

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
April 26, 1948.

Dear family,

In case you've been wondering what's become of me, I've been to Paris again. In fact I've been twice. This is how it happened.

Hews wanted me to come back to Paris with him for the last week he could give to house-hunting until the next problem was finished. The weather had turned sunny and warmish, and just right for wandering around, so I wasn't hard to persuade. I went back with him on a Monday afternoon, and spent a whole lovely week with him until we came back as he always does, on Friday night. Most of the week we just spent rambling in Paris, to such an extent that I'm hard put to it right now to remember exactly what we did do. Perhaps if I begin with Monday night and go thru the week it will come back to me.

Monday night when I got in I called Johanna Dorian, and, since they were home that night, we went over to spend a little time with them. Charles was there, too, and invited us to come have coffee with him and his wife the next afternoon, and then climb the Invalides dome. Their baby girl was just refusing to take a nap when we got there, so they showed her off for us with much pleasure. Their apartment is so small that they built in a bunk for the baby over the head of their bed, filling in the niche the big bed fits back into. The whole apartment, tiny as it is, is full of ingenious little things that Charles thought up, like the baby's bed, and a very attractive lighting arrangement over the dining table improvised out of a bamboo tube that the wires run thru and pottery lampshades that shield the bulbs. After coffee, we walked the short distance over to the Invalides, and Charles took us around on the side where a small inconspicuous iron door opened into the wall. We went in, and immediately we were inside one of the supporting columns, winding up a circular stair. There were openings about six inches square at intervals up the stair, so we could see well enuf. At the top of it, we were between the two inner domes, the one that curves out from the walls and is cut off at the top, and the one that finishes out the ceiling with all the frescos painted on it. We could look over the edge of the first part-dome, all the way down to the beautiful mosaic floor, with people crawling around like ants on it, and still farther down to the tomb where Napoleon lies in the hollowed out center of the floor. Then we started climbing again, up a narrow, ladder-like wooden stair, and then up another winding, stone stair even tinier than the first. The steps were so narrow we had to put our feet on them sideways, and the distance from wall to wall was so little that if we hadn't been going up sideways, our shoulders would have touched. On top of that, there were lots of places so dark that I couldn't see at all, and just had to keep on climbing by feeling the stairs with my feet. It was a wonderful place for ghosts, but as Hews said, we couldn't fall-- there wasn't room enuf. At the end of the stair was a trapdoor, and then we were out on the very top, a little circular affair like a porch, with wrought iron railings all around. All Paris lay below us, beautiful in the strong spring sunshine. There's no other city like Paris. It's so green. Every courtyard, every garden, every avenue is full of trees, and seen from above like that the city lies open, and full of life, and very lovely. On the way down, I was scared to death of that stair, but somehow, there seemed to be more light on it going down than coming up, and it wasn't so bad. When we got down between the domes again, Charles took us outside on the wide stone supporting structure, and showed us the bullet holes all around the dome. The day of the liberation, a rumor got out that Germans were occupying the Invalides (the nearby ~~XXXXX~~ barracks had been full of them) and the French started firing on the dome, using tracer bullets. Charles went to

the commanding officer and said, "You've got to stop them. The dome is held up by wooden supports, and they'll catch fire. There are no Germans there, anyhow." So Charles took the commandant up on the dome and showed him that it wasn't occupied and the firing stopped, but later on they started again. It was just luck that the thing didn't burn. Fortunately, the bullet holes all slant upwards, so there's no danger to the wood from water entering. Then we went back down the little wooden stair among the forest of timbers that hold up the outer dome, and down the second winding stone stair, and out again into the Paris sunshine. It takes about half an hour each way to climb the dome.

Wednesday, Hews wanted to show me some of the lovely suburbs he had found on his hunt for a place to live. We went out to St. Germain en Laye first, found a little restaurant, and had lunch. Then we circled the castle, noticing some very interesting stone grottoes in the bottom of the dry moat, looked at the great house where Louis XIV was born, and walked in the gardens of the palace. The long alleys of chestnut trees were beginning to bloom, and there were red bud trees scattered among the smaller growth. The stretches of lawn between the trees were sprinkled with buttercups, and every bench had a group of mothers who had brought babies to the park to play. There's a long wall along the edge of the garden, and the ground drops away steeply below. We could see all the way to Paris, where the Eiffel tower was just barely visible on the horizon. Below us lay all the little towns and gardens we had come thru on our way to St. Germain, with fruit trees in blossom everywhere. On the way back we stopped at Le Vesinet, which Hews had told me he considered the prettiest suburb of all. We didn't have time to see a great deal of it, but what we did see, looked very nice. All the houses had yards all the way around, instead of high walls and courts front and back. They looked comfortable, and easy to live in. I wish we could get a house there.

Thursday, Hews took me out to the Cite Universitaire, which I hadn't seen before, and we looked up Herbert. We ~~xxxxx~~ had a nice visit with him, and then we looked at some of the more unusual buildings there, like the Swiss house, that was designed by LeCorbusier. Then we went in to the Montmartre section, which was strange to both of us. Montmartre is a real hill, and the streets were awfully steep. Some of them are just steps, they're so steep. We found a restaurant that turned out to be the best one we've hit in Paris so far, and had a wonderful meal. We had a tomatoe salad and a mushroom salad to begin with, and to my amazement, the mushrooms were served raw. They had a vinegar and oil dressing on them, and they were delicious. Then Hews had a Coquille St. Jaques, which was a kind of shell fish neither of us had ever eaten before. It has a little round center, something like a small scallop, and a bright orange fringe. They were cooked in butter and stock. I had lamb kidneys, which were served with tiny potatoe croquettes about as big as the joint of my little finger. Then we had bananas flambee, with rum on them, and coffee. Between every course, the chef, who was also the owner, would come down from the kitchen and sit and talk to us. Then when we were ready to eat something else, he'd go back upstairs to the kitchen and fix it ~~after we were in the kitchen, and we would be looking for the~~ ~~the white church that crowns the hill.~~ ~~the white church that crowns the hill.~~ We didn't have time to go over the whole thing, so we decided we'd done enough climbing for the time being, and instead of going up into the dome, we went down into the crypt. That was a dim basement-like place, full of heavy stone arches and little chapels, with two enormous statues of past bishops. When we came out, the gardens that slope down from the church were swarming with children. Being Thursday, all the schools were out, and the children had come out to play in the sunshine. Scattered among them were a dozen ~~or so little girls in~~

or so little girls in their first communion dresses. The first communion is a much more elaborate and important affair here than at home. There is always a special dinner in each family, in honor of the communicant. The girls wear a long white organdy dress with a tight waist and full skirt, white organdy cap that looks a lot like a Dutch cap, but without points, and long white organdy veils that float from the backs of their heads. They look almost like little brides, but very crisp and sweet in their dresses. The day of their first communion, they are allowed to wear the dress all day long, and that's how it happened that there were some of the little white gowned figures racing and playing around with all the others in front of the church.

Thursday evening, as Jean was out of town, we took Johanna to dinner. First we met her and she took us to the American Legion headquarters here. She's a member. The ice cream bar was open, and we had a pineapple sundae each - the first real icecream we've had since we left home. Is there anything that tastes better? Gosh, it was wonderful. They have a restaurant, too, where you can get things like hamburgers, and ham sandwiches, and other exotic foods - all with real honest to goodness white bread. But white. I could hardly believe it. But their prices are quite high, even when you consider that they serve all these imported delicacies. They're more in the tourist than the student classification. We took Johanna to an Italian restaurant we'd been hearing about, and had some very good spaghetti. That's exotic, too. It's rationed very sparingly.

Friday we met Herbert, and he took us to a Russian restaurant for lunch. (We were very international this week.) We had borscht, which turned out to be not beet, but cabbage soup. It seems to depend on the part of Russia you come from, and these were White, or anti-Stalin, Russians. Then we had something else that was awfully good, but I can't pronounce it, let alone spell it. It was chunks of lamb ~~skunk~~ that had been broiled on a spit with lots of onions. It was very good to see a little of Herbert. He had some wonderful tales of his trip to Italy, and almost made us wish we were there instead of here when he started telling how plentiful and cheap everything is.

And Friday night we took the train back to Mourmelon, where it had been grey and drizzly all the time I was enjoying the wonderful Paris sunshine. But it was very nice to be home again, even if I don't care too much for the town where "home" is located. Mostly I'm just so tired of saying "good-bye" to my husband.

Monday Hews took the train back to Paris, and I tried to settle down to the regular routine. It was specially hard, because while we were in Paris I saw some posters up advertising Carmen Amaya. I've heard so much about her dancing and her troupe that I was awfully anxious to see her, but we couldn't get tickets for the opening night, so we got them for the following Saturday and decided I'd just come in town again for the occasion.

The week passed, with only Thursday to break the regular schedule. We've been wanting to have a picnic for quite a while, now that the weather's warmer, and I promised the children that if it wasn't raining Thursday, we'd have our picnic. They could even invite the two youngest Logeards. Thursday morning, Solange got here early and we all set to and got the beds made and the dishes washed in a hurry. Then we packed our two baskets, picked up a crocker sack in case we found anything in the woods we wanted to bring home, and started off. It was a grey, heavy day, but it wasn't actually raining. By the time we got halfway to the woods, it started to rain, and we ducked into a ruined barn for shelter.

Fortunately, the guns had only destroyed the walls, and the roof was still pretty good. It wasn't raining very hard, and nothing would do but that the children explore. And the grass was full of snails! They were scarce enuf that we had to hunt, but plentiful enuf to make it fun. Every day hunted, and pretty soon we had about fifty in the bottom of the sack. Then we had covered the place pretty thoroly, and the rain was almost stopped, so we decided to go on to a little pine woods nearby. Once in the woods we couldn't feel the rain at all, and I built a fire and sharpened sticks for us to cook with. I had two cans of weiners, and even tho it wasn't twelve yet, everybody was so hungry we set right to cooking. The little Logeards had never done anything quite like that before, and they had a fine time. So did the little McCanns and the big McCann and Solange. After weiners we ate hardboiled eggs and lettuce and then we started on the marshmallows. The Logeard children hadn't ever seen a marshmallow before, but they learned very quickly. The children ate and ate and ate - almost two bags of marshmallows. Then, as Annette said, they didn't have room for another thing, and could she have her chocolate, please? Then everybody was put to work gathering pinecones, that are just what I need to start my fires in the morning. We threw our trash into a nearby shell hole. There were a lot of cans in the hole already, and I was curious about them. Powdered eggs, said a big one, and Budweiser beer, said a little one. The American army was here before us.

We came home very slowly, picking buttercups and marguerites and lilacs on the way. We found some more snails, too, and when we got home and counted them, there were ninety-nine, so Cile went out in the garden down the road and found us another to make it a hundred. Snails are a lot of trouble because you clean them so carefully, but they're good. They taste almost exactly like crawfish. We fix them with a butter and garlic sauce.

Then Friday came, and I went back to Paris. Saturday night we went to see Amaya, who was really worth the extra trip. I've never seen any one dance like that. And the audience was full of Spanish gypsies, like the Amayas, and when anyone danced just well, they applauded politely, but when anyone danced superbly, they went wild. "Ole!" they shrieked, "Ole, nina!" And "Bis! Bis!" "Bravo!" Of course the dancers loved it, and they did their best. There was one boy who couldn't have been more than sixteen who was the best dancer I've ever seen. He was like a flame leaping about on the stage. He even took the evening away from Amaya, who is an exciting dancer if ever there was one.

And I think that brings me up to date. As yet we've no living quarters, but we've hopes still.

April 28, 1948.

Dearest Mom & Pops.

An hour after I mailed my worried note, the postman brought me a long letter from you - the one in which you asked me to see about embroidery at the little shop, but forgot to give me the address. There was a ten dollar bill enclosed tho, which was very welcome indeed. We got 3400 francs for it, which buys quite a few swell meals. Since then I've had a package with two cans of brown bread in it - very good. Cile's doll was in the other package that I mentioned before, in perfect shape. But you know, you sent us ten dollars right after