'd don't hear from me for a long time, and nobody does, get yourself set for the homecoming.

I am mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted. I am so tired and rundown that my old bones feel like aching lead. I am thin and nervous and in no mood to go into a long line of bull in this letter regarding the significance of the peace. Just love me and trust me and wait for me. Don't send any more packages. Don't send any letters after 1 June. Inform the rest of the family. Be prepared in August to take off on the basis of a phone call.

With all my love, John

#174. DPM to JDM (ALS, ip.)

Utica, NY

May 28, 1945

My Darling,

We feel as if we have waited two years for the letter that came today. I can't tell you how much it meant to get it, but a great and growing weariness and tension let up a little – surely enough to keep us going until August, when the rest – I know already from this morning's experience, – will soon go.

This time it really seemed as if I couldn't bear another day of not

hearing from you. It was worth waiting for, and won't have to be endured again because every day of silence from now on will bring you nearer. What a wonderful thing to get our lives and our love off paper. All the adjustments won't be easy, but everything will be so much more normal that making them will be far less strain, and there will be plenty of time to take on one thing at a time.

We've laughed and cried and I feel elated and exhausted, but even you would be impressed with Pencil's reaction. When I told him the news, he sat very still and said "I feel as if I were going to cry." About an hour later he said "Mom, isn't it different with Dad coming home? He's only six but as sensitive and mature as we could possibly wish for him to be. You will like him. Margie was very much relieved, and called Dad and Dorrie. Our friends are all very happy for us too. Grandma said "It's probably a good thing if he comes by boat, he'll get a good rest. Before the War people thought a boat trip was the thing to do when they were worn out."

Dorrie got her first letter from Bill written after VE day, so she feels glad to know for sure he is safe. I wish his war were over, too.

I'm sorry you are weary, but you will have plenty of rest when you get here. If you feel that you need me, I am glad. I need you, too.

Let's hope you're not delayed – I'll be a nervous wreck waiting for that phone call. We'll spend the Summer getting brown and healthy and calm working in our garden and fixing up our house – with your homecoming the reason for everything. It will be a happy Summer.

Take terribly good care of yourself, Darling, and I'll come anywhere to meet you, the minute you say the word. I love you so very much.

Your Dordo

#175. JDM to DPM (ALS, ip.)

A way station

June 16, 1945

Dear Dordo,

There is no time to make up for many months of ragged correspondence, but maybe little bits here and there as I can squeeze them in will help.

I am waiting for transportation; impatience is a curse sapping my energy to the extent where I have to force myself to take these days in a slow measured pack, forcing my mind onto quiet trivial matters, trying to sleep as much as possible, ignoring all the fevered and hurried thoughts which try to intrude themselves upon me. I am consciously cultivating ennui in the hope that it will quiet me down.

One of the things making these days so nice is the abrupt lifting of all weight of responsibility, the bliss of having only myself to think of and only my own creature comforts to plan is truly a delightful thing. I guess that Saturday morning feeling is going to hang around for a long time.

Regarding concrete plans, I suppose you have some, and those which follow are of course subject to change depending on what you want to do. I don't know where or when I will get there, but I imagine that I will be able to get to a phone and get hold of you. Then, I assume there will be sufficient waste time in processing so that while I am being red taped, you can get to some meeting place which I will designate over the phone. I will have a sufficient amount of money with me to carry us over a little while in the bright lights, before we head for home side. We can stay alone together until we decide it's time to head for home, blaming any undue length of time we spend as "processing." You can hit the Piseco fund for the cash to get to me. Stow the Pencil at 9 Beverly.

Then, after we have had time at home – four, five days, I would

like to head for the lake, a few weeks there and then to see Sammy and Evy (I have plans which we ought to discuss with him).

It all sounds too good to be true, but I can think of nothing which will interfere with the above, except, as said before, whatever plans you may have.

It seems strange to sit here, covered with prickly heat and impetigo, realizing that in a few tense weeks we will be together again after these two unbelievable years.

Take care, my darling, and have your plans all set for my phone call.

All my love,
John

Persons Most Often Mentioned in the Letters

Mr. Devall: landlord at 1108 State Street, Utica, N.Y.

MacDonald, Dorrie: John MacDonald's sister, born in 1920.

MacDonald, Eugene: father of John. He is sometimes referred to as EA as in Eugene A. MacDonald.

MacDonald, John: born July 24, 1916.

MacDonald, Margeurite: mother of John. Known as Margie. She was the daughter of John Dann MacDonald —“Pa Dann.” Her father, was a craftsman who made cases for standing clocks, but he had other skills which must account for his having been a hunting companion of Teddy Roosevelt. He was an angler as well, and possibly a guide. Margie is sometimes known as Mrs. E.A.

MacDonald, Maynard: “Penny,” “Pen,” “Pencil”: nicknames for Maynard. Maynard is also known as John Prentiss MacDonald.

MacDonald, Nana: a permanent member of the household at 9 Beverly. She was an elderly lady, a relative, also referred to as Aunt Em.

Prentiss, Dorothy: born Feb. 18, 2011. Wife of John D. MacDonald.

Prentiss, Evelyn (Martin): also known as Evvie. Wife of Sam Prentiss. Dorothy's sister-in-law. Born in 1933.

Prentiss, Sam: brother of Dorothy Prentiss. Husband of Evelyn (Evvie) Prentiss.

Prentiss, Bard: son of Sam and Evvie.

Prentiss, Helen: wife of Unc Prentiss.

Prentiss, Mary: daughter of Unc and Helen.

Prentiss, Unc: uncle to Dorothy on Father's side.

Robinson, Bill: married Dorrie MacDonald in 1944.

Van Woert, Harriet Mariah: mother of Dorothy Prentiss.

Glossary

ALS: autographed letter signed.

APO: Army Post Office.

ATC: Air Transport Command (ATC) was a United States Air Force unit that was created during World War II as the strategic airlift component of the United States Army.

AMG: Allied Military Group for Acquired Territories.

Baksheesh: a tip or bribe to expedite service.

B.O.T.M. Club: Book of the Month Club

“Chop”: an identifying symbol created to be used as a signature stamp, used in Eastern culture. (References to JDM’s “Chop”)

CBI: China, Burma, India Theater in World War II, under the command of Gen. Joseph Stilwell.

Donovan, William J.: an American soldier, lawyer, intelligence officer and diplomat, best known for serving as the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), during World War II.

ESKY: short for Esquire magazine.

faw: Find A Way.

kush-kushj: – Kush is a particular variety of cannabis grown in the Hindu Kush mountains.

Mountbatten, Admiral: Lord Louis Mountbatten was a British naval officer who oversaw the defeat of the Japanese offensive towards India during World War II.

OD: (or OOD) Officer Of The Day, duty officer serving on a rotating basis.

OCS: Officer Candidate School.

OSS: Office of Strategic Services, a wartime intelligence agency and precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency.

P.O.D.: Payable on Death.

Pony Edition of Time: The Pony edition of Time Magazine was printed during the World War II especially for air transport. To facilitate this, the magazines were printed in a miniature format

(5.5" x 8"). Textually identical to the normal magazine issue, these Pony editions were published without advertising, which included the rear covers.

Pine Camp: Army camp near Watertown, N.Y. and about 50 miles from Utica and Poland, N.Y.

Ernie Pyle: Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist and war correspondent, best known for his stories about ordinary American soldiers during World War II. He was killed by enemy fire during the Battle of Okinawa. At the time of his death in 1945, Pyle was among the best-known American war correspondents. His syndicated column was published in 400 daily and 300 weekly newspapers nationwide.

ROD: Rochester Ordnance Dept. (where MacDonald first served in the Army).

Rommel: a German field marshal and commander of the 7th Panzer division during World War II. Rommel was popularly known as the Desert Fox because of his victories as commander of the Afrika Corps.

Route Step: a style of marching in which troops maintain prescribed intervals but are not required to march in cadence or to maintain silence.

Station Complement: personnel who maintain the station and run many of its essential services.

Uncle Sugar: Uncle Sam, or the United States of America.

VE Day: Victory in Europe Day, generally known as VE Day (Great Britain) or V-E Day (North America), celebrated on Tuesday, 8 May 1945 to mark the formal acceptance by the Allies of World War II of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender.

V Mail: the microfilming of specially designed letter sheets. Instead of using valuable cargo space to ship whole letters overseas, microfilmed copies were sent in their stead and then enlarged and printed at an overseas destination before being delivered to military personnel.

WAAC: The Women's Army Corps (WAC) was the women's branch of the United States Army. It was created as an auxiliary unit, the

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) on 15 May 1942, and converted to an active duty status in the U.S. Army as the WAC on 1 July 1943.

Wendell Willkie: an American lawyer and corporate executive, and the 1940 Republican nominee for President.

Yahnundasis: a golf club in New Hartford, NY.

"Yank": a weekly magazine published by the Army during World War II.