

Envelope Postmarked  
Miami, Fla.  
Dec. 13 11 AM  
1944

Return Address:  
1st Lt William A. Henderson 01683353  
Ward 7E  
A.A.F. Regional Hospital #1  
Coral Gables 34, Florida

Addressed to:  
Mrs. P. C. Christensen  
Route 4  
Huron, South Dakota

Letter:  
Ward 7E  
A.A.F. Regional Hosp. #1  
Coral Gables 34, Florida  
December 12, 1944

Dear Mrs. Christensen,

Your letter of October 17 finally caught up with me yesterday. You see I left over there before it got there so it was forwarded to me here. I'm sorry I can't give you all the information you request. I know the suspense of not knowing the facts is hard to bear. One would much rather know the facts.

I understood the war department bases their decision on the circumstances in declaring a missing person dead. As far as I know they didn't find Raymond nor hear of him. It is possible though that they learned something about it that I don't know. So I don't know on what grounds they base their declaration. And I'm not sure of the procedure but as I said before, I understand they base the decision on circumstances involved. In Raymond's case, he was over water just off the Italian coast the last he was heard from. The Italian coast was then enemy territory but is now in our hands. If he went over land and crashed, the Allies would probably have found the wreckage or the civilians would have know [sic] something about it. If he were a prisoner of war, the Red Cross would have found out before now probably. It is known that Raymond and Leonard were in a combat engagement with an enemy plane at very low altitude when they were last heard from. So it is very probable that they were either shot down or something else happened causing them to crash into the water too suddenly to allow time to send a distress call. Now if that happened and Raymond was not killed he would have reached land or been found before now. Every effort was made to find them in that whole area the next day and in the following days. There was some wreckage found but it could not be identified as far as I know. And at that time there were many planes, both ours and the enemy's crashing into the sea. So there was wreckage scattered all over the place. A man's chances are very slim when he crashed into water from a low altitude because he doesn't have time to prepare for the crash. And it was at night which makes it more difficult. A plane of the type we flew over there only floats a few seconds at most. So if a man isn't prepared for the crash, he has a poor chance of getting out.

So it is my opinion that the authorities made the declaration in view of those circumstances. Of course that is only my opinion and is in no way official. The headquarters have all the responsibility and everything is handled through them. So it is possible they learned something from a source of which I know nothing about. So you see, Mrs. Christensen, as much as I would like to be able to, I can't give you any more facts because I simply don't know any more about it. I am more than glad to help in any way I can because,

as you know, Raymond was one of my closest friends. And I know he would do all he could were the situation reversed. I hope that by now you have received a letter or something from the War Department giving their explanation and particulars.

I was sent home for a rest and reassignment a couple of months ago. I left the squadron in Southern France in September. I had three weeks leave at home and am now in an Army Hospital for rest and treatment. I don't know how long I will be here before I am ready for duty again nor what my new assignment to duty will be.

No, I didn't receive the package before I left over there. I don't know if it will be forwarded on to me, returned to you, or what will happen to it. When I left I told the fellows to open my packages and use anything that they could from them unless they thought I would want it especially and in that case to repack it and mail it to my home address. So probably, some of my buddies and Raymond's buddies who are still over there are using the articles. I really hope so, because I can get by all right now that I am back in the States.

I join you in hoping the war ends soon so that the boys can come home and stop these tragedies that must happen every day in war. It is a price we must pay; and the price is dear. But it is always so in war. We can only look forward to the end of wars and the well earned peace thereafter. We can also look forward to the time we meet our loved ones, whom we had to sacrifice, in that home beyond the blue.

Sincerely,

Bill