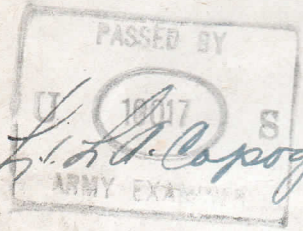


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POSTAGE DUE 6 CENTS

Mr. + Mrs. Frank Mauro
491 Lexington Avenue
Mount Kisco,
New York



Italy

Dear Folks,

I am well happy and safe and I hope you all are the same.

I received your letter dated Dec. 15 today which was right good mail service.

I had a hard time deciphering Rosemarie's letter, but tell her I was happy to receive it and that all of my letters are to her too.

I am glad that you sent the things I asked for, especially the paper because this is Italian ink and paper I am using now. Let me know what this ink looks like when it gets to you. Right now it looks like gravel and smells like alcohol and iodine combined.

As for the stockings, you could have sent white, brown, green or red as long as they were heavy. I have enough cotton stockings to last me some time as long as I don't lose them, as I frequently do.

I wouldn't make any promises about seeing my cousins but I hope I see them anyway.

Well, I am glad to hear that Vince is home by now and I wish that

he could stay home. If he doesn't get a good job as instructor or something it won't be the navy's fault. I wish I could be home too, but that won't happen for quite a while.

I am happy in the service and always was. Every now and then we all get cold and wet but then comes a period of sunshine and warmth and we all prepare for our next inevitable encounter with mother nature. So far we have been faring pretty well against the worst weather I have ever stayed outside in for a long time.

These Italians around here are quite ingenious when they are starving. Today I went into a sizable town and had an olive oil lamp made. It was made of old tin cans the kitchens throw away. It is a nice looking thing and didn't cost much. All the Italians make something out of nothing. They make all sorts of lamps other than the one I mentioned before besides funnels, stoves, strainers and numerous other articles I don't recall at the moment. Speaking about stoves, we brought a round five gallon can into town today and came back with a stove complete with stovepipe, legs,

doors and grates.

I also ran into a nice Italian family here a few days ago. They were nice people but poverty stricken. They had no other clothes but the ragged things they had on. It wasn't that they didn't have any money to buy clothing but there wasn't any clothing to be had anywhere. They didn't even have needles and thread to sew their already multi-patched clothing and they were overjoyed when I gave them an old sewing kit I just happened to have in my pocket. If I had known they needed sewing material I would have rounded up a bit for them.

While I was in their house they fed me home made shells, chicken made gravy plus fried chicken and some good wine. They were always complaining because they didn't have cheese for the shells or olive oil to fry the chicken or good flour to make the bread. The bread was made out of corn meal and flour. They paid an outrageous price for the corn meal and I wish I were there when they bought it because I would have

gotten it a lot cheaper, by force if necessary. The shoemakers there wouldn't repair their shoes for them because they were getting about ten times as much for the leather from the soldiers as they were from the civilians. Those kind of Italian shakies are beginning to make us made now. When I want to buy, I mean buy, something now and they won't take a reasonable price for it I take it off of them and give them what it is worth. The reason most of the soldiers pay so much for everything is because they don't know how much anything is worth here so they pay whatever the dealer wants. That way, the dealer charges a little more each time until the prices become unreasonable. Still the soldiers pay the price because they want the things so badly and all of the worthless things they make here are so new and different from what we are used to getting.

I am getting off of the subject of the family I started telling you about, so I'll continue. The little boy of the family was ten years old and was clean and honest, something new in the line of

Italian kids. I used to let him guard my tent when I left it for any length of time and he used to stop the other kids from stealing anything, fighting them off if necessary.

His only brother - he had no sisters - was nineteen and had been in the Army before Italy capitulated. He is now working for the Fifth Army repairing roads and is being paid considerably more than he was when he was working prior to his entry into the Italian Army. He also was a nice fellow and he and I used to sit in my tent at night and have a confab about nothing in particular and everything in general. We also played all the Italian games such as Scopa, Three-sevens, - Briscola (I guess that's how it's spelled) some other child's game I don't know how to spell and the American game of War. He didn't know how to play Pinochle and was surprised at my beating him at every game we played.

His mother was not very old and I could not remotely guess her age. She looked young and wore her only tattered

dress neatly. She washed all of our clothes the day before we left that area and she didn't want to accept anything for the laundry. We gave her a few things anyway. She couldn't believe that we had paid two-dollars to another woman who had washed the same amount of clothes.

Her father was a nice fellow but I couldn't tell you much about him because I haven't seen him for more than a couple of hours.

When they told me to go to their house and eat with them, they knew that I would be leaving that night and they wanted me to eat there before I left. They also wanted me to come back in about a week because they were going to kill a hog and they wanted me to have some of the pork derived from it. That was impossible, however. I sure hated to leave them and they hated to see me leave, but I got away alright.

Well, that's about all for now so I'll close with a happy New Year.

XXXX
For everybody and
Rosemarie

Love + Kisses
~~Frank~~