

⑤ Not at sea,

5-11-41

Dear Mum and Dad,

We are now back on dry land and are speeding across America between San Francisco and Vancouver - hence the very shaky writing, as even America's railways are not 100 per cent efficient for comfort while writing. Since letter no. 4 quite a lot has happened, so I'll begin at the beginning.

On Monday morning the ship berthed at Wilmington, which is the port of Los Angeles. We were not given shore leave in the usual way, but for the expenditure of 3 dollars 50 cents we were taken on a 100 mile trip by bus all around the city, which is about 25 miles from the harbour. It was a good trip and we saw a lot, though things were a bit rushed.

We had a kind of triumphal procession into and through Los Angeles, as there was a police escort dashing to and fro

on a motor cycle along the whole fleet of 'buses to make sure that there were no undue hold-ups at intersections. The highway into the city provides for four lanes of traffic, and is lined on either side with an absolute forest of oil derricks; as probably you know, Dad, it's a big oil-producing centre. Petrol prices ranged from about 11d. to 1/1d., or, as the signs read, from 12 to 15 or 16 cents.

After "doing" the business section we went through the fashionable residential areas to Hollywood, where we had the real treat of the day - lunch as the guests of Warner Bros.' film studios. In accordance with our previous experience of Americans, everything was well done; each of us was given a neatly-packed box containing about enough lunch for two ordinary people, as well as an orange, bottle of milk and tea for those who wanted it. We picnicked in the shade of trees forming part of the

scene for a permanent street setting. There was ice cream going the rounds, as well as free cigarettes for the smokers, with half-a-dozen minor actresses to hand the kai out to the hungry.

For the first time in ten years, visitors to the studio were allowed to use their cameras round the place, and we sure made the most of the privilege. I think both of you would have enjoyed looking around and seeing just how your legs are pulled when you see a movie; I know Dad in particular would be walking around and wishing he had twice as many eyes. Here's hoping some of the shots we took will come out all right so you can see a bit of what it was like. The sets they use are marvellously lifelike even without the aid of the camera, and some of the permanent ones outside were very deceiving although they were only false fronts. There was a full-size model of a Pan-American Clipper

with water all round it for close-ups, I saw Jane Wyman, who is quite a star by now, and Alexis Smith, a new actress who is up and coming, and got a snap of these two together.

After that part of the programme we went on a tour round famous Beverly Hills to see the homes of the stars, and they were certainly worth the trouble. I nearly applied for a screen test on the strength of those lovely homes, but remembered I'm in the Air Force anyway.

We sailed at night for 'Frisco, which we reached in heavy fog next day - so heavy that we caught only a glimpse of the famous Golden Gate bridge looming up through the mist. However, it came later and from the ship we saw a bit of the city, and also the famed Oakland bridge, which is $8\frac{1}{4}$ miles long. It's a great sight at any time, but is well worth seeing at night when it is all lit

up along its whole length. Treasure Island we saw only at night, when we crossed the harbour by ferry to the train. We have quite a comfortable type of carriage on this trip - it needs to be as the journey lasts two ~~days~~^{nights} and a ~~night~~^{day} just to Vancouver. From there we pilots go to Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, where we have been told our station is located.

Mail is going to be very slow, and will only arrive once in a month or six weeks.

We are going very fast now and I see my writing is becoming almost illegible, so I'm going to close as there is a chance to get mail posted at the next station. Hope you have been able to read this far - it's the best I could manage under these conditions.

Love from
 Duddell