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BUREAU OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY
NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.
AND REFER TO No.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

September 23, 1943

W. A. Graham, CPhM, U. S. Navy
U. S. Naval Hospital
Memphis, Tennessee

Dear Graham:

I was extremely happy to receive your letter and wish to thank you with all sincerity for the nice words you wrote about me.

I am very happy that you are enjoying life at Memphis and that you have been nominated for the rank of Pharmacist which I hope you will obtain very soon. I will make it a point to look into it today and see what your status is.

I was most interested in reading the letter of Mrs. Smith and the following account is my recollection of her son while he was on the WASP with the R.A.F. pilots.

** He was a very fine man, well liked and considered one of the best pilots that the R.A.F. had in the flying of Spitfires. As you remember, the taking off of the Spitfires from the WASP was a very exciting time as none of these young men had flown a plane from a carrier. All the Spitfires carried an extra supply of gasoline in their belly tanks, and when Smith took off his belly tank became loose and fell into the ocean. He elected to return to the WASP rather than come down in hostile territory in North Africa. When the decision was made by him to land, everyone aboard on the flight deck from the Admiral down became intensely alert and interested in the success or failure of his coming aboard, as no Spitfire had previously been landed on a carrier, as Spitfires land at a very high rate of speed - higher than ordinary carrier planes - and also there was no landing gear attached to the Spitfire. In addition, it was the young man's first attempt at landing on a carrier. It requires many weeks and months of training normally for a pilot to be able to land on a carrier at sea. We all watched with bated breath as he made a beautiful landing and then swerved from one side of the carrier deck to the other, putting on and off his brakes and as no barriers were put up, he continued on down the flight deck with everyone aboard watching him, feeling that he would certainly continue and go off the end of the bow into the ocean. However, about two feet, and no more, from

- 2 -

the end of the bow, the Spitfire was successfully stopped and everybody on the flight deck felt a tremendous relief that one of the most dangerous and thrilling experiences they had witnessed was successfully completed. That night in the wardroom we had a little party consisting of a special cake, band music, and the presentation by Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Commander Kernodle, the Air Officer, of the Navy wings to young Smith. He was then transferred at Gibraltar, and I imagine was sent over to Malta from there.

There were many pictures taken of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Smith alongside of his plane, and pictures of Smith and the Senior Aviators aboard the WASP. There were also pictures taken in the wardroom the night of the presentation of the Navy wings and I am sure that Mrs. Smith will be able to receive a copy of these pictures if she writes to Captain Michael Kernodle, U. S. Navy, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., as you remember he was Air Officer aboard. If she explains who she is and tells of her son and her other son's being at Malta, I am sure that Captain Kernodle will be extremely happy to do whatever he possibly can to see that she gets copies of these pictures if they are on file at the Bureau of Aeronautics.

Please give my deepest sympathy to Mrs. Smith. She has all the reason in the world to be the proudest Mother in Canada, as her son was one of the finest chaps that I have had the pleasure of meeting. He was perfectly happy while aboard the WASP, knowing that he was going into the most dangerous area of the war and was very disappointed when he had to return to the ship because he felt that it might interfere with his desire to be flying and fighting the Germans from Malta. I am sure that if he lost his life on August 10th that he died happy and without regrets and felt honored that he was able to do his part in winning the war.

Please give my best regards to Mrs. Graham, and again many thanks for your lovely letter to me. I only hope that I have the pleasure and privilege of having you, or men like you, with me on my next trip to combat areas this fall.

Sincerely yours,

Bart Hogan