

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Milan, Italy
February 16, 1941

Dear Folks:

Sarah's letter of January 10th arrived February 14th, and Daddy's of January 22nd arrived today. Why the favoritism, I don't know, but it doesn't do any good to wonder about it, because there just isn't any reason in most of the things that happen in these days. I was, of course, very happy to hear from you all, especially since the last previous letter had been over a month ago.

I am glad to be able to say that my cold and grippe seems to be at an end, for the time being at least. I found an immediate improvement after I started taking vitamin D extract, although one can never be absolutely certain that it was the real cause of the improvement. In any case, I shall continue to take it until warm weather comes back again, and I hope that I shall be able to avoid colds thereby. I consider the month of March perhaps the most dangerous period, especially if we are without heat at that time. I have been told that at my apartment house, they have enough coal for the entire month of March, due to careful consideration on the part of the superintendent, who has not allowed us to become over heated at any time. It was my impression that heating to be limited to 120 days, regardless of whether coal was available or not, but I hope I have been mistaken. According to the latest rumor, the Consulate will be heated until March 10th. If we get heat until the first of April, we will have nothing to complain about, since by the middle of April the weather becomes fairly warm.

I have been astonished by the regularity of the weather here up to date. During the summer, the days were almost uniformly hot. After the 15th of August, it began to get a little cooler, and after September, it got quite chilly with much rain and fog. During the months of December and January, the temperature hung between 30 and 40 degrees F.; we didn't have any very cold spells, as we usually do at home, or any warm ones either. About a week ago an "old-timer" remarked that he thought the back of the winter was broken, and, sure enough, the temperature appears to be slowly moving up. It hasn't dipped below freezing during the last week and a half, and we have had several nice days, interspersed with heavy rains. ("Good for the crops!")

Daddy's note that John Montgomery is going to get married after concluding his period of army service came as something of a shock. Not, of course, that there is an reason why John shouldn't get married, but, after all, he is probably my best and closest friend, and taking such a step as that always makes one stop and think. Also today came news from Washington that a girl whom I knew there had announced her engagement, thus eliminating another hypothetical possibility for me. It certainly is true that being in the Service is not all peaches and cream. It is my philosophy of life that every advantage brings with it a disadvantage, which is the same thing as saying that every cloud has a silver lining, or that silver linings come in dark clouds. You can't have everything, and I just have to reconcile myself to living alone for the time being and for an indefinite time into the future. I wish you would send me all the details of John's fiancée in your next letter. Off hand, I don't believe I know anyone named Fitch.

I think Daddy was very wise to buy a gallon of olive oil, even at an advanced price, for certainly there will be few imports from now on. Some olive oil is made in Spain, of course, but it, is problematical for how much longer that will be available. The prices of ocean freight, too, have

become prohibitive, and it is likely that that contributes to the increase. Higher prices seems to be taking its place here with death and taxes as one of the sureties of life. It is estimated by our commercial section that prices of foodstuffs have increased by over 50% since last July. This increase was, itself, based on other increases which had been going on even before the European war started. A few selections of retail food prices are as follows: white potatoes, 3½¢ per lb.; fresh tomatoes, 7¢ per lb. (seasonal average); oranges (good quality) 50¢ per doz.; canned peas, 19¢ per lb.; spinach, 25¢ per lb.; lettuce, 12¢ per lb.; cabbage, 3½¢ per lb.; navy beans, 15¢ per lb.; prunes, 40¢ per lb.; raisins, 55¢ per lb.; fresh string beans, 8¢ per lb; celery, 10¢ per lb.; apples, 15¢ per lb.; canned peaches, 32¢ per lb.; eggs, 72¢ per doz.;

Chicken, 65¢ per lb. dressed; pork chops, 60¢ per lb.; lamb, 50¢ per lb.; beef steak, 75¢ per lb.; *rice, 10¢ per lb.; *flour (mixed wheat, corn, potato, etc.) 6¢ per lb.; * butter, 70¢ per lb.; *bacon, 60¢ per lb.; *lard, 55¢ per lb.; *sugar, 18¢ per lb.; tea, \$1.25 per lb. (hard to find); coffee, none. The articles marked with an asterisk (*) are rationed. We have recently received word from Rome that consular employees of career who are of American nationality are to receive double the normal ration. This is very nice, and it makes one feel a little bad, since probably there are Italian families who really need the extra rations more. Except for soap and alimentary paste, the rations of most things are enough to get along on, although not very abundantly. With double the amount, it will be quite all right. Olive oil is very strictly rationed, and that makes it hard on the cooks. We had a supply on hand when the rations were announced, and so we are still doing well. I still have a little coffee, and cherish it carefully.

I have filled in by writing about prices because there really isn't much else to write about. The news of the prospective closing of the Consulates at Naples and Palermo at the request of the Italian gov't came through today, and we wonder if they will finally close all Consulates outside of Rome. Hope not. Love to all,

08M
Air mail
AMERICAN CONSULATE
Milan, Italy
February 16, 1941

Dear Folks:

Sarah's letter of January 10th arrived February 14th, and Daddy's of January 22nd arrived today. Why the favoritism, I don't know, but it doesn't do any good to wonder about it, because there just isn't any reason in most of the things that happen in these days. I was, of course, very happy to hear from you all, especially since the last previous letter had been over a month ago.

I am glad to be able to say that my cold and grippe seems to be at an end, for the time being at least. I found an immediate improvement after I started taking vitamin D extract, although one can never be absolutely certain that it was the real cause of the improvement. In any case, I shall continue to take it until warm weather comes back again, and I hope that I shall be able to avoid colds thereby. I consider the month of March perhaps the most dangerous period, especially if we are without heat at that time. I have been told that at my apartment house, they have enough coal for the entire month of March, due to careful conservation on the part of the superintendente, who has not allowed us to become over heated at any time. It was my impression that all heating was to be limited to 120 days, regardless of whether coal was available or not, but I hope I have been mistaken. According to the latest rumor, the Consulate will be heated until March 10th. If we get heat until the first of April, we will have nothing to complain about, since by the middle of April the weather becomes fairly warm.

I have been astonished by the regularity of the weather here up to date. During the summer, the days were almost uniformly hot. After the 15th of August, it began to get a little cooler, and after September, it got quite chilly with much rain and fog. During the months of December and January, the temperature hung between 30 and 40 degrees F.; we didn't have any very cold spells, as we usually do at home, or any warm ones either. About a week ago an "old-timer" remarked that he thought the back of the winter was broken, and, sure enough, the temperature appears to be slowly moving up. It hasn't dipped below freezing during the last week and a half, and we have had several nice days, interspersed with heavy rains. ("Good for the crops!")

Daddy's note that John Montgomery is going to get married after concluding his period of army service came as something of a shock. Not, of course, that there is any reason why John shouldn't get married, but, after all, he is probably my best and closest friend, and taking such a step as that always makes one stop and think. Also today came news from

P8M

Washington that a girl whom I knew there had announced her engagement, thus eliminating another hypothetical possibility for me. It certainly is true that being in the Service is not all peaches and cream. It is my philosophy of life that every advantage brings with it a disadvantage, which is the same thing as saying that every cloud has a silver lining, or that silver linings come in dark clouds. You can't have everything, and I just have to reconcile myself to living alone for the time being and for an indefinite time into the future. I wish you would send me all the details of John's fiancée in your next letter. Off hand, I don't believe I know anyone named Fitch.

I think Daddy was very wise to buy a gallon of olive oil, even at an advanced price, for certainly there will be few imports from now on. Some olive oil is made in Spain, of course, but it is problematical for how much longer that will be available. The prices of ocean freight, too, have become prohibitive, and it is likely that that contributes to the increase. Higher prices seems to be taking its place here with death and taxes as one of the surities of life. It is estimated by our commercial section that prices of foodstuffs have increased by over 50% since last July. This increase was, itself, based on other increases which had been going on even before the European war started. A few selections of retail food prices are as follows: white potatoes, 3 1/2 ¢ per lb.; fresh tomatoes, 7 ¢ per lb. (seasonal average); oranges (good quality) 50¢ per doz.; canned peas, 19¢ per lb.; spinach, 25¢ per lb.; lettuce, 12¢ per lb.; cabbage, 3 1/2¢ per lb.; navy beans, 15¢ per lb.; prunes, 40¢ per lb.; raisins, 55¢ per lb.; fresh string beans, 8¢ per lb.; celery, 10¢ per lb.; apples, 15¢ per lb.; canned peaches, 32¢ per lb.; eggs, 72¢ per doz.;

Chicken, 65¢ per lb. dressed; pork chops, 60¢ per lb.; lamb, 50¢ per lb.; beef steak, 75¢ per lb.; *rice, 10¢ per lb.; *flour (mixed wheat, corn, potato, etc.) 6¢ per lb.; *butter, 70¢ per lb.; *bacon, 60¢ per lb.; *lard, 55¢ per lb.; *sugar, 18¢ per lb.; tea, \$1.25 per lb. (hard to find); coffee, none. The articles marked with an asterisk (*) are rationed. We have recently received word from Rome that consular employees of career who are of American nationality are to receive double the normal ration. This is very nice, and it makes one feel a little bad, since probably there are Italian families who really need the extra rations more. Except for soap and alimentary paste, the rations of most things are enough to get along on, although not very abundantly. With double the amount, it will be quite all right. Olive oil is very strictly rationed, and that makes it hard on the cooks. We had a supply on hand when the rations were announced, and so we are still doing well. I still have a little coffee, and cherish it carefully.

I have filled in by writing about prices because there really isn't much else to write about. The news of the prospective closing of the Consulates at Naples and Palermo came ^{at the request of} through today, and we wonder if they will finally close all the Consulates outside of Rome. Hope not. Love to all, *the Helms 300 11.*