Monday evening
March 19, 1945

Dear Dad,

Perhaps you would like to know about a typical mission day with the 8th United States Air Force.

After 1700 supper, I stop at the base weather office to check up on tomorrow's weather, for bad weather is Germany's greatest ally in her vain attempt to stop the men, stop night and day, strategic and tactical air bombardment and espionage by the Air Forces of the United Nations. Then I check the availability list in the squadron orderly room to find if I am available for a mission and who will make up my crew (experienced crews check in men from newly arrived crews). I check
the board — if it is red there is an alert for a mission, if green there is a stand-by (until 2230 etc.) if white we are released for training (the board often changes several times a night.) I visit the gunners for an hour or so (that, censor letters, sample a package from home, see that they are ready to fly) and then return to my barracks and bed about 2130.

At 0300 the squadron C.O. snaps on a barracks light and wakes the men checked off for flying. He tells briefing time, bomb load and gas load. Speculation as to the target begins as we get up at 0400 (we allot about fifteen minutes to dress, fifteen to wash, fifteen to
eat and fifteen to get to briefing and check through the orderly room on the way to the mess hall. (Half pre-mission breakfasts are of real fresh, fried eggs.) Just before checking into briefing I make a quick check of my flying equipment and put on a set of mantas over G.I. O.D. long winter underwear so my electric heated suit will not be too close to my skin. Pilots, navigators, and bombadier's attend a general briefing together at 0500 and then split up for more specific separate briefings. (Gunners have a short briefing half an hour earlier before going to the planes to put in guns, check positions.) At briefing information is given on formation,
wing and division order, route and assembly, altitudes, temperature, weather, primary and secondary targets, enemy resistance, friendly fighter escort, call signs, colors of the day, escape procedure and special instructions.

About 0545 I go to my locker to dress. I put on a two-piece green General Electric wire lined A-3 electric heated flying suit and over that a light green coverall type summer flying suit. (For very cold days a heavy green wool lined jacket too.) Heavy wool socks, a light felt electric heated shoe and a heavy fleece lined rubber boot protect my feet; electric heated leather gloves over silk inner gloves protect
my lands. I also wear a wool lined leather flying helmet with built-in radio head phones, plastic sun goggles with electric light filaments to prevent clouding up and a radio throat mike. Overall I wear a forty pound back pack type parachute. And I carry a rubber oxygen mask, a steel flak helmet and a cord for my electric suit. A truck takes me to my plane-Kirkland "A" Able, 719, Blue Hen Thief, on Hardstand 14—about 0605. After a quick check with Crew Chief and engineer I assemble the crew in the waist for a last check of each man (position, equipment) a last briefing
and a prayer with God.

Start engines at 0630 (crew chief has earlier given complete pre-flight inspection) run-up engines, wave to crew chief and taxi out to perimeter track and take off runway. At 0700 pull out on the runway, make a quick last check, note the green light from the control tower and give it the gun.

An actual mission is one continuous surge between tense, eager expectancy and weary monotony. The thrill as power surges to lift the great silver bird in flight, the job trying to form in squadron-group-wing-division and airforce
formation by 1200 planes, England — a cloud covered landscape — a quilt of smudged fields and towns—a symphony in early morning shades of blue, the cold gray Channel, Germany, feld, a stick of Wrigley's Spearmint gum, oxygen, fat, sticking, fascinating flak, escorting Mustang and Thunderbird fighters, unidentified contrails, more flak—close and black—the plane staggers from the concussion, peaceful smoking target, prop wash nothing, the formation, propburging, and running away. I'm tired, the Channel and England again, low altitude, off oxygen at last, swoop down a Hershey bar.

P land about 1500 check with the crew chief about the plane (1 prop governor) and ride a tranca.
back to the briefing room. I redress and down Red Cross cocoa and sandwiches while talking over the mission and calming down (lots of scotch she provided too — supervised by a Flight Surgeon). I attend pilot's critique and then go to suffer at about 1700.

Yours,

Lee