

Rec'd
4/7-41

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Milan, Italy
March 15, 1941

Dear Folks:

Daddy's letter of February 5th arrived March 4th, and I was very sorry to hear that he has had an attack of appendicitis. I hope that it will not be necessary to have an operation, but, on the other hand, if it becomes necessary, do not put it off too long. Remember all the trouble Dorothy had for such a long time because she didn't have hers out? That is one point where I think Louis Mitchell goes a little too far.

I have been quite well, and enjoying the spring weather as much as a person can who has to be indoors all the time. The last several days have been very nice indeed; in fact, almost all of March, with the exception of the first few days, has been delightful. At a guess, I should say that the temperature was in the upper fifties during the day. Today is supposed to be the last day on which private houses and offices can be heated. Even so, this is an extension of time over that which was announced last Fall. At home, we have enough coal for the rest of March at least, but if they follow instructions, they will save it for next winter. This is too bad in a way, because the houses get so damp at this time of year if they are not heated. I had dinner with a friend last night whose heat has been turned off for over a week, and you could see your breath very clearly. My house has been well heated all winter; i.e., since November 4th, although during the really cold weather we had in December, it was hardly what you would call warm. Nevertheless, there was always enough heat to keep the place dry, and I found out that that is more important. We have nothing to complain about here, actually; the stories I hear about the terrible conditions in France are really heart-rending. I certainly hope I will not be transferred there.

Thank you very much for having remembered to have my insurance premium paid. Unfortunately, I also thought of it, and mailed a check to Bill Grieser January 18th by pouch, which should have arrived about February 18th. If he hasn't said anything to you about it, please call him up and see what he has done with it. I wrote to Carl [Carl] Ankele and to Bill directly the other day, but sent the letters by pouch, so, with luck, you should get this first. In my letter to Bill, I suggested that he put it on his calendar to send out a notice way in advance next year, keeping in mind that it takes the mail about six weeks in each direction. I shall also put it on my calendar, and if I am still in Milan, I shall probably think of it. Who knows where I will be by next December?

The other day I got a brief and cryptic letter from Kenny Jones saying that John Montgomery was to be married on February 15th. I suppose you will let me know if this is the case. I would certainly have liked to be present at John's wedding. I'm afraid I probably would have wept like a Victorian mother, because, as I said in a previous letter, it makes me feel very strange to have John getting married. Now there's just Dick Coelho and myself left of the "Old Guard".

The food situation here remains fairly satisfactory from my personal point of view. This, however, is largely because we have special privileges not granted to the people as a whole. For instance, the Ministry of the Interior has granted all foreign consuls and the foreign staff of consular offices double and in some cases four times the regular ration. We now have tickets for

pasta (alimentary paste), rice, butter, oil, fats, sugar, etc., and meat is rationed to the retailer in addition to being limited to three day's sale a week. The retailer is only supposed to give out about a quarter pound per person for each of the three days. I hope that I will be able to get extra rations on this, too.

In a way, it makes me feel badly to take the extra amounts which are available to me when there are so many poor people who can't afford to buy what they need. On the other hand, if I didn't buy my full allotment, it would not go to the poor, but to someone who would pay the storekeeper an extra price. Furthermore, these people have presumably entered this war for the glory and grandeur of Italy, and they are supposed to be glad to make sacrifices for their country. The radio reminds them frequently how glad they really are, as some people seem to be inclined to forget. I am not only a foreigner, and therefore not directly interested, but also I am not starving here of my own free will and accord. From this point of view, it seems only reasonable to expect me to make fewer sacrifices, and this is the point of view taken by the Italian authorities. On the whole, relations are correct with the officials, if something less than cordial.

As you have read in the papers, no doubt, the Consulate General at Naples and the Consulate at Palermo have been closed at the request of the Italian authorities. The closing of the latter was of little importance, but Naples was our supervising office, and handled all the immigration work for all of Italy. They had the largest staff, and it was therefore quite a job to get everything moved. The supervisory consulate general is now established in Rome, and the Consul General from Naples has taken charge of it. From many points of view, this will be an advantage, since they will now be in closer contact with the Embassy. Formerly there was a bit of pulling and hauling between the two, as the Naples office did not like to have the Consulates correspond directly with the Embassy. Since we have assumed the protection of so many foreign interests, a large part of our work has been carried out in direct cooperation with the Embassy, and Mr. Bowman, the C.G., is said to have felt a little out of the swim.

Hope you are all well, as I am.

Love to all, William

(JIM)

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