Tully Archive; LeHand Papers

Correspondence: Offie, Carmel, 1935-1940

Collection: Grace Tully Archive; Series: Marguerite ("Missy") LeHand Papers
Box 10; Folder = Correspondence: Offie, Carmel, 1935-1940

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Moscow, October 27, 1935.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

First of all I want to thank you for that very, very nice note you sent me regarding my nose operation. Then next I want to inform you that His Excellency IS HIS OLD SELF AGAIN! I REALLY MEAN IT - wait and see.

We arrive in New York aboard the steamship WASHINGTON on December 10, and HE will be so glad to get back to the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA that he'll weep with joy. The weather here has been ugly and bad all this year and, together with very "pleasant relations with the Soviets" (brrrrr!), you can imagine how pleasant life in Moscow is. I don't mind particularly because I manage to keep busy all the time but it's hard on WCB. And what with all these dying American millionaires and American senators, all of whom get their meals from the Ambassador's kitchen and insist on talking foreign affairs with him while on their deathbeds, life may be hard here but to one with a sense of humor it's a lot of fun.

I'm rather glad that the Ambassador is going home soon, however, as I am beginning to exhaust my repertoire to keep him amused. Only today (it's been raining all day and at 3 P. M. it was as dark as ink) when he remarked on the ugly weather, I said, "Just think, you will be in the White House pool in six weeks." It cheered him immensely.

And when the pouches come in all he cares about are letters from the White House or good old Judge Moore. You have all been very good this year about writing him, better than he deserves in fact because he is so negligent about writing.

As

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.

As a possible source of amusement to you, I am listing below what I did today:

Arose 6:45 A. M. Ambassador sent for me and went in for some dictation (letters to Judge Moore and the President) and general conversation with the Ambassador. He lamented fact there was no sun, whereupon I borrowed a sun lamp from our military attaché here and set it full blast on His Excellency. Went into kitchen downstairs and found servants about to engage in mortal combat over whether or not French standard of living was as good as the Russian. (We have both French and Russian servants.) I settled the battle by telling them that they were equal. Took Mr. Kelley (Ambassador's State Department guest) to the one Catholic Church in Moscow situated across the street from the OGPU! Stopped in office for a moment and received urgent call from German Embassy saying that the Russian customs had refused to release their fresh meats and provisions from Poland, and therefore they would have no food for tonight. I have promised to send them three turkeys, six sausages for making canapes, and some veal. The Germans are giving a reception for 200 people tonight. Invited 90 people for our movie this afternoon. Office charwoman asked to see me - received her and immediately noticed black eye. It appears her husband beat her up and took her salary away from her. She wants to have him arrested and sent to Siberia and asks my advice. I said, "think of your three children." She weakens. We males must stick together. Took Kelley to the Museum of Western Art, Boyars House, and the Kremlin Museum. He is very much interested. I'm bored, it's about the millionth time I've done it. At lunch time Ambassador calls for me to tell me that Anne's prize Persian kitten is violently ill. Get a doctor. I get a doctor and the kitten has worms. I would have to give it the worm medicine. Ambassador becomes inspired and decides to write a despatch on Japanese and German relations with the Soviet Union. It looks as though it's going to be a good one. It'll take about three days to finish it. Had to give some adrenalin out of our dispensary to the asthmatic husband of one of our American women here which makes me 20 minutes late for

lunch

lunch and I am publicly bawled out before Mr. Kelley. Telephone rings and Chinese Ambassador "must see the Ambassador immediately." O. K. come over, and it's the same old thing. Japan this and Japan that. Again the telephone and this time it's your friend's dear Boris. He wants to ask if Grace Davidson's book has been published - he has heard it is already being advertised. I think his days are numbered. Met Sir Charles Bell, famous Tibetan explorer, and introduced him to the Ambassador who finds him very interesting. Movie is a great success. Meeting of Embassy staff after movie - great bore and you're supposed to look interested. Dean of Diplomatic Corps advises Japanese Ambassador's wife has sudden attack of appendicitis. I immediately send flowers with Ambassador's card. Shortly thereafter Japanese Ambassador scours town for ginger for his wife to give her relief (believe it or not but these Japanese are funny people) but without success. Fortunately, we happened to have some in the kitchen which Anne left - she loves ginger bread - and the Ambassador takes it over to the Japanese Embassy personally and presents it with all the formalities. For a moment I thought the Japanese Ambassador was going to kiss WCB's feet. Foreign Office calls to say that an American professor is dying of spotted typhus in Irkutsk - 4,000 miles away from Moscow. Ambassador says what is to be done. My advice is to inform Foreign Office that they should clean lice from Russian trains. What I think is that the poor professor is probably dead and the Foreign Office will tell us only tomorrow or the next day. Litvinov's Secretary calls up to say that Litvinov would like to see the Ambassador tomorrow. They haven't seen each other since the famous protest. I'm going to put hand grenades and poison gas in the Ambassador's pockets before he goes over. WCB receives Chinese, French, Afghan, and Polish Ambassadors plus Lithuanian Minister between 5:30 and 7:30 this evening. On my way for the second time to the office I

took

took the Ambassador's gray topcoat and stepped into his limousine with my hat pushed down over my head. The OGPU spies in front of the house think I am His Excellency and immediately start their Ford in hot pursuit. When they arrive at the office I throw off the coat and they get as sore as the devil. It's a favorite trick of mine and always makes a hit. Met the Chinese Ambassador's niece and hostess at a cocktail party at the Turkish Embassy late this afternoon. She is known as the "Snake woman" in the diplomatic corps because of the shape of her body and her walk. All the women hate her but I think she's very fascinating. The Ambassador and Mr. Kelley are having a long conference this evening so I'm down here listening to all the complaints and troubles of the various members of the staff. To my amazement I have discovered that we are going to have three new babies in the Embassy this next year.

The above is a rather dull day but will give you some idea of life in Moscow. When I get a real day sometime I will send it to you. I wish I had written you at the time Senator Lewis and old Filene were ill but I was much too busy.

Before I close this long-winded epistle I warn you that I am going to violate all that is appropriate and bring with me to America a gift for you for your many kindnesses to me. I hope you will not consider me too impertinent.

I am grateful to you and I have a good friend here who is a thousand times so.

Best wishes always.

Yours very sincerely,

C. Offie

P.S. I haven't read this letter. I just dashed it off on a typewriter before your courier gets away. CO

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Paris, August 31, 1937.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Many thanks for your letter of August 23rd. I have made arrangements for the three young ladies to be well taken care of and will have the pleasure of seeing them at least a couple of times before we leave for America.

I have arranged for a car and somebody who speaks perfect French and English to go around with them. I shall also see to it that they are invited to several lunches and possibly one binge at Montmartre - or doesn't the White House approve of binges? All this should help them a little on their budget.

Is there anything we can bring back for you from here before we sail on the NORMANDIE on September 22nd?

With all good wishes and kindest regards, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

Carmel Offie.

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, August 9, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Hamilton Fish has just been in for a long talk with the boss and was so completely persuaded by what the boss had to say, that at the Noon-Day Club Luncheon today he spoke very highly of the boss and the President's foreign policy!!! I thought this would amuse you as coming from the congressman for Dutchess County.

Mrs. Roosevelt, the President's mother, is in grand form. I wrote Mary a few details about her yesterday. Ask Mary to show you the letter, or at least to tell you about, because Mary is bashful of my love and kisses at the end of each note I write.

I have never known the boss to be more sad and longing as he has been for the past three weeks. Each defeat for the Administration in Congress (Neutrality, Spend-Lend, Housing, etc. etc.) have hurt him deep to the heart in each case. And when I say something to get him to forget it or tell him that there's nothing he can do about it, he invariably replies, "I know. But if I could be in the White House with the President tonight, I know I could make it easier for him."

On Sunday evening last, after Anne had turned in, we went off walking into the forest(It was as bright as daylight at 11 P.M.!), and he spoke to me in a manner which leads me to believe that he is serious. After stating that the President needed real friends, and ought to be helped in every possible way, and cursing a few people for deserting him because of the end of his term nearing, he said that if we passed into this Fall without war, he felt that he should resign. Before doing so, however, he wanted me to make up my mind as to whether I wanted to go on working for the Government or whether I wanted to go in private business. No matter what I decided upon, he would see to it that I was well placed. I thanked him, of course, and said that I would like to know why he should be particularly worried about me; that I would much prefer to go on working for him or with him.

He

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.

He went on to say that if all went well he would return home this Fall and say to the President that he would like to return to the United States for good; that if the President could use him at home, he would be at his service; but if the President could not use him in any official capacity he would talk to him about serving in an unofficial capacity. I asked him what he meant by unofficial capacity and he replied, "There are lots of ways." The only thing I can think of off-hand is that Margaret Biddle ($85,000,000) has offered to buy two or three radio stations if he will agree to run them. Roy Howard has also spoken to him about taking on the foreign end of the SCRIPPS-HOWARD papers.

I argued with him and told him that he was foolish to think of doing such a thing at this time. I said that after all he was the No. 1 Ambassador; he enjoyed not only the friendship but the real affection and trust of the President; and that he had done immeasureable accomplishments for the good of the United States in Europe. Whereupon, to my utter amazement, (you know I have always kidded him about being too pro-French simply because they were so intelligent and had such good food and wine) he replied, "I want to be in the United States, I want to live in the United States, I feel out of touch with the United States."

I let it go at that, thinking he would forget about it all the next day but he hasn't. In a way, you are responsible in part for this. I have been embarrassed and have embarrassed the mail room for letters from the White House when there are none, and when he repeats to me five or six times a week (we have pouches three times a week.) "Are you sure there were no letters from Miss Le Hand in the last pouch?", I say, "Absolutely not. If you want to have word of some kind from her, we have twenty-four hour telephone service with Washington".

Doris Fleeson and her husband arrived today. We will take care of them. She asked me where she could get a special kind of bracelet for you and I have scouts out now searching. Judge Moore wrote a pathetic letter to the boss which arrived today, saying that if he had gone to the Hill before the House voted on the neutrality bill, he is sure he could have obtained a favorable vote. (He was on the CLIPPER).

Joe Kennedy is on the Riviera where he will be for five weeks and I get great pleasure when he calls up each day for news

news. He always says, "What's the news today, my boy. My Embassy doesn't have a G..... d....ed thing when I'm not there." Incidentally, his wife and most of the kids are sailing for America on September 20th.

Jim Farley, who is now in Warsaw, called up from Havre and said he would arrive here about August 22nd, to stay about one week. Miss Beth Leary, Mary Eben's FRIEND, is coming up from Biarritz to take care of the two girls while Jim is meeting French government officials with the boss. They will (Jim and the two girls) stay at the house in town while the boss and Anne are in the country.

This is a long letter, but you asked for it in your last letter to me.

All the best.

Yours very sincerely,

Offie

P.S. Incidentally, I dined at the house of a very intimate friend of the Leidy (Leidig) Hoyts, who live, I believe, in Dutchess County. In any case, the high spot of the evening was the reading of a letter from Mrs. Hoyt to this friend, making fun of the manner in which the Roosevelts received the King and Queen and commented at great length on Mrs. Roosevelt's sneakers and print dress (cheap); the way she got up and served personally; the ~~xxxx~~ hot coffee which wasn't hot; the different tablecloths on each table on the terrace; the way the President walked into the church, etc. etc. etc. The reason I pass this on to you is because I understand from the woman in question that the Roosevelts asked Mrs. Hoyt to put up some people during the Royal visit and I thought you would like to know just what they really think. I was so sore that I told my hostess I thought Mrs. Hoyt must be pretty cheap.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Paris, September 9, 1939

Dear Miss Le Hand:

We're in the army now.

Many thanks for your note of August 25th.

I hope that Messrs. Borah, Nye, Fish etc. will admit that their information about Europe isn't so hot after all.

Actually, this whole war seems absolutely pointless. I wouldn't give Martha's Vineyard for the whole of Europe but the fact is that a mad dog is loose on the Continent, so what is to be done about it?

We could all commit murder over the delay in sending American ships to evacuate American citizens. It has been no joke calming down hysterical American men and women. Actually, the men have been much more of a nuisance in this respect than the women. Old Mrs. Forbes refuses emphatically to leave and is completely convinced that Paris will be exactly the same during this war as during the last one!

Elaborate plans have been made for the complete evacuation of Paris by all members of the Government from the President of the Republic, Prime Minister, etc. down. This will mean that we will have absolutely nothing to do in the Embassy except play cards, the radio, read, etc. I am really beginning to get worried about becoming completely bored. Maybe we can get the French to allow us to become neutral observers near some fireworks.

Needless to say, we are all watching developments on the Neutrality Law, and I think, personally, that unless we can sell planes and anti-aircraft guns to the British and French, they will lose. The French are so cool and calm during this whole affair that I often wonder if they are human. As one Frenchman said to me recently, "It's merely a question of becoming accustomed to it."

Please

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

tell Mary that if she will come to Paris she can save us all from becoming too bored. If she wants to come, we can give her a job paying $2750 salary, $600 rent allowance, and $300 post allowance; a total of $3650 per annum, to say nothing of the right of free importation (for her Scotch and caviar). As an extra attraction, you might add that French dresses are now much cheaper and the franc is 43 to a dollar.

We'll give Hacky a job as seductress of Adolf Hitler to whom we will send her as the perfect Aryan.

Paris is absolutely deserted and at night there are no lights on the streets. There has been quite a bit of looting of houses during air raid signals, but the Government yesterday issued a decree making the crime of looting punishable by death. This will have a great deal of effect. I wish you could see us all go down to the Embassy cellars during an air raid siren. Everyone knows that our cardboard cellars are absolutely useless in case a bomb hits our building - but we all file down like obedient cattle. I've asked one of the Army officers to put down there a high-powered radio-receiving set and a few card tables, with one poker table. I'll be damned if I'm going to sit down there doing nothing.

The boss is very much on pins and needles these days. He is feeling extremely well; tremendously energetic; with very little to do except quiet down Americans and some little diplomatic activity. In a week or ten days this will all disappear and I'm going to be hard put to keep him busy. I think I'll pile up all the issues of the SATURDAY EVENING POST containing Ray Moley's articles, and then I'll put before him five volumes of THE PAPERS OF FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT. After that, I hope things will become exciting around here.

Our news from Poland is all bad. What they're doing to the Poles is horrible, incredible and terrible. Attila could teach the Germans today absolutely nothing.

I'll tell you all about the Farley visit when and if I come to Washington again.

Tell Mary I've got some new wonderful stories for her.

All the best and thanks again for the letter.

Very sincerely yours,

C. C.

September 22, 1939

Dear Mr. Offie:

Thank you for that nice long letter and also for the piece of anti-aircraft shell. I hope there was no one on the terrace when that fell there.

I should like to be in Paris for the Fireworks. I know that doesn't sound intelligent, but I really would.

The President made his speech to Congress yesterday and we are now sitting with our fingers crossed hoping the so-called "peace bloc" will not be able to defeat the work on the Neutrality Bill.

I had a short talk with Doris Fleeson when she came back -- every one has nothing but the highest praise for your Ambassador.

I loved your message to Mary and particularly the one to Hacky. You probably will hear from them both.

Do write again when you get a chance.

Always sincerely yours,

M. A. LeHAND

Carmel Offie, Esq.,
Secretary to the Ambassador,
American Embassy,
Paris, France.

mal/tmb

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, September 9, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Here is a piece of anti-aircraft shell which fell on the terrace outside the Ambassador's office during our first air-raid. I thought you might like to have it for a paper-holder. I expect we shall have many more for ourselves before the fun is over.

No one here is at all excited and calm reigns everywhere.

Every good wish.

Yours always,

C. O.

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Paris, September 25, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

I have just received a letter from Miss Barbara Cushing requesting me to have delivered personally to Monsieur Jean Pagès, an officer of the French Army, a personal letter from her.

In as much as Miss Cushing did not put any return address on her letter to me, I don't know how I should address her and I should, therefore, be grateful if you would please inform her that the letter has been delivered to the French General Staff, to be delivered personally to M. Pagès.

Every good wish and kindest regards.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

Carmel Offie.

P.S. - The Biddles arrived yesterday pretty much shaken up; but otherwise all right. They are now living at the Embassy Residence, and are being thoroughly spoiled with good food and good wine, orchids, to say nothing of the personal attention of one Mr. William Christian Bullitt. The stories they tell are, to say the least, gruesome. C.O.

C.O.

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,

The White House,

Washington, D. C.

Personal.

Paris, November 2, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Inasmuch as this envelope is going forward by the hand of Mr. Frank Waterman, President of the Waterman Pen Company, who is taking the CLIPPER from Lisbon on Sunday, November 5th, and who is being met in New York by the United States Despatch Agent, the Ambassador asked me to drop you this line to request you to please telegraph him two words: "Letters received" as soon as you receive this letter. He asked me to tell you that his letter to you is ultra-ultra important; his first letter to the President ultra important; and his second letter to the President damned important.

I have also taken the liberty of putting in a letter to Judge Moore and another one to Secretary Hull, which I hope you will not mind sending across the street.

Everything is going well; it rains every day -which is perfect from the war point of view - and we are all in good spirits.

Every good wish and kindest regards.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
The White House.

November 13, 1939

Dear Mr. Offie:

Your letters are joys. Your description of your Chief's physical condition is grand and I do hope that he has done some of the things you suggested but he probably hasn't.

Mr. Brown came in to see me, bringing the foie gras and the medicine! The first arrived just at the right time. We had just finished the last you had sent. The second, I have not as yet tried but the next time I have a cold, I will start it.

It must be very interesting being in the Embassy these days and knowing about all the telephone calls. Wouldn't you like another secretary to take care of them? I am getting tired of my present job.

Your story about the telephone call from London was particularly amusing and also timely. The next time you are in Washington remember to have me tell you about it.

mal/tmb

My very best wishes to you and thank you again for the foie gras and the letters.

Always sincerely,

P. S. I am attaching copy of a letter which I have received from Ethel Downe. Will you let me know quickly what I can tell her about the official connection she wants? She spoke to me on the telephone about it before she left here. Of course it sounds to the President and me as if the suggestion should come from your Ambassador.

M. A. L.

Neither

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington,

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, October 27, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

I am taking advantage of the journey of Mr. Lestrade Brown to send you this note, together with some foie gras for the President and you (three terrines) and a small package of medicine for colds for you. The Ambassador told me that he wrote you a note in the last pouch about the medicine so you may receive this medicine a couple of days before you receive this letter.

The boss is not well, unfortunately, but I think it's his own damned fault - I say this bluntly because if he would listen to me a bit more on the question of rest and taking it easy, I am sure it wouldn't have happened. Anyhow, his blood pressure is down to where it was when he went to Bermuda a little over a year ago and he ought to take a little rest. He has promised to go to Chantilly tomorrow and stay there getting plenty of sleep, no telephone calls except the Ministry of Air, Daladier, or the White House and the Department, to cut out cigarettes completely and to stay in bed for three days. If he does this he'll be all right because he always makes a quick comeback. He has run himself down completely with a lot of extremely important things and a lot of unimportant things, into all of which he puts exactly the same amount of energy. I have been trying to get him to leave the unimportant things to subordinates entirely, but no, little "Willie" has to give everything that effervescent personal touch. As you have probably guessed, I shot off my mouth again to him last night when he said to me that he felt like collapsing completely. I am certain, however, that by the time you receive this note he will have recovered completely.

Paris is still very quiet and except for an occasional reconnaissance plane of the enemy which causes the alarm to go off, there is no particular sign of war. We can't buy beef on Mondays or Tuesdays now, but there is plenty of every other kind of meat and poultry.

Neither

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington,

Neither the Ambassador nor myself has been getting much sleep lately due to a combination of factors such as the Biddles in the house, noisiness of the city in general at night due to no lights and an excessive use of horns, tenseness of the atmosphere in general, war correspondents, dinner engagements, etc. etc. I was particularly irritated this morning at 2:30 A. M. when Percy Philip of the NEW YORK TIMES called me up, asking to speak to the Ambassador of course, and said to me, "Offie, can you tell me whether or not it is true that Ambassador Davies has just handed in his resignation to become Secretary of the Navy. New York has queried me on this, I tried to reach Davies on the phone, but no success on account of the censorship." I was furious!

Incidentally, did you know that Americans can make long distance calls only through the Embassy. I feel very important knowing everybody's business, and a couple of days ago I had to put one call through for an American to inform his uncle that his daughter was living unmarried to an Italian in a small doubtful Parisian hotel and refused to leave for America! I have also had a couple of interesting spy cases lately which are not without fun. The latest of the latest news, however, is that the Germans sent a beautiful New York stenographer over here to enlist as a French spy and the French have ascertained that she is a German agent!!

Joe Kennedy called several days ago and tried to persuade the boss to ask for permission to go home for Christmas, so that he, Joe, could ask for permission at the same time. In other words, he doesn't dare ask alone for fear he will be criticized. The boss told him then that he had no plans for going home this winter, unless he was ordered home for consultation. Joe was very disappointed, but this morning he told me he would positively go home in December or he would resign. I told him when he said he would resign, "That, sir, is an Ambassador's prerogative."

Every good wish to you and good luck.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

RELIEF CO-ORDINATION SERVICE

PRESIDENT
MRS. HENRY S. DOWNE

ÉLYSÉE BUILDING
56, RUE DU FAUB. SAINT-HONORÉ
PARIS (8e)
TELEPHONE : ANJOU 00-25

October 25, 1939

Miss Marguerite Lehand
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Missy,

Lestrade is leaving on the Clipper. He is taking some foie gras to the President from Bill and I am also sending this letter by him.

I hear that you have been quite sick with the grippe. I am frightfully sorry to hear that because I know how important you are to the President and particularly in a time like this.

We are turning inside out over here on account of those dumb senators making stupid speeches about the neutrality. If they don't wake up soon and get it through their heads that if we don't give every help possible to the Allies, communism and nazyism will be seat~~ing~~ed on the shores of America.

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Miss Marguerite Le Hand,

The White House.

RELIEF CO-ORDINATION SERVICE

PRESIDENT
MRS. HENRY S. DOWNE

ÉLYSÉE BUILDING
56, RUE DU FAUB. SAINT-HONORÉ
PARIS (8e)
TELEPHONE : ANJOU 00-25

because there was no general bureau for organization or cooperation, so Bill has asked me to take on this job. It is exactly the kind of a job that the President gave out in a speech ten days ago. So I will be "semi official" in direct liaison between the Ambassador and the American activities, and I am also liaison with Mr. Laboulaye, former Ambassador at Washington who has the same with the French.

Would it be possible for the President to name me for this job, naturally "without salary", as attached to the Embassy, as I think it is going to be very big and far-reaching and it is going to save a great deal of racketeering and chiselling, as people will know where they can apply for real information and where their money goes if they have no specific organization that they want to send something to.

Do write me if you have time, as I always love to hear from you.

Ever devotedly and affectionately,

Ethel

Ethel Downe.

ovember 15, 1939.

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Miss Marguerite Le Hand,

The White House.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, November 15, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

I want to apologize for having bothered you on Sunday last, but I felt justified in doing it for the reason that never in almost six years have I seen our friend so low. He has, as you can well imagine, been doing altogether too much in cheering up people, getting ambulance work started, getting Red Cross contributions out of the really rich, producing reconciliations between discordant elements among these people here, reporting, etc. His blood pressure has been and is very low and he has been postponing going off for a little holiday week after week. But when the Department's telegram 1378 of November 10th arrived saying that the Great White Father had reversed himself (I hoped you looked up that telegram and the one to which it referred)and had so informed the British, without one word to him, after he had gotten the French started off in the opposite direction on the specific authority of the Great White Father (see Department's 1260 to him), he just went down like a ton of bricks. How would you feel if you had fought, bled and died for something, all at the request and desire of the person you admired and idolized, and then if that person cut the floor out from under you.

I argued as best I could, saying that probably the Canadian business had something to do with it; that it was impossible to change the system set up in Canada, etc. etc., but it didn't do much good. Then on top of that, the letter Zed, the blankety blank blank Navy Department ignoring our violent appeals for an answer on something else for over five weeks, plus the delays of the War Department on another equally important matter - it was just all too much at one time and he was ready to say, 'Oh, my God, why has thou foresaken me?' Truly, I thought he had given up hope in all human nature. Two days at Chantilly (last Saturday and Sunday) however, have helped a great deal. He lunched at the headquarters of the General Staff yesterday and is in a much better mood today.

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,

The White House.

We are going to the Front tomorrow and will be back on Friday evening or Saturday morning. (This is very private.)

Judge Moore made me promise to him four years ago that I would inform him immediately if ever I thought our friend was ever over-doing himself and if I was at all worried about his health. Chantilly, I am absolutely convinced, has saved him time and again but it isn't quite enough and if he does not go to North Africa or the south of France or somewhere very, very soon, I am going to give the Judge a ring and tell him a few things so that he can either have WCB ordered to North Africa on an inspection trip (It's in his district) or have him ordered home for consultation, (if the Judge still has authority to have that sort of thing done). I had hoped that our friend would volunteer going home to spend Xmas but he appears to have decided against it. You will recall that he wrote the Great White Father recently that he didn't think he ought to leave on vacation right now and didn't intend to. Of course, I don't agree with this theory at all. I said that we are living in such an abnormal atmosphere here with everything censored, etc. that IF I WERE AMBASSADOR HERE, I would go home once a month via the CLIPPER for three days in order to breathe in a normal atmosphere and find out what the reaction of American people is to events during this war. I was squelched with the reply, "Well, you're not Ambassador, so that's that."

I wish you could see the way in which he is hounded to death here. Everyone wants his opinion on this or that and all run to the Embassy before this or that is done. It is all very complimentary and quite exceptional in a way but what it does to one's disposition and constitution is terrific. For instance, the news of the wonderful stand of the Curtiss P-36s was received with such glee by the French that the big boys called him at 2:30 in the morning to give him the news. Then of course we have all these lovely little visits by German planes at 4:30 in the morning dropping leaflets and everyone wonders when they will drop bombs; although I don't think they will for a long time.

What I am driving at is this: He should, ought to, and must get away for at least a couple of weeks for a complete change. Can't the Great White Father hear of some report that a communist revolution or something has occurred in Biskra or Morocco or anywhere on the face of the earth except Paris and want WCB to investigate it at once and report?

I remember almost two years ago the Great White Father sent him an order as Commander-inChief to go on leave. I think it should be repeated.

Joe Kennedy told me over the phone the other day that he was going to wait until December 3rd to see if he would be ordere d home for consultation. If he isn't, he intends to sail anyway on the REX from Genoa on that date and cable the Department that he's taking leave to which he is entitled! I bet him five dollars that he wouldn't dare, and he offered me a hundred to five that he'd be home for Xmas by hook or by crook! I also learned from a very good friend of mine in the Embassy at Brussels that Joe Davies wants to come home for Christmas.

Please tell Mary Eben that her story about the 104 year-old woman went down great here and I took great pleasure in telling it in French the other day in front of Daladier and two French Generals. They almost died laughing. Please tell her also that I must be very dumb because I didn't get the point of her ~~xxxxx~~ joke that the SOB of 2 plus 2 is 4, etc.

We were very glad Mrs. Forbes left. She looked very well. So far, there isn't a shortage of food. It's very difficult to get oranges, but we've managed to get some off American ships, but now that the President won't let them come to the regular ports, we'll have to do without. One cannot buy beef on Mondays or Tuesdays, but there's everything else in the way of game, poultry and other meats. The weather has been lousy, but it's a blessing in disguise because everything is so overcast and heavy and thick - so thick you can almost cut it in blocks and store it away; and it means an offensive is impossible. I'm enjoying it all very much and find it very interesting indeed. In fact, life for me is 100% perfect, except that I am sick and tired of seeing an exhausted, irritable individual around me whom I know is not naturally that way. What are you going to do about it?

Every good wish to you and again apologies for disturbing your Sunday.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

P.S. I am sending you some more foie gras which will reach you before Christmas. Six boxes of it.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, December 9, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Your letter of November 13th reached me this morning. Ordinary mail is disgustingly slow these days. My Chief has persuaded the French to start a shuttle air service from Paris to Lisbon for mail and passengers, and the Minister of Air has offered to carry mail pouches for us from Lisbon to Paris free of charge, but the State Department takes its good old time about deciding whether or not we shall have pouches sent by air. It makes my blood boil because from experience down in Honduras, we used to get one big mail bag a week by air from Miami (Pan American) and the only mail of interest or importance was the new toupée every month from Manuel's in New York for my Minister's wife! However, I am hopeful that pouches will be leaving the Department by air soon for Paris.

Your telegram from Warm Springs did the job and the Chief has spent the past week on the Riviera getting a good rest and some sunshine, but not a great deal. I remained in Paris to take care of a lot of unfinished business of the War and Navy Departments, to say nothing of a lot of miscellaneous business for Swift and Wayne Taylor in connection with the Red Cross. But I was glad not to be sitting next to a buzzer for a whole week and to more or less fix my own business for the week. He gets back to Paris on Monday morning, and will have been away fromthe office for ten days. I speak to him over the phone every day, of course, but there really isn't a great deal doing.

Monnet is busy in London getting things established and is doing a grand job. He called me up excitedly several days ago from London, and read me over the telephone a confidential cable which Lothian had sent to the British Foreign Office in connection with Mr. Arthur Purvis' first call on Mr. Morgenthau. Lothian cabled: "Purvis was shocked when the Secretary of the Treasury informed him that while it was a fact that close cooperation was given to the mission

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House.

mission headed by Monsieur Jean Monnet, the President had as yet given him (Morgenthau) no indication that similar cooperation was to be extended to Purvis' mission." Some day I hope you will give me a little clarification on all the mix-up about the French-British missions. In any case, Monnet is well-started, thanks to my Chief and I think everything will work out well.

Joe Kennedy passed through last week and then had to wait three days at Lisbon. He was furious and the atmosphere between Lisbon and Paris was electric over the radio-telephone with good old-fashioned Boston Irish cursing. He was a riot. Incidentally, he still is very anxious for my Chief to come home for Christmas, and told me he intended to speak to the President about it. Joe Davies also went through on his way to Italy to take the REX. He was looking as well as I have ever seen him look. He said that he was going home to bring Marjorie back to Belgium - that the only reason Marjorie didn't go to Belgium with him was because the President called her personally and said under no conditions would he allow her to come over here and be hurt. I think that was very, very s-w-e-e-t of the President. Of course, I swallowed everything. But his Private Secretary, who is an old newspaper man I used to know in Moscow and in the Department of State, told me that actually Joe is hoping to be given Pa Watson's job now, and that Pa will be made Ambassador to Belgium. I think this idea is probably still in the dream stage.

Poor Cudahy is wasting away in Dublin and writes and phones frequently to us. He has practically nothing to do and is biting finger-nails in Dublin. He has been expecting something to be done about him, and hasn't given up hope but he gets mighty low sometimes. I hope something has been done about Huberta Earle. They're in a really sad situation because they don't know what to do.

Here is a piece of information which I ask you to keep very, very private. Margaret and Tony Biddle drove up from Angers yesterday, where they are established (it's only four hours from Paris) and Margaret and I had a great give-and-take, knock-down, drag-out battle about everything. As you know, she is a remarkable woman and I admire her greatly.

greatly. Then, too, they have been through a great deal in Poland and at the moment are, I suppose, somewhat tired. In any case, Margaret said to me that if anything did not occur and things for them should be more or less quiet, they would probably leave Angers, where the Polish Government is now established, next June for the Convention, would attend the Convention, and then probably RESIGN. I said it would be nonsense, etc. etc., but she answered quite frankly, "Tony and I are still young and energetic and we have no intention of sitting on our tails down in Angers with almost nothing to do. We want an interesting life and we'll just have to find it." I am arranging for them to visit the Front next week. You have no idea how wonderful Margaret has been with the Polish refugees and also for French refugee children who have been evacuated from the large cities. She has given blankets, medicines, tobacco, etc. to the Poles and the other day at a small intimate lunch with Daladier, my Chief, Tony,Margaret and myself she gave Daladier a check for a million francs and said, "Please take this so as to give a little happiness to some of the soldiers for Christmas." And she does it all anonymously, which I think is very nice. The Chief is very fond of both of them and of course feels completely responsible for them, their well-being, welfare, health and everything else!

It has been raining a great deal here lately and I'm just as pleased, because it means there is no military activity. Human nature is a funny thing. Believe it or not, no one in Paris now gets out of bed when there is an air raid alarm, and no one will until the first eggs are dropped. It was very thrilling out at Chantilly a couple of weeks ago when the air raid siren went off and I got up at four o'clock in the morning, opened the shutters on my bedroom window and there in the moonlight not more than two thousand feet in the air over the chateau flew those long, black,pencil-shaped Dornier bombers of the German Air Force! It was very exciting.

Incidentally, just write a polite little note to Mrs. Downe and tell her you have written to me about her request and I will talk to her about it so as to kill it once and for all. She is really a very nice person, but gets much too enthusiastic and tumbles into messes from which the Embassy has to rescue her. Only a week ago, she got into a terrible row with an old French Senator about a handful of baby clothes! However, a luncheon, some good stories, and a lot of backslapping smoothed everything over. She is working very hard and is doing a lot of good, but we always like to keep the ~~xxx~~ bridle irons tight in her mouth!

Mrs.

Mrs. Forbes was magnificent in her behavior just before she left for the United States and I could have died laughing when the night before she left she asked the Ambassador whether he wouldn't lend her $100 and a portable radio; otherwise she wouldn't leave for America. She was very nice indeed to both of us, and especially to the Chief and if it weren't for the fact that she is 93, I should have very grave suspicions in her kindnesses to the boss! She is old faithful, and writes him regularly since she got back. Her last letter describes in the most detailed manner the ceremony at the corner-stone laying ceremony for the library at Hyde Park. I hope you noticed that I notarized that document from Mrs. Roosevelt to the President and that my signature is on it.

Incidentally, the Chief was absolutely sick to the stomach when he read that story in TIME about Hopper and Jimmy.

I am sending you a small package from Paris as a Xmas gift. I hope you like it. The thing I really wanted to get you was in the line of gloves, but alas!, I didn't know your size. This country may be at war, but there are just as many gloves, dresses, lingerie, etc. being made as ever and what's more, everything is just as chic as ever.

Every good wish to you and kindest regards, and again my thanks for your letter.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

P.S. By the way, as I tried to tell you over the phone the other day, the Chief feels very strongly about not leaving the country to which he is accredited during wartime, merely to go home on vacation, and he positively will not leave, so he tells me, unless he is ordered home on a specific mission. I told him he was being very foolish and impractical but did you ever try to persuade him? I'd sooner try to persuade Gibraltar to sink into the sea.

P.P.S. I gave Mr. Swift of the Red Cross a package for you. The Chief told me it was a Xmas present. Swift arrives in New York on the SATURNIA on December 20th and is going straight to Washington. I hope you will be there and will see him at once.

December 12, 1939

Dear Mr. Offie:

Thank you ever so much for your letter of the twenty-sixth and also for enclosing the pictures which I think are extraordinarily good.

You were an angel to telephone me about the Christmas things. There were some complications and I finally decided on the golf balls, which will go, I hope, on the same Clipper with this letter and I hope, also, will arrive for Christmas.

This carries to you my very best wishes and I hope I shall see you soon.

Always sincerely,

Carmen Offie, Esq.,
Secretary to the Ambassador,
American Embassy,
Paris, France.

P. S. I am enclosing a letter which Mr. Robinson of the United States Lines sent to me. Will you tell me the answer to the marked paragraph.

Also, you have not told me yet about Ethel Downe and I have never answered her letter!

M. A. LeH.

(Over)

Every good wish and kindest regards.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
Washington.

Let. to MALeH. 11/17/39 from Hugh B. Robinson, District Passenger Manager, U. S. Lines, Amer. Merchant Lines, 10 Rue Auber, Paris France re conditions in France as result of war. Marked paragraph as follows:

"By the way, our Military Attache here, Col. Horace Fuller, just received day before yesterday the decoration of Commander of the Legion of Honor of France. I do not know whether the President knows him or not, but he has been doing a grand job for three or four years. He is one of my closest personal friends in Paris, and I wonder if you could not get the President to look up his record and get for him a break in some way toward that star all Colonels look forward to, or perhaps a note of congratulations from the President on the Legion of Honor decoration, which was placed on him by General Gamelin himself. Needless to say, he does not know I am writing this to you. He is one of the finest Military Attaches we have ever had here and a real soldier."

Personal.

Miss Le Hand:

be good to be in the United States again - when

wish to you for the New Year. Yours always, Offie

Personal.

Paris, November 26, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

As you have probably heard, (I assume you have been reading all our telegrams to the State Department), the Ambassador and myself visited the front. We had a grand trip.

General Requin, the commanding General, had a small luncheon for the boss at his general headquarters and everyone in this country is so grateful to us for the Curtiss P-36 pursuit planes which were bought last winter, that the General felt France's gratitude must be shown in some way even during lunch! He therefore pulled out of his armies one French artist who did the job on the menu card which I am enclosing herewith and it is endorsed to the Great White Father. The Ambassador, who isn't here at this moment, asked me to remind him to send it to you and inasmuch as the mail is leaving in fifteen minutes, I am sending it along to you as of interest. I protested to the boss that he shouldn't send it to the Maison Blanche because you would see from it that we are far from starving and that you would all stop sympathizing with us and thinking of us! In any event, here it is. I am also enclosing four photographs taken of our arrival at general headquarters at the beginning of our visit, somewhere near the western front in France.

Inasmuch as we will not be coming home for Xmas, will you please ask Mary Eben, with this check for ten dollars enclosed, to buy something suitable as a gift from me to ~~Mxxxxxxxx~~ Anne Bullitt? It ought to be sent down to Foxcroft before the Xmas holiday of the school begins marked "Not to be opened until Xmas". I enclose a card of mine to go with it. I apologize for bothering you but I don't have time at this moment to write Mary a separate letter.

Every good wish and kindest regards.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
Washington.

P.S. I wish you could see the letters we get from French peasants, farmers, shopkeepers, factory workers, etc. thanking the President for the airplanes. The Ambassador in this country for the President today.
J.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, December 30, 1939.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

What I tried to tell you over the phone last night was that our friend is sitting on the south side of a sand dune in the Sahara on strike! It really isn't a strike because he is visiting French defenses down in North Africa - he has a plane at his disposal and flies all over the place. He asked me to tell you he was on strike, but actually I think he is rather enjoying it. I think you have spoiled him, or maybe he has just become bored but in any case he is not interested in things here anymore. Perhaps a good breath of a normally-functioning democracy will put him in good shape again but I warn you to prepare for a withering onslaught on his arrival back home. He is in good shape physically and is looking very well - in fact bubbling over with energy - and he will, I am certain descend upon you all in the White House like a juggernaut.

I have tentatively reserved seats on the CLIPPERS from Lisbon in my name for January 8, 10, 12th and 14th. Please let me have a cryptic word or an official message through the Department for our friend on just what's what and the exactdate as much ahead as you can. I know this is asking for a lot, but I'm merely stating the case.

I have the Biddle's present for you. It is a beautiful gift from Cartier's and I'm sure you like it. Margaret Biddle has been swell through everything and we are crazy about her and Tony and I am afraid that we are spoiling them but so long as they don't show it, I don't care. I am also bringing you those sun-shaped earrings and clips.

I was not surprised to see that Joe Davies remains in America. If you will recall, I wrote you sometime ago that he would get some sort of a job in Washington. Don't you think I am pretty good as a predicter.

It will be good to be in the United States again - when and if.

Every good wish to you for the New Year.

Yours always,
Offie

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, April 28, 1940.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Everyone in Paris is terribly depressed except the American Embassy. The Chief feels so sorry for them that he is giving lunches and dinners every day - quiet meals of course without any fanfare and no one except the ladies dress. They were certainly glad to see him when he got back and to learn that the United States was not trying to arrange a new MUNICH.

Clare Luce of TIME, FORTUNE, and LIFE has been in town for some time. She is very attractive and lovely, but I wouldn't trust her around the corner. Anyone who could have written the WOMEN, just isn't to be trusted, in my opinion. In case you are interested, she believes the President should retire and that Hull should be elected, even though she is a Republican. The Ambassador has arranged for her and her husband to see almost everyone here, including a visit to the Front. She just can't be too nice, and I am wondering whether she is looking for a job in the Diplomatic Service or whether it's just plain..... She told me flatly the other evening that she thought the Chief ought to be either President or Secstate!!! That's why I'm suspicious.

Margaret Biddle is looking very, very badly. She has gallstones, and really ought to go home to be operated on, but she won't leave Tony. She says she doesn't want to go home at all, but in any case won't go home unless the Chief goes home.

Chantilly is perfectly beautiful - never has it looked more beautiful. The swans are all sitting on nests; the rabbits are having litters; the cows are all having calves; there are already 124 baby checks; 39 baby ducks; the nightingales are singing; and the s inging cascade is singing more than ever. The Chief remarked to me the other afternoon after a long walk: "Offie, isn't it a damned shame that Missy, Harry and Betsy never came to visit this place."

Now I have a proposition to make to you and I hope you will take me seriously. Mrs. Henry S. Downe is President of the American Clearing House Association engaged in war work. The committee of the Clearing House has decided to invite two American women, expenses fully paid, to visit Paris and France and write an informal report on their impressions which will be used by the Clearing House as an example of reaction to their work. This will of course be done most confidentially. The idea that I have in mind is that why don't you

and Betsy, or you and Grace, or you and Mary allow me to inform Mrs. Downe that you are willing to come over and I will do all the necessary. Mrs. Downe would, of course, be delighted to say nothing of how the rest of us would feel. If you like, I will even write your report. You should have no feeling whatsoever about not doing this because the Clearing House is very well supported financially, and the only people who would know the identity of the women coming over would be Mrs. Downe, and myself. We could even leave WCB out on the limb, if you wish. I hope you will do this while the President is on his trip across the country. You really ought to see Paris at this time, and if as seems probable (I have always doubted it and been against it) that the President is leaving the White House in January, all the more reason why you should do it. Please let me have a cable from you saying "Barcus is willing" or"Barcus isn't willing" and I will be governed accordingly. If you want Betsy, say "Barcus and Jim"; if you want Grace, say "Barcus and Father"; and if you want Mary, say "Barcus and Patrick".

It can be arranged so quietly and inconspicuously that no one will even know you are here.

If you decide against this, I shall be so angry that I think I will cast the only vote against you at the Convention.

Good luck and best wishes.

Very sincerely yours,

C. O.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal. Paris, May 11, 1940.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

We're in the army now!

The air raid over Paris at 4:30 this morning which resulted in the bombings of the airdromes at Chartres (outside Paris) and Pontoise was one of the most exciting things I have ever experienced. I climbed to the roof of the house in pyjamas this morning when the air raid siren sounded to see what was going on and I saw a wonderful air duel between some American Curtiss planes and some Messerschmidts and Heinkels -- and all this took place right over the official residence of the American Ambassador to France!! I wish you could have seen some of the power dives. While all this was going on at five A. M., 11:30 to midnight, Washington time, the Ambassador was trying frantically to get the United States on the telephone to let you all know what was going on. The Germans have now bombed any number of towns over France today and it is fairly certain that the French will reciprocate some time tonight. I had thought everyone would be very tense, but not at all -- the French are taking it right in their stride.

What do the people of the UnitedStates think now? We are in constant touch with Cudahy and the French General Staff who are directing the operations in Holland and Belgium. Some of the stories are terrific!

I burst into the Ambassador's bedroom this morning expecting to give him all the news on the invasion of Holland and Belgium by the Germans, but to my amazement he was awake - wide awake - and trying to reach the White House by phone. Daladier had given him all the late news at an early hour. I had seen the boss last only at 1:30 A. M. He gave a dinner last night for the Minister of the Navy, the Minister of Labor, the Minister of Armament, the Governor of the Bank of France, Lawrence Steinhardt, the British Ambassador, Dorothy Thompson, the Air Marshal of the British Air Force in France, and various others. The party broke up at 1:15 in the morning at which time those who were involved in arguments adjourned to Dorothy Thompson's suite at the Hotel Meurice where they consumed great quantities of champagne until the air raid

at 4:30 this morning.

Incidentally, Dorothy Thompson who has up until now favored Wendell Wilkie for President, believes that the Great White Father should remain where he is. You might be amused or interested to know what she advocated for Wilkie: that he should be the Presidential Candidate for the Republicans and that he should appoint Mr. Hull as Secretary of State.

Paris is calm; people are not tense; they even seem uninterested, and although open towns are being bombarded in France, they are not yet carrying around their gas masks. They are absolutely determined to go right along and fight to the end, airplanes or no airplanes.

I have just talked with Brussels and they Belgians are fighting marvelously and are still holding the first line of defense against the Germans. Some French troops have already reached the Albert Canal to support the Belgians and the British are not far behind. The port works of Calais were destroyed this morning by bombs and a few French planes were destroyed on the airport at Dunkirk.

It looks as though Holland is lost pretty much to the Germans but at least the Dutch have done some damage to them. Luxembourg is of course completely in the hands of the Germans and the Grand Duchess and her family have successfuly escaped into France.

Long before this letter reaches you, we will probably have been bombed in Paris, but no one seems particularly worried about it. We are ready for the worst.

Every good wish and keep the home fires burning.

Very sincerely yours,

C. G.

P.S. The Chief is working very much like a war horse in the smoke of battle. G.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PERSONAL.

Paris, May 13, 1940.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

Before this letter reaches you, you will have read in the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE of day after tomorrow an excellent article by Dorothy Thompson advocating that the President be elected for a third term. I hereby enter my claim that you see to it my chief gets complete credit for seven million and one half votes (isn't that the number of D. Thompson's readers ?). It all happened after a violent discussion of the world situation and the United States the other evening at the Embassy and in the end Miss Thompson (the boss has known her for the past 22 years) conceded that the Great White Father should remain in the White House for another four years and that she would advocate it publicly to her readers.

Everyone here is frantic with impatient waiting and everyone is trying to conceal it, for this is the fourth day of the world's greatest battle going on up in Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and in France. Paris is quiet and no one seems excited. We have had three air raids already today and it is only 12:30 in the afternoon as I write this. The Dutch have been swell, the Belgians not so swell, and the French and British have been very stubborn. There are German airplanes all over France, laying eggs everywhere.

Steinhardt, our Ambassador in Moscow has been here for the past week and is getting plenty of air raid alarms experience. He is leaving Thursday evening for the United States. The Luces got out of Holland and Belgium by the skin of their teeth. Incidentally, he does want an Embassy.

We are in constant touch with Cudahy by phone who complains only about indigestion. He doesn't mind the quantities of incendiary bombs being dropped on Brussels! So far, the Nazis have only bombed the outskirts of Paris, that is to say, the railroad yards, etc. It is very strange to hear the explosions nearby and not knowing what they have hit. I saw this morning seven Nazi bombers only about fifteen hundred feet overhead!!! The crosses on the tails looked very ominous.

The military men one talks to are very gloomy for the moment as the German mechanized columns seemx to be progressing very rapidly toward Antwerp.

I could go on indefinitely along this line but there is no use. It will be old stuff by the time you receive this letter. But I did want you to know about D. Thompson.

Every good wish and kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,

C. Offie

P. S. Give my best to Mary and tell her that I would like to know who she is buying canned pears for now!

P.P.S. Please excuse errors, grammatical, typographical and otherwise.
O.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Paris, May 27, 1940.

Personal

Dear Miss Le Hand:

The military news is bad again this morning - so bad in fact that people who ought to know say that this beautiful and lovely city will be in the hands of the people across the Rhine in the next ten days. It sounds utterly incredible, but this is the machine age and the seemingly impossible exists no more.

Everyone in the Government here has been trying to persuade the Chief that if the worst comes to the worst, he should follow the Government because in Paris he would be doing nothing but protection work concerning American property and American interests which any good consul who speaks German could do. The Chief of course speaks excellent German too, but I have been telling him that I don't think any German will wish to speak to him. The French are sick about it, but they understand fully why he insists on staying here. As you know, it has been an American tradition that the Ambassador always stays at his post here no matter what happens.

I am getting off this personal note to you to tell you what I think will happen if and when. Provided we are not killed when the Germans bombard this town before it surrenders, we shall undoubtedly be kept locked up in our own Embassy with no communications whatsoever with the outside world. No one will have the slightest interest in whether or not we have food, water, etc. for several days at least. The American flag will be kept flying over the Chancery but it will be completely ignored. In other words, Mr. Roosevelt's personal representative will be overlooked completely for the first week or so. We will, of course, be refused permission to go out on the street because the Germans will say that since they are responsible for our safety, they must oblige us to remain inside. For this, I am completely prepared and have made all arrangements for food, water, etc. for ten days for ourselves and the members of the staff who will remain here. (Over half of the Embassy will go with the Government). Of course, if the place is hit by a bomb, the food and water will disappear also.

After

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.

After some ten days, either very late at night or very early in the morning, when they are absolutely sure we will all be asleep, we will hear loud yelling and shouting outside the building, the door will be opened, and we will be informed that Herr General so and so or Herr Kommandant so and so has come to make his courtesy call on Excellenz the Ambassador, who will doubtless be sound asleep. Then when Excellenz doesn't appear quicker than instantly, the distinguished military gentleman will probably show great rage, and go out screaming that since he has not been received courteously to hell with the Amerikanische Botschafter (American Ambassador). Then Excellenz will express regrets and request the honor of calling on the military man in question and will probably be kept waiting another week or ten days and then will be told the military gentleman in question can see him at midnight or six thirty in the morning! Excellenz will go to the residence or office or whatever of the military man, will be kept waiting at least one hour or more and then finally ushered in. The reception will be colder than an iceberg to say the least but I feel quite certain that Excellenz with his German and first class brain will be able to make some arrangements about our mode of life. Of course, during all this time we shall not be allowed to communicate with Washington or Berlin or anyone. They will even refuse mail. They will merely state: "We have sent word to your Embassy in Berlin that you are all well and in good spirits." We will be told then that we can have only soldier's rations for food; that we can not have the freedom of the city because the uncivilized French are dangerous; so back to the Embassy we go. Every possible sort of little pinprick and annoyance will be invented to bother us as much as they possibly can.

I personally think it is useless and impractical for him to remain in Paris, but since he feels so strongly about a certain tradition, there is nothing to be done about that.

But there is very much something that can and should be done by you people back home and I would suggest the following: As soon as you hear that Paris has been occupied by the Germans, the German Chargé d'Affaires should be sent for by the Secretary of State and should be told that the President of the United States wishes to be put in touch with his personal representative in Paris immediately and wants to know whether or not he needs anything for himself or his staff - that is food or a doctor. It can be pointed out, of course, that we don't have to communicate with him in code, just merely in plain English. Then too, if they insist this communication can be through our Embassy in Berlin.

That is point No. 1. No. 2 is as follows: I was given to understand very confidentially before I left Washington that I would have to address my chief by another title and that this would probably take place sometime in June. When the Great White Father decides to do it, and if Paris has fallen by then, the message given to the German Chargé might be that informing my chief that he is going to have his title changed. That would be very interesting for them to transmit and just a bit sarcastic.

All the above may sound fantastic to you, but if you know anything about those people, you will realize that it is probably exactly what will happen. It peeves me a bit to think that we are deliberately giving them the opportunity to put us in this position, but since the Chief is so stubborn, there is nothing to do except to plan on staying here and staying I am.

Incidentally, when communication is established, always through the Germans, of course, and via Berlin; daily messages should be sent to us from Washington, or to one of us, and always put in questions which require answers so that the communication will be constant and so that you know all is going not so badly.

I shall probably for the first time in my life spend twelve hours a day in bed, do a lot of reading, and walk on the roof of the building. I have a radio, of course, but if I know those hard-boiled, heel-clicking birds, I think they're going to probably go through this building with a fine-toothed comb and a radio will be deprived us. It will be maddening certainly but there will, I hope, be enough of us left to have bridge and poker games. Twenty-four new books have just arrived from Brentano's in Washington which we can't think of reading now, but we will then. And then too, I shall keep a diary (which I have never done before) in shorthand of everything that happens.

By the way, do you realize that if the Italians should come in also and this city is captured, the only way we will have to get back to the United States will be via Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow, Vladivostok, Tokyo, Shanghai, Manila, and then China CLIPPER to San Francisco!!! The world has certainly changed. But my spirit is not broken and I shall take it all in good form.

Thank you for reading this note, and if the worst happens, we shall see how close I was to being correct.

Every good wish.

Very sincerely yours, C. O.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, May 30, 1940.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

I am taking advantage of the departure from Paris this evening of a private American citizen for Lisbon where he hopes to get on a CLIPPER to the United States. I am putting all our mail in one envelope and I would thank you to have stamps put on the mail not for the White House, and dropped in a mail box. It is getting more and more difficult to get mail through nowadays.

The most important items in this envelope are one envelope for the President, three for you, one for Henry Morgenthau and one for the Hungarian Minister in Washington. The rest are not important. This is merely so you can check. I am enclosing money for postage.

We have just gone through the Memorial Day Services with people of the American colony here. I know I need not tell you how sad everyone felt. Then, too, the Germans have bombed one of the cemeteries not far from Paris which had nothing in it but American war dead.

The Chief is feeling well and working very hard - too hard, I fear; but he is doing a grand job as you will observe from his communications. Everyone remains calm and we are all doing our best. How long we will be able to stand the strain, I don't know but we will do our best. I'd give anything to be able to get my hands on American newspapers nowadays.

Every good wish.

Very sincerely yours,

C. Offie

Miss Marguerite Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.

P. S. The Biddles are down in Angers going almost wild with nothing to do.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Personal.

Paris, June 8, 1940.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

It has occurred to me that something might happen to the Chief or myself one of these fine days and there are a few things which should be taken care of.

You now have in the White House two large mail bags containing effects of the Ambassador. He wishes them to be held in the White House, of course, but if he should be put out of commission, he wants them sent to his brother, Orville H. Bullitt, 1517 Locust Street, Philadelphia. The two bags contain, some papers, Anne's things, some things of Margaret and Tony Biddle, one or two things of sentimental value to the Ambassador because of his mother, and a few things to go to the President, and to you, if the worse comes to the worst. The Ambassador has written full instructions to his brother as to how these different things should be handled but he positively wants these things to remain in your hands so long as he is breathing. So much for that.

The air raid on Monday was terrible. To hear the shrieking sound of the bomb fins, and then those dull thuds when they exploded was quite an experience. I am sending you a few photographs which we received a bit later from the Ministry of Information showing a hospital bombed and also civilian victims of the bombardment. The amazing thing about the reaction to the bombardment was that instead of being afraid, they got mad and they are now madder than hell and are determined to fight this thing out tooth and nail.

We are all, of course, working day and night but it's all very interesting and one doesn't realize until one goes to bed at night and "lets down" what one goes through in the course of a day.

The Chief is looking well, but is tired - although he would never admit it. Morale here is first-rate; and all in all, I think there's nothing to worry about.

The

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.

The Ambassador's narrow escape has made him utterly intolerable because he has received so many compliments from people all over the world. In France alone, he received 1,153 letters and telegrams. He received a telephone call from President Roosevelt, as you know; and received telegrams from a multitude of people in the United States, to say nothing of Chiang Kai-shek, H. H. Kung, the Queen of England, Churchill, and the old Jeanneany, President of the French Senate wrote him a handwritten letter in which he said, "Praise to God, because if you had been killed, it would have been a greater shock to the cause of civilization than the loss of five army corps (1,250,000 men). Do you wonder?

That's all for the moment.

Every good wish to you.

Very sincerely yours,

C. Offie

P. S. By the way, you will note that I am sending you carbon copies of the ~~Ambassadors~~ Ambassador's letters to the President. Will you please keep them for him aside somewhere because we don't dare keep anything confidential around here. We even burn code telegrams which we receive and send immediately after we are through ~~them~~ with them, for the simple reason that if at any point the French lines should crack, the Germans could be in Paris with a motorized division in two hours, and if this happened during the night, it would not do at all to have them pilfer our files.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Return to Missy

Paris, June 10, 1940.

Dear Miss Le Hand:

We go voluntarily into "prison" tonight during the night and will be cut off from the outside world for only the Lord knows how long.

If we are cut off too long without you people back home getting news of us, I hope pressure will be applied or hell raised. The only difficult thing about this whole business will be to keep the Chief inside all the time so that no "accidents" will happen. It's going to be damned hard but I aim to move heaven and earth to do it, even if it means knocking him out.

Every good wish to you and thanks for your many kindnesses.

Very sincerely yours,

Offie

Miss Marguerite A. Le Hand,
The White House,
Washington.