

May 11, 1945
Somewhere at Sea
between Pearl Harbor
and San Francisco
California! U.S.A.

Dear Mom, Dad Kids-

Well, Folks- I guess it is
time for your wandering son
to write - but the boys of the
Sheliam are the happiest boys
in the world - we are headed
back to the good old U.S.A.!

I meant to write but
since we are on the way back
I am so happy I have not
done much for the last four
days - we are scheduled to
arrive at Frisco, the 14th of
May -

It will seem good to
see Civilization again - no
more the Clanging of the General
Quarter Alarm, no more straining
the eyes looking for the enemy -
and having the enemy try
its best to sink you - and when
a fellow hits the sack
he can once again rest

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and not worry - what, to-morrow
will bring.

But here it is, all
is not good news - I will be
unable to get home so my
enjoyment will be a great deal
~~less~~ I don't know how long
I will be in the states or
much else - They may be
transfers for S. Division men
if they reconvent the ship -
but it is most assured that
I will have to go out again
even if I get transferred so
maybe if things work out
that way, I will try and stay
aboard the Shelish - as I
am used to it and as long
as I have to go out again
I'll stick with her.

I have quite a
bit to tell you that I could
not - because of Censorship
which makes letters difficult
to write - but this one
I will mail ashore

The first thing I want to tell you - is that none of your letters are censored so you can say what you want. Like if you want me to say yes to one of your questions - tell me to call Dad "Hank" etc.

I have traveled a great part of this world since I have been in New York - our first stop was Panama then thru the Canal and to Pearl Harbor after a couple weeks at Pearl Harbor we went on maneuvers - then to Guadalcanal, and Tulagi. From there we went to Rilihe in the Caroline Islands and then to the Invasion of the Jap held Island of Okinawa which is only 325 miles from Japan. The days before the invasion the tension of us fellows was terrific - wondering how we would come out - and how would we ~~all~~ react under enemy fire - I managed

to get to mass on Palm Sunday and Communion also - it sure made me feel good - and gave me courage for battle -

— we had daily classes showing maps of the Island the beaches where we would land - land marks to look for and so forth - we sure tried to memorize everything as we knew we were in this for keeps -

The time was nearing and the anxiety increase when we started hearing enemy contacts and General quarters was sounded - which sent us running for our guns - my job is sightsetter and it is a hell of an important job - which made me quite nervous - then come Hally Saturday and we were getting closer and closer and that night we fought off Japs aircraft all night - it was a pretty sight to see them going down in flames everyone was too busy to think

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about what danger really was
around us. and finally early
morning arrived - Easter Sunday!
and my thoughts were of you
at home wondering what were doing
I could just see you going to
church and it gave me a funny
feeling - wondering just how
I would make out - (Easter Sun-
April 1st - 1945 - would be Sat at
home because of the date line)

— Finally the sound
over the speaker said - "I"
Division. man your boats!
so I went to my boat and was
prepared to go over the side and
ready to hit the enemy beach
with marines - by this time
the japs were giving us hell
and the sky was lit up
like forth of July - only you
could not stop to enjoy it.
and every hull in the noise
I would catch myself praying
unconsciously - I'm sure God
was with me and us and
gave us the strength we

needed to carry on-

Finally our barge got the signal to go to another ship to get troops and hit the beach - we proceeded to the ship and the tense faced, Marines, in full battle dress climbed down the nets into our - barge - this was it!

we proceeded with our other boats - passed other ship which gun crews - waved at us - just as if to say - were backing you up - it sure helped encourage us.

I hit the beach twice the first day and many times there after - the fighting was tough and there was no sleep as the Jap planes kept you busy all night - they made many suicides dives at our ships - and many were shot down but many times they hit and we had the biggest losses of men in Naval service so far - quite a few of our ships were sunk.

one suicide plane even hitting a hospital ship which was painted white and plainly marked with a Red Cross.

After a week the fighting was inland away - so my buddy and I went to a village which was mostly demolished. we picked up a few souvenirs which I will send to you - when I am able to - and on the way back - we came along a river which had many caves which the Japs lived in - boy! they sure were dirty and stunk awful - when coming over a small hill I suddenly jumped back - and pushed the safety of my Tommy gun - my buddy asked what was up - It was a dead Jap in the trail - Boy! and what an odor - he had been dead almost a week - and was a dark purplish in color - boy! I can smell him yet - the fellows still kid me about it.

I will never forget Gerry's Birthday as in the afternoon we were attack by a large force of suicide planes - and we were shattering almost steadily they got quite a few of our ships and one dived at us but missed its mark. Boy! we sure were scared - There were 37 planes shot down in our area alone - we were credited with two -

well - I guess that is enough of this - but the 18 days I spent there sure was hell on earth and I sure do not crave it.

We Came through in good shape tho - but most of our nerves are pretty well shot - but do not worry about me as I am feeling quite good - and have no kids coming.

one thing I learned tho is to drink Coffee I never

drank so much Coffee in all my life - black, coffee was given to keep us going.

we lost one of our shipmates - he endured the 18 days we were at battle but the strain was too much and he died aboard ship. we sure felt bad - we buried him in the Caroline Islands on Uthiri Atoll - we gave him a full military funeral and after it was over we sure felt sorry and our moral was "low"

I saw many young men give their life for their country but I'm sure a lot of people do not realize what the fellows are going thru - they think it is some sort of a game.

Oh - yes the Japs island was full of fleas and we all got bit up - the sure were miserable but we used a powder and finally got rid

of them

I will wear three bars now - and have one star in one - possibly two - for the naval battle we had prior to the invasion - guess on a salt now - what do you think?

well folks I guess the happiest guy in the world will close now but I promise to call you the first liberty when I hit the states -

Yee! I can hardly wait! -

all my love
Byron -

March 15

Dear Folks

I sure enjoyed talking to you last night even tho I had to stay by the phone half the night before the call got through -

about that money I sent for I do not

intend to spend it all - but
like to have as I don't know
what may turn up.

I finally got
to Calif - and went right
by Mare Island I took the
long way the traveling over
27,000 miles.

It sure is a treat
to see civilized people - autos
and familiar scenes - I sure
appreciate our country more
now then ever.

Lou
Byron