

Royal Air Force Station  
September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1940

Dear Mike,

I know what you are thinking and I quite agree it is a hell of a long time since I have written but every time I've sat down to do so something has cropped up and I've put it by until later. We have been kept frightfully busy with all these raids on London and the south but have thoroughly enjoyed it. It's amazing the difference it makes when you are fighting over your own country and more or less defending your own people. We've been up against raids of 300 to 60 or 150-200 to 12 but either we've killed all their real good pilots and they're using new young ones or else they are losing their nerve.

They haven't got the same guts they used to have and except in a few cases try to avoid a real scrap. The squadron shot down fifty-six in four fights which brings our grand total to 130. I've got over twenty-one confirmed victories now and if we keep up like this hope to increase that by a few more before long. The C.O. was awarded the D.S.O. last week and my flight commander won the D.F.C. and the squadron as a whole won itself one of the best reputations in the air force. We're among the top three high scoring squadrons in the service now and are considered one of the top five real crack squadrons. We've only lost two pilots in the last three months as we feel quite proud of ourselves. The C.O. and myself have been shot up rather badly on three occasions but as long as they miss you what the hell. Ball was shot down in flames but got away with it. Milling had his engine shot away with canon shells but got away with it, (Shedden) and (Longshale) bailed out and are both back fit again so you see even if we lose a few machines we get all or most of our pilots back safe. The last (brig?) do I was in a canon shell blew my port aileron off and another one hit just behind the cockpit then just to finish it this bloke put a few machine gun bullets through the cockpit practically smashing everything in it but missing me and all I got out of it was a few shrapnel splinters in my left hand so I'm beginning to think Lady luck must be a permanent passenger when I go up. Turner and I are both being promoted in the next week so that means I shall be one more step up the line. I got over the seven-hundred hour mark just a few days ago and starting to be considered an old timer in the flying game now. I've got nearly 400 of those on hurricanes and still claim that they are the best fighter in the service not even baring the "much talked about but never there when needed" Spitfires."

You'd never believe how well the people are standing up to the bombing. Their morale is higher now than it ever and instead of breaking up the country its bringing all the classes closer together and making them more than ever determined to beat the Huns. And the damage done when you consider the number of raids, tons of bombs dropped and the number of machines over is practically negligible.

I had a letter from Olive some time ago and was very pleased to hear from her, I don't hear from many people at home and you and Oliver are the only old friends I have at home who I still consider myself in touch with. It's a funny thing but of all the people I know at home you two are still (I hope) my last and oldest friends and the only ones who I feel I know anything at all about. Olive certainly grows more pretty and mature every day judging by the pictures you have sent me and I am very pleased to hear that you are doing so well together and I fully expect an invitation to the happy occasion when it comes.

I am still being offered a chance to return home as an instructor but the old reasons still keep me here and I suppose I shall remain here until the end or until the other end. I've got as used to the thrill and the, I don't know how to express it, final (feeling?) of victory that I'd feel lost and bored by a quiet life again. This war business changes people a lot and I'm sure you'd never believe that people were one and the same if you meet them again after a year or so in constant "(dicing?) with death."

How is Helen coming along with her son (or che-ild??) I haven't heard about her for ages. Say helot to her for me and also explain for me why I never get around to writing to her. I hope that your mother and father enjoyed their holiday. How is Barnes, still running around with the lady or has he graduated to something a little bit older yet? I am greatly disappointed in Barnes, I always thought that he would be the real go-getter of the few of us but he seems to lack that certain thing that would push him up the ladder. I was real pleased to hear that Pa Riley was back in the army again as he must have missed it a lot while he was out. I should think he would make a marvelous C.O. – you know, the type the troops would all go to hell for. Does he still look as young as he used to? As for Ma Riley I must definitely come back and try her chocolate cakes again. I was very surprised indeed to hear that Maria was engaged as she was always the one who was going to be the successful young business woman before she thought of marriage. However, I can't say it broke my heart or anything as I believe I outgrew or lost interest several months ago but I always will believe she was one of the best looking girls I ever knew. She also did me a good turn because it was mainly because of her I left home and I think I'm (???) a bit more broad minded and educated than I was then and if you happen to see her I'd like you to give her my best wishes and congratulations also ask her to remember me to her mother.

How is the football going on this season? I'd give my eye to see a good game its two year almost since I saw my last one. They were going to operate on my dud leg not long ago and the doc figured I'd have a fifty-fifty chance of not having a stiff leg as so I put the kibosh on that and I'm still periodically () up with a bad knee. I hope I'm not boring you with all this but I never get my ideas running () so I just jot them down as I remember them. I saw some new pictures of the Jasper (is that correct?) highway which was opened this year and it looked absolutely marvelous. I'd love to spend about three months at home seeing all the old places and faces.

Well I really must close now before I sentimental or homesick. Please write to me soon and until then,

Ever your friend,

Bill