

AMERICAN CONSULATE  
Milan, Italy  
January 28, 1941

Dear Folks:

Daddy's nice letter of December 7th, telling about his trip to Arkansas, arrived here January 12th. One is very lucky to get air mail in a month now, and you can imagine all the complications of a business nature that have come up due to the slowness of communications. Even cables take three or four days. I have often wondered how much money I spend on postage since it is necessary to send every letter by air mail - and I still keep up a pretty lively correspondence. It must amount to about \$5.00 a month. I hasten to add that it is well worth it; receiving letters from the family and old friends is one of my greatest joys.

Since my letter of January 9th there have only been a few things of interest. The first was the visit that the Ambassador paid us on his way to Rome. You probably read in the newspapers that he left Washington for Rome by Clipper after an extended sick leave in the U.S. From Lisbon he came by train to the Spanish-French border, where his Italian chauffeur met him with his own car. It is an eight cylinder Cadillac, and you can imagine what an impression that makes in these days, when even the tiniest cars cannot be operated without permits which are most difficult to obtain. In Marseilles, he was met by Bowling, the Secretary of Embassy with whom I drove to Rome last Fall, and they came on together.

They arrived here about 6:00 PM and went immediately to a hotel. Dowling then called the Consulate, and I talked to him as Mr. Schnare had already gone home. He asked me to call later so we could make arrangements to meet in the evening. I did so, and he invited me to come to the hotel to meet the Ambassador at 8:30. I had to go without dinner to make it, but I was there, and had a short but pleasant talk with the Ambassador about conditions here and the work of the Consulate. A few minutes after finishing his dinner, the Ambassador went to bed; he is an elderly gentleman, and it is obvious that he does not have much strength. After that, Dowling came down to my apartment, and we had coffee and cognac and discussed things in general. I naturally found it very interesting to talk with someone close to official circles in Rome and got a great deal of useful information which would have been unattainable from any other source.

The next morning, it appeared that the Ambassador had caught cold, showing what only one night in the Milan fog will do, and they decided to go on to Florence by train. One of the men in our office arranged for a local photographer to photograph the Ambassador, and the picture appeared in two evening papers. It was withdrawn from the morning editions, however, at the order of the Prefecture, which is said to have bawled out the papers which had published the photo. It seems that pictures of foreign personages are not to be printed without special permission, which, in this case, was not accorded. The general point of view of the Italian government was illustrated by the fact that the Ambassador's reception at the Foreign Office was given four lines in the papers, under a two column spread describing the reception of the new Minister from Manchukuo.

January 18th I made my long deferred trip to Lugano. I found things very cold indeed in Switzerland. The hotel where I stayed operated their central heating system only from 6 PM to 9 PM - and as far as I could see, it made no difference at all. They also let me have a very small electric heater for my room, but it was too small to help much. I stayed outside the hotel as much as possible. First I went to a dentist, who found a couple of cavities and filled them. He cleaned first my teeth and then me - of \$7.50. However, he is supposed to be a very good dentist. If my teeth begin to fall out soon, I will know that he is not.

One of my friend's has a wife residing in Lugano, as I mentioned previously. He was unable to get a visa in time to go up there with me, but I had dinner with his wife and the baby's nurse, and lunch on Sunday. She had very kindly bought some Spuds for me, which I was very glad to have. I believe I said once before that

they only cost 35 cents (American) in Switzerland now. However, rotten Italian cigarettes cost 20¢, so I suppose it's all right. I wish I could find a way to get cigarettes from the U.S.; right now there is none.

The day after I got back, I came down with a fine cold – possibly as a result of that frigid hotel. We have been having an epidemic of grippe here similar, to judge by reports, to what has been prevalent on the West Coast. Nearly everyone in the office is affected to some degree or other. In addition to the usual headache and sinus pains, I also have, periodically, an ache in my jaw, a little like what I suppose neuralgia is, although I never had it. Joint aches, too, are typical of this type of grippe, although different people have them in different places. I have now passed through the first, worst week; the head is improving, but I still have a nasty cough. I have just gotten some vitamin extract medicine, which I hope will build up my resistance.

Daddy asked how my Italian was coming along. Pretty well. I am still taking lessons, although they don't amount to much more than conversation; I find them useful, however. My main deficiency as a language student is too much self-consciousness. Being fully aware of my many mistakes, I never feel at ease in a foreign language, and consequently speaking one is a considerable nervous strain, and I have a tendency to avoid it as much as possible. Also, I do not read enough Italian because I have so many American books and magazines.

It is now time to go home, so I will say Good night, and good luck.

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