

Captain Nagle

Writes of Army

Rest Area *July 7, 1945*

Describes Scenes on the Beautiful Island of Capri Near Naples, Which Is Famed Among Poets

Captain Howard J. Nagle writes his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Nagle of Willow Hill vicinity, from Italy:

"A number of things are changing over here in Europe, although my work will probably remain the same for some time. Of course, this theatre and the one in France and Germany are folding up rapidly, except for occupational forces. My best and oldest friend, Captain Marquis, has gone to Austria with the occupational forces. At present it seems that I shall continue until this combined headquarters folds up, then return to the United States for reassignment or go up to Austria. At this time, there seems little likelihood of my going directly from here to the Pacific, although many of the Army Service Forces will be redeployed directly from Europe.

"I recently sent you copies of Sergeant Jack Mauldin's cartoons which have appeared in the Stars & Stripes during the progress of the war in the Mediterranean. Perhaps, you will not understand some of them; however, they are really funny to us. I've also sent a copy of 'Puptent Poets.'

"I have just spent a day off at the Army Officers' Rest Center at Sorrento. We have taken over the finest hotel, the Grande Albergo Vittorio. It is on the top of a perpendicular cliff along the sea shore and has an elevator which runs straight down to a small beach at the foot of the rock. The place is ultra-modern and was previously used by the wealthy people of Italy and its more influential visitors. I shared a large furnished room with a lieutenant.

Had Hot and Cold Water

"We had excellent beds, a fine wash room with hot and cold running water (something of a novelty in Italy) and opening through large glass doors onto a balcony over the sea. From there one had a view of the Neopolitans and their tiny boats below, also the dock where larger seagoing boats tied up; one looked out over the blue waters of the bay of Naples toward the city of Naples. Toward the right was the rocky shoreline and towering Mount Vesuvius. On the left were the islands of Capri and Ischia and the open sea. There was a large veranda terrace near the hotel lobby with a bar and dancing at night. It, too, commanded a grand view of the sea as did the glass walled dining room. The only people there were officers on orders.

"During the one day that I was there I took a boat to Capri. I had seen this wonder spot from the air but didn't realize it was so large. There are three mountain peaks that just about comprise the surface of this famous island. I made a motor trip in an Italian Fiat touring car. At one point we stopped and looked down (almost straight down) to the water's edge. Our native driver informed us that the drop was 400 meters (approximately 1,300 feet) and showed us the remains of an Italian military vehicle which had toppled off with twenty-two soldiers aboard. An American jeep had gone off the road, also, but had caught on a ledge after dropping only a short distance. We saw the villas where Premier Schuschnigg of Austria and many other important German and Austrian prisoners are being kept.

Now a Rest Center

"Our Army Air Forces have taken over Capri as a rest center, and they really have something. There are the finest beaches and pavilions for both enlisted personnel and officers.

"The little towns on Capri are quaint and clean which is most unique in Southern Italy. I saw some really grand pieces of art, such as wood boxes, etc., carved from ebony. There were terra cotta blocks with beautiful paintings covered over with porcelain in the final baking process. The floor of the famous St. Michael's church, which figures in the legend of the Lucky Bell of St. Michael, is covered with this material depicting the complete garden of Eden scene.

"Our guide, although perfectly willing to sell us the tiny tinkling lucky bell, which no visitor to Capri leaves without, assured us that the legend was 'toute bunk.' The finest of modern Italian artists must now be on

(Continued on Page Five)

Captain Nagle Writes of Army Rest Area

(Continued from Page One)

Capri, for I saw paintings which were really beautiful and without comparison in the shops of Naples and Rome. Heretofore, the only paintings which have impressed me were the great works in the Caserta palace and the vatican and the churches of Rome. I am sending Betty a painting of Vesuvius in eruption which has evoked much favorable comment from and envy among my friends. The colors are really superb; however, I'll let it speak for itself. A shortage of all important lire necessitated that I leave without having procured much that would have been treasured in the future.

"Mussolini (the late) had a fine villa just below the ruins of Emperor Tiberitus' fortress. It is now used as a billet for nurses on leave.

An Awe Inspiring Sight

"The Blue Grotto, under a section of cliff, is just about the most awe-inspiring work of nature that I have ever seen. The deep blue water in this great cave is lighted from below. Yes, no kidding. Our large ship pulled up alongside the rocky shore, and we piled, two or three at a time, into small row boats manned by grizzly Neopolitan youngsters of 65 and older. Entrance to the subterranean watery grotto was gained through a hole in the rock, large enough for the boats to pass through provided all heads were on the bottom. Visitors often take a swim for the uncanny color effect. The Blue Grotto and the Green Grotto at Smalfi on the Sorrento peninsula, home of King Victor Emanuel of Italy, are high points of scenic interest.

"So much for Sorrento and Capri, which probably excel even the French riviera as a top resort areas for pre-war travelers throughout the world. The Neopolitans love it, too, and have written many of their best songs from inspiration gained there. I'm sure that 'Come Back to Sorrento,' 'The Isle of Capri,' 'Maria,' and 'Santa Lucia,' will always remain especially significant for thousands of GI's who have seen this war through the Mediterranean theatre.

"The English poets Keats and Shelley spent much time and recorded greatly of their inspirations gained while living along the bay of Naples. My old friend and former commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Loizeaux, who is provost marshal of the eighth port, Naples, has invited me to the Port Officers Club, which is located on a tiny island just off the rocky coast west of the city. The club is using the villa inhabited recently by A. Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde."