

4-18-46

My Dear Mrs. Reilly,

I have received your letter and was very glad to hear from you again. I have here beside me the list of addresses that you were kind enough to send me. I also have here all the correspondence that I have received from yourself and the parents of the boys since I have returned home.

I just received a letter that was sent Mrs. Jones from an Officer of the 23rd Squadron. Mrs. Reilly, I know what happened on that day, but for the past few months I have been fighting with myself as to whether I should tell you or not.

I still do not know that I am doing the best thing, but you told me that you would feel better if you knew for sure one way or the other. So that is what is in my mind at the present time.

I am going to write to all of the other parents tonight also. I have sadly neglected to do so until this time. I received an enlarged picture of the crew from Mrs. Bigley and I want to thank her. I understand that Mr Reilly had them enlarged, it was swell of him. That was the last picture we had taken and was on the Island of Los Negres in the Admiralty Groupe.

I still hate like anything to have to write a letter like this but I think that you will feel better knowing what actually took place, so I am going to tell the story as I know it.

On the morning of June 22, 1944 (I, as you know being transferred from the crew) I was assigned to fly a mission to the Island of Yap, nineteen hundred miles from the Island of Los Negres where we were based. On this mission we were forced to leave the rest of our squadron and to head for the Island of Wakde due to the fact that we were getting short of gasoline. We stayed overnight on Wakde and took off for Los Negres again on the 23rd of June. When we landed there at Los Negres about dark I was immediately told that Lt Boltin and crew had been shot down over Yap Island that day, June 23rd, 1944.

I asked to be allowed to fly with the search crew that would leave the following morning, June 24, to search for them and was granted permission to do so. Our fourteen hour search failed miserably. The Navy had already searched the previous day. Returning from that flight I was grounded by the flight surgeon for three weeks to recover a little.

The next day I contacted other crew members that were on that mission of June 23rd to learn what had happened to my crew. Going in over the target on Yap Island one engine was knocked out of commission by flak, or anti-aircraft fire. Immediately three Jap Zero fighters attached them and forced them down. No one bailed out. They fought their way down to the last. When the plane was seen to crash into the sea and sink, six men were seen to come up out of the wreckage. If the Japs were not the dirty fighters that they are those boys would probably be home today.

A Navy flying boat was ~~XXXXXXXX~~ on the scene within an hour of the time that they were shot down. The Zero fighters went down and strafed those men while they were in the water. I know that there is no hope for Bill or those boys ever coming back. They went down like fighting men that they were and took a Zero with them.

Sincerely,
Alfred E. Daywait