

McKee

Ruth McKee

Lexington Hotel, San Francisco  
Wednesday evening, March 14, 1945

Dear Roz:

Today when I called in at the office I found a large air mail letter from Washington full of messages from my dear friends and fellow slaves, you among them, and was most happy to be saluted in this fashion. I was also most impressed by whatever tactics Kimi must use to get such messages out of professional writers of one sort or another, knowing well how they avoid letter-writing. Frank, the old so-and-so, of course saluted me most briefly of any of the gang. You might tell him that in the absence of his beautiful brown eyes and their twinkle and visual evidence of his taking ways, I am not so easily moved to overlook all his sins of omission.

I have now been "on the road" for 5 weeks, and my poor old bones are feeling the strain. In fact I have taken it a bit easy the past two days, and tonight, once I have fed my face, it is my firm intention to get myself into bed and go to sleep, not see anybody or do a damned thing. Tomorrow I rate a staff car to drive to Berkeley for the day, and I get one again next Tuesday to go to San Jose and Salinas, and will thus save my bones and fatigued mind the struggle with unfamiliar bus and street car or train systems. You see, when I lived in these parts, I always drove everywhere. I had never been on a street car in San Francisco or Berkeley or Oakland until my field trip of 1943, and had to ask my way like any tourist. I still do, and have an unhappy genius for getting on the wrong vehicle.

Our incidents are coming right along, aren't they? I have an up-to-the-minute list, with essential details, of all incidents up to and including today's. Between you and me, I have little faith in the intentions of most of these California sheriffs to do anything at all about apprehending the roughnecks unless coerced into doing so by the Governor's office, as was the case up in Placer County. That trial has now been set for a date in April, I believe the 17th. What kind of a jury they will get out of that pest-hole of bigotry, only God knows. But if a heavy sentence is given those four offenders I would be willing to bet a good deal on other rugged individualists laying off this intimidation campaign. I wish we could give some big publicity to the fact that the instigators if not the actors in these gold-coast dramas are everywhere admitted to be the people who stand to lose a profitable occupation of Japanese farm or business property if the evacuees come back in any number. We are just a bit over-cautious at the wrong time, it seems to me.

There are almost more Washington staff in S.F. than local, it seems to me. Every time I drop in at the office, somebody else is on hand. Helen Collins, Charlotte Dixon, Miss Shippo, Mr. Castleberry, and today Rex Lee have all been on hand. Rex Lee was in Chicago when I was there, too. Helen spoke with genuine regret of Michael's indefinite leave from Mail and Files. She admitted that the output of work from her department would not be materially affected by his withdrawal, but declared that the place would be dead without him. I learned in today's collection of notes from the gang that he had been seen haggard and gloomy after his West Point exams, but I have not heard from him as yet. He probably wrote himself out for the exams. I loved the account of his speaking up in solitary eminence when Mrs. FDR asked for questions at the youth meeting. It doesn't astound me too much, as my son seems to have few inhibitions, but

even so, when I think of how difficult it would have been for me to open my face in any public gathering when I was 17, I wonder how my son turned out so free from the doubts and confusion which troubled me in my early days--and confidentially still do. You may recall that I was dubbed by the Bernreuter introvert-extrovert test (which was not too intelligent, I thought--maybe I was prejudiced because Bernreuter tried to make me once and gave me a pain in the neck) over the border-line of sanity on the introvert side. I've choked a lot of nonsense out of myself, but I can revert rather easily. Knowing that I am fundamentally a neurotic and that Michael's father is a mess of unhappy complexes, I really do marvel at having produced a child who, at least to all appearances, is awfully well adjusted to life as he finds it.

When I was really proud of my child's balance was when I got his first letter out here. Did I tell you that a letter from his pa came that last day I was in Washington? It was dedicated to extracting a promise from M. that he wouldn't drink or smoke until he was 25, as Alma, M.'s stepmother had seen fit to inform her prisoner-of-war husband that M. was now smoking. Darr put it on the basis of "ceiling" for flyers, and hoping to see his son the kind of pilot that excess had prevented him from being. I was really damned upset. Darr went to excess the minute he got out from under his pious parents, simply because he had been held down and taught that smoking, drinking, dancing, cards, cussing, and even coffee and tea were sinful. Michael has been raised on my policy which is to make everything so familiar to him that there is no temptation. Hence my child doesn't feel obliged to sneak around in back alleys to smoke when he wants to, and as a matter of fact he smokes maybe two or three cigarettes a day and sometimes not that. It is a purely social gesture with him. His alcoholic consumption amounts to maybe 4 ounces of liquor a year, which include a Tom and Jerry at Christmas and an egg nogg at New Years. It means nothing to him one way or the other. Knowing how he feels about his father, and knowing how I would have cut my ears off to please someone I was that devoted to, when I was his age, I stewed and stewed, after writing him a despairing note to go with the letter, asking him to think everything over very carefully before he made any promises which might prove very hard to keep, and telling him that I had no real fear of his becoming an alcoholic or smoking himself to death either. His letter was very reassuring. He was so eager to get the letter from his dad, that he went down to meet Lily at the bus. Says he: "I read the first sentence: 'Alma tells me that you are smoking now,' and decided the rest would keep till I got home." He went on to add that when he read my note and his father's letter he "had to laugh at the conflicting ideas" of his parents. "Nope," says my son. "If he'd asked me to lay off till I'm 18 or even 19, I'd have strung along with him to please him, but 25's unreasonable." Deep sigh of relief from the agitated mother at this point.

I regret that Nicky is ignoring his limitations as a beau brummel and a Casanova, and hope he doesn't distress your nights too much. It seems awfully strange to think that when I return, on April 18, you won't be across the hall from me any more. I simply marvel at you tossing off another semi-annual so fast. I don't see how WPA can afford to lose you, even for childbirth, inevitable as that event is in the present circumstances. I hope you have a baby who is unworldly and given to meditation. I spent last week end with my dearest friend and her 3½-year-old daughter, who is precocious mentally, tall for her age determined as Napoleon, and normally ego-centric of course. I thanked God that I went in for maternity when I was young and strong and didn't save it till my forties as poor Kathryn did. K. was a week ~~fix~~ or two from her fortieth birthday when this heavily planned for girl-child

blessed their previously peaceful home. Meri (short for Merideth) is a charming scamp. Her vitality simply slays me. She never gives up hope that she can get around a command to do or not to do something and her ingenuity is unbelievable. Her mother is a model of patience and consistency; she really never weakens when she has said no or has told her she must do something, but I well understand why she is too exhausted to write the book she has been under contract to present Harcourt these past four years. Kathryn sighs and says, "If I just have the strength physically to keep one jump ahead of her and can get her persistence turned in the right direction, she can overcome mountains, but God help society if she takes the wrong road, ~~for~~ she'll sure enough make the gallows instead of a laurel crown. Bob is at his daughter's mercy, because he can't bring himself to lift a hand to swat his attractive and wiley little daughter, and she knows he is all a bluff.

Now, Mrs. S., what would you do in such a case? Kathryn is a brilliant and highly talented writer. She is just about desperate with desire to get this book written. Her husband is an enzyme chemist in the Bureau of Soils and Chemistry, which evidently is a stinking Bureau, everyone scared of his life, and the Chief glorying in slow advancement and taking no interest in his personnel at all. Bob's reclassification was approved and sent to Washington in October, and is lying on someone's desk, and the Chief here can't be bothered. So Bob continues with a base salary of \$2600 a year. Kathryn does all her own work, though Bob markets and usually cooks dinner, but K. does all the laundry, flat work and everything. She can't afford help and couldn't get it if she could. You can't get a child into a nursery kindergarten for love or money unless the mother works outside her home full time; writing a novel under contract doesn't count as work. K. never has an unmolested moment until little Meri is bedded down at 7 to 7:30 p.m. She is made to lie down in the afternoon for at least an hour, but for the past year, she has never slept a wink during her nap period, and goes to any length to get it abolished. For instance, though she is always made to use the john just before lying down, if she can't get her ma into her room any other way, she screams that she must go to the toilet; when this petition is ignored she manages somehow to wet the bed. A spanking doesn't dent her will to have her own way. There are no children her own age in the neighborhood. There are little girls and boys about 6 and 7, and they let her boss them, and that is bad for her. There are two children 6 months to a year younger and she snoots at them, saying loftily, "I just play with big girls and boys." If coerced into the presence of the babies, she pinches or slaps them. Reasoning, spanking, fail to change her behavior or her attitude. On the other hand, she is astonishingly sensitive to color to sounds and beauty. She'll sit quiet as a lamb as long as her mother or anyone will read to her or tell her stories, and she has a phenomenal memory for long passages of poetry. School, when she is older, will solve all problems probably but in the meantime there is nothing to do with all that energy and determination but grin and take it. Poor K. says feelingly, "What a lovely child Michael was! And I never appreciated him properly!" M. was no angel; he had a terrific amount of energy, but he had always a tender heart, and he was obedient. One good spanking for some atrocity committed, and he never committed that one again--though he would think up something equally devilish maybe next day in another line. If Kathryn or I were ill, he would be overwhelmed with pity for us, and tiptoe around speaking only in whispers, and would come to the bed of pain and pat us tenderly on the cheek and say, "You feel better pretty soon," very persuasively. Meri, if her ma is under the

weather shrieks her indignation to high heaven, and that failing, sobs piteously that nobody loves her, nobody cares whether she lives or dies. Her ma sternly says, "That's an act, Meri, and you know it." Meri grins a very mature sort of grin and tries another stunt.

I didn't mean to have this letter turn into a discourse on a problem child, but maybe you are interested in such a case. I am, naturally. Kathryn is somebody I love dearly. We are what sisters are cracked up to be to each other but seldom are; we have lived together closely, and together brought up Michael for his first six years. We have seen each other through all sorts of mental and emotional crises; we wrote our books at the same time and under the same roof and compared notes and criticized each other's daily stint. Our gods are the same, and our prejudices (traditional southerners and native sons of the golden west). And boy, how I do admire K.'s genius for the perfect phrase. She is basically a poet, and her prose is something. I recognized her gift in our Freshman English course in college at our first theme assignment. I had known her for two years before that, but we had never been in class together before we hit UCLA. I remember reading her first theme in that college class while she read mine, and I felt almost dizzy with recognition of the genuine article in one of my every-day associates. I had liked Kathryn, and we argued about a lot of things and she was overcome when she found out that I was crazy about poetry, as she was. As juniors in high we met. K. was an art major, and one of six of us, all rather precocious in one way or another. The rest of us all denied any interest in the male sex around us, and it was quite genuine. I thought I might have some children, but I was never going to marry and be some man's slave. K. thought I was screwy and I thought she was headed for perdition because she said openly in this group that certainly she intended to marry, she liked men, and maybe she would have some love affairs besides being married. The rest of us were aloof from student affairs, but Kathryn went to school dances, and we all shook our heads over her and thought maybe she was pretty frivolous. We ranged in age from 15 to 17 then. Now all of us but one of the six have from 1 to six children a piece. The one remains a virgin and looks not a day older than 30, though she has worked for two years at a job in an air plant as an engineer draftsman, getting up at 5 a.m. daily and working 9½ hours per diem. She is actually 2 months older than I, but as my son said in his tenth year when she visited us in the forest, "Nobody would ever guess it!"

Ah well, all this is reminiscence, and I shouldn't be boring you with it, but when I face a typewriter, it is so natural to let my thoughts run on and on as they will. I regret exceedingly at this moment that my mind has not run to diapers except when I was searching out some rayon stockings--which are very scarce-- in Oxnard, and I saw a knit diaper sign, and couldn't remember whether that was the kind you wanted or eschewed, so I didn't get you any. Otherwise, I am just dashing from appointment to appointment, and trying to placate friends and relatives who can't quite believe that I am not on holiday.

Honestly I am so worn out that this noon when I lunched with Helen Johnson (Toz's erstwhile secretary, and a cute little piece who could never get along with him) who is now working in the Maritime Commission, and Helen wanted us to celebrate with a cocktail, I couldn't lift the thing without spilling it until I clasped my right wrist with my left hand, with left elbow solidly placed on the table. Here as in L.A., I have friends of long standing, and I try to see them in the evenings. We haven't been together that we have a hell of a lot to say, and we have a few drinks to pass the time. I love my friends dearly,

because they are so nice and intelligent, and I want to catch up on their personal histories. Therefore, I totter back to my room at anything up to 4:30 A.M. (that was only once, and with a gal, in case you were getting suspicious) and then have to get out and make appointments, but not earlier than 10 a.m. by God. When I hit fatigue to the point where I am consciensx of my heart-beat, I know that I had better call a halt, and so tonight, I expect to be bedded down by nine o'clock. Of course I propagandize all my friends heavily, and distribute copies of Nisei in Uniform etc., but then my friends, though all for us and interested, don't need propagandizing as much as some others.

I don't go out and howl very often, but when I do it is with some dearly loved friend whom I haven't seen for ages, and the time simply races past and I get in at a horrible hour because I know that maybe I won't see this person for years maybe, and so I can't set a stop-watch on our conversation. Then morning comes all too soon, and I feel my heart flutter and my knees bend under the load they carry. Frankly it is a relief to hit a spot like Fresno where I knew nobody, and could type up my notes in peace in the evening hours and go to be around midnight at least and not feel that somebody who is dear to me was having his or her feelings hurt because I had to work at night.

Am I lucky, that I thought of this queer little hole-in-the-wall hotel run by a French family where I stayed back in late 1942 for \$7 a week with room and private bath! I wrote to the manager, inquiring for the grandchild, who was a charming baby of ten months when I was here before. I was a nice tenant if I do say so myself, as I understood their difficulty in getting chambermaids, and it hurt me to think of white-haired jolly and very French Grandma having to do room work, so that in emergency I made my own bed and even scrubbed out my bath, and they loved me dearly. They are still here in effect, though Grandma and Grandpa live over in Palo Alto with Michell the baby, now three years old. Mama is still proprietor. Anyway, she made a concession in my favor, though she takes no one now for more than 5 nights, and so I have this rather shabby but clean room and private bath in a convenient location for 1.50 per night! And I have it for two full weeks, though everyone else I know who lives in more elegant quarters has to move every 5 days. The personal contact certainly pays! I realize it daily in the cigarette business. It is now a bad struggle to get cigarettes of any kind at all. If you buy a bottle of liquor, wine to whiskey, you can get a package of cigarette in a liquor store, but after all, though I have a fair capacity for alcohol, I can neither stand bodily nor financially a bottle of booze for every package of cigarettes. Unhappily, I felt so sinful about having so many packages of my favorite brand of p.m.'s when I set out, that I kept giving them away to worthy acquaintances, and hence gave out of that noble supply of 36 packages I set out with by the time I was getting ready to leave L.A. I have not yet taken to rolling my own, but am seriously considering it in view of the strange flavors I get when I get anything.

Well, this state is so damned beautiful and appetizing at this season of the year, and I have some friends and acquaintances who are so enlightened, that I can almost forget the superior number of the benighted--not quite. I keep being amazed at the total ignorance of the vast majority of people out here. Our information program has broken down somewhere along the line. Most people still are amazed to learn that we trust these "Jap-Americans" sufficiently to allow them to carry guns! The majority of Californians are ignorant of the fact that the Western Defense Command ordered the revocation of

Correspondence; Wint...

collections and try to make a convincing noise suitable to a scholar-- which I am not. I was told again at Christmas that the offer stood open as they had a lot of money for such frills! I hadn't known that any library anywhere ever had any extra money for frills. At least, it would tide me over for anything up to six months, and by that time FAO might open up to U.S. citizens.

Michael began his 4th semester of college work, his 2d at Sacramento a week or so ago, having survived the finals of the first semester. He takes horrible things with no leavening, as far as I can see. His bete noir is chemistry, and apparently the forestry course demands considerably as he is still moaning over it, and has been since his junior year in high school. Aside from that he takes physics (advanced now) some kind of horribly elevated mathematics, Geology, and a couple of other lab. sciences, and that's it. I'd die in a week of such fare without any seasoning of literary or philosophical kind. It pleased me vastly that he mentioned having taken his two little sisters to their first ballet, when the Ballet Russe hit Sacramento, though he wrote: "Dad rang his hands at thought of his son's being interested in such entertainment, but we all enjoyed ourselves hugely." Michael is not perturbed by ridicule or criticism in more serious vein when it comes to a question of his own taste. He expects to transfer to U.C. after this year. He has a part time job with the Bureau of the Census since the first of January. Before that, he worked in the loading yard of the S.P. 17 hours a week or some such figure, but decided that he preferred a job that called for some brain and less brawn. His stepmother periodically makes a damned fool of herself, and she and Barr are from a happily wedded pair, but Michael seems mature enough to take things in his stride. He is fond of his father, though certainly none of the hero-worship of other and less familiar days remains. He is crazy about his engaging young sisters and very proud of taking them around to this and that. Yvonne Noguchi and her husband live in Sacramento--she is Lily Tamaki Noguchi's sister-in-law and a nurse, and lived with Lily at the time Michael stayed there for my last WRA field trip. They have him over often, and he makes friends easily. Also he gets away for occasional week ends with Kathryn and Bob in Albany and spent Christmas there. I was simply panicky lest he manage some breed of free air transportation to Washington for the Christmas holidays, and much as I love and miss my son, I did not care to have him risk his young neck in the air during the winter season with all these ghastly crashes in the news and in fact. Fortunately his job tied him to Sacramento except for three days, which he spent at K.'s.

Eleanor and Jim have an apartment at Park Fairfax for March 1, and E. is buzzing around trying to acquire basic furniture that they can bear to live with and that won't cost a fortune. They had astonishingly good luck in getting one so quickly after putting their names in. Of course a whole gang of Antioch and Syracuse alumni live out there and do an efficient job of lobbying with managers, and Jim has veteran's preference, but even so, they had anticipated waiting anything up to six months. They have been living at the Parrot Guest House out on Connecticut near Dupont Circle since they returned from Florida, where they had to pay as much for a bed sitting room as I pay for this whole apartment. They are wonderfully happy, and just remarkably suited to each other. I am so glad for Eleanor, who was meant to be married and have a home and all that goes with it, and is a streak of luck for any man with sense enough to appreciate her.

You will be interested to know that I have hot flashes only when I have to fiddle with some gadget that won't work or try to find something that I can't nowadays since Madeline left these premises for more elegant ones out in Alexandria. I still have three or four packing boxes of her junk behind doors in her old room which I now use as a study, thus getting my file case and other writing mess out of the living room, but those will be removed in time, as Eleanor and Jim have cause to drive out there. I don't dislike Madeline, but I simply can't accept her as a quite human being, and never have I had to live at close quarters with anyone who so thoroughly got on my nerves. Before she moved out, she damned near drove Eleanor nuts, too. We both just draw extra deep breaths and relaxed after she had moved.

There was considerable turmoil in the Longfellow building last week, because just as DSM's final confirmation as real instead of pro-tem Commissioner of FPHA came up in Congress--and with some rather dirty opposition from some of our old enemies in the American Legion, Senator Taft, and one or two others--the Core Report, so long delayed that even Toz had forgotten about it, was issued and to the press! The Wash. press without exception, though some didn't use it as front page stuff, carried long articles on how the pro-tem Com. of FPHA, former WRA Director "Announced"--as if he just stood up in a press conference--that the evacuation was unnecessary and unjustified and that the Military had been a colossal jackass in the whole deal! There was a three-day period of suspense, with everyone expecting issue to be taken by the War Dept. and much capital to be made of this fiasco by the press and senators and representatives, before Dillon was confirmed without mention of this untimely happening. Poor Toz called me up daily sounding almost as hysterical as he did in those records of his conversations via telephone with Ray Best and some of the guys in the S.F. office when Tule Lake blew up in 1943. He was convinced that he was developing stomach ulcers, having gotten a minor dose of food poisoning just at the beginning of this crisis. Now, all is calm again. After things were settling down, Phil announced, with rather less diplomacy than he usually shows, that after all Toz and the Core Report were just like the Shotaro (sp.?) girls incident with the German prisoners. Everyone expected all hell to break loose, and then nobody paid any attention to it. Toz bridled a bit at being classed with the S. sisters, but was relieved that in general Phil's statement was true.

This must be the end. I have to go to the library, and then I have to beautify myself as much as wardrobe and increasing age will permit, to go to the Lit. Guild's The Glass Menagerie tonight. I got around to cutting off a foot or more of the dinner gown I bought to wear out to Myers' last June when long dresses for women were ordered. It has been hanging unworn in my closet ever since, and I decided that I couldn't afford to have an unusable dress around when it was the kind that, shortened, would be a perfectly good gown to wear to concerts and the National and such when I don't want to wear the dresses I do dishes in. Eleanor turned it up for me and whacked it off, and I painfully did the new hem. Odd, but I can type for 12 hours in a day without getting a "crick" in neck or back, but one hour of sewing can make me ready for the hospital. Toz suffered agonies over the problem of using his Lit. Guild season tickets when the National is being picketed on the score of the management's refusal to admit Negroes. He even tried to turn in his season tickets, but no refund would be granted; so he decided that since this issue had not come up when he renewed his subscription--and since he dearly loves the theater--he was justified in using these seats that were paid for last August or September. He won't renew come summer unless the policy has changed. However, we go slightly

before eight--as the picket line forms at eight--and thus will avoid passing through it, something neither of us was eager to do, I fearing I would see some of my colored friends in the line, and Ioz fearing sight of colored friends and also fellow members of the UDA (Com. for United Democratic Action) with whom he has been working voluntarily for some time. You may picture us skulking into the National tonight as soon as the lights are on and the doors open, looking guilty as hell. I am in complete sympathy with the pickets, except that I don't think this issue was raised at the correct time. Had they brought it up at the time season tickets are up for renewal and could have broadcast cancellation of many hundreds or a thousand subscriptions pending admission of all races, it would have been much more sensible.

Well--enough for now. I shall hope to hear from you sometime in the next six months or so, but expect nothing. I have stated in certain company that it will take (1) an award to me of a Lit. fellowship, or (2) M.M.T.'s elopement with a chorus girl to get another WRARAA out of me. In the meantime, I must fall back on private correspondence with my pals.

My love to your household, and tell Barry I have always thought burros were wonderful little animals, myself, and should love to own one--but not in this apartment. Much love and many good wishes to you,

*Ruth*  
P.S. You forgot to sign your epistle, but I was able to identify this writer from the content. I thank you for the contribution of stamps.

I just got hold of Helen Oro in Interior, through Marvite. (Boyd Larson is no longer there) and she promised to get your W-2's for you pronto.

*R.*







202-B  
"Mistletoe Sketches"  
Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.  
WHITE & WICKOFF  
HOLYOKE, MASS.  
Made in U.S.A.

th E.  
mence; WRARAA  
WRA

Dear Roz and Ned and Barry and Penny:

If I needed anything more than what I see in the mirror to remind me of the passage of time, the scaling of Barry and Penny to their parents' height would do the trick. I was glad to see your images and should appreciate a few words some day.

Last June I rushed out to Arizona to see my son graduate from advanced flight training and get his wings at Williams Field, near Chandler, and wished that I might have stopped off at Tucson for at least a few hours with you, but I was closely scheduled, not having much annual leave. I managed three days with my sister in Los Angeles. Just everything was too brief, and I know better than ever that the West is my proper dwelling place, but I seem to be fated to stay on in Washington for the next few years.

Michael is stationed at Shaw Field, South Carolina for his first year--though today he wound up a five-week assignment back at Williams, getting acquainted with a different breed of jet from the kind he has been flying at Shaw. I expect him home for about two-weeks of holiday leave

Dec. 17, 1948.

the 23d or 24th. You may be astonished to hear that he expects to be married in June. He is likely to be sent to an overseas spot right after and thinks he would like to take his best girl along. It's still the same one he talked to by the hour over WRA telephone in the old days. Neither of them has thought twice about anybody else since they met, when she was edging on 14 and he had just hit 16. Tookie will be 19 on next Valentine's Day, and will finish her second year at Greenbriar College in West Virginia the first of June. Michael was 21 last September. Tookie (official name Margaret Rea Ricker III) is extraordinarily pretty in her grown-up version, all of five feet tall and nicely put together. Michael plans for her to finish college after they are married. They expect to have four children, starting after the first two years of marriage, but no limit on dogs and cats.

The Crosses are proud grandparents now. I went out to meet Candy (for Candace) a couple of Sundays ago. Her mother and grandmother had driven her east from Texas, and she took the trip and all the admiring

people all in her stride. She's an awfully pretty baby and looked more like six months than three. Pat Cross has settled on one of her string of admirers after three tentative engagements and is marrying a radio engineer next month.

Eleanor and Jim Grahl's baby, Bartlett is nine months old and tremendous, weighs more than Michael did at a year and takes size three from now on. They have a very attractive apartment at Park Fairfax and are happy as larks about life and each other. Emily stayed with me till March, when she resigned from Public Health and took off for Carmel, where she is living with her father and mother and has redecorated a basement game room as a study and is trying her hand at free lancing. Lorna Jenson Stith breezed through Washington a few weeks ago on a visit. She looked wonderful, and she too is happy. Orel found it impossible to get a living wage in industry and went back into the Army. He had to go in as some kind of a sergeant and is drilling draftees down in Louisville, Ky. or somewhere near there, but expects to get his commission back shortly. Lorna's Christmas greeting informed me that she had gotten a berth in the post library at Civil Service rates. She had decided there was no chance at a govt. job there and that it wasn't worth her while to take a commercial one, since the latter paid only sixteen or seventeen a week.

Eleanor had a pre-Christmas punch party last Saturday with quite a number of the old WPA hands there: Glicks, Barshays, Gretchen, Louise Harding, Harry and Ella Weiss, Madeline Perry, Mel Specter and his wife (gorgeous redhead whom he finally got around to marrying at Thanksgiving) Toz and I. Toz has been Chief of Information at the Federal Power Commission and doesn't like the job too well. Dillon Myer is President of Inter-American Affairs, State Dept. and Phil is his Gen. Counsel. They are cheering up with the present political picture and hope to get enough money to carry on a constructive program. Phil is rather trying with his newly acquired Spanish, especially when he tries to talk on two levels at once in it--Nobody can understand him at all.

Me, I'm still at the Pentagon, now slaving over Procurement of radio, telegraph, telephone, radar, meteorological and associated equipment for the Armed Forces and Lend Lease, overcoming shortages of raw materials, development of substitutes, expediting, education of industry, contract termination, repair, storage and issue problems, packaging, tropicalization, etc., etc.

My thoughts turn toward the Orient. State Dept. is still needing people for information, and will accept those with wartime status, being as those with permanent status mostly have ties here and don't want to pick up and strike off across the world. There is word of a Civil Service Exam coming up early in the year for historians, happily the unassembled kind--with no danger of being asked who led the charge of the Light Brigade or anything else that could embarrass me--and I have decided to take it as a gesture toward security. My present official superior, charming at coffee or lunch or on a social occasion, is a pain in the neck to work with or under. He is slow as time, going at an official history as if it were a life-project in an out-of-the-world college. He has been working on this program for two years and a bit more now, and began actual writing in January. By November he had come forth with one incomplete chapter of 53 typed pages, which defined the functions of the Signal Corps in such intricately patterned prose that it took three readings of every sentence for his peers who held the "seminar" on it to get his drift. I find myself in instinctive disagreement with almost all his ideas about the way this thing should be done, but he has a sublime faith in his own infallibility. I'm not much good as a yes-man. However, I have reason to believe that the end is not far over the hill.

I have a somewhat insane cat who likes to retrieve bent paper clips and such small stuff. He turned up on the doorstep a pathetic little waif scarcely steady on his legs a year ago. Emily and I together spent \$30 in doctor bills on him, after which he turned into a handsome streamlined beast, all black except for one white whisker and very shiny. He is a demon, and you'd think he was about three months from the way he behaves. The old witch below me has come up at three a.m. in a wierd dressing gown to ask what kind of a beast I keep? It is ruining her health by its bumping and crashing about over her head. When he gallops stiff-legged, he sounds like a buffalo.

Best wishes and love to all of you--I envy you the desert at this season.

Ruth.

e, Ruth E.  
responde; WRARA

Jan. 1, 1950

Dear Roz:

Until your Christmas card showing the growth of the younger generations of Spiers and the enlargement of the menagerie came, I had heard of you only through Emily, who turned out one of her 20-pagers shortly after your stay in Carmel. She was delighted to see you.

I gather from both her report and the current picture greeting that the Spiers are thriving and exuberant. <sup>my job at the Pentagon</sup> wound up Dec. 2. Not too

good a period for change,  
but actually I am  
glad to be out of the  
place.

I was turning my  
thoughts to overseas  
work and with pretty  
definite change of getting  
to New Zealand, Australia,  
Tasmania, Egypt, or  
Paris, when Michael  
suddenly revised his  
plans. Now, since the  
new economy program  
has cut him from flying  
(since he was at the  
Air Force breakup school  
and no longer a tactical  
pilot) he is signing  
out of the Air Force & into  
the National Guard for  
week end jet-flying,

and going back to college  
to get an aeronautical  
engineering degree,  
Univ. of Maryland, which  
has just had a handsome  
grant from Glen Martin  
for aeronautical studies.  
So - I have kissed overseas  
work good-bye and am  
wandering up some local  
trousers & shuffling library  
of Conger - to shelter  
my child from the hours  
of a hall bedroom  
existence.

Of the old gang: Eleanor  
Grall (one more) has a  
tremendous blondson,  
Bart, nearing two, who  
speaks enthusiastically  
of "The Co-op" where he  
accompanies his mother

afford butter, etc., etc.  
After Phil took her  
home, Michael and Toy  
and I sat around and  
snarled about her for  
a full hour. She can  
be nice, but is so un-  
predictable! She is at her  
best as a hostess, but  
in one's own home, one  
never knows whether  
she will be an utter  
bitch or a human. And  
she can wreck the whole  
evening for everyone, if  
she is in a nasty mood.  
I must go and get myself  
into a long black skirt  
and a fake blouse for  
the wedding of one of Michael's  
close friends at 6:30 p.m.  
M's romance crashed on  
the tundra of snobbery and  
religion.  
Best wishes to you all,  
Eva will? and love, Betty.

reasonably happy about  
it. He had quite a  
junket through the  
Caribbean and So.  
America this fall, and  
was somewhat surprised  
to return alive. He had  
to do a deal of flying and  
is not air-minded. He  
was quite chagrined  
to find that his French,  
which he had always  
prided himself on  
being damned good,  
was not up to  
talk on sanitary  
engineering and  
public health problems.  
Allison Meyer recently  
returned from a mission  
to the Arabs and since  
then sees much more

for marketing purposes.  
Lisa Peattie was an M. A.  
and is a ma, her son  
John Christopher, having  
been born last summer.  
Sherly Barrshay is ex-  
pecting her first child  
on January 5.

Frank Cross's son  
Charles was killed in  
that crash of an army  
bomber against a mountain  
in Alabama in October.  
C. was just a passenger.  
Fortunately for all of them  
Pat's first year began that  
same week and he is  
a charming baby. Gretchen  
is free-lancing happily,  
recently returned from a  
jaunt to Europe. Lorna &  
Orel stills are in Germany and  
very interested in life. Toz is back  
with pliers and Phil now, in the Dept.  
of Inter American Affairs, and

Jan. 1, 1950

Dear Roz:

Until your Christmas  
card showing the growth  
of the younger generations  
of Spiers and the enlarge-  
ment of the menagerie  
came, I had heard of you  
only through Emily, who  
turned out one of her  
20-pagers shortly after  
your stay in Carmel. She  
was delighted to see  
you.

I gather from both her  
report and the current  
picture greeting that the  
Spiers are thriving  
and exuberant. Pentagon  
my job at the Pentagon  
wound up Dec. 2. Not too

good in the Institute of  
I-A. affairs.

Phil is about to  
take off for a second  
trip to South America  
and quite thrilled  
about it. He gets a  
heady sense of freedom  
on field trips, I know.  
They are his escape  
from Rose H., who's theory  
of marriage will not  
allow him to go anywhere  
without her socially,  
when he is in walking  
form. We can't even go to a  
men's gathering here  
if it is not an official  
meeting.

I love Phil dearly and  
should see more of the  
glitches if Rose H. weren't  
such a thorny cuss.

Two years ago Christmas  
I had them as dinner  
guests, and have not  
yet fully recovered. Rose  
H. was in a hell of a  
mood. She raised hell  
about my new kitchen, to  
begin with, as she doesn't  
like cats, and screeched  
every time he walked  
past her - challenged  
everything anyone said,  
interrupting 17 times  
in every five minutes,  
cried out upon me for  
my extravagance in buying  
wild rice stuffing for  
the goose, for using  
butter, when she couldn't