

Augusty 2nd, 1945

Dear Folks,

I'A THOUGH!!--which explains why I'm addressing this to all of you rather than those from whom I heard last. Yes, we taxied to a stop at exactly 0904:30 this morning from mission 35, fifth in the squadron to wind up our tour. I can't begin to describe how wonderful to be finished it is--it seems as though nothing can ever worry you again. This will make a good yardstick in my later years to judge my worries about, I guess, because it will be a long time before anything quite so important happens again. I feel very thankful for being able to write those words with which I opened this letter. So many times God could have let us go, but each time someone's prayers-- Mom's or Dad's or Jack's or mine or any of the relatives--were answered, and now I'm able to sit here, free of any worries, and look forward to getting home. (I forgot to mention Mary Ann's prayers above-- perhaps I owe more to her than any of us imagine. Doesn't the Gospel say, "And a little child shall lead them?")

In spite of having every reason to be completely happy, I can't quite bring myself to that stage. I keep thinking of all the fellows that won't ever finish their tour. To quote a prayer I have, "I thank Thee for keeping me safe, but I am thinking all the time of the many who have fallen, my officers and comrades. May they receive from Thee all the peace and rest that is reserved for brave men who did their best. Give their unhappy families, please, the consolation of believing in The kindness and love." I'd like each of you to say that prayer tonight, even though you never met any of them. I've said it after every mission so far.

We will probably be here about a week now, and then will go to Honolulu. I don't know how long we'll remain there, probably another week, after which we'll come on back to the states. So as I see it now, I ought to be back home the last of this month. Start stocking up now, Mom, on milk, combination salad ingredients, meat loaf, and everything else that I used to like. When they don't serve anything I like here, I just don't eat, so I've got lots of catching up to do.

I'll arrive in cotton uniforms, and I'll be looking forward to getting into my wool summer uniform. If you can get hold of any 20th Air Force shoulder patches in town, they go on the left shoulder where the Air Force patch is now; I'll need an overseas stripe for my right cuff, a couple of sets of first looie's bars, and an Asiatic-Pacific theater ribbon with two battle stars (The mandated islands campaign and the Air war over Japan.) All the other fruit salad I can furnish myself. But mostly I want to pitch into some real food, with lots of milk. That I haven't even seen, except in cans, since I left the states.

Public Relations here sent radiograms to UP and AP in Montana saying I had finished and was eligible for rotation, so probably by this time you've seen it in the paper (if they see fit to print it). Suppose you wondered when and if you did see it why I didn't tell you first, but I didn't know about it myself untill I returned this morning, and there's no way I can beat their time.

Aunt Cora's warnings before I left about the B-29 not being proved have certainly been proved all wrong. Since this was our last mission we sort of forgot the engineer's cruise control and went like hell all the way up and back. We took off 25th, bombed 15th, and landed here again 5th. We were really tearing coming back, too--as our weight decreased our airspeed increased and finally we were doing 230 mph as we approached the field. . We even beat back ships that took off as much as 23 minutes ahead of us. It's a real airplane.

Mac got a July 2nd "Life" this noon, and I noticed an article on Guam in it. While not strictly correct, it was interesting, and I hope you got to see it.

Have Mom's letter of the 23rd and Dad's of the 24th to answer, so I'll go through them now and make any desired comments.

Mac is a Catholic, and a very good one, too. I agree with you that you can't tell what a person is, even with a good Irish name. McMinis, our radar operator, is a Presbyterian, if you can imagine a sacrilege like that to the Irish! Incidentally, he isn't finished yet, has eleven more to go yet. And Ack, who you remember was transferred off our crew after the Captain hurt himself, had eight more to go. He was bewailing his fate to us after congratulating us--of course he didn't have anything to say about it, but if he had stayed on our crew he would have finished up today too.

The morning glories are blooming regularly now, a few blues and mostly a beautiful reddish purple. The blues are sort of watery and I much prefer the others.

Dad, Mac and I were glad to hear the cards are on the way. The reason for the qualifications, which are very strict, is just so every navigator in the Air Forces can't join--it's strictly a non-profit organization. Mac estimates that not more than 500 men can qualify in the whole world, which would make it a pretty exclusive outfit, and most of them will be B-29 men.

If I do get home the last of this month, I'll be there when Aunt Gatharrives, as I'll have 30 days. I'm glad it's working out this way, as I'll really be glad to see her. I'd like to be able to see Petty McKeel, too.

Well, that's all for tonight. Suppose you're as happy as I am to know that the sweating is over.

Love,

