

20 July 1948

Dear Family,

Today I will take the typewriter firmly in hand to give you a word from the masculine side of the European branch of the family and give Cecile a rest from her usual chore of keeping YOU informed, as the American Forces Radio Station is wont to put it.

For the past several weeks my time has been almost completely devoted to preparations and plans for our summer trips, and trying to complete our arrangements. I had to get exit and re-entry visas from the french government, (I had to go to Chalons for Cecile's and to Paris for mine) a military permit to cross the zone of occupation in Germany, and visas from the consulates of Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, and Denmark. Then I had to make extensive enquiries about customs duties and exchange of currency in the various countries before I could even begin to think about buying train tickets. We couldn't buy our tickets until we had all our visas and we couldn't decide when we would leave for Denmark until the other arrangements had been completed but we had to give approximate dates for the trip at each consulate before we could get the visa. Getting the visas involves at least two trips to each consulate, presenting papers of identification, having photos made, and often a wait of two to four days before the passports are returned to you. They certainly do go out of their way to make travel difficult and annoying in Europe. Even countries who make a big show of wanting tourist trade and spend a lot of money advertising the attractions of their country require you to go through the same red tape procedure. We have finally finished with all that and can breathe a little easier. At present we intend to leave for Denmark about the 30 July and return to Mourmelon the 13 or 14 August.

Tomorrow we are leaving for Strasbourg where we will spend a week with Simone Weil who has just returned to France from the U.S. We spoke to Simone over the telephone the other day and she went right out afterwards to reserve us a room in a hotel. She told us over the phone that she will soon be going back to the States but we dont know any of the details of her plans yet. She seems very excited about being able to go back though, and we are very anxious to find out what it is all about. Maybe she is going back to get married.

Last week was a very big week for the whole family. We took all three of the children to Paris for the 14th. of July celebration, The high-light of the week was the 14th. itself. We spent most of the day walking through the gardens of the Tuileries, the Place de la Concorde, up the Champs Elysees past the beautiful fountains to the Arc de Triomphe where we saw the tomb of the unknown soldier, then by bus to the Place du Trocadero and the Palais de Chaillot where they have the largest and most impressive fountains in all France.

Then we walked across the Seine to the Eiffel Tower, which

was the supreme sight of Paris for the children. The people of France have a feeling of awe for the Eiffle Tower that amounts almost to veneration and they identify Paris in their minds with the Tower. The children were all steeped in this attitude from their constant contacts with the people of Mourmelon and had had Paris and Eiffel Tower drilled into their heads at school until they began to think the two terms were synonymous. They had wanted the life out of us ever since we arrived in Paris trying to persuade us to take them to the top of the tower. So when we finally did get to the tower nothing could keep them from going to the top. But first we went to get Eliane Christelle, who is now working in Paris in a house near the Tower. We got back to the tower about a quarter past four in the afternoon and bought out tickets for the top of the tower. There was a small line of people waiting to buy tickets but it didn't look too bad so we went blithely on up to the second level where you change elevatoes to go to the summit. When we got there we were dismayed to find a line of people four wide that extended half-way round the tower. But rather than disappoint the children by leaving we decided to sweat out the line. Now you must know that only a limited number of people is allowed on top of the tower at one time. So when there is a capacity crowd, as there was that day, the elevator stays at the top of the tower until it is full of people ready to go down. So there was generally quite a long wait between elevators and our line moved very very slowly or not at all. We finally got a place in the elevator at six thirty. Since we had a dinner date with the Dorian family at seven o'clock we were not able to stay on top of the tower more than five minutes. When we finally got down (we had to wait in line again for the elevator going down) we found that the busses had stopped renning and we couldn't find a taxi. So we started walking to the Dorian's house which was about a mile away. When we got about half-way there a taxi obligingly stopped right beside us to let out a fare and we took his place. We finally arrived at the Dorian's about a quarter of eight but we were forgiven for being so late. We had a delicious dinner. About nine thirty several other people came in and we all went to the Hotel des Invalides to climb the dome. We stayed on top of the dome until after eleven o'clock watching the fireworks displays that were going on all over Paris. Then we went back to the Dorian's to have wine, Birthday Cake in honor of Cecile's birthday, and pineapple in Kirsch. Our last real treat of the day was our ride home in an American Automobile...You cant imagine what a treat that was.

Cecile's birthday was the 13th. and we celebrated that day with a dinner of borscht and shiskabob in a caucasian restaurant followed by a very amusing play about the life of college students in Paris. It was the first time that any of the children had been to a theatre and they seemed to enjoy it immensely. It was a light comedy with practically no risque lines and the kids had no trouble at all following the plot. The only thing that bothered them was the fact that all the action took place in one room so there was no change of scenery. They got a little tired of looking at the same set all the time.

The rest of our time was spent wandering around Paris

seeing the sights and shopping. The most interesting shopping we did was at the maison de haute couture of Robert de Raemy where Cecile had the last fittings of her beautiful dinner dress, which was finished the day before we left Paris. Unfortunately Cecile's waist line had increased at such an alarming rate since the previous fittings that the zipper in back would no longer close, but that really made no difference. The waist and bodice had long since been fitted and finished and nothing remained for the last fitting but to adjust the trimmings. It is really a marvelous dress and the styling and workmanship are perfect. I am sure that you will love it when you see Cecile wearing it. It is cut perfectly for her.

The best day, from the children's point of view, aside from the day that we went to the top of the Eiffel Tower, was the day we went to see the zoo at the Bois de Vincennes. It is a remarkable zoo where the animals all live in the open in very pleasant surroundings with no barred cages. Each group of animals lives on a sort of island surrounded by a moat which has curved concrete walls that they cannot climb. For the animals that like water the moats are filled with water, otherwise they are dry. On the island for the lions and tigers a mountain has been constructed of concrete. It is a real mountain about as high as an eight story building with a stair inside which we climbed. It was quite a climb and our knees were shaky when we got back down, but we had a lovely view from the top that made the climb worth while. All in all the trip was a big success and the children never realized how tired out they were until they got back to their familiar beds in Mourmelon for a twelve hour sleep.

Towards the end of August we hope to be able to take a trip to southern France for a few days. We don't expect to stay anywhere very long but we will try to see as much as possible in a few days. We are more interested in scenery than in the towns so the time we spend on the train will be as valuable to us as the time we spend in the towns. We want to stop in Avignon, Martigue, Marseilles, and some town on the Cote d'Azur. Either on the way down or on the way back we will stop in Annecy for a couple of days and perhaps run over to Geneva for a day. We will spend practically all of September getting ready for our boat trip back to the states. If we can get ready in time we will leave Mourmelon the 25th. of September and spend a couple of days in Brittany before we go to le Havre to get on the boat. By the time we get back to the states I think we will have had enough of travelling and sight-seeing to last us for quite a while.

Well I guess that just about brings you up to date on our activities and plans. Besides Cecile is ready to put dinner on the table so I'll wind up this yarn now and put it away in the Post Office.

*Hewes*