



UNION-CASTLE LINE

(23)

At sea again,

15-3-42.

Dear Mum and Dad,

At long last I can settle down again to tell you all about the fun and games of the last fortnight. I suppose that first I should mention this little matter of a commission, which I picked up on graduating at Saskatoon; apparently I was a little previous in getting my photo taken as a sergeant-pilot, but since I haven't an officer's uniform until we get to England that's a minor detail. I think about 30% of our course were commissioned.

Now for the trip. We left Saskatoon on the Friday night after our wings parade, and went as far as Winnipeg where we had a day before I continued on to Ottawa. Officers travel first-class, so I had a dinky little air-conditioned sleeping compartment across Canada. I had from early in the morning until three

in the afternoon with Mr and Mrs
Ford, who wanted me to stay longer.
However, I had to keep on the move
and ended up next morning in
Chicago, where I looked up Gill
Ford, who is at the Moody Bible Institute
training as a missionary. Had a
great time there, and by an
effort managed to pay for myself
for one meal out of the four I had
during the day. At breakfast in
the station as soon as I arrived
one chap who hadn't even spoken
to me collared the check off the
waitress as soon as he saw the
uniform; and in the afternoon and
at night just before I caught the
train two other chaps hustled me
into restaurants and fed me on
the fat of the land! One of them
found I had another train trip
ahead of me and bought a bag
of buns before you could say "wink".

Next stop was Detroit, where I
rejoined with Peter Day and Ray
Wellsop, who had crossed the border
earlier. We spent a day and a
night there, and made records



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at the home of a friend of Jim Whytes, so I hope you'll hear the result some day. We re-crossed the border into Canada, and had a whole lot of fun hitch-hiking from Windsor to Niagara Falls. That's a swell place, and we spent a whole morning photographing the falls from every angle. We were lucky, as the whole place was still covered in snow and slush after a heavy fall just a couple of days earlier. The falls were a great sight, partially frozen up as they are at this time of the year.

We crossed into America again at Niagara, and hitchhiked about 150 miles that afternoon, ending up after quite a lot of fun in the city of Syracuse, where we spent an evening and eventually caught a Train for New York which got us

there next morning. We put up at the Piccadilly Hotel, where the British-American Ambulance Corps has an office which handles the Air Force visitors wonderfully well. That very afternoon we went on a 3½-hour free bus-tour of the city; at night we saw the stage and screen show in the Radio City Music Hall, where they feature the Rockettes, world's greatest precision dancers. It's the world's largest theatre, by the way, and seats 6,200.

(If there are too many "world's greatest" things in this, pardon me; but that's the way New York affects you.)

After that we went on to a testimonial dinner in the big Hotel Roosevelt, where the seats were \$10 each to everyone except us. It was in honour of the famous war correspondent, Quentin Reynolds, and I met a whole lot of famous people there - Wendell Wilkie, Lyona Loy, Mr Reynolds sen., Deems Taylor the radio commentator, Jimmie Walker, ex-mayor of New York, and



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a bunch of others I can't remember off-hand. Alan Borelli, secretary of the National Theatre Authority, a bouncing, good-natured chap who knows everybody on Broadway, eventually took me in tow and rushed me off to Arnold Reubens' place, a famous restaurant where I met Ted Husing, the Grantland Rice Spotlight screen commentator; Bert Lahr, the comedian who played the Cowardly Lion in "The Wizard of Oz"; Larry Adler, the mouthorganist and Frank Fay, radio comedian.

There was a swell ice-show on in the afternoon at the Center Theatre, world's largest stage theatre, which seats over 3000, and we got best seats at $\frac{1}{3}$ price, if you please. It was a great show, and at the end of it the

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three of us, at Stan Corbelli's suggestion, met Mary Jane Yeo, a sixteen-year-old star in the presentation. Both this and the Music Hall are wonderful theatres with stage and scenery facilities they don't even dream about in New Zealand; as for the lighting effects, they are nothing short of miraculous.

At night we saw a Jewish concert in Carnegie Hall; there were some very attractive items on the programme and many which just didn't click, but on the whole I was not sorry that I went, for Carnegie Hall is the ultimate ambition of most of the world's great singers and players.

I should mention that the United Services Organisation, which looks after the men of the American forces, also looked after us with theatre tickets and so on, just as I have come to learn is the case with Americans everywhere. They can't seem to do enough for a guest.



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After that there was time for a late showing of "Captains of the Clouds," then we three, still on the move, caught an early train to Washington. Bola Luxford, the New Zealander, who helps a lot in looking after the boys who visit New York, suggested that we should visit the New Zealand Legation there, so we did; we met old acquaintances in the persons of the Hon. Walter Nash and the Hon. Frank Langstone, as well as the N.Z. liaison officer, Group-Captain Isitt. Mr Langstone did his best to outdo the Americans in hospitality; he really gave us a royal time. He took us through the great Nelson Art Gallery, took us out to lunch, and in the afternoon he hired a taxi, took us for a two-hour or

more drive to Arlington Cemetery, the
Lincoln Memorial, the Capitol, and
every other place he could think of.
At the end of all that he
wouldn't listen to a word of thanks,
but believe me he couldn't have
done more in any way. There was
with him during the first part of
the tour a Mr Johnson who was also
attached to the legation and who
expected to be leaving for home
shortly; he made a note of our
home addresses and promised to
drop a line to let our folks know
how we were, so perhaps you've
heard from him by now.

We had to catch a train from
Washington at about 5 p.m. for
New York and through to Montreal;
how we managed to make it I
really couldn't say, but make it
we did, and arrived at Montreal
next morning. We had a full
day there, but I'm afraid I was
not very much impressed; Ottawa



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seems a far prettier town, beside which Montreal is drab and colourless. Of course, the tail-end of winter is a bad time for sight-seeing in any town, but Washington - the most beautiful city for parks and buildings I've yet seen or hope to see - came through with flying colours. Even New York, for all its size, is clean and almost quiet compared with what you might expect from traffic noises, while Chicago on the other hand is dominated by the roar and rattle of the "L", or elevated railway, which throws its shadow all around the "loop" - but the loop is no new place to you, father. Detroit, of course, is unique in that it is the centre of so huge an industrial area; you should just see those

vast new factories - and the old ones, too - which will very soon now be ready for flat-out production, but otherwise it is a normal enough big city. But you should see the cars! They are everywhere, in their thousands, and 99% of them are new. Manufacture of cars has practically stopped now, though, and the factories are making tanks, 'planes and so on.

Well, I think I started rambling round about Montreal - to continue from there, we caught a train at night and ended up at a "Y. Depot", as they call them here, on the east coast; just two nights and $1\frac{1}{2}$ days there saw us on board, and now 24 hours later we are quite a distance out at sea. Our quarters are far from being as palatial as those we had on the trip to Canada, but they will be O.K.; though even an officer can't sit up in bed in a hurry without coming into sharp contact with the bottom of the bunk above.



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Next day a new camera sort of came my way (yes - another one, and this time one I'm going to hold on to) and in the morning I went on a tour of Rockefeller Center, truly another wonderful place. It's a huge block, or really two blocks, of modern buildings which combine business with art in such a way that you'll find roof gardens way up in the clouds. Underground passages connect all the buildings and the world's fastest elevator whisks you up and down in a 70-storey building at 1400 feet a minute. Some travelling.

At night there was a cosmopolitan party in a posh home in seventieth street; Ruth Draper, the monologist and entertainer, was there - remember her New Zealand tour? A couple

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of hours there and I moved on to a tour of the National Broadcasting studios, where I was televised - just into another studio, of course - and saw my first television camera and receiving set. It is terrifically hot under the battery of lights you have to face in front of the "camera," but it was a lot of fun. On our tour we struck it doubly lucky, as Madeleine Carroll was to broadcast on the "Cavalcade of America" programme, and we saw the show from end to end. It spoilt the illusion considerably to observe that the hero looked about fifty, while the tough father was more like thirty; Madeleine Carroll, however, looks very much as she does on the screen, and the whole thing was very interesting. Both of you, I think, would have enjoyed yourselves finding out how things are done "on the air."



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We were very amused at the Americans because while we were in the States the universal opening for a conversation of any kind was, "you boys are kinda long ways from home, aren't you," as against the Canadian equivalent, "How do you like our winter?" Honestly, not a great many of the people we met could tell us much about New Zealand, and very few really knew exactly where it was. However, their own country is such a big and busy one that perhaps they can't be blamed. News of the Pacific side of the war is making some of them look at the maps a little more, but usually the only chance we had of identifying New Zealand in their minds was to mention Australia.

If you see the Galliers, Tell

Rose that Kitchener¹⁴, Ontario, where
her pen-pal lives, was off the main
line and I couldn't get around to see
her. However, a friend of Gill's in
Chicago came from Kitchener and
knew the Fountain Flower Shop there,
so she'll take a message next time
she goes home.

To think I told you about New
York without even mentioning that
I'd been to the top of the Empire
State, the World's Tallest Building
(in capital letters). It is 102 stories
high, and is a great structure.
It's a grand view, but sad to say
cameras were not allowed up there.
However, I took about 100 photos on
the trip, with some very satisfactory
results, too; but unless I can find
some sure way of getting them
home I think I had better hang
on to them rather than risk their
going down, as I'm afraid some
of the previous lots must have done.
In that very hurried note
before we sailed I told you that



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Three letters of yours had turned up, I think; well, the next day there was one from Joan - no. 15, meaning that at least three of hers, and perhaps four, are delayed or missing altogether, and there's a gap of two in your letters as well. I guess it can't be helped, but it's a bad business since we probably won't get mail until we have been over the other side quite a while.

Well, that's really a very brief survey of a jolly good trip, but it is the best one can do in a letter. I know Dad is going to ask me if I have seen this and that and the other thing, and probably the answer will have to be "no," because we covered such a vast amount of territory that we couldn't do it all thoroughly in about twelve days. Take a look at one

of those National Geographic maps, and if you trace out the route I have described you will see what I mean. It was lots of fun, though, and an education in itself. I can only say again, as I have done before, that the real Americans are wonderfully hospitable - and that doesn't disparage in any way the Canadians, who also gave us a good time during our four months there.

I was thinking over the record of the twelve of us who left Taiari the other day; one was held up at Auckland with foot trouble, one broke his wrist at Saskatoon and went back a course, one smashed up while flying, one came bottom in ground school and three came 1st, 2nd and 5th; one got a bad dose of flu and three got commissions. So there's a record for you.

That's plenty for this time, I guess, so this is Pilot-Officer Christensen signing off.

Love from
Arnold G.