Sept. 18, 1918.

33

Dearest Cousin Kate,

From my diary I see that one year ago I was in a feverish suspense on Bedloe's Island, expecting every minute to receive orders to sail and I am thinking with pleasure of those last few joyfull trips to Cross Nest. Ha! And it was just about this time a year ago that I thought ~~I had~~ that my days of whole-heart-and-fancy-freedom were just about at an end and I was beginning to worship at the throne of the fair Louise; only to find that it was another misfire to be credited against Dan Cupid.

What a long time it has taken to get to my goal, but at last I have reached it - to be exact I have been here now for nineteen days and in just the place I have wanted to be - in the 27th Squadron, with its enviable reputation, a fine bunch of men and Jack.

We are in the midst of the American Drive and it is a wonderful to be actually taking part in it. (The squadron moved soon after I joined it to this sector).

I have just returned from a two hour protection patrol and have had all the thrill I want for the day - in fact things looked very uncomfortable for a while. I was ordered up at four to fly in the upper of two echelons. At 1500 meters, our meeting place I flew around for thirty minutes before the leader and one other plane came up. The leader had engine trouble and had to leave. This left only two of us to fly the upper echelon and I thought it wisest to drop down and join in with the lower one. Looking down I saw a formation of five ~~taking off~~ flying toward the lines and dived down to join them but discovered that they were French. I turned back and saw another formation some distance off - of six planes and headed that way - I recognized our machines and joined the

formation - They were s-ing over a formation of bi-place French photographic machines and I realized that ~~the~~ we were off on a protection mission - It seems that after I had "taken-off" from the field we had received the orders and since I was about the first off I was the only one who didn't get the order. So I wondered "whither bound". The clouds were quite low and there were a great many of them, large white ones, black underneath, and so it was necessary to fly at about 2500 meters.

Over the lines we went and on and on. Old Archie opened up ~~and~~ like mad and once I got the puff of one under my tail - Soon a formation of twelve Huns appeared ahead and above us away up above the clouds - to our right another and another until there were twenty-one Huns in view - And on and on we went with the Huns watching every move - Why they didn't attack I can't imagine - I wish

we could find the same sort of easy meat behind our lines. But the brutes were too yellow to attack. And on we went until the famous city of M. was just about under us. I could see the bridge over the river with its pretty arches, could see individual buildings. We turned and went parallel to the lines then back North again and all of this while we were way back of the lines and all this while the Huns sat up there watching for some poor chap to fall out with engine trouble and they would pounce on him. Like hungry cowardly vultures. And Oh! How I nursed my engine. Finally the photo bnoses had their pictures and headed toward the lines. What a relief it was for I barely had gas enough to get me back to the airdome. But just before reaching the lines they turned and started in again. I knew if I made another trip in I wouldn't have gas enough to get

for you see I had been up for more than half an hour longer than the other men. I dove down in front of the leader waved my wings and wheeled off toward the lines. Looking back I could see the Huns on their lofty perches, but in front was a great big friendly cloud and I made for that I dove down to the level of its flat undersurface and keeping my back against it headed for home guided by the sun and my compass - There was some Archie but not close enough to bother and - a few machine guns fired on me - for I was flying quite low. Over this shell torn area, with its skeleton villages, ~~and~~ passed over our trenches, our balloon line, and finally saw off in the distance a ~~the~~ queer shaped lake reflecting the sunset through the ~~sun~~ mist - it was a joyfull friendly sight for I knew its location well and I made a bee line for the dome. And I was some glad

to feel old terra firma rolling by under my wheels.

There is lots that I want to tell you about but I must close now for we are on for an early patrol in the morning.

Because of the change of my address I haven't received any mail since I joined the squadron and I am starving for news from you.

Oh! Lots and lots of love for you Cousin Kate and for the rest of the fam.

Penrose.