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St. Paul, Jun 28, 7:30 PM 1944  
Minn

Return Address:  
E. E. Bauman, District Agent  
8th Floor Globe Bldg.  
St. Paul 1, Minnesota  
[State Farm Insurance Logo]

Mrs. P. C. Christensen,  
Huron, S. Dak.

Letter:

A LETTER FROM ONE OF OUR BOYS.

Ray Christensen who was connected with our St. Paul Agency for the greater portion of one year on a part time basis entered the service in January, 1942. He took an intensive training in Signal Corps, later joined the Bomber Squadron and was shipped to England and now is in Northern Africa as a Flight Officer. He writes us a most interesting letter, which I am passing on to you. I know you will enjoy reading it, especially since it comes from one of our own men.

417th Night Fighter Squadron  
A.P.O. 525, C/O Postmaster,  
New York City, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Bauman: -

True to form Uncle Sammy doesn't want us boys to get bored or stale by staying in one spot. From a social point of view I don't know why he picked North Africa for me. Otherwise it is mildly interesting. We've only lost a few boys, so I feel quite optimistic about a long life as yet. I've got quite a bit of faith in my pilot and we get along as well as anybody could with me. We've got to have perfect teamwork to live out this blessed war, so we pay as much attention in our teaming up as we would to getting married - probably more. In this case "until death do us part" doesn't seem to lend any humor to the situation whatever. It's a good sport going up in the black of the night and scaring bad little Nazis, just like when we were kids, only the Nazis don't scare any to d----- easy.

England was a good host - in most cases too friendly to soldiers..... It's quite a shock to the boys to come over here (North Africa) and have these lovely French African girls ignore them completely. It's a fact, the girls here don't smoke - I never saw one intoxicated, and I never saw one flirt on the street. It isn't all a difference in language either, however, I will admit it is a handicap to not be able to converse. Oddly enough as few of these people speak English as there are of us who speak French.

The architecture here is quite modern looking and the streets quite wide. The poorer class of natives inhabit the older parts of the city, but they are off limits to Army personnel. One couldn't possibly imagine the sights in one of these areas. There are Arabs lying in the street in the blazing sun with flies all over him. He is unwashed, ragged, no one bothers him, he is left to finish his sciasta [sic] as he sees fit. No sight disturbs the calm and steady movement of pedestrians. Either a man is just lying around or he has an objective. There seems to be a singleness of purpose like an ant- an utter lack of imagination or interest in events around about. There is every type of uniform and insignia from all the allied countries, jeeps - cars- trucks - donkeys with huge loads or carts ridden by natives - horses - oxen hitched to all types of odd vehicles. The better class arab in flowing gown and turban,

veiled women - quite a number of civilian whites and me. A hell of a mess if I ever saw one.

The Red Cross has started and is operating several very nice clubs, some for officers and some for the enlisted men. They offer a varied program from speech classes to dancing - a swell place to kill a few hours and certainly an oasis for me out here. A credit to the organization.

We are on American rations now and have our own kitchen. Until now we have always lived with the British Air Force. They can't get the food that the Americans do get and of course prepare it in their own style. Whether it was good or not made little difference an American wouldn't approve it. It is good, though, to get a bit of canned fruit. In England grapes sold for \$5.00 a pound and no tinned fruits - very poor peaches were 50 cents a piece. Clothing was rationed unmercifully. Little do the U.S. people know what rationing is, much less war. I've only had a sample and that wasn't good. Some of the events here that never get back to the U. S. would make your flesh crawl.

The food situation is better here - there are loads of good grapes - tomatoes - peppers, etc. and of course being French, plenty of wine and champaign. The latter is about \$2.00 a quart. As in England the boys still pay the black market \$10.00 a quart for Scotch.

We aren't allowed to buy any food or fruit in town so the Red Cross has snack bars for the boys. All our food has to be approved before we get it. And so much for Africa.

I finally got my discharge and appointment to Flight Officer. Aside from a financial gain it's not too exciting but one more step - also a gaudy uniform. The best to you and the Co.

Ray