Letter to parents on son’s initiation into the Armed Forces

Dear Parents:

You are to be congratulated on your son’s entrance into the Armed Forces of the United States, and on his being in the Air Corps. We realize that you are very much interested in what your son will be doing while he is here, and this letter is being written to tell you of the activities in which he will be engaged.

The Air Corps in training officers believes that there are several things which should be emphasized: character, physical fitness and professional proficiency.

Character, we believe, is the most important thing which a soldier can have. By this is meant a strict sense of honor, which requires that all men be positively fair with themselves and their fellow-men. In furthering this development of character, we have what is called the Honor System which places your son upon his honor as far as his own actions are concerned, believing not only are we training him to be a better officer, but that this is what you would have us do.

Also, this will be of great benefit after the war is over and your son has returned to civil life to take up the duties of a civilian. Chaplains of representative faiths will minister to the spiritual needs of your son.

Physical well-being is furthered by having a very carefully planned diet, daily wholesome exercises, and regular hours of sleep.

Professional training consists of a study of those things which will enable him to conduct himself properly after he becomes an officer.

Naturally, your son will miss you as you will miss him. Of course, you want to help your son in every possible way, and indeed you can help him more than, perhaps, anyone else. Nothing can give him as much pleasure as receiving a letter from you. Especially will it be of assistance to him if you write encouraging letters, telling him that you are proud that he is in the Armed Forces. Should he have a tendency to become home-sick during the period of adjustment, nothing would help him more than a letter from you encouraging him and letting him know that you, too, are brave and that everything is all right back home. This will give him that
extra spark of inspiration that only you can give. Please do not tell him of family problems unless necessary.

Unfortunately, certain military information cannot be divulged and we seek your cooperation in not asking your son about the strength of various units and movements of troops. By doing so you are helping us a great deal.

We sincerely hope that this training will be of great benefit to your son. We shall do everything we can to help him. If we all work together as fellow Americans we shall come out all right, still having those things that we hold dear.

Yours truly,

Graham Kirkpatrick
Major, Air corps,
Commanding Officer

War Department’s letter to Evelyn Smith on Luther Smith’s MIA status

19 October 1944

Mrs. Evelyn L. Smith
341 West 23rd Street
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Mrs. Smith:

This letter is to confirm my recent telegram in which you were regretfully informed that your son, Staff Sergeant, Luther e. Smith, Jr., 14,076,888, Air Corps, has been reported missing in action over Italy since 23 September 1944.

I know that added distress is caused by failure to receive more information or details. Therefore, I wish to assure you that at any time additional information is received it will be transmitted to you without delay, and, if in the meantime no additional information is received, I will again communicate with you at the expiration of three months. Also, it is the policy of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces upon receipt of the “Missing Air Crew Report” to convey to you any details that might be contained in that report.

The term “missing in action” is used only to indicate that the whereabouts or status of an individual is not immediately known. It is not intended to convey the impression that the case is closed. I wish to emphasize that every effort is exerted continuously to clear up the status of our personnel. Under war conditions this is a difficult task as you must readily realize. Experience
has shown that many persons reported missing in action are subsequently reported as prisoners of war, but as this information is furnished by countries with which we are at war, the War Department is helpless to expedite such reports. However, in order to relieve financial worry, Congress has enacted Legislation which continues in force the pay, allowances and allotments to dependents of personnel being carried in a missing status.

Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt sympathy during this period of uncertainty.

Sincerely yours,

J.A Ulio
Major General
The Adjunct General

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*Headquarters, Army Air Forces letter to Mrs. Smith- Update on Luther’s MIA status*

October 31, 1944

Mrs. Evelyn L. Smith
341 West 23rd Street
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Mrs. Smith:

I am writing you with reference to your son, Staff Sergeant Luther E. Smith, who was reported by The Adjunct General as missing in action over Italy since September 23rd.

Further information has been received which indicates that Sergeant Smith was a crew member of a B-25 (Mitchell) bomber which participated in a bombardment mission over Italy on September 23rd. Full details are not available, but the report indicates that during this mission at about 10:45 a.m., in the vicinity of Altare, Italy, our planes were subjected to enemy antiaircraft fire and your son’s bomber was seen under control entering a cloud, and was neither observed nor contacted after that time. Inasmuch as the crew members of accompanying planes were unable to account for the disappearance of this aircraft, these facts constitute all the information presently obtainable.

Due to necessity for military security, it is regretted that the names of those who were in the plane and the names and addresses of their next of kin may not be furnished at the present time.
Please be assured that a continuing search by land, sea, and air is being made to discover the whereabouts of our missing personnel. As our armies advance over enemy occupied territory, special troops are assigned to this task, and all agencies of the government in every country are constantly sending in details which aid us in bringing additional information to you.

Very sincerely,

E.A Bradunas
Major, A.G.D.,
Chief, Notification Branch,
Personal Affairs Division,
Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel.

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Headquarters, Army Air Forces letter to Mrs. Smith about crew’s next of kin

December 27th, 1944

Mrs. Evelyn L. Smith
341 West 23rd Street
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Mrs. Smith:

For reasons of military security it has been necessary to withhold the names of the air crew members who were serving with your son at the time he was reported missing.

Since it is now permissible to release this information, we are inclosing a complete list of names of the crew members.

The names and addresses of the next of kin of the men are also given in the belief that you may desire to correspond with them.

Sincerely yours,

Clyde V. Finter
Colonel, Air Corps
Chief, Personal Affairs Division
Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Personnel
INCLUDED: List of crew members & names & addresses of next of kin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Next of Kin Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Lt.</td>
<td>Frederick L. Van Dien</td>
<td>Mrs. Gertrude L. Van Dien, (Mother) 531 Pontiac Street, Rochester, Indiana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Lt.</td>
<td>Lawrence J. Dopp</td>
<td>Mrs. Stella D. Balsley, (Mother) 4635 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/O</td>
<td>Edward J. McAvoy</td>
<td>Mr. Charles W. McAvoy, (Father) 1303 Edanola Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/Sgt.</td>
<td>Luther E. Smith</td>
<td>Mrs. Evelyn Lois Smith, (Mother) 341 West 23rd Street, Jacksonville, Florida.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt.</td>
<td>Theodore Eyl</td>
<td>Mrs. Flossie b. Medlock, (Mother) Route Number Two, Box 87-A, Denver, Colorado.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt.</td>
<td>Elmer T. Short</td>
<td>Mrs. Blanche V. Short, (Mother) 402 Loockerman Street, Dover, Delaware.</td>
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*Mrs. Blanche V. Short’s letter to Mrs. Evelyn Smith*

Dover, Dela.
Dec. 27th 1944.

Mrs. Evelyn Lois Smith,
241 West 23rd St;
Jacksonville, Fla.

Dear Mrs. Smith:

Our sons were on the same plane, reported missing in action over Italy, since Sept. 23rd. The War Dept. has furnished the names and addresses of the next of kin and so I thought I’d like to write to you and compare the reports. I received my telegram on Fri. Oct. 13th about 11:30 a.m. And so you must know was an awful shock to me. I have received three reports from the war dept. The second stated they were sent on a mission Sept. 23rd about 10:45 a.m. and the planes were subjected to antiaircraft fire, and their plane when last seen was still under control, entering a cloud over Altare, Italy. My next report, dated Dec. 26th stated their plane was
damaged and dropped out of formation and when last seen was proceeding south toward the base, but did not return. The place was damaged immediately after bombing a bridge east of Villanova Monferrato, Italy. This last report to me was so discouraging but I’m still living in hopes for his and their only chance. I am a widow, 44, with two sons in service. I work here in Dover at the International Latex Corp. engaged now in war time work. My other son is 19 and in the Navy stationed in Cuba. Elmer was 21 – July 10th and is about the time he left the states. This last letter was dated Sept. 15th and about all he wrote was of Christmas. He and his family of five, as he called them, meaning his crew members, were talking of Xmas the other night and that you could tell by the expressional on their faces, that their minds were 3000 miles away but they had decided to have a Xmas tree even if it were no longer than a twig, so in one of his Xmas boxes I mailed a small artificial tree and a few unbreakable ornaments. I have received four letters back that I had wrote to him in Sept. also the first package the mailed. I have had lots of hopes for them to turn up as prisoners but some days I get so worried and blue. I would like to hear from you, and I expect to write to all his crew members families’. Would you like to exchange pictures of our sons with me? Hoping to hear from you soon and please lets pray for their safety and God’s protection.

I remain,
Mrs. Blanche V. Short

Mary Anne Van Dien’s (Van Dien’s sister) letter to crew members’ next of kin

TO THE FAMILY OF:
F/O Edward J. McAvoy
2nd. Lieut. Lawrence E. Dopp
S/Sgt. Luther E. Smith
Sgt. Theodore Eye
Sgt. Elmer T. Short
 members of Fred Van Dien’s crew)

I am the sister of the pilot of the plane on which your son or husband or brother, what the case may be, went down on September 23. Up until yesterday, my family and I did not know the names or addresses of the crew members…yesterday I received word from a ground crewman at another base on Corsica who had been doing some investigating for me…he had been able to get some information and wrote it all to me November 9, but said as it had to go through military channels, I would no doubt not receive it yet. To date, I have not received it. In his letter yesterday, however, he was able to give me the names and home addresses of Fred’s crew, so I am writing all of you to tell you what information we have been able to gather so far, and if you know anything, would you please write either me or my mother…my mother gets all the official word and she lives at Rochester, Indiana.
We have received a letter from the Ass’t Chief of Air Staff of the 310th Group, and a letter from a Brigadier General Witsell in Washington in response to a letter I wrote to the Adjunct, Captain Lindeberg at the 310th Group…Captain Lindeberg also wrote me, however, as I understand it, until three months are up, no one can, write anything in detail, and as the three months were up last Saturday, perhaps we will now hear more information.

I have also been in contact with an Intelligence Officer in a fighter outfit based at the same bas as the 310th Group, and yesterday received word from him that he contacted the Chaplain of the 310th Group, so I will hear from that source soon, I hope…this officer is now in France, and so cannot do anything personally, but knows all the military angles and, therefore, no doubt thinks the Chaplain would be able to get the most information for the families.

I will quote you the letter received from Brigadier General Witsell and if you desire copies of the other two official letters received, I will be glad to send them to you also. The official letter from Washington, however, contains the most information.

I visited my brother down at Columbia, South Carolina last April, but do not believe I met any of the crew members altho I do believe I might have met Lieut. Dopp, who I believe was the bombardier…am I right? Fred should have given us the crews’ home addresses, but I guess you think something like this can never happen to you. From the new we have received so far, we are quite encouraged, however, and believe we will hear that the crew are Prisoners of War or with the Italian underground. I will now quote you the letter from Washington:

Washington, D.C
December 2, 1944

Dear Mrs. VanDien:

I have received for reply a letter of 31 October 1944, addressed to Captain Lindeberg, by your daughter, in which she requests further information concerning your son, Second Lieutenant Frederick L. VanDien, who has been missing in action over Italy since 23 September 1944.

Further information has been received in the War Department which indicates that Lieutenant VanDien was the pilot of a B-25-J type aircraft which took part in a bombing mission on 23 September 1944, from Corsica to the road bridges east of Galliate, Italy. Shortly after the bomb run had been completed the formation encountered intense and accurate flak. As a result, one engine of Lieutenant VanDien’s plane sustained damage. The flight leader gave him directions to the coast and kept in contact with him by radio. About four miles from the coast Lieutenant Vandien’s lane was seen to go into cumulus clouds at an altitude of approximately 5,000 feet and was not seen again. The flight stayed in the general area for about five minutes and then spread to search the water on the way home, but were unable to locate the plane.

I am requesting the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces to furnish you the names and addresses of the emergency addresses of the crew members associated with your son on 23 September 1944, if the information is available and if security regulations permit.
The disposition you request of the packages addressed to your son is most considerate but in accordance with existing regulations, all mail that cannot be delivered is returned to the sender.

I realize how much it would mean to you to hear from your son’s commanding officer and I wish to explain that sometimes the commanding officer or Chaplain find time to write to the families of our military personnel who become casualties, even though it is not required.

My sympathy is with you and the other members of the family in this period of anxiety and it is my fervent hope that good news of Lieutenant VanDien’s whereabouts will soon be forthcoming.

Sincerely yours,
Edward F. Witsell
Brigadier General,
Acting the Adjutant General”

If you care to call me, I live at the Phil B, Steigerwald residence here in Fort Wayne and my phone number is H-2769…I am Secretary to the Purchasing Agent of The Wayne Pump Company, phone number A-7411, ext. 17 or 19….if any further word is received, either I or my mother will get in touch with you, and we ask that you please do the same. Here’s hoping we get good news soon.

Most sincerely,
Mary Anne VanDien

Mrs. Stella Balsey's letter to Mrs. Smith

Hollywood, California
Jan. 3, 1945

My dear Mrs. Smith,

Having received the names and addresses of the fellows who were on the plane with my son (Lt. Lawrence J. Dopp) I am taking the privilege of writing you. In the hope you may have received some news other than what we received from the War Dept.

My Son was the Bombardier Navigator on the plane and had trained with Lou, the pilot in Columbia, S.C and so far as I know the crew was the same as when they left here, except for the Co-pilot. He had received a plane and crew of his own after several missions. He was my son’s room, or bunk mate however, and had gone on the same mission.
We received three letters from my son’s pals. His roommate and former Co-pilot wrote all the information he was allowed to at that time. I shall quote in part from his letter.

“The last time we saw Larry’s – (my son) plane it was on single engine and fell behind and below our formation. We were on our way home from a bombing mission over N. Italy and were still over enemy territory. The plane appeared to be under control, and from all appearances nothing was wrong except the lost power of one engine, all this would attempt to make a forced landing. The pilot was capable, and, in the event a landing was made, I think we will hear from “Larry” in time as a prisoner of war. Keep faith and don’t lose hope. End of quote –

If you have any further information will you please pass it on to the rest of us? I am sending a copy of this to the others.

Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Stella D. Balsley

Mrs. Blanche Short’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Dover, Dela
Jan 14th, 1945

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I have received your letter also your son’s pictures, and a nice looking boy too, he looks so happy. May God bless him wherever he is, and may we soon hear from them. I can almost put myself in your place with your son and husband both away. Do you know where he is going? And does that leave you alone? I am alone now with my two sons in service and I’m telling you at times its mighty lonesome. My son in the navy was home in April so he should soon be getting another leave, I hope. They were both home at the same time and did the enjoy it. And I was so proud of them. They were both good boys and had grand dispositions. I’m mailing you a picture taken in Columbia S.C if your son is on it, let me know. I’ll send you a better one later as I’m having some made. It was her son and two other boys. I also received a letter from Mrs. Balsley of Hollywood, Cal. Her son was the bombardier-navigator on the plane. The co-pilot who had trained with them at Columbia was given a plane and crew of his own. He was her son’s bunk mate and was also on the same mission that day. He wrote her a letter giving what information he could. His letter in quote: “The last time we saw your son’s plane (Lt. Dopp) it was on single engine and fell behind and below our formation. We were on our way home from a bombing mission over N. Italy and were still over enemy territory. The plane appeared to be under control and from all appearances nothing was wrong except the lost power of one engine, all this would indicate that the pilot would attempt a forced landing, and, in the event a landing was made, I think we will hear from the crew prisoners of war. Keep faith and don’t lose hope. End of quote.
I’m writing this from her letter as she might not write it to you, as it was so encouraging to me. Please keep writing if you get any more news and I’ll do the same. May God Bless you and our sons and all our boys out there.

I remain,
Mrs. Blanche Short.

Mrs. Flossie Medlock’s letter to Mrs. Smith
Denver Colo.
Jan. 14th, 1945

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I was very glad to hear from you. And thanks for the picture of your sons, and I will have one made from one of Theodore’s pictures taken when he was home the last time, that was one year ago this month, I also want to thank you for being so nice to him when he visited your home before going over sea’s, he did not have enough time to come home he wrote and told me how very nice you folks were to him but did not give me your address, however I did know your son’s name as he often wrote about him, I sincerely hope they are together and safe, at first I did not think there was a chance that they were alive, but since I have been able to pull myself together, and think more calmly, and since getting the letters from Miss Van Diem, and Mrs. Balsley, I have begun to hope, I did not know, either, that their plane had been hit, and seems to me that they would have bailed out if the pilot seen he could make an emergency landing.

My husband is over sea’s also, he is somewhere in the So. Pacific, I have two other sons, but Theodore’s father was killed when he was two years old and I have had to be both father and mother to him so we were very close and dear to each other, he has always been a very good boy and very considerate to me, I have gotten all my letters back, written as far back as Sept. 12th, and that worries me as he surely had not gotten any letters from home recently, reading my letter over I see I have made several mistakes but guess you will have to excuse it, as I always get emotional when I write or talk about Theodore, seems like I cannot realize that this has happened to me although you always know you can expect such news in war time, it is a terrible shock.

Should I get any news from Theodore or about him I will let you know at once, and I know you will write me should you hear from your son. I too am praying they are all safe and that we will soon hear from them.

I remain as ever,
Mrs. Flossie Medlock.
Mary Anne Van Dein’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Dear Mrs. Smith:

Thanks so much for your letter + the picture. I am sending both on to my mother, also a negative of a snapshot I took of Fred she will have developed + send to you – I thought perhaps it would be better to read your letter altho I will keep all of you informed on whatever I hear – it will simplify letters for you too – Mrs. Short sent a picture of five boys one of which I am clear is your son- she no doubt sent one, too.

You will hear from my mother soon + me as soon as I hear anything – I was so glad to hear from you + please feel free to write anytime + keep your hope up – I still feel quite hopeful.

The sgt. In the ground crew I mentioned has contacted his mother that he doubts if I ever receive his letter written November 9 + what he has found out will have to wait until he returns to the U.S – a mandatory precaution, I suppose, but I’m wondering what he found out – am going to get busy on that angel. I guess I should have written a letter after all!

As ever,
Mary Anne

Mrs. Stella Balsley’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Dear Mrs. Smith:

Am sorry to have taken such a long time in answering your letter.

The 20th of last Oct. I had a major operation and seemed to be getting along straight from some time but had to go back for a minor operation in Jan. Am trying not to be too active now for some time.

Had some copies of a photo my son sent my daughter when he was in S.C, as I didn’t have the negative they made one. But my son had written on the photo and I thought it would be blocked out. But it wasn’t. That’s why the writing on photo.

My daughter was married the 19th of Feb. to a young fellow she went to high school with and who just returned home on Feb. 3, from his 9th Air Force Base in Belgium. He is a P-38 pilot, and had put in his 200 combat hours. Shot down 6 German planes. Did bombing and strafing.
Saw most of his pals killed. Out of 2000 of his gang only 5 came back, he being one of them. He was white and nervous when he first arrived. He wanted to get married right away and just the two of them get away by themselves. It was a very private wedding in our church, only his family and ours attended. She carried her brother’s prayer-book. Somehow it seemed to represent him.

They are now at the Santa-Monica, Calif Redistribution Station. The wives may live there with them free. The A.A.F has taken over all the Beach Hotels there.

My husband age 37 was inducted into the Army last week and is now stationed about 35 miles from here. So now I am alone. Oh! If we could only get some good news of our boys. We never did hear any more from George, the fellow who had trained as their copilot. Guess he must have had bad luck too.

On the 24th of Jan. I had the pleasure of meeting and having to determine the couple who was best man and bridesmaid at my son’s wedding in Columbia. My son always referred to him as “lucky” his name being Lt. Luckhaupt. He had just returned from Corsica and had written my daughter-in-law Ruth who was here with me, that he would be in Columbia, S.C on Jan. 12, hoped to see her then. So she rushed out and bought a bus ticket and left her on Jan. 9 arriving in Columbia on the 12th, saw he and his bride for two hours in the meantime while she was on the bus hurrying to come to see him, he had received his orders to report out here in Santa Monica, Cali only 15 miles from here. Isn’t that something? Here’s what I really want to tell you. He wasn’t in some Bomb. Grp. As our sons, but was on a B-35 and went on some of the same targets. He left for overseas last April 20th, so he had about 30 missions in when our boys arrived over there. He was one of the very best pals my son ever had. And they were so happy to meet in Corsica they both were overcome with emotion. He was based 8 miles from my son. A bombardier-navigator and he had been so busy that he and my son hadn’t seen one another for a week before they were missing. And it was a blow to him too. He tried to learn all he could but could find no one who could really give him any definite information. Not even as much as we got. George being at a rest camp in Cairo at the time. But on Nov. 10, Lucky’s plane was hit same as our boys plane. One engine out the other damaged. Near Modena, Italy. The co-pilot who happened to be a Capt., and on his last flight gave the order to “get out of here” Lucky said he was the first one out; they were lead ships and had a crew of 7 men. He was so busy on his way down, that he didn’t even see any of the others bail out. He came down about 50 miles behind the lines in an orchard full of trees. Said he come down as pretty as he could be, right between the trees and not a scratch on him. By that time there was a large group of people-Italians gathered around him. He didn’t know what was going to happen to him. But he said one of them ran up to him, grabbed him by the hand and saying something he couldn’t understand, started pulling him. So Lucky thought here’s where I get turned over to the Germans. (This was a boy about 16) He took him to another young fellow who put him on his bicycle and riding behind Lucky, he went as fast as he could to a (secret man). Here he spent 2 nights. He was told how to get back through the lines; this was all in mountains 8000 ft high. So in 17 days he was back in Corsica. He told me a great deal more but am trying to make it short. It was his 57 mission. Once they are shot down even if they do get back like he did, they are sent home or transferred to another front. He is now in Midland, Texas going to Instructions school. Gee! He was nervous. I had him take a pencil and mark on the map about where Galliate is as it wasn’t
on my map. He said that really was a lot target. That it would be hard to say as to the fate of our boys. But since none of them have been heard from they are very like P.O.W. Oh! Yes all of his crew except the pilot got back to base a few days after he did. Galliate is much farther N. than Modena. He said even if they are still in N. Italy he doesn’t think they could walk back as he did. Because we have blown up all the river bridges. But he said he really thinks they are all alive and we will be hearing from them. He said he had plenty to eat. Just the idea of keeping away from the G. patrol. That we may not hear until the war in 6 months Is over, as everything is so disrupted. He will keep praying and hoping.

Yours truly,
Mrs. Stella Balsley

(Over)
I noticed your name is Evelyn Lois
My daughter’s name is Evelyn Louise.

Mrs. Gertrude Van Dien’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Rochester, Ind.
Mar. 26 -1945

My dear Mrs. Smith,-

I hope you will forgive me for waiting so long to write to you. My daughter, Mary Ann, sent me the lovey letter you wrote her, in answer to her letter to you. She wrote the first letter to all the mothers of my sons’ crew, for me, then – I wanted to write to each of you- I don’t know, but hope she acknowledged your letter to her in some way – but she is such a busy girl and I know she expected me to answer it. We appreciated your letter and your sons’ picture so very much, he is a fine-looking boy and I wanted to send you my son, Frederick’s picture in return- and this is the one reason I’ve waited so long to write to you. Of all the pictures we have of Frederick – there was only one where he is alone. My daughter sent me the film to have some prints made from it – I’ve wait two months to get the pictures and they still are not here – that’s the reason I haven’t written you sooner, kept waiting hoping each week they would be here. The studio here sends the films out of town to be finished – I was down two weeks ago and they promised to check-up on the film and didn’t – and I was there again Friday of last week and they promised again to check-up on it – so, I may get it yet – but I have my doubts, for I presume it is lost – should I get it later on, will send it to you at once, Mrs. Short sent me her son’s pictures also – I had an extra picture I sent her in return, but I only had the one and was in hopes I could get a picture of my son for each one of the mothers.

I was in Detroit almost four weeks, with my married daughter, she was in hospital for an operation and I was with her until she could be and around again. While there, I rec. such a nice letter from the adj. general regarding my son. He said he was so in hopes he could have good
news for me, as he knew what a terrible strain we were under as the months went by, but as yet – no further word had been rec. by the War Dept. And assured me that I would be notified at once, should they rec. any word. We must be patient and feel “no news is good news,” and pray harder than ever before, for the safe return of our loved ones.

Mary Anne wrote me a week ago, that she had another letter from Captain Lindeberg who is based at Corsica, telling her he didn’t believe there would be much information of any kind coming through, now that the end of the war with Germany is insight, that we won’t know anything until it is over and the boys are released over there – for some reason they seem to be holding on to No. Italy and we must hope and pray our boys are there and will be released and will get to come home. I trust you hear regularly from your husband, and that you are in good health now. I only have two sons – both are overseas, my married son is in Hawaii, he is in the Post Office in the Navy and I am so thankful for that – I have two sons and two daughters. I am a widow living alone; I had been working at War Wor, but had to give it up last Jan. and rest. I am feeling better now, and hope to start working again soon. Hoping and praying we’ll have good news very soon.

I am,
Sincerely,
Mrs. Gertrude VanDien

Mrs. Gertrude Van Dien’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Rochester, Ind.
April 2, 1945

My Dear Mrs. Smith,

I was so very glad to receive your nice letter in answer to the one I was so long in getting off to you – letters from the boys’ mothers are a real comfort to me and, I trust and believe our prayers for one another will help also. I do pray so earnestly that you will hear your son is safe, as you hope you will, before the medals are presented to you at Camp Blauding – I know how proud and happy you will be to receive them – especially if you can know in advance your son is safe. As soon as you find out, I would like so much to know of the incident in connection of your son being awarded them. Enclosed you will find the picture of my son Frederick – I finally got them just last Saturday, it isn’t a very good picture of him, but as I said before, the only one we have of him alone – this one was taken as we were leaving my daughter Mary Ann in Ft. Wayne – when Frederick was home on his furlough after graduating and receiving his silver wings we visited both of my daughters- while visiting my older daughter in Detroit – she took a whole film of pictures of Frederick and the rest of us and later was heart sick to find the slide on her camera had been moved over to time exposure and not one of them was any good. Many Ann visited Frederick at Columbia S.C a year ago at Easter time and took several pictures- but all were group pictures – however, not one of them were of him and his crew, and how I would love to have a
picture of the entire crew– I don’t believe one of us have a picture of ours sons’ with their crew—
maybe they weren’t allowed to take them together, I don’t know. Yes, dear Mrs. Smith, I can
realize how much harder it must be for you, who only have the one son, and how I do wish we
weren’t all so far from each other and could meet and talk to one another, “in person,” and I hope
the time will come, when our sons’ are with us once again and we can be happy and can have the
pleasure of meeting sometime, somewhere—it would be nice to meet your friends in Detroit,
though I probably won’t visit there very soon again, especially if I start working again soon, as I
hope to. My daughter is gaining right alone, and my whole family constantly help me through
this trying ordeal—and I hope my letters will help you too just as your letters help me. It is best
for one to be busy, but not to do things that are too much for us. I trust you will be able to go
back to your work soon, I feel sure it will help. Yes, indeed I’ll let you know if I hear anything
of our loved ones and know you will let me know too—hoping to hear from you again.

I am,
sincerely,

Gertrude Van Dien

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Mrs. McAvoy’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Lakewood, Ohio
May 19th, 1945

Dear Mrs. Smith:

Our son Ted was a member of your son’s crew. On Monday we received a cable directly from
him, and we are hoping you received one from your boy.

This is what Ted said “still alright. Sorry you have had to worry these seven months. I’ll see
you soon.” They tell us that as it was a direct cable from our son, he was not a prisoner. Had he
been the War Department or the Red Cross would have sent the word.

They will not tell us where it came from and we are praying we will hear from him again.

It is our earnest wish that you have had word from your boy. If so, will you let us know? They
have been long terrible months, and thank God the war in Europe is over.

Sincerely yours,
Olive McAvoy
Excerpt from: Mrs. Stella Balsley’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Hollywood, Cali
May 27, 1945

My dear Mrs. Smith:

Received your letter and was so glad to hear from you again.

No, I have not received any news at all, about my son. Mrs. McAvoy must be the only one who has been so fortunate, but it was wonderful to know that one of the crew had been heard from. And I truly do believe that we will all hear very soon now. I shall let you and the others know as soon as I hear and I am sure you will do the same. We all know what it means to have any news…

Sincerely yours,
Stella Balsley

Mrs. Stella Basley’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Hollywood, Cali.
May 28, 1945

My dear Mrs. Smith:

I just wrote a long letter but will make this one very short as I am writing all the mothers of the crew and it’s late now. But I had to write you the good news and hope you too have received some good news. Here it is.

“The Secretary of War desires me to inform you that your son Lt. L. Dopp returned to Military Control in Italy May 8

- J. A Ulio”

So my dear I am overjoyed. Hoping to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Stella Basley
My dear Mrs. Smith,

I do hope you have received good news of your son by now. We have received 5 letters from Larry.

He writes that he cannot tell us anything that took place those 8 months, now about their going down.

He is questioned all the time by the Intelligence Officers. That is a bit of red tape he must go through. Then when he returns to the States he will go to Wash. D. D where he will report to the Intelligence Sections for these days. They will okay what he may tell or may not. He is now under a Security Secret pledge to the Gov’t. – three of his letters are V-mail, 2 regular air mail letters.

I will tell you what he has written of himself.

1. He was never a prisoner, but an “Evader of the enemy”
2. That his parachute saved his life.
3. He was awarded the “Purple Heart” as he was shot through the left hand the day they went down/
4. That he was in the Maritime Alps in N. Italy not far from France.
5. He is now in Naples waiting to be assigned to a ship (boat) to come home. On leaving Wash. D.C he will report to a base here in Calif. For further orders and a 21 day leave.

I am sorry this is all the news I have to give you. Maybe it will help until you do have news, of your son. I received the regular 3 mo. form letter from the War Dept. just three days before I received “my good news” so I imagine all the mothers received the same.

Please let me hear from you as soon as you receive any word of your son.

Sincerely yours,
Stella Balsley
Mrs. Gertrude Van Dien’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Rochester, Indiana
June 20 – 1945

My dear Mrs. Smith,

The enclosed clipping will tell you the news I received of my son from the War Dept. Monday evening, June 18th. I hope and pray your news will be good news. I just can’t believe it’s true and will have to have the best proof before I will believe it. If it is true, then it’s God’s will, not mine, be done and I will try my best to be brave and to be a good soldier, as I know my darling boy would want me to be.

Hoping you will receive the best of good news about your son.

I am, sincerely
Gertrude Van Dien

Leila P. Dorm’s letter to Mrs. Smith

Ninety Six, S.C.

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Sarah sent your letter on to me and the newspaper clipping. We had wondered what became of “Smithy” as R. called him. I am so sorry that his fate was the same as Richard’s. I was glad to get in touch with you as our sons were such close friends. He was Richard’s best friend and you know how close that makes me feel to you. I had not met your son but had heard Sarah and Richard speak of him so often that I knew him anyway. We gave R. a little picnic in the park in Columbia not long before he left there and your son was in the hospital at the time. He let R. have his car to come over and be with us. We had told R. to invite him but as he was sick R. brought another radio-man along. So you see we all know just how you feel as we have the same son now. It is so hard to see their pals come back and to know that our precious boys can’t. Was Eddie your only child? I had to cry when I looked at his handsome, smiling face and read the writings. Our son was killed in a crash Sept. 7, 1944 on his 16th mission. It seems rather strange that they both went on their same mission and in the same way. I am going to enclose a letter written by the only survivor of Richard’s plane to the mother of Lt. Hopper who was killed on the same plane. He was Mrs. Hopper’s only child and she is a widow. I have seen her twice. She is a very sweet lady and so deeply hurt. I also hear from another mother whose son was with R. I am thinking of you often and remembering you at the throne of grace. No earthly help can comfort us but we can lean on Him who cares. I have poems I want to send you later. They helped me. Please return the letter as it is the only one I have.

With all our sympathy,
Leila P. Dorm