

1 July 1944 3:45 PM

Hey there girl:

Every time I use that salutation I think of the Tuck Smiths. I have a note in my book reminding me to write to them, but I'm afraid that I spend too much time writing to you to try to write to anyone else. Maybe when we get back up into the front lines I'll be less busy having a good time and will find time to write.

Getting back to the home of Mussolini's mistress. I believe I was out on the balcony on the second floor at the time I ended my letter. A circular staircase of cement led up to the sun porch which occupied the entire extent of the third floor. At the front of the building the wall on this floor was translucent plate glass, while at the side it was cement with a two foot wide opening at about waist level, running the entire length of the wall, for seeing the countryside while lounging around in deck chairs. I was told that this vision slot was usually filled with flowers so that it was quite difficult to see if anyone was on the sunporch. There was a rather plain cement outside staircase leading from this third floor down to the ground, and another similar case led from the second floor down to the ground from another part of the house, in its course downward going over the driveway like a bridge. All in all this was an experience which I doubt any other GI in Rome will have the opportunity to duplicate.

Our next visit was to St. John's of Lateran. I had visited it once before and wanted to see it again along with Father Girard (Father Joe didn't go with us because he had an old priest at the monastery who was in the last stages of dying, and he wanted to be present at the end since he is the superior of the monastery) and feels that this is his duty). St. John's, as I may have told you in a previous letter, is the Pope's true church, rather than St. Peter. Formerly the pope lived at St. John's, but in the middle ages they were exiled by an unfriendly ruler and lived in Avigny (?) France. When they returned they came back to St. Peter's and to the present day Vatican. As we entered the church we could hear the Latin sing song phrases of a priest, repeated by the congregation, softly echoing thru the tremendous church. It was the feast of St. Peter and services were being held in many of the churches. In St. John's church are kept the heads of Sts. Peter and Paul, while the bodies of the two Saints are kept at St. Peter's. I don't know the reason for this except that it is impossible that the bodies were in such a state of decay when exhumed that they couldn't be sure which was which, and therefore took both heads to one and both bodies to the other. The nave of St. John's is lined with tremendous statues of the apostles, each in an allegorical pose suggesting something which he did in life, or in one case (St. Bartholemew, who was skinned alive) having a Salvador Dali type of face and hands drooping from an apron held in the hands of the Saint. Actually, a person with a better religious background than I could get a lot more out of all the places which I have visited than I have been getting, altho I must say that I have been having a most unusual and interesting time. In the center of the church, as in St. Peter's was a high canopy. At the upper part of this is a draped cell which is closed all year round but opened on the Feast of St. Peter's, so we had the unusual experience of seeing it open. However I was not impressed by this, since the statues in it were not of very artistic quality.

On our way to St. John's we drove thru the grounds of Mussolini's house in the Villa Torlonia. The grounds were quite beautiful, and the houses from the outside looked quite old, but unquestionably were elaborate on the inside. He had confiscated the houses and grounds from a prominent royal family not long after he came into power. We also drove thru the Villa Borghesi, which is a beautiful park, far lovelier than parks in the U.S. It contained numerous fountains, an artificial lake, and also holds the Roman zoo which latter we did not enter.

Our next stop was at St. Peter's to hear the world famous Sistine choir singing on the feast of St. Peter. There was an amazingly large crowd present, and I didn't think that we would be able to get close enough to see the choir, but I found that most of the crowd was forming a line six broad, over at one side of the church. I was very curious about this line of people and watched them closely to see what they might do. It didn't take long to see that they were all going to the statue of St. Peter, which now, unlike the other day, was clothed in a high golden hat, a beautiful golden robe, and wore the pope's ring on one of its fingers. The people had lined up in order to kiss the foot of the statue and place their foreheads on the foot. It is no wonder that the foot is gradually being worn out. My medical mind thought that this was one swell way to spread infections. We continued on forward past the statue of St. Peter and just beyond the canopy they were holding their religious services. It was quite a showy and elaborate thing, with a beautiful red carpet spread on the marble floor of the church, and a long line of clergy on either side of this carpet, occasionally walking up to the altar and performing a sort of ritual, mumbling prayers all the time. The Sistine choir, surprisingly divided into two halves, one on each side of the church, was being led by a single concertmeister, and sang truly beautifully. There are no females in the choir, the soprano voices being those of youths. It was carried to all parts of the church by loud speakers, so that you could hear the music from the moment you entered the building. I was able to get far enough forward to be able to hear the actual voices, rather than hear it thru the loudspeaker. The choir

was accompanied by a beautiful organ, which was somewhat of a surprise to me because the sistine choir has always been famous for its singing a capello (without accompaniment). I learned that this was in the days of the last choir leader, but since his death the new choir leader has used musical accompaniment. We stayed until the services were over and watched the clergymen (rating from a cardinal down, the pope was not present) march out between the vatican guards. They really put on a show over here.

We then returned to the monastery and had supper along with the canadian soldiers. As usual, supper was quite simple, consisting of the same barley soup, the same vegetable, something like broccoli, the same fried egg, and tea, apparently out of respect to the canadians. I had a very good time talking to the canadians regarding the difference in pay of the american and british soldiers, the impression the americans had made when first coming to England (everyone was amazed at the way they spent money, but became used to it in a few months) and the difference in taxes in Canada and the U.S. They were surprised that I didn't have to pay any taxes on my captains salary which is 138 dollars more per month than is that of a canadian captain, and he has to pay income tax. We were so engrossed in talking that we didn't realize that supper was over and we were holding up the others from leaving. Finally Father Joe reminded us that we could talk out on the porch so we all retired there. I talked with Father Joe regarding the income of his church. Formerly they received most of their income from France, but since the fall of France they have received nothing from there and have had to rent their little(?) place in town. I forgot to tell you that we stopped there during the afternoon, and they have a very nice little church surrounding which is a large hotel in which under ordinary circumstances they house 75 priests. This is all part of their property, and at the present time they have rented it to a society which is using it to house people who have been bombed out of their homes. It is from the income of this rent that the monastery is now living. They don't seem to be doing very badly at that. I talked to the old patriarch from Armenia who had spent many years of his life in Constantinople and also Jerusalem. I was very curious as to whether the beauty of Rome could be equaled anywhere in the near east, and he told me that Constantinople was really a more beautiful city, partly because of its advantageous location and also because of the architecture there. So I guess that my impression that this was the world's most beautiful city may be a false one. At any rate it is still the prettiest thing that I have seen. Much of the city is quite new, having been erected since Mussolini's advent to power. It is for this reason that the modern structures are in such abundance. Then, too, the streets are all in a state of good repair, with balack topped macadam the rule.

I did forget to mention that we stopped at the officers' club to bring out sandwiches to those at the dance. We were having far too good a time to stay there, and preferred the company of Father Girard. The gang had come out in full strength, all except my company, and practically everyone of them was tight. Dorsey was so drunk that he didn't recognize me when I said hello to him. I learned that the colonel was sitting at a table with five hungry girls and they had run out of sandwiches, so I brought my sandwiches over to them, and you should have seen those girls tear into them. They hardly gave me time to open the box. I gave my apologies to the colonel and walked on out to spend the rest of the day with Father Girard.

Thus ended another most interesting day in Rome.

All the time that we have been in the city of Rome and its vicinity, we have been impressed by the four letters SPQR which we see on all public things just like you might see the letters UG&E on things around Cincy and wonder what they meant. We had thought that it had something to do with the fascist regime, but learned that these letters were almost as old as Rome itself. They stand for the words SENATUS POPULUS QUE ROMANUS, which means The government and the people are Rome. However there are many parodies on this now in existence. one is SINE PAPA QUID ROMA (Without the pope what is Rome?), another SONO PORCI QUESTI ROMANI (What pigs these Romans are!) Astory is told that one of the cardinals asked of the pope SANCTA PATER QUARE RIDES (Holy father why do you smile?) at which the clever pope reversed the letters and answered RIDEO QUIA PAPA SUM (I smile because I am pope).

Do you remember my telling you about the 14 Italians that had been murdered in the grove not far from Rome whom I had helped remove to the truck? Quite some time ago, in fact about two days after I had helped pick them up, articles were in all the newspapers about it. The Stars and Stripes carried the following article. UNIONIST KILLED : The body of Bruno Buozzi, one of the leaders of the pre-Fascist trade union movement, was found in a field six miles from Rome to-day. Nearby were the bodies of 13 of his associates. All had been shot through the neck.

Buozzi and his companions had been confined for some months in the Gestapo's jail in Via Tasso. Socialists, Communists, and Christian Democratic trade unionists have issued a manifesto declaring that Buozzi's death will leave an irreparable gap in the movement for restoration of free Italian trade unionism. I told Father Joe of the incident and he surprised me by describing the young man of the group that I had picked up, and telling me that this young man had been a personal friend of theirs who had been doing some spying and using a short wave

radio set to broadcast his information when he was caught. They also confirmed the rumored importance of the entire group. On my first return to Rome I found signs all over the various buildings with Bucuzzi's name on them, apparently suggesting that revenge would be had.

Don't I have some of the darnedest experiences.

I mentioned to you that I had been working on getting my recommendations in for medals. In many cases I had to have the men who were present at the heroic deed write the letter of recommendation, or rather the affidavit of what actually took place. Some of these were real gems, and I herewith send you a copy of one of them - "I, Pvt --- hereby certify that, PFC --- who was a pretty sick man on May 13, 1944 when they ask for volunteered to get men off one of the Mountains that was under heavy enemy ~~fl~~ motor and shell fire, and he got up and went at the risk of his own life to bring men back off the mountain, with I wouldn't have sent a dog up there, the Reason I know all this about ---, is because I am in his litter bearer squad, and I don't think any body is any braver than he is and in my estimation deserve a award for his bravery and heroism." I'll bet the general would have gotten a good laugh out of that one if I had sent it in as is.

Yesterday we had a parade over to a field not too distant from our bivouac area, for the purpose of meeting some big shot who was going to award medals to a few of our heroes. I say a few with premeditation, because we really have a tremendous number of heroes who do not receive any recognition. We started out at noon, on the hottest day that we have had to date, arrived in the field at 1 and had to wait until 2:30 until the big shot arrived. Since there was no shade in the field I was sure that we would have some heat casualties, and so had one of my ambulances ready in case it was needed. Sure enough, after about another hour of the hot sun, men began passing out and had to be carried back into the shade at the rear of the field. I waited to see if any of the other docs would go back to take care of them, and since no one went, I decided that I would take care of two birds with one stone, viz. take care of the patients and at the same time get out of the hot sun myself. It worked quite well. I sent one ambulance load of patients into the clearing station and the rest were not so bad that they needed to be sent back. I merely kept them in the shade and gave them some water from a can that I had gotten from the ambulance. I even got out of walking back to our area with the company by accompanying one of the patients back to his area. It really was a foolish thing to get such a large number of men into a field under the hot sun, especially after walking them for several miles, and then making them wait for more than an hour. But that's the way the army does things, the old adage "Hurry up and wait" still holds good over here.

Yesterday we got some yeast with our rations, and our cook decided to make doughnuts. They were the most delicious doughnuts that I have eaten since your mother made that tremendous batch of them for me. Remember? However, the rest of our rations still remain very poor. I am going to request some baking powder from you, since we have not been receiving any and despite the fact that we get sufficient flour we still can't make pancakes at breakfast without the ~~fl~~ powder. I'd appreciate several large cans of it, since we use one can per breakfast. A number of the boys in the company are sending similar requests home, so that we will have enough to last us for a while.

I'm not going to send you any more cablegrams since it takes so long for them to reach you. I can see no advantage of them over ordinary air mail. So don't worry if you don't hear from me via cable.

Well, sweets, that's about all for now. Maybe I'll have more to write you in the AM.

Love,
Falt.

