

43 Herbert Street  
Invercargill  
New Zealand  
20.8.44

Dear Mrs Shaver,

Some little time ago I received your address from our N.Z. Air Dept. as the mother of W/O Joe Shaver who was one of an air crew lost on operations on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> last. My son Alan was captain of that Bomber and I felt that I would like to write to next of kin of all members of the crew but had been waiting in the hope that more definite news than I had received would come to hand.

I do not know what information you have received but I have had nothing officially apart from the first cable announcing the fact that they were missing. I have just returned from a visit to Wellington where I had an interview with the Air Dept., but they could give me no further information and so far death has not been presumed.

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However I have been able to get in contact with another N.Z. boy over in Africa who knew Alan and he has been able to get me what appears to be terribly final news. This boy was not with the same Squadron as our lads but got his information from an English lad F/Sgt Haddock who was. I will quote what Jack Birchall, the N.Z. boy above referred to has to say —

"I have found an English lad Fgt/Sgt Haddock who was ~~one~~ his Squadron at the time and he has given me the following account, but owing to lapse of time since it happened, his story may not be strictly accurate, particularly in regards to the names of the crew & the date. Here it is — He thinks it was on the night of Nov 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> and they were in a Wellington escorting a convoy about 150 to 200 miles S.E. of their Base. They carried out their duty and left the convoy approximately on schedule to return to Base. This was within a few hours of daybreak. Everything was apparently alright then & they were

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No signals of any sort were received, nothing  
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sea was exceptionally rough. Haddock  
says there were twenty foot waves and  
knowing that stretch of sea fairly well  
I have no reason to doubt him. Search  
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Much can be presumed but what  
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The fact that no S.O.S. was picked up  
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 All that I can add is that there must  
 have been little or no suffering. It must  
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 Perhaps in the future something may be washed  
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 This crew consisted of — Alan, Captain.  
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 have been well experienced. — English.  
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[WopAG = Wireless Operator/Air Gunner]



That completes the information in the letter and if you have been able to obtain any further information in Canada I would be so glad to hear from you. When in Wellington the other day I met W/O Swift's mother. Her address is

Mrs W. Swift, 38 Roxburgh St, Wellington N.Z., should you at any time wish to write her. My lad had only recently joined up with his crew - he had had a spell in Hospital with a form of malaria & had only been back on duty a week or two & had not described his new crew to me. One naturally wonders what the boys were like & no doubt you will have the same feeling and I am taking the liberty of posting you a photo of Alan taken just before leaving home to finish his training in Canada. By the way he trained at Dunville which is in your province of Ontario, but your provinces are so big over there that it is probably miles & miles from

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very friendly terms with your son. He had a tremendous lot of time for Canadians. I have a very nice letter from a Canadian Pilot Officer - Floyd Woolf - who had been in a previous crew with Alan & he had some very generous things to say about him. You know you people of Canada have been wonderful to our boys, one lad to whom I gave the Afflecks address wrote back when he contacted them, that he would never have ~~believed~~ believed such hospitality could be shown to any one. Am afraid we New Zealanders owe a debt to you Canadians that we can never hope to repay.

How I would be so glad to hear from you sometime. so far I have not been able to get the addresses of the next of kin of the three English boys, but I have another son in England that asked him to get them for me from the R.A.F.

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had tried to do so. When Alan had completed his training in England for Coastal Command he was advised of his appointment to his Bomber on his 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday and he wrote out to me - "The best birthday gift I have ever received". That was the spirit of our splendid boys that is the spirit that will win in the end, but how hard it will be when all is over & we finally realise that our own boys will not come back. We fathers feel it badly enough but it is you mothers who suffer the most. We lost Alan's mother over ten years ago so she is not here to mourn his sacrifice, but I would like you to know how much I feel for you in your great loss - unquestionably it is the mothers who make the great sacrifice.

With my kindest regards & sympathy

Very sincerely yours  
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