

ON ACTIVE SERVICE



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Melshrook
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Dearest Joan,

This is of necessity another rather hurried
scribble I'm afraid, but I must tell you of my
adventures during the last few days doing.

On Tuesday Ken and myself took some equipment
down to an ex-American drome in the Ardennes
that we were given to understand was now
occupied by a Belgian Squadron, imagine our
surprise when we arrived there to find the
place apparently deserted - no aircraft or birds
visible, anyway the runways looked clear and
serviceable, so we lobbied in and found the
Squadron had been delayed and had not
arrived from England yet!

The only personnel on the drome were two Belgian
pilots and 20 men who had been there for
two months now as the advanced holding party,
anyway they got us some lunch and then the
fun really started!!

We enquired about a starter trolley to start our
merry's engines, of course they hadn't got one,
as they had no, and did not expect any
aircraft there, so we decided to try on the
aircraft internal acc's, but our luck was out!

They were nearly flat, fortunately they had a small engine for charging ~~for~~ accumulators so there was nothing else we could do except charge the internal acc's, after watching for an hour I calculated it would take at least 22 hours to obtain the required 24 volts, we left instructions to keep the engine running and retired to the mess, to inform Malbroeck we were O.K. and would return to Base the following day, we had to get through 16 exchanges all over France and Belgium which took over two hours before we were eventually connected with Malbroeck, they were naturally in a flat spin by this time because we were well over-due and were getting ready to organize patrols to look for the wouhays!

After that was straightened out we had a very welcome tea, I think the Belgians were really pleased to have some visitors, they fixed up us up with a couple of comfortable beds and then said they were taking us "out"

The doome is right out in the wilds the nearest village is 30 miles away, it was a pitch black night and pouring with rain, but undaunted they got out their old Hillman and then began

one of the most hectic rides I've yet experienced, the road to the village unroofed like an English field road and winding through typical Ardennes country across hills and thickly wooded valleys, the heavy rain had made the road like a quagmire; the four of us climbed into the old Hillman and battled along between 40 and 50 M.P.H. shielding all over the place at every turn, I could see the trees flashing by in the glare of the headlights, expecting to spray one at any minute, three or four times I braced myself for the inevitable, but we arrived at the village "local" quite safely; the usual Belgian cafe with a bar, three piece band and small dance floor, I think during the course of the evening we were introduced to the entire population of the village, our friends were apparently quite well known there.

I got quite anxious when I thought of the drive back and saw them drinking large quantities of wine etc.

About midnight the party broke up so we set off back to the dome - a repeat of our hectic drive there, I was getting used to it by now though, or perhaps the odd drink had given me extra confidence!

I was pleased to be safely in bed by 01.30 hrs.
In the morning we found they had had a little trouble with the engine during the night but by 11.30 hrs we had the required 24 volts, I was quite relieved to hear the engines once more roar to life again though, we said our farewells and departed for Base.

The C.O. took a strip off us when we got back for not checking the internal acc's before we started, no one ever does though, it so rarely occurs that you land at a doom without a starter trolley.

He reported later on in the evening at the Squadron Stag party and said he knew these things did happen and we could forget about it as we should hear nothing further of the matter.

So that was that!!!

I received your letter of the 27th today darling, do I realise how long it is since I saw you, it seems more like two years gone.

I can't bare to think about it too much dear. I think you will enjoy "Ten Little Niggers" an excellent mystery film, I saw it some time ago, by the way the Ten Little Niggers are actually ten little Indians in the film because of the