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La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
December 4, 1947

Dear Family;

This is not going to be much of a letter. I'm not a bit sure it will even get to you, and somehow that discourages composition. However, in case it does, I want you to know that we are all well, and only disquieted, not disturbed in any way, by all the upsets here. Hews's school is closed by strikes, and he decided just to stay here with us until things quiet down a little in Paris. You can imagine how glad I am of that. Whatever happens, we are very unlikely to have any trouble here. It's too small a town, and there's that big army post so near. Food is still plentiful in the shops, and if it stops arriving from out of town, there are lots of farmers in the surrounding countryside, and we are beginning to have a few contacts. I can now buy a dozen eggs a week for only 22 francs a piece. They've gone up to 28 in the stores, when there are any.

By the way, I want to clear up a little misunderstanding. Those prices I quoted a while back are not blackmarket prices. They are the legal, government fixed prices as quoted in the daily paper. And some of them have risen since then. I noticed that pork chops are now 520 francs a kilo, or at the legal exchange, about \$2.19 a pound. You can understand that my interest in porkchops these days is strictly academic. As for horse meat, I was mistaken when I quoted that at 38¢ a lb. It's 94. In fact, if you come right down to it, practically the only thing you can buy for less than \$1.00 a pound is bones, without meat, to make soup with. That's exactly why there are so many strikes now. Only the rich can afford to eat, and the rest are having a hard time buying enuf potatoes to eat just plain boiled. It's not a pretty picture to think of the people, children, too, who are living on nothing but plain boiled potatoes and a little bread. The rations don't mean much to them because they can't afford to buy what they have tickets for. Of course in a little town like this, practically everyone had a garden, which helps, and maybe a few rabbits, or even a chicken or two. But there are an awful lot of people who don't have gardens, and along in Febuary or March, even a garden doesn't mean much.

The first clothing package arrived just before everything shut down, and Dorothy and Cile are so happy with their snow suits. They look adorable, and we've had a couple of snowy days since when they could wear them, and they were wonderful and warm. Cile looks like a brownie for true in hers, and Dorothy's got glamour. My pants fit perfectly, too, and so you can see that we're all pleased. It was very encouraging to get the package. I've been a little worried about those things coming thru all right. Now I'm looking forward to those long-handled woolies.

Hews has been splitting wood ever since he got here, and there is a beautiful pile stacked in the basement now. A wood cookstove is such a comfort! We can get the room that had gradually become living room, dining room, and kitchen warm enuf to sit around in of an evening wearing just a couple of sweaters, and we wouldn't need that much if we were doing anything active. How standards change! Today, I looked out the window, saw that most of the snow had melted, and told the children "You wont need your snow suits. It's warm today." And Cile came in from play at noon complaining of the heat.

This is a strange life we lead. It's not easy, but it certainly is interesting.

Dearest Mom + Pops -

Most of all I want to say

"Happy Birthday, Mom, dear." I played with the idea of phoning you, but it's awfully hard to get ~~me~~ connections thru now, and even if it were fairly easy I'd probably have to spend the day in the post office (where the nearest telephone is - a block away) waiting for the call to go thru, and you'd have to practically take all your meals at the side of your phone. As practice, I'm afraid. But I want you to know that it was very reluctantly that I abandoned the idea. And you can be sure that we'll all be thinking and speaking of you on the 12th and loving you just a little extra, if that's possible.

Your schedule for now till Christmas sounds very full and very gay. I know you'll enjoy spending Christmas with Leonard. I hope Lee makes it too. I'm going to try to write to them, but I find that cherry little Christmas notes come rather hard right now. Please give all the family my love.

And very much to you both.

Cecile