

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
June 29, 1948.

Dear family,

In spite of all the running we had to do, Hews and I had a very nice time in Paris last week. Not only that, but it wasn't too hot and we formed the habit of going back to Hews's room late in the afternoon to rest a while before starting out for the evening, and we even managed not to be completely exhausted by the time we returned to Mourmelon. It was always something of a question whether we'd be able to rest enuf, once we were up there, to make it worthwhile climbing the stairs to his sixth-floor room, but it seemed to be worth the effort after all. We didn't have to spend the entire weekend reviving this time.

So much of our time in Paris is always spent wandering around window-shopping, doing errands, or eating, that it's always a little hard to remember just what we did. The high spots this trip were going to hear Manon sung at the Opera Comique, which we enjoyed very much, going to see Jane Russell in the Outlaw (she doesn't look half as bare in Paris, even with the same amount of skin showing), and going out to Auteil Friday afternoon to see The Drag run. Oh, yes, we even got to a night club at last. It was Jean and Johanna's fete day, so we took them out to dinner, and after Jean wanted to go to a night club. So we ended up in this little place not too far away to walk to, in the Latin quarter, and it was just as dull as anything of the same type back home. Not nearly as lively as a good French quarter bar. Hews and I had fun dancing Mourmelon style for Jean and Johanna. Just wait till you see that. It's quite an act.

Manon was wonderful. I don't understand how the French opera manages to find so many beautiful prima donna's with such fine voices. It's really too much to expect that a girl who looks like these two leading ladies that we've seen so far, can sing too. And the tenors, also, are just fine. It's just a shame we can't get to the opera more often.

You know, I think I'll let you all in on ~~xxx~~ my secret. I was planning to keep it for a surprise, but it would be even more fun to be able to talk about it. I'm having a dress made. That's why we've made these last two trips to Paris specially. Hews and I decided that I just couldn't come back after a year in France with out some French clothes, so quick, while my waist-line could still be found without excavating, we went to see a coutourier. We had ideas about getting several dresses for me, but French clothes are either ready made and ghastly, or made by a little dressmaker and take forever, or made by a good dress maker and cost high. So we finally narrowed it down to one really good dress, and I had my two main fittings this last trip. It's a dinner dress, with a tight basque waist, very décolletée but

modest with its little white fold over the bosom. The skirt is a complete circle, enormously full, and finished with a pleated flounce that falls to just above my ankles. It's a blue grey heavy, heavy taffeta, and somehow manages to have a charming 1880 air to its very "new look". I'm supposed to wear it with a full petticoat. I've never been so excited about a dress in all my life. And Hews has had such a good time consulting with M. deReamy about the exact line for the décolletage and the length of the waist, and just where the skirt should fall to. I want you to know that it's every bit as much Hews's dress now as it is mine, even if I'm the one to wear it. I shall probably keep it put away in a big box, to be brought out ~~xxx~~ for the next ten years on Really Important Occasions. It's not a dress that will go out of style very quickly, thank goodness, and it really says Paris all over it.

It was M. and Mme. deReamy who persuaded us to go to the races Friday afternoon. They explained that it was one of the highspots of the Paris 'season', and that we really shouldn't miss it. And they were right. All the big dressmakers sent mannequins out in something startling to have their pictures taken for the papers, and the president of France arrived in the traditional coach with his party, and the horses were beautiful in the sunshine, with the jockeys' silks flashing as they went over the jumps on the steeple chase. We couldn't stay for all of it, but Hews got some good pictures, and it was a lot of fun. It was so completely different from anything else we've done in Paris.

Nothing much has been happening in Mourmelon. Before I went to Paris, the oldest class at school here had their 'examen de certificat', or final exams for diplomas. Michel Logeard and Cile's ~~Jacquie and Jojo~~ and Dorothy's Jacquie were all in that class, and tension was running pretty high, especially around the Logeard's. Michel hasn't been doing well in all his subjects, and there was considerable doubt as to whether he would pass the exam. When it was over, they found that all three had passed. Such excitement! Each family had a little party for the entire group on successive days, and all week the boys were stepping high. Thursday afternoon, late, I heard a sort of unearthly wailing outside the front windows. We rushed to the windows and looked out. It was Jacquie, Michel, and Jojo, with a trumpet, an accordion, and a ukelele, respectively, and they had come to serenade the girls. Jojo is fairly musical, and he does all right with his accordion, but Jacquie can only squawk on the trumpet, and Michel's ukelele just went plunk from time to time. They had a lovely time, and the girls all climbed up on the bench so they could see better and just doubled up with laughter watching them cut up. After half an hour or so, they wandered off and I got the children to bed. Nine-fifteen, we heard more squawks outside. (It was still daylight) I told the girls they had to stay in bed this time, and we all stayed quiet in there laughing to ourselves. I heard Jeanine downstairs at her window talking to the boys, trying to get rid of them. They said they were playing for the little girls. She said that the little girls ~~xxx~~ had gone to bed. With that, Jojo took the trumpet out of Jacquie's hands and started blowing reveille. It was very funny.

June 30 -

Dearest Mom & Pops -

Your letters made me feel so good. I knew you all missed us, but I didn't think our coming home would cause that much excitement. Sure is nice.

By now you all should be fairly well settled in Beverly, and out of the heat at last. I tried to be properly sympathetic when I read about the Louisiana temperatures, but all this week it's been damp & grey & cold. We're wearing sweaters and coats to go out doors, & sweaters in the house. The thermometer can't seem to push up above 50° & it doesn't seem spring-like at all, let alone summery. We could stand a little of that heat here. At least there aren't so many flies in the house when it's cold, so I don't complain. The Christelles hang one single fly paper from their ceiling as token resistance to the invasion, & everytime I'm over there the flies settle on my bare legs till I can't sit still. It's not quite that bad here. I work at it more. And to think that if a single fly was in the room at home I used to chase it for hours if necessary to get rid of it. O tempora, etc.

We love you -
P. C. C.