

Air mail

American Consulate
Milan, Italy
June 1, 1941

Dear folks:

Since I began my travels a couple of weeks ago I have received two letters from you to be answered. Daddy's letter of April 19 arrived on May 12, just after I wrote to you the last time, and Sarah's letter of May 10 arrived the 29th – very good time indeed. I was very glad to hear from you both, especially after such a long pause.

Having mentioned traveling, I might as well go on and be more precise. The opportunity to take a courier trip, which I mentioned in my last, actually did come to a head a short time afterwards. The Legation at Bern asked us to go to Rome and take the pouches from Rome to Bern. Mr. Schnare expressed a desire to go to Bern himself, but, since he had already been to Rome the week before, he had no objections to my going. He did say, however, that I had more work than he did and that therefore he was in a better position to get away from the office. So I left here the night of May 17 (Saturday) and took the night train to Rome, arriving there the next morning. You will recall that my last visit there coincided with the beginning of the campaign against Greece. This time, I arrived on the same day with the celebration of Croats who were coming to "request" the king to select a member of the house of Savoy to be king of Croatia. The city was draped with Italian, German and Croatian flags, the latter appearing for about the first time anywhere. It rained very hard and the new Croatian flags ran rather badly; this fact, however, did not hinder the selection of the new monarch.

After delivering my mail to the Embassy, I went to Dowling's house and had breakfast. After another short visit to the Embassy, we had lunch at the hotel Excelsior with Mr. Tittmann, the Counselor of Embassy – or rather, one of the counselors, since there are now two. Mr. Tittmann is particularly interested in matters relating to the Vatican, having acted for a time as assistant to Myron Taylor when he was there. Besides Dowling, there were two American priests present – very nice fellows, judging by my brief acquaintance. Later in the afternoon, we went to the Ambassador's for tea. The other guests were the new assistant Naval Attaché and an American by the name of Gorcher, Ehret, who has just been released from prison after serving a small part of the eight year sentence he got for dealing on the Black Bourse in Florence. The Embassy had just completed arrangements for his departure by plane the next day, and the Ambassador, as well as the rest of us, were interested in hearing of his experiences in the various prisons where he was confined. Without going into detail, it was a rather unpleasant experience, especially for a young man of wealth accustomed to every luxury.

The next day, Monday, I spent mostly talking to various people in the Embassy and the Consulate General. I discussed a few things with Mr. Bowman, the Consul General, and after lunch I saw my old friend Vernon Link, the public health service doctor who went to Stuttgart at the same time as I did. I had a drink with him and his wife, and they invited me to lunch the next day, which I accepted with pleasure. We had a great time talking over our friends in Stuttgart, and I learned from him that Mike Treble, the immigration inspector, who Janie may remember, is now in Honolulu, quite a change after being in Europe for ten years or more, I would think. Although

several of the public doctors have been recalled to the States, there are still several on duty in Europe.

Monday evening was the biggest thrill of all after having dinner with the famous "Triple Sec" (three Secretaries of Embassy without families), we went to see Rebecca, the movie, in English. It was the first film I had seen in English since my arrival here, and the first of any kind for almost a year, since I have not been going to the movies here. I enjoyed it tremendously, and found the suspense almost unbearable at times. To appreciate things fully, you have to be without them for a while. I left Rome Tuesday night for Milan, arriving the next morning.

It turned out that, in addition to having a good time in Rome, I had also managed to pick up a cold. This started to develop Wednesday afternoon, and I regret to say that it is still with me, vitamin pills to the contrary notwithstanding. It is, I am glad to say, much better now. Its progress has not been helped by the fact that the weather, until day before yesterday, was very cold and rainy. In fact, it is feared that the crops will be considerably impaired, since we have had little sun and no warm weather up to the present. The last three days, including today, have been very pleasant, however, although by no means is warm as one would expect that this time of year. I tried to persuade Dowling to come here and make a trip around the Lake of Como with me over the Memorial Day week-end, but he was unable to get away. No doubt, if he had come, the weather would have been terrible.

To continue with the travels, on Friday, May 23, I had to make a trip to Turin to see about a French visa for an officer from the Embassy. I made the whole round-trip in one day but even so, I got to stay in Turin from 10 in the morning until three in the afternoon, and since there wasn't any work to be done, I just strolled around looking at the town. I hadn't formulated in my mind just exactly what I expected to see, but whatever it was, I felt vaguely disappointed. For one thing, I thought I would be able to see the mountains from inside the city. I couldn't, due perhaps partly to the weather. Then, too, the city looked rather dull and uninteresting, the meal I had was dull and uninteresting, etc. What with my new cold and all, I didn't feel any too well, and perhaps this contributed somewhat to the general dissatisfaction.

In the meantime Mr. Schnare made the trip to Bern returning with further pouches for Rome, which were taken down by Phil Hubbard, who had not seen Rome before. Phil brought another load back from Rome Tuesday morning (May 27), and I carried them on to Bern. The weather was changeable; in the vicinity of Brig it was clear and the scenery gorgeous. On the north side of the Loetschberg tunnel, however, we ran into rain again. I arrived in Bern a little after five in the afternoon and took my sacks to the Legation. Somewhat to my surprise, I found that the Legation is located quite a distance from the center of Bern, in a residential section. The Legation itself is a remodeled dwelling house, and the only place that looked very busy was the mailroom, where, besides myself the courier from Lisbon had just arrived with about 20 sacks of mail from all parts of Europe. I had dinner with Claffey and Stoner, two couriers, the former an old acquaintance. Claffey suggested that we eat at the grill room of the hotel where I was staying, as he knew the maître d' hotel. Using his influence with the latter, he got us one of the most beautiful T-bone steaks I have ever seen in any country, much less in Europe since the war. It was bigger than the ordinary dinner plate and over an inch thick. It was beautifully browned on the outside, and rare inside served with Bearner sauce. We had French fried potatoes and some vegetables also, but I was so carried away with the meat that I didn't pay much attention to the rest. We also had a bottle of French wine (red), and dessert. Altogether it was a marvelous meal, and it cost plenty,

too: about \$2.50 each. You wouldn't want to pay that much all the time, but for a change it was fine. It was especially worthwhile, since it is persistently rumored that there will be no further distribution of meat during the summer here. The amount you get now is just about enough for one meat meal a week. Tonight I am having Claffey, the courier, and Bob and Helen Pallucca for dinner. My maid told me that if we served meat, it would take our entire week's supply, so we are having chicken. The chicken cost over \$2.00 and it's not much of a chicken, either. And you must remember that I get extra rations; if not there wouldn't have been any chance at all of serving meat.

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