

An Airman to His Mother

Amongst the personal belongings of a young R.A.F. pilot in a Bomber Squadron who was recently reported "Missing, believed killed" was a letter to his mother—to be sent to her if he were killed.

"This letter was perhaps the most amazing one I have ever read; simple and direct in its wording but splendid and uplifting in its outlook," says the young officer's Station Commander. "It was inevitable that I should read it—in fact, he must have intended this, for it was left open in order that I might be certain that no prohibited information was disclosed.

"I sent the letter to the bereaved mother and asked her whether I might publish it anonymously, as I feel its contents may bring comfort to other mothers, and that everyone in our country may feel proud to read of the sentiments which support 'an average airman' in the execution of his present arduous duties." Here is the text of the letter:

—RCAF—

"Dearest Mother,

"Though I feel no premonition at all, events are moving rapidly and I have instructed that this letter be forwarded to you should I fail to return from one of the raids which we shall shortly be called upon to undertake. You must hope on for a month, but at the end of that time you must accept the fact that I have handed my task over to the extremely capable hands of my comrades of the Royal Air Force, as so many splendid fellows have already done.

"Firstly, it will comfort you to know that my role in this war has been of the greatest importance. Our patrols far out over the North Sea have helped to keep the trade routes clear for our convoys and supply ships, and on one occasion our information was instrumental in saving the lives of the men on a crippled lighthouse relief ship.

"Though it will be difficult for you, you will disappoint me if you do not at least try to accept the facts dispassionately, for I shall have done my duty to the utmost of my ability. No man can do more, and no one calling himself a man could do less.

"I have always admired your amazing courage in the face of continual setbacks; in the way you have given me as good an education and background as anyone in the country; and always kept up appearances without ever losing faith in the future.

"My death would not mean that your struggle has been in vain. Far from it. It means that your sacrifice is as great as mine. Those who serve England must expect nothing from her; we debase ourselves if we regard our country as merely a place in which to eat and sleep.

"History resounds with illustrious names who have given all, yet their sacrifice has resulted in the British Empire, where there is a measure of peace, justice, and freedom for all, and where a higher standard of civilization has evolved, and is still evolving, than anywhere else. But this is not only concerning our own land. Today we are forced with the greatest organized challenge to Christianity and civilization that the world has ever seen, and

I count myself lucky and honored to be the right age and fully trained to throw my full weight into the scale.

"For this I have you to thank. Yet there is more work for you to do. The Home Front will still have to stand united for years after the war is won. For all that can be said against it, I still maintain that this war is a very good thing; every individual is having the chance to give and dare all for his principle like the martyrs of old. However long the time may be, one thing can never be altered—I shall have lived and died an Englishman. Nothing else matters one jot nor can anything ever change it.

"You must not grieve for me, for if you really believe in religion and all that it entails that would be hypocrisy. I have no fear of death; only a queer elation. . . . I would have it no other way. The universe is so vast and so ageless that the life of one man can only be justified by the measure of his sacrifice. We are sent to this world to acquire a personality and a character to take with us that can never be taken from us. Those who just eat and sleep, prosper and procreate, are no better than animals if all their lives they are at peace.

"I firmly and absolutely believe that evil things are sent into the world to try us; they are sent deliberately by our Creator to test our mettle because He knows what is good for us. The Bible is full of cases where the easy way out has been discarded for moral principles.

"I count myself fortunate in that I have seen the whole country and known men of every calling. But with the final test of war I consider my character fully developed. Thus at my early age my earthly mission is already fulfilled and I am prepared to die with just one regret and one only—that I could not devote myself to making your declining years more happy by being with you; but you will live in peace and freedom and I shall have directly contributed to that, so here again my life will not have been in vain.

"Your loving son,

THE SENIOR CLASS AT NO. 1 S.F.T.S.



Front Row (left to right)—L. W. Barnett, J. Mason, J. T. Edwards, E. K. Booth, J. Moody, J. M. Priestman, G. D. McKay, R. R. Wilson, B. C. Wesgate, E. H. Allen, J. Andrews, D. I. Cruikshank, F. B. Solomon, W. A. Clark, F. E. Colwill, L. V. Bourke, J. Wilson, A. H. Davidson.

Centre Row (left to right)—E. Winiarz, R. S. Graham, D. G. Dick, J. Downs, H. B. Rutledge, F. W. Hyder, J. Z. Zabek, J. M. Old-

ing, C. A. Krause, J. A. Lowndes, M. L. Failles, A. C. McAuley, B. B. Alexander, C. E. Ratchford, G. W. M. Lumbley, J. T. Wilson, T. R. Ballantyne.

Back Row (left to right)—H. P. Morris, A. D. Green, R. H. Jones, J. E. Coombs, E. G. Smith, A. R. Bonner, W. A. Switzer, R. W. Davidge, J. M. Perkins, E. G. Smith, H. V. West, C. R. Abbott, G. P. Nixon, G. B. Ough, H. H. Ware, J. Martin, K. H. Coffey, J. W. Dunfield.

VALEDICTORY BY L.A.C. G. P. NIXON

Our first impressions of "Borden" were rather awe-inspiring. To be reminded once again that we were even a small part of such an efficient organization gives one a very great feeling of pride. To think that we would be entrusted with one of those "much talked about" Harvard's that winged their way overhead every spare moment we looked skyward, gives one a still greater feeling of pride.

Our course was played by us, rather like a grand game, than, as some people would have it, hard work. We were excited, keyed-up, and at all times aiming at a standard just a little higher than our predecessors. It is quite unfortunate that our course at G.I.S. had to be crammed into such a short ten weeks. However, all those instructors, who willingly gave up much of their leisure time at night to journey down to the classrooms in order to help all who need assistance, remind us of that well-

known quality "sportsmanship." Again at the flights, our flying instructors did not confine their teachings solely to the time spent in the air, but generously imparted valuable tips to us; flying tips and personal tips which definitely make our stay in the air force more successful and enjoyable. Like every game we had our ups and downs but thanks to this wonderful co-operation the better part of our course can be labelled "up." The "down" that we look on with the deepest regret was the unfortunate accident of our two most promising students, LAC Bonner and LAC Moody.

Now, having completed our training, we are ready, and we hope capable, to carry out the duties to which we are assigned.

With more thanks than can be expressed in words, we say good-bye and good luck to those we leave behind.

—COURSE "52".

IN MEMORIAM

L.A.C.
A. R. BONNER
KIMBERLEY, B.C.



L.A.C.
J. MOODY
NEW YORK CITY, U.S.A.