

Aug. 13, 1944

Has anyone received word of Edie Maloney's whereabouts - I've written him but no answer

Dear Miss McGlynn:

Received your letter today and was good hearing from you again. I had received the last list of addresses but thanks for putting them in the letter - I've a bit of news for you on that score.

I've seen Falsome and have spent an after noon with Bob and Ed Laken - I've really had a great conflag talking about the good old days - by the way Bob is now a Sgt. and Ed a P.T.C. - I haven't as yet reentered into Parks or Trippe but will peep my eyes open for them - I also met another Salemite a WHC by the name of Jane Reed - Folsom told me about her - I guess she lived in Salem - she must have been four years ahead of me - for even after seeing her I can't place her -

Another choice tid bit is

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that Leda went and did it with neither Bob nor I there to stand up for him - never thought it would happen to us - He married a southern Belle - what have they got- that gets our Salem men - it looks like the old Triumvirate is breaking up -

The first coat of newness has worn off our surroundings now and a fellow can look around him with eyes fairly clear and see just what the country is like.

I've found that our first impressions upon entering the country were not too far from being the whole story. Our first view was one of devastation and ruin- the people we saw homeless and dressed in garments that were little more than tattered rags - No one it seems wears shoes except in the larger cities.

Without a doubt the cities have been hit badly both by us and the fast moving Germans - Most of the cities are in ruin and their inhabitants these who stayed - appear lifeless and uninterested in anything

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that might occur. You can easily read in their faces that they have had a hard time of it. I talked to one old lady who told me that with her family she had lived under-ground for three months coming out only for food and water.

The surrounding town and village have been touched least of all by what has befallen Italy. Especially is this [town?] where there has been no hard fighting. People are working in the fields tending their crops and with the implements they have to use - I can easily understand why no one family owns too much land - In more cases than one - I've seen hand hewn wooden plows pulled by two oxen - or a donkey- as the only machinery used.

Prices here are high - a fact which the rest of the allies blame on us American G.I.s - Peaches from home orchards sell as high as ¢35 a "kilo"- which gives you about a sip - and I've seen a soldier pay 65£ [Lira] for a melon which would not

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bring half that price in the states.

Most of the G.I.s are using cigarettes as a form of barter and the natives take them from us more eagerly than money. I use my rations of cigarettes to pay for my laundry etc. The natives get as much as 40£ a pack for them on the black market - and they will give you 400£ and 500£ without any question.

I've been most interested in trying to find out the feelings of some of the people I've met. I'm able to understand them quite easily - but my Italian will never win for me a stamp of approval from the natives here.

Most of them dislike the Germans very much though in a few instances some of them have told me that the Germans never made them work half so hard as have the allies.

They have accepted us and that's about all one can say. There seems to be an apathy of feeling - towards us and there is no strewing of rose petals in our

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In our path every time we go out – though perhaps it is because they have become used to us. – with our strange ways and we are a queer lot make no mistake about that.

The only thing they have in common with us is the fact that we Christians. Each Sunday we go to mass at a nearby field. There is a road that is used by the natives as they go to their work. Many of them stop and watch – old men tip their hats as they go silently by. I've seen old women with tears in their eyes – peering intently through the fence at the priest who is offering up the mass. They slowly nod their heads as though they have found the common ground between us. Here they have found in us something can understand. One can almost feel the difference.

We are fortunate I think in this respect – because it is going to make our task that much easier for us. They will learn to

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trust and have faith in what we are trying to do for them. Now that we have coquered [sic] with guns and men it is time to start to build with them a feeling of confidence in us in the post war world.

I've seen Vesuvius and been able to walk on some of the lava which came down from the crater during the last eruption. I have to visit Pompei in the near future and as soon as I get time go to Rome.

You are right when you say that there are many things to see here – but I'm afraid Uncle Sam has first call on our time now – but I hope to use our spare time in seeing as much of Italy as I can.

Again thanks for writing – my best to Priscilla and Mrs. McGlynn – and in your next news letter – I think a P.S. putting the boys still in the south and single one their toes.

Sincerely,  
John Capone