



Air Mail

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Saturday
April 24 (8th day)

Hello Folks -

We've been here 2 days now - so as most of the work on the plane is done, maybe I can sneak off and at least start a real letter! - (Start one, I said!)

It's quite a busy job flying and then doing all your maintenance yourselves. As we keep going east we lose more & more daylight hours on the evening end of the day - and have to get up correspondingly earlier the next morning to get an early start - it soon gets a fellow down under a steady pace - bed sure feels good - but the time spent there never is long enough! This is our second stop in Brazil and the first place we've had maintenance crews to work on the ship - even so it's confining, cause we want to be "Johnny on the spot" and see that it's all done properly. ~~and also~~ there are always lots of odd jobs to be done. When working around inside the ship - as big as it is, we wish the darn thing were bigger - honestly we've so much junk packed that if you move one thing, chances are you've locked your foot

2
in some position, and you have to move
3 other things to free your foot!

For the past three hops we've been
messing around what the meteorologists
call the "Equatorial Front" but what the
old sea captains used to call the "Doldrums".
Believe me - it may be doldrums on the
surface - but out in the air at flying
altitudes! Some times we climb as high
as we can and still hit heavy thunderstorms,
and sometimes we skim the tree tops and
hit them. Other times we just get an
altitude and stay right at the same level
and barge on thru! You might as well
cause you'll hit the heavy stuff anyway.
The day we crossed over the Amazon River,
we weren't sure we were crossing over it or
thru it! Only once or twice could we see
the river beneath us, and incidentally, you
just think you've seen wide rivers! We must
have been averaging a ground speed of 180 at
least and it seems we were over the river
for 15 min. anyhow!

Shortly after crossing the river - we
crossed the equator and hit another storm!
I guess that was old man King Neptune's
way of christening us!. I was sorta scoffing
at the equator - there isn't any line at all
marking it, like all the maps show! - & why

3 I would never have even known it if I hadn't asked our navigator, beforehand, to let me know it! - That just shows you never trust a map explicitly!

Incidentally, we passed over a bit of jungle. - Man, oh, man. - there are places where for hours + hours we saw no indications of "man's hand" - if we had gone down in that stuff we sure would have been there for "duration plus"! I even caught myself pulling on the back of my parachute to see if my "jungle kit" were still there!

I can't imagine one man ever getting out of such dense growth. - Think I would have just made my home on the spot and either waited for someone to come get me - or go native - I always liked zoos anyhow! We flew over real forests back in the states, but none were ever so dense that nowhere could you not even see a trace of the actual ground, itself - but ~~not~~ here, when!

At our last stop, native Brozhians gased our planes, "a la primitive", using "chamois skins" to strain the gas in - and they sold the fellows all sorts of monkeys + puppies for pets. - Only thing, tho. some of the natives must have sneaked in during the night and stole some of the monkeys back, cause next day - lots of 'em were shy!

With a profitable game!

I've had lots of fun here in Brazil. - I've been talking Spanish (Brazilians speak Portuguese) and every time, I've gotten what I wanted! I forgotten a lot, tho, but using it is bringing it back to me. The enlisted men just stand and gawk at me when I speak to the men gassing the plane. - They don't know what to think cause they know I must be talking to 'em or else they wouldn't do the things I want alone! And in eating my Spanish has been quite handy. A while we've eaten in "Officers Mess" each place - the help is usually native and so that's where I come in! Take last night for example: - I kept asking the waiter to bring me some coffee in English - and he would keep nodding his head and repeating "café". Well - after three or four times of this, I started getting tired - so the next time he came by - I raised my cup - and in Spanish - I asked him why in the devil didn't he bring me coffee - (looking very mean all the while!). He gave a start - looked at me again - turned

5 around and promptly returned with a whole pot of coffee (that's the way they serve it to us)! Everyone else at the table asked me what the heck I'd said to make him change so suddenly! - It's a sorta game.

Since we've been in Brazil, we also get quite a bit of ^{hot} chocolate at the meals. It's served prepared, in rather large pots - one to a table - and it's good, too. Then you drink it all up, they bring you more. On each table is a big bowl of fruit also - native local fruit. - Some of it is pretty good - but some pretty bad, too. About the only kind I can recognize are the bananas! - And even they are different. The bananas we eat are green in color, but ripe! - If you pick around and get one that's a little yellow, like you're accustomed to, - you'll find they're much too ripe to eat. - I give up!

On this post, too, as on these others we've hit - the fellows are really well cared for - and the spirit seems to be high. In fact, - I could name worse posts right

in the U. S. A. that are worse than those
we've hit, so far. (But, I will admit each
one gets progressively worse, which is to be
expected). In the evenings they have a
show - provided there are films - and they
show them on a small screen out of doors.
It's not bad at all - particularly here for there's
always a wind blowing so there are no
mosquitoes to worry with. In the daytime,
without the wind it would be unbearably
hot - but as it is - in the shade it's very
comfortable. At present we are sleeping in
tents with regular beds and a mosquito
net so not even flies can get to us. All
the luxuries!

The natives ^{that work on the post} around here are all of the
lower class, of course. - It looks just like
pictures you've seen. - Up the road where
they are building, a string of men carry cement
from the mixer to the construction work in
large cans balanced on their heads! - And
the other day I saw a man walking down
the road in what was unmistakably
a pair of North American - very ~~old~~ ^{so vivid}
multi-colored pajamas! - No less!

and some of the trousers they wear - have
been patched & patched till even the
patches have grown too old to hold additional

patches, so as a result - nothing very much is covered by the pants! Of course - as I said - this is the poorer class - laborers on the fields - He haven't been allowed to go into any of the towns or cities, so try not to judge the places by what I've described. - Having worked at the Union I know of a certainty - there is another class who don't wear patches or pajamas!

Guess I've beat my gums long enough for now, so maybe it better end this rambling and see what more mischief I can uncover. - I sorta hope I can spend my Easter on the ground here a loofing, & but have fears to the contrary!

Bye for now and be good.

Love,

P.S. - They wouldn't let us prepare our own text for our Easter message - so bear with me. I hope I'm somewhere where I can send Ma a birthday greetings - but if not - let this suffice - Happy Birthday, Ma.

Love again,
J.