

January 4, 1948

Ray Aiken  
Bellogg, Iowa

Dear Jay,

Your letter was received and I cannot answer soon enough-- I too, have been writing letters to various people about my brother who was killed in action on Okinawa, so you can see that I know exactly how you feel. I too can not uncover any information worth much.

I remember everything about my experience overseas, in combat, as if it happened yesterday so whatever I tell you is the truth and I tell you first that I remember the specific incident, for your brother Melvin's plane was directly in front of mine.

Lt. Goin's crew was a good one, I know, for I was the Assistant Operations Officer and knew practically all the men--so with that in mind the accident could not have been due to Pilot error or crew error.

Vienna was by far, worse than any target ever attacked by our Air Force--excluding none!!! The Flak was indescribable and to me each mission was suicide-- though statistics never convince the higher-ups who never carry out their own plans.

Your Brother's plane was hit directly in the No. 1 engine (Pilots side). The propeller flew off and fire commenced. It doesn't seem possible that a fire can exist in such thin atmosphere but it does. For a few seconds I thought Lt. Goin or Lt. Hall had the plane under control for I saw the attempts to blow the fire out--by sliding, or slipping away from the flames but as time went on the maneuvering became more mechanical. By time, I mean that it was a matter of seconds, and by mechanical, I mean that I felt as if someone was laboring to keep control.

I sincerely believe the Pilot was killed outright, and the Co-Pilot wounded.

Why men didn't start bailing out is beyond me, for they did have sufficient time. I should not have said it was beyond me for I know better--in the first place, in my opinion the waist gunner on the left side, more that certainly was killed instantly, and all others either wounded or stunned, for once over the target, men are on the alert to get out, and in such a case if they were physically able the boys in Lt. Goin's plane would have had all the reason in the world to do so.. Then to, maybe one boy was trying to help others in need of First-Aid.

After the plane made mechanical movements it started to loose altitude, and fast. This would pin anyone alive against the planes inside and prevent them from moving---

Up to now I would say there was still a chance for Melvin but when the plane got to a lower altitude, the engine still burning, the increase in oxygen in the atmosphere, made the fire worse, until the plane exploded--no chutes were seen--and I was watching closely, for I was well experienced in combat at that time and was hoping to God I could see some sign of life--but I didn't.

That is what I saw--straight!

I did know the plane and its crew! I did not report the accident by its serial number. Now I hope to God something turns up that gives you more and better information, and that would only if a crew member were found alive.

German fighters were not seen that day, though there is a chance that they were lower than the Bombers.

The Adriatic had wonderful safeguards and Air-Sea Rescue equipment, if the plane would have reached the sea. Not much flying over water need have been done by a crippled bomber. He could have crash landed in Yugoslavia and still been safe, for Marshall Tito had fields for us--then secret. (To the Public)

In my opinion the suggestion you heard about the Russian salt mines is very remote indeed. You know now the plane neither was heading there, nor could have reached Russian territory.

The explanation of a sortie and mission is a difficult one on paper--a mission and sortie were the same excepting that a sortie was what was counted towards your going home, and a mission as how many times you flew combat. You see, Melvin went at the time, 10 times. Twice they were deep into enemy territory and was credited with 1 point extra each time. (The hard targets gave you 2 points, easy ones 1 point.)

Please believe me when I say, "I saw what I wrote." I'm telling you as I wish someone would tell me of my brother.

Any further questions, I'll be glad to answer--ANY!!

There is nothing I can say in the way of sympathy for I know how futile it is. But as a fellow airman of your Brother's, I'll never forget the boys and no matter how happy people become I cannot seem to join in for I saw too many good boys ride helplessly to their deaths. But the world forgets very easily.

Thanks a million for your letter. I'm sorry I had to say what I did but you asked me to. Write again some time.

Mr. Peter A. Massare  
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