

SHOWN in this photograph, which has been sent to us by an American radio station, are Sgt-Major Jack Vanderbeck, U.S.M.C., with his bride, Miss Patti Grant, of Hamilton, whom a caption with the photograph describes as the first New Zealand war bride to reach Omaha, Nebraska. They had just been broadcasting from the studio.



A Kiwi In Rome

ONE week after the fall of Rome the Kiwi Concert Party moved in and began a series of concerts for Allied forces. Tony Rex, leading tenor with the party and a former singer from IYA, describes his first impressions and excursions in airgraphs received lately by his mother, Mrs. F. J. Rex, of Auckland, who read extracts for *The Listener*.

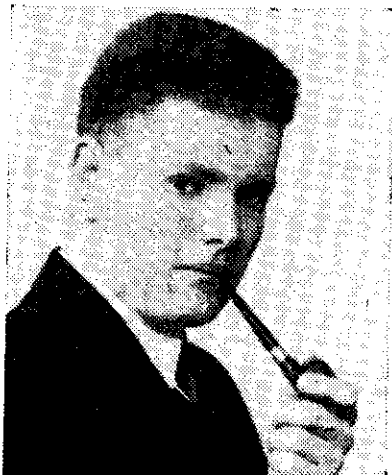
"Ours was the first party to give a concert here," he says, writing from Rome on June 19. "It is a wonderful place, all the people beautifully dressed, the streets splendidly paved and wide—but no one has anything to eat, of course."

"The Kiwis were given two days' leave soon after they arrived, and this is how Tony spent them," Mrs. Rex said. "I'll read you the most interesting bits: 'I went into a tobacconist's shop to ask if the owner could direct me to a first-class singing teacher—I suppose he thought he might as well get his

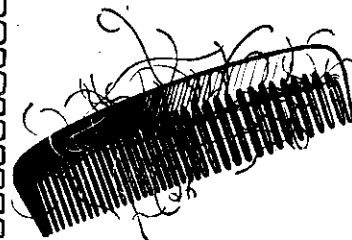
opera correct while he had the chance at headquarters—'and the tobacconist turned out to be the cousin of maestro Riccardo Zema, whose father had taught Beniamino Gigli himself! So round we went at once to his house, and he gave me one full hour's lesson then, and another full hour the next day. And all he asked was a little food—which I was very glad to give. He is conductor at the Royal Opera House, Rome. I learned much in those two hours, and he asked me to spend my next leave with him and have lessons free of charge—so he must have been impressed with Tony. 'With Terry Vaughan I spent two evenings at his house and heard some excellent singing by his sister, who is a prima donna at the Royal Opera House and at La Scala (Milan), and has sung opposite Gigli and Du Luca. A grand lyrical soprano.' He doesn't give her name. Probably couldn't spell the thing."

"Then he goes on: 'One day Zema took us to Gigli's house, where we met Gigli and his wife. He is a dear old man of 58, but still a champion. I took him some food and some flour (which I've no doubt he knocked up into spaghetti pretty quickly). He took it saying: 'As one artist to another, I accept, with many thanks.' He sang a few snatches of his songs for me, and promised if ever I returned to Rome he would sing for me again.'

"That's about all he says about Rome in this letter. He has a few bits about Anzio: 'We had a pasting from Jerry the first few nights, and as we were on a balcony over the waterfront we had a grandstand view from our beds. We gave two shows for the Americans—they were splendid audiences—and also one to about 700 Canadians before we came on to Rome.' And from what he says, everyone thinks the world of the Kiwis."



TONY REX, Kiwi tenor



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