Dear Paul,

Thank you for your very nice letter of January Second.

It's a lot of fun renewing old acquaintances. Dottie & I have been doing just that since our retirement in 1985. Just a year ago, we found an old friend of Basic Training days. He said in parting, "We must not lose touch again!" Of course, at our age we are also losing many old friends, and it's nice to be able to say "hello" while we still can.

We have been attending the 97th Bomb Group Reunions for the past six years. This is the outfit I flew with while overseas. This gives us a chance to get together with my old crew who are pretty well scattered over the U.S.

What an interesting flying career you have had, especially with the number of hours to your credit! You should write a book, or several of them, like Ernest Gann.

I have often thought about "Mr. Hanson", as we cadets knew him. I had hoped that some day I could find him and thank him again for my flying career.

J. L. Hanson was my flight instructor through about two-thirds of my primary training. O. E. Pierce taught the balance of the course. Through a set of circumstances, I flunked the final flight check. The following day, Mr. Hanson was down on the flight line checking on "his boys". He was told that I had failed the final check the day before and was back at the barracks waiting to ship out. Jimmy sent word to the barracks that I was to report to him with a parachute on the flight line for a recheck. This check went well and I was reinstated.

I went on, then, through basic and twin engine advance, B-17 transition, crew phase training and 50 missions over Europe. After that, back to the U.S. where I instructed in B-17's and at war's end, transitioned to B-29's. So, Jimmy's interest in one of his boys paid off: for me as an individual and more importantly, for Uncle Sam and the war effort. I would have liked for Jimmy to know that.

I have enclosed a copy of the orders sending me from advance training to B-17 transition, as you requested.

I did correspond with Bell, Branlund, Giscoe and Illies, during, but not after the close of WWII. My letters to Illies were returned with the notation, "MIA".
A brief summary of my military experiences is as follows:

(1) Enlisted in Army Air Corps 11/24/41.
(2) Graduated Radio-Operator-Mechanic, Scott Field, Ill. 8/03/42.
(3) Accepted for Cadet training 9/06/42.
(4) Classified Pilot, Nashville, Tn.
(5) Preflight Maxwell
(6) Primary - P.T.-17's, Douglas, GA.
(7) Basic - B.T.13's & 15's, Greenwood, Miss.
(8) Advance - AT-10's, George Field, Ill.
(9) B-17 transition, Lockbourne, Columbus, Ohio.
(12) Flew 50 missions, Jan. to June, 1944. We were one of few crews to finish tour with complete crew. Served as Ass't. and then Sqdn. Operations Officer and Squadron flight leader.
(13) Returned to U.S.A. & assigned as instructor, Alexandria, La. A.F.B. Also served as Aircraft Assignment Officer.
(14) TBY at Hondo, Texas Cruise Control School
(15) Transitioned to B-29's.
(16) Discharged September, 1945.
(18) Discharged 4/01/55.

My civilian life following WWII began for Dottie & I (married 11/23/43) with the construction & operation of Sportsmen's Airfield here in Pinconning, MI. We offered full service, including A/E, flight instruction, charter, crop dusting & spraying, ground & air, plus a boat livery at the edge of the airport. The business prospered initially, but fell off after three to four years, and we closed the field just prior to being recalled in January, 1951.

After release from the Service in 1952, we joined Magline Inc., a local manufacturer of magnesium and aluminum materials handling equipment. First as Sales Engineer, then in Order Processing & Inventory Control, then as Shop Sup't. and finally, the last 20 years as the Purchasing Agent. I also served as Company pilot in a secondary capacity.

We have two sons and a daughter (two college teachers & an electrical & steam generating plant manager, of whom we're most proud). We have been traveling extensively throughout the U.S. & Canada since our retirement in 1985.

We shall look forward to meeting you & renewing old friendships with the Class of 43!!

Sincerely,

Cal Carstens
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