

Somewhere in North Russia
23/9/42

When I left I just took the bare necessities and never thought I might like to write a letter during our stay here. The only writing paper I can find is this log sheet and a borrowed pen.

We left our base -----about dark and started the flight over here. I felt very jittery about it, but after we got under way things didn't seem so bad. We were a lucky crew, in fact the trip was wonderful until we got over this country. We were at 8000' and below us were solid clouds and not a break in them, we couldn't come down for fear of crashing into a mountain. So we decided to fly to the White Sea and follow it up, which we did, and finally came to our destination; but there was no Aerodrome in sight. Our fuel was getting very low and we started to look for a half decent place-to-land paddy to set down on. We spotted a marshy hayfield and were running up to it when both motors cut, --out of gas, and down we went in a woods.

//-----and it is unbelievable that five men could get out of it without a scratch, and talking about getting out! It took me a split second to scramble out and the rest of the crew were out ahead of me. I never got out of an aircraft faster. It didn't go up in flames as we expected; I guess-----Nobody said much for five minutes! We had a cigarette, after which Bert and I decided to see a way out. We met about fifteen soldiers not far from the aircraft. This was the first time I was scared, knowing that we were close to the front line and that they couldn't understand us. It was the first time for me to put my hands up while I was being searched, and I put them up good and high! After seeing Bert's Aussie badge and the Canada badge on my shoulder they became more friendly, but not taking any chances yet. We went back to the aircraft and they looked the three other fellows over. They arranged everything, put a guard over the aircraft, got a truck and took us to a Military Camp, and gave us a bang up dinner. After dinner we went by trolley to where the rest of the Squadron were. They too had some trouble on the way. At the station while waiting for the trolley there were about fifty gathered around. I said to one fellow "Vodka" and away he went and returned with a bottle of wine.

They were very, very nice to us all the time and I sure wished I could speak Russian. After a couple of days, one of which we spent at the crash, looking for our personal belongings, we took the train to----- We had an interpreter with us. I don't know how we would have got along without her. We took a truck after the train at----- and set out for the drome from which we were going to operate. We have no aircraft so there'll be no operations for us unless somebody gets sick or hurt.

Up here we are eating R.A.F. supplies and not Russian food. We spend most of our time reading, cutting wood, were in the Arctic Circle and it's getting fairly cool! We've had some snow but it hasn't been 70' yet. Last week we were into the little town close by and had a shower in the communal bath. I stayed in the steam too long and then came out in the cold. I've been coughing, sneezing, and eating cough pills ever since.

The first of the week the Russian soldiers put on a concert for us, singing dancing etc., it was darned good.

I have spent quite a few hours in the air raid shelters; I never thought I could run so fast; I can pass anybody on the way to the shelter.

This is a very rough country and the Russians are welcome to it. We expect to get back soon; if we don't soon go, I think I'll get into a dugout. The Ruskies are in them ~~because~~ it's purely a wartime measure, but it certainly would be much warmer for the long winter.

I'll be glad to get back to get some letters, English papers, radio, etc., Everybody's in uniform here! No leave until Victory! We get an allowance of money from the Ruskies, but there's absolutely nothing to buy. One can spend a few roubles for a shave now and again. We get a -----a couple of times a week. I've had one drink of Vodka and it's sudden death! Summerside screech is mild compared to it. The Ruskies sure have a total war effort, I think. Everything for Joe Stalin.

This trip has been a great experience, one that I wouldn't have missed for the world but I wouldn't want to do it again. That crash landing, the first meeting with the Ruskies, and the first Russian meal are incidents I'll always remember. I thought of the story Perc Murphy used to tell us while we were crossing over Lapland; do you remember the story? Jut will.

Still up here in the Arctic Circle. I was into-----yesterday and while there I -----but I doubt if she'll ever get ~~there~~ it. There's nothing at all to do in the city. We spent most of our time in the Arctic hotel a modern spot. We had tea biscuit, dish of canned fruit, and two glasses of ~~beer~~ wine each. I got rid of a few of my roubles. They don't seem to care about money at all. I suppose there's nothing they can buy. I'm getting quite a few air raid shelter bars up. There are some funny things happen on the way and in those shelters and they are the source of much laughter after the raid is over. Jerry can stop bombing any time now. We'll find some other way of amusing ourselves.

I-----have a letter or paper to read right now. There should be some letters for me by the time I get back, which I hope is soon.

During a dog fight yesterday over the aerodrome an aircraft was shot up, the pilot bailed out and the aircraft came down and crashed into the building-----there were no people in it at the time. Lots of excitement every day! On a nice clear night I don't undress at all; it gets it pay. I heard the news ~~or a night on the aircraft radio equipment.~~ The war isn't over yet anyway! I've seen two shows lately and although I couldn't understand the language I got the drift of the story out of them. The Ruskies also put on a musical evening for us two nights ago.

13/10/42
It has been quite a few days since I ~~asked~~ anything to this note. There isn't very much happening apart from cutting enough wood for ourselves, going to the communal bath house twice a week, doing our laundry, etc.,.

We had two

Joe

*Delivered by J.C. The
F 72683 Squad 45
PCAF Attached to
O. ...*