

Air Mail

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Milan, Italy
October 19, 1940

Dear Folks:

It seems to be true that good things never come singly, and that applies to your two letters of October 11th. It was very nice of you to think of my birthday in this pleasant way, and I appreciate it very much. I found both letters on my desk this morning when I came to work. I want to wish Daddy a very happy birthday in return. I thought of his birthday on mine, and would have liked to get off a letter at that time; now I'm afraid it's a little late. It seems that since my first appearance when I was two weeks early, I have been a little late ever since. Best regards and congratulations also to Grandpa; he certainly has lived through a good many birthdays.

I have written to Janie, having in the meanwhile received a letter from her giving her New York address. I am glad to hear that she has got well established there, in reasonably pleasant surroundings and with good friends. I also wrote to Carl Ankele and asked him to send her a check for \$400.00 to cover a part of her expenses. I hope this will be enough, although if more is absolutely necessary, you might let me know. You might call Carl and ask him if he got my letter and if he dispatched the check to New York.

I am sorry to hear that the apple crop was not better this year; I hope it will nevertheless be possible to make expenses with them. Regarding the grapes, and selling them to Italians, I was interested to find that they have rather good Concord grapes here. They are fairly large and have a flavor, although I like to think that ours are better. They are called American grapes (*Uva americana*), and are used almost exclusively for eating. I asked the maid if they were used for wine, and she said that in general they were not, except by the peasants. The wine, it appears, is too sour for most people; I agreed, recalling a bottle that some of our Italian or Rumanian friends gave us once, which certainly was sour, although beneath the sourness, there was a certain good flavor.

They have revived an old joke in a new setting here. The story starts: "Do you know what Hitler said to Mussolini at the Brenner?" "Well, he told him that the entire Fascist hierarchy must be sent immediately to the English Channel. "If they can only suck like they can blow, we'll drain the Channel and invade England in no time." It makes an even better phrase, with a pun, in Italian, but there is no use explaining it. Another bit of current wit is that 25 killed German fliers appeared one morning at the Pearly Gates of Heaven and asked St. Peter for admission. The latter glanced at a list in his hand, and began admitting the men one by one. When he came to fifteen, he shut the gate and told the rest to go to Hell. When they asked why, he said: "I read the bulletins from Berlin, and it says only 15 were killed yesterday. The rest of you must be fakes". With such trivialities we pass the time away.

I am now enjoying my first cold of the season. I hope, without much confidence, that it will be the last. I don't know whether it is due to the lack of heat in the house and office, or to the fact that I started to take injections against typhoid last Tuesday. This course has been advised by the Department, and seconded by a doctor here in whom we all repose a great deal of confidence. She said that while there wasn't much danger at this minute, wars have always brought epidemics of typhoid, even under modern conditions. Mr. Schnare and I are taking them; the other members of the staff are apparently waiting to see whether we survive. It may be that the inoculation just threw

my system sufficiently off balance to allow a cold to get started. The first shot is not large, and it has had no other unpleasant effect. Tomorrow I am going to spend most of the day in bed, to give nature a chance.

We are still having meat, but everyone agrees that it will soon be rationed. At present, you recall, it is sold on three days a week. The new rations of butter, oil and fats hasn't caused much hardship yet. Butter continues to be available even outside the rations, apparently because they haven't been able to prepare and distribute cards yet. Whether true or not, most of the people here believe that these products, of which Italy always had enough, are now being shipped to Germany. This naturally increases the popularity of the latter. Few undiminished optimists are still saying that the war will be over by the end of October. Various comments in the press are interpreted as meaning that the government too has abandoned this rosy hope; the statements go something like this: "Even though the war continues for many years, which is unlikely, we are prepared". They ring various changes on this theme. The ordinary people are very interested in the position of the United States. If we did enter the war, it would be a terrible blow to the prestige of the government.

I am sorry to hear that Betty has been having the chicken pox. I hope she is well now and learning all about geometry from Pop Swank. Please give my love to Betty Baumann and all the rest of the family and friends.

With love,

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