

at Lee Field,  
south of  
Jacksonville  
re meeting  
Frank Chapman  
at Royal Palm  
State Park, now  
part of Everglades  
National Park,  
& then driving  
north to the  
Jacksonville  
area again  
Vake at wedding

Jan. 4, 1943

Dear Folks,

It seems that whenever  
I move from one location to another,  
that things get too complicated for  
me to write letters for at least  
two weeks, but by now you should  
be used to that. There has been  
the usual red tape of departing  
("checking out") and arriving ("checking  
in"), first at the main station  
then at Lee Field. Then it  
turned out that all my writing  
paper was in my big box (still  
to arrive), that no one had any  
to "lend" and that ship service  
was closed and even when  
opened was all out.

Well, here's what happened.  
We "checked out" of our squadron  
Christmas morning, and so didn't  
have to fly that day, which

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meant I could have Christmas  
dinner with the Bud Ritchies.  
That was very pleasant, and  
Gracie's goose was delicious. She  
is an old friend, whom I once  
took bowling. Three Brazilian  
lieutenants from the sub chaser  
school were the other guests  
and pleasant. After helping with  
the dishes I borrowed Bud's bike  
and went for a good ride up  
the beach finally getting away  
from the suburbanism.

It took all of Saturday to  
check out of the station, and we  
were allowed two days to get  
to Tax. Arranging to drive up  
with a feller on Monday, a  
week ago, I hired a car on  
Sunday and drove through a  
good deal of the country south  
of Miami. At Royal Palm  
State Park, an isolated hammock

of pretty much tropical trees  
and some of the very few  
natural royal palms, magnificent  
trees with cement-like holes, I  
met, by pure coincidence, Frank  
Mr. Chapman, the famous  
ornithologist. He saw in the  
log hoods of the lodge, where he  
was staying (in lieu of his  
place on Barro Colorado Id. in  
the Canal Zone), where I came  
from, and introduced himself  
saying he had once given  
some lectures, arranged for by  
Tooney, at C.S. He is quite old  
and obviously not well enough  
to be very active any more,  
but he was talkative and  
friendly and showed me  
around. It was quite a thrill  
to meet a man one had always  
wanted to meet despite his  
abrupt needs manner, which,

together with his remarks about<sup>4</sup>  
old times, etc., made him seem  
a little pathetic, though I  
don't believe he is unhappy.  
He is to meet Dr. Barbour shortly,  
if he hasn't already. It was  
quite an anti-climax to  
drive out to the resort and  
largest of the bays, not a  
particularly attractive island -  
no beaches, no palms, plenty  
of mangrove swamps, mostly  
poor growth of tropical  
hardwood.

The drive up on Monday  
was uneventful - straight  
up the coast, though mostly  
a few miles away from the  
shore. We passed many  
orange and grapefruit groves  
with the fruit ready to be



picked, as well as endless  
 and pretty much badly burned  
 pine forests. One fire was  
 burning fiercely after dark -  
 too bad and yet undoubtedly  
 incendiary. Fire is the worst  
 forestry problem of the whole  
 South, fires being purposely  
 set for every imaginable  
 reason, especially to improve  
 woods pastureage, which it  
 may do, but often injures or  
 kills the trees and in the  
 long run impoverishes the  
 soil. Once a fire starts, it  
 had to stop because of the  
 continuous forest, but  
 fortunately most fires are  
 the less harmful ground  
 type because of the wide

spacing of the trees and  
the absence of many low  
limbs.

We came out here to  
report Tuesday morning, but  
the afternoon of the next  
day I was ushering, as the  
head usher, at a wedding -  
that of one of the nieces of  
the original Squantum crowd,  
Roy Merchant, who came  
over from Pensacola, but  
could summon only one  
friend, me. The Motts, the  
Babes and several other  
friends were there, but  
because of the <sup>recent</sup> death of  
the bride's father, there  
were no bridesmaids, and  
no real reception (just  
a small, mostly family

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one with bridesmaid who were to be. It was all very nice, though there was a confusing number of the bride's relations. The bridal couple was, incidentally, very handsome, though the matron of honor nearly stole the show.

We have been quickly broken in down here, where we used to fly yellow peril, but which is now the equivalent of Miami - more or less. There are both cadet and new ensign training here, though these planes are not quite the same. SBC-4s are similar to the SBC-3s at Miami.

P.S. This duty will again be  
only temporary - perhaps into next  
T.R.  
even with no date. Love to all

but more powerful and with  
hydraulic wheels and flaps  
instead of mechanical (a vast  
improvement), and they are  
used for dive bombing  
instead of scouting because  
there are no BT<sub>2</sub>, Land  
OS2V<sub>2</sub>, and SNT<sub>2</sub> are used  
for scouting, and the latter  
are used for other things  
too.

The B.O.Q. out here is  
in an attractive spot by  
the river shaded by nice  
hardwoods and is very  
comfortable. Actually it is  
just off the base. We are  
nearly <sup>or quite</sup> 20 miles <sup>south</sup> from N.A.S.  
Taxi and so around 30 from  
town. Nice New Year's Dance