

5162 Marguerite Street

Vancouver B.C.

CANADA.

My dear Father,

30th. April 1929

It seems ages since I wrote to you, but I have travelled far and seen many places in the last few months.

~~My~~ On the 14th. March I started off from Seattle U.S.A. to fly a big Flying Boat to Alaska, it was the first Flying Boat to ever attempt a flight from the States to the land of eternal snow. I had a most wonderful trip, our first port of call being Campbell River on Vancouver Island, then on to a place called Lowe Inlet on the Canadian Coast, at this particular place there was no communication with the outer World, so all the papers along the Pacific Coast got busy and published stories that we were fifty two hours overdue, they feared the Flying Boat was lost with all hands. However, it was not the case, from there we proceeded to Prince Rupert, repaired a leak in the petrol system and flew North to Ketchikan, Alaska.

Ketchikan is a beautiful city, nestling at the foot of huge snow capped mountains, I will never forget the wonderful scenery that met my eye as I circled over the bay just before I landed. We had a marvellous reception as we came ashore, the Mayor and all the important people of the city turned out to welcome the first passenger Flying Boat to ever land in Alaska.

I felt rather pleased and honoured, as you can imagine, to be the pilot of the Boat on this occasion. This eventful day was still more marked by the fact that the Mayor was Irish (Michael Hennigan by name) I was Irish, and I landed there on the 17th. March 1929. - St. Patrick's Day!

I had Mr. and Mrs. Mc. Carty, Mrs. Mc. Cord, (an Alaskan girl) and George Lortie, my mechanic on board. We stayed in Ketchikan for four days - they were busy days - attending Dinners, making speeches and sightseeing. On Wednesday the 20th. March I took off again with my passengers for Petersburg, a town about 100 miles further North. At this place also we received a most cordial welcome. The small town of Petersburg is famed for its Shrimps. Mr. Ohmer who controls one of the largest Shrimp industries in America was our host. He supplies practically all the cities in the States. We hopped off from there the following day for Juneau, the capital of Alaska, on the last leg of our journey.

During this part of the flight I encountered terrific storms and at times I was forced right down on to the water. The visibility was about fifty yards and snow and rain obscured my vision so badly that on several occasions I was tempted to land. However, I managed to pull through and at last sighted Juneau in the distance. Here we received another wonderful reception. The people of Juneau were delighted to see the first passenger Flying Boat arrive from the States. We stayed here several days and paid an official call on the Governor of Alaska.

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Whilst at Juneau we received an offer of \$5000.00 from a big Fur Trading Co; to fly 800 miles into the Interior and bring back a large consignment of furs. Unfortunately we could not accept the offer as we were pressed for time, besides which our flight to Alaska was only in the nature of a survey prior to inaugurating an Air Mail service from the States to Alaska. The only means of transportation in the North is by dog teams which for long journies takes weeks and weeks to accomplish. This is where the Aeroplane will save both time and money. The Alaskan people are enthusiastic over the thought of an Air Mail service to their country, and you can well imagine what it means to them away up in the frozen North.

From Juneau I started to traverse the long journey back to Seattle U.S.A. and my experiences on that trip would fill a book. I picked up another passenger at Juneau; making six in all aboard the Boat. I was forced down in a terrible storm owing to shortage of petrol near Ketchikan and we drifted about in a rough sea for over two hours before being rescued by a small fishing boat which took us in tow. I can assure you it was a nasty experience, drifting about at the mercy of the sea and not knowing what was going to happen next. We were so long over due at Ketchikan that the United States revenue cutter put out to look for us. They found us about eleven o'clock at night and we then cast off from the small fishing boat and let the American cutter take us in tow. At the time I forced landed it was getting dark and I was flying about eight feet above the water through this bad storm. I was travelling at 125 miles an hour when the engine cut dead and the extraordinary thing regarding this forced landing was that instead of putting the nose of the machine down I had to pull it right up, on account of my low altitude and also to get rid of my speed of 125 miles an hour. It was a matter of seconds before I hit the water and even then I touched at 70 miles an hour. However, I managed to land her O.K. It was a thrilling moment. My passengers I am afraid, required a little stimulant after these exciting few moments-but alas we had landed in a dry country. Ahem! The people of Ketchikan were very kind to us when we eventually arrived there at midnight, we soon had plenty of good hot drinks - drinks that were brewed in Scotland! - and we needed them. Next day I took up about twenty of the most important town people for joy rides and flew them over the Glaciers and snow capped mountains. The following day after we started off for Prince Rupert B.C. where we refuelled and continued our journey to a place called Bella Bella, here we stayed the night at a small Indian village. Next morning we were off again, we ran into a few bad storms coming in off the Pacific Ocean and it was all I could do to keep the Flying Boat on an even keel. I landed that afternoon at Campbell River, on Vancouver Island, continued our trip next day to Vancouver where I surprised Grace by arriving unexpectedly. We had a big party that night to celebrate our safe return. Easter Monday we flew down to Seattle thereby completing my flight to Alaska and back.

My next big flight I hope, will be from the States to Japan. This time I expect to have a larger Flying Boat fitted with two or three engines. I am looking forward to this flight and I sincerely hope it comes off. In the meantime I expect to carry out extensive flying in Alaska for a big Gold Mining Company until the Air Mail route is established.



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I hope you are quite well and enjoying life. Many thanks for sending on my birth certificates. I am enclosing ~~which~~ which I trust will cover the cost etc;.

Give my kindest regards to Eddie MacDonnell, Jim and Frank O'Reilly E. Campbell, George Byrne and ALL the Devitts. Some day in the near future I will pay you all a surprise visit.

My small son is a great boy and although only six months old on the third of May he weighs 22lbs. If I am not mistaken, I think I told you I had called him Michael. Well we changed our minds at the last moment and he is now known as Brian Edward Burke. I will send you some snaps of him in a few days.

Give my love to Josie, Angela and Mick.. I hope they are all fit and well.

This is about the second letter I have ever typed in my life, so therefore, you must forgive me for making so many mistakes.

I am also enclosing some photographs taken in Alaska.

Drop me a line soon and give me all the Bray news.

Grace and Peggy send you their love and kisses.

Your affectionate son,

*Eddie.*