

Setting

These transcriptions are excerpts from a selection of letters that were written during Virginia's years at Yale University in New Haven, CT. They are mostly to Virginia's mother, Myrtle, unless noted otherwise. Her family resided in Milwaukee, WI.

Cast of Characters

Ginny	Virginia Hammersmith (later Virginia Fontaine) b. 8Oct1915 d. 19 Feb.1992
Mother:	Myrtle Bishop Hammersmith b. d Milwaukee 29 Sept 1961. Christian Scientist. Home economics degree .Married Paul W. Hammersmith 30June 1909.
Father	Paul Walter. Hammersmith b.6Oct 1882.d. 4March1979. Only child of Paul and Louise Hammersmith. Horseman, member of the Wisconsin Cavalry. Worked as salesman for his father's engraving company
Lou	Mary Louise Hammersmith b.21Jan 1912 d. Jan 2008. Christian Scientist, younger sister to Virginia
Carol	Carol Knox Hammersmith b. 19 Feb 1914, younger sister to Virginia
Bud	Paul BishopHammersmith b.10July1925 , only brother to Virginia
Grandpa	Paul Hammersmith b. 17 March 1857 d. 12 Nov 1937. Founded Hammersmith Engraving.. Later Hammersmith-Kortmeyer Printing in Milwaukee. Also co-founded Milwaukee Commercial bank which went under in 1932. Hammersmith paid the debtors back in full.
Grandma	Louis Knox Hammersmith Married to Paul Hammersmith, grandfather. Died. 20 May 1938, six months after her husband.
Elsie	2 nd cousin. Cousin to Virginia's father.Niece of grandmother Myrtle Bishop. Lived in Connecticut.
Ginny(2)	Virginia Tex MacArthur. Friend during Camp
Dick Hapgood & Steward Dean	Both courted Ginny, only to be dramatically rejected.
Paul	Paul Emile Fontaine b 21 June 1913 d. 17 Jan 1996 Married Virginia 24 August 1940

Sun. Sept. 15, 1935

Dearest Mother-

There is one thing I wanted to tell you about last Thursday afternoon at Yale. After we had left the office with the bad news that the enrollment was filled, I was positively sunk-but I held onto the spark I hope for the second interview with Mrs. Pratzner-after lunch we came back and parked near the campus-and stayed in the car while grandpa took grandma & Elsie to see the art exhibits. I read over the requirements for entrance and tried for the first time, I guess, to make a demonstration. I guess I almost prayed-I knew if it was right for me to go to Yale-nothing could prevent my entering-even if the enrollment was filled and there was a waiting list for 7 or 8 girls. There was supposed to be 2/3 boys and 1/3 girls & already it was 1/2 boys and 1/2 girls- the odds were tremendous- I didn't know how it could be worked out- but it was anyway. Mrs. Pratzner said that the instructor I had talked to a few weeks ago was quite impressed with me, and so she would admit me anyway—it didn't seem possible --- yet there it happened.”

Friday Sept 20, 1935

(after a full description of her friends and her room including a drawing...) I opened an account today at Connecticut Savings Bank of New Haven by depositing the \$10 check you sent. I can draw no more than what is in the bank. So after this when you send checks I will put them right in the bank. Other banks require \$200 to start an account or else a \$1 a month to check them.

....Because you are placed according to the work you show not the marks—I am placed in the Prep school just as all the other kids in the dorm despite previous training. We are graded every month & can go ahead just as fast as we work—so it is very probable I will be in first year classes in a couple of months....

....If you will forgive me—Irene & I just bought \$1.10 tickets to see “Paths of Glory” here before it goes to New York. Bitter Sweet” comes next week & I will probably sit in the gallery for that with the other drama kids. I guess I ought to tell you too, that in New York I got some swell \$3.85 black shoes with a strap which I always wanted (includes a drawing). Black swede and leather & in New Haven here I got a swell \$2.50 tailored blue felt hat cause I felt I needed it. I won't get another thing now & I feel very satisfied with my wardrobe...

Sat. nite Sept. 21, 1935

Dearest Mother,

I hope you didn't mind my seeming extravagant in sending that telegram. Betty Beggs, a senior student, and Lloyd Zembry another, and Mrs. Beggs all strongly advised me to wire you at any cost and try to get in at least one advanced course and there try to pull my other courses up to first year work. And when I considered the living expenses of a year in a class which I might be able to get out of by showing my work—I thought the wire was worth it. I hope you packed and sent everything right away...

Monday 6:30 PM Sept. 23

I am happy to say that our combined efforts in getting my stuff down here has advanced me to a first year student. I was immediately put into all advanced classes this afternoon and am already painting still life with real oil paints. The complete outfit which will last for years cost \$18.80. I will continue to buy canvasses & oils eventually—so forward a little more money...

Wed. Sept 25, 1935

Dearest Family

....Every Morning from 8-11 I draw statues of Venus & Aphrodite or some other guy with charcoal-it takes a week to do it because every part must be accurate-which is very good training. Then from – in the afternoon everyday I do still life painting which we spend a week on also. On Mon. Wed. & Fri. I do II division composition which is a 2nd year class, whereas my cast and oil classes are 1st year. In composition we do figure grouping and coloring which is 2nd year work. If you can find my mechanical drawing plates, send them PDQ then I can get out of 'perspective' class also. I am taking a lecture course on modern art- (18th-20th cent.) from Dean Meeks and 2 other professors and will audit a renaissance lecture.....

....You made me laugh when you suggested taking a drama course—only graduates can enter Drama or else enter on probation if an undergrad—if you don't make an 80 you're out!

“About the rules you spoke of—that applies only to the academic colleges. Tho our classes start at 8- only ½ are there by then and teachers come still later and one appears in the office till about 10—in other words we can do what we please with our hours-- but, if our work shows slipping – then we toe the line. I work hard while I'm in class and always arrive around 8 anyway—I have actually skipped 2 yrs. work (Prep & 1st) because they liked my composition work you sent—I'll get along alright-just you wait-

Also there is no real house mother—must Mrs. Schneider who comes every morning to dust & make our beds—She will do sheets for 10 ¢ and pillow cases for 5¢..so I'll let her do them—

There are no rules in the house except that men can only come in our little living room and must be out of it by 12:30—We can come in any time we want since we each have a key to the door...

...My art bill is about \$20 dollars which must be paid next month—also I can't possibly live on \$5 per week. 90¢ a day is the very cheapest for food & after all there are 7 days not 5 in the week—also there are theatre plays which come here which I could never see at home.....

Sat. evening Oct 12, 1935

Your letters and birthday box arrived safely and on time—so you know that I am very happy—thanks awfully for everything—I had a regular spread in my room & invited everyone in the dorm at 11 in the evening..

...Well, folks it's now 2 o'clock in the morning & I have just come in from the country with Chet Loomis of Hartford—he is a 37 lad & asked me to the Dartmouth game & also wants me to goto the army game with a friend of his—in brief—I am just getting on the ball with the Yale lads—so to speak—

Now this morning (Sund.) I am going out to lunch with a boy from NYC . Please don't think because I mention a few dates I have over the weekends that I am neglecting my work—cause I'm not. All art work comes first—but since there is little or no homework—I read the N.Y. Times & other literary stuff.

..There is no such thing around here as a boarding place for food & we are all perfectly happy getting our own breakfast & supper & when ever I feel like green vegetables I go over to the YW for a meal—it's about 4 blocks away—I get a dozen oranges for 25 ¢ or 30 ¢ which last me a week,, ½ dozen sweet rolls for 10 ¢ last 2 days & coffee for 17 ¢ lasts 3 weeks.

I smoke about ½ as many cigs as I used to—in fact I'm quite a good girl

....My modern art course is given by Dean Meeks-head of the School of Fine Arts—he's a short fat man with a beard like Henry the VIII & wears pinchers—quite a jolly fellow—he gives 22 lectures on architecture from Renaissance to Modern—then Mr. Sizer gives 22 on painting & sculpture covering the same periods & then another man will give the last 22 lectures on furniture—then I will know all there is of modern art.

Monday Nite Oct 21, 1935

....Well Sat. Penny, Norm & I hopped on the street car to out to the bowl—everyone takes the trolley cause parking is terrible—the trolleys are open on the sides & if you can't get a seat you hang on the side on a sort of running board—lots of fun. We had 6th row seats on the 20 yard line which was swell—and the game was marvelous—After the game we hung onto another trolley going back—it was loaded 3 deep on the sides—just marvelous—. All the way back on every street corner there were bunches of little boys & girls calling “scramble” which means for us to toss up a penny or more & let them fight for it—it was lots of fun tossing off coins at every corner—but also quite pathetic—but the kids loved it.

We then went back to Cliff's room for cocktails—and then to another boy's room in another college on the old campus—and at that party I met most surprising young boy who claimed to be a clairvoyant or something & tho I had never seen him before in my life he told me father's name, said I was from Milwaukee & father had something to do with printing. I'll have to get to the bottom of how he learned all that. After that we moved over to the Alpha chi Rho house & last to the old Heidelberg & at 12:30 I ups & told Cliff to take me home cause I was dead tired—

Come Sunday I slept all day & turned down 3 dates for the evening but Chet Loomis, the third phone call, was more persistent & came over anyway-so I went out with him over to his fraternity Theta Sigma Phi & then down to the Old Wagon which the frat. had rented for the evening. I had a marvelous time—but as usual –come 12:30 I decided to go home—even tho the party was still going strong. Yes mother—at last I have reached that stage you always wanted me to get to—which is simply to get one's sleep if you're tired, and tho the boys never want to stop going I always hop off at my bedtime. Chet is the boy who is taking me to the Darmought game for the weekend and is also

getting me fixed up for the Army weekend. We may go down to NY to the Rainbow room after the Darmouth game to hear Ray Noble in Rockefeller City & if we do I'll stay with Isabel Bishop.

...Did you know there are 4000 boys in Yale—so you see I am conducting myself most properly and can pick & choose as I please. Oh boy—I have a Chicago orchestra on the radio—it makes me feel so close to home.

Sunday afternoon Oct.28, 1935

Dear Mother,

I want to thank you & Lou & Carol & father for all the grand letters I have been receiving from you & my only hope is that you will all keep it up—cause I'm getting a little sick of the place down here anyway—in brief—the men—tho they do go to Yale—aren't so hot—so I guess I will just stay home nights from now on till I meet someone I can really enjoy. Tho fraternity parties are the things to go to—they are really nothing more than a contest of who can down the most liquor—which is not my idea of a good time—Since this is a man's town there is none too much respect for the girls & since we do not meet the men in our own homes—only in an old dormitory—it's rather hard to give too good an impression. I have had no misshaps myself yet and have been having a really good time.

... For my first month's grades I got 71 in composition, 68 in painting & I don't know yet about drawing. Since the passing grade is 60 and few got above 78 or 80, I am what you might call an average student of the arts

Monday nite Nov. 7, 1935

...Since the faculty consist entirely of very reserved men who have next to nothing to do with you outside of class—it's out of the question that I get in good with them. They think we're all dumb twits anyway.

I met a very nice boy last week, Bob Marshall who took me to dinner after that French lecture—And this afternoon Dick Stone came over to take me walking—and we walked so far that we got lost & had to go in a drug store to get a map of the city to find our way back—we had lots of fun—then he took me into Saybrook college for supper & then I went to the library to study architecture & then home. Washed my stockings & so to bed

You said that that \$50 you sent is to last till Christmas—please don't forget that it costs me about \$10 a week to live here which will also include a weekend, the 23rd at West Point and maybe the 16th in N.Y. for the Army Notre Damn game.

I think I'll spend next winter in Sarasota at the Ringling art school which is fine for commercial art—oh yeah? Probably cheaper living expenses there...

Fri. Nov. 16, 1935

..Last Sunday, Joan Tippet, a New Haven girl took me out to the riding academy and we rode for about 2 hrs in the afternoon—up and down the hills & took a few good jumps too—it was simply marvelous to be back in the ol' saddle with a good horse between my knees

Eva Le Gallineau was here Tues. & Wed. 7 of us went to the matinee in the gallery 55¢ to see "Camille" & then I led them all back stage "cuz" I'm used to that now & got a good look at her as well as her autograph. I liked her so tremendously that 4 of us went in the evening to see her in "Rosmersholm" by Ibsen—which was a very stirring and well done drama—I am terribly interested in the cultural advantages of seeing good plays—and am making the most of it.

I had a final exam in architecture today and am quite exhausted. Monday I start decorative arts. I believe I did pretty well in the exam—since I had put in some hard studying. The reason you hear more of this lecture than of painting is because I was so enthused by learning under Dean Meeks who is an authority of authorities. He is head of the architectural school, on museum boards, and a well known art judge & critic.

Tues. afternoon Nov. 19, 1935

Dearest Mother,

I got home at 2 o'clock this morning from the happiest weekend I have ever had—it was simply marvelous—I did so many things and it was so marvelous being with Jeanne again—and she gave me the most marvelous time... Got tickets for "A touch of Brinestone" with Roland Young and Mary Phillips for \$3 which is very cheap for any popular plays..enjoyed it loads..Went to her home ..We had dinner and then some friends of Jeanne's came over and six of us went out to the Red Arrow Inn on the Hudson which is a tremendous home fixed over with about 3 ballrooms and pictures all over of famous people ..got home about 1:30. Sunday it rained all day so Jeanne played piano for a good part of the afternoon. ..Because of the awful weather Mrs. Searle insisted that I stay over..we slept until noon and then Jeanne & I took the train into N.Y.. and went to the Van Gogh exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art. Over 3 million people have been there to see the exhibition since it opened. His work was good and some was exceptional—tho I have seen better..

Then we went to Radio City to see Ronald Coleman in the "Man who broke the bank of Monte Carlo" There was a perfectly marvelous ballet on the stage with an 80 piece orchestra...After dinner we walked down to the town hall where Jeanne had two \$2.50 balcony seats to hear Lee Pattison play the piano..He played so beautifully-gosh. Then I took the 11:45 to New Haven & Jeanne left for Bronxville and I am the happiest girl in the world-and believe it was well worth my while to cut one day of class to hear Lee Pattison.

And then my dear when I came into y room what should I see on my desk but my architecture exam with an 85 on it. Marcie only got 80 and half the class flunked, and the highest mark was 90—so you can imagine how I feel—gosh—I haven't seen an 85 since I was a freshman in high school-But now for the bad news —I have 10 dollars to live on for the rest of the month...

....But I'm seeing so much, and learning so much-and doing so much—that you must see that it really is worth it. Just one year of heaven is all I want here---and then I'll come home and work like a dog designing annuals...

Thurs nite Dec 13, 1935

Dearest Lou, (Ginny's 2nd sister)

You've been about the only good writer in the family besides mother—and she always devotes a page or two to higher morals just as if I was a falling woman—gosh—I've been so good I'm surprised at myself.....

Mond nite, Dec 17, 1935

Dear Family,

Of all the feeble-minded mid-western Podunk-people-such trash you read. You might as well get me a book of Plato's works—as send me such stuff & nonsense—and may I take it as an out and out insult that mother said I reminded her of the heroine of the tale—such trash—so that's how you waste your time. I have been reading such books as "Europa" and am now finishing "Time out of mind". I may do a little drinking—such as sipping good sherry or port in Mr. Head's old book shop—discussing a touch more interesting and worthwhile subjects than free love or what have you with Rod and some of his friends in the graduate school.

Enough of that—I now have \$32.12 of that \$50 and since my ticket will be \$50 how about \$20 or \$25 PDQ

Wed. May 27th, 1936

Summer school is out. If I can get either one of the two camp jobs I want—I expect to interview this weekend. The one I want now is on McMahan island in Booth Bay, Maine—very ritzy and nice—feature sailing run by Mr. Allen and his wife of Rye Country Day school.

I got my thesis back this afternoon and Prof. Sizer wrote that it was "very interesting" & "you have done well in the course all year—and this is not a let down" So I feel pretty good—also I got a 75 on my final big oil composition for Mr. Rathbone & since the top mark was 85 & passing is 60—all good luck came my way this afternoon...

...I see a lot of good solid work ahead of me next year—so I'd much prefer being in the country this summer

June 19, 1936 Pine Tree Camp, Buzzards Bay, Mass.

Although I haven't heard from you as yet—I'm still alive and broke as usual—but as usual I'm having a perfectly swell tie. I'm getting plenty of exercise for the first time in 9 months—and loving it—sailing is great stuff again—reminds me of the good ol' days of sailing on Lake Michigan in father's yawl

Gosh, I haven't really much to say, m'love—but I like the kids & teachers and am learning a lot

Thurs

Dear Grandmother,

..I'm having a lot of fun sketching the kids—so that is about my only form of relaxation, and I love it. Tell Grandpa that I hope he is ship shape soon,, and gets the paint brushes a swinging soon.

The assistant director here left for a grand trip to Europe, but Miss Stevens, the head director here is simply a wonderful woman & I eat at her table as often as I can. Everyone here is so fine and enthusiastic and working so hard for such a good cause. I hope I can get to be a swimming director in a girls scout camp next summer. Even if the pay isn't so hot—the spirit and purpose is finer.

My next address will be Forest Acres Camp, Fryeburg, Maine

Monday, Aug 31, 1936

Dearest Mother,

I have took it into my head to write you—mostly to say that the telegram didn't cost as much as you probably think on account of it is a special rate kind which costs only 35 ¢ anywhere in the country. I sort of gathered after about the third letter from you that you didn't want me to go to N.Y. but I knew that all along anyway.

Ginny & I (that's Tex MacArthur) stayed at camp till Saturday cleaning up & finally left camp at 2 that night & got to Boston at 12 at Mrs. Bob Harkness's apartment—she is Higgie who was a counselor last summer & who we visited on our last trip to Boston. There Dick Hapgood & Stuart Dean had been waiting for us all that time—so we chatted for a while & then the boys left & we pulled out the sofa & made a double bed—slept late Sunday- ate breakfast & then Dick came over to go for a walk with me—His father is principal of the girl's Latin school in Boston & he graduated from Brown in '34 & got his MA at Harvard this year & he's 6'3" & beautiful blond blue-eyed giant who says he's in love with me & wants to marry me—but remarkable as it seems, I have not fallen & am taking my own good time with this & will probably come home married someday—with a little more sense behind it all this time.

Anyway Ginny & I drove down to Gray Gables on the Cape Sunday afternoon & right this minute I am sitting on the white sandy beach of Old Silver in North Falmouth, Cape Cod & the sea is rolling in with big white caps & blue sky above & a brisk wind blowing. Sand is blowing all over this letter and me & the sun is so bright on the water—

But that is not telling you very much—Ginny lives with her mother & father & brother in a cute gray stucco house surrounded by tall pine trees—the house or rather Gray Gables is the former summer white house of Grover Cleveland—you know the president of the US.

Tomorrow we go back to Boston where once more I will see Dick for a date & then Wednesday Stuart is driving me to Hartford—so you see I am not spending anything on train fares as yet. Ginny is going back to see her mother before leaving for Texas.....

...Ginny & I are great friends & she says she is going to write to you when she gets back to Texas—don't forget she is eight years older than I am.

Oh yes, I spent the last week of camp painting murals for the dining room for Mrs. K. She likes them so much she wants them permanent with frames & wants me to come back next year & paint some more—She thinks she is getting a lot for almost nothing having me there—and to me it's just fun.

Monday morning Sept, 1936

Well, I have cleaned my room this morning, and have now seated myself at the dining room table and am going to try to answer all my mail. I've been getting an average of 1-5 letters a day from everybody—this morning I heard from Ginny, Dorothy, you and Pat Stearns about school. Dorothy is a Tri-Delt & has been telling me all about the rushing down in Austin, Texas. They took in 45 girls. Dorothy is 26 and is teaching history in the University High School—but is quite a help to her sorority because she is so attractive and has such a charming personality. Ginny wrote me all about the Dallas exposition which the two of them stopped to see on the way home. She also sent me a picture of Rodin's "the three shadows" and Gainsborough's "Mrs. Siddon"—which a friend of hers gave her who just returned from Europe. Did I ever tell you that she also gave me a Jenson Danish silver ring with a gun metal blood stone in it? She got it in Denmark when she went to school there. The ring is much on the order of the silver one grandfather gave me.

...I really think I ought to tell you the whole story about Dick Hapgood. We had a perfectly grand time at camp together—and he certainly gave me one grand rush—and repeated his great love for me and meanwhile I liked him so well that I was scared to death of him & so-like most foolish women—acted just the opposite and he hardly got to first base with me—in fact after two months of heavy courtship—I didn't even let him kiss me until about the last day of camp—and even then I was cold as ice. I think he got a little upset because he didn't seem to be getting anywhere- and has the general opinion that I am a cold woman-at least – that is what he told me. But it meant so much to me to take everything slowly and to be sure of myself—that it got to the point where Ginny & Dorothy said that I was just too mean to him for words, and they didn't understand me & wondered why he even continued to date me in spite of my apparent indifference. He is through school and has his M.A. in Political Science & is hunting for a job, and seems to have very little success—and much as I want to encourage him—I can't help but write him light and stupid letters—and I can't do anything about it. It would kill me to think of asking him home, and I doubt if he could afford it-unless he asks me up to visit him in Boston first. He's 24 and so adorable—gosh—I guess you're rather surprised at my attitude—and I know Carol & Lou will be—and I suppose none of you can understand me—considering past experiences—but I guess I've become quite a well settled New England hen—and don't know any better—Stuart Dean—when he saw how little effect Dick was making—drove me down to Hartford from Boston & on the way asked me if I would wait two years for him—but I avoided an answer. He just got a new job as principal of the Plainville grammar school—10 miles from here—at \$1700 a year and is planning to rush me this winter—since he'll be just 23 miles from New Haven—so he said—but it won't do him any good—so I don't care. Frankly I don't know what I want, so I guess I'd better let it go at that....

Monday night, Oct 6, 1936

Dearest Mother,

It is now past my bed time—all of 15 minutes after 10—so I haven't long to write to you—you see darling I am on a new schedule—I've got so much work to do—that I try to get to bed before 10 every night so's I can get up in the morning for an 8 o'clock class & I've been doing alright so far—

besides painting and drawing, I am taking both 2nd & 3rd year composition classes instead of just 1, and 2 lectures instead of 1 and I've been accepted in the graduate education school to take the History of Education—working towards the Connecticut State teacher's certificate. I haven't dared tell Mr. Keller at school cuz I'm taking so much more than I'm allowed to—but I know I can do it if I stick to my gus—and sleep comes first. I have learned that much & I've had everything in so far. I work from 8 to 5 and 7-10 at night. I play only if I know I can afford the time for it.

I'm not dating anyone except on weekends- and it looks as if Stuart is taking good care of that.....

Monday Oct 12, 1936

Dear Grandpa & Grandma,

.....I don't know if I told you or not, but I am taking 3rd division composition under Eugene Savage, one of the greatest muralists in the country and I am thrilled about it.....

Tuesday evening Nov 3, 1936

Dearest Grandpa,

.....My work is progressing nicely. Right now I am working on a composition depicting a flood and another one representing "the Wave". I have been doing a series of 6 lectures on Leonardo da Vinci by Stephen Park, pres. of the National Gallery in London. I just listened to the third lecture this afternoon, which centered mostly on the "Last Supper". Did you know that every head in the picture has been repainted? Leonardo had painted with oil on plaster—which only held for about 20 years—and since then many other hands have tried to restore parts of it. But the preliminary sketches were beautiful and I can only imagine what a masterpiece it must have been in the original.

Half of the girls in the dorm have gone to a movie and one has gone to school to work and the rest have finished up all their work to listen to the returns tonight—but poor little me has to just keep working—I'm beginning to wonder if perhaps I have taken on too much to do—but I'm going to try & keep it up until one of us goes under—either the work or me—a right jollie game alright.

Saturday Nov 7, 1936

Dearest Mother,

I would be writing this to grandfather—only I said goodbye to father yesterday and promised him that I would write to you for him. I got a note from the Bursar's office today informing me that my tuition bill had not been paid as yet..they sent the bill to grandfather on Oct 20 –and in a letter last week to father he said he had paid my bill.....

I had my last composition for Savage checked for the exhibition & an 85—so at last I have done something. It represented "a flood"

Monday Nov 16, 1936

Dearest Mother,

...My bills are entirely straightened out. The Bursar said that due to grandfather's request last year, the bills were mailed to him—but the tuition bill was probably lost in the mail....

I didn't tell you that I am only a second year student here—I have been permitted to do a collaborative problem which is 4th year work because of my work for Savage. The problem is presented by the association of the Alumni of the American Academy in Rome. My 5th yr architect Jene Nyquist(Chicago) designs the building, Ed Steever (3rd yr) does the sculpture & I do the painting or mural decorating—16 groups are working on it—it is judged in NY 7 then at Yale—takes a month to do it—and the grade is my grade for the month here—and all I hope is that I get a passing mark—Love, Ginny

Sunday night

Dearest Family

....Pricilla Stearns drove down from Schenectady for the weekend & we all went to a movie Friday night 7 Saturday Stuart was down for the game—we had lunch and then crowded on the open street cars out to the Bowl & the game was perfectly marvelous. Harvard 13, Yale 14. After we got back to the dorm Pricilla & I dressed & the four of us went to Ed Malone's for supper—marvelous steak—meantime we had reserved a table out at the Seven Gables Inn for dancing—but first Sal & Pricilla went to "Ali Babba's" so Stuart & I took a walk trying to pass the time till the theatre was out & ended up at the State House. We talked for two hours—rather heatedly & decided that we had better call it quits. I was so sick of the whole mess—because I didn't love him & told him I never could & he called me a "cold woman" & so I didn't want to finish the evening with him & so he brought me home and I said goodbye—and that's the end of that—and I'm sure it's just as well—because it couldn't have gone on & on that way

And now I have said all I have to say except that I'm saving \$60 for train fare for xmas—otherwise I will be broke.

I just finished reading "Lost Horizon" Have you read it? All I want are good art books for xmas—no clothing—What do you want? M'love Ginny

Sat. Feb 9, 1937

Dearest Mother,

I just came up stairs to Mary's room an she is playing Rochmoninov's new concert no.2 in C minor and "Rochie" himself is playing the piano—a beautiful recording—really we are the most cultural—beg pardon—that was Tchaikovsky concert in B flat—shows how I am learning—what? Anyway—it is still very nice and it puts me in a delightful mood—such as to being thinking high time I wrote my weekly report on my goings on—as for my final grades for the semester—they are: drawing 74, painting 78, composition 2nd 78, 3rd 79, Pictorial art 80, Hist. or Ed. 83; Italian

Renaissance 85—which looks like my calling was probably that of the academic student of history—not an aesthetic artist....

...After school today I went over to the Ed library and read most of the afternoon to find out if the “present secondary school curriculum fits the child for his place in society” a paper which I have to write for Monday evening’s class. You see the title of my education course this semester is Principles of Secondary Education which meets Monday nights from 7:30-9 –it is quite a bit harder than last semester’s course—but I think I can stick it out.

I guess I never got around to telling you that we spend a week drawing a pose and four days of the week we take a half-hour doing 5 minute sketches of different poses—these sketches are on small sheets of paper about the size of this sheet. Mr. Keller comes in to criticize twice a week—gaily wipes out half the drawing & redraws all the deltoids and heads etc—but I’ll be a Michelangelo yet just wait

...I’m working on a mural design to decorate the the wall space above a fire place in a large colonial reception room for Savage & he likes it so far...

12:45 AM Feb 13, 1937

Dearest Mother,

Lucrezia Boori is now singing Madam Butterfly on the Radio City Flood Relief Benefit ‘s midnight program...Up to this time I have been at school watching the mural drawings in progress for the Beaux Art Ball for Feb 19

I got the highest mark in a class of 200 for my pictorial art notebook-a 90 & I am second highest in both my art lectures—so I guess the old brain is working for a change

Friday May 14, 1937

Dearest Mother,

....I did some lettering for Mr. Eckerman’s Arnold Colleg book & will probably ber able to pick up some odd jobs next year.

I took some pictures last Tuesday of the Prix de Rome work before it was loaded into the truck for NY..Please notice the time exposures I took—didn’t they come out well? I guess I’m getting pretty good...

(last exam May 28th)

Wed. Aug. 11, 1937

....I was sorry to hear about Bud’s illness and that father wasn’t so well—but I hope all is well now.

*Did I tell you that my marks from Yale were pretty good—the lowest was 72 and the highest 95
--But—I’d sure like to come home after camp is over—won’t you let me?*

Monday nite Nov. 7, 1937

Dearest Dear Mother,

Oh, you frightened me so by your last letter—I felt terrible—completely laid out—it was such a shock—because I was planning on coming home next summer to spend it with grandpa—and I want to learn etching so badly.

Paul Hammersmith died Nov. 12, 1937, at age 80

Sat. Nov. 20, 1937

...I haven't been able to get to sleep nights for the past week—and I cry a lot and have stopped smoking and eating. I am so glad that I have such a nice picture of grandpa on my desk

August 5, 1938

*42 Hamilton St.
Worcester, Mass,*

Dear Virginia,

I don't know if I'm surprising you by writing but I've been wanting to do so for a long while. I had difficulty in getting your address and was successful only last week when I paid a visit to the school.

The exhibition was well worth the visit. Enough pictures are hung, so it seems to fill a couple of museums. I noticed several of your compositions on Mr. Savage's wall. To me his comp. class is by far the most interesting part of the show. There is more real art there than the rest of the exhibition put together. A number of your life drawings were up—all those that you had checked.

I'm struggling alone like the rest of the students on ten compositions. I never realized before what a large number ten was. I've even stopped making watercolors for fear I might not be able to finish them all. I understand Mr. York won't let anyone return to school unless everything required is completed. I have one consolation I've finally settled and put on paper an idea for a tempera painting. That was my biggest concern and now that that is done I feel as though I'm coasting home.

Your plans for the summer sounded exciting to me last Spring. Have you changed them or did you really enroll in the Chicago Institute? A thousand things must have happened to you

I've been really living like a retired banker traveling from one summer colony to another. I went to Fitzwilliam New Hampshire last Friday to see an exhibition. It is the most delightful little town. It has everything New England is famous for: a church designed by Bullfinch; a general store and postoffice combined, a beautiful view of Mont Monadnock and a nice little lake to cool off. I had a long talk with an art dealer there. It is his ambition to make an art colony out of it. A few artists are living there now and any painter that comes along is a good subject to let loose a torrent of ideas

upon. The exhibition at any rate was well worth the trip. I made a watercolor of a tourist camp there; that's what my major comp. idea is about.

What are your plans for next semester? I'm really much more interested in hearing about them than relating about a lot of disconnected incidents. Let me hear from you soon.

Ever,

Paul

August 12, 1938

My dear Virginia,

I was so glad that you answered my letter. I now feel much better about everything. In spite of my coolness the last few months at school—which incidentally I hope to explain in detail some day—my sentiments have really never changed.

All the wonderful things you've done and experienced have made me quite happy for you...I too admire Albright's work. I shall never forget the first time I saw one of his paintings at the Whitney museum. My eyes literally "popped" out of their respective sockets.....

.....I personally think if they had a few teachers like him at Yale the school would be worthy of its reputation...Hasn't the school the funniest way of running its business? Not being notified of winning a scholarship is to me inexcusable. It makes me ill when I think of all the anxiety and worry caused by such negligence. Luck, fortunately was with me in this instance. A friend sent me a wire upon my winning the Alvard scholarship, one of the reasons why I'm enjoying this summer and not worrying too much about finances. If anyone deserved a scholarship, Virginia, you did. Even though you are not taking advantage of it, you're to be congratulated. I should say doubly congratulated, one for being the top student in your class and one for throwing it back into their faces.

I'm going to miss you at school Virginia, believe it or not. One of the most pleasant evenings of my life & that's taking in a lot of territory—was spent in your company. Do you recall "Tristan" at the Metropolitan? I can assure you that if it weren't for you it would have been just so much music to me. Now all I have to do is mention the name and I get gooseflesh all over.

Your plans for the coming winter, frankly, makes me envious. A Mediterranean cruise and a years study in Italy sound exciting to me. I do hope we can continue our correspondence no matter where you go. Let me know if this isn't asking too much. Going back to Yale now practically leaves a bad taste in my mouth.....

Paul

September 9, 1938

Virginia dear,

I had expected to answer your sweet letter last week and to let you know definitely that I would be in New Haven by the 15th..it breaks my heart to say this dear, in more ways than one, most important of which is the fact that I want to see you a lot more than you probably do. Now I won't be in New Haven until the 19th. Wouldn't it be nice if the Alvard scholarship were traveling—if it were I'd jump on the boat with you and wouldn't that be fun—No, not the jumping but being with you for such a long time. ("You go to my head" is being sung over the radio—awakening all sort of romantic illusions.)

I do hope Mr. York will defer the scholarship for you until you return....

Paul

May 16, 1939

Dear Mother

I hope father got my note all right about the Freshman year book. The Yale banner staff is taking it over. They know our engraving is good... Mr. Carroll is now an assistant dean of Yale college.. I think they think our prices are high-but also think it is worth it for the good work they get.

...Paul and I went to N.Y. Saturday and had a wonderful time. He got the job at the Fair—but they're not sure they want me yet because I can't run a cash register & they only want experts because they're in business for such a short while..Paul is simply wild that they didn't take me & doesn't want me to go home this summer at all. In fact we want to get married this summer & live together next fall while we're in school. He figures that the only way to keep the other men away from me is to marry me—I guess. His full name is Paul Emile Antoine Fontaine. Gosh—spring is simply marvelous—everything is green & wonderful & quite warm....Gee, I love Paul so very much—I know you will like him—he's so very wonderful—sweet & kind—we're stuck together all the time like a couple of lolly pops—Why don't you come east to our wedding?

Heaps of love—your Ginny

May 22, 1939 Sunday AM

My dearest Mother,

I am full of sweetness and light this morning so I thought the best thing to do would be to write you. Paul and I fully agree with you in your last letter, and I promise you I won't do anything foolish. It's just because we are so in love that we talk about getting married a lot—how much we'd like to—and how we're going to work so we can. The way things look—we might be able to swing it next summer—not this....

Saturday Velona, Harry, Jamie, Paul and I went out to the swimming hole. We weren't there very long when to everybody's surprise Paul's two brothers and mother drove up. Well, you can imagine how scared I was. His brothers are two of the handsomest boys I've ever seen and Mrs. Fontaine is a little charming gray haired woman, and I guess she was as shy of me as I was of her. I invited them all to supper at the dorm & walked over to a nearby farmhouse with Bob Burns to

phone Mrs. Jones. Paul meanwhile told them he was going to marry me—Well, anyway we came back to town, had a nice supper & then they left. & Paul told me I had made a hit with his mother & that his brothers liked me very much. Now all you've got to do is meet my Paul someday & then everything will be jolly....

....Am enclosing a scholarship application for father to fill out & if you can suggest any good references—please fill them in & send back by return mail....

Tues. A.M, May 30, 1939 (*Enclosed a clipping "Fourth Year Class" listing Virginia Hammermith as a John Ferguson Weir Prize scholar*)

Dear Mother,

I haven't been too good about writing lately because I've got my fingers in so many pies. I decided to paint a new picture a week ago & it now looks as if my first & last painting are my best. I just missed the boat in between----But I am enclosing the list of my class in the catalogue this year & thought you might be pleased with what you found in it. Paul's name is there by mistake. You didn't know you had a prize scholar for a daughter, did you?....I haven't been too much on the job for father—tho I try to see the staff every other day anyway..I have been helping Paul every night with his Architecture note book—cutting and mounting....

Oh mother it is so wonderful being in love—everything is so pleasant & I work so much better---Tho Paul is dying to get married—I'd like to wait till next year cause he has a good chance for a scholarship abroad & I'd hinder his chances if we were married—but I'd meet him over there in that case & we'd get hitched anyway—that' what all the other winners have done...going swimming again today...So long till later. Love Ginny

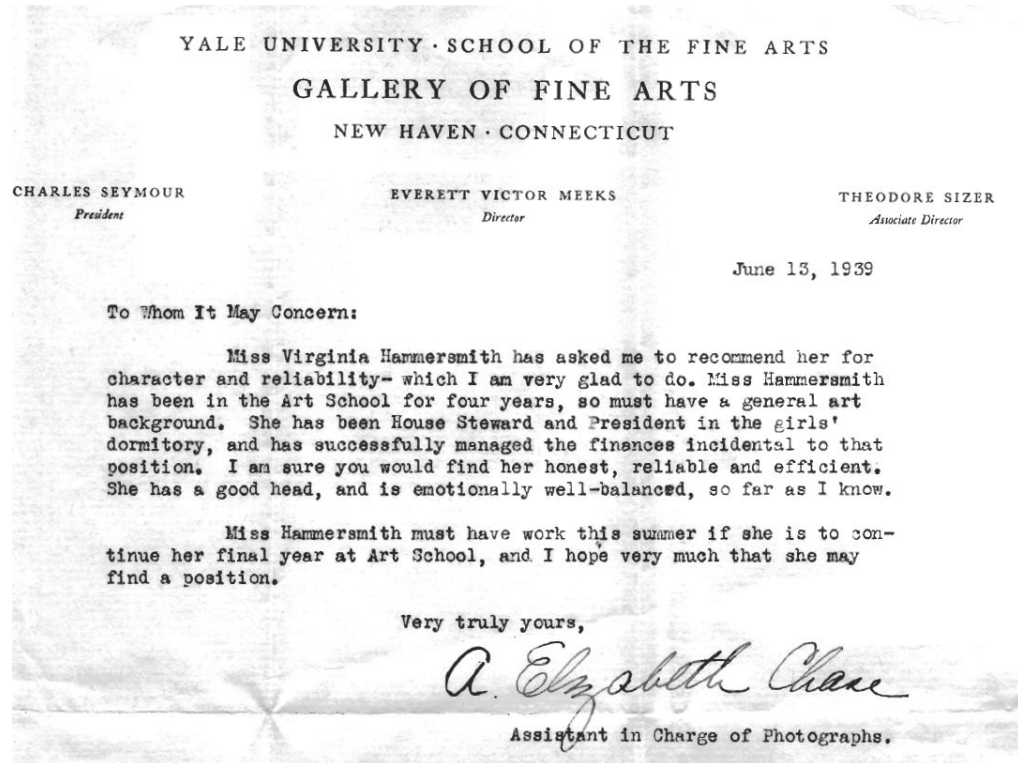
Tuesday noon,, June 13th, 1939

My dearest father,

You must realize how I felt when I sent you the bad news in the last wire—especially when I know how badly you need the business—It's just that I wasn't hot enough. Mr. Gurwit of John & Ollier has sold Harvard, Princeton, Wells, Amherst and Yale—with a damn good talk on modernizing with taste & pictorial illustration and a lot of good books to back him up---This book selling is a man's job & no room for greenhorns—experience is what you need & I'm learning it the hard way. I think Gates would do very well down here; he has the personality & experience & there's no guess work about him. John & Ollier's price was about the same as ours. They just had a better salesman. They did not want to split the contract and give me the Freshman book—they wanted to give it all to one company with full responsibility. They know our work is good & price is good—the other fellow just had better ideas & material to show. I am sunk to the depths & feel quite badly about it all father & I feel like a heel even trying to ask for another year of school here after this has happened. I have just decided to go to N.Y. & try once more for a Fair job & try to earn money in that way—because getting my degree means everything to me. Please get two men to send business references to Mr. Bolgar 2 W43rd st, Art Aid Corporation, N.Y.C.. Have Meeks write one on my salesmanship (?) & good accounting at the office in the summer & have Carol look up the woman at the Y.W. I worked

Virginia Hammersmith Fontaine Letters—
Selections and Excerpts 15 Sept 1935-17 June 1939

under summer of 35 teaching sketching out at the place on Wisconsin Ave—for character reference—or anybody. I'm going after the selling end & directing visitors at Masterpieces of Art exhibit. Haven't much chance for lecturing—only Phi Beta Kappa's got that. If that falls through will come back home & ship stuff home for good. Send \$10 more please, that's all—make it \$15 if you can, will refund. Love Ginny



Friday June 17th, 1939

Dearest Mother,

I am afraid that I am causing quite a trial & expense to your family and I feel perfectly terrible about it. I guess I am just about the dumbest dope you've got, and if it weren't for Paul, I don't know what I'd do. I am so darn helpless, just waiting and hoping for this job. The big crowds they have been expecting at the Fair have finally arrived. They need 2000 a day to go through the Old Master's show to make it pay & now that they have come Paul feels that Bolger will see soon enough that he needs another girl on the day shift. Then too everyone got their job because they were friends with Miss Sidenberg or Bolgar & Paul's the one one there on his own merits. But since Miss Chatfield, Bolger's secretary advised me to stick around a week if I could—I think I am doing the right thing in staying here until next Tuesday. I am so darn scared about going home cause then I don't think you'll let me come back for my degree & just about everything depends on that degree now.

It makes me ill everytime I think of that Yale fizzle—and I don't know why I haven't broken down yet

Virginia Hammersmith Fontaine Letters—
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I suppose you'd like to hear about the Fair—well it really is quite wonderful & perfectly beautiful at night.....

<u>1937-38, Year II, Term II - Entered 9/27/37</u>			
Drawing II, Life	18	78	78
Painting, From Head and Life	15	73	74 -To Life 1/24/38
Composition, Div. 3, B.A.I.D. Class A	10	84	85
Art 15, Sculpture & Ornament	2	audit	audit
Drama 6, Survey of the Drama	2	--	85:incomplete
<u>1938-39, Year IV, - Entered 9/26/38</u>			
Life Painting	15	78	79
Major Composition	24	Pass	Fail
Awarded the John Ferguson Weir Scholarship, June, 1938.			

Required for passing:

In Preparatory, 1st, and 2d years, an average of 70 with no grade below 60.
 In Third and Fourth Years, an average of 75 with no grade below 70.
 In Fifth Year, an average of 75 with no grade below 75.

Virginia did not graduate. She and Paul were married that next summer 24 August 1940.