

Monday April 3, 1944

Dear Mr and Mrs Fix,

I suppose that by the time this letter reaches you, you will have received a notification from the War Dept that Rene is missing action. I don't know just how much they told you about how and why he was missing, that's why I am writing now. I know how you feel about the event but after you hear the details you'll feel a lot better about it I believe.

Rene flew some 17 missions with me and he was such a good pilot he was finally checked out and made 1st pilot. He made his first one as pilot on the 26th of March and made out OK. The next day we went out again. I was leading the second element of the high squadron and Rene was flying left wing of the lead element just under and ahead of me some 50 feet. I couldn't see him as he was too low but my bombardier could see OK. We were going to an airfield at La Rochelle France about 60 miles north of Bordeaux and on the coast. The colonel leading us gave us a very stiff climb which was hard on the engines. We had to pull a high manifold pressure which resulted in overheated engines. We all had trouble keeping up. We flew south, passing directly over land straight on course to the target. When we were climbing we noticed that puffs of black smoke caused by detonation were coming from Rene's ship from two engines. We finally passed over the Brest peninsula and came to the Bay of Biscay. It was at this time that Rene's ship began to straggle. After a while my tail gunner reported him some 5 miles behind but we didn't worry about him as there were no enemy fighters around. We figured he would catch us on the way home. We went out to bomb the target and returned to England. Rene never did show up but one other boy that had two engines fail said he last saw him heading south and losing altitude slowly, trying to feather an engine. That's the last we know of what happened. However, here is what probably happened to him. He had trouble in the climb with his engines and when he started to straggle he at that time lost an engine. He was still over land so couldn't drop the bombs to lighten the load so flew on for another 10 miles to water. To our way of thinking he probable flew south as far as possible and bailed out over southern France. Also, he was at 23,000 feet, there was a tail wind & it was only 180 miles to Spain. With only one engine he would be able to stretch the glide out 100 miles at least.

Now there is a wonderful chance that he will escape and be coming back within a month or less. Of all the raids we've done so far this one would be the best as far as escaping is concerned. We all regret his loss but feel that he is safe and on the way out now.

The \$40 is money owed him by two of my crew men. If there is anything you would like to know further write me and I'll tell all I know.

Sincerely yours
Walter H Keilt
1st Lt A.C.