

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Lisbon, Portugal
July 29, 1941

Dear Folks:

So many things have happened since my last letter that it will be rather hard for me to catch up with the events. Furthermore, my back correspondence is in my trunk which is in storage at the railway station where I can't get at it, so I can't remember exactly where I left off in my last letter from Milan.

It looked for a while as if I might stay in Italy after all. The Embassy wanted to have somebody come to Rome to take the place of Vice Consul Cole, who wanted to return to the States with his wife, and they asked me if I would like the assignment. I said Yes, because I had an idea that I could do much worse than Rome, so the Embassy wired to Washington. The reply came back that they had already selected another post for me where they needed a single man. Then I knew that they had some sweet place or other in mind, and it was at that time that I finally wired you that I would come to Lisbon to await orders rather than on the way home, because I just had a feeling that this wasn't my year to see home again. It was typical of the Department not to say where this post was they had in mind for me, thus leaving me in delectable suspense for a couple of weeks.

On July 8th I reluctantly said good-bye to my friends in Milan. The ones I hated to leave most were my maid and Miss Borchetta, my Italian teacher. I left two days earlier than the others in order to carry the confidential files and codes to Rome; this had to be done before the safes could be taken out of the office. It was pretty hot during the last few days in Milan, and this made the work of packing up even more unpleasant than it usually is. It was also hot at Rome, there seemed to be more movement of the air there than in Milan; there are times in Milan when you almost suffocate because the air is so still and hot. While in Rome I stayed at the Hotel Majestic (now known as the Maestoso in deference to the laws regarding the use of foreign names) , and didn't have much time to go sight-seeing because Mr. Schnare kept us hanging around the Consulate all the time in case there should be some news. It was his responsibility to notify the members of the groups, and he could do this easier if we were all there. Poor Mr. Schnare got at least one good shaking down from Mr. Bowman while we were in Rome. Bowman told all the chiefs to wait around for certain news and Schnare left just a few minutes before this news came in. The next day Bowman bawled him out as if he were a little child, and Schnare was quite meek from then on. Perhaps I should explain that Mr. Bowman is, or was, the supervising Consul General for Italy and the leader of the group who were departing. On Sunday I did take time off to go with Phil Hubbard and his two kids to see the catacombs of Saint Sebastiano - quite interesting, and the coolest place we were in all day. The drive into Rome from there goes along the old Appian Way (still called the Via Appia), and we went back in a horse carriage. The driver pointed out many interesting buildings and remains along the way. We just barely had time to stick our noses in the Coliseum.

Our departure from Rome was postponed from the 14th to the 15th and actually was to take place at 6:50 PM. We had a special train consisting of four sleepers and a diner, an ordinary first class carriage occupied by the police, and a sealed baggage car containing our baggage. The latter was to go straight through to the French-Spanish frontier, where a change in the gauge of the railway necessitates a transfer. Our departure was somewhat delayed because the in-laws of one of the clerks from Rome refused to let her go and the police had to go around to get her, but we left around 7:30. This might be as good a time as any to mention that, although we

were an official party, the trip itself was organized by Cook's, and two representatives of the Rome office went with us all the way to Lisbon. Then they brought the members of the Italian delegation from the States. We were all requested to pay \$35 in advance, and this was to cover our hotels and meals for the whole trip. The railway fare was paid by the Embassy.

The first night everything went smoothly. I shared a compartment with Snyder from Genoa, a very nice, serious young fellow who is going back to Washington for the School. In the course of the trip we became very good friends. When we got up the next morning we were jogging along the Italian Riviera - very lovely country. The train stopped at San Remo, but we thought nothing of it until the train was moved onto a siding and we were told that we wouldn't be going on until one in the afternoon. We got out and walked around town and located a good beach for swimming. After lunch in the diner, we learned that we would be there over night, so we went swimming - that is, some of us did. My old friends Dr. and Mrs. Link, who went to Stuttgart with me in 1938, were on the trip, and I went around with them quite a bit. After another night on the train, it was announced that we probably wouldn't leave until July 23rd, since the Italian government didn't want to release us until the Italians were off the "West Point" in Lisbon. We moved to a hotel, which was practically vacant before we came, and settled down to have the first vacation most of us had had for years. The hotel had a private beach, special food was provided by the Italian Foreign Office, and the Foreign Office paid the hotel bills, including meals, but not including wine and extras. It was an ideal location, and everyone had a good time. We were very disappointed to learn, after only two days, that we would have to leave the same evening. I hear our government threatened to turn the "West Point" around and go back to New York if we weren't promptly released. The same thing happened to the German crowd at the French-Spanish frontier (occupied France), except that they didn't have such a nice place to stay as we did or such good food.

We left San Remo Saturday July 19th in the evening, and crossed the French frontier only a short time later. We had to wait three hours for the special train which was to take us through France, but this arrived about ten o'clock and before eleven we were speeding through poor, sad France. Since we arrived at about 9:30 the following morning at the frontier, we didn't see much of France, the whole distance from one frontier to the other being covered at night. After a short pause at Cerbère, we went through the famous tunnel into Spain. The desolation which met our eyes here was typical of what we saw all the way through Spain - the station half in ruins, and the half which was being used in a thoroughly bad state of repair. A trip through Spain is one of the most depressing experiences I can imagine. Everywhere you look you see destruction and poverty, a poverty more obvious than I have ever seen before. The stations swarm with beggars, most of them children. Most of us had brought some food along in case of emergency, and before we crossed into Portugal we gave it all away.

There was, however, one pleasant sight for me at Port Bou. That was good old Leon Cowles swinging down the platform. He had come up from Barcelona to meet three survivors of the *Zamzam* who had joined our party at Marseilles. Since some or all of them had also fought in the Spanish Civil War against Franco, getting them through Spain was quite a ticklish operation; fortunately, one can usually rely on the Spaniards to be inefficient, so we had them safely across Spain before they had time to check their black-list. He assisted us mightily with the customs formalities and the currency declaration, which occupied all the morning. We had lunch on the French diner and I took a walk through the town with Leon. Our train left Port Bou about four o'clock and arrived in Barcelona about seven thirty. We were taken to the Ritz Hotel, which proved to

be quite Ritzy; I ate with Leon and Tillie at their apartment, but those who ate in the hotel said the food was good.

The following day was the worst of the entire trip. We left Barcelona at 8:30 AM and travelled [sic] without interruption to Madrid, arriving a little after midnight. We had two special cars attached to a regular train. One of the cars was all right, but the other was open, like an American daycoach, and was one of the dirtiest things I have ever seen. Dust, dirt and smoke swirled through it continually, and there were lots of nice long tunnels. It was, of course, too hot to close the windows, and, as a result, we soon began to look more like niggers than white people. The car was full of kids, some of them very little ones, and they were always yelling, or crying, or requiring attention of one kind or another. There was a shortage of space, so that I never had a regular seat, and during the latter part of the trip, I had to stand up along with three or four others. We were certainly glad when that was over; we were probably the filthiest people ever to present themselves at the Ritz in Madrid. The following day we spent in Madrid, and I drove out in a taxi to see the remains of University City, where some of the hardest fighting in the Civil War took place. Although I had heard of the destruction and even seen pictures of parts of it I was overwhelmed with the sights which we saw. It was truly terrible, and must be seen to be appreciated. We left Madrid at 11 at night for Lisbon. The older people and those with babies had sleepers; the rest of us sat up. The arrangements miscarried so that we had trouble getting seats, but this time I didn't have to stand, thank Goodness. We arrived at the Portuguese frontier early in the morning and waited until afternoon for a train to take us to Lisbon, where we arrived about 7:30 PM. It was a tiresome trip, and all were glad when it was over. After passing the frontier, I learned of my assignment to Dakar, with which I am neither especially pleased nor displeased. Being assigned to such a crucial place is a sign of the Department's confidence, and that is good. I had about given up hope of coming home anyway, so I wasn't too disappointed. The Department has approved 30 days leave for me so I can buy tropical clothing and get a little rest, and I am planning to stay here. I think if you write right away, I will receive the letter before I leave for Dakar. My old friend Hervé L'Heureux is here, and so is Bill Cordell and John Cope, so I am not alone and have people to reminisce with. My trip to Dakar will be mostly by plane, and in this way I hope to avoid the long tedium of a sea or overland trip. I am going to conclude this now as I have some other things to do and don't want to delay mailing it any longer. I shall write again when I have time, and in any case before leaving for Dakar. I forgot to say, in case you might wonder, that I am in perfect health, having had nothing more serious than a slight stomach upset from eating bad fish on the Spanish diner. Much, much love to all of you.

William

¹In the spring of 1941, before the United States had entered World War II, the passenger ship [Zamzam](#) was sunk by a German raider in the South Atlantic. Among the *Zamzam's* 201 passengers were 142 Americans, most of whom were missionaries en route to Africa. The dramatic sinking and miraculous rescue became headline news in 1941." From "The Zamzam Story" <http://zamzamship.net/> (accessed

American Consulate General
Lisbon, Portugal
July 29, 1941

Dear Folks:

So many things have happened since my last letter that it will be rather hard for me to catch up with the events. Furthermore, my back correspondence is in my trunk which is in storage at the railway station where I can't get at it, so I can't remember exactly where I left off in my last letter from Milan.

It looked for a while as if I might stay in Italy after all. The Embassy wanted to have somebody come to Rome to take the place of Vice Consul Cole, who wanted to return to the States with his wife, and they asked me if I would like the assignment. I said Yes, because I had an idea that I could do much worse than Rome, so the Embassy wired to Washington. The reply came back that they had already selected another post for me where they needed a single man. Then I knew that they had some sweet place or other in mind, and it was at that time that I finally wired you that I would come to Lisbon to await orders rather than on the way home, because I just had a feeling that this wasn't my year to see home again. It was typical of the Department not to say where this post was they had in mind for me, thus leaving me in delectable suspense for a couple of weeks.

On July 8th I reluctantly said good-bye to my friends in Milan. The ones I hated to leave most were my maid and Miss Borchetta, my Italian teacher. I left two days earlier than the others in order to carry the confidential files and codes to Rome; this had to be done before the safes could be taken out of the office. It was pretty hot during the last few days in Milan, and this made the work of packing up even more unpleasant than it usually is. It was also hot at Rome, ~~and~~ there seemed to be more movement of the air there than in Milan; there are times in Milan when you almost suffocate because the air is so still and hot. While in Rome I stayed at the Hotel Majestic (now known as the Maestoso in deference to the laws regarding the use of foreign names), and didn't have much time to go sight-seeing because Mr. Schnare kept us hanging around the Consulate all the time in case there should be some news. It was his responsibility to notify the members of the groups, and he could do this easier if we were all there. Poor Mr. Schnare got at least one good shaking down from Mr. Bowman while we were in Rome. Bowman told all the chiefs to wait around for certain news and Schnare left just a few minutes before this news came in. The next day Bowman bawled him out as if he were a little child, and Schnare was quite meek from then on. Perhaps I should explain that Mr. Bowman is, or was, the supervising Consul General for Italy and the leader of the group who were departing. On Sunday I did take time off to go with Phil Hubbard and his two kids to see the catacombs of Saint Sebastiano - quite interesting, and the coolest place we were in all day. The drive into Rome from there goes along the old Appian Way (still called the Via Appia), and we went back in a horse carriage. The driver pointed out many interesting buildings, and remains along the way. We just barely had time to stick our noses in the Colliseum.

Our departure from Rome was postponed from the 14th to the 15th and actually was to take place at 6:50 PM. We had a special train

consisting of four sleepers and a diner, an ordinary first class carriage occupied by the police, and a sealed baggage car containing our baggage. The latter was to go straight through to the French-Spanish frontier, where a change in the gauge of the railway necessitates a transfer. Our departure was somewhat delayed because the in-laws of one of the clerks from Rome refused to let her go and the police had to go around to get her, but we left around 7:30. This might be as good a time as any to mention that, although we were an official party, the trip itself was organized by Cook's, and two representatives of the Rome office went with us all the way to Lisbon. Then they brought back the members of the Italian delegation from the States. We were all requested to pay \$35 in advance, and this was to cover our hotels and meals for the whole trip. The railway's fare was paid by the Embassy.

The first night everything went smoothly. I shared a compartment with Snyder from Genoa, a very nice, serious young fellow who is going back to Washington for the School. In the course of the trip we became very good friends. When we got up the next morning we were jogging along the Italian Riviera - very lovely country. The train stopped at San Remo, but we thought nothing of it until the train was moved onto a siding and we were told that we wouldn't be going on until one in the afternoon. We got out and walked around town and located a good beach for swimming. After lunch in the diner, we learned that we would be there over night, so we went swimming - that is, some of us did. My old friends Dr. and Mrs. Link, who went to Stuttgart with me in 1938, were on the trip, and I went around with them quite a bit. After another night on the train, it was announced that we probably wouldn't leave until July 23rd, since the Italian government didn't want to release us until the Italians were off the "West Point" in Lisbon. We moved to a hotel, which was practically vacant before we came, and settled down to have the first vacation most of us had had for years. The hotel had a private beach, special food was provided by the Italian Foreign Office, and the Foreign Office paid the hotel bills, including meals, but not including wine and extras. It was an ideal location, and everyone had a good time. We were very disappointed to learn, after only two days, that we would have to leave the same evening. I hear our government threatened to turn the "West Point" around and go back to New York if we weren't promptly released. The same thing happened to the German crowd at the French-Spanish frontier (occupied France), except that they didn't have such a nice place to stay as we did or such good food.

We left San Remo Saturday July 19th in the evening, and crossed the French frontier only a short time later. We had to wait three hours for the special train which was to take us through France, but this arrived about ten o'clock and before eleven we were speeding ~~kk~~ through poor, sad France. Since we arrived at about 9:30 the following morning at the frontier, we didn't see much of France, the whole distance from one frontier to the other being covered at night. After a short pause at Cerbère, we went through the famous tunnel into Spain. The desolation which met our eyes here was typical of what we saw all the way through Spain - the station half in ruins, and the half which was being used in a thoroughly bad state of repair. A trip through Spain is one of the most depressing experiences I can imagine. Everywhere you look you see destruction and poverty, a poverty more obvious than I have ever seen before. The stations swarm with beggars, most of them children. Most of us had brought some food along in case of emergency, and before we crossed into Portugal we gave it all away.

914

There was, however, one pleasant sight for me at Port Bou. That was good old Leon Cowles swinging down the platform. He had come up from Barcelona to meet three survivors of the Zamzam who had joined our party at Marseilles. Since some or all of them had also fought in the Spanish Civil War against Franco, getting them through Spain was quite a ticklish operation; fortunately, one can usually rely on the Spaniards to be inefficient, so we had them safely across Spain before they had time to check their black-list. We assisted us mightily with the customs formalities and the currency declaration, which occupied all the morning. We had lunch on the French diner and I took a walk through the town with Leon. Our train left Port Bou about four o'clock and arrived in Barcelona about seven thirty. We were taken to the Ritz Hotel, which proved to be quite Ritzzy; I ate with Leon and Tillie at their apartment, but those who ate in the hotel said the food was good.

The following day was the worst of the entire trip. We left Barcelona at 8:30 AM and travelled without interruption to Madrid, arriving a little after midnight. We had two special cars attached to a regular train. One of the cars was all right, but the other was open, like an American daycoach, and was one of the dirtiest things I have ever seen. Dust, dirt and smoke swirled through it continually, and there were lots of nice long tunnels. It was, of course, too hot to close the windows, and, as a result, we soon began to look more like niggers than white people. The car was full of kids, some of them very little ones, and they were always yelling, or crying, or requiring attention of one kind or another. There was a shortage of space, so that I never had a regular seat, and during the latter part of the trip, I had to stand up along with three or four others. We were certainly glad when that was over; we were probably the filthiest people ever to present themselves at the Ritz in Madrid. The following day we spent in Madrid, and I drove out in a taxi to see the remains of University City, where some of the hardest fighting in the Civil War took place. Although I had heard of the destruction and even seen pictures of parts of it, I was overwhelmed with the sights which we saw. It was truly terrible, and must be seen to be appreciated. We left Madrid at 11 at night for Lisbon. The older people and those with babies had sleepers; the rest of us sat up. The arrangements miscarried so that we had trouble getting seats, but this time I didn't have to stand, thank Goodness. We arrived at the Portuguese frontier early in the morning and waited until afternoon for a train to take us to Lisbon, where we arrived about 7:30 PM. It was a tiresome trip, and all were glad when it was over. After passing the frontier, I learned of my assignment to Dakar, with which I am neither especially pleased or displeased. Being assigned to such a crucial place is a sign of the Department's confidence, and that is good. I had about given up hope of coming home anyway, so I wasn't too disappointed. The Department has approved 30 days leave for me so I can buy tropical clothing and get a little rest, and I am planning to stay here. I think if you write right away, I will receive the letter before I leave for Dakar. My old friend Hervé L'Heureux is here, and so is Bill Cordell and John Cope, so I am not alone and have people to reminisce with. My trip to Dakar will be mostly by plane, and in this way I hope to avoid the long tedium of a sea or overland trip. I am going to conclude this now as I have some other things to do and don't want to delay mailing it any longer. I shall write again when I have time, and in any case before leaving for Dakar. I forgot to say, in case you might wonder, that I am in perfect health, having had nothing more serious than a slight stomach upset from eating bad fish on the Spanish diner. Much, much love to all of you.