

August 15, 1944

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hildeth,

as Major's squadron commander and close friend, I am writing this letter to spare you any unnecessary grief and anxiety. You have already been notified by the War Dept. that your son is missing in action. I know how brief their messages can be even though it is a question of necessity. At the same time, I like to feel that I may describe the action a little less formally.

The information concerning Major's mishap may be limited, but only because of censorship and through no desire on my part. Our group was assigned to destroy a very important target in Germany. On its way to the target, the group became separated from our fighter escort because of bad weather. Alone and without a moment's hesitation, our group began its bomb run in the face of some 200 enemy fighters. Against such overwhelming odds, there was absolutely no possibility of escaping without the loss of some airplanes.

When I first counted the returning airplanes, I suffered the same anguish that must have been yours upon receiving the message from Washington — you see, none of my airplanes came back. However, when we consolidated the eyewitness accounts, I learned that the sky in the immediate vicinity of my squadron was filled with parachutes. Since then, I've had high hopes of seeing all my men again soon or after the war has ended. I'm sure you will agree we have every reason to believe that Major is alive and well although he may be a prisoner of war.

In the event I finish my tour of duty before the war is over, I should consider it a privilege to be welcomed into your home. In the meantime, if there is anything further I can do to help, please feel free to call on me at any time. Could you kindly pass this information on to Major's wife, Annie, for me? Thank you.

Sincerely,
Fred D. Ascani.

P.S. Major is one of the best formation pilots I have ever seen.

AIR
MAIL