

*We have passage booked on the S.S. Washington
for Oct. 1st - Arrive New York Oct. 8th.*

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
July 6, 1948.

Dear family,

Friday at noon, as I was calmly fixing the children's lunch, the telegram man, with his usual quiet reticence, came strolling into the front yard and bawled 'McCann!' in the general direction of the house. Fortunately, the window was open and I was right behind it to answer him, so he only had to do it once. I rushed down and snatched it out of his hand, wondering what had slipped up that was going to keep Hews from coming home for the weekend. Leaping back upstairs to my scorching potatoes, I tore it open and read, "Come bail Quatrz Arts tonight." By the time lunch was on and I was able to slow down a little, I started planning. There was a train at three fifteen that would get me to Paris for seven. I absent mindedly kept Cile from stabbing Dorothy with her elbow every time she cut a piece of meat and insisted that Annette eat the potatoes she had hidden under the edge of her plate before, not after, dessert. I think I ate lunch myself. At least, I put something in my plate, and later I found it was empty. What on earth would do me for an Aztec costume? There was my long black skirt, if I could somehow pin the waist together so it would stay on. I had those sandals that looked kind of Indian, and that Guatemalaen sash. What could I use for a blouse? I went into the bedroom and took out my only white blouse. No, that just didn't look Indian at all. But there was a big piece of white material on the shelf. If I could fold that in half and have it long enuf to tuch in, I could slit the neck and gather it on a string, and there'd only be the two side seams. By golly, I might be able to do it! It was one o'clock. I shoed the children off to school, sat down with a needle and thread, and by two I had something that might not stand any rough handling, but looked fairly peasant-like, and rather effective. With Solange hovering over me like a mother hen, trying to find something she could do to help, I threw my things into a suitcase, trying hard to remember just what I'd need, and started off to catch the bus to the station. In the square, I knocked at the door of Thyre's store, and persuaded them to open up a little early after lunch to sell me some dark pancake makeup, and two yards of rough blue cloth to make a reboza of. They were very much interested, and very sympathetic. Then I ran down to the cafe on the corner, --and the bus arrived. I climbed carefully in, sat down, and finally managed to draw a full breath.

The trip to Paris was very relaxing, and I even managed to doze a little, thinking of the -till dawn reputation of Beaux Arts balls.

In the station at Paris I hurried out to the quai beyond the gates, anxious to get the whole story to Hews. I got out there, and there were simply millions of people milling around - but no Hews. It's the first time he's ever missed meeting me, and for a while I drew a blank. I couldn't think what to do. But the plan had always been for us to go with the Dorians, so after five minutes that seemed an hour, I decided that the thing for me to do was to phone Johanna. Maybe she'd know what I was supposed to do.

I went over to the lost and found booth, which also sells the little official slugs that work the telephones, stood in line behind

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a lady who had lost her baby's cap on the train, and finally got my little jeton to operate the phone with. As I turned away from the booth, I saw a familiar looking figure standing in the center of the platform, gazing anxiously down the tracks. I walked up behind him, touched him on the shoulder, and said, "Excuse me, Mister, Are you looking for someone?" He was, and he was very glad to find me besides. He said that Herbert and Denise Broussard were out in front, and we were going to eat dinner and spend the evening with them, and he was late because he and Herb had been out to Versailles at Denise's invitation, and they had missed the train back. When he stopped to draw breath I asked him what he was going to wear to the ball, and he said he wasn't masking. He had had a cold all week and he didn't feel up to going out in the g-string that was the accepted Beaux Arts version of an Aztec costume. Instead, we would all parade the Champs Elysee, where the students do a lot of ~~the~~ cutting up on the way from the ateliers to the ball room in the Salle de Wagram. So I had no use for a costume. I asked him the same question about three times, but he still insisted that we were not masking, and I didn't need a costume. By the time Denise and Herb joined us and explained how many people we know weren't going to the actual ball or masking either, I managed to be more philosophical about the whole thing.

After dinner, we gathered up Johanna, since Jean, as often happens, was in Tours for the day, and headed for the Champs Elysee. The Hotel des Invalides and all the dome was illuminated for these two weeks of celebration, looking like something out of a fairy tale, and so much lovelier and more mysterious than the same things in daylight. At the Place de Concorde, the fountains were playing, and they too were magic with light. Once on the Champs, we were in the crowd. Everybody and his aunt was there to see the boys cut up. It was far and away the best dressed crowd I've been in in Paris, and there were English and American voices everywhere. Every now and then there'd be a wild surge of people to one spot, and sure as we followed it, we found a bunch of Beaux Arts Indians in the center, brandishing spears, chasing and kissing the pretty girls (on the cheek, French fashion), and giving what they thought were Indian war cries. The costumes were amazing. I realized immediately that my indian costume wouldn't have done at all. It was too authentic, and not naked enuf. Most of the boys wore G-strings and had themselves painted up -red, brown, yellow, or simply splotchy. It didn't seem to matter very much. As variations on the basic theme of g-string and paint, some of them had fairly Aztec-looking headdresses that they had painted on cardboard, or a shirt with pseudo-Indian designs. An awful lot of them seemed to be rather confused as to just what an Aztec was, and there were several plains-type Indian feather war bonnets, a pair of African with-doctor water buffalo horns (a buffalo is a buffalo) and a very nice Polynesian ceremonial shield. These were the variations I could identify. The two or three girls that we saw who had courage enuf to go with the crowd (or was it desperation? ~~had~~ had themselves decked out in something vaguely harem like. At least, besides paint, they were in bandeau, shorts, and a bunch of veils. I remarked to Hews that the effect of the whole bunch really wasn't very Aztec, and he said that no, it wasn't, but ~~after~~ it was very Ecole.

Anyhow, everybody was having a lot of fun. The cafes along the sidewalk were full, and the boys had a lovely time invading each in turn, and drinking anything the customers had in their glass.