Lt H.J.Smith 0-677910
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A.P.O.634
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Dear Bri:

Was that ever good to hear from you. I haven't heard from Dad for more than three weeks, and consequently I haven't had yours or anyone elses address. Today four letters came...Two from the Gal. One from Aunt Lutie, and one from you. Oh! Yes, Art Tomlinson also sent an announcement that he has a 6 lb 3oz baby girl, so like you, he is a Dady, only one step ahead of you.

Ah! so at last you are getting into it. I feel for you because now you realize just a bit what I've been putting up with for the past two years. As I've said on many occasions it isn't the best life in the world and there are a million and one things I'd lot rather be doing than this fighting ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ But what the heck, someone has to do it, and even tho we have nice girls, and families to go back to, we must take care of Hitler, and crowd, then we can live in peace and do as we wish.....That weather you mention is the same I had to do all my flying in. You remember I flew, at one time down to Gulf Port for a training mission, and like you say it will rain one minute, and shine the next. There is one advantage of flying, and that is you can see these ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ storms you talk about, and in about ten minutes fly right around them.....Makes it nice and dry most of the time.

You mention about getting a birds eye view of your old stomping ground....not too bad so far, but never pleasant.....just between you and myself, when they start sending up that flak, and my gosh they have a lot of it in some places, or when those Me 109 or FW 190's start squaring off for an attack there are many an anxious moments, and a good deal of longing to get back to the home base in a hurry.....It is all sort of a game of me get you, or you get me as far as fighters are concerned, and thus far the figures are in our favor, but that Flak----- well, it just comes up, and you can't do much about it but fly on thru and hope some shell doesn't have your number on it.....There isn't any use talking much about it as it is something that has to be experienced to be appreciated, and definitely experienced to realize just what bomber pilots go thru.....I can really feel for the boys who pioneered the way over here, for their lot was a tough one.....Do you remember Walter Stewart.....He is at a base close by, and in B 24's, only he has been here a year and is all thru with his missions.. He has 32 behind him, and is now an operations officer----

What a time that boy had....he was in the first B 24 group over here, and has had plenty of experiences to write home about.....Wish that I had as many behind me, but my number is growing slowly and surely, so before many more months, if my luck holds out, I'll be back home the same as ever. Maybe I shouldn't say the "Same as ever." for if I live thru, and my intentions are doing just that, I'll probably be "Flak Happy", just like the rest of the boys who finish.

That reminds me of a little something ----Up where the bombardier sits, there is a little switch called the toggle switch. When depressed it releases the bombs on target(we hope). Well one of the standard sayings around here has been, in order to press a point, "On Target----Flick". Well the other day we went over a target where the flak was so heavy we thought they were throwing up the last few remaining bath tubs left in Germany----they weren't bothering to take out the water either....the whole works was coming right on upstairs..... Well after we who were left arrived back home, the saying immediately changed over to...."On Target-----Flak" It is sort of a subtile dig at the present time.....It is quite a life, but in many ways this is a darn swell way to fight a war. We go up when general weather permits, fly around for anything from five to ten hours then come back to as nice as quarters as they have at any fighting front. They are these Hutments which look like a culvert pipe cut in half...eight officers to a hut. We have good food, considering where we are and what the English put up with, we are able to swipe enough coal to keep warm(we saw and chop wood to help out tho) and thus far we've fixed up our hut until it is pretty comfortable. We've a radio, a record player and quite a collection of records(about 80 at the presenttime)---incidently to give you an idea of how expensive things are over here that record player which is a hand ground one, three record before rewinding job cost us 48 smackers, and the records an average of 85 cents a piece...We've put out about one hundred and fifteen dollars so far....sounds awful doesn't it, but we haven't much else to spend money on. We've fixed up a lister bag so we can have water handy(they have wash houses about a quater of a mile from the hutments, so you can see running water is a problem) four jugs to haul drinking water in so we have that handy also, clothes racks, a writing table, lamps, folding chairs so we can sit and toast by the small English stove in the center of the room, and last but none the less important a storage spot down at one end. If you ever get over this way, you must by allmeans come

and see me....or if you just let me know you are here, I'll swipe the Col's old Stripped down D model 24, and fly to the nearest field, and pick you up....I'd like to take you on some nice easy touch(if there is such a thing over there) and let you see what a raid really looks like from the air. Ithink it might be arranged, so be sure and keep in touch with me.....

I don't know if I've ever toldyou about our swell plane. Wehave a honey, and after flying over and back several times is still purring like a new kitten. We've really had good luck with our ship, and at the present time it is in the best condition of any ship with an equal number of hours on it.....Old Greg is a pretty good number and we are plenty proud of it. There is one thing that irks me to no end and that is when they let other crews take it up and fly it. I was always lead to believe that one crew had a ship, and that crew alone flew it, but since being over here it has proved ever so much different, and several crews have taken it up, so Greg has more missions on it than does its own crew. It makes me so mad to think of others taking it up I could swear a blew line, but they try to be fair to everyone, and keep one crew from flying every time, so they are always saying....How many ships are available for the next flight....well if ours is in flying condition, and we made the last one or two....they let some poor guy who had his ship shot up on the trip before take ours up so ~~you~~ can have a rest.....none of us like this system but when wing calls up for so many ships, and your ships is ready it flys if it is needed, and if it is your turn to rest someone else takes it up and as a rule beats it up for you.... As I said I don't likethe system but there isn't anything you can do about it, so I just stand around and gripe about it.....

Well, one more thing, then I'll run along and let you get some sleep. I was down checking the ship this morning, and discovered that one of the boys had left the tail turret cover off. I hauled over the mechanics stand went about putting it on as none of the ground crew were handy at the moment.....On climbing down off the stand I slipped and hit a piece of cement just the wrong way when I hit the ground and sprained my ankle. It isn't too bad a sprain and I should be off the red diagonal in a few days.....In the meantime I'll be sitting close by the fire roasting my feet and keeping myself warm.....Hot dog...

Keep'er on the beam, don't make too long a run, and "On Target----Flak".

Love,

Mike