

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO.

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULATE  
Milan, Italy  
December 17, 1940

Dear Folks:

Our Vice Consul Niccoll, who has been transferred to Niagara Falls, Ontario, is leaving tomorrow for a non-stop trip to New York and Washington, and I am writing this in the expectation that he will be able to post it in New York for me. We are very sorry to see Nick go; he is a good fellow, but he is very happy to be away from here and to go back where his children will be able to have a good American-type education. I envy him the opportunity, because now he will be able to enjoy all the advantages which being in America brings: no more pinching of sugar and coffee, plenty of butter and good flour, American movies and all the things you don't think about until you don't have them anymore. With the money it cost him to keep his two boys in school in Switzerland, he will be able to drive a car - something he couldn't do here, what with the price of gas and all.

As the nights grow blacker and blacker, I have more and more difficulty in overcoming my natural reluctance to go out in the evening. I am invited out fairly often to the homes of people I meet at the Consulate - mostly American women with Italian husbands and vice versa. I usually enjoy the evening after I arrive, but when I get home again, I wish I could have spent the entire time at home reading and listening to the radio. I realize that this doesn't sound much like flaming youth, but I'm afraid I have never been the type to flame. My natural instincts are all against it, and I am getting to the point where I don't comprehend how people can live who go out practically every night in the week, and if they aren't invited out, they ring up their friends and go to a movie. I have lots of material here to read - magazines, with which I never seem to be able to catch up, and books. I haven't yet read the books I brought over with me, and I have acquired several since. Nothing like the comforts of home, I always say.

I have been very rushed in the month or three weeks just past getting my Christmas cards ready. All of them will probably arrive hopelessly late, but the recipients should be glad to get anything, conditions being what they are. From tomorrow on I have to rush out those for Europe, or they will be late too. What takes so much time is that I can't resist the temptation to write a note with each card, and since I bought sixty of them, that all takes time. I am enclosing this with a sample card, somewhat soiled from printer's ink. It shows the famous Duomo of Milan. These cards were engraved to order, and the engraver signed each one with his name and the word, "Milano". They were not expensive, compared to what they would be in the United States. The printers, however, made a mess of things, failing to capitalize the word "Season". There was no excuse for this in view of the fact that I sent them a type-written slip,

showing the wording. I was so mad when the boy brought them over that they have never been back since to collect the bill. I'll bet any amount of money, however, that after Christmas, they will send a bill through the mail. Besides the misprint, the worst feature of the cards is their weight. Mailed from here, they require double postage. As yet, I haven't checked up on the U.S. rates; this is difficult to do since we have only metric weights here.

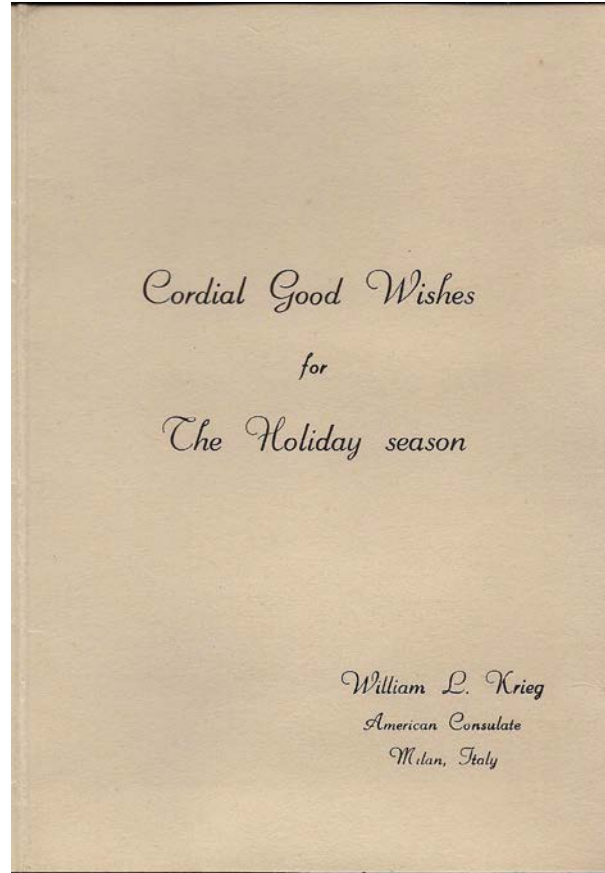
Italy is in an uproar (subdued, of course,) about the disastrous campaigns in Albania and Africa. They are a temperamental people, and quickly plunge from the heights of confidence to the depths of despair. This is the case now, and old timers say they have never heard the word "revolution" used so often as in the last few weeks. I fear, however, that it is all talk, because, with the German army ready to come in at a moment's notice to support the regime here, no responsible leader would start a revolt. For of all things, they hate and fear the Germans most. If it were not for this, it is by no means beyond the bounds of reason that some of the army leaders who have just "resigned" might lead an army putsch against the government. If anything ever happens to Germany, it is my feeling that the regime here wouldn't last a month. The people never wanted war in the first place; rightly or wrongly, they think Germany forced them in to it, to divert the British fleet to the Mediterranean. Now that restrictions are multiplying and the campaign going badly, they are sick of it and would be only too glad if the whole business were called off. But wars are easier to get into than to get out of, and it is my expectation that Italy will drag along somehow until the decision is made elsewhere.

I hope that you will not show the above discussion to anyone, because the Department has asked the Foreign Service to be extremely guarded in remarks, even in private letters. Therefore, it would be better to say as little as possible about it, and not say anything to anyone who might possibly misquote it for the newspaper. The above would be quite enough to cause my recall, if it were published, and that would have a disastrous effect on my career.

Well, it is now 7:15, and I expect any minute to have a complaint that my light can be seen from the street, so I will sign off for the present. Hereafter, I shall write by air mail, and hope that the letters will make better time than they have recently. Daddy's letter of Nov. 8th took exactly one month. Love and all good wishes to all of you.

*William*

*PS – Betty Lou's aunt (cousin?) Gertrud wrote to me a few days ago to ask how she was, since she hasn't heard for a long time. I answered that I thought she was all right & doing well in school.*



The Christmas card mentioned in this letter  
(1940-12-25 M64 WLK Christmas Card)





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*W. H. H.*

*Betty Lou's aunt (Gorman?) returned word to me a few days ago to ask how she was, since she had heard from me. I answered that I thought she was all right, but I don't know well in school.*