

3054 Delancey Rd.
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

March 17, 1992

Dear Ogden:

It was great to hear from you last August and I really appreciate your thinking of me.

First, though, I deeply appologize for the long delay in getting back in touch with you. It definitely was not due to lack of interest. Your letter arrived just as I encountered personal problems due to illness of my wife. We had just returned from the Cleveland Clinic where she underwent cardiac by-pass surgery (for the second time in two years) and my time and efforts were fully occupied seeing to her convalescence. She is now doing well and things are pretty much back to normal.

To get back to your letter. Thanks very much for the night club photo. I don't remember it being taken but I do remember the three of us going out on the town. We had met your father at his apartment and as we left, he handed you a \$20 bill (probably close to \$200 now) for you to spend on us having a good time-which we did.

I also remember that B-26 trip very vividly, even today, because of the problems we encountered. In fact, any time I run short of nightmares, I think back to that trip. Especially the aborted flight from BW 1 to Keflavik. The long arctic twilight, which was over just as we landed, gave us just enough light to get into BW 1. For a while I was afraid we were in serious trouble after the turn-around and it was taking us so long to get back to Greenland. We were pulling maximum continuous cruise power from the engines in order to make it. That was my worst experience by far in my four years service. And then, as you mentioned, the "run-away" prop situation over the North sea. When we arrived in Casablanca (finally!) no one there was willing to accept delivery of the plane since the receiving combat unit had moved on up to Sicily. Fortunately, we were able to convince someone to sign the receipt. (Little did I realize that less than two years later, I would be back in Casablanca, stationed there as a Captain, flying C-54's on the Green Project, ferrying combat veterans back to the U. S. for the expected big conflict invading Japan.)

I did hear from your friend Malcum Puckett and have replied to him. He has a big job on his hands trying to trace down people after so many years. He said you had given him my address.

Osden, I have enclosed a few momentos. Chances are you already have copies of the flight orders and the Pyramid photo. The A-20 photo was taken by Bob Schofield somewhere over the Nile between Luxor and Cairo. I had shown him how to operate my camera and asked him to take a lot of shots in order to be sure of getting a good one. He did take a lot but none of them are much good because he did not focus the camera properly and are in poor position. I had the white stripe painted on the tail in Nashville for recognition purposes. On our other two flights I always had trouble trying to pick out which one was supposed to be the lead plane.

It is nice to know that you are doing well in your retirement and able to travel as you do. You mentioned your frequent visits to Israel. You will remember our first A-20 trip together. We stopped at Aqir, overnighted in Tel Aviv, hired a car and driver and spent a day sightseeing Jerusalem and Bethlehem. I still have my "Certificate of Pilgrimage" to the Holy Sepulchre. I did make another trip to Jerusalem while stationed in Cairo, in 1946.

My wife, who as you know is French, and I have been making yearly trips to Europe since I retired so that she can visit the relatives she still has there. We then would rent a car and travel on our own around other parts of Europe. It has been very enjoyable. Now, I am not sure if we will be able to do this anymore because of her medical problem.

Thanks for the nice words about my flying ability. All I can say is that I had a navigator in whom I had complete confidence and who was a good companion, as well. I sure needed your experience to instill confidence in me as to our chances of successfully completing that mission.

Best regards,

Bill Beck

P.S.:

Puckett indicated to me that Jim Drummond is deceased. I was not aware of this as I lost contact with my friends from the 20th. FG after being assigned to "Fireball" in Miami. He also said he had heard that Derryberry had been killed in a plane crash. No details.