

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
June 12, 1948.

Dear family,

I never did get to write a letter last week. Hews whisked me off to Paris for a few days and ripped my letter schedule to pieces. We didn't do very much in Paris. It was so hot the first day that evening found us too exhausted to go down the stairs again to a restaurant. Instead, Hews insisted that since I was visiting him, he had to fix us some supper and I was company. That man has hidden talents. He made us the best stuffed tomato salad you ever ate, with tuna fish, hardboiled egg, and pickle mixed into the mayonnaise and chopped tomato insides. Next day the Herald Tribune had headlines about a temperature of ninety, but it really felt hotter than that to me. But by then it was cooler, and Friday was even nicer. I kept a light coat on all day. I still can't figure out where the week went to. Of course, everything takes so long because we walk or take subways and walk, but as far as I can see, we spent all day Wednesday in a bookstore, all day Thursday with Jean and Johanna Dorian, and Friday till train time looking for a coutourier that we finally located half a block from where we started from. In between we did a lot of window shopping. The windows in Paris drive me crazy. They're like a series of museums and style shows, and I simply cannot walk past them quickly. One thing, I certainly don't have to worry about not getting enuf exercise over here. Nothing like not having a car when you're supposed to do lots of walking anyhow. X

But we still haven't got a place to live near Paris, and one by one the hopes we had have evaporated. We're giving it two more weeks, and if by then we still have no place to live in together, we're going to reserve passage home for October and spend the rest of the summer sightseeing, and the heck with it all. I know the children would benefit a lot from another two years here, but from Hews's and my standpoint, I'm not so sure the time would be well invested even if we found a completely comfortable apartment somewhere. But that's for Hews to decide. After all, it was for him to study that we came in the first place. We'll let you know what we're doing, in any case.

If we do come back, it probably won't be to Louisiana. But even ~~is~~ that is still a good long way off. The next thing on our program is to get visas in order and arrange our trips. Mme. Logeard said she'd be quite willing to take our children just any time, so we'll arrange to make at least three short trips, taking one child each time, and a trip to Paris and one to the Mediterranean coast with all three. We'll take Dorothy with us to Denmark and Holland, spending about ten days in Denmark and one or two in Holland; we'll take Cile when we go to Switzerland for a week or so, and Annette when we visit Strausberg with Simone. Then the last thing on our summer schedule, we want to take all three and go down to a little fishing village on the coast where they can paddle on the beaches all day and eat bouillabase and look at Roman ruins on the hills. After that, if we have to say good bye to Europe, as they say in the travelogues, at least we'll have seen something of it besides the railroad track from Paris to Mourmelon and back.

In the immediate future, next Sunday we've a date with the Logeard's to take all of our two families to the woods. The strawberries are ripe. It should be a pleasant change from the inevitable Christelle roast, mashed potatoes, and salad-period. Besides, with the hot weather and the girls still around home without jobs, the atmosphere ther has been a little vif for me the last

Little vif for me the last few weeks. Papa raises heck with the girls for not helping their mother enuf around the house and spending all Sunday afternoon and evening at the bal. Then he raises heck with Maman for letting them get away with it. As for Maman, she knows darn well she ought to keep after the girls more (Papa tends to the boys), but she can't even persuade herself to do what should be done around the house, let alone talk the girls into it. And she likes taking the girls to the bal on Sunday evening. So she retaliates by scolding for all she's worth because Papa, who works hard enuf for three men, likes his glass of wine at the cafe, and sometimes comes in in the evening just a little unsteady. And on Sunday, he goes to the cafe as do most of the men in town to have a couple of apperitifs before lunch (~~xxxxxx~~) and he comes to twelve o'clock lunch fifteen minutes late, regularly every Sunday. The obvious solution of planning Sunday lunch for twelve-thirty has never occurred to anyone. As for Papa's drinking, the only place he can get any peace at all from all those children is at the cafe, where he meets his friends to play cards and billiards, and no matter how much wine he takes, ~~xx~~ he earns enuf extra the way he works that the family never suffers for want of the money he spends there, nor have I ever seen him ugly or unpleasant from licour. He gets gay, but he carries his alcohol well. My sympathies are beginning to be on Papa's side. I have listened ~~enuf~~ too often to Maman weeping and saying she just doesn't have any luck because her parents died when she was fifteen. ~~xxxxxxixxxxxxx~~ I suppose she means that if they hadn't, she wouldn't have been married to Papa ten years afterwards, but she's so much better off than most laborer's families. There's always enuf to eat and clothes to wear, and they have a good solid house and chickens and a garden, and they've succeeded in raising nine children, of whom they can say that while they're not all everything that parents could want, yet there's not one really bad one in the lot, in spite of all the ugly situations they've come thru. I don't know what she's looking for in her life that isn't there, and neither does Papa, and I'm beginning to wish she'd shut up almost as much as he does.

Meanwhile, my health is wonderful. We're getting the most wonderful lettuce and tomatoes now, and the cherries and strawberries being ripe too, I eat salad and fruit till they're coming out of my ears. I get an extra ration of two pounds of butter a month and a pint of milk a day because I'm pregnant, and with that besides our regular allotment, cooking is much easier. The food situation is really lots better here now. In fact, starting next week, the butchers will be open five days a week. That will be a big help in this land where the only refrigerators are in the butcher shops. The bread ration is bigger now, too, and there's talk of taking it off rationing entirely and improving the quality after July first. It seems to me, too, that the people I meet as I do my shopping are more hopeful now than they were when we arrived. If the harvests are good this year (and the wheat in the fields around here looks wonderful) ~~xxxxxxix~~ life will be easier for everybody.

Dearest Mom + Pops -

This letter has a special job to do. Besides bringing you news of us, it brings you lots of congratulations and good wishes on your anniversary. Four years! From the stand point of an old married lady regarding a couple of young things just starting out with you both a long & happy life together! And your year be as interesting as those that we go

Pops dear, ~~don't~~ it's always so good to get letters from you. Don't ever worry about confused words or sentences that overlap. My goodness - who am I with all my spelling & grammatical errors, to criticize you! Besides, I don't pay any attention to those things. I'm so glad to get your letters and so interested in what you have to say that even if it was in Netherlandish I'd manage to read it. Hey! Don't take me up on that!

Are you all comfortably settled in that lovely Massachusetts house by now? That sounds so nice. And what a relief to be there with the house in New Orleans and drawing breath in the cool of New England instead of Louisiana's tropic climate.

I had a long letter from Aunt Edith, in which she, also, told me about Sara's party for Felicia. It sounds heartless but at least for once they're being honest, even if unpleasant, about their feelings for Aunt Felicia.

Thanks very much for the cash. That's always come in very very handy.

Give Lee & Eli our love, won't you.

By the way - we don't need any more good now, but any maternity dresses will, of course be gratefully accepted. You might send it to me. Christelle, Rue Basse.

What is the news of Sandy? He must be very grown-up now. We love you all,

Cecile
P.S. - Pops dear will you give us your brother's address in Holland? We'd like to look him up when we go there, Holland. And how about Max. Michlisen? Should we try to see him, do you think?

Again - love -
C.

[Faint, mostly illegible handwriting at the bottom of the page, possibly bleed-through or a second draft.]