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Thunderbird Field Phoenix, Arizona

Tuesday evening August 31, 1943

Dear Mother,

My new address is:

A/C RLM Flight 16 P.O. Box 991 Phoenix, Arizona

When I send free mail I must use this following address on the envelope.

A/C RLM A.S.N. Fl. 16 12'th AAFFTD Scotsdale, [sic] Arizona

Don't get the two mixed up. Send my mail to the first address.

Monday morning I rose at the regular time, handed in my bedding, lugged my barracks bags five blocks, said good-byes for an hour and then fell out at the main parade ground. Trucks took us to the Southern Pacific R.R. station in Santa Ana and after an hour we moved out with the Tuscon [sic] boys.

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The easiest way to tell you how being a Cadet has raised me in army eyes is to compare my train rides. Before we have always had two to a berth or day coaches. Yesterday we had air conditioned compartment cars, three to a compartment. Before our food was sparse and of low quality (\$.48 a meal) but yesterday for lunch and dinner we had magnificent lamb and chicken dinners (\$1.00 a meal).

We arrived in Phoenix station at 8:00 A.M. We just waited around for an hour and then found out that we would get no breakfast. Instead we piled into tourist busses [sic] and started for Thunderbird II. As we drove through Phoenix I got the impression that it was a sprawling slow moving Southern city. Green was everywhere but a depressing though dry heat hit us hard. And then as we reached the country I saw the dessert [sic]. Small ranges of desolate black erosion riddled hills mountains rose abruptly from the dirty barren soil which supported occassional [sic]

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bushes or cacti. Then we saw columns of dust reaching skyward and small whirlwinds of dust racing along the ground and we saw what was the dread of all pilots — violent upward air currents — thermals.

After twenty miles we turned in toward a group of low and colorfully painted buildings — Thunderbird. It looked mighty desolate there at the foot of the

mountain in Paradise Valley. First we had lunch — cafeteria style and all we could eat. We drank more than we ate though for the heat was really heating us. (We take salt tablets at each meal.) Then we went through the usual routine — physical, draw bedding, unpack, get beds, get goggles, listen to commadant's [sic] talk. Twelve of us are in a room which is filled with fans. Three rooms make a flight; two flights make a squadron. There are now twice as many cadets here as ever before.

We are to spend most of this week getting acclimated.

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Saturday we will get our schedules, planes and instructors. Monday we fly!

That's the news for now but don't expect too much more because after we start flying we will have even less spare time than we had in pre-flight.

They use a 2nd lieutenant for mail orderly here. We will get the same rank or lower (Flight Officer) while going through harder training and work.

Please send my sunglasses quickly as well as that shoe equipment. (add liquid brown polish).

Say hello to everyone for me.

Love,

Lee