

18th., September  
1941.

H.M.S. Victorious.

40. G.P.O.

London.

Dear Mas. Fabien,

Please accept my sincerest sympathy for the loss of your son - there is nothing else I can say.

The pilot of the aircraft, Sub. Lieut. Park, reported to me on landing. He told me that Fabien "fought like a tiger" with his one machine gun in the back cockpit, and that it was almost certain that he shot down a Messerschmitt 109 which was last seen diving down over a hill with black smoke pouring from it. They were constantly attacked by 2 or 3 ME.109s. at once, over a period of 20 minutes. As you probably know, your son's job was to work the wireless and fire the rear gun in an Albacore Torpedo-Bomber. In this case they were carrying a Torpedo which they dropped at a ship off Kilkenny.

An aircraft of this sort naturally is not designed to stand up to a fast 380 mph. single seater fighter like the ME.109, and I don't know how they survived, especially against 2 or 3. The aircraft was hit several times and one of the wheels was shot, the pilot having to land on the deck with a burst tyre, which he did successfully. Both the

pilot and observer, who was alongside your son, escaped injury by a miracle. Your son was killed instantly by a bullet and cannot have suffered any pain of any sort, which is perhaps some consolation. We buried him at sea in the Arctic Circle.

I went through his private effects and destroyed all letters of a purely personal nature. He left no will or instructions in the ship. I am sending you the few letters etc., I did not destroy.

His clothes were sold on the mess deck by auction, according to the custom of the service. He had only a small kit, just the necessary uniform, which would have fetched possibly £5 ashore. The sale realised £43.14.6, which has been or will be sent to you by the Naval authorities. This will make you realise how much he was liked by those who knew him. Sailors as you know are not rich, but they wanted to pay a last tribute of loyalty and show their admiration for a gallant shipmate in the only way they could.

Later on, a pair of white canvas shoes and his bathing costume were again auctioned privately, and I was handed the sum of £10.10.0 for them. This I enclose, and would be grateful if you would sign & return the receipt.

Again, please accept my sympathy. Perhaps later on, when the pain has healed a little, you will be able to feel proud of the gallant fight he put up. I am certain he would have chosen that way to die.

Yours sincerely,

Herbert C. Randall,

Commander (Flying)  
Royal Navy.