

HOECHST, Germany

6 April 1946

Dear Mom and Dad:

Yesterday I spent the whole day driving back from Hamburg, Germany, the last lap of my journey up North to visit Heber's grave. This was the one thing that I had promised myself and you that I would do before starting on my way home. I left last Tuesday morning after finally getting a chance to get away from this FIAT place and getting orders that would take me into the British Zone of Occupation. I signed out a Command and Recon. Car from the FIAT Motor pool and drove the thing myself. Usually persons who go on such leave are supposed to have someone else accompany them. However, an exception was made in my case so I was able to make the trip alone. I had excellent weather all the time. The four days I was away were perfect with no rain nor cold...just wonderful sunshine and warmth. It helped out considerably.

My first target was Fulda for a visit with the Graves Registration people. I found out the answers to the questions asked in a letter I wrote them some time ago to which no answer had ever been received. I talked with a Mr. Shambeck. First, the meaning of the abbreviation used to show status of airmen on the army records "RMC" means "Returned to Military Control." In other words the men who had this abbreviation after their names on the list of crewmen aboard the plane that crashed about a month after Hebers were taken as prisoners of war and later returned to the army. I learned that there was no sizeable Graves Registration Hqs in Bremen where I intended making further inquiry about graves in this area and also that the field Hqs at Fulda was moving this week-end to Bremen to start the job of moving all Americans buried in the British Zone. They have just about completed the work of sweeping the American Zone of occupation. I gave Mr. Shambeck the color print of Lt Kelly's plate which I sent to Stan Sharp some time ago and which he returned advising me to send it to Fulda. It will be forwarded at the time a team or unit goes to Kronprinzenkoog to disinter the graves. I learned that it is the practice of the G R people to have on hand missing aircrew lists of the known airmen buried in isolated spots at the time the disinterment is made. Also with this they have the complete Air Corps medical records of each member of the crew which are complete as to teeth charts, body structure and in general individual characteristics on hand to assist in making proper identification. So, this means that the men who were buried as unidentified still stand a chance of being accounted for. Mr. Shambeck was kind enough to take my name and address for the purpose of sending direct word concerning the location the men will be moved to. It is also the practice of the Chaplain officiating at the US Military Cemeteries to notify the next of kin when the men are buried in the various places. I hope that Mr. Shambeck will send word first.

I managed to get as far North as Kassel the first day. I stayed there over night and the next morning continued North thinking I'd have to go to Bremen as it is located in the US Enclave. However, I was able to get gas at Hannover from the British (which surprised me very much) and so with a tank full plus the extra cans of gas I had in the trunk, I decided to stake my chances on staying overnight with the British in Hamburg. I was successful in getting a place to stay in one of their transient hotels. In fact, I had a very nice room and the company of a British 1st Lt. who had spent two years in Germany as a PW and was well acquainted with a good number of American airmen. He was a swell Joe.

The following morning I got an early start and arrived at Kronprinzenkoog just after ten in the morning. Upon driving up to the small church right next cemetery, a small crowd of kids gathered around so I asked the largest boy to take me to the spot where the Americans were buried. He obliged and also very considerately told the rest of the kids to stay behind. We walked over to the far corner of the cemetery and there they were, thirteen graves all in a row, barren of any green or decoration except for the one German cross which had the inscription, the contents of which you already knew, written on it. I can tell you that if ever there was a time in my life I felt the desire to break down and weep, this was it. The whole tragedy seemed to strike home again as forcefully as it did the day I received Uncle Georges letter telling me that Heb had been killed in action. Needless to say I was incapable of talking I was so choked up. So, in my agony proceeded to take a few pictures and at the same time try and to prevent a flow of tears or give vent to my feelings. With a few picture taken, I moved away from the spot before I was able to speak again.

I went across the street from the cemetery and met the young boys mother. As I recall, I think their name is Lemm. He had asked me if I knew a Kermit Maupin. It turned out that Kermit had visited the spot a month or so in advance of me while on his way home. I understand that he had terrifically cold weather during his visit as well as trouble with his jeep. Both he and his friend were invited to stay with the Lemm family during the night. They seemed to be very nice people. I left a note with Mrs. Lemm addressed to "Whatever unit of G. R. does the work in Kronpinzenkoog" asking them to forward any information they might find as well as advance notice of the place they will eventually rest in. This together with a self addressed envelope plus copies of letters containing information about the crew were also left for any possible aid they might be in doing their work.

I went to visit the spots where the two bombers came down in the area. I did plenty of inquiring and although their stories seemed to vary and were sometimes mixed, I managed to establish some details concerning the circumstances involved. As for the Liberator that came down the 5th of Jan 1944 I found the ending to the story told in the missing air crew report. As the plane came into the Kronpinzenkoog area headed West from Kiel, the Messerschmitt was still riding it tail firing at the bomber which was on fire by this time. It began a turn to keep from going out over the water on the West side of the peninsula and four members of the crew had succeeded in jumping before the whole plane exploded in mid-air throwing crew members remaining aboard and parts of the plane as far as three to five miles apart.

Most of the people in the area witnessed the incident and the kids remember it well because a goodly number of them ran to the spots where parts and bodies fell. The little Lemm boy took me right to the spot where he had seen one of the airmen lay and then over to a farm where one of the motors of the plane was thrown through the roof of the combination house and barn killing one of the cows. I talked to the lady of the house and she informed me that the incident occurred around the beginning of January. For a while I thought it might have been Heb's plane as some had told me that the incident had happened earlier than Jan. However, the fact that the number of men who parachuted totaled one more than the number of the un-accounted men in Hebs crew, that the date was so firm in the mind of the lady as being the beginning of Jan. as well as the facts given in the missing aircrew report make it definite that this was not Hebs plane. I have the addresses of the next of kin of the occupants of this plane so it will be an easy matter to write to the fellows who survived this crash and get further details

as to what happened. It may even shed some light on Hebers plane.

I drove out to the outer dyke facing the North Sea and the little Lemm boy pointed out where the other bomber had come down. It was just an approximate location. Apparently it was right at the waters edge. The land makes a gradual slope down to the water and it looks very much as if the tide would come up to the dyke itself. The land leading out to the water is also ribbed, that is, plowed in long straight furrows toward the sea with an occasional deep canal. From what I could ascertain, the plane came down and plowed deep into the mud but did not break up and was hauled away in one piece .. more or less. In spite of all my efforts, I was unable to find out as many details surrounding this crash as I did about the other. It was further out toward the sea and came down in a sdpt where the dyke cut off the view of the inhabitants. It was also probably well guarded and no one was allowed to go near it. However, I spent a good part of the afternoon driving all around Kronprinzenkoog, Friedrichskoog, Wilhelmskoog etc. following leads of individuals who were supposed to know something about the plane. Most of them were men who live in the area and were in the service of the Wehrmacht as plane spotters in that area. One of the men by the name of Bauer from the town called Marne took me to several of his former comrads who he thought would surely know something about it but I'll be hanged if I could get anything definite except for the fact that the plane didn't break up too much and that it was an apparent attempt at a belling landing. As for those of the crē who are still unaccounted for I was unable to find one peep. Mr. Bauer was very definite about the fact that one of his comrads had definitely mentioned the name of Smith as being one of the dead airmen. This seemed to be quite well fixed in his mind. There was nothing left in the way of plane parts or even evidence of the crashed.

After viewing the spots where the planes came down, I went back to the cemetery and talked with Mr. Hamann the (Kirchendiener) who actually made the burials. I was able to learn a few definite things from him. First of all, there are 19 allied airmen buried in the cemetery. Six of them, Englishmen, were buried there in 1939 during the first days of the war. There is also one Frenchman as well as various individuals washed in from the sea. Mr. Hamann told me definitely that the bodies washed in from the sea were buried long before any of the American airmen were buried there and that none among the thriteen American airmen were bodies washed in from the sea. The way the men are buried would also indicate that:

German Cross														
13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	//	
													Plot H	//
Path													//	
					X	XXXX		X	X	X	X	X	X	//
					.	.							.	Englishmen
					.	.							.	Bodies washed in from the sea
					.	.							.	Frenchman

According to the card# supposedly made by the German Sgt in charge of the burial, the following are buried in the thirteen graves:

From Hebers Plane,

Maupin, Jesse C.	0-802682	Plot H,	Row 5,	Grave 9
Smith, H	39680970	H	5	10
Craig, James D.	35418657	H	5	—
Krogh, Svend A.	37428065	H	5	7
Klinchok, John J.	13074018	H	5	8
Love, William E.	15116576	H	5	11
2 Unbekannte - Unidentified		H	5	—

From the other plane,

Raymond, Geo. J		Plot H,	Row 5,	Grave 11
Cornwall, Chas. E.	32609009	H	5	13
Javick, Chas R.	13025345	H	5	8
Jones, Edison E	18171634	H	5	
2 Unbekannte - Unidentified		H	5	9 & 10

Upon inquiring further as to the possibility of any names being entered into the Church records, I learned that not one penscratch was made. The bodies lay in the burial room of the church several days while the caskets were being made in the nearby town of Friedrichskoog and no one bothered about making any records because the Sgt. in charge said he was taking care of everything. Further, I learned that the men were not supposed to have been buried in Kronprinzenkoog, that a place called Brunbuttelskoog had been designated as the central spot for burial of allied airmen who crashed in that area. However, according to Hamann, the Sgt. in charge insisted that they be buried there and thus no record was made whereas it would have been had they been buried in the proper place. Mr. Hamann couldn't understand why nothing along this line wasn't done. He as well as others regretted the fact that they didn't think to make any kind of a note. He appeared to be a decent sort of an old man and I give him plenty of praise and credit for doing something as well as he did which he really wasn't required to do. I accepted all he told me as being the truth. He stated that they were buried with their identification tags, that the Sgt took one tag with him from each individual. When I pointed out the discrepancy in the burial records and asked if they were buried one on top of the other, he couldn't understand it all because each had his individual grave and were buried starting with grave number one working to the left up to number thirteen. The highest numbers were the ones most recently buried. The fact that thirteen graves are there for the Americans but the records show that fourteen are supposed to be buried there also goes unexplained. I asked him if the Sgt had filled ou the cards at the grave side. He had just made notes in a small book and was only too happy to get away from the place as soon as he had witnessed the burial. Mr. Hamann assured me that everything in his power was done to give them a decent burial.

Following every lead possible, I decided to go to the place where the caskets were made to see if any sort of a record was made there. At Friedrichskoog I found that nothing in the way of a pen scratch had been made either.

However, I was successful in finding out the name of the German Sgt. who had charge of the burial of both crews from the place where he had stayed. His name is Karl Eggers. He is still living and according to the people is at present located in Neumunster just about 100 kilometers away from Kronprinzenkoog. Too bad they didn't know his exact address. If only I had had more gas, I'd have gone over to Neumunster and tried to find the guy and straighten him out in more ways than one. After learning most of the facts, I'm inclined to think that he was dilatory in the performance of duty. There are several things he'd have to explain satisfactorily before I'd ever be through with him: Why the men were not buried in Brunbuttelskoog as they were supposed to, why the thirteen graves for fourteen bodies, why he failed to enter the grave numbers correctly on the cards, why there were no visible markers put on the individual graves and why Kronprinzenkoog was written on the cards as the place instead of the name it was officially called at the time (ironical as it may seem) Adolf Hitler Koog. Also, I'd more definitely establish the fact that they were buried with their identification tags and ask further questions about additional members of the crew still unaccounted for.

One thing I'm going to do for certain and that is make sure that Mr. Shambeck of the G. R. Service gets all the details I have found which will include Karl Eggers name so that they will be sure to find him and use him to good advantage. No doubt he is responsible for the burial of a goodly number of allied airmen in that particular area. If he still has his notes, this may prove to be of some advantage. On the face of things, I can't help but accuse him for his apparent lack of interest and responsibility in his work toward his work. On the other hand, he may have done all he could. Perhaps he shouldn't be judged too harshly.

On learning the Brunbuttelskoog was the official central burial place for allied airmen, it gave me a glimmer of hope that some sort of a trace concerning the three of the crew still unaccounted for might be found. I drove over there and visited a Mr. Rhode (Kirchendiemer) and found that there were only two allied airmen buried there, also that no records of others buried in the surrounding cemeteries had been maintained. Of the two, one was buried before the date of the crash and identification was so doubtful that the nationality was even uncertain. The other was buried on the 30th of May 1944 as an unknown American airman. Grave Number IV R C 17. His body was found about the same date of burial on the Kronprinzenkoog beach and Mr. Rhode mentioned that the remains were nothing more than a skeleton (harsh as it may sound). The date of burial and condition of the body may indicate that he was a member of Hebe's crew. At least, I'm going to make sure that a check is made against the medical records when they make the check...that is, I let the G R people know of this particular man.

I was on the go all day, talking, driving around and looking for people. By the time I visited Mr. Rhode, it was quite late and I remembered that I hadn't stopped to eat lunch of supper. It was getting dark about the time I got under way back to Hamburg but the trusty old C and R car got me back OK so my worries about traveling along at night were unnecessary.

I felt the trip was very successful except for the fact that I would like to have gone over to Neumunster. A few stones were overturned but somehow I felt that inspite of all I found out, this was one remaining that needed turning. However, I'll give Graves Registration the lead and let them take up where I left off. Knowing that he had a lot to do with

burials all over that region, I'm sure that they won't fail to get a hold of him and if they do, I'm sure they will accomplish just as much as if I had gone over and found a few things to pass on to them myself. Perhaps in the long run it will be better if they contact him and exploit him to everyone's advantage who may have loved ones buried in Schleswig Holstein. The way I felt towards him I'd certainly have antagonized him to no end. Anyway, we'll have to let things run their natural course. I'm sure that G. R. will get some good out of him and that I can at least give them this lead. Let's hope they take it up and exploit it to full advantage.

The trip back from Hamburg took about ten hours of straight driving. The old bus held together....got me there and back without one bit of trouble.

Well, this about covers all the details of the trip. I hope that I haven't left out any important details. I hope that it won't be too long before I can be home to tell you more about it...that is if I've forgotten anything. I'm well and happy. Glad to hear that Paul will be out about the middle of May. Prospects for getting out are getting brighter all the time. My love to everyone.

your loving son,

