



U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA

7/3/44

Dear Folger,

Our "outlying field," officially an auxiliary air station (A.A.A.S., Vernalis), is southeast of Alameda something like 60 miles, which means in the great valley, but only just east of the coast ranges. The San Joaquin River parallels them on our other side about eight miles away. Right at the field here it is absolutely flat, and though there are cultivated fields around, they are mostly irrigated, and the non-cultivated areas including the resort

range of hills, are very barren.
The weather has been
continuously hot and cloudless
- perfect for night flying,
especially as the nights
cool off pleasantly. We've
had ^{had} mostly two night hops, have
left morning and sought
sunshine in the afternoon.
Though on some days we've
had field carrier landings
in the late afternoon.
There has been nothing
extraordinary about the
flying except the experience
of flying over San Francisco
Bay at night. It would
be nearly impossible to
imagine it without doing



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it and likewise nearly impossible to describe having done it. Certainly it is one of the sights of a life-time, at least from the vicinity of 5000'.

One day two of us climbed the nearest of the approximately 2000' peaks, walking from here, which gives you an idea how near it is. As I remember, there were two small trees, but we did see two deer, a doe and largest fawn. Another time, yesterday in fact, I walked up a sort

of canyon, along what was
a mostly dried up stream,
but which appeared in enough
places to make plenty of
water holes for the many
beef (Hereford) cattle grazing
in the vicinity. There
were many jack rabbits
in the lower, drier reaches,
and what amazing creatures
they are with their
extraordinarily long ears
and long legs. They run
in terrific leaps and
bounds and are said to
be able to outrun almost
anything except a grayhound.
Of the several kinds of birds



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seen land sparrow, prettily
 marked birds especially for
 sparrows (see Forbush for
 practically identical eastern
 subspecies) and with pretty
 songs, were the most
 interesting (least familiar
 to me). Two trips to the
 river, one mostly on foot,
 got me a few new birds,
 which brings up an
 interesting point. Compared
 with Florida I've seen
 more new species for the
 time, or fairly nearly as

many altogether (something like 27 compared with 35). Whether California will wind up in the lead may depend on whether ^{or not} we're here for any of the southern migration, during which a good many unfamiliar species (as opposed to most of the migrants passing through Florida) would be passing through here. Though I'm due to nab several more resident species here. As a whole the avifauna out here, then, is less familiar to a New Englander than that of Florida. There are more, distinct species (as well



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as a few distinct families)
as opposed to sub-species.
Though there are many such
of eastern forms here as well
as in the south-east. Except
for the ocean birds, for which
I've a good little book (Alexander),
it's going to be very difficult
for me to identify strange
birds further west, in some
cases perhaps even as to
family, there are so many
strictly tropical families,
that is assuming one might
occasionally get ashore. Well
enough of this "fascinating"

subject.

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Robert M. Ware is our
squadron commander, and
Hugh W. Nicholson the
executive officer, also a
lieutenant commander, and
while I'm about it Douglas
Yerxa is the flight officer
and third ranking man,
having been a lieutenant for
over a year and a half. The
letter, incidentally, comes
from New Haven and graduated
from Yale in '37 and so far
as I know is the only
other New Englander or " Ivy
League" man in the squadron
- unless Annapolis is
considered belonging to said



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league. He is a likeable
 chap and already a good friend.
 The skipper, by the way, is
 the only Annapolis man,
 and, save one other risen from
 the ranks, the only one not
 in the reserve. We have
 several other lieutenants
 besides Gernka, so you can
 see where I stand, actually
 eighth. There are a good
 many j.g.'s and of course
 even more ensigns, and
 though the only j.g. senior
 to me has likewise not
 seen sea duty, which is

We'll be back in Alameda tomorrow and will probably be there
for some time. Sat. and Sun. both off may mean a trip to Santa
Barbara, depending on travel possibilities. Love
Toots

also five or two of the
lieutenants, there are several
who were members of old
VB-17, who perhaps rightfully
have more responsible jobs
than I have, and that
includes extra-flying jobs.
Altogether there are nearly
fifty of us, though we
haven't that many planes
and would probably never
fly ~~many~~ even all those in
commission at the same
time. The only reason I
feel justified in disclosing
this is that anyone can
count. I shouldn't pass it
on. We should be a good
outfit. At least half of
the US states are represented.