

18 October 1943.

Dear Mr. McKinney,

Thank you for your nice letter, however, it took some time to reach me as I have been moving around considerably since returning to the U.S. late in August.

I have just answered Ruth's letter, answering some things she wanted to know, and giving her all the details I knew about the night Chile was lost.

No doubt by now you have seen W.C. Smith and he gave you a good account of what happened. Incidentally, that Smithy is one of the finest gentlemen, and mild as he may seem, he is one of the hardest fighting men I have ever seen. And I've seen quite a few in the past few years.

On that night Chile had attacked an enemy destroyer at low altitude. And he badly damaged and probably sunk that destroyer. However, his plane was badly damaged by AA fire, and was later attacked by an enemy plane which further damaged the plane and killed Chile's gunner.

In spite of this Chile very skillfully flew his plane, and at night, nearly 300 miles back to Guadalcanal. Neither Chile nor his radioman were injured as yet. However his plane was so badly damaged he could not lower his wheels to land at the field so he attempted a water landing just off the beach from our camp.

In the water landing the radioman was knocked out, and was surprised to find himself floating in the water, but Chile and the plane gone. A boat picked up the radioman about 10 minutes later but no trace could be found of Chile and the plane. Yes Chile's plane was equipped with a three man rubber boat and Chile had on a life preserver. I had rather tell you anything but this - but I sincerely feel that Chile was knocked out or killed when the plane hit the water and that he went down with the plane. When it got daylight the area was again searched as well as the shore. If Chile had survived that landing we ~~we~~ certainly would have found him within a week, for it was just off shore from our camp.

As I told Ruth, we must face facts - difficult as it is, and she must readjust her life without Chile. He has willingly and gallantly given his life that she, and I, and you, and all of us might live on to enjoy a free, and full, and happy life. I'm ~~so~~ sure he would be disappointed if we were unhappy.

Chile and I were very good friends. He always did a magnificent job in combat, and he fought hard and long and willingly with the main thought of destroying the enemy completely to end their terrible conflict. We all thought the world of Chile and his loss was unbelievable, and was a terrible blow to us. Let us pray we shall never lose faith in our sacred resolution that those honored dead shall not have died in vain. May God be with you and Mrs. McKinney during these troubled times.

Sincerely,

R. L. Savage.

Thank you for your kind invitation - if I am ever near I shall come to see you.

P.S. Have just received a very nice letter from the mother of Chile's gunner who was killed that night by the enemy plane. She is very much heart broken, and told me he was the only boy she had. I am wondering if Chile had any brothers. She wants to write to you and Mrs. McKinney and also to Ruth. I am sending her your address. The boy's name was: Jack C. Durner. His mother is Mrs. J. Durner

21 ~~Seaside~~ Seaview Ave

East Norwalk, Conn.

I'm sure she would be glad to hear from you.

Chile's radioman came thru here, and I obtained his address only a moment ago.

His name is Richard T. Dale and he will be home until Oct 29th at:

3821 Cottage Grove
Des Moines, Iowa

After the 29th he will be at U.S. Naval Hospital, Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, Ill. I am writing him to give him your address.

C O P Y

AIR FORCE PACIFIC FLEET
TORPEDO SQUADRON NO. 21

c/d Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.
18 July 1943

Mrs. Ruth Priest McKinney
2500 Primrose
Fort Worth, Texas

My dear Ruth,

It is with greatest sorrow that I must confirm the fact that Chile has been missing in action since July 7, 1943. He was on a night mission similar to ones of the same nature he had been on before. Although he was seen by several pilots in the target area and while attacking the target, the only information we have was learned from his radioman who was later returned to us.

According to the radioman, Richard T. DOLE, ARM2c, they believed their plane was hit several times while attacking the target. However no one was injured and Chile flew the plane for sometime on his way back. A few minutes after attacking the target, and while still over enemy area, they were attacked by an enemy plane which killed the gunner. However, Chile and the radioman were uninjured, and he continued to fly the plane toward his destination, having trouble controlling the damaged plane.

Sometime later Chile told the radioman to prepare for a water landing. In the landing the radioman lost consciousness and came to floating in the water with a broken arm, and Chile and the plane were no where to be seen. He was picked up and returned to us, but numerous searches have been made and Chile is no where to be found yet. This landing happened close to us and I sincerely hope he will eventually turn up, as we have had such instances happen recently with other pilots in this squadron.

You know, Ruth, I have known you and Chile for some time, and this incident is not only of personal interest to me, but to the squadron as a whole. He was an excellent pilot and has done some excellent work in the combat zones, while being very popular with officers and men alike. His absence is keenly felt by all of us.

If it should be the case that Chile did not come back to us, we can all feel justly proud of him, for he willingly and courageously gave his life for the cause that you and I might live to enjoy the blessings of our country. Let us pray that THEY shall not have died in vain.

The squadron wishes me to express, and I personally want to express deepest sympathy to you in your great sorrow, and we all pray that Chile will sometime be with us again. I know how confused you must feel at this time and how inadequate this letter is, so if I can be of any assistance, Ruth, at any time, please don't hesitate to call on me or anyone in the squadron.

/s/ BONES
R. L. Savage,
Lt. Cmdr., USN

3709 Quantick -
Hannerton

AIR FORCE PACIFIC FLEET
TORPEDO SQUADRON TWENTY-ONE

c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.
July 20, 1943.

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob C. Durner
10 East Racks Road,
Norwalk, Conn.

Mr. dear Mr. and Mrs. Durner:

It is with sincere regret that I must inform you that your son, Jacob, was killed in action on the night of July 7, 1943. He was acting as the gunner in a plane piloted by Lt(jg) McKinney on a night mission in the front area. According to our information from the radioman in this plane, who was severely injured, your son was killed by gun fire from an enemy plane. Later the plane crashed into the water and sank. The radioman as far as we know, was the only one who returned.

Jacob was a fine hard working boy, very popular with his buddies and was chosen by Lieut. McKinney for this flight because of his ability and resourcefulness. His loss is keenly felt by all of us and rest assured, Mr. and Mrs. Durner, you may justly feel proud of your son, for his was always a job well done.

Only at times like these do we realize that our cherished freedom costs us our cherished loved ones. He has gallantly given his life for the noble cause of his people.

The squadron, as a whole, wishes me to express their deepest sympathy to you both in your great sorrow, and please feel free to call on me for assistance at any time.

Very sincerely yours,

ROBERT L. SAVAGE
Commanding, VT-21.

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*This is the lost letter
we had from Charlton McKinney*

No. Lt (SG) M.C. McKinney
(Sender's name)
VC-11 Fleet Post Office
(Sender's address)
SAN FRANCISCO, California
19 MARCH 1943
(Date)

Mr & Mrs W.D. Lemon
RFD #3
Silver Springs
Texas

PASSED BY
U.S. NAVAL CENSOR
(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Kin Folks:

We are glad to hear from you. Have everything on the ground here keep. I'd like to be there to fly that tractor for a few days. Hope you had a nice winter as there is certainly a cloud of darkness in the South Pacific. I'm sure Mother has told you that we have tangled with the Japs. We saw considerable, experience should prove invaluable, and in all it was an unforgettable experience.

How does N.C. like the Army? Is he in the Air Corps? Is Campbell a Senior this year? Drop me a line when you have time as I'm always glad to hear the news.

Love you both with love
Always
Dad

V-MAIL

