

Cp. J.D. Capone 11087793  
Hdqtrs. 12 Wx. Sqdn.  
A.P.O., 600, % P.M.N.Y.

3 March [1945] -

Dear Miss McGlynn,

It has been some time since I've had a chance to write you - but I assure it wasn't due to "neglect" on my part. I've had quite a variety of experiences since my last letter to you. Which have kept any free time for me to a minimum.

First off, and somewhat of a surprise to you I'll wager - I am now doing a little teaching - after duty hours. It all come about when one of the "higher ups" decided that the soldiers in this area could use some sort of a school to enable them to obtain credits in some subjects and brush up on others. With this thought in mind the call went out for instructors to teach the subject - which by the way were mainly high school courses -

[Page 2]

The curriculum was as varied as the instructors and we have Majors with MA; to Pvts with LLB; [Bachelor of Law] on the faculty. I didn't think my BS was going to stand up at first- but I'm happy to say I passed the interviewing board and was selected to teach Review Math (if Miss Stone - is nearby break it to her gently - she will never believe you). At any rate things are going along quite smoothly and between planning the lessons and working on lectures I'm obtaining a world of valuable experience.

We are using an Italian Hi[gh] school as our school building and while it is lacking in some of the modern fixtures to be found back in the States - we are doing quite nicely. Our texts are Armed Forces Institute and are not too bad at all. Classes are fairly large and attendance has been very good - My classes at the present time has about 30 students in it - which make it just about fine.

[Page 3]

Since writing you last I've also had a chance to see a good bit of Northern Italy. Notably Florence, Pisa, Leg horn [Livorno] and Seina - I wish that you could see yourself how beautiful this part of Italy is. It is so vastly different in so many ways from what we had been used to.

The countryside north of Rome is mostly rolling land - with high hills as a background - until you reach the foothills of the Apennines - which I found to be very beautiful. Skirting the sea coast I passed through several small villages where the inhabitants depend on the sea for their livelihood. On the sea walls were the extra nets tied up to dry. I felt a little homesick then, I thought about some of the small cities out by Gloucester and are my own home. I don't think I've ever seen water so blue in color as this was. Some of the places were badly mauled - others barely touched.

[Page 4]

It is the same all over Italy where the Germans sought to make a stand the area is mostly ruins. Speaking of ruins - it was surprising to note how much rebuilding has been done - since last I passed through the area - even Cassino showed signs of new life - though it was still in bad shape.

Florence I found is fairly good shape except for the area around the Arno. Every bridge but Porto-Vecchio was destroyed by the retreating Ledesche - They did little damage to the famous old bridge but they mined, bombed and completely blocked both entrances, so it was just as effective as would have been the destruction of the "land-mark." Don't sell these Germans short - they are a smart lot and seldom miss a trick.

The business part of the city was in good condition and the shop windows full of things to buy - and not too highly priced - The shop-keepers all speak fairly good English and there was little or no need to try my faulty Italian on them. Fact is I spent the better part of

[Page 5]

half an hour talking with one of the young ladies in a shop and didn't once speak a word to her in Italian. Most of them can speak French fluently and have a good working knowledge of German.

I didn't have too much time - but I did stay long enough to visit one of the old cathedrals and also the Palace of the Medici family - ancient "rulers" of Florence- which was still in good condition. I was truly surprised at the modern appearance of some of the buildings and dwellings there were eye openers to say the least.

Longhorn [Livorno] was in bad shape - fact there was hardly anything left standing. Pisa was in about the same condition and except for the "famed tower" there too was little remaining. I did climb the tower and spent a little time walking in the old buildings of the university which are laid out around the base of it. I talked with an old care-taker who told me much about the buildings which added to the viewing of them.

I think the most beautiful city I've seen so far is Siena. I think it

[Page 6]

was the birth place of St. Catherine at least they claim her as their own. I wish I could tell you exactly when I was there - I think you could then more exactly see why I enjoyed it so much.

The town sits a top a hill and from it you can look over most of the surrounding country. I notice that this was the case with most of the towns along the way - a high hill that commanded and good view of the countryside usually was the place where you found the city Protective measure?

The people in the northern part of Italy are certainly better off than these people in the South. They appeared to be far better dressed - and shoeless peasants - seemed to be the exception rather than the rule as in the south. Fur coats (fem) were everywhere in evidence and was in surprising numbers of "places."

We had supper one nite in a farmhouse - and what a meal it was. Fried eggs fried sunny side up and fried pork sausage- fresh cheese also tasty beverages for the "weary travelers." After the meal we offered to pay for the food but the people would have none

[Page 7]

of it we come close to offending the man of the house by trying to press some money into his hand. A few bars of chocolate and a package of cigarettes were well received and I feel like the Dutch must have felt when they bought Manhattan.

I couldn't help wondering how these people would react to Americans when in a few months a "Yank" in uniform would not be a curio and they get a chance to know us better. Would be interested in going back there in about four months and see what it would be like. By the way our host was an active member of the "partisans" and had quite a few interesting stories to tell.

I had a surprise visit from Donny Parks recently. Looks good - missed him on my trip - No word from Bob or Ed for a long time. Ledo has written from Nice and at last reports appeared to be mending well. I've never seen a picture of his wife - but from his description of her she must be quite a lady.

Had two letters from Priscilla - in the last couple of months - she appears to like her new job.

Sincerely,  
John