

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Milan, Italy

March 24, 1940

Dear Folks:

I now have Daddy's letter of February 23rd; although it was mailed one day earlier than Janie's, it arrived one week later. It bore no mark of censorship, and I don't know why it was delayed. Janie's came unusually fast, however. I was very glad to hear that things are going so nicely, and that the house has been so prettily done over. It really takes a woman's touch to run a house, as I am finding out every day by practical experience.

By this time you should have received Betty Lou's air mail letter which she asked me to forward. I hope that in the future she will send lighter letters, as that one, together with one addressed to Curt, cost over \$1.00 to mail. I have had two letters and a post card from her. As you will have already learned from her letter to Sarah, she seems to be very happy, and it does not look as if there was much chance of getting her home before July, anyway. In her letter to me she wrote, "It makes me feel badly to think that Muttie, Uncle Curt and Aunt Mary are worrying about me in any way, which I can understand, but I wanted to fill out my year here, otherwise there won't be time enough to learn everything I want to. Are they angry?"

Yesterday I went to Lugano by train with one of the clerks from the Consulate. We had a good time, but did not stay over night, as he had to come home to be with his wife, and I couldn't find a single room in any of the hotels. The weather is simply beautiful. It is now quite warm and the grass in exposed places is getting green. The lakes were marvelously blue, and the mountains very impressive, although the hills around Lugano are not so high as some others. I found my five cartons of cigarettes at the American express in Lugano, and brought them back with me without difficulty. I also sent Mr. Buhrman in Basel the money I owed him for the duty, which was about \$7.30, and the five tins of smoking tobacco which I bought for him on the boat. The export of coffee from Switzerland is now strictly forbidden, even in small quantities, and I didn't buy any as I thought I had enough contraband for one time.

My radio is still at the customs. Two days ago I got a letter from the inspector of customs of Milan saying that he had received permission from the Foreign office to release the radio duty free provided a permit be secured from the Ministry of Communications. We found that this latter is obtainable only after paying the annual "listening tax", which amounted to about \$4.20. I paid this, and we have drawn up a request addressed to the Ministry which I am sending to be forwarded by the Embassy. It will probably be several more weeks before the radio is out, and even then there will probably be a tube tax and a loud-speaker tax to pay. People who complain about taxes in the U.S. have no idea what taxation is like.

I have received a letter from Harris & Ewing inquiring about the disposition of the proofs from my sitting. The letter is dated February 27th. I hope that, if you have not already done so, you will not lose any time in returning the set to them. Janie knows which pictures I wanted sent to the Department of State. There is no charge for that. If you want any pictures made up, order it done and I will pay for it. I trust you received the price list I sent from New York; I indicated there which groups I thought most suitable, but you can do what you like about it. Please don't let the matter drag out any longer, though, as you will recall that they charge \$25.00 just for the set of proofs. In reading this paragraph over, I ought

to explain that the negative for the Department is not sent to the Department, but to Harris & Ewing, who will take care of everything. Just indicate which picture it is.

I'm afraid you were looking at a small scale map when you thought that Milan is in the mountains. It is flat as a pancake here; I haven't yet seen even a slight elevation within the city. The mountains begin thirty or forty miles to the north. I am informed that under exceptional weather conditions, the mountains are visible from the tops of the higher buildings in Milan, but of course I haven't seen anything of it as yet. In any case, it isn't far, and I hope I will get to see a lot of the beautiful country in this area. It would, of course, be nicer if I had a car, but I am still holding back, as it is too expensive.

I have taken over Laukhuff's opera ticket as well as his apartment, and I will be going to hear "Oberon" Thursday evening. Since I care little about opera, I am not looking toward particularly to this event. Perhaps I will cultivate a taste for it in time. Altogether, there are four more performances this year which I will be entitled to attend.

I believe that this is about all for the time being. As always, I am anxious to hear from you all and learn how things are going at home. Please give my love to all the family and regards to all my friends. How is Mrs. Schaub these days? Don't forget to tell her that I asked about her.

With love,

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