

Royal Air Force
c/o Canada House
London, S.W.

Date (July 18 and 20th, 1940)

Dear Mike,

It seems like a hell of a time since I last wrote to you but things have been moving so fast that I never have had time to write to anybody up until now. I've a lot of things to tell you but I suppose as usual I'll forget them all until after I've posted this letter. I've been sick in bed for four days now and to-day is the first day I've been allowed to do anything at all and the M.O.'s even put a time limit to writing letters. Everything seemed to go wrong with me all at the same time, stomach, ears, throat, eyes, etc. or in other words I was more or less useless to anyone. The Doc says it was almost two months of no sleep and less food that did it then sort of coming back to a civilized life just floored my system and I was left sucking a hand tit. I should be out in another four or five days though I hope so or the "Blitz" is just starting again and I've got to keep Turner from hogging all the fun. We two are the high scorers in the squadron so far having got twenty-three between us – nine for Stan and fourteen for me – so we have a pretty keen competition going on and neither of us likes to be off duty when the other one is on and we're both afraid we'll miss a chance to get something. This game is damn good fun when you're fighting bombers as they're just like picking apples off a tree but fighters are a hell of a different proposition and keep you moving like greased lighting. It's a funny thing this fighting in the air before you actually start or see any of the Hun you're as nervous and scared as hell but as soon as everything starts you're too busy to be afraid or worried. We've had several fights with Colonel Schumachers squadron – its supposed to be in the same class Richtofen was in the last do – and I don't mind saying that they're about the finest pilots I've ever met. We generally manage to come out even-steven with them but a lot of the other squadrons haven't been so lucky. We had rather a funny thing happen one day – you may have read about it in the English newspapers – anyway we were chasing a hun bomber – five of us – when we lost him in some bad cloud – however right after this we saw about nine Me. 109's so we jumped them thinking we'd get a couple then slip off into the clouds. Right after this however the sky just poured 109's and some bloke, who must be the personal ace of the Luftwaffe jumped me and succeeded in shooting away all the machine except where I was sitting before I managed to dive into a cloud. Well anyway after we got home (three out of five) we found out that about eight Jerry squadrons had pooled their resources for the morning and we'd tried to jump about eighty machines. We laugh like hell when we think of it now but it wasn't funny then. Still the odds are always in their favro for some reason or other and we're always fighting like the underdog.

I supposed you have heard about my decoration by now – it all happened by a mistake one day and things I'd been doing before. I got separated from the squadron and was sort of pissing about on my own – you know, boots shaking, knees knocking etc. when about fifteen Ju. 87's came out of the clouds and started to bomb the fleet. I got four and luckily chased the rest off but the funny part is that while I was doing this the rest of the boys got jumped by 109's as usual right above me but on top of the clouds – so while I was having all the fun they were keeping everything away from me. We've only got five fo

the original twenty-two pilots in the squadron left now and those of us who are left aren't quite the same blokes as before. Its peculiar but war seems to make you older and quieter and changes your views a lot on life – you also find out who are the blokes worth knowing and who aren't and I haven't met one yet who wasn't worth knowing.

I expect soon they'll have most of the chaps at home in the army though I can't see what good an army is going to do now that we've only got an island left to defend. I hope you'll pardon me of this letter seems to ramble but I'm trying to remember things I think you might like to hear and also throw in a few of my own view-points.

You'd never believe it but the last time I was in France I lost twenty-seven pounds – I almost looked like an overgrown kid when arrived back in England.

I enjoyed our stay in France – I had a hell of a nice Parisian refugee with me and the brass hats pulled out so fast we all had our own private cars. This girl and I – her name was Maryeve – took a flat in Nantes and had a hell of a time for almost two weeks. All the boys kept dropping in every night and we'd all B.S. and listen to the radio and eat then (?) off to bed (after the lads had gone. It was sure marvelous and I certainly miss it now. I tried to smuggle the girl back on one of bombing planes but one of the few big (noises?) caught me and raised merry hell. It was too bad because she was certainly one first class (forms??) – she had been to university and was a (modiste?) until the hun started towards Paris when she had to evacuate and then I ran into her. Oh well, I supposed I must have been (fated) for a bachelor – I can't fall in love anymore like I used to, I get all worked up for about an hour then I just lose interest. The last letter you wrote got here about two or three days ago and I had quite a laugh over (M.S.) in it. I won't say anything as it would sound too much like "I told you so" but darn it all I did say something like that. They're talking of reviewing the scheme of sending colonial officers home on leave as they did during the last scrap but so far its only talk however who knows one of these days you may see me walking down the streets of the old (bung). It would be nice to get back and see all the people I used to know and do some of the things I used to do. The real funny thing is the doc has stopped me drinking everything except () as my stomach is in such bad shape – and as I haven't done much drinking for – (18th July) –

I'm sorry that I haven't finished this letter sooner but I got a bit worse and the doc refused to let me write however I'm to-day so I'll finish. There can't be a lot more to tell you right now so I'll close but I hope to hear from you soon. Give my love to Olive (as usual). If she still remembers me. I had some pictures taken when I was in London and the last (convestiture?) and if you'd like one I'll send you one. As ever,

Your most sincere friend,

Bill