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Thunderbird Field Phoenix, Arizona

Monday evening September 6, 1943

Dear Dad,

I went up today for forty minutes but the ride was as different from a ride in a Cub as a ride in our Packard is from a ride in a Model T. It was wonderful! I flew in 324, one of the big 225 horsepower Stearman bi-wing blue P.T. - 17s, with my instructor, Mr. Ray Newton, an Oklahoma stunt flyer and one of the original Thunderbird instructors. Mr. Newton is a grand fellow who believes in starting from the very beginning and mastering every maneuver in its turn before attempting something new. He also believes in letting his students do most of the flying. But getting back to our Stearmans — these ships are capable of going 300 m.p.h.

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but the Army has had Boeing cut them down to 100 m.p.h. and build in heavy torque (propellar [sic] tendency to pull the ship hard to the left), easy stalling and high landing speed. Thus there will be hardly one ship which we will fly latter [sic] which will have any feature harder to cope with. Besides that Stearmans are the most powerful and most rugged of our training ships and exceeds most of our fighters in size. She responds instantly to the controls and so is easy to fly.

I guess you can tell that I am well pleased with the Stearman and you wonder why more washout on Stearmans than on Ryans. For one thing a Ryan has only half the power, size and bad performance characteristics but if you look farther you see that 90% of those who wash in basic training are Ryan men — the jump is too much. 40% of our class will wash here at Thunderbird; 20% will be

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voluntary eliminees who haven't the will power, the desire or the push to stick. Air sickness of course contributes heavily to this group. The other 20% will wash for various reasons: violation of safety rules, ground school flunks, violation of cadet conduct and mostly on insufficient progress. Everyone can fly but few can learn as quickly as the army wishes or acquire the precision needed. Of course checkitis (my trouble of tightening up when being tested) will get quite a few. The boys in the second 20% may have a chance to be navigators or bombardiers, the others can never become officers nor leave the Air Corps unless they join the paratroops.

Today I just did elementary turns, climbs and glides. Tomorrow I will begin take offs, landing, stalls and spins.

Sunday I tried to call home but couldn't get through. I'm going to try again this coming Sunday though. I'd just like to talk to you all again.

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Today a package of tooth paste and socks came from Brodsky's. Do you know anything about it? The socks will come in mighty handy but I had just bought a tube of tooth paste Saturday so I sold two tubes. Please thank Mr. Brodsky for me and explain why I cannot write.

I hope you said hello to Roscoe for me. It must have been a happy week for Delaware with the 198'th home again.

Please straighten Mother out on my address. A.S.N. stands for Army Serial Number and is only for my envelope return address. Address me as A/C R.L.M. (add) 12'th AAFFTD, Fl. 16 P.O. Box 991 Phoenix, Arizona

Say hello to Ben for me when he gets home.

Do you think the Blue Rocks can win the play offs. I suppose they failed to finish first in the league race.

Somehow or other the canteen gets only a limited supply of airmail stamps, not near enough for the demand, so please send me some. Also let me know what you want me to

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write about in my letters.

We started ground school today with Air Navigation and Engines. Both cram a lot of material but it doesn't look hard. This is the only time that we will ever study engines by the way. I'm really tired tonight after our first full day.

My bunk mate, Jim Gist (Miami and New York, 24, ex. S.E. conference light heavy boxing champ, ex Eastern Air Line's pilot, Miami, Nebraska and Santa Ana) was taken to the hospital for appendicitis Saturday night. I'll miss him.

Sunday morning most of 44-C attended religious services. I went to the Protestant service which was held on the shady lawn by the swimming pool. I really enjoyed it, especially the sermon by our flying chaplain. (he serves all Thunderbirds). He spoke on the Lords Prayer and its meaning for all men.

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I think that I have rambled through most of the news. Do you think that Mother might have something good-to-eat which she could send me? Please send nothing that heat affects, like icing.

Yours,

Lee