

Received  
6/4/43

19088  
Pte. R. T. Street,  
26 Bn. H.Q.,  
2 N.Z. Div.,  
Middle East Forces.  
12 Feb. '43.

Dear Mum & Dad,

I am seated  
at a table in our "I" office, which is  
a room in a wealthy Italian's  
Villa in the Capital. When I wrote  
to you last, we were camped among  
lovely trees not many miles away &  
were quite content there as we could  
have a lazy time yet leave to  
go into the city each day. We had  
booked the theatre at Castel Benito  
for 10 nights to hold our concert, but

2/

in the meantime we shifted our quarters to our present location, so we shall be putting on our show in one of the theatres here.

We are living in what was the residential area of the city & we of the "J" Section are in a villa just across the street from our office in this villa. Bright red flowers of some creeping plant cover the stone wall in front of the building & it makes a pretty sight indeed. We shall be taking snaps of it, so you will be able to see our ideal home.

The man who lived here must



<sup>31</sup> have been wealthy. In the library  
-over thousands of books, beautifully  
bound in beautiful walnut book-  
-cases. They deal with Libya from  
every point of view, & of course  
with Italy too. I suppose that is  
where the owner of this place now is.

Yesterday we looked into a  
house just across the street. It  
is vacant as the owner & his  
family moved in a hurry. It  
was pathetic to go from room  
to room, filled with beautiful  
furniture, wardrobes filled with  
clothes - & hats! I tried on  
several smart ones & admired

myself in the full length mirrors.  
In the boy's room we were his  
school books; arithmetic, drawing  
books & so on. It didn't seem  
right that we should be there,  
looking at all the things these  
people had left behind them.  
However, these people are our  
enemies, & thousands of other  
families on the side of the  
Allies have had their homes  
destroyed throughout Europe, so  
why feel any pity for these  
folk!

The man must have held  
some important post in the



57 city. I think he was connected  
with the Army for I came across  
two brand new hats (which I also  
tried on!); there were empty  
shell cases & a collection of  
shrapnel in a cupboard, &  
we saw also the boy's uniform  
- Fascist Youth, with white  
leather belt, black cap with  
badge of Romulus & Remus & the  
she-wolf.

I said in a letter written three  
weeks ago or thereabouts, that Tripoli  
was a bit of a disappointment.  
Having seen more of the place,  
however, & judged for myself,

I have to revise my impression.  
Quite a considerable number of  
the buildings have suffered from  
bombing (ours mostly) - & owing  
to the fact that most of the  
Italian population had left  
before we reached here, the city  
wasn't at its best. There are a  
few shops open now, run by  
Jews, Arabs & Syrians; a lot  
more are still boarded up, but  
I expect in the near future  
they will be opening up again.  
We have our own Y.M.C.A. in a  
fine building & there you may  
get a mug of tea if you are



7/ patient + wait your turn in the  
queue. At present there are no  
places where one may sit down +  
enjoy a meal, so we take our  
own lunch when on leave for  
the day. The Y. M. C. A. have done  
a very good job over here. Every-  
where we go, the Y. M. C. A. mobile canteen  
goes too; even in action it is  
well up near the fighting troops.

Well now, before I go further,  
I must thank you very much  
for the excellent cake which arrived  
several days ago when we were  
camped among the trees in tents.  
It was very good of you, Mum,

87 to send it, as you had already  
sent me one four times. - the one  
you yourself baked. The same  
day as your cake arrived, I received  
also a parcel from an aunt of  
Edna's in Roxburgh (Otago.)  
There was a tin of fruit included,  
so Norman & I shared it &  
put a piece of your cake into  
the dixie too. It was an ideal  
combination. I received also  
mail from ~~you~~ you & Edna;  
your letters being dated 13th. & 20th.  
Dec. & Edna's about the same.

My word, I can imagine  
the noise when Isabel & her



91 family arrived. However, it would  
be a change from the quiet exist-  
-ance you & Dad had been lead-  
-ing.

I say, what "igo" about the old  
"Scorp" & the "Scarab" I sent.  
The smell I mean. Yes, I  
guess there was a stink. I laughed  
when I read your letter. I had  
removed the inside of the Scorp.  
& put in cotton wool, but of  
course they were sealed up in the  
tin & would have gone through  
the tropics all before reaching  
you. So there was bound to be  
some smell.

10/ Regarding the petrified wood I sent you, I have to say that I sent it just as I found it out in the desert in Egypt. I noticed myself that it appeared as if someone had sawn it off cleanly, but of course that couldn't be.

The fact is, the wood when petrified fractures cleanly. I dropped several pieces on to a rock - they broke cleanly in half. I dare say the effect of heat & cold causing expansion & contraction would be sufficient to cause a piece to break. It gets very cold in the desert at night, you know.



11/  
You may have heard over the B.B.C.  
from time to time about a new  
American fighter plane called  
the "Lightning". They have been in  
operation in Tunisia - in the Pacific.  
Well, I saw one a few days ago, &  
what an unusual plane it was.  
It has two engines & two bodies,  
but the pilot sits in a stream-  
lined cabin in the centre. This  
plane is very fast & can do  
more than 400 m.p.h. The one  
I saw was painted blue & was  
named "Little Edna". I also saw  
the new British "Mosquito" bomber  
which can do 400 m.p.h. They

12/ were "mosquitoes" which raided Berlin in daylight recently & interrupted Father Goering's speech.

Oh yes, I have a good look at everything. The dome at Castel Benito is huge, & is littered with the remains of Italian & German planes, big & small. There are hundreds of ours there now, & many American pilots & crews. Soon the enemy in Tunisia will be feeling the effects of our air power.

I told you, did I not, of the visit Mr. Churchill paid our Division. It was a treat to



see the Maori Battalion do their  
-drill & marching. They put us  
quite in the shade. Mr. Churchill  
looked just like his photos, but  
his face looked pale compared  
with those of the troops. Of course  
he is not so much in the open  
-air as we.

For the last three days the weather  
has been boisterous with strong  
winds & rain. There are numerous  
puddles lying in the streets. One  
of the barrage balloons broke  
away yesterday: we watched it  
float away, up & up until it  
burst.

A day or so ago I bought a

14/

leather shopping bag for Ema, from  
one of the reopened shops. It is  
of unusual style.

Well my dears, I will finish  
this off now. I will be sending  
you something from here in a  
day or so. I have saved up  
some money lately.

I am A.I. hope this finds  
you also in the pink. Thanks  
again for the cake.

Love from your son,  
Rawai

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