

Reminiscences
about Hooded
Mergansers, etc.
Life aboard
ship & room mats
etc.

April 1-2, 1945

Dear Folks,

Happy Easter! So April is upon us! Well, that's all right with me. Actually with me hours may sometimes drag, but as a whole time seems to move pretty swiftly along. This time of year reminds me of walks along the railroad tracks beyond old Primer station and especially the one that first made the "Moat" country ^{one} of my favorite haunts, an occasion that ^{also} brought a certain beautiful picture "to life." This picture is now, I think, my favorite of all Fuertes ^{pictures} and has been since then. The background of dead trees, obviously killed by flood, I'd noticed as very similar to the "Moat" country in general and had in fact made me wonder if the foreground could ever be duplicated there, until on a certain April 2 (1933, I believe) it was. A pair of hooded mergansers being glimpsed just beyond before they disappeared behind a point of land, which, however, soon provided a perfect ^{approach and} vantage point for seeing them in all their beauty at close range. The male, as handsome a duck as they come, was courting the dusky little female by raising and lowering his hood or crest, a pretty sight indeed. This was the closest I ever got to hooded mergansers (not counting the families seen several years later) except for one time in 1940. ~~when~~ I was walking by full moon light ~~and~~ beside a small pond near Ann Arbor, ^{when} a flock of
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white some distance from shore caught my eye² and hastened me to push out, paddling with my hands, ⁱⁿ a conveniently located rowboat towards what materialized, at a range of only a few yards, into a similar courtship display! The first effect then was ^{the} opening and closing of the hood, which, when contracted, shows very little white indeed. Since the males only other whitest areas, along the flanks, were the only other parts of either him or his mate that were not ~~more than~~ shadows, the total effect was almost eerie!

Yes, those were happy days! I remember on another April 2 (possibly Apr. 3) meeting two male pine warblers a short distance from Primer station itself, this being by far the ~~the~~ earliest ^{warbler for Quetzaltenango} date recorded. There were one or two years when I saw tree mallows even before the end of March, and again these were seen from the railroad tracks, that stretch indeed being excellent for observing land birds as well as water birds. I should compile all my notes for that area some day and perhaps, even if only for fun, write up the more interesting incidents.

Those terns and the flying fox were not just red herrings, at least not to the extent of not being real. Tropic birds, which I've seen, to last advantage flying around inside dead volcano water on Hawaii, are not terns, by the
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was, but in a family by themselves. The three³ species, one of which does occur in Bermuda, make it one of the very smallest of all bird families, though there are some with only one!

I was going to make some personal observations of life aboard a carrier this time and so shall ^{now} do so. I'll diminish the flying angle by just saying that take-offs and landings are just routine by now, if still more in the way of events and more fun than the same from a field. The efficiency of even normal operations is amazing. Though great efficiency is essential when you consider that for every take-off and every landing the ship has to turn and steam ^{directly} into the wind if not already headed that way, which of course is seldom the direction of the task force's destination. The experience then is something I as a pilot am glad not to have missed, and the duty is perhaps as interesting and exciting as there is in flying.

My room-mates are Lt. Bob Bollinger of Lewiston, Idaho, and Lt. (j.g.) Ward Matthew of Bryan, Texas, both very pleasant and especially congenial fellows. That I've mentioned before. They're both just an inch shorter than I am, the former weighing over 190

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The latter around 130! Our room is very cosy
and comfortable, though it gets hot in the
lower latitudes. It's really a two man room
with only two bunks, so Ward has to sleep
on a cot. There also are only two desks,
but there's plenty of drawer space for all.
Needless to say my books now overflow
the shelves. The ward room is very con-
venient, and while on that subject I'll add
that the meals are reasonably good - far
better than at any shore stations any-
where near this far from the states.
Since we don't have very much to do
besides flying, we get plenty of time to rest
up between flights. I do far more reading
than anything else, not counting sleeping,
and I guess letter writing comes in a very
poor second. Lately I've really dipped into
the past and read for the first time, at least
in their original form, "The Tempest", "A Mid-
summer Night's Dream", "Romeo and Juliet" and
something more voluminous, "Tom Jones",
all of which I enjoyed very much.
Unless there isn't much going on or
we're starting or ending a flight we don't
aren't encouraged to spend much time on
decks, where it's pretty windy anyway most
of the time, so on a day off we may not even

see the day. The ship is very comfortable up to pretty rough weather.
though we're not getting terrific yet. The view from Europe is almost too
good to see. Time isn't it? If his part is no doubt with it, though who at home
ever heard of Okinawa? In good health & spirit, I now say good night! C.T.