

May 14, 1968

Dear Marge:

Herewith, indubitably, my last letter from sunny Italy. Barring a post card the next time you hear from me will be in New Hampshire.

Everything seems about finished here because even the time left, as I have said, partakes of the going - We've had our last party, our last letters from some people, written our last Italian letters, entrusted our last pictures to the Italian Kodak in Milano, had our last clothes made, seen our last festa, taken our last trip around the island, made our last enemy (among the epicenes here), made our last, probably, shopping trip to Catania (now the emphasis will be on Messina, the going away place, etc. etc. This lastness bit is a sad business somehow and yet it is, oddly, only the lastness, not anything substantive, because actually I will be glad to get back, as I have said, and besides that, I am, oddly, looking forward, as a child, to our steamship voyage home (although Ruth and probably Danny is not). I am not, however, looking forward to the explanations which I will have to give people upon my return. If I go according to the past, I will say whatever pops into my head and finally ritualize on what seems to be the most well received answer. But how do you sum up a year and a country and a whole lot of everything else in a quick witty interesting sentence which if it is not quick, witty and interesting, will never become a paragraph?

"It was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. It was like a dream. Those Italians. Say...."

"Give me the good old Usa anytime, my God...."

"I wish Americans enjoyed themselves the way Italians do...."

"You can't beat good old American homogenized milk...."

"You call this bread. Compared to this Italian bread is cake...."

"The trouble is Italians think it is normal to drive the wrong way on a one-way street. No Italian thinks rules are for him."

"For God's sakes, officer, if I came out while an Italian cop was writing a ticket, he would have waggled his finger and torn it up."

My all over impression is that Italy is one big family; the family is the thing, government is an unfortunate accident. Italians will force you off the sidewalk for the same reason (in reverse) they will treat you so warmly when you become their friend (a surrogate member of their family) - they save their good nature for friends and that doesn't leave anything left for strangers.

Danny is holding his own. We are trying to get him into shape for the voyage. He has gotten over his sphincter troubles and walks better now that he is getting a shot in each side every other day but his hind quarters are definitely not responding and are progressively weaker. He has uremic poisoning, albumen in his urine, a heart misdeed and skeletal debility - (four tests) outside of that he is fine. At least they are surprised at his good teeth, which I attribute to good American dog biscuits.....We have 3 trunks packed and noted and we reconnoitered the Greek line in Messina....Our last party was great - our padrona had a painting made of our villetta and gave it to us and another nice Italian gave us Stetily, a plush book of the Italian Touring Ass. Love to you all and keep well, Don and Ruth,