34

27th Aero Squadron
1st Persuit Group
American E. F., France.

Margie dear,

Sept. 19, 1918.

Sich argern heisst:
Anderer beute
Dummheit
an sich selbst strafen.

This is a substancial sign one of the fellows found nailed up on a wall at the front yesterday that the Huns had left behind. I suppose that they forgot it in their rush for it is quite obvious that they have more use for it now than before they started their hike. Liberally translated into "United States" I understand that it means "Don't get fed up" "ye nut".

Yesterday afternoon Jack with a couple of other fellows went in a car on a tour of inspection of the newly evacuated area, they were supposed to return last night. but they haven't returned yet and it is eleven am. They are probably having

having a very interesting time of it. We are all speculating on the probability of their going past our new and indistinct lines and presenting their compliments to the Crown Prince. (Don't get uneasy for I won't send this until I have definite information.)

It is great to be actually taking part in this All American offensive and it is wonderfully interesting to hear the boom of the cannonading at night, see the star shells flare at night and in the day look right down on the whole big show—See the cannon flashes—see the spatter as they hit. But the thing of greatest and most pressing interest is the aerial activity. The balloons the Hun machines, the Archie. And in this I am still a "green horn". It is very discouraging to go up day after day and strain your eyes in every direction for a couple of hours at a time and come down only to find that you didn't see half of what was going on. Some

experienced pilot will ask. "Did you see those seven Huns above us over So and so?" "Lord no! Well did you see the twelve come out of the cloud just as we turned South?" "Lord no!" And I find that the sum total of what I saw amounts to exactly nothing of importance. It takes a great deal of practice and training to perfect this knack of "picking up" enemy aircraft, and it is naturally of tremendous importance. Until I aquire this and learn more about aerial tactics I intend to do my work rather conservitively.

Here is a tale for you - About two months ago a blond young chap who looks like this, makes you think of adenoids right off, joined the

squadron. No one knew anything about him except that his name was Luke. A restless, impetuous kid of nineteen. His flying round the airdome was always of a stunty nature, presumably for the benefit of the mechanics who paid no attention to it

He seldom went up on a patrol. He would frequently have engine trouble, requiring him to return to the field before they got to the lines. He was very unpopular and was even suspected of being yellow. Once he came back and told of how he had gotten lost from the patrol and going into Germany alone attacked a formation single handed and brought down a machine - "A grain of salt" everyone thought.

On coming over to this sector he asked for permission to attack a balloon which he had sighted on the morning patrol. He went over, brought it down and got it confirmed. Now balloon strafing is a perilous job. They are located quite a distance behind the lines and are protected by anti aircraft guns, machine guns, ~~a ball~~ besides the enemy machines are constantly on the alert for such attacks and can quite easily dive from their altitude and pick you off. His initial success had apparently set him balloon wild and now if he hears of the location of a new balloon he is on pins and needles until he has brought it down. In the past week he has brought down seven - which makes him the balloon ace of aces in the

American Army and establishes a record for that brief period.

It takes a great quantity of unmitigated nerve and a large portion of luck to get by with it. But he has done it and my hat is off to him and likewise all the other chapeaux in the outfit. He is the nerviest fellow in the group and he has clearly demonstrated to the squadron that a fellow can be mistaken once in a while in his judgement. The newspaper reporter was around yesterday for the story so it probably is old news by now.

Jack has just come back. They didn't go in a car after all - it was a truck. and the object of their mission was to get a piano for the squadron. It seems that the Huns had left a ~~gun~~ number of them behind when they retreated. Well yesterday evening were driving merrily along - no one stopping them until they came to a village where a few American Dough boys told them that they were the advance party and that the Americans didn't hold the village. They probably would before dawn but in the mean time they

had best stick around the dugout for the Huns were still in the other half of the village. Sure enough without opposition the Americans took the village and the piano seekers started out to complete their mission. They found the commissary where all the junk was stored, had picked out a nice piano. Jonnie and Jack had just backed up the truck and Russ was running the scales, when a French Captain M.P. steps up and said "You are not going preparing to take anything away with you, are you?" Jonnie says "Oh! no sir. We just thought we would come over and get a few little German books with pictures in them." Think of it a 3 ton truck for a few little picture books. But that's all they brought back with them besides rousing appetites and heavy heads.

The weather has been bad all morning - rain and very low clouds but its clearing up a bit now and it looks promising for a patrol. "Punctual. That's me all over, eh Mable?" Have you read "The Love Letters of a Rookie". Rebecca

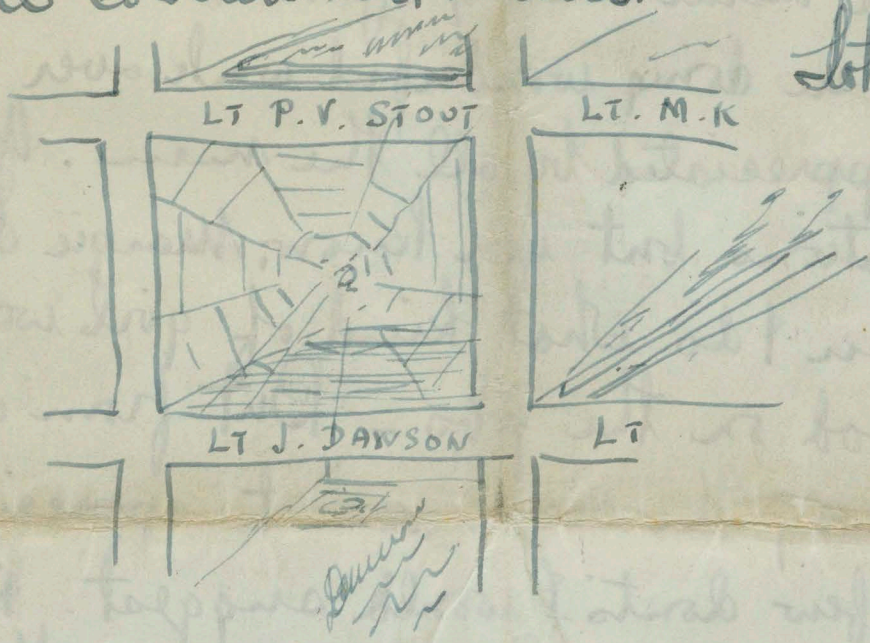
recently sent it to Jack. If you haven't, get it and get Cousin Frank to read it aloud.

I am so glad that you find your work so interesting. It certainly must be an eye-opener to get the inside history of such a varied lot. They are doing wonderful work over here and is appreciated by all the men. You asked for suggestions but you know, Margie dear, better than I do what kind of girl would make good on the jobs - But from observation of they way the men seem to appreciate the heroes a few donts I would suggest. Don't send over any highbrow intellectuals with spectacles ~~in the~~ for canteen work. A smile does a man a lot more good than a quotation from Keats or a reference to the Illiad or Bernard Shaw. Don't send over any super-sympathetic, romantic person - Observe the lips carefully and see that they have a tendency to turn thus ⌣ rather than ~~down~~ thus ⌢, people can growch just as well back home and do lots less damage.

Send the real American kind of girl - The kind

like the vast majority you have already sent over.

Got to go — Please write me one of those Margie letters soon. My P.O. Box is all covered with dust —



Lots of love —
Pluroe.