

19 May 1945
Germany

Fear Peggy

Now that the war is over, the blackout regulations have been lifted, and among other sundry odds and ends, censorship regulations have been more or less drastically revised. Just about the only thing we are not permitted to reveal is the present location of our unit. And, for the small purposes of security still extant and in force, we have been advised to use the words "I" and "me" in preference to "we" and "us", the better to prevent involving or designating any specific units in the personal narrative of life in and around the ETO these past many months. This should explain the consequent frequent use of the first person singular, and deflate any illusions about an ego gone wild. O.K.?

You are fully aware and mindful that I never kept that date I had with you a certain Thursday in September -- for the opening gun, signaling a more specific "participation" in the war for me, had been fired. They routed me out of a comfortable bed at the Sutton on Thursday morning, and gave me instructions to pack & get ready. Jazzed around (as you always do) after breakfast until the busses for La G. field were loaded. I took a good look around at lil' old New York during the ride, to form a sort of last remembrance, for some time, of the place. Ran into the usual hustle and bustle checking thru customs, weighing in, etc., once I got to the field and then tried to relax with some U.S.O. coffee and doughnuts and a dozen assorted magazines. But the prospect of making the big trip, and by plane at that, was a little exciting, to put it mildly, and gave me that old "butter fly" sensation in the stomach. I recall that it seemed quite humorous to be given a 5 minute lecture on the use of life rafts, emergency equipment, "Gibson Girl" radios: signal equipment, "ditching" the plane and a host of other actions to be followed with scrupulous care in the event of some unforeseen trouble while in flight. Unless one had a card-index type of brain he could not hope to remember all the warnings and instructions that the flight personnel gave. In any event it was an interesting lecture, notwithstanding its apparent faults. Just before boarding the plane I coughed up 50¢ for a boxed flight lunch for the first leg of the trip. The plane I was in was a regular four-engine commercial type job taken over by the army. Some planes had lounge type seats, but I had to board one with box-type seats arranged along both sides (I didn't raise any hell over this). This plane, incidentally was used to ferry wounded on return trips. After the engines were warmed up we taxied down the field, headed into the wind, and took off at 1245 hrs. It was my first time in the air and I can't overestimate the first big thrill of it. Unfortunately, it was a hazy, cloudy day, and once aloft, I could see only a short glimpse of Queens and Long Island Sound, before the clouds closed in. We rose above them in a short while, however, into a land of sunshine above and downy clouds below. And except for an occasional plane flitting around the sky, that was all to be seen for an hour or so. Then, far up the New England coast the clouds parted briefly to give a glimpse of farmland and cities far below. After this I settled down

to a comfortable, cheery flight, quite pleased with myself and my fortune.

A little under four hours out of N.Yk the plane ran into a stretch of clear weather, and I devoted myself to a contemplation of the ocean and occasional islands below. About 5PM we sighted land ahead, and soon the plane dropped down, circled once, and landed at Stevensville, Newfoundland. It was drizzling, but my spirits weren't dampened at all. Boarded an Army bus, and whisked away to chow at an Army camp -- even while you were at home wondering if I'd call.

No time was wasted. As soon as chow was over and the plane fueled and ready, I was in my seat, safety belt buckled, awaiting the as-yet-new thrill of the takeoff. The plane cleared Newfoundland at about 1845hrs., and struggled for altitude for the long trip across. Night closed in quickly, and the dreary sound of the motors and the engine exhaust were the only things to be heard and seen. I curled up for a fitful sleep, for we ran into bumpy weather.

At 0230 hrs Friday morning, I was awake again, and was surprised to see the sun rise so early out of the clouds and sea ahead. I was eager for the first glimpse of land and soon saw the farmlands of Northern Ireland come into view. Then the Irish Sea, and far below a black submarine cutting the cold waves. Suddenly, more land, and a rocky green coast ahead. The plane dropped down, eased in for a smooth landing and at 0430 hrs N.Y. time my feet touched the soil of Prestwick, Scotland. It was 0930 hrs British time, and life in the ETO had commenced.