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SEP 1

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Hi all

Its been a long time since I wrote, I guess you know why it sure took a while to get here, but I made it.

We ^{Germany} had so many pictures taken lately that I couldn't count them all and today we will still have more pictures and interviews by radio & T.V. after chow and after all of this we will be interviewed by the Civil Aeronautics board which are some very important people.

I will try to tell you exactly what happened, this way you will be able to get a general idea of what it was like.

As you know we took off at Ft. Dix on Sunday morning and all was well and good so we landed at New Foundland to refuel, we stayed there for about 40 minutes and then started off for Frank-

put Germany, again all was well and good
 until we hit a storm so the pilot took
 the plane from 11,000 to 21,000 feet to try
 and get out of the storm, after we got to
 21,000 we cruised for about an hour
 and one engine on the right side started
 to shoot flames back past the wing
 when I was sitting and the ~~pilot~~ pilot
 stopped that engine, no one got scared
 because on these engines we could make
 it easy and then an engine on the left
 threw a prop off, so there were now 2 to
 keep us up, it was possible to make it
 with two engines but it would be hard
 to do, at this time some people got a little
 shaky and then when the pilot said it
 would take 5 to 6 hours to get to the nearest
 airport everybody just knew that we
 couldn't make it, all during this episode
 of the engines going out we were dipping

very rapidly, we flew about an hour and a half with two engines, during this time we put on our life vests and took off our ties, boots, and went through all the ditching procedures 2 times to make sure that all people knew what to do and when to do it, after this $1\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. we saw the white caps of the waves below and they were very close to us, at this time I knew it was now or never, or ^{swim} ~~swim~~ or die, suddenly the lights went out so we could get used to the dark and then the pilot said "Well it looks like we'll have to ditch", and so we all leaned forward and got set for the impact.

Then it happened the plane hit the water and all the seats tore loose and all went to the front of the plane, I was sitting on the right side and ended up on the left about 10 feet from where I was, sparks flew

and some women screamed, when I finally stopped the seat was on top of me, and the water was just gushing in from all over the plane, you could hear the waves hitting the side of the plane, ~~when~~ when I first tried to stand up my seat belt was still fastened and I had to sit back down and open it, by this time some people were out and others still in the pile of seats and trash, when I finally got my ^{senses} I noticed that the water was just above my knees and said to myself I've got to get out, so I stepped up on my seat and walked across most of the others, ~~and~~ I managed to get to the back door exit and saw 3 people waiting in ~~the~~ line to get out so after they got out when it was my turn the water was about 3 inches above the top of the door but when I was standing it

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it was up to my chest, I looked around and saw a few people behind me so I dove under the water and out the door, the rest followed me, when outside a wave took me under and I got a good drink of salt water then I inflated my life vest, the people were struggling all around yelling "Where is the raft?" then finally we saw a shadow so I swam towards it and there it was, 3 boys got me on and we helped others until no more were in sight, by the way it took about 5 to 6 min for the plane to sink but most of the people got out but did not make it to the raft, the plane ~~had~~ had 5 rafts but only one was found so you know somebody screwed up there.

After we all got on the raft and got calmed down a bit we tried to find out about who & how many were missing

The pilot had a flashlight with him but he could not see to use it because he was badly cut on the forehead and the blood dripped into his eyes and called there one of the boys used it Joe Hoyer from Ala.

As you read we had 54 people in a raft that was built for 25 and you can imagine all these people screaming with pain when someone tried to move, I stayed in one position for over 5 hours and the cramps were killing me, my legs were doubled under and that's the way I stayed until the actual rescue, to top all of our troubles the raft was upsidled down and all the safety equipment was underneath.

Just minutes after we got on the raft a plane was circling over us dropping flares and that gave us new hope of being rescued, as the plane passed

~~over~~ over us dropping flares the 5 or
6 hours passed and then we saw the
ships lights and we just knew that
we had it made, it took about 40
to 50 minutes ^{after seeing the ship} for the ship to get close enough
to throw life ropes for us to pull ourselves
to the ship, after getting along side of
the ship we tried to catch the ladders
which were put ~~of~~ over the side for
us but the waves kept taking us up
and down it took an hour to unload
the raft and get us all aboard ship,
when I was taken aboard they took me
to a cabin and ripped my clothes off and
wrapped a wool blanket around me then
put me in a bed, minutes later they brought
cups of rum and whiskey and poured it down
~~on~~ our throats. I slept about 7 to 8 hours
and got up, at this time I was so stiff
and sore it was almost impossible for

me to walk so then I just layed around, and kept thinking of the whole ordeal, it was quite frightening and I just could not pull myself together too well, I finally got out of bed in the afternoon and went to visit other people this is when I found out just how lucky I was, I had 3 burns and about 5 small bruises, when I saw some of my buddies it was hard to take, their legs had the ^{SKIN} skin burnt off and they had broken ankles and feet they were moaning and some crying I couldn't take it so I went back and went to bed. The next day the ones who could walk went to visit all of the survivors, and we all shook hands and were glad that we made it.

During the whole stay on the ship the crew slept in the engine room and in

the floors so that we had a bed to sleep in, I slept with a Lt. Colonel Dent his wife died in the raft.

When we got to Belgium there was about 150 photographers plus all the other people who were there to greet us. The school children got out of school and came to give us their regards, it was wonderful the way these people are. I just can't say how I felt, as soon as we got ashore they put us in a bus and took us to a hotel (the biggest one in Belgium) and the photographers met us there too, just minutes after arriving there we had a press conference and then we got shaves and took showers while this was going on they brought us our set of clothes, then we ate a big juicy steak with champagne and the waffles, after that the ship's crew came and we threw a wild party, the

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captain of the ship and his wife and daughter were there for more pictures.

Next day we boarded a plane for Frankfurt Germany it was a 1 hour flight and we made it, at the airport we were greeted again by brass and more photographers, we had a general pin the wings on us and shake hands, then we got in cars, 2 men to a car and went to the 261 replacement BtH. and started on our records.

We also had radio and T.V. interviews. Tomorrow Monday 31st we will have an interview by the Civil Aeronautics Board.

It's been quite an experience and I will never forget it, I was very close to losing my life, like a few others but I knew I just had to make it and I did, I'm just sorry that all of us could
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not be there together on board the ship.

Now, talking about Guamang, a few boys took us to a club last night and had champagne, beer and ~~and~~ women. Boy are these guys nice, I haven't seen an ugly one yet, they are all so good looking and is very easy to get along with, I think I am going to like it here.

I want you to tell everyone I am fine and thank them for everything they did for you, I bet it was quite a shock when you heard the news about the crash.

When you wish tell all about what happened back there.

There is one thing over here that really surprised me and that is the way they drive, they are crazy most of them go between 50 and 60 on congested roads.

and cities.

I am going to sign off now and get this ready to send, I still don't know my address yet I may get it before I mail this I don't know.

As far as I can see I am going to enjoy it over here, I have been out on the town two ~~one~~ nights and had women both times they were very good looking also.

How did you like me on TV and radio, that was worse than the whole airplane crash.

So long
Skip

Our interview today was 2 hours apiece with the Civil Aeronautics Board, and then we had an interview by the insurance co. for the Flying Tiger lines