

By Air Mail

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Milan, Italy
July 19, 1940

Dear Folks:-

I was quite happy to receive, yesterday, the air mail letters from Daddy and Sarah of July 8th and 9th. As you guessed, your letters from Havana and after your return have not yet arrived, but I really expect them soon, as traffic through Southern France to Spain and Portugal has now been resumed, although I imagine it is not exactly normal yet. In any case, I hope soon that the pouch from Washington will arrive with six weeks collection of letters and magazines. Your letters above referred to were the first I have received from the U.S. since June 12th.

I am glad that the box arrived back from New York, I was a little worried about it, thinking that it was probably in some contraband control port somewhere, and that we would never see it again. You had better luck than I about getting your money back on the postage. The package I sent to Germany for Betty came back about a week later. It seemed that we had not attached all the necessary forms. In the meantime, the additional form had arrived, but I had to pay the entire postage all over again, amounting to about \$1.25. They say I can make a complaint if I want to, but there is so much red tape in connection with that that it wouldn't be worth-while, especially since there is no certainty that the money would be refunded. I asked "Tante Gertrud" to write me as soon as she received the package, but so far I haven't heard from her. I do hope that it will arrive, after so much trouble has been expended on it.

I hope that Bob Hughes' operation will be successful and that he will succeed in getting back into Service. This is a wonderful time to get in, as things will be humming from now on. I feel very strongly that we ought to have general military training; it is good for the people who take it, as is easily seen over here. The boys come back from their period in the army stronger and healthier than ever before. It also gives an opportunity to train the under-privileged in useful trades, and helps knit the country together by mixing up people from the different sections. We are so accustomed to thinking that the Europeans are "sissies" that we haven't caught on yet that they are the ones who are tough, while we are getting softer all the time. I realize that I am no one to talk, with my dislike for physical exertion, but it might have been better for me if I had had some training of this sort.

I was surprised to see in Daddy's letter that you have not heard what work I am doing or how many people there are in the office. I was sure that I had written this to you a few weeks after I arrived; perhaps you didn't get the letter, or else I may have written it to some one else. In any case, our staff here consists of two consuls and one vice consul of career, and one vice consul not of career. There are six American and three foreign clerks, and two messenger-janitors. You will see that this is much less than the force we had in Stuttgart; since we handle no immigration work here, and since the other types of work are either normal or less than normal, I suppose this is a typical office. That at Stuttgart was abnormal in that one phase of work predominated all others, and there was a very decided pressure of work in this line. Consequently, the office force was expanded far above its normal proportions; now, that immigration has slacked off, due to the difficulty in obtaining transportation, the staff has been greatly reduced.

My regular work here is connected with American passports and temporary visitors visas. When I first came, there was plenty of both, especially of the former. Under the rules issued by the Secretary of State under the Neutrality Act, no American passport is valid for travel in Europe except when specially validated for that purpose either by the Department State, or by a consular officer, and then only for the specific countries named in the validation. My principal job is to decide whether a given person is entitled to have his passport validated for further residence in Europe, and they have to submit evidence to show that there is some urgent reason for their presence here. At first I was pretty strict, but now that it is virtually impossible to return to the United States I am giving validations more freely.

The weakness of the system is that, although all the competent police authorities of foreign countries have been informed regarding this requirement, they continue to regard passports as valid even though they have not been validated. There is nothing, of course, which we can do about this. Besides the validation problem, there is also the renewal of passports, which must be done every two years, and the issuance of new passports. In connection with the latter, we have to examine applications from persons who have never had an American, passport, such as the children of Italians born in the United States who returned to Italy on their parents' Italian pass. Great care has to be used to prevent frauds. In my recent letter to Janie, I told about the special work I am doing because of the war, so I will not repeat that.

I do hope that you are all well and happy. I will try to write to Uncle Cary, Grandpa, Roe Francis etc. when normal mail service is resumed, and also send stamps for Mr. Woltjen. I trust this will be soon.

Love to all,

William

over

Regarding the expenses for Betty (mentioned in Sarah's letter) I don't care whether I get that money back or not. Under date of May 30, I sent her (to Washington) an itemized account. In case she didn't get it, I will send another later, if you wish. The total, including the \$30.00 I gave her for incidentals on the boat, was \$65.00.

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