

# Captain Robert Kroehler Tells Of Visit To Rome

### Former Plattsmouth Resident Now With Medical Detachment in Italy Writes of His Impressions

Dr. Robert Kroehler, of New York City, son of Mrs. Andrew Kroehler of this city, is now in the U. S. armed forces as a surgeon and at the present time is in Italy on duty with the army. He has written a very fine description of the city of Rome that appears below:

July 7, 1944

Dear Mother and all the Gang:  
My Impressions of Rome

To describe Rome in any complete way would be an impossible task so I will confine myself to the highlights as I saw them. In my first hurried visit I was not too greatly impressed by St. Peter's except from the standpoint of size and architectural construction but I changed my mind on subsequent visits.

In front of St. Peter's is the famous "Piazza" which is oval in shape with an obelisk in its center. Surrounding this square on two sides were the colonnades each of which is part of a perfect circle. There is a series of some 36 columns three deep in each semicircle. These columns are so arranged radially from a marked location, on either side of the center of the Piazza that viewing them from this spot they would appear as single columns rather than three deep.

Entering the church by a long series of steps or incline, one enters a vast portico which covers the front of the structure. The church is a vast basilica in the form of a cross. The high altar, at which only the Pope may say Mass, lies over St. Peter's tomb at the intersection of the cross and the altar is surmounted by an ornamental canopy of Byzantine type of architecture. The altar has six candlesticks and crucifix of pure gold and is decorated according to the occasion. St. Peter's statue sits at one side of the long nave. It was invested in the ceremonial robes of the Pope and had the Pope's ring on a finger, and two of the most beautiful crosses that I have ever seen, one of myriads of beautiful diamonds, the other of diamonds and rubies. One of the feet of the statue is worn down from kissing of same. The head was crowned by the Pope's tiara of silver, set with precious stones.

The chief corridors (nave and chancels) forming the cross are formed by a series of enormous square pillars supporting arched ceilings. On each side of these pillars are corridors, off of which there are the many chapels and crypts, and in this part are the beautiful mosaics and statues. The enormous and lofty dome covers the intersection of the cross. I went up into the dome and looking down from the little balcony around the inside, people looked like Lilliputians. The dome is entirely covered with mosaic depicting Mary, Christ, and the disciples. Even at close range the detail is beautiful. It was some climb to get up that and I was very exhausted but happy that I saw it.

One of the most beautiful statues in marble was the "Pieta" by Michael Angelo, depicting Mary holding the lifeless body of Jesus in her lap. I gazed at this for a long time and was completely enthralled. Subsequently I saw the "Pieta" by Bernini in St. John Lateran and it, too, was beautiful, but hidden away more or less in a private tomb under a chapel there.

I was able to attend the audience for soldiers by the Pope and stood at the edge of the rostrum. I had two rosaries and a medal blessed by him. He spoke to each one individually that were near him after his general address. He certainly is a democratic fellow and on this occasion there was no pomp nor ceremony. The crowd was too large and I did not get in to see the Sistine chapel although some were admitted. I spent a total of some six hours in St. Peter's and had the opportunity to study the art in a more leisurely way. All the pictures were mosaics so perfect in color and shading that again I felt they must be oils. The statuary is so perfect anatomically that they seem almost alive.

My next tour covered the old Roman ruins and I spent some four hours in the area of the forum and Palatine Hill. I fortunately had a guide who gave an excellent picture of the past in relation to the present ruins. The arch of Septimius Severus was one of the best preserved. The pillars of the temple of Saturn were excellent. The Basilica

Julia, which at that time was really a building for justice and a public gathering place, showed only the bases and a few capitals at present. A part of Constantine's basilica remains in a good state of preservation and is really enormous in size with high domes, ceilings and massive pillars. The temple of the Vestal Virgins with their court and school, etc., is just an outline. Some of the old imperial palaces on Palatine Hill are in fair structural condition but the most beautiful (Augustine), with its private circus or stadium, is pretty well destroyed. I saw the remains of the Circus Maximus which is merely an outline but was enormous in size. Some of these structures are marvelous in that they could have been built at all that they could have remained standing so long. I snapped a good many photos which I am hoping will turn out well. I visited the Pantheon in which many of the Emperors are said to be buried. I saw Raphael's tomb there but much of the statuary had been removed for safety. The building is in excellent state of repair and the dome which is the mother of all domes is remarkable. The portico with its massive columns is said to have been brought from Greece. It makes one feel quite insignificant to view these historic places, when one realizes they were constructed centuries ago and still exist in fair condition even today.

Castle St. Angelo, in which Hadrian's Tomb lies, is connected to the Vatican by a high viaduct only wide enough for two people. This castle was used to store the Vatican treasure and for the protection of the Pope. I believe it was defended against Attila. It has a series of three draw bridges and had a moat within its walls. It was completely surrounded by a moat which was directly connected with the Tiber, which lies alongside. The castle contained many stone balls and several old catapults which were the means of defense. I saw the chamber with the trap door which the Pope could easily get rid of obnoxious friends. Many of the rooms were covered with decorations which had been taken from Pompeii but were in a better state of preservation than those in Pompeii. Looking down from this building one saw the Tiber with its many bridges. The old and famous Ponto St. Angelo from which Horatio declaimed, lies in front of the castle.

The river winds through the town in a series of curves and its banks on either side some 50 to 60 feet in depth are completely covered by masonry. This river is a muddy looking stream and is not deep enough nor wide enough to support transportation of any but relatively small boats.

The Victor Emmanuel Monument is an enormous structure easily seen from most parts of the city but is more a gaudy show-off structure than anything else. Its design was essentially beautiful but its construction looked cheap and not well done as in other works of art.

The streets of Rome generally speaking are narrow and multidirectional. I only encountered some eight or ten which were wide straight streets but these were beautiful. The squares or piazzas each contained some artistic work, very often centered by an obelisk or a fountain of artistic statuary. Around these squares are buildings of excellent design whose facade presented a work of art either in its frieze or by ornamental statues, etc.

The "Borghese Gardens" was the largest park in the city and must have been beautiful in normal times, though at present it is in need of attention. It has thousands of statues and many fountains, all of which are dry now. It is completely wooded with lovely walks and drives and contained botanical gardens and a large museum. All are treasures from public institutions have been removed to a place of safety so one had to depend on the art in the churches which was more than one could digest in the allotted time.

Within a few blocks of our hotel was the church of the Capuchin fathers, the church of the Immaculate Conception. Under the church was a cemetery containing the bones of over 4,000 Capuchin brothers. These bones including skulls were used as a decoration motif. The ceilings were decorated with vertebrae and small bones, and the walls were lined with the long bones stacked like cordwood with niches in which were mummified bodies standing or lying dressed in monk's habit of the order.

Under one altar in the church, enclosed in a glass casket lay a monk who was in almost a perfect state of preservation in spite of no embalming. Pope Pius X body was on view to the public in St. Peter's but

in no way compared in preservation with that of the Capuchin father in the church of the Immaculate Conception.

The shops in Rome seem to be generally small specialized shops. The stocks are practically depleted, especially after the soldiers are in town a day or two. The jewelry in silver filigree was beautiful but was completely gone after four days. The table linen with lace or crocheted borders was of poor quality and poor workmanship with prices averaging some fifteen dollars for pieces not over 16 inches in length. I was unfortunate enough to get into Rome at a time when shops were open, so missed the opportunity of getting the few types of things I desired. The shops close at 12 noon and reopen at 3 PM and are closed again at 5 PM. The shopping is therefore limited to the morning hours. There are many bars but with only soft drinks, a little cognac, and poor quality wine. There are many ice cream shops but the cream tastes very little like our own. The most plentiful souvenirs are of a religious nature and here too the quality is not of the best.

The basilica of St. Mary Major (Maggiore) was another lovely church particularly because of two chapels it contains. Each one was a thing of beauty. The paintings in one were by Raphael and the statuary in the other by Bernini and his pupils. The ceilings of all church buildings are beautifully decorated either by designs in bas-reliefs, usually of a stucco composition overlaid in many by gold leaf, or designs in mosaic. Generally speaking the churches are very colorful, with the coloring of the pictures and brilliant colors in the ceilings and various natural colors in the marble floors and columns. Windows are usually of plain clear glass, perhaps to admit more light than stained glass would permit. All of the windows in St. Paul's, but only one in St. Mary's and St. Peter's, are made of alabaster. This stone is used quite extensively for decorative effect as in trim around corners and for statues as well as occasional massive pillars.

After careful observation it is difficult to say which church is the most beautiful, as each has its own peculiar beauty. St. John Lateran is perhaps the most strikingly beautiful because of the enormous and conspicuous mosaic paintings on its walls and the colossal statues of the apostles, each occupying a position in an indentation of the square columns which outline the long nave. Each corner of these columns has a concave bevel. When one stands facing the bevel and another in the level of a diagonally opposite column, one can carry on a conversation in whispers even though separated by many feet. It was an unusual acoustical coincidence as the church had been rebuilt some 300 years ago. It was originally built on the site of the home of the Lateran family in about 300 A. D. and is the Mother Christian church. In it Constantine was baptised by Pope Sylvester about the same era. The chapels in this basilica while not as ornate as those in St. Peter's, were almost as interesting. One chapel was the private one of the Borini (?) family and under it was the family tomb. It was here that I saw the "Pieta" by Bernini.

The holy stairs were in a building near St. John's. The stairs are of wood supposedly taken from the court of Pontius Pilate and are supposed to be those trod by Jesus. One may only climb these 26 steps on their knees. Our Catholic Chaplain insisted that he and I should make the ascent together. All went well for about five steps when the Chaplain decided it would be easier on his knees if he used a foot to elevate himself to the next step. This proceeded for about two steps, after which the priest at the bottom and old ladies making the ascent began jabbering at him in Italian. Apparently it was quite a faux pas and we have been kidding the Chaplain about cheating on the holy stairs ever since. I must say my own knees were pretty stiff after the episode and I'm afraid my mind was more on my knees than on prayer by the time I reached the top but I didn't cheat.

The hotel at which I stayed in Rome was taken over by the Army for a rest place, and it certainly was a very fine place. The marble floors in the corridor and all the other marble used for moulding and decoration was beautiful. I had a room to myself for the four days and enjoyed the luxury of a box spring mattress and sheets and pillows. The toilet and bath was certainly a treat as they were very modern and clean. The first fitted bath room I've enjoyed for over a year.

I am afraid my efforts have been

## Family to Have Reunion

The members of the Henry Mauzy family are to have a reunion in the old home here, the first time in several years that all of the group have been able to be together. Mrs. Henry Mauzy, who has for the past two years been living in Chicago with a daughter, Mrs. Verdon Vroman, arrived last evening with Mrs. Vroman, while Mrs. Minta Mauzy Todd of Kearney, another daughter, arrived here today. This evening Miss Margaret Mauzy, who has been residing at San Francisco, is to be here this evening to complete the family circle that includes James G. Mauzy, local druggist.

Mrs. Henry Mauzy and daughter, Margaret, are returning to make their home at the family residence in the north part of the city. Mrs. Vroman and Mrs. Todd will enjoy a visit here with the family and old friends. Lieutenant Colonel Verdon Vroman, is with the armed forces in England.

## Returning to Station

Pfc. William Pittman, who has been spending a furlough here with his mother and other relatives and friends is leaving Saturday for his station at Camp Carson, Colorado. The visit has been very pleasant for the family and for the many friends of the young man.

## Visit Relatives Here

Cpl. Perry Dingman and Mrs. Dingman of Sioux City, Iowa, were visiting here for the past ten days at the home of Mrs. Dingman's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John S. Valley and family.

## Death of Baby

Thursday morning at 5 o'clock at an Omaha hospital a little daughter was born to Pvt. and Mrs. Nicholas Papa, the little one passing away a few hours after its birth. Mrs. Papa is the former Betty Briggs, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leland Briggs of Omaha. Pvt. Papa is at this time in the armed services in England. The little one was a great-granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Hartwick and Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Briggs of this city.

## Sends Grandmother Gifts

Mrs. Rachel Kerns of this city was greatly pleased this week to receive some very attractive gifts for birthday anniversary, sent by her grandson, Pfc. James Keele, U. S. Marine corps. James whose home is in Omaha, enlisted some time ago and is now located at the marine base at San Diego.

## GRADUATES AS CORPSMAN

Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, Cal., —HA2c Robert A. Gall, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. August Gall, 316 Main street, Plattsmouth, has been graduated from the Training Command Field Medical school for hospital corpsmen.

Graduates of this school are thoroughly trained in medical field tactics, field sanitation, military first aid, field medical equipment, chemical warfare, military topography and combat concealment. After graduation they are assigned to Marine Corps combat units going into the field.

Hospital Apprentice Second Class Gall, 19, attended the Plattsmouth High school where he won two letters in basketball, two in baseball and one in track. For recreation he plays basketball and softball. He enlisted October 1, 1943.

## Visits Family Here

Lieutenant W. H. Burns, who has been stationed in the south for the past several months, arrived Friday at Camp Rucker, Alabama to visit with Mrs. Burns and the children, who are making their home here with Mrs. Cora Hinz, the mother of Mrs. Burns. Lieutenant Burns is now enroute to Fort George Meade, Maryland for assignment. Before going to Rucker he was stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida.

pool cars in trying to convey my impressions and a good guide book can tell you more. I just had to get some of it off my chest even to the point of boring you.

I have been well and am as comfortable as one can expect. We are moving forward fairly steadily and as we are near the front, are a long way from Rome now.

I hope this finds you all in good health and good spirits. Give my regards to Thelma, Stub and the kids.

Love, Bob

# Sidney Farmer Kidnapped By Young Soldier

### Nebraska Farmer Forced to Drive Away With Camp Carson Soldier But Escaped at Brady

Kearney, NeBr., July 28. (UP)—A handsome 22-year-old army private who identified himself as William B. Meadows, Camp Carson, Colorado, was arrested by two members of Nebraska Highway patrol late yesterday near here, after police wires flashed the news that he had robbed and kidnapped Harry C. Barton, a farmer residing near Gering.

Meadows, who claimed to be enroute to his home in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the time of his apprehension by Patrolmen M. R. Lambert and C. E. Watson, was armed with a .45-caliber automatic pistol. He did not resist arrest.

Barton, who escaped from the soldier near Brady told police that he was irrigating a field near his home when the soldier approached him from the highway. "We talked for a while," Barton said, "and then Meadows pulled out a gun and told me to get into the car and drive him east. I drove about 30 miles before he insisted on driving."

"He told me," Barton said, "that he was sick of being a fifty-dollar-a-month man. He also claimed to be stationed at San Diego, California."

The farmer captive said that soon after Meadows took the wheel of the car that the soldier forced him to remove most of his clothing. The army private was wearing the usual khaki outfit, except for a civilian blouse.

Near Brady, the automobile developed motor trouble and Meadows drove into a garage to fix the car. After putting the motor in running order, Meadows went into the washroom. "As soon as he left me alone, I slipped out of the car and ran," Barton said.

Meadows continued to drive east until patrolmen apprehended him. Watson and Lambert said he was "sullen upon capture and refused to do much talking."

Police said he would be questioned thoroughly today, and would be returned to Gering tonight by Sheriff Mohlan Morgan.

## Ordered to New Station

A telephone message received here by the parents of Pvt. Robert E. Sedlak, who has been stationed for a short time at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, is to the effect that he is expected to leave the first of the week to a new station. Mrs. Sedlak and the children, Bobby and Nancy, departed a few days ago for Camp Shelby with the intention of enjoying a visit with the husband and father but this plan seems shattered by the new order to move.

## Family Has Pleasant Visit

A R. Case has just returned from Chicago where for a day he enjoyed a visit with his son, A/C Richard P. Case, and his daughter, Cpl. Jean Case and her friend, Cpl. Ruby Eskridge.

Richard is at Madison, Wis., where he is attending radio school at the University of Wisconsin, a part of his training course, and found the opportunity of a short furlough that enabled him to be with the father and sister in Chicago. He likes his work very much and hopes to complete it by August 15th. Whether he will be able to have a furlough at the close of school is a matter of uncertainty.

Cpl. Jean Case and Cpl. Eskridge are stationed at Casper, Wyoming, a depot for WAC replacements and they are enjoying a short furlough and from Chicago left for Little Rock, Arkansas, where they will visit at the home of Cpl. Eskridge. Mr. Case reported that the travel conditions are very crowded at this time, a great many service men being on the road from different stations. He was compelled to stand all of the way from Chicago west to Burlington, Iowa, on the return trip.

## Returns to Duty

Friday evening Harley Minnear, S2/c who has been here visiting his wife and daughter as well as his parents and other relatives, departed for Great Lakes, Illinois, to report for a new assignment. His visit home was very pleasant and many social affairs marked his stay.

## Buy Victory Bonds



# Receives Awards Of Soldier Son Killed In Italy

### Cpl. Edwin Leesley, Killed in Action in Italy in May Is Honored for Services

This morning Mr. and Mrs. Earl Leesley of this city received from the United States war department the Purple Heart and Military Medal awarded their son, Cpl. Edwin Leesley, who was killed in action in Italy on May 16, 1944.

These trophies given for the valor shown and the sacrifice made by the deceased soldier will be cherished remembrances to the bereaved father and mother as well as the brothers and sisters of Edwin.

## NEWS OF SERVICE MEN

Billy Conley, S2/c, arrived last Friday for a visit with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Conley. Billy has just completed his boot training at Great Lakes Naval Station. His brother, Roy, GM3c, arrived Tuesday. Roy has seen duty on sea since last spring. Another brother, Gerald, is taking his boot training at Farragut, Idaho.

Lt. Linville Prall and Mrs. Prall left Sunday morning to return to Washington, D. C., after a few days visit at the home of Lt. Prall's parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. H. Prall.

Mr. and Mrs. S. Ray Smith received a package recently which is very precious to them as it contained an air medal which their son, Lt. Milford Smith won for "exceptionally meritorious achievement while participating in bomber combat missions over occupied Europe." Lt. Smith participated in the Belfort, Femp and Melun attacks. In the package was also his latest award, which is the Oak Leaf Cluster. Lt. Smith has been promoted to first lieutenant.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Tankersley are happy this week to have both of their son at home on a furlough. Ray Tankersley, Jr., Pvt., in radio department of Infantry is here from Ft. Benning, Georgia. He is being transferred to a Marchdale Field, La. Wednesday morning Keith Tankersley, Pvt. in 3rd Air Force, arrived for an eighteen day furlough.

Mrs. Russell VanEvery has received word that her husband has been promoted to the rank of first lieutenant. Lt. VanEvery, who is in a hospital somewhere in England, writes that the bandage has been removed from one of his eyes and that he still is permitted to use the other eye only a short time each day.

## WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY?

NOTE—Bill sent us the following poem written on the battlefield. It has appeared in other American papers but it is timely and it should make us think.

What did you do today, my friend, From morning till the night?  
How many times did you complain That rationing is too tight?  
When are you going to start to do All of the things you say?  
A soldier would like to know, my friend,

What did you do today?  
We met the enemy today,  
And took the town by storm.  
Happy reading it will make  
For you tomorrow morn.  
You'll read with satisfaction  
The brief communique,  
We fought, but are you fighting?  
What did you do today?  
My gunner died in my arms today,  
I feel his warm blood yet;  
Your neighbor's dying boy gave  
out

A scream I'll never forget,  
On my right a tank was hit  
A flash and then a fire.  
The stench of burning flesh  
Still rises from the pyre.  
What did you do today, my friend,  
To help us with the task?  
Did you work harder and longer  
for less.

Or is this too much to ask?  
What right have I to ask you this,  
You probably will say,  
Maybe now you'll understand,  
O'ye see... I died today.  
A lieutenant Shafain amputated  
his own foot with a jackknife and  
thought he was dying as he wrote  
this poem. He is now recuperating  
in a hospital in England.

## Charge AWOL Soldier

Kearney, Neb., July 29. (UP)—A handsome 21-year-old soldier, who attempted to play the role of a modern Robin Hood, was charged late yesterday with kidnapping, robbery and threatening bodily injury after he admitted taking Farmer Harry C. Barton, Gering, for a "176 mile ride" across the Nebraska lowlands. The army private, who identified himself as William R. Meadows, said he had been AWOL from Camp Carson, Colo., since July 26.

A former resident of Cincinnati, O., Meadows had served 30 days in the Cincinnati workhouse for attempted robbery, and one year of a two year sentence in the Kentucky State penitentiary for auto theft, Sgt. R. C. Beers, of the State Highway Patrol, said.

Meadows told police that "I don't like the way the army is run, and I'm tired of being a \$50-a-month man." He also explained "I'm tired of seeing my wife without and other people with everything they want."

He professed to be a "modern Robin Hood" who wanted to "take from the rich and give to the poor." The soldier, Beers said, hitchhiked and rode by bus to Gering, where he saw Barton working in a field. After discussing the weather with the farmer, who was irrigating his fields, Meadows ordered him at the point of a .45 caliber automatic pistol to drive him east.

# American Bombers Strike Blows At Jap China Bases

### Industrial-Military Area of Manchuria Blasted in Daylight Raids of the Heavy Bombers

Washington, July 29. —(UP)—American B-29 Superfortress bombers struck a mighty blow for the cause of embattled China today, blasting the fabulous industrial-military center in the Mukden area of Manchuria—spawning ground of World War II and Japan's "arsenal of greater east."

Roaring boldly over their rich targets by daylight, the giant bombers—presumably China-based—cascaded tons of explosives upon an area studded with heavy industries which have been turned upon the Chinese during the past seven years.

Here, too, is the principal stamping ground of Japan's crack Kwangtung army, which has held Manchuria in an iron grip under the Japanese war lords.

The daring aerial strike, the third made by B-29s within six weeks against vital Japanese military and industrial objectives, was announced by the war department in an early-morning communique which gave no details.

It said only: "Superfortresses of the 29th bomber command attacked in daylight (Saturday) industrial objectives in the Mukden area, Manchuria. No further details are available at this time."

It was the first time that the fury of the awesome bombers has been turned loose against Manchuria, where the present World War had its origin 13 years ago in the famed "Mukden incident" that started Japan on her since-frustrated plan of world conquest.

And it was the first time they ventured over an enemy target in daylight for an attack in force.

In their two previous attacks against Japanese objectives—the Imperial Steel Works at Yawata on Japan proper last June 15 and against Yawata again and the big naval base of Sasebo on July 7—they dropped their lethal loads under cover of darkness.