

Margaret Best Prize
1944 Class Original
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My Cousin Overseas

J. H. Spackman,
29 Faulder Ave.,
Westmere W.2.

Born [REDACTED]
Attend King's Preparatory School,
Remuera.

These are incidents in life of Anthony Bernard Chatham.

After he was born, his mother died of an illness, and he was left with an old father to take care of him.

During his school career he was always near the bottom of the class.

"Chatham, I cannot understand why you don't get a higher place in the class."

When he had left primary school, he worked as a paper boy, so that he might obtain enough money to go to a secondary school. This he did, and, when he left this school, he applied for a position as a junior clerk.

"So you are applying for this position."

"Yes."

"Where did you generally come in your class at school?"

"About twenty - fifth."

"Out of how many?"

"About twenty - seven or twenty - eight."

"Oh! Well I'm sorry but you can't be accepted."

This disheartened him, but a few days later received a position in a warehouse, but was dismissed because of lack of ability.

Next he became an assistant to a farmer and although he did not like the work very much, persevered, and received much useful training.

Sunday, third of September, 1939, found him sitting in front of the radio.

"This is the British Broadcasting Corporation."

"We now present the Prime Minister."

"This morning the British Ambassador to Berlin handed the German Government a note, stating, that unless we heard from them by eleven p.m. that they would withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you that no such undertaking has been received, and, consequently this country is at war with Germany."

The next morning Anthony was found waiting at the Airforce recruiting office.

"Your name?"

"Chatham - Anthony Bernard."

"You want to join the Airforce?"

"Yes Sir."

"What do you want to become?"

"A gunner."

"And how did you do in your examinations?"

"Well Sir,"

Despite this unsatisfactory commencement, Anthony shortly found himself in Airforce Blue; and very proud he was; at last he had made a success of something.

A few days later, he was at the railway station saying goodbye to his relations.

"There goes the bell, Dad. I'd better hurry or I'll miss my train. Goodby Auntie"

"Goodby Tony and remember what I told you. At the first sign of a cold, rub your chest with camphorated oil; and, don't eat too much rich pastry or you'll have a bilious attack."

"Don't forget to write when you get to England, will you?"

"I won't Dad. Goodby."

"Goodby my son, and I'm mighty proud of you. God bless you."

"Goodby Dad. Goodby Auntie."

"Goodby."

After a lapse of time we find he has arrived safely in England, and is stationed ^{at} an Royal Air Force Gunnery School, situated in East Anglia. From here he sends an interesting letter to his father.

Somewhere in East
Anglia.

Dear Dad,

The country that surrounds us here is a flat part of England, with wide fields rolling gently towards horizons bounded by dark masses of trees, for the most part oaks, elms

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and pines.

As we had forty-eight hours leave I went with some of the other chaps to see the sights of London. We saw some trenches and air-raid shelters being built, and everyone was carrying a gas-mask.

As soon as night descended, the blackout became very obvious, making it difficult for us to get about. It puzzles me how the drivers of the vehicles manage so well.

The next day we visited the zoo, and found that all the animals were standing up to the bombing remarkably well.

We also visited the museum, and saw many relics of the last war.

Before we returned to our station, we had a cup of tea at the New Zealand Fighting Forces Club, and were treated remarkably well.

I think that is all I have to say for now so Cheerio,

Tony

After three months of training he was directed to a Royal Air Force Fighter Wing in another part of England.

Somewhere in
England.

Dear Dad,

At last I've been in action, after all these months of training. We flew over Dunkirk and what a wonderful sight it was, with the men all lined up on the beaches, and in the water and ships of all sizes and shapes

making a passage from England to France. I was so interested in the scene below that I did not realise what was happening until my pilot called to me "Aircraft on Port Beam". I looked and there was a plane floating alongside. Then I saw the Black Cross on his fuselage. For quite a while I could not think what to do, and then I decided that it was an enemy ship. I swung round my guns and tried to remember all the lesson I had been taught. I saw my tracers, and then found that they were passing right through the enemy. He sheered off, and it gave me a thrill to find that I had participated in actual combat.

There was little rest for the boys from now on as they seemed to be constantly in the air, matching their strength against the enemy's strength who frequently outnumbered them, as much as twenty to one.

I am sorry to have to advise you that your son, Air Gunner A. B. Chatham was killed in action on Sept. fifteenth - Jones, Minister of Defence.

Dear Mr. Chatham,

Somewhere in
England.

As ~~Tonig's~~ superior officer, it is my duty to tell you that he died as he wished to die - serving his country, in her greatest hour of need. He was shot down just as his Defiant was taking off, and the plane crashed on the drome. He was buried in a little cemetery alongside a little old stone church.

P. T. O.

I have enclosed photographs of the funeral.

Never in the history of mankind, was so much, owed by so many, to so few. - Winston Churchill Sept. 15th.

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