

The folks' Italy letter (original by Mom with Dad's interpolations and emendations. Their individual voices are evident).

I have several versions, revisions, of this letter, including a carbon copy, remember Those?... This is a compilation. [My (Curt) remarks in square brackets.]

Of course the only ones who remember this are probably Lee and me; Bill was five and six.

Villa Pagliano

22 Via Zuppetta

Bellavista, Portici

Naples, Italy

On February 8th [1952] the Bouterse tribe sailed from New York aboard the USNTS General Hodges bound for Naples, Italy for our tour of "foreign duty." So far I don't think we could have chosen any place in the civilized world that could be any more foreign to us.

Since we had to make a choice as to whether we would all come together and take our chances on a place to live, or wait until M.J. could come and have things all in order for the rest of us, we decided that to come together was worth any later difficulties. We have had some varied and surprising experiences as a result. First, let us get back to our voyage. We needed that as an introduction to Change, with a capital C.

We all had a wonderful rest on the ship. The Military Sea Transport Service is a strange combination civilian and Navy oceangoing "cruises," with a few of the accommodations of regular passenger ships. At least that's the way things are *supposed* to be. We ate at 7, 11, and 5 and the rest of the time we could do whatever we pleased, so we got a lot of first class sleep. After the first four days of what M.J. called typical North Atlantic weather [*extremely rough*, with crashing waves and sliding dishes on the tables!], the Powers that Be cooperated and it was perfect sailing and all of us enjoyed ourselves. [I was in a separate cabin from the folks and the younger kids and I was seasick the entire trip!] We might include a slight commercial plug for Benadryl for children at this point. There was morning devotional time each day at 0900, followed by a Children's Hour where the ship's chaplain, Lt. Clemons, played records, showed movies and such, which gave mothers a slight break. The food was good and we were quite comfortable in our cabin. The biggest

problem was that even the chaplain could keep the interest of the children after a few days. Something happened to the ship's flushing system and the "Play Room" was flooded out with sewage water. Since the kids couldn't be entertained, parents were stuck with them permanently despite all the chaplain's good intentions. We were also stuck with a passenger list of very selfish card players who turned hostile to all children and refused to allow the adult lounge area to be contaminated with anyone too young to play bridge. So, yes, we slept a lot.

Mercifully we made it to Casablanca, [French] North Africa on the morning of the 17th where we docked and unloaded what we immediately decided were "poor unfortunate Americans" to have duty here. Later we had a more sanguine approach to it all because some of them were the Bridge Player! Ah, justice, A bus tour had been arranged for us and we enjoyed the after noon driving through great throngs of people who seemingly were there to greet *us*. What we saw made us feel almost sorry for the aforementioned Bridge Players. It didn't look like any American had any business in that place. We did see some spectacular estates. The Sultan's Palace grounds which we were allowed to visit were beautiful, but it seemed not many locals were so privileged, and the difference between life styles was indeed shocking. There were also some very modern buildings but these too were not for just anyone. Right alongside these modern structures were slums of the unfortunate "average people." We found out later that either *the* Sultan, or a Sultan was arriving and all the people were there because of that. We wondered if the Sultan really cared? Of course we hadn't been introduced to the huge disparity of the "haves" and the "have nots" of many other countries, including weven the Southern part of Italy. The view from the area up over the sea (near where Roosevelt and Churchill stayed) and the beautiful hotel there, was spectacular, but the beach was a revolting sight. Because it was Sunday, and a special holiday, we guessed for the VIP Visitor, most of the nice shops (for tourists) were closed. A walk through the bazaars failed to impress us and we didn't have much desire to "mingle" so we were glad to go back aboard our ship, which looked a lot better to us now. There was an interesting spectacle as we were leaving port. One of our passengers almost got left behind. He was Army so we Navy types got a big kick watching his frantic efforts to catch up with us. He had evidently found a water taxi or bum boat to bring him alongside and as the pilot left he was allowed to climb aboard on the dangling rope ladder regularly used by pilots. He didn't have the proper skills and almost got baptized, barnacleized, on the side of the ship, or thrown back to the domains of Neptune before he finally collapsed aboard to the jeers of what looked like even his own Army buddies. Someone on the bridge saluted him with a blast from the ship's whistle and siren.

On Wednesday, February 20th, we caught our first glimpse of the Isle of Ischia about noon and everyone who could rushed topside and to peer through the haze to spot Vesuvius and

Naples. It was a cold and misty day so, as soon as we could say we had the heights behind Naples and smoky Vesuvio, we went back to our cabin which was warmer and, fortunately, on the port side facing our destination so we could watch everything from our porthole. We finally were tied up at the Stazione Marittima dock, which was the U.S. Navy dock, but it was swarming with Italian guards and officials in a state of confusion. So, from 2pm we waited for the customs people to check our baggage and such; it was a long wait and all the children got hungrier and and more impatient. Out of the haze of confusion Chaplain Hansel Tower, the senior chaplain from NATO came aboard to greet us. He was a welcome sight and his Navy carryall was even more welcome. He was batching it because his wife was still in the U.S., but he had reserved a suite of rooms for us at a very nice (and expensive) hotel [Hotel Parker] in a nice area of Naples for us. He and an Italian driver would take us there when we got through the red tape, which seemed to get less red now that Chaplain Tower was present. We love him for being there and being so thoughtful.

By the time we got settled in our two adjoining hotel rooms all of us were famished, having eaten so early, but we made the discovery that Italians don't dine until well after 7pm, usually much later. Having depleted our stock of snack items obtained aboard ship we just held on to our tummies and waited. (Our introduction to the famous Italian saying, "dolce far' niente," It's sweet to do nothing.)

Of course we didn't know what we would find when the hotel dining room opened, if it ever did. Fortunately there is always spaghetti served as the first course served after the soup or omelette or some such antipasto. We always picked the spaghetti and never got tired of it. We were warned about the local milk and milk products and that tempered our enthusiastic reception of the hard Italian rolls they served at every meal because the butter looked so beautiful, curled or shaved in a delicate presentation with the bread. I think we cheated a little, and it was delicious but we did suffer a bit, mostly from guilt and self-imposed fear. We had also been told never to drink the water and we noticed the locals didn't either, but they had beer and wine to drink and they consumed enough to make us even thirstier. We did find a large bottle of grape juice in our picnic basket that we had overlooked, so for the first two days we rationed it by the sip and suffered.

Through necessity we decided we just had to sally forth and find the Navy "Commissary" we had been told about, so forth we went. One of the hotel managers put us all on a bus that he assured us would take us right to the Navy Commissary; he knew the word and assured us we would find it right at the end of the line atop the Posillipo, whatever that was. When the bus driver pulled to a final stop (it was final because he moved to leave the bus and indicated that he thought it would be a good idea if we did too) we attempted, in our modicum of Italian, to seek directions to our most eagerly desired destination. Since we

couldn't "capische" what we were being told in a form of Italian we had *never* heard we just started wandering around in what was obviously a very nice section of the city high on the hill overlooking the Bay of Naples.

We finally stumbled onto the American Military Officers' Club; the commissary store was in the garage. Enjoying a sort of lunch there at the club we then went back to the so-called Commissary. It was just what it looked like, a large garage piled high with boxes and a few U.S. Navy storekeeper petty officers and a lot of Italians. It was stocked with a miserly few edibles from a Navy Supply Ship and we bought canned milk, powdered coffee, Clorox, some boxes of cereal, and some canned fruit. Aided by aluminum plates and utensils we found in a UPIM, the Italian equivalent to a 5 & 10cent store we got along beautifully. We could purify our water by adding a few drops and later got a little hot plate so we could boil water for Mark and Bill to drink.

We always fixed breakfast in our room, having prepared cereal with canned fruit. Eventually we got some peanut butter and jam and bought some bread from a neighborhood panificio. At first we had pots of boiling water sent to our rooms and we added our own coffee or cocoa and sugar but after the hot plate we did our own.

Incidentally we got the hot plate after we got the first week's bill from the hotel. Since we stayed there 8 weeks we saved a great deal by snacking in the room, and the children were better satisfied. Frequently we fed them early at night because they were too hungry and sleepy and cross by dinner time Italian style. We hadn't learned the Italian secret of a siesta time for a couple hours after lunch.

We had a couple of interesting, and I guess embarrassing experiences during our hotel stay. As before mentioned, Virginia used our balcony to hang up a few intimate articles of clothing of her own and some of the children's things after hand washing them in our bathroom. There was quite a large apartment building being built adjacent to our hotel and one morning a group of plasterers or painters began working directly across from our room. Virginia had hung some stockings and some undergarments early that morning and when she went out about 11 o'clock to collect her things she was greeted by wild acclaim from the obviously impressed and loudly approving Italian lovers of beauty, especially golden-haired "blondies." Italian women, if they're good looking or have a good figure, learn to expect such an audience and such response; some have even learned to appreciate it, expect it, and even respond to it in some way. But not Virginia. She almost collapsed into the room, her face red, and as angry as I have ever seen her.

We had a similar experience later when she and I left our children with missionary friends [the Piatts, I think, former missionaries to Albania!] and took a camping trip through the

Alps to Holland. Camping in the [1950 Ford] station wagon by an alpine stream near the Brenner Pass she had again washed a few things in the ice water of the mountain and I had rigged a line from our aerial to a nearby tree. Later that day a truck full of Italian workers returning from Switzerland and passed by and Virginia and the American Ford "woody" station wagon and I(?) got an identical demonstration of "good taste," Italian style to her equally great embarrassment.

The greatest embarrassment we suffered was not even known to us at the time. It involved table manners and was caused by my thinking I knew good manners, Italian style, because I had become acquainted with an Italian couple who ran a Mom and Pop Italian restaurant in Port Hueneme, California. Virginia and the children had gone to Florida to be with her mother who was dying of cancer. [I had forgotten about the timing of this. It may account for some of our pix at Grandma's.] I moved into the BOQ and somehow found the cafe just off base and after a few meals Mom and Pop sort of adopted me. They left their spaghetti very very long and watching them eat as they usually did with me I also took a large spoon in my left hand and twirled a forkful of spaghetti in the cup of the spoon and was very proud to eat like a "native?"

Getting orders to Italy nearly two years later I had already indoctrinated my family in the *proper* way to eat long spaghetti. So for the two months we ate in the hotel dining room, and we almost always had spaghetti, that's what we did. This was probably the nicest hotel in Naples at that time and was patronized mostly by well-to-do Italians. It was months later when we had invited Margaret Scipione, my seminary classmate missionary friend to have dinner with us at our home in Bellavista. As we went through our little spoon and fork routine, Skippy, looking a little hesitant, told us that only the very ignorant uneducated Italian farmer types ate pasta that way. Right there in front of my kids my little balloon popped! They never let me forget that either. She told us it was equivalent to eating food off a table knife, or some such gauche behavior. I guess some of the educated Italians who watched our family eat like country rubes may have derived some satisfaction out of feeling superior in *one thing* anyway. There was one American Commendatore who wasn't so smart anyway.

Back to Virginia's letter: The second day after we arrived we went out to the Housing Office run by the Navy with Italian Nationals as employees. We sometimes felt they were helping the Italian landlords more than us. We know we all paid much higher rents than any of the locals. We began the grim business of trying to find a place to live with a very nice lady who made over our children and made us feel better. But compared to what we experienced at this time we were shock proofed for the rest of our life as far as house hunting was concerned.

The language barrier was the worst part but there was nothing in our experience as Navy "floaters" that could have prepared us for what we were now going to face as a family. Even the nicest places were, to say the least, antique, especially insofar as plumbing, electrical connections, fixtures, etc., were concerned. The gabinettos all had rickety-looking tanks of water high on the bathroom wall with a chain that brought down a deluge of water, much to the children's delight, and the "best part" was it sounded like the walls were going to fall down too. It was great fun for them, and we had a little legislating to do. In the kitchen there was usually a laundry sink with built-in concrete rub board, as well as the regular sink (there isn't really any 'regular' sink but rather a very small single sink with a tiny drainboard). But I doubt there was a really modern kitchen or bath in all of Naples. (Remember this was 1953 [1952] and we never did get to see how the upper class lived.)

After looking at several places, mostly apartments on anything from the second floor to the eighth, some with kitchens a floor below the rest of the apartment or house, where there would be no place for the children to play or to keep their playthings, toys, or vehicles, the kind lady told us of a place far out of Naples that she thought we *might* be able to rent but it wasn't ready yet. Actually it had either been damaged during the war or the owner had decided he could make a little American money by subdividing his 3-story 100-foot long family mansion and he was in the process of having it done.

The Villa Pagliano, Numero 22 Via Zuppetta in Bellavista was the ancestral home of Conte Giuseppe Pagliano and his brother Presidente (or judge) Pagliano. What took our eye was the yard and a walk where the kiddies could ride their vehicles. By using the breakfast room for our dining room and the original dining room for our Living Room, we were able to have 4 bedrooms, something we had wanted for a long time. So we agreed to take the place - and we were told that we could move in by March 15th. How happy - and *how ignorant* we were! We just prayed that our furniture would be here by that time so we could finally get settled. Hah! That word...in *Italy* in those days (1950s, remember?).

The first Sunday after we had arrived, M.J. had charge of a sightseeing bus tour going to Pompeii, so after Sunday School we went aboard the Adirondack, the Command and Communication ship for the fleet, had lunch, then went on the trip. There really wasn't much time to do more than just get an idea of the layout of the ruins of the infamous city but we made up our minds that we would return and spend a full day there. We are now living closer to Pompeii than Naples itself since we are on the slope of Vesuvius itself, the volcano that caused all the trouble. It is a fairly long ride on the Autostrada, a toll road, to downtown Naples where M.J.'s office is located.

The next Sunday was a trip to Cumae and Solfatara. Cumae is the ruins of an ancient Greek city high on a hill, overlooking the entrance to the Bay of Naples. It is said the first Christian

church was built there, probably on the ruins of an older Greek temple of some kind, also the first baptistry, where we took a picture of our children in the pool. We have even been inside caves underneath Cumae where we saw openings drilled through the mountain up to the surface where the Greeks had built their temples to the gods. We thought of the Sibylline Oracles who used to take some kind of drug and would then give fortunes to their "customers." We plan to go there again some Saturday and take our picnic lunch - really a beautiful spot. Near Cumae, a fragment of the famous Appian Way, the boulder-surfaced road that led to Rome - as all roads are said to do - is clearly visible. We walked under and even later drove our car under a very high arch that spanned the road near the city. It was probably an ancient 'off ramp' from the freeway.

Solfatara, which is between Cumae and Naples, is called 'little Vesuvio,' and is itself an active volcano, with lava bubbling constantly, and sulphur fumes coming out of the ground all around. We were told the fumes are very beneficial to anyone suffering from respiratory trouble such as TB. It seems to me that the hellish smell could *cause* all kinds of trouble. At least to us it seems like it was the sort of place that gave Dante the idea for his "Inferno."

[Dad wrote a note: "Add re: guide and rock." As we walked out on the flat surface of Solfatara - which was, in reality, only a thin layer of compacted soil and rock that overlay the bubbling volcanic pit beneath - the guide always picked up a rock and, after telling us what we were walking over, would toss it into the air and wait (while we puzzled why) for the loud echoing 'boom' when the rock hit the ground, which trembled! The tourists were *always* properly impressed - and, perhaps a little freaked out! (We went there more than once and I have seen videos where the guides *still* do the same trick.)]

The Sunday School we have is held in Christ's Church, the Naples Anglican Church. We are allowed to use the facilities just before their regular Episcopal service and, since it is the only place in Naples available to us yet, we have to settle for a 9:45 period in which we can invite all English-speaking people to gather to worship. That was the arrangement we were handed by the existing Navy command until we can accomplish the seemingly-impossible task of finding another place where we can have non-Roman Catholic church services and Sunday School. This is a very unsatisfactory arrangement and one we certainly expect to improve on. There is no place for Bible classes since there is just the sanctuary and all our classes meet a few feet apart. We realize some of our greatest old timey country churches started out this way in America but we know we can do better. However there are different conditions in Italy, as history so vividly tells us. The Navy brass doesn't seem very anxious to assist in facing, much less solving, the problem and the top commander is Roman Catholic.

Of course the pressure from the Roman Church is terrific and not even the hotels will dare to rent us their *ballrooms* for our church services. At this time the only Navy preaching service, aside from Roman Catholic, is held aboard the USS Mercer, a troop barracks ship tied up at the Naples dock. There is a rumor that the Mercer will soon leave and we have no idea what will happen then. Many people have become concerned about the problem now that we are here, in addition to Chaplain Tower, and it looks like something may happen. The US authorities who handle such things under NATO seem to think they have a Naples theater that was partly constructed before we came and that it can be obtained - at great expense to our country, of course. We aren't holding our breath but figure a little prayer can't hurt! In a few days Chaplain Tower, a Methodist, will leave Naples to go to NATO headquarters and M.J. will be the only non-Roman Catholic U.S. chaplain in southern Italy.

We found a wonderful group of Christians meeting on Sunday evenings in the Naples Swiss Church, an evangelical Swiss ministry to Italians. God has provided an answer to the many Christians in Naples, most of them English speaking and many American civilians who, a few weeks ago, formed what they call the Christian Activities Committee of Naples. Practically all the U.S. missionaries joined in and there are several fine U.S. military families who are all cooperating in an effort to continue worship and fellowship together. Up to now they have held meetings in the dwelling places of those who have settled. The missionaries who have been here awhile are the most fortunate as far as a place to meet. They have somehow gotten permission from the Swiss Church, which is right in the center of Naples and has a small but very lovely little sanctuary sufficient to hold the group on Sunday nights. Praise God. Prayer meetings are held in homes. Lt. Floyd Robertson and his wife, Catherine, among the most active of the group, have a Friday evening Bible Study in their home. He is an active member of the Navigator Bible Study group which played such an important part in M.J.'s service in the South Pacific. M.J. met him during those years and had a chance to fellowship with him and others of the Navigators staff.

This committee is now engaged in opening a Christian Servicemen's Center and we are glad to join in the effort physically, financially, and even politically, because it will take that! There is just *no* good or decent place for a Christian serviceman to spend shore leave or liberty time in Naples or its environs. We hope to fill that need and we are getting a group of American Christians, especially those with children, excited about the possibility. Thanks to the Navigators we are able to have a full-time director, and we are busy getting an apartment in the central part of the port area ready to be occupied this week. We will start out with a lounge and reading room and a recreation space. [I was really excited to see my Very First foosball table!] One Rec room will be equipped for snacks, coffee, and we hope to eventually expand it so we can have a sort of kitchen for parties and such. So far our



finances, from ourselves and some of the U.S. mission groups that have become interested, will allow the bare essentials.

Curt and Lee are going to the American School and are doing very well. The Navy provides transportation for them which is a real help. A carryall with an English-speaking driver [Antonio Mollo, who reluctantly answered all my embarrassing questions about Neapolitan slang.] comes to the homes of all families with school children. Ours is about as far from the school as any, about 10 miles [Plenty of time for questions - and answers.]. They have been taking their lunches but within the last few days they have been serving soup there for them. One enterprising local restaurant furnishes soup and a breadstick for about 100 lire a day (less than 20 cents). So they live in style with their sandwich and fruit and now soup. Of course most Moms try to sneak in a few cookies too.

Curt has been home for a week with what we thought might be the mumps, but the swelling didn't progress properly and now the Navy doctor says there is something wrong with his lymph glands; there is also a soreness around his spleen and kidneys, and his liver is enlarged. We are awaiting some more tests and answers to prayers - ours, not his - I think he's enjoying all the attention, and vacation from school. He doesn't feel sick, just tired, but the doctor is his ally and says keep him quiet and at home.

[It turned out that I had infectious mononucleosis. None of the doctors knew what was going on until a recently-arrived, brand new MD said he read about it in a recent medical journal, and the tests confirmed it. The only treatment was bed rest and no one seemed to know for how long...So, after a couple of weeks, I (and the folks) said, if you're not going to *do* anything you might as well let me go back to school. They did and every few years afterwards I had relapses, which every succeeding doctor said "can't happen." Each one said, "You didn't have it Then, but you have it Now." It almost kept me out of the military: the doctors wanted some guarantee I wouldn't get it Again while serving. Fat chance. It hasn't come back since the '60s.]

You should see the balconies in Naples, all strung with clothes. Everyone hangs their laundry right out on the street. While we were at the Parker Hotel I hung ours out on the balcony with the best of them [See Dad's memory of that.] only we didn't have a very large balcony so I had a line in the bathroom too. Washing a few things every day or two by hand in the basin and rinsing them in the tub we got along very well. The ironing was a bit more difficult with the little travel iron and a table serving as an ironing board. How glad we were to have things ironed almost right again.

On April 22nd, after many trips to our place to heckle the workers and after madly sending speed letters, personal letters, dispatches, etc., our household effects finally arrived and

were delivered - the place wasn't ready any sooner anyway. In fact they are still building walls and piddling around the yard. Having your belongings delivered to you here isn't a simple matter either. We had a friend who speaks Italian well come out for the day so she could direct the workers and relay messages to us. There are none of the time and labor (and furniture) saving devices used here. Hardly a thing but a crowbar and a few strong backs were used in uncrating and unloading all our gear. In fact the piano fell off the truck and on the man who was gaily swinging from a crowbar trying to pry the side of the box off. The man was badly battered and the piano slightly, but otherwise things went off as smoothly as could be expected. [Mom always told the story that the man enjoyed his time off work, directing his fellows, while she brought him lemonade as he reclined in the shade under our fig tree.] I don't think any of the people here had ever seen a refrigerator or stove like ours. Our landlord, the Count, says our stove is grand enough for a hotel. Our gasoline-powered washing machine has caused quite a stir, too. The first time we fired it up we had an audience of six or more people around the bathroom window trying to figure out what was going on. I remember my beautiful Laundromat and dryer with longing but am sure I'll enjoy it even more when we get back and get it out of storage. [In the U.S?]

Meantime we are so much better off than most. Until this week I have washed in *cold* water, but things are fresh, if not clean. [Remember this was 1952, before cold washing was a thing.]

One of the first things we learned about Italians was that time is absolutely of no importance to them. When they say "domani" it doesn't mean "tomorrow" (as we learned when studying the language) - it means any other day than today. Nothing can be done quickly and many things not at all. Take, as an example, getting industrial current or gas services. We let our landlord know what we wanted: he told the company. Then one day they called and said they were ready to take our application. M.J. goes down, pays a deposit, takes the receipt, and goes to another office to sign the application. Several days later a card arrives in the mail saying he may come in to sign the Contract. He does and pays another deposit. A few days later a wagonload of ladders and men arrive and they all trail into the living room, set up the ladder they choose, and after much discussion - during which the landlord is called - they put the meter on the wall. Finally they make ready to leave, after showing me they want the broom and a dust cloth and a few other things - they will come back the next day and connect the wires. The workman comes early the next morning and drills the hole in the wall through which they will run the wires. Then he leaves, saying the electrician will come later to connect the wires. He finally gets the thing in working order after noon this last Saturday and the water heaters got our bath water hot in time for our regular Saturday night baths. The heaters, incidentally, heat all of ten gallons. They make a great deal over them - they are very expensive but I wonder what they'd say if

they saw a big 40 gallon tank. We are fortunate in having one in each bathroom or we'd never get us all clean.

Our big gas stove still is of no use to us; it has only been a week since M.J. signed the contract with the gas company. We had thought we would use bottled gas and had the people come and connect it for us, but they knew absolutely nothing about it and we were afraid to have them experiment with it, so we're trying now for city gas. Lines are already in the building but the spirit hasn't moved the company to connect us up yet. We are still doing all our cooking on a hot plate and eagerly forward to having something *baked!* I'm all set to bake bread as soon as the gas is turned on. I think M.J. would rather have pizza than anything and the kids are having a fit for cake. [Because Mom baked Wonderful cakes!] For Mark's birthday [April 13] a friend baked a cake and how Curt will survive if I can't bake him a cake [May 22], I don't know. We're still hoping.

Our rooms are enormous - a 9x12 rug just about fills half of one. The ceilings are about 14 or 15 feet high and the windows and doors are something you wouldn't believe if you didn't see them. In order to lock up (and everything has at least one lock, and usually a bolt for good measure) you close the shutters, then the doors with glass panels, then you lock the wooden sections over the glass, then most of them have a bar to put across the whole thing. Almost every window in the house has iron bars on the outside too. It is really a major project to get ready to leave. We have finally decided to just open the windows with the iron bars, and we can leave them open. Of course they don't even know what screens are here and the flies are numerous. We think we'll get cheesecloth and hang full over our doors and the few windows we need to leave open. The best part about this big place is that it is very cool and pleasant. Of course, in the winter time it will be impossible to heat more than a room or two, but the way it is arranged we plan to use just the kitchen, dining room, one bath, and living room. We will get a stove for the living room and use our little kerosene heater in the dining room. We get the morning sun on our bedroom and think that will be sufficient to keep them from being damp. That is the big danger with all the tile and cement floors.

Our garden is going to be lovely. The daisies are in bloom now, also lots of geraniums, and calla lilies. There are many huge hydrangea bushes just full of buds. We have one lemon tree, four or five oranges, two mandarins, two or three mulberry, a fig, and the fruit of two apricot trees. We have a nice sized terrace opening on the garden, with living room and dining room entrances. When we have time to get the garden weeded and tended a little we will all just love it.

We have done quite a lot of sight seeing since our car came...before we moved, that is. We went to Paestum, an ancient Greek city, which is about 20 miles south of Salerno. Some of

the architecture is so well preserved you can see the entire column, Doric style, and the children even found some pieces of stone with carvings on them. [Pottery, actually, lying in random excavated piles, which - in retrospect - I feel a bit guilty about.] Herculaneum, the other city being excavated like Pompeii, is only about a mile from our house. We haven't been there yet but the Count has promised to go with us. He is in charge of evaluating the treasures excavated. He is really very nice - and just crazy about Mark. [Mark was a really cute kid, at two. I'm not sure if we ever got to Herculaneum...] The Count was a general in the Italian Army and isn't married; neither is his brother, who is the President of the Senate, similar to our Judge of the district court. They both own our place.

Sorrento is just across the bay from us and is certainly a beautiful place. Before our car came we rented a tiny little Italian car [Fiat 'Topolino,' "Mickey Mouse"] one Saturday, took a picnic lunch, and went to Sorrento. The drive around the water is one of the loveliest I have ever seen. Our landlord (the President) has a villa in Sorrento and has invited us to come visit. [I'm not sure *that* ever happened either.]

The Royal Palace at Caserta is a spectacular-looking place - we got there too late to go through the palace but the grounds are worth the trip. A man made waterfall and very formal grounds make it a real showplace. Lee is going with her class tomorrow to visit the palace. [That may be the only other time any of us made it back there. I don't remember revisiting it.]

That's about the best I can do - I trust no one minds getting a carbon of all our experiences - it was that or wait for another couple of months. We do like our place and think this will be very nice now that we're nearly settled. The multitudes of people still dismay us a little - and their interest in us is flattering till they begin to beg for chocolate, chewing gum, and cigarettes, as they invariably do. ["Chocolate, chewing gum, cigarette" was the standard English refrain at every opportunity. Obviously taught by the GIs since the war had only been over for seven years, and they, and we, were still there... The still-evident damage to the port area, and elsewhere, was depressing, though friends coming from Occupied Germany told of things being mainly rebuilt there. Once again, Italy got the short end of the stick.]

Remember us in your prayers, and let us hear from you all...