

Lt. John K. Martin Tells of 9 Months as Bomber Pilot

By GEORGE R. AVERILL

Just nine months from the time he left the United States to participate as an air pilot in the Allied bombing of North Africa, Sicily and Italy, Lt. John K. Martin, son of Mr. and Mrs. John K. Martin, 815 Oakland avenue, arrived back at the home of his parents, behind him a record of bombing achievements that reveal the high caliber of training Uncle Sam gives his fighters.

Lt. Martin, a Baldwin high school and University of Michigan graduate, reached here last Sunday, which was his twenty-fifth birthday. With him was his wife, who had met him Oct. 24 at Newport-News, Va., where the youthful air pilot had landed from a ship that had come directly from North Africa to the U. S. A.

In keeping with U. S. Army Air Forces regulations, Lt. Martin had been given a 30-day furlough following the completion of 50 days of Axis shipping at Tunis and Sicily, and Italian combat zones. On his breast is pinned the insignia of the campaign he went through, together with the Purple Heart, received after being shot in the leg with enemy gas.

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- (4) Avoid dark-colored lamp shades (they soak up light), or try fitting them with white linings. Use good, white paper and fasten seam with Scotch tape. White linings will often increase the amount of light from the lamp by as much as 50 per cent.
- (5) Whenever possible, make floor and table lamps serve more than one person for reading or sewing. A single lamp on a table, for example, can provide light for chairs on both sides of it. The Detroit Edison Company.

more than mast-head height, and fast, too. The Germans improved defense methods to offset some of this skip-bomb method, as they did every time we tried something new against them. These Germans are smart and good fighters, both in the air and on land. Compared to the Luftwaffe, the Germans are really close fighters; while they do everything they can to kill the enemy, they do live up to most of the traditions of war, and I believe are treating prisoners quite well.

Germany Suffered Air Loss

Germany, of course, has suffered tremendous losses in the air; present her airman on the west coast are either very young, as low as 16 and 17, or much older than most of our U. S. Air Force fighters. Germany now seems to be concentrating on the building of fighting airplanes, to combat our growing bomber resources; Germany doesn't appear to have many big bombers in the war.

HIS GREATEST EXCITEMENT

Lt. John K. Martin spent nine months as an air pilot bombing over North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. Where did he get his greatest excitement? In no less a place, two weeks ago, than in Washington, D. C. "I finally maneuvered my automobile through its crowded streets, dodging trucks and taxicabs and private cars, and reached New York City," he said this week.

Flaw "Billy Mitchell"

The bomber I flew is known as the "Billy Mitchell" type of lower altitude ship. Our bombs are lighter than the Fortresses use, of course. Most of our raids against the Axis shipping were of the skip-bombing type; this means that we'd fly over the water, dropping bombs that would hit the water and then skip, just like throwing a thin piece of rock across a river or lake; the bombs, of course, were directed at the enemy ship.

"This type of fighting would bring us over a ship at slightly cases than ours, in this respect of workmanship. But I believe that we have the best air personnel, more of them, and our ships are equal to the demands of the job."

Lt. Martin, a wing commander, himself, related that on bombing missions the smaller groups that make up a squadron fly in close to one ship's wing overlaps the one next to it. Flak, the term applied to describe the enemy's anti-aircraft fire, presents the most disturbing distraction to a pilot. "You just go through it, zig-zagging several times a minute, or course, to wait them, if you can," explained the Lieutenant.

Saw Ruins of Naples

Kirk made 11 flights over Salerno, two over Crete, several over Naples, Rome, Messina, Palermo and numerous others. He also visited Naples shortly after it was taken by the Allies, and asserted that most of its central area was just a mass of ruins.

"The Germans are very clever at placing booby traps and land mines in areas they evacuate," said Lt. Martin. "They know most of the tricks and maneuvers of war, for they've been at it for generations. But our engineers are very capable, and soon restore roads and other natural defense aids to our troops."

Kirk's Personal Reactions

What are Kirk's reactions to his experiences in the Mediterranean theatre of war? Something like this: "One gets used to taking chances against the enemy, of course, but one never gets over a feeling of inner concern for his ultimate return in safety from a bombing mission, which is quite natural. On a bombing mission, we have to follow rules of formation and course, and in those hours and minutes we figure we are flying on government time, and stick strictly to regulations; discipline in the air is always the most important element of success and safety."

"But once we have dropped our bombs we figure we are 'on our own,' and the job is to get back to our base by any means possible. There were days when we were not on a mission, and the African summer gave us plenty of discomfort, with the heat and the ever-present flies. Actual time approaching and going over target amounts to a matter of seconds. Our food was sustaining, at least."

What was Kirk's first thing upon reaching Newport-News? "I went in and bought a glass of beer, a malted milk, and a coke. The next day I recall telephoning my folks from a drugstore, and telling them 'I've just had six months in the seventh one is coming up.' To me, after my experiences this year, the United States is the grandest place on earth."

"There is more wealth in Birmingham's downtown business section, in commodities, than in all of Africa that I saw. The average man who thinks that his lot in the U. S. isn't what it should be ought to compare it with what we saw and went through in North Africa, Sicily and Italy; then maybe he wouldn't complain—and even strikes wouldn't occur."

Kirk expects that he may be assigned to combat instruction within the United States, when his furlough is up. In nine months he lost 30 pounds—but I'll get 'em back after eating some of my mother's and wife's home-cooking," he laughed.

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