

*Bachman Greer Bedichek*

*Letters from the Pacific*

*September 8 - December 1, 1945*

Lt. B. G. Bedichek  
FREIGHT DIVISION  
NAVAL SUPPLY DEPOT  
NAVY NO. 128 (one-two-eight)  
c/o Fleet Post Office  
San Francisco, Calif.

Miss Jane Gracy,  
American Red Cross,  
Ft. Wright, Wash.

September 8, 1945

Dearest,

My, but you are full of questions! Perhaps I can be equally full of answers. At any rate I'll try, starting with the most important question, that of my discharge.

The air is naturally full of rumors, most of which agree that little credit will be given for overseas service. A quarter point per month is the figure most often quoted. There is a persistent, and apparently well-founded story that the new system will be announced on the 15th of this month, and that commencing the first of October, the score will be reduced two points per month.

If this is true, I would be started back by Dec. 1. . . .

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Within a week after I get my points, I should be on my way. Count four days for the trip, another week getting from SF to Camp Wallace, Texas, about a month from the time I get my points to the time I will be in Austin commencing my terminal leave.

We can be married just as soon as I get back to Austin. There is no point in waiting around is there? We can then take our honeymoon during the first part of my terminal leave.

I'm in favor of a daytime wedding, too. That way we can get moving on our honeymoon before we are too dead tired. Incidentally, I think the couple have more rights in the wedding day than the general public. In other words, honey, after we have stood around being gracious to Aunt so & so, and I have put up with the usual corny jokes from the male section, lets get out of there!

I am a member of All Saints" congregation, although a non-attending member for some years. My sister Mary was married in All Saints" Chapel. It is a perfectly satisfactory place to be married, if you wish it. . . . .

Here are some statistics about my family. Mary Virginia, an MD, is married to Gay Vaughn Carroll, MD. They have two daughters, Lillian Lee, 7, and Jane, 4. Their home is in Houston.

Sarah is a geneticist, and her husband, Alan Pipkin, is a parasitologist (PhD, Tulane Med.) They have a son, Alan Jr., 3, and another child is expected this month. He is still in the Navy, and they have no permanent address at present.

My only living grandparent is Mother's mother, Mrs. Virginia Lee Greer, of Waco. She had four daughters and three sons. One daughter died in infancy, six grew up. Four have children. Mother's sister, Mrs. Frank Ramey, of Stamford, Texas, has two children, Frank Jr., 29, and Virginia Lee, 31. Carroll Greer, of Waco, has two sons, Jimmy, 10, and \_\_\*, 7. Bachman Greer died last year, leaving Bachman Jr., 22 (married last month), and Genevieve, 17 (U of T freshman last year). Their home is in Waco, also.

These are the only first cousins I have in Texas. I have a second cousin, Wendell Bedichek, who is editor of a couple of West Texas newspapers. He has a son, Wendell Jr., about 6 or 7.

I am shamefully ignorant of my relatives. . . .

Since you have never met my family, I think I'll dig up some snapshots for you.

One fact which may or may not be interesting is that each of my grandparents was born in a different state, James Bedichek in West Va., his wife Lucretia Ellen Craven in Maryland, James Greer in Kentucky, and Virginia Lee in Louisiana. But they were all four teachers. All lived to advanced ages except James Greer, who was killed by a horse at 47.

One last item in this extremely disjointed affair. You may be curious about the origin of my name. My great-great-grandfather was born in Prague, was conscripted into Napoleon's army, and promptly deserted at the first opportunity by swimming the Rhein into Switzerland. Here this penniless refugee married the daughter of a well-to-do burgher of Bern named Ross (now where did that name come from?). Their son, Frederick, my great-grandfather, came to the U.S. So you see that although I frequently boast of my Slavic origin, I am but 1/16 Slav.

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\* Can't remember the child's name; haven't seen him in years.



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My appetite is so huge that I nearly perish from hunger between meals. I get up at 0600 and turn in at 2200 one week, and get up at 0900 and turn in at 0100 the next. Soon I will get two days a week off. So you see I get plenty of sleep. My actual working hours are only about 10 per day.

I shall find out about Columbia and Yale. Either would be quite satisfactory to me. However, it looks as though it might be a tight squeeze to get in at midyear.

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Tennis balls are readily available here . . . .

Your observations of the young men at Ft. Wright were very interesting. Do you detect a note of "The world owes me a living", in their complaints?

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Do keep up the fine stream of letters. They do me all the good in the world.

September 9, 1945

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The new point system has just been announced, which gives me  $43 \frac{1}{4}$  or  $43 \frac{1}{2}$  depending upon a small technicality. . . . .

The move I managed to wiggle out of was Guam. I don't particularly care for Guam. It is too hot and muggy. However, I might still go, or I might go to Japan or China. The only real objection is the fact that the mail service would not be nearly as good. It might make a difference of 3 weeks or a month in getting back, too. As a consequence I am trying to avoid any such move. The only scenery I am interested in right now is my very lovely fiancée. You were indeed sweet not to have pressed me for details of confidential matters during the war. . . . . There are still some parts of my duties that I suppose I am not to tell of for a while yet. But most of it I can.

It is all too long for a single letter, but if you can stand it in installments, I'll drop a bit from time to time.

My father wanted me to keep a diary, but regulations forbade. He remembered how his father forgot the very interesting experiences he had as a member of Quantrell's band during the Civil War. Grandfather Bedichek had a remarkable attraction for bullets, but a strong physique, since he survived seven bullet wounds.

I had always heard how veterans refused to talk of their experiences, and I suppose the ones who have horrible experiences do wish to forget them. My own experiences have not made me either reluctant or eager to talk of them. I like to talk, and if anyone wishes to hear of the things I have seen or done in the last four years, I'll oblige.

My active duty commenced in Nov. '41, in New Orleans, where I was a member of the intelligence organization. I don't think I should say very much about this now, except that my work was concerned with enemy submarine operations in the Gulf, and that it was very interesting. In Sept. '42, I took a short course in anti-submarine warfare in Miami.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, I applied for sea duty and was rejected solely because of my duties. A few months later I applied again, and was ordered in Dec. '42 to Princeton Univ. for a two-month course.

It was a surprisingly good course, and I liked the town, since it was all "university" and that made me feel at home. I renewed the acquaintanceship I had made with Dr. Dodd & his wife in 1939.

In Feb. '43 I was ordered to Amphibious Forces, Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk, who assigned me to training duty at Solomons, Md. This was my first acquaintanceship with this truly fantastic branch of the Navy. Fantastic for the stupidity and inefficiency of the senior officers, and for the heavy responsibilities given to young and green officers.

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September 11, 1945

I could certainly go to Japan or China if I wish, but if I ask for it, this would be taken to mean that I don't care when I get out . . . .

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Had a letter from Mrs. Graves today. Seems Chrys turned down a chance to be on the war criminals prosecution staff at the Nurmberg trials. She doesn't understand why. I'm going to tell her. Perhaps people generally do not understand just how much we all want to go home.

All my life I'll remember that terrible feeling I had going up the gangway into the S S Matsonia for the trip back here in June. A few hours before I had held you in my arms, and at the moment I was leaving without having any idea of when I'd see you again, except that it would be months at best. I really felt like running away! All the men have the same feeling.

Autobiography for today:

The Chesapeake Bay is a lovely place except for the climate, and Solomons is a minor resort place, with summer houses in the trees along the shore. I could have enjoyed my stay there, except for the management of the base, which was stupid and corrupt. Any military organization is full of graft, but seldom is it as open and flagrant as it was at Solomons. (The C.O. was removed while I was there, sent overseas to England as punishment, and then promoted to captain.)

Several hundred officers idled there, waiting for assignment to LST's and LCI's. We were supposed to be "in training", so we got a good deal of pushing around. Many were ex-enlisted men with 15 to 25 years of enlisted and commissioned service, yet they were put in knot-tying classes held by seamen, second class. We were also required to take the examination for seaman, first class, which the C.O. explained was designed to show us how stupid we were. This gentleman, incidentally, was never seen in a sober state during my stay there.

However, a few weeks after I arrived, I was put to work teaching navigation to prospective LST and LCI navigators. This was most satisfying, since my pupils were my brother officers, were intelligent, eager to learn, and were not at all hesitant to express their appreciation for my efforts. It was work which I could see the immediate value of, and although 6 hours a day, 7 days a week, is very exhausting, I enjoyed every minute of it.

Also during my stay, I learned to handle LCT's (105' landing craft), beaching them all over the Chesapeake. We used to put into the small fishing villages such as Tangier Is., Chrisfield, or St. Michaels, and have a regular liberty.

In June '43, my LST crew was made up, with myself as Exec., and the whole lot of us were sent to Panama City, Fla., to board an LST and take a practice cruise. From Panama City, we went to Pilottown, La., (near mouth of Miss.), joined a convoy, and went to Norfolk, Va.

On this trip I got to really practice my navigation, particularly since not an officer on board the LST had the foggiest notion of navigation.

Well, darling, I don't know if this is what you wanted in the way of an account of my travels. If you want just the places I visited, I can list them in half a page. I supposed, however, that you wanted a little explanation of my duties. Until tomorrow, then, I'll leave you at Norfolk.

September 12, 1945

You probably will be amused by the story I just got from home. When the point system was first announced, I wrote an angry letter home to the effect that it would take a good deal of pressure from Congress

before the Navy would consider turning more of us loose, and a good deal of pressure from the people before Congress would act. I think I wrote you the same thing. When the letter arrived at my home, Father was out of town and Mother read the letter, and acted at once.

She immediately wrote Tom Connally and Lyndon Johnson, not to the effect that something should be done to get the men home, but that something should be done to get B. G. Bedichek home. How maternal!

Now Father tells me she got a perfunctory acknowledgement from Johnson, but a telegram promising immediate and vigorous action from Connally.

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Had a very pleasant letter from Janet. She & Mary Ireland have been together a few days. . . .

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You have made a real hit with my mother through your letters. Father writes that if only I could make a similar impression on your mother then this would be something for the books.

Mother is a very strong minded person, but she has such a horror of imposing on her daughters and daughter-in-law that I am sure we'll never have any strained family relations.

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September 13, 1945

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My commanding officer released the first officers to come under the point system readily enough, but he is beginning to act a bit obstinate about the rest. Thank the Lord I don't have an important job!

This new work schedule is easy. 0715 to 1645 for a week, then 1615 to 0045 the next. Starting next weekend, we get two days a week off. The Navy is trying to spread the work, so they can make a case for retention of as many people as possible. Incidentally, although I would have enough points under the Army, Marine, or Coast Guard systems, I still do not have enough under the Navy system. Yet the Navy is escaping most of the public criticism!

The answer is that the Navy has always had more efficient lobbyists in Washington. At the Naval Academy we were taught the necessity of good public relations, and how the Navy had always had a better record with Congress than the Army.

Today's installment of autobiography:

From Norfolk my crew was sent back to Solomons in an LCT, the conventional amphibious transportation in the Chesapeake Bay area. Naturally, there was no food provided, although the base at Norfolk took ration credits for our food. This business of transporting men is one of the blackest outrages perpetrated by the Amphibious Forces, Atlantic, and is too long a story for me to tell now, but it resembles very much the stories you have heard of the transportation of prisoners by the Japs or Germans.

A few days after returning to Solomons, we were sent to pick up our ship at Evansville, Ind. On July 22, 1943, we started down the Ohio River, then the Miss. to New Orleans. Ten days of outfitting there, and then to Panama City, Fla., for shakedown. This took two days instead of the usual three weeks, because the authorities considered our ship so much faster advanced in training and organization than the average.

Then to Gulfport, Miss. for cargo, then back to New Orleans for an LCT on our deck, and on Aug. 17, 1943, we sailed for the Canal with two subchasers for escort.

(continued tomorrow)

September 14, 1945

The time is 0100, and my sole duties for the next three hours consist of answering a telephone which will not ring. And why not? Because all the people who might be calling are asleep. What a silly waste! but that is what the Navy is made of. The WPA never approached the leaf-raking and boondoggling of the services.

I note by the papers that the Japanese Navy has already demobilized a million of its million and a half men. Just who did win the war, anyway?

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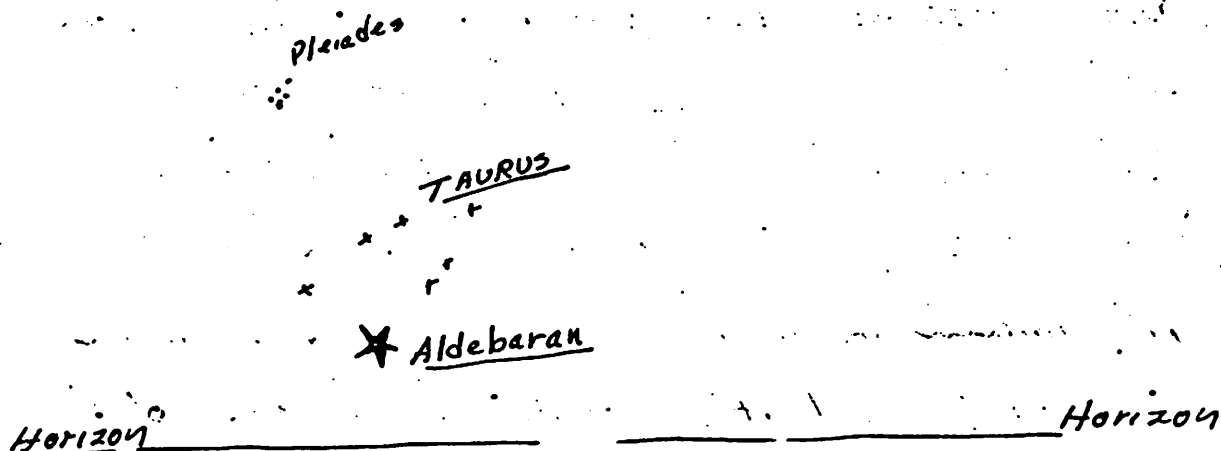
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My sister Mary Virginia (Dr. Carroll) is back from East, where she has been studying some late anesthesia techniques. She is going to have another child in March. How she manages to have a family and a career both is a mystery to me. Father says he won't admit that she has done both successfully until she has reared the children properly. As it is, her oldest daughter, Lillian Lee, aged seven, has made some very pointed comments about the lack of home life the family has.

I'm trying to wangle a new job for myself out here, but because of my "limited duty" status there doesn't look like much chance of success. There is a 153 foot sea-going tug which needs a new skipper, and I've put in for the job. As I say, it would be a major miracle if I were successful, but it's worth the chance. I'd be running in & out of here, I'd have just as good chance of getting back on points, and the tug

just might be headed back for the States for decommissioning soon, because it is quite old. Anyway I'd be a lot happier being a sailor again, even if it were something that old & small.

I have another good star for you to learn if you wish. This one rises a little before midnight this time of year, so you should be able to catch it on your horseback rides or other social affairs. It is Aldebaran, or in Arabic "the Follower" so named because it follows the Pleiades so closely. It is the eye in the constellation Taurus. Look for it low in the east, about midnight.



September 15, 1945

Autobiography continued:

We had a peaceful seven day cruise through the Gulf & Caribbean, sometimes but a few miles off shore, but most of the time in the open sea. This was my first experience at navigating by ourselves, without another ship to check positions with. It is true we had two escorts, but these lads knew practically nothing of navigation, and relied on us to tell them where they were.

We arrived in Cristobal late one evening, discharged our troops we had brought from N.O., and then moved to Coco Solo. The next evening we transited the Canal, and tied up in Balboa. After two days of liberty we were underway again with three other LST's for California, 2800 miles away.

The trip took 13 days, ending at San Pedro, and was quite pleasant.

The trip took 13 days, ending at San Pedro, and was quite pleasant. Most of the time we were within sight of that desolate volcanic west coast of Central America. (continued tomorrow)

September 15, 1945

Your friend's description of Yale Law School as quite small fitted with the impression I had. With all the returning men, millions of whom will get out before I do, they will probably be filled up for some time to come. However, I ought to get a line on this from the school, that is, if they aren't too exclusive to answer correspondence.

. . . I wonder how exclusive Columbia is? After all, it matters very little as far as education is concerned which I go to. If you had rather be in N.Y. than N. Haven, then that alone is of more weight than any other factor.

. . . . .

As far as Harvard is concerned, well, please don't quote me, but I just don't think I could take it. I don't think I'm snobbish, but there is a bit of a mark on their product that is mildly irritating in small doses, but unbearable in large. . . Honey, am I being too narrow-minded?

I'm sorry I haven't had my picture taken yet. The difficulty is nothing but vanity, I fear. I just haven't yet been able to get a decent haircut. In spite of all my directions the lads here manage to well-nigh scalp me each sitting. But Monday I get shorn again, and within 3 or 4 days I'll have the likeness recorded, be it good, bad, or indifferent.

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September 16, 1945

The air is full of rumors about reductions in the point scores. It is impossible, of course, to determine their accuracy. However, the best-authenticated story . . . .

I am enclosing a picture of my sister Mary and her children. Mary, as usual, had her eyes shut when the shutter snapped. She always had a talent for that sort of thing when we were children. I'm so fond of the older of the two children in the picture, Lillian Lee, that I fear I will be a very doting parent when we have children.

Ran into a Navy lieutenant yesterday that must have the record for sea duty--48 months continuously--and he still doesn't have enough points!

Also enclosed is another picture taken aboard LST 240 when I commanded it.

Autobiography - continued:

At San Pedro we discharged 600 tons of oil we had picked up at N.O. as cargo, then we dropped down to San Diego and shed our LCT. From there to Hueneme, Cal., discharged the cargo loaded at Gulfport, Missl., and back to San Diego.

There we worked a couple of weeks training troops in the art of disembarking equipment on a beachhead. We would pick up a load, run 60 miles out to San Clemente Is., wait for darkness, and beach. Then we would reload and return to San Diego. The miserable fog made everything touchy. I got stranded in a small boat one night on San Clemente, and I can assure you I was a miserable creature the next morning.

Finally we got orders to Mare Is. for the latest conversions, and an LCT on our deck, then back to Hueneme for loading, to Richmond for fuel, and to pier 56 for troops.

On the afternoon of Oct. 15, 1943 we sailed, unescorted, in a company with five other LST's for Pearl. The voyage was not pleasant. Our passengers were part of a Carrier Aircraft Service Unit, and they were hard to get along with. We had several amphibious "big-shots" in the convoy, and they were always unpleasant. It was a real relief to arrive in Pearl on the afternoon of Oct. 25.

(continued next letter)

September 17, 1945

Only a short letter this evening; I'm all tired out after an unexpectedly hard day. After all the high-powered loafing I've been doing I'm not used to a real day's work. But it was a real pleasure.

Demobilization prospects look brighter. Congress seems to be getting the word. The only thing to fear now is that Congress and the public will fall for the soothing syrup our be-medalled and be-starred big shots are pouring over the air-waves.

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Travelogue continued:

In Oct. '43 there was high excitement for LST 240. We were to be a part of the first campaign in the Central Pacific: the Gilbert Islands. My ship was to take part in the recapture of Abemama Atoll. Charts were studied, contingencies foreseen, and then we weren't unloaded in time to put a combat load aboard, so another ship got our job.

To add to our woes the skipper, who was ordinarily a fine ship handler rammed another LST and it looked for a while as though he might be in real trouble.

Then we got a job, and a good one, too. We loaded some AAF personnel and equipment for Nanomea in the Ellice Is., south and east of the Gilberts. Our forces had landed here a couple of months previously, built an airstrip, but the planes had no maintenance personnel.

So after a very pleasant thirteen day cruise in company with one other LST, escorted by a PC and a YMS, we hove in sight of the first atoll I ever saw.

Three days later we were empty, and headed for Funafuti, still in the Ellice Is. The sun was nearly overhead, and the sea was quite smooth. It might have been a pleasure cruise. Incidentally in reaching Nonomea, we crossed both the Date Line and the Equator, so you see your husband-to-be is a "shell-back" and a member of the Society of the Golden Dragon.

(continued tomorrow)

September 19, 1945

Good news today! All officers in the Freight Division who have better than 48 points were notified that they would get their demobilization orders next week. . . .

I've been working on refrigerator ships lately. Handling thousands of tons of meat, fruit, and other chilled and frozen products. This type of cargo requires a good deal of care.

Stevedoring is an entirely distinct profession from that of sea-faring, although ~~the two are allied~~. It seems a pity that my knowledge of these professions will in a large part be wasted. Of course, no knowledge is wholly wasted. Any information is worth having for the sheer pleasure of having it. Maybe someday I'll practice Admiralty law.

It is hard for me to believe that three months have indeed passed since we were together . . .

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September 20, 1945

Three days without letters and then three letters in one day! And apparently that is the way you are getting my letters.

I'm sorry I didn't explain who Dr. Dodd was. I usually am more lucid. He is the president of Princeton, and a friend of the Duncalfs' & Villavasos' whom I met when I visited them on Cape Cod in 1939.

The course I had at Princeton was, as you supposed, the basic one. It was, however, remarkably good for such a short-length affair.

My family is indeed long lived. Grandfather Bedichek died at 74 or 75, Grandfather Greer was killed by a horse at 47, Grandmother Bedichek died of old age at 88, and Grandmother Greer is still living at 85.

I'm enclosing a picture of my sister Sally with her offspring. She is rather tall, has hair nearly the same touch as mine.

In 1935 I happened to have a couple of days to kill in Washington, D.C., so I looked up a first cousin, once removed, of mine, Josephine Craven Chandler (first cousin of father's). She was a lady of about 80, the recent widow of a New England manufacturer of plows.

She suggested that since I was in the territory whence most of my ancestors came, that I should look up the old home places. So we ran around Virginia and Maryland looking them up, introducing ourselves to extremely distant cousins, seeing the place where Great-great-grandfather so & so did such & such.

The place where my Grandmother Bedichek was born (1849) turned out to be a comfortable 12 or 14 room brick affair, in fine shape. The reason was that it had recently been purchased by a multi-millionaire, who built a house costing hundreds of thousands (\$700,000 I think) and was using the old house for a caretaker's house.

Great-Grandfather Craven was an extremely negligent man, who lost the moderate sized plantation he inherited, and was forced to move west. He took up free land in Illinois, in 1849, starting on the journey a few weeks after my grandmother, and her twin were born. Souther Illinois was "border territory" during the Civil War, and afterwards part of the family became used to the North, and thus converted to Yankees. Father laughs about how they spoke proudly of how Grandfather Craven set his slaves free by bringing them into free territory. Father says this is true, but that the old rascal never told them that they were free, and the relationship never actually changed. Cousin Josephine is one of the "northerners".

The two points a month is still hearsay and not yet official.. However, I think the chances are much in favor of it being true. . . .

Last letter that I gave part of my Navy history I think I left you at Funafuti in the Ellice Is. Here we loaded aviation gasoline and food to take to Tarawa in the Gilberts on Dec. 5, a couple of weeks after the initial assault. By this time the place was cleaned up except for a few snipers.

However, the Japs used to send a few planes over each night and keep us awake. We found that facilities were not available for discharging our cargo immediately, so we requested and obtained permission to discharge it ourselves. Naturally we wanted to get that damned gasoline (200 55gal. drums) off the ship as long as our little yellow brothers were dropping bombs around.

So the British Commissioners rounded up some natives, and we and the natives did a bang-up job unloading. Don't ever let anyone kid you about the "lazy Central Pacific natives". Those boys really work.  
(Cont. next letter)

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September 21, 1945

Mother wrote that my sister Sally has another son. That's two for her. Mary has two daughters, so it looks as though they are specializing.

About half my office is leaving on points shortly, so I suppose there will be some real work around here. I hope so. It is good for my morale.

Honey, ten hours a day is not bad at all. One thing I have learned from the war, or at least has come to me during the war is the ability to concentrate. The lack of this ability was the curse of my life formerly. It kept me from realizing but a fraction of my potentialities.

For instance, my college record is nothing to brag about. I had about 8 or 10 "A's" above a "B" average. Not  $\Phi\beta K$ . In law school four or five poor grades pulled an otherwise fine average down to between 77 or 78, in the top 15 or 20 percent, but still nothing to be proud of.

Secretly (I couldn't admit it without seeming to boast) I am ashamed of it. If only I had had the ability then that I have now.

Darling, I am so anxious to get started in the practice so that I can prove to the world what I am able to do. Do I sound too egotistical? Probably I am. It is a fault, but not an undiluted one.

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September 21, 1945

A : A rough day today. I finished loading one refrigerator ship and started on another. This latter one has a refrigeration system that is highly efficient, as I discovered to my discomfort.

I would have to go into the hold where the temperature was 5 to 10 degrees above zero to straighten things out, and when I came back out in to the warm sun I would ache all over. Right now I am a very tired lad.

Not that I'm complaining a bit. That tired feeling at the end of a day is at the same time a very good feeling. The only drawback to law is the lack of physical exertion ~~in the practices itself~~. That, is, you have to get your exercise somewhere else.

Travels of Bedichek, today's edition:

After hanging around Tarawa nearly two weeks, we sailed for Pearl on Dec. 17, 1943. A few days out the weather got very rough, and the trip took over two weeks. About the same time the weather got rough, one of the men became very sick with an intestinal stoppage. The weather was too rough to operate, so we were very fearful that he would die. By some miracle the man survived to Pearl, and there he got the operation, which was successful.

We had some wild nights on that trip, with ships breaking down ahead, and racing back through the darkness out of control. LST's are very subject to failure of the steering engine, and this makes for uncertainty indeed when in convoy.

On Dec. 31, we reached Pearl, and immediately commenced preparations for the Marshalls campaign. We had celebrated Christmas at sea.

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September 22, 1945

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Of my ship's complement the skipper and engineering officer had been years at sea, I had 3 months (mid'm cruise), both cooks (about 2 yrs. each), two of the black gang (engineers), the quartermaster (a year), the bos'n (6 months). This is about one of ten, but it was more than any other LST crew I ever heard of. The skipper & I picked the crew with the greatest care and difficulty at Solomons, and our fellow officers openly admired and envied our success. It was agreed that we got away with murder in getting more than our share of experienced men.

Isn't it incredible that ships put to sea with crews like that? Only in the Amphibious Force would such be done. A battleship skipper would refuse to leave port with a crew like that. And the LST that I

made a practice cruise on, from N.O. to Norfolk, had only one man on board who had any experience at sea, the bos'n.

Our cargo from Gulfport was "general", mainly construction equipment. The two items that stick in my mind, though, were 28 tons of carbide and 6 tons of detonators, the latter picked up in N.O. and discharged at Coco Solo, C.Z.

Here is an amusing incident of the trip from N.O. to the Canal. We had a full load of army troops as passengers, including a half-dozen officers. One major was joking with the skipper and myself about navigation the third evening out. "You mean to tell me," he asked, "that just by squinting at the stars through your sextants, that you know exactly where you are? You know we haven't seen land for days now."

It so happened that the skipper and I had had excellent sights that evening, and our position was but a few hours from the tip of Yucatan. With the good weather we had, we could predict quite accurately the time we would be in sight of the two principal lighthouses on the part of Yucatan we were approaching. So the skipper leaned back, winked at me, and said, "Well, its eight thirty now. At just about nine thirty the quartermaster will be in the door there reporting that a group flashing (four flashes) white light will be off the starboard bow. That will be Cape Catoche. Nine minutes later he'll be back with the word that a flashing white light is five on the starboard bow. That will be Contoy Is."

The major laughed good humoredly, and we all had coffee. The skipper had made a pretty bold boast, but our sights were so good that evening I knew he could not be more than ten or fifteen minutes off in his guess. The denouement was perfect, however, for at nine thirty on the nose the quartermaster was in the doorway with the word, and was back just nine minutes later. The major was staggered. He told us that without doubt there were no two finer navigators in the world; that he had no idea such accuracy was possible. We were a bit surprised that our predictions had come out on the minute, but we never let on, and took a strict "ho hum" attitude about the whole affair, which increased the major's respect.

Were you able to see the Vega, Deneb, Altair triangle? Its almost overhead right after dark now.

. . . . .

The question of career vs. children is a vexatious one, at least for any woman with brains and energy as you have. As you say, bringing up children is a full time job, and you would be very unhappy without children. Yet your ego demands that you prove your ability to hold down a well paid position. As far as I can see, there is no blueprint for a perfect solution.

Shortly after I was born (a year or so), my mother went to work. My Grandmother Bedichek was living with us, so until I was eleven, she took the place of my mother. No real harm was done, but this fact annoyed my mother no end. She stoutly maintained that she was working for the money only, and it is true that it was needed, but the most compelling reason was ego.

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#### *War diary, continued:*

From Dec. 31, '43, to Jan. 19, '44, was the usual hectic period of outfitting and combat loading. We were very thankful that we managed to miss the "dummy run", or practice operation, for this is always more wearying than the actual operation. Also ships become disabled in these affairs quite readily.

We missed the "dummy run" because we were scheduled to duplicate our job in the Tarawa affair, and "back up the line" with a cargo a few days after the landing. Then, suddenly, we were in the initial phase, due to the disabling of a ship a few days before shoving-off time.

On Jan. 16, the skipper was sent back to the States for new construction and LST 240 was my ship.

Honey, my heart was full of fear at the responsibility, and I couldn't confide such a thing to anyone. On Jan. 17 I was scheduled to move my ship from one part of Pearl Harbor to another, which takes some ship handling skill. And although I had watched the handling of the ship at close quarters, I had never done it. And I had watched the skipper, an experienced ship handler, bungle things a bit sometimes. So I was scared.

Well, I backed out of the slip alright, made two or three turns as required by the channel, ordered the mess boy to bring a cup of coffee to the bridge, and from that moment on, I had all the confidence in the world. Darling, the feeling was wonderful!

*Continued tomorrow.*

September 24, 1945

Persistent rumors about the reduction in points . . . .

Admiral Nimitz has returned here from Guam to expedite the demobilization. Apparently he really means business, and the whole island is buzzing with the latest story about what he did or said to this or that outfit who was holding back their eligibles. As one of the men here said, "He's the enlisted man's choice for mayor."

Travels, cont.

After two days of lying at the dolphins in West Loch, P.H., we got underway for Kwajalein on Jan. 19, 1944 (my 26th birthday). In my convoy there were about eight LST's and about the same number of LCI's, escorted by a destroyer, a DMS (destroyer-minesweeper) and three SC's (subchasers).

An amusing incident occurred as we passed the sea-buoy on the way out of Pearl. An officer came up to the bridge (I was handling the ship personally, since we were assuming position) and said, "Captain, we have a couple of Army men who aren't supposed to be on board."

Sure enough, there were two Army radio technicians who had come aboard to calibrate the LVT radios. (I was carrying 17 LVT's.)

It was typical of the mad rush attendant upon shoving off on an operation. These men were told that if they heard the engines start while they were at work, not to worry, that the ship was merely shifting berths. So they did not worry, finished their work, and came topside, and there was Diamond Head on the port hand! We were about 8 miles out. The only thing to do was take them along.

As I told them, they were lucky. They got a month's vacation and a star for their service ribbons, something they could not have thought of when they were sent out to West Loch to check some radios.

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September 25, 1945

Someday I'll point out on the chart the ground strategy of the Pacific War. It is pretty hard to do it in letters.

The Allies were never driven completely out of New Guinea, and the Japs were still fighting there on VJ day. At one time, however, about all we had there was Port Moresby. New Caledonia was occupied without opposition early in '42. Guadalcanal was invaded Aug. 7, 1942.

The Central Pacific campaign started in mid '43 with the unopposed occupation of the Ellice Is., or rather three of them in this order, Funafuti, Nukufetau, and Nanomea. I've been to Funafuti, Nanomea, and have seen many others from the sea, such as Nui, Nukufetau, Nukumau, and others which I do not remember now.

The occupation of Nanomea, the last of the Ellice Is. to be occupied, was accomplished in September '43. We were there in Nov. '43, bringing in the AAF ground crews.

At the same time we were there, the assault on Tarawa, Makim, and Apemama in the Gilberts was taking place. These were the only Gilbert Is. with any Japs on them so when they were all dead three days after the initial assault, the Gilberts were ours. I said "all dead", but actually the last Jap was disposed of on Tarawa about six months later.

Resuming my narrative--

The trip to Kwajalein took twelve days, which passed pleasantly enough. We passed between the Jap-held islands without incident. (Our planes & ships had neutralized their airstrips.)

On the morning of Jan. 31 '44, we rendezvoused with the other convoys, and I ran around at top speed looking at one transport after another until I found the one which had the infantrymen assigned to my ship. In the meantime the sky was full of planes (all ours) and the sea full of ships.

An hour before daylight the assault had begun with a bombardment by the heavy ships. It looked like great orange splashes against a murky horizon. About eight, the LVT's from some ships went ashore on one of the small islands, and by noon the artillery was beginning to land. About 3 AM, men had landed from rubber boats on the two tiny islands guarding Gea Pass into the lagoon, so we had free access inside, and the minesweepers had already begun sweeping the lagoon.

By 10 AM I found my transport, hove to, and the men began coming over in small boats and clambering up my sides on cargo nets. They were all aboard before noon, and all I had to do was hang around until the next morning when they were to be put ashore in the first wave of the main assault on Kwajalein Is. itself. (Kwajalein Atoll is composed of many small islands completely enclosing a lagoon, and of these Kwajalein Is. is the largest.)

At nightfall with 7 other LST's I formed up to maneuver all night. It was raining fitfully, no moon, and visibility was very bad. The formation was poor, and altogether the thing was one night-long nightmare.  
(continued tomorrow)

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September 27, 1945

The Navy says over 800,000 out of 3,500,000 will be out of the Navy by Christmas. I hope that means me. The fact that I do not get the 10 points for dependency is what puts me behind the 8-ball. There weren't anything like 800,000 in the Navy when I went in. And yet there may be that many discharged ahead of me. . . .



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War Diary cont.:

We fumbled around all of the night of Jan. 31 - Feb. 1 '44 in rain and darkness in constant danger of collision. Finally, about 4 AM the last three of us broke off from the rest due to the great confusion, and maneuvered on our own. About 5:30 AM I headed for the line of departure (the place I was to discharge my LVT's). The only thing I could see was the bursts of our shells, but I figured the battleship boys were probably firing at the right island, so headed for it.

By 7:45 the three of us were in good position, but the rest of the ships were still hull down. A fourth ship joined us, and we launched our LVT's loaded with the infantry we had picked up the day before. This was about 4,000 yards from Red beach on the south end of Kwajalein Is. I caught hell for the slowness of my launching, but it was done with 45 minutes to spare, and in my own defense I must say that it was the first time we had ever handled LVT's. The Army was new to the job too. So my only casualty was a pair of ears burned from the sarcastic remarks my group commander made over the voice radio. The rest of the LST's were in position, and since they were carrying other than 1st wave troops, their lateness did no harm. However, if I had followed them as I was ordered to, a very bad situation would have resulted, since I was carrying 1st wave troops. This is an example where disobedience to orders was essential. And I never, never, got a reprimand for disobeying those orders. I was certainly waiting for such a reprimand. I'd have had a lot of fun with whoever delivered it.

With my LVT's and troops gone, I went to an assigned area and stood by for further orders.

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You notice how I go into considerable detail over the landing operations. In these affairs a good deal happened in a short time, a good deal that was notable, anyway. And I thought you might be interested in a LST-eye view of some rather exciting events.

September 27, 1945

The Honolulu branch of the Freight Division has folded up, so the personnel has been moved to Pearl. Since there were a large number of civilians working in the Honolulu branch who have now come over here, the place is full of tiny Asiatic girls. Also, there is a great deal of bustle & furniture moving going on now.

Another rumor has it that the point reduction will be five. . .

Once an officer is released, he seems to get transportation within ten days. . . .

The quotation you sent me from 1 Corinthians is splendid. It is one of the old favorites, like the "swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks" from Isaiah. I can't remember "Chapter and Verse"; think it is Chap. 4. The ability to cite "chapter and verse" and to remember the full quotation and the context when someone tries a fragmentary quotation is an impressive ability. The only trouble is that when you have that ability you tend to over-use it.

Large wall maps will make an excellent decoration for the library walls. . . . At home I keep at least one large map on the wall just to improve my geography.

Isn't it astonishing how poor the average person's knowledge of geography is? There must be a flaw in the teaching methods used in this subject.

There probably will be some shortage of professors, but I do not think it will be very serious, since most of them ought to be back on the job shortly.

The University of Texas Law School has done remarkably well in spite of the War and the Regent trouble in keeping a good faculty. Both Stumberg and Walker, the two most noted of the professors who left during the War are both back.

On the subject of Oil and Gas there is no better authority in Texas than Walker, and since Texas has more oil and gas than the other states, that makes him an important author on the subject. As a matter of fact, I think he is by far the best writer on the subject anywhere in the country. And he is a very fine teacher, too. I made my best grade in law school in Oil and Gas.

Dean McCormick, who is a noted authority on Evidence, was at the Law School during the war.

Narrative, cont.

Along about 3:00 PM I got an order over the voice radio "Anchor in the lagoon prior to 1900." Now at this point I was a very tired lad, so I said to myself, "It is certainly prior to 1900; I'll just find myself a spot inside the lagoon out of sight of everyone and get some sleep."

So I headed for Gea Pass, about 6 miles away (I'll show you on a chart some day) and went on into the lagoon, following the buoys dropped by the minesweepers showing areas free from mines.

As soon as I dropped the hook, about 6 or 7 miles inside the lagoon, I got three LCT's alongside, and I immediately began to give them ammunition, water, fuel, and sent a repair party to repair the main engines on one of them.

Then about 5:00 PM, I got a message from my group commander telling me to go to a spot about 10 miles away to pick up some LVT's. When I told him where I was he said "You should have anticipated that the orders to anchor in the lagoon would be changed." That was a hot one wasn't it? Should have anticipated that orders would be changed!

Anyway, I pleaded that I was servicing three LCT's and could not be disturbed. But at 10:30 PM my efficient engineer had repaired the LCI's engines and I was forced to get under way.

Cont tomorrow-

September 28, 1945

The first of the officers who were detached here day before yesterday have been assigned transportation leaving day after tomorrow. . . .

Another rumor--points to be reduced to 44 by Nov. 1. . . .

By the way, have you told your family about our decision to go east for a while? Your father, you know, was looking around for a job for me, and I don't suppose there is any point in his finding one that requires my immediate presence. On the other hand, if he could keep his eyes open for something when we will be coming back, it would help. By that time, things are going to be pretty tight on the job front, I assure you.

Treasury and Justice Dept. jobs for lower case attorneys are usually under Civil Service, so any additional time I spend in study before taking the exams will be a big help.

One of the nicest things about getting out of the service will be separation from the slimy graft and corruption that seem to be a necessary ingredient of waging war. It is like living in a garbage dump. Sometimes I feel like I must be the only person without a graft, but, of course, this isn't so. If, however, there is ever a business transaction in which the government did not get cheated, I have not heard of it. .A. .

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I've managed to lay hands on a limited amount of good whiskey lately, but I think I'll go back to being a teetotaler. I opened a fifth of 7 yr.-old Scotch yesterday, served a round of drinks and then left for work. Today I went to pour myself a small nip and found that one small nip was all that was left. Two drinks--price \$4.20! When you open a bottle around here you have to drink like mad to protect your interests. And I can't do that. As a matter of fact, when nothing but mediocre liquor was available out here I drank absolutely nothing.

Note of the moment--the officer across the desk from me is arranging for the transportation of the Packard convertible coupe of the NY Times Tokio correspondent out to Tokio. Nice to be a big-shot, huh?

Resuming on the question of liquor, you'll never have to worry about your husband becoming a drunkard. I like a small snort once in a while, but it doesn't seem habit forming for me. But coffee! I drink too much of that.

#### Pacific Campaigns, cont.

At 10:30 PM Feb. 1, I got under way with considerable profanity and bad grace, and fumbled for the lagoon entrance. The moon was obscured, a light rain was falling, charts were inadequate, but I had a small early-model radar set, which proved on this occasion as on many others simply invaluable. The numerous small islets of Kwajalein Atoll were spread across the screen. Between two of them, Gea Is. and Ninni Is., was enough water for a ship to get through, the channel, in other words. Between the others was coral reef. So I picked two likely looking "pips" on the radar screen and headed between them. Pardon me while I boast, honey, but my officers were telling me I had the wrong two islands, but I disregarded this and headed between--Gea and Ninni.

Once out of the lagoon I headed down to lie off Ennylabegan Is. (the one next to Kwajalein Is.) to pick up my LVT's. On the way down LST 78 directly ahead of me was rammed by LST 272 and a large hole torn in the side of the former, through which the light shown. These ramblings in darkness and rain are a frequent occurrence in wartime. LST 78 did not sink, and, by a strange coincidence, she is tied up at the dock right outside the window here as I write.

Through one of the conventional mess-ups, my LVT's were sent to wait for me near another island, so I spent another bad night on the bridge, avoiding collision.

Cont. Tomorrow--

My great-grandmother Lee died at 92. And her hair never turned white. This must be a strong family trait, because her daughter's (my grandmother Greer) hair was not completely white the last time I saw her, and my mother's hair is as black as when she was a girl. (Mother is 60.)

. . . . .

September 30, 1945

The rains have come down out of the mountains to the lowlands, and at the moment it is pouring as though all the sins of the wicked world had to be washed away in the next five minutes. I wish I were looking at it from the refuge of a cave in the hills instead of the pitifully prosaic third floor of Building 474.

The water tower on Ford Island is almost obscured, although it is but twelve or fourteen hundred yards distant, and the time is 12:40 PM.

Most of the officers who got their points on Sept. 15 have left now. . . .

At this point Ford Is. is completely obscured, and visibility is down to about four to five hundred yards. It is the kind of weather I do not like to see at night from the bridge of a ship I am conning in tight formation.

Narrative, cont.

In the early morning of Feb. 2, 1944 I got a message directing me to go to Red beach on Kwajalein Is. and deliver ammunition.

On these operations LST's performed several functions, one of which was the supplying of ammunition to the troops on the beach. To this end we had a couple of hundred tons of assorted ammunition, all fused, piled on the main deck. Flame thrower fluid, gasoline, TNT blocks, 81 mm, 60 mm, 75 mm, 4.5 in (white phosphorous) shells, 30 cal, 50 cal., 37 mm, as a matter of fact just about everything used for killing you could think of. The troops convey their needs to the Beachmaster, who tells the LST over the voice radio, and who send DUKWS (amphibious trucks) out after it.

So I went to Red beach, where the troops needed 81 mm ammo, which I had and 75 mm, with a particular type fuse, which I did not have. The DUKWS came out, came up my ramp (I had the bow doors open and ramp down) took on their loads, and returned to the water. Since I was very close to the reef, they had but a short distance via water and land to firing line.

This went on all day, interspersed with meaningless trips to Ennylebegan Is. about 8 miles away, to pick up LVT's which were not there. This nonsensical confusion led me to make some caustic remarks about the organization over the voice radio, which were picked up by the monitor on the flagship, and recorded for posterity in the "Observers' Comments" on the operation. Far from getting in trouble about the affair, the observers commented that such confusion must be straightened out.

About 5:00 PM I went back to Ennylebegan Is. and my LVT's were actually there this time. I commenced taking them aboard, but by this time the weather was getting worse and after five were aboard the capt. in command of the LVT's suggested that I convoy the rest of them up to where they were going 10 miles away. This I did, and then proceeded inside the lagoon again, and anchored. By this time it was 10:00 PM, and my group commander told me to come aboard the next morning at 0645 to receive my orders for the day's operation. Mind you, I had left the LVT's on a small nearby island, per orders, for them to be repaired. This fact is important in light of the peculiar occurrences of the next day.

Next morning bright & early I with my fellow LST skippers was on the LST flagship, LST 31, ready to hear the word. The group commander told us that we were to take a small island in the atoll (the name escapes me at the moment). A particular commodore, not noted for acumen, was in command. The group commander handed us the operation plan with the explanation, "This is just for a guide, everything in it has been changed." He then went on to point out the jobs of the various other ships, and then he got to me.

"Now, Bedichek, here is your position in the line of departure," he said, pointing to a position on a diagram. "But what am I doing there, Commander?" I asked.

"Discharging troops in LVT's" he answered with a straight face. Immediately I sensed a doublecross. "Wait a minute, Commander, I told you last night that I had no LVT's!"

"Yes," he said, "I know that, and I told the Commodore that, and he said that you would discharge them anyway."

I have received more preposterous orders, both before and after this episode, but at the moment I thought the whole thing a bad dream.

The Commander asked, "Bedichek, do you know where there are any LVT's?"

"Well, sir," I answered, "I remember hearing some talk over the radio last night about sending them to \_\_\_ Is. for repairs."

"Good," he said. "Now you jump into your small boat, go over to that island, find the LVT's, get them on board, and be ready to get under way by 0900." (By this time it was 0745.)

So I did. I landed at a Jap dock, and started down the beach. About 200 yards down the beach I found 4 LVT's but no personnel. So I headed into the brush, keeping my fingers crossed against stepping on a land mine or running into a sniper. (It was only D+2, and there are bound to be snipers for days after this.)

In a few minutes I came across a Jap barracks, but little damaged by shell fire (the fighting had been light here). Inside were a number of sleeping men, and one of them I recognised as a 2nd Lt. Schacter (Army) one of the LVT officers from my own ship. So I woke him.

"Sorry to bother you, Schacter, but we have a small invasion this morning and I wonder if you'd like to come?"

"Can't say that I do, particularly. Am I supposed to?"

"Yes."

"O.K., but I have only 4 'gators (LVT's). I'll try the radio to round up some more."

"Fine," I said. "You'll see the ship about 1500 yards out, the bow doors are open and the ramp down."

So I left him and started back for the beach. There I ran into a Capt. Wort also an LVT officer, from another ship. (He was the fellow I had convoyed the night before.)

I put the same proposition up to him and he told me he could round up 8 LVT's. I was pretty happy by this time, so I went back to the ship where I found the group commander had been screaming and swearing his head off over the voice radio because I wasn't back with the LVT's.

Soon the LVT's came out to the ship, but just as I was loading aboard, they were recalled by the 7th Division LVT officer, who wanted them for repairs. So our informal invasion didn't come off.

I called the group commander and told him the story, asking him to give my apologies to the Commadore, but in spite of my best efforts I had failed to produce 17 LVT's in an hour and a half.

So I was instructed to stay where I was. An hour later he called for me, and then cancelled the message, so I returned to my anchorage. That night I got my first decent night's sleep in days, and the next day I took the LVT's back aboard, and moved down about 7 or 8 miles to Kwajalein Is. There the fight was nearly over, and I picked up about 400 very weary infantrymen (183 regiment).

We were told that night that these would form the reserve for an assault in the morning, but that little opposition was anticipated, so they probably would get a well-deserved rest.

-Cont-

You know, honey, all of this happened only a year and a half ago, but it already seems like it happened not to me but to someone else. I suppose in time I'll forget the sharp details. That's of no importance, however.

. . . . .

October 1, 1945

I received replies from both Yale and Columbia today. The former is accepting no graduate law students until next fall.

Columbia is, but they state that the applications are many times the admissions. I could qualify, but the greatest difficulty seems to be the lateness of my application.

However, if I get a Gov't job, there is no reason why I couldn't get one in the East, if you would like it. I don't think I'd like to stay there over a year, though. We can't afford to lose contact with the places and the people that the bread & beans will ultimately come from.

You don't think I would make a very dignified spectacle sitting around many months waiting for an Eastern law school to open, do you? I can't see it, myself. But maybe things will click on this Columbia deal. I hope so, because I've been sort of counting on it.

I'm glad you asked all those questions about LST's and such. I'd been assuming you knew more of them, and consequently my story must not have been drawing as good pictures in your mind as I thought it would.

An LST is 327 feet long and 50 feet broad. In other words, as long as a city block or a football field. A destroyer is about the same length, but much narrower, so that the LST, when loaded, is about twice the tonnage of the largest destroyers.

However, a destroyer has about three times the crew of an LST, and costs about three times as much to build. (LST, about 2 million dollars; destroyer, 7 million)

An LCT is 105 feet long, 32 feet broad, weighs about 140 tons, makes about 9 knots. (A knot is one sea mile (6,080 feet) per hour.)

A liberty ship is 441 feet long, makes 10 knots.

An LST makes 9-11 knots; a carrier 30 knots.

Thus you see an LST is quite slow, which got them their nickname "Large Slow Target".

An LST weighs about 2,000 tons empty, and over 4,000 tons loaded. We have had LST 240 loaded down to 4,700 tons.

So you see an LST, although larger than a destroyer, indeed as large as some light cruisers, is not nearly as important, because of its lower cost and fewer men.

When packed with 400 or 500 passengers, however, an LST skipper can get all the pains of responsibility of any destroyer skipper.

That is all a bit disjointed, but it should give you some idea of what you were asking about.

One of the members of the General Court Martial Board was around to my room this evening offering me a job on the Court. It would be very desirable, except for the fact that the Depot by its actions has now indicated that officers will be released as soon as they have points. It would be so on the Board also, but I don't like to change at this late date, particularly when the last bunch got out with only 48 points required.



My tennis has been suspended, of late, due to the fact that the only two Freight Office players have gone back on points. I do get some swimming in, however, and I think I have another tennis player located.

-Travels-

On the morning of Feb. 5, I got under way for the small islands north of Kwajalein Is. which were to be taken. Everything was in a state of great confusion, since no plans of the operation had been delivered to anyone. Finally a boat came alongside and delivered me an operation plan, but this proved practically useless. So I just ran up to the place where the action seemed to be centering, and stood by.

My group commander started screaming at me over the voice radio (he always screamed and swore when the slightest bit excited) that he wanted me to get in another position. He couldn't tell me just exactly what he wanted, so I just ran in circles while he tried to make up his alleged mind.

About the second circle I got a message from him to the effect that an Army officer would come aboard to take charge of another operation, that I would be joined by two medium tanks in LCM's (50 footers), and that a number of LCVP's (36 footers) would be assigned me for whatever use I needed them for. I was a little confused, as you doubtless are at this point, but it was soon explained.

A boat came alongside and a hardy looking Lt. Col. came up to the bridge.

"My name's Moore," he said, "I'm the commander of the reconnaissance outfit here and this morning a 20 man patrol landed on Gugewe Is. and was pinned down. We've got to relieve them.

He wanted to know how soon we could be there. I told him about 45 minutes unless he wanted me to outrun the LCM's. No, let them keep up, and bring the tank commander alongside and the infantry commander to the bridge.

So I set off for Gugewe Is. at 7 knots, and signalled the LCM with the tank officer alongside. A 2nd Lt. came up, and the major commanding the infantry came up, too.

While I conned my ship toward the island we would be at in a few minutes, keeping a weather eye for coral heads, the four of us planned the operation. I say "we" planned it. It was very simple. The Lt. Col. stated what he wanted, and asked if we could perform it. My job was simple indeed; put my ship 2000 yards from a particular beach and launch LVT's.

When everything was squared away the Lt. Col. laughed and said, "If this thing comes off right, I hope it proves to some of the big-shots that you don't need 200 mimeographed pages to run a minor landing."

When we arrived at the required position, I notified the Lt. Col., and we launched the first wave. They hit the beach and reported over the radio that things were going well. After a few minutes, however, my friend started showing all the symptoms of an itchy trigger finger.

"You take charge, Bedichek, I'm going ashore. If I get in trouble, you throw LCM companies in."

That seemed simple enough. A few minutes after the Lt. Col. hit the beach, I called him and he said things were OK. But after 45 minutes I lost contact. Immediately I was beset with all kinds of worries. The troops were dead tired, after three days and nights of very tough fighting on Kwajalein Is., and I did not want to give them an unnecessary run in to the beach, but I was afraid to take a chance, so I ordered LCM companies away. They had hardly cleared the ship, however, when word came from Moore that they were not needed, so they were recalled.

By this time LST 127 had joined me with more troops, which were not needed, however.

By 2:30 that afternoon all the Japs (just a handful) were dead, and the troops started back aboard.

(Cont)

October 2, 1945

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I wrote Columbia that I wished to be admitted in the Feb. term for work leading to the degree of Master of Laws.

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October 4, 1945

The Navy says it is "undecided" when to lower the points. . . .

-Travels-

During the mop-up on Gugewe Is. one of the soldiers on my ship accidentally fired his rifle and the bullet tore one man's knee off and entered the right buttock of another, travelling upward at an angle of about 45°, coming out the abdomen.

The operating room on an LST is the wardroom, where the officers eat. The doc patched the two men up as best he could, but his facilities were limited, and toward evening he began to worry about the serious case.

"Captain," he said, "We'd better get rid of this fellow. I'm afraid he's going to die on us."

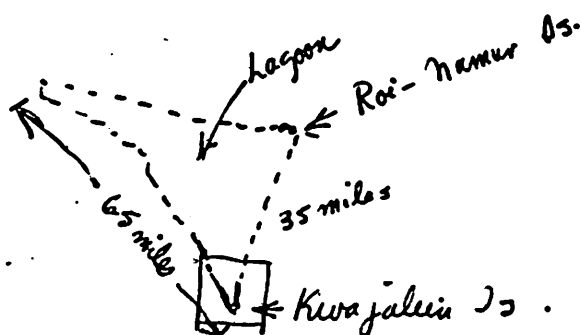
We had already arranged to turn him over to a transport, so I made arrangements to have the transfer effected that evening instead of the next morning. The next morning might have found us with a corpse, an embarrassing situation, indeed.

I was to proceed back to Kwajalein Is., and anchor. Before I got there darkness set in, so I had to "feel" my way to my anchorage. Finally I dropped the hook, notified the transport as to my position, and started waiting for their boat to pick up my casualty.

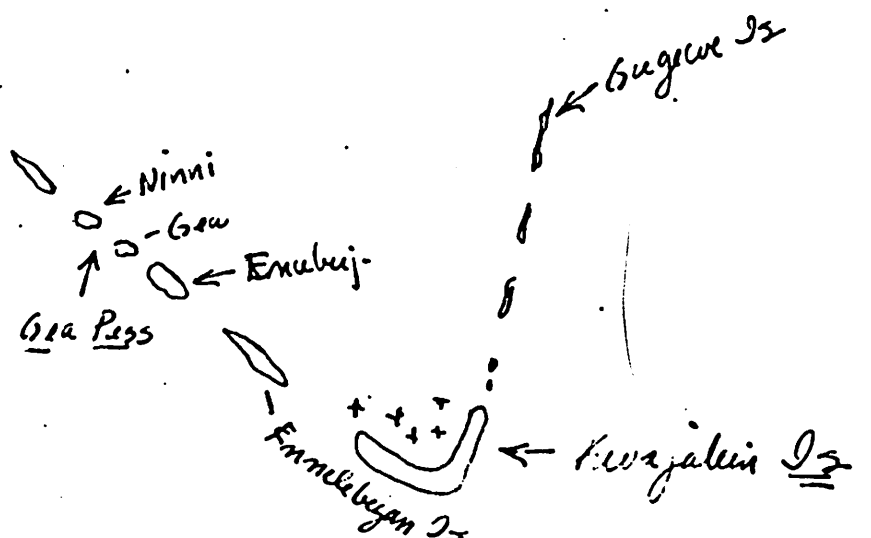
They sent the boat, but it couldn't find us. For two hours I worried over this situation, until finally one of my officers discovered that I had mistaken one light on shore for another, and was several hundred yards off in my position. This error corrected, the transport's boat found us and relieved us of our man, who was nobly holding on to life, much to the relief of a worried doctor and a worried skipper. So an ordinary little mistake of my fatigued brain nearly cost a man's life.

The next day I got rid of the infantrymen, sending them to a transport, and moved over to anchor near Ennylebegan Is. The occupation of Kwajalein Atoll was complete.

I have used a number of place names which probably mean nothing to you, so here is a sketch from memory to help out:



This is Kwajalein Atoll, composed of many tiny islands surrounding a lagoon.



This is the section in the square above, and is the portion my narrative deals with. The crosses near Kwajalein Is. indicate coral heads.

Ennubuj Is. was the one I went ashore on to find the LVT's on Feb. 2.

Honey, I hope you had a fine time at Lake Louise. How I wish I were with you.

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October 5, 1945

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#### -Travels-

I stuck around Kwajalein for a few days, doing nothing, until one evening I got a call from aaCmdr. Webb, whom I knew slightly, as Commander LST Group 7 (I was in Group 8). This was about Feb. 10. After a wet small boat trip I pulled myself over the side of LST 226 which was the Commander's flagship, and went into the wardroom.

He wasted few words. I was to be his flagship in the coming Eniwetok operation. He knew no precise plans, except that about 8 or 9 LST's would take part, and that I would handle LVT's again, and that the job would require some very precise celestial navigation.

Webb moved aboard the next day, and I found him a very agreeable person. Many of my fellow skippers did not like him, and marveled at the way I got along with him, but I liked him very much and was quite sorry when he left.

Shortly after the Commander arrived, I suffered a minor humiliation. One thing we LST people pride ourselves on is our ship-handling. An LST is a large, highly unmaneuverable vessel, which, if I do say so myself, takes a great deal of skill to handle. Many people never learn it.

I had to go alongside the USS Mississippi for water, and, my sweet, this was the very first ship at anchor I had ever gone alongside. The wind was blowing like the devil, and I made a miserable job of it, much to my disgust. That was a fast lesson, though, because I never again had a difficult time performing this operation.

-Cont-

October 6, 1945

A nice fat letter from you today. I'm glad you had such a good time at Lake Louise. As far as picking that for a honeymoon spot, I have an open mind. As I have said a number of times, the place is an insignificant matter compared with the company.

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You said you hoped my new suit of blues could be made into a winter uniform. It is a winter uniform already. Did you mean a winter suit? If so, the answer is yes, but it isn't quite the height of fashion, having been designed some 20 years ago.

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October 7, 1945

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-Travels-

After getting my LVT's back aboard, I was all set to move again. On Feb. 14 we (all commanding officers and flag officers) went aboard Rear Adm. Harry Hill's flagship and heard a briefing of the operation.

Eniwetok Atoll is a nearly circular atoll about 20 miles in diameter, located about 350 miles northwest of Kwajalein. It is the western-most of the Marshalls (except for tiny Ujelang) and was an important Jap base, being only 650 miles from Truk.

The plan was to take the place from the inside, the fleet steaming into the lagoon, so our landing craft could operate in smooth water. The Admiral said that the battleship people had objected to endangering their ships, so he had agreed to send the less important ships in first. Yes, honey, that meant the LST's, and since I was carrying the LST flag, that meant B. Bedichek!

Heavy cruisers were to cover our entrance, and minesweepers were, of course, to precede us, sweeping a channel through the enemy mine fields. This was the reason our navigation had to be good. We had to hit the pass at daybreak, so that we would synchronize with the cruiser bombardment.

We were told that the big carrier strike on ~~Truk~~ <sup>Eniwetok</sup> was scheduled for Feb. 16, so that should take most of the steam out of any attacks the Japs should make from their greatest Central Pacific base. So on Feb. 15, we shoved off in two groups, 9 LST's, 2 tankers, the minesweeps, and one destroyer in my convoy, and the battleships, transports, cruisers, and destroyers in the other.

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October 8, 1945

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As you possibly noticed from the return address, I am now a lieutenant commander. A large number received the promotion, which, coming at this time means very little. Since I lose my mustering out pay, I probably will be doing well to break even financially.

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I'm anxious to see the presents you bought, and even more anxious to be a civilian so I can wear them. You know, having been repressed in my choice of clothes for 4 years, I just might break out with a dash of color.

I'm terribly conservative about clothes, my own, that is. Mother gets so disgusted with me; tells me I look like an undertaker's assistant. But right now I'm perfectly capable of breaking out with a loud tie, instead of the sober shades I usually wear.

October 9, 1945

Here is the idea I have on what to do when released:

- (1) Marry you.
- (2) Honeymoon, length determined by how soon I would have to enter school or go to work.
- (3) Enter Columbia in Feb. term, if accepted, if not, apply for federal legal job, which may or may not be under civil service. If under civil service, as most are, I would have to study a couple of months before taking the exam.

If I go into Taxation, Columbia can't be beaten for this study. The professor who wrote the book I'm studying now is a Columbia man.

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There is little chance of my ever getting into Admiralty practice. A person has to have good connections to break into this practice. It pays exceedingly well, but few people ever get in without family connections or some tie-up with the shipping business.

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You know, sweetheart, it is remarkable what interests, tastes, and prejudices we have in common. Of course, we have a fair amount of background in common, Austin, public schools up to college, but still it surprises me. We are lucky in that respect. This business of "opposites" attracting one another may be true, but I think it's a poor idea.

#### -Travels-

On Feb. 16 we got word of the carrier strike on Truk, which made us feel pretty good and on the early morning of Feb. 17 we hit the south of Eniwetok Atoll.

At daybreak on the dot we steamed inside, with the minesweepers in front, and cruisers covering our entrance. Below is a sketch.

The cruisers did a good job, and we were not fired on. The only excitement was provided by a mine swept up immediately in front of me, which the minesweeps tried to explode, but failed. I finally went on past it.

About a half hour after our entrance we were joined by the big ships who came in the Deep Entrance between Parry Is. and Japtan Is.

By noon we were anchored and I was getting my troops on board. In the meantime artillery was landed on one of the small islets to the east of Engebi. This was the situation at nightfall of Feb. 17.

-Cont-

Engeli Is - Jap airstrip here.

Anchorage first night

These lines indicate courses from deep entrance and wide passage to anchorage.

Japtan Is.

Deep Passage Entrance

Perry Is.

Japlan Is.

Minesweepers

Eniwetok Is.

Wide Passage

Dredging → LST 240

Other LST's

Cruisers  
Shelling island

Tankers



October 11, 1945

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I'm getting quite uneasy about this point business.....

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*-War Diary-*

In the early morning of Feb. 18, we moved into position about 2000 yards south of Engebi Is. and discharged marines (22nd regiment) in our LVT's. Everything went along very well, except that the fight on the beach was particularly bloody.

That afternoon I picked up my LVT's again and also troops from the 106th regiment (Army). Then late that evening we moved down to the south end of the atoll.

As usual, since I had the flag, I was in the lead, and the commodore above us was highly complimentary about the way the ships were maneuvered into position in the darkness.

All through this operation, incidentally, my senior officers, from the LST commander right up to Adm. Hill were a good lot. This makes the whole affair as pleasant as something involving bloodshed can be. At least my end of the affair came off well. The troops, however, did not fare so well.

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October 12, 1945

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R Remember my pointing out a Liberty Ship to you in S.F.? I'm sitting in the saloon (wardroom) of one right now. The early part of the evening I read some Taxation from Prof. McGill's book. (Columbia man)

We are loading provisions in all five hatches, and it is such a simple job that I can afford to take this time off. Last night I loaded a ship with refrigerated cargo, for "issue"; that is, so that any part of the cargo could be discharged at any time.

This is an extremely complicated business, which necessitated many long climbs up and down the ladders out & in the hatches. And since I basked my skin quite painfully day before yesterday, last evening was not one of my favorite days.

About 9:00 PM this evening I looked into the east and saw Aldabaran rising. Just to the left, about north east, was Capella, also rising. Capella is a very bright star in the constellation Auriga. To the left, was Orion rising.

The next letter I write will be addressed to you at USNH San Leandro. After that will it be care of Janet. . . .

I suppose everyone who plans to marry thinks he or she is bound to be happy, but . . . .

October 13, 1945

I have just received the Post article about Tom Clark, but have not read it yet. He is, as you possibly know, a protégé of Tom Connally, so I think I could get a Justice Dept. job with ease, as long as the Senator remains Senator. He's getting pretty old now, you know.

I suppose you included the clipping about the State Dept. for my comment. If we were starving, honey. Otherwise I don't think our blood pressure could stand working for that outfit. Not that I'm too choosy about a paying job. I just think I can do better.

The suspense connected with lowering the point scores is getting all of us down. . . .

Someone asked me yesterday if I were going to stay in now that I am a Lt. Cmdr. I told him that the rank of 9-star admiral wouldn't tempt me for five seconds.

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October 14, 1945

I hope my timing was good and this letter reaches you in S.F. If it does not, it probably will lead you a merry chase. I wanted you to get a letter from me at each stop on your route.

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The radio is turned on, and Eddie Cantor is exerting himself. He doesn't register too well with me.

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October 15, 1945

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I may have unwittingly misled you on the subject of the necessity for my taking some law work. . . .

The longer I study, naturally, the better off I am. And obviously I will progress many times faster in a school with good teachers, and adequate library, and a course of study, than I can outside such a system. So I believe it to our best interests for me to take some law work. After all, I've been away from it for four years.

How much will be necessary or desirable I do not know. However, there is nothing more certain in my mind than the fact that I will spend no more time in school than is necessary. I want to be making money for us soon.

Another advantage to law school is the fact that you are in close contact with people who can secure positions for you. So, if I were in a school, I could be studying and looking for a good spot at the same time with the added advantage of having influential persons (my profs) to recommend me for whatever position I managed to dig up.

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The two government jobs that I think would be most profitably for me to take are either (1) a Treasury job as suggested by (a) your father, (b) my father, (c) Dean McCormick, (d) numerous attorney friends out here; or (2) a Justice dept. job, which should be fairly easy to secure through political influence.

Now we are agreed on the desirability of spending our first year away from home. The more I think of this the more I am convinced of its wisdom. Not that I do not think we could get along well together in Austin, Attu, or Tanganika, but I think we will be the happier if we start our marriage among strangers.

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The 15th of October is gone, and no reduction in points. . . .

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October 16, 1945

The radio announced a three point reduction in points effective No. 1. . . .

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Northern New Mexico is lovely indeed, but not for us warm-blooded people in the winter. It is way, way below zer. I think New Orleans would be wonderful.

. . . We could run down to the coast at Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, or Gulfport, we could sail on the Lake or in Chadeleur Soun (I could show you where LST 240 took on its first cargo.) . . .

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October 17, 1945

The news of last evening is confirmed. On Dec. 1 I will have enough points, and will start on the red tape journey home. . . .

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October 18, 1945

I'm afraid I should have gone into detail a bit about this lieutenant commander business. Actually, the Navy promoted all of us "lieutenants, super grade" who had stayed out of trouble. That's all I really had to do, honey. Of course, the idea is that many of us will choose to remain, but that isn't too much of a compliment to my way of thinking.

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Don't get the idea that I am trying to be modest. I'm not modest at all. I know I earned the promotion, but I would have received it anyway, so it can hardly be held to be in recognition of my services. The C.O. had to include a statement of my fitness for promotion on my last fitness report, which he did, but this is usual, too. Incidentally, I saw the fitness report, which was a good one, but not as glowing as the one Capt. Walton gave me. He gave me a strong recommendation for promotion.

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October 20, 1945

Some time ago I wrote the West Publishing Company (law books) and had them send me the Southwestern Reporter Advance Sheets, which contain the latest law cases. Recently I read one which should prove that judges are human and gallantry is not dead.

The case was one of those sordid little dramas of today, where the returning war hero gets involved with the high school girl, and is forced to marry her. Naturally he regrets this, and sues for annulment, asserting, among other things, that the girl was of easy virtue when he met her and that the child was not his. In proof of this he attempted to introduce a deposition from a witness who said that he had been intimate with the girl.

The trial judge refused to hear the testimony on the grounds that any man who would testify to such a thing was not to be believed! The appellate court (Court of Civil Appeals at San Antonio) upheld this view.

From a strictly legalistic point of view, I suppose the decision may be criticized. But I feel the same way the judges did about it.

When I read cases, I can almost see the litigants telling their stories, see their attorneys wrangle. What a lot of broken hopes and dreams go to make up our litigation.

Honey, I think humans are much more interesting than atoms.

Speaking of pitiful creatures, there is one of the saddest looking tom-cats you could imagine who inhabits pier K-7 in Pearl Harbor. I work on this pier quite frequently, so I am well acquainted with him. The poor fellow is as skinny as a rail in spite of the quantities of food on the dock, and he has suffered a spinal injury which causes his backbone to be crooked. Everytime I see him it seems as though he has acquired a new limp. But he's always happy to see me, because I always stop to pet him.

I don't know what makes me think of cats and annulments this evening, sweetheart. Maybe because it has been a dreary day. The only good thing about these days is that at the end of them I am 24 hours closer to you, my darling.

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October 21, 1945

Some time ago I mentioned that if it made no difference to you I should like for a Rev. Tenney to perform the ceremony. Now since we have decided on All Saints for the place, it has occurred to me that there might be a slight difficulty in that Rev. Tenney is a Presbyterian. Do pastors lend their churches for weddings conducted by ministers of different denominations? I don't know the customs of the profession. . . . .

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War Diary, cont.

On the morning of Feb. 19, we moved a few hundred yards from our anchorage to the line of departure off Eniwetok Is. and launched our LVT's with 106th regiment troops.

The big-shots had believed that there weren't any Japs on the island, so the bombardment was strictly perfunctory. After seeing the marines get a beautiful bombardment the day before the army boys could hardly believe that they were expected to land behind such a pitiful excuse for a bombardment.

To make matters worse, the beach selected had a high embankment immediately behind it, which the LVT's could not climb. The Japs evidently had this figured out, because they let the LVT's get piled up on the narrow beach (about 20 feet wide) with the men all bunched together climbing out, and then they let go with mortars.

From where I was watching, a mile away, with a 16 power glass, I could tell it was plain butchery. What an easy job I felt I had, riding around on a nice safe ship, with nothing but a few air raids to worry about.

The island was taken in a couple of days, at a heavy cost. The C.O. of the 106th, a regular army colonel, was broken completely in spirit after the affair. I got to know him fairly well, and he confided to me that this was his first and last combat; that he supposed that he was just too old to be able to stand seeing his men slaughtered. Incidentally, I have a letter from Col. Ayres expressing appreciation for the treatment I gave him & his men. (Mainly sharing my water supplies & furnishing some hot food)

About the 20 or 22nd, we took on board the marines again and moved up to Parry Is. to make our landing in the morning.  
(cont).

October 22, 1945

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Father writes that Dean McCormick thinks I am wise in picking Columbia, because of Prof. McGill, the noted tax authority. As I mentioned, I am studying one of McGill's books now, "Taxable Income".

. . . It is a relief, knowing that I'll have points on Dec. 1, although it is hard waiting. . . .

October 23, 1945

You can be sure I checked up on the "G.I. Bill" before I accepted the rank of Lt. Cmdr. Do you think your intended was born yesterday?

Yesterday evening I was checking on the loading of an LST in berth K-6, here, where I used to tie up so many times. The skipper of this ship turned out to be an old friend from Solomons! He was in one of the navigation classes I taught. We spent a couple of hours comparing notes, telling about how Joe Blow got courtmartialled, "Stinky" got shot up at Leyte, etc.

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War Diary, cont.

We were supposed to land on Parry Is. one morning, but the landing was postponed 24 hrs. because the marines morale was all shot. These men had seen their first combat three days before on Engebi, where they were badly shot up. Two companies were consolidated into one company, or three into two. So they did the intelligent thing for a change, gave the poor devils an extra day's rest and the Japs an extra day's bombardment.

The only trouble was that when the decision was made to hold up the landing the correspondents had already filed their stories and turned in, so the next day as we lay off Parry Is. the radio from the States told of our landing which wasn't going to come off until the day after.

The landing finally came off, and the place was secured in a couple of days. Incidentally, you might refer to the rough sketch map I sent some days ago and see Japtan Is. This is where the artillery was placed to fire on Parry, to cover the landing.

It has always been a problem in these landings to keep the artillery fire on the beach until the last possible instant, then move it inland as the troops land. At Engebi, the planes dropped flares to signal the gunners when to lift the curtain, and this worked very well. But someone forgot to arrange this for the Parry landing so the artillery kept on pounding the beach as the LVT's moved in. Some of them ran into this and took casualties, but most of them used their heads and simply waited off the beach until some aviator saw the situation and got word via radio to the admiral, who had the gunners lift the barrage.

This is a typical slip that costs lives. It is also the type that never, or rarely, gets into print.

Parry Is. was the last one with Japs on it, so by the 22nd of Feb. (or the 23rd, I forget which) Eniwetok Atoll belonged to us, and the 240 rode at anchor with the rest of the invasion fleet at the south end of the lagoon.

To be continued-

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October 24, 1945

Thank you for the book, Men Under Stress, which arrived in the afternoon mail. It should be quite interesting to see how a psychiatrist sees some of the things I have seen.

Today I visited the Civil Service Commission, and picked up a great deal of useful information. . . .

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October 26, 1945

I finally got my formal application for entrance into Columbia Law School off today. It has been held up the past couple of days while I got a passport-size photo made. Enclosed is a copy. Isn't it frightful? Do you suppose they'll admit me after taking a look at that picture?

Save the clipping and give it to me on our honeymoon, darling.\* Grande Isle is near New Orleans, and I recall the incidents exceedingly well, since I had the responsibility for the evaluation at 8ND. I'll tell you about the whole thing sometime.

I have heard that dischargees have been waiting but 12 to 24 hours in San Francisco for rail transportation. . . .

The cruiser you saw was a 6,000-ton anti-aircraft cruiser. Your description and sketch were good for a layman. The characteristic you noted happens to be the distinguishing feature of that class of ships. So step up and take a bow, sweetheart.

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\* "REPORT SUNKEN SUBS, GRAND ISLE, (La. (UP)--Summer visitors to this island paradise report that they have been the silhouettes of two Nazi subs which were believed to have been sunk in the Gulf of Mexico campaign, but the Navy could never produce sufficient proof to convince the evaluation board in Washington that men and ships and planes of the Eighth Naval District had destroyed a U-Boat."



-War Diary-

A couple of days after the conquest of Eniwetok was complete, I was notified that six of us were to stay and unload the cargo ships, and the rest to go back to Pearl.

LST 242 was ordered to come alongside me at 8:00 one morning and give me his cargo of ammunition so that he could sail that afternoon. What a job that turned out to be! That ammo had taken trained stevedores 48 hours to load in Pearl and my sailors and his had to transfer it in eight.

It was a real madhouse, with cases of ammunition falling down to the next deck, smashing open, mortar shells rolling around the decks, etc. But it was done on schedule, and then I had twice as much ammunition as I started out with! What a headache! It was piled 6 feet high on deck and nearly filled my tank deck.

A day or so later I was ordered to beach on a certain place on Eniwetok Is. and get rid of the ammo. I did not have a chance to sound the approaches to the beach.

I made this, my first beaching on coral after taking command (I had beached her on sand in practice at St. Andrews Bay) about 4:00 PM. It was a fine job, if I do say so myself. But what a nasty surprise I had in store when the tide went out!

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October 29, 1945

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Darling, the S.F. Bay Area is always going to have a golden haze for me. Everything there is associated with you. Weren't we happy?

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War Diary, cont.

When the tide ebbed I found my ship resting on a number of small, sharp coral "heads" or "fingers". These stick up from the bottom something like this.



One of these had punched a hole in a fresh water tank, causing me to lose 15,000 gallons of this precious fluid. The same head had caused a structural member to punch a hole from the ruptured tank into my port shaft alley (where the propeller shaft runs). This last hole was very small, and the pumps controlled it readily.

The whole thing was absolutely unavoidable on my part. Muddy water concealed these heads, I was not given time to examine the beach, and I put the ship exactly where ordered.

Nevertheless, I was apprehensive about having the buck passed to me, since it was a USN-3-striper who made the mistake, and such are never, never, wrong.

His (my group cmdr's) ship was beached about 100 yards to my starboard, so I went down and reported my damage. He was very much upset, and started asking me if I couldn't have avoided it. I reminded him pretty coldly that his orders were entirely responsible for the whole mess. With some reluctance he admitted this, and then further, that he had sent me to the wrong island anyway! I should have been sent to Parry Is, 4 miles to the north.

Sometimes I felt sorry for poor Hurst. He was a tin-plated, 24 karat phoney, but he was about to make 4 stripes and consequently he was scared stiff all the time. At this point he was terrified for fear I couldn't pull off the beach, and thus cause his blunder to come even more forcefully to Adm. Hill's attention. As a matter of fact, the probability is that he told Hill some yarn putting the blame on me and covering up for himself. But if I couldn't get off the beach, then Hill would call me over for an explanation and the fat would be in the fire for sure.

So the Cmdr. was very, very pleased with me when I pulled off, swung out of the coral heads and ran up & beached on Parry Is, the afternoon of the next day. Here I got in touch with Col. Ayres, of the 106th infantry, and he sent working parties who commenced unloading my load of ammunition.

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October 29, 1945

I see you had not seen Janet very long before you picked up this "Bachie" business. Please!

I enjoyed your Japanese friend's letter. The displacing of these people I consider one of the most outrageous things in our history. I can hardly blame any of them for becoming disloyal under such circumstances, and those who remained loyal in spite of their persecution have a stronger patriotism than I.

Tell her by all means to come out here. Half the population is Japanese, and they are certainly well treated. Indeed, they aren't "treated" any way. They are on the same footing as anyone else and she will certainly save herself that \$1000, because any girl's love life takes care of itself out here.

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I thought you might be somewhat confused by the casual references I make to various big-shots in my war diary. So here are some of the characters in the play:

Cmdr. Willie Hurst, USN, class of '24, was my group (12 ships) commander. He was bald, florid, and exceedingly nervous. To him courtesy to juniors was an admission of inferiority, and he fawned on his seniors.

On the slightest provocation he lost his head entirely, and issued the wildest sort of orders. His cursing over the voice radio was a feature of all operations.

Cmdr. Richard C. Webb, USN, class of '24, was a heavy set, greying, gentleman with a reputation for hitting the bottle during times of stress. He commanded group 7 (my group was 8), but he used my ship for a flagship at Eniwetok, where he had charge of all LST's. I liked him. He did drink, but never to excess while aboard 240. He frequently asked my advice, and then showed his faith in it by acting on the advice. (He did this with other skippers, too.) At first I thought this a subtle way of flattering me, and naturally it pleased me, but more than once I suspect he really needed the advice. My opinion of this officer is some better than that of most of the skippers.

Capt. Lillard, USN, class of '24, was commander LST Flotilla 3 (groups 7, 8, & 9). He was a courteous, gentlemanly sort of fellow, well liked by all his skippers. Hurst and Webb, I think, were a bit jealous of him because he made Captain before they did. Hurst and Webb, incidentally, hated each other openly and bitterly.

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October 31, 1945

Another day, another cross on the calendar, and I'm 24 hours closer to closing my arms around you. Time goes so slowly. It seems as though each second pauses before it decides to pass on.

I'm enjoying the book you sent tremendously. I was amused (and relieved) to read that men who suffer from anxiety can be good soldiers nevertheless. I suffered very much from anxiety. So did anyone who took their responsibilities seriously. Of course, the psychiatric casualties in my outfit were tremendous. However, it seemed to me at the time and it still seems so that the remedy lay not so much in the selection of the skipper (we had psychiatric screening) but in better administration of the Amphibious Forces.

For instance, since hundreds of LST's were being built in '43 and '44, we had to send about 10% of our very best men back each month to provide nucleus crews for these ships. This was reasonable enough in principle, but 10% was pretty stiff in view of our heavy turnover in crews for other reasons; desertions, sickness, accidents, etc. But at the same time, some high-up had decided that instead of sending navy criminals to prison, it would be better to frighten would-be wrongdoers by sending convicts to the worst possible navy duty. This was decided to be LST's, since early in the game it was figured that we were practically suicide people. (That did not happen that way, of course.) So I sent my best men back and had them replaced with convicts, and anyone who thinks that such a thing doesn't hit the morale of even a strong-minded person a body blow he knows nothing of human nature.

#### War Diary-

During the three days I was on the beach on Parry Is., a number of interesting things happened.

First, my poor nostrils, which I thought were used to the foul smells of war, were assailed by the most horrid odor I ever hope to endure. Eniwetok is only eleven degrees (660 miles) north of the equator, and the sun was quite hot. There were about 700 dead Japs on Parry, and by this time they were about 7-10 days old. Our people had stacked them up like cord wood only a couple of hundred yards upwind from us, and the stink was ghastly.

But this was not the worst. There were some live Japs left, too, who roamed around at night, sniping and booby-trapping bodies. After three or four men were lost from the burial parties, it was discovered that the rascals were burrowing under the pile of overripe bodies in the daytime. So the colonel had the whole pile ~~drenched~~ drenched with gasoline and touched off. It burned all day, and the ship was filled with smoke, the odor of which made the stench of the previous day seem as attar of roses. Frankly, I had a difficult time eating.

-Cont-

Honey, I'm telling you all this just as it happened, leaving out what I heard about, and telling only what I saw. Now if you don't want me to tell you the ugly things, like the above, just tell me and I'll leave it out.

November 1, 1945

It is only 24 hours since I last wrote, but the "November" looks so much better than the "October" at the head of the letter. . . .

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. . . The pension matter is one you should be familiar with. After the last war, the American Legion seized tight control of the Veteran's Adm. and ran it as a private concern--on gov't money, of course. The big selling point the Legion had then, and has today is that they can get your pension for you. Of course they can, and whether you merit it or not!

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November 3, 1945

Pardon my continual comment upon the date, but I am preoccupied with this these days. . . .

Good news dept: seven officers from my office got their orders Nove.1; at least five have already sailed. . . .

I am spending my last month here straightening out the barge situation. Barges are used extensively in discharging ships and transporting cargo around Pearl and to Honolulu. So I've been put in charge of the Supply Depot's barges (about 150), and the job promises to be surprisingly interesting.

-War Diary-

After three days, I pulled off the beach at Parry Is. and anchored. The next day I was ordered alongside the USS Cambria, (R. Adm. Harry Hill's flagship) for water.

When I got alongside at 5:00 PM, I found things in a beautiful mess. The Cambria was giving me only 20,000 gallons of water instead of the 125,000 I needed. The Cambria refused to take the excess ammunition off my hands. (Is still had about 75 tons.)

Also, I had been designated as a supply ship for the small craft (PC's, YM's, SC's, LCT's, LCI's, etc.) in Eniwetok Atoll, so the Cambria was using this as an excuse to dump their spoiled meat on me. We took care of this situation very neatly; we called the small craft alongside our outboard (free) side, issued them the good meat, and surveyed the spoiled stuff over the stern.

The water and ammunition situation was serious, however. So I called Cmdr. Hurst on the radio and asked him to straighten the situation out with Adm. Hill. This, the chicken-hearted so and so wouldn't do.

So I went up to see the Admiral (in my "forward area" uniform, shorts, bedroom slippers, open shirt, no insignia) and got matters straightened out rapidly. The interview was rather amusing:

Scene: Flag bridge of the Cambria

AIDE: Admiral, this is the captain of the 240.

ADM: (genially) Well, what is it?

ME: Admiral, your flagship is giving me the old run around.

ADM: (frowning) How?

ME: I'm trying to get rid of this excess ammunition, and I figured Pearl was the best place to send it, but the Cambria won't take it.

ADM: Why didn't you get rid of it on the beach?

ME: It won't fit anybody's guns. Seems a little mistake was made in Pearl.

ADM: Well, we'll take it. And now, how about your water?

ME: Your engineer says his evaporators are broken down and he can't give me but 20,000--same old story I've been getting from everyone.

ADM: How much do you want?

ME: 125,000

ADM: I thought you carried only 120,000

ME: I said 125,000. If I didn't have a hole in one tank I'd want 140,000.

ADM: You'll get it--that's all.

As I walked off the bridge I thought, "In a pig's eye I'll get it; he's leaving tomorrow, and there isn't time." But I had underestimated the admiral.

-Cont-

Sweetheart, Janet will have to have a good deal of volume for me to hear her singing at our wedding over the singing of my heart.

November 4, 1945

I hope my dear mother did no dwell upon the fact that I was a handsome child, or pull out some photos of me labelled "age 2½ mos."

A letter from your father came today, this time on credit slips. It really amuses me to think of him casually reaching for the nearest thing that will serve as writing paper. Incidentally, have you told your family of our plans?

. . . . .

-War Diary-

I got one episode out of place, or rather I omitted another episode that bears telling. So at this point instead of lying alongside USS Cambria I have just pulled off the beach at Parry Is.

I was sent alongside a Liberty ship, the SS Laramie, to take part of her cargo and run it into the beach. It took three days to load me, with about 1000 tons of cargo, belonging to a marine 90 mm AA outfit.

About the second night some of the merchant crew got into the alcohol on the Laramie, and they, the marines, and my men got stinking drunk. It's a good thing the Japs didn't come over that night. I gave one summary and three reductions in rating the next morning. And that was letting the boys off light.

When I had my full load, I beached on a fairly good beach at the south end of Eniwetok Is., and discharged my tank deck load. I still had a deck load, but since the task force of Adm. Hill was leaving the next day, I was called alongside the Cambria for water. At this point I take up the story where I left off last letter.

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About midnight (while alongside Cambria) I got a note from the Admiral to get underway and go alongside USS Indianapolis (heavy cruiser) at 0200, take all water they could spare, and then go alongside USS Louisville (heavy cruiser) and get the rest.

Well, honey, there was no moon and we were all blacked out. I made the smoothest shiphandling job of my career going alongside the Indianapolis. I got 40,000 gals from her, and then at 10:00 I went alongside Louisville and got 43,000 more. This, with 42,000 from the Cambria made the 125,000 the Admiral promised. So I put Harry Hill down in my books as a man who keeps his word.

--Cont--

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Well, I suppose you will be shortly starting the round of social functions incident to perpetrating matrimony. Have fun, sweetheart, but don't get all worn out. Remember, we have a honeymoon to do.

November 5, 1945

A strenuous day today after a quiet and studious weekend. In addition to arranging for many barge moves, I had to check up on some dock trailers at the West Loch Ammunition Depot, some 20 miles over bouncy road. But all this makes the time pass faster.

Saturday and Sunday (this is Monday) I got in some good licks at my studies. I have three books, McCormick and Ray, Texas Law of Evidence, McGill, Taxable Income, and Stumberg, Conflict of Laws. I read a chapter in one, then in another, then another. This method of study is not nearly as efficient as study in law school, but of course it is the best I can do for the present.

#### War Diary-

After getting all 125,000 gals, of my fresh water, I went back on the beach on the south end of Eniwetok Is, and commenced discharging the deck load. It should have taken but a few hours, but I had lost the fine 60 man party of CB's who had discharged the tank deck, and I had to rely on a lazy bunch of marines (this 90 mm outfit was not the pride of the Marine Corps)

So we went far into the night on the discharge, instead of getting off on the evening tide. I was a bit worried, since the beach is a bad place to be during a raid, and we were within easy range of a number of Jap bases, and the moon was getting closer to full each night.

So it was no surprise when, a bit after midnight we had the old "condition red" come over the radio. We went to C.Q. and settled back to enjoy the show, listening to the play by play over the voice radio.

To the north the Japs had got some good hits in on Engebi; fires were quite bright 20 miles away. To the south the Japs were dropping numerous flares over our screen, and occasional heavy 20mm fire indicated some low level attacks.

Then we had about a half dozen Japs come directly overhead at about 15,000 feet. At that range my little 3" gun could reach them but with no chance of hitting, so I refrained from wasting gov't ammo. The 90mm guns on the beach, though, were firing like mad in one of the sorriest exhibitions of gunnery I ever saw. (A marine captain from the outfit, whom the raid caught on board, was humiliated.)

After about 3½ hours of this nonsense, including a torpedo plane who flew through the whole mess of ships, causing us much alarm from wild AA shots, we thought the raid was over. Then whoosh! about 100 yards to port there was a small bomb burst. We all hit the deck, with the C.O. setting a fine example by being the first to hit it. I know I was first because the gunnery officer landed on top of me.

A few seconds later I peered cautiously over the edge of the conning tower, and that was the end of the raid.

-Cont-



November 6, 1945

As I expected, you made admirers out of my family. I had a letter from my father today which was very enthusiastic. I suppose it is not the most important thing, but it is certainly a great help to have the in-laws so thoroughly in favor of you. . . .

Dad told me that my grandmother was on one side and my mother on the other side of you, and naturally both were talking at the same time. How ~~dad~~ you survive? You can see, I come by my talkative streak honestly.

. . . . .

-War Diary-

I got rid of my deck load the next morning after the raid, pulled off the beach and went alongside a newly arrived Liberty ship. I had only begun to take cargo from her when Hurst, my group commander, arrived with some unpleasant news.

He told me that my orders (from Capt. Crews, atoll commander) were to go to Engebi with the Liberty, and there I was to beach and discharge what I had taken aboard. Further, that the beach conditions were exceedingly bad, and that I had every prospect of ripping the bottom of the ship out. He told me that he had protested vigorously, but to no avail. However, the Cmdr. said, I was the final judge of whether the job could be done, and that if I refused to risk my ship he would back me up.

I told him that I would reserve judgement until I examined the approaches to the beach, and that if the attempt could be made without too much danger, I would try it.

So that afternoon we both got underway and moved 20 miles up to Engebi, and there the Liberty dropped the hook and I again went alongside.

-Cont-

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November 8, 1945

I had a letter from Mother today. You certainly won my family's hearts in short order. . . .

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Mother tells me Edgar Weller is home, so that is one of my good friends who should be on hand. (He lives in S.A.) Now if Bobby & Walter Fisher are in Austin then we should have a substantial portion of the Austin High School tennis team there! (Edgar, Bobby, Walter, Ernest, & myself constituted 5 of the 6 man team my senior year.)

. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 You see, I simply don't have a quiet place to study my law. The B O Q has too many inconsiderate people who play their radios loudly, drink loudly, and play poker loudly. Since I'm working pretty hard this last month of my naval career, the week ends are the times I get most of my studying done.

And darling, the way you referred to buying a new dress for each party I'm going to have to be a hell of a good lawyer!

. . . . .

November 9, 1945

The news is wonderful. I am to be released Nov. 16 or shortly thereafter. That is, I was informed today that I could expect my orders next Friday or the early part of the next week.

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The transportation situation is very good, with almost no one waiting longer than five days. Most of them get out in two or three. I'll telephone from the coast. . . .

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November 11, 1945

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A little while ago I came back to the room and found one of my roommates a bit under the weather from having drunk about 1½ quarts of whiskey today. He was lying on his back with his mouth open snoring gently. So my other roommate & I got a medicine dropper & dropped some liquor between his lips. He swallowed, smiled, and wiped his lips with the back of his hand without ever waking up. So you see, it is possible to drink whiskey while entirely unconscious.

#### War Diary-

For three days I loaded alongside the Liberty at Engebi, and each day I went out in a small boat with a lead line and sounded the approaches to the beach. The water was about 11 feet deep for 500 or 600 yards right in to the beach, except for a sand bar 10 feet six inches about 250 yards out. I calculated that I could get the stern of my ship up to 11 feet by proper arrangement of ballast and cargo.

So when I was loaded, I knew pretty well that I was not going to be able to reach the beach, but I figured that even if I tried & failed, I could pull off the sand bar without much damage.

So I got under way, and headed in between the coral heads, and stuck on the sandbar. I got off, as anticipated, swung around, and anchored about a thousand yards out.

In the meantime an officer from the staff of the group commander had come up and informed me that I was supposed to get discharged and be ready to sail for Tarawa right away. It took a day to get rid of the cargo. We brought trucks into the tank deck with LCM's, loaded them there, and took them to the beach with the same LCM's. It was a highly efficient discharge, and my group commander was very pleased.

So the next afternoon I went back down to Eniwetok Is, and late that afternoon, March 20, we got underway.

March 22 we stopped in at Kwajalein, and got underway the same day again for Tarawa, where we arrived March 25.

-Cont-

Sweetheart, the fact that I'm coming home shortly is like a wonderful dream. I'm so happy that I think with a favorable wind I could just take off and float home.

November 12, 1945

Today four years ago I reported for active duty in New Orleans. I was an ensign, and to me, a lieutenant commander was a real big-shot.

Sweetheart, we see eye to eye on so much I wonder what we are going to have to argue about . . . . Just as you said, there is no point in arguing with these fanatical Roosevelt-haters. Only the other day I discovered that an officer I've been working with daily happens to be a Republican and he discovered that I'm a Democrat. And we'd had something in the line of business to discuss every day for more than a year.

And I like your attitude about the way your uncle Lutchler ragged Tom about the Navy. Everything you quoted your uncle as saying about the Navy is true, but I would never say them to Tom. I have reminded myself that the next time I run into Tom I must be careful what I say. For he has as complete and fine a loyalty toward the Navy as you could find. Sometimes I think faith and loyalty may be a bit more important than the strict truth.

My father's politics are probably a bit more literal than my own . . .

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*I'm so happy!*

*November 13, 1945*

*I saw my orders today. I'll be detached here Nov. 17. . . .*

*I suppose I should have told you that specializing in taxation will most likely mean we can't live in Austin. It really isn't big enough to have a great deal of tax work to do.*

*However, I really think you are being too fearful about our being dominated. . . .*

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*Don't worry about your dominating me, either. That reminds me of my sister Sally. You know, she is definitely on the strong-minded side, and she knows it. . . .*

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*November 14, 1945*

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*Go ahead and commit me to the Cravens' party if you wish. And to whatever parties before the wedding also, so long as they don't delay the event. (As the Navy would say, lets put this "on a no-delay basis")*

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The Saratoga left today clearing out everyone presently waiting transportation. So there should be almost no one ahead of me when I check in at the staging center Saturday. . . .

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November 16, 1945

I got my orders today, although I'm not officially detached until tomorrow. In the morning I'll report to the Staging Center at Maunaloa Ridge for transportation. . . .

War Diary-

A couple of hours after I had dropped the hook at Tarawa, I got orders to move down about 10 miles & beach on a sand causeway near Mullinix field on Eita Is. A pilot was sent over, since the approach was tricky. He was Sam Page, a renegade Englishman who sailed schooners around these waters in peacetime. I knew him from the last time in.

Page did a good job, and we soon began loading the impedimenta of a couple of aviation headquarters outfits. (7th Bomber Command and 11th Bomber Group, AAF)

Before I went up to Eita Is, I had received a foolish order from R. Adm. Jones, the Atoll Commander. He directed me by dispatch to retract and rebeach each high tide to avoid getting stuck. This sounded good, but it would have resulted in wrecking the ship if I had tried it at night. So I simply started the engines each tide and loosened the ship up a bit.

The ship was loaded in a couple of days, and then I got a shock. I was stuck! So I commenced preparations for getting off on the evening tide (my failure was on the morning tide) I sent men under the ship with fire hoses to cut the mud away from the bottom. We put out an extra anchor. We got an LCT to pull and two big bulldozers to butt on the bow. At the same time the engines would back full and the stern anchor winch would heave on the stern anchor wire. The plans were good and I was pretty sure of getting off.

In the meantime the Admiral sent a messenger around who discovered that I had flaunted the Admiral's orders about retracting and rebeaching. So then the Admiral sent for Cmdr. Hurst and gave him hell because I had disobeyed orders.

Poor Hurst was just about to make captain, and this drove him absolutely frantic. He jumped in a boat and came 10 miles to see me. I saw him jump from the boat and run up the dock half out of breath, and say "You didn't really do it did you? You surely didn't disobey the Admiral's order?"

When I told him it was true it was like hitting the poor fellow. However, I went on and explained the circumstances and he calmed down. "You were absolutely right" he said. "Now just tell the Admiral all that and I'm sure--I hope--things will be alright."

So I called up the Admiral and told him the story. He didn't like it.

That evening I pulled off with the aid of all the arrangements I described above. I called Hurst on the radio and told him I was off, which was good news, and then the bad news that the Admiral was still displeased. That got a most heartrending groan out of him.

Just to make things official, I wrote the Admiral an official letter stating in detail just why I had chosen to disobey his orders. Nothing ever came of it, and I never worried.

-Cont-

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November 18, 1945

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Does my "war diary" really sound like I never made any mistakes? Remember the one I made at Kwajalein in launching my LVT's the first time? And I haven't come to my prize mistake yet. (I mentioned it in a note on the back of a photograph.) The good thing about my mistakes was that my Guardian Angel always saw to it that little harm came from them.

. . . . .

. . . Since I'm detached from my duties, and all I have to do is wait, I'm getting plenty of studying done.

November 19, 1945

Apparently I let my optimism run away with me in figuring that I could get out of here in three days. . . .

Got a letter from Ernest today telling me how pleased he was with your visit. . . .

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November 21, 1945

I'm a nervous wreck! For 45 minutes I waited to see whether I was going to get on a ship sailing this afternoon, for San Diego. I'm on, and leave in a couple of hours.

The ship should arrive about Nov. 28, at least within a day of that date. . . . .

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November 27, 1945

As I told you in the hurried note I wrote you on Nov. 21, my transportation came up on a moment's notice. That letter was written about 3:00 PM, and we got underway at 5:00 PM.

The trip has been very enjoyable. The food good, the quarters excellent, and the weather fair. The vessel, incidentally, is the USS Wasatch (AGC 9), a "command" ship, fitted out with great care for high-ranking officers.

Tomorrow morning (Wednesday) we get into San Diego . . . .

. . . . .

Day before yesterday made five months since we were last together. I never want to let it be five hours again!

December 3, 1945

I have finally been assigned transportation. I leave here Wednesday (Dec. 5) morning and arrive in Camp Wallace Saturday morning.

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. . . . .

It was wonderful to hear your voice over the telephone. . . .

Had a good walk this morning, and was able to identify several western birds that I have never seen before. I am considerably handicapped by lack of field glasses, however. I patiently stalk some nervous little bird for an hour or so, and then find that I can get him narrowed down only to a choice between two or three species.

What do you think of some hikes through the hills when I get home? . . .

December 1, 1945

Here it is Saturday, and I am no closer to home than I was when I got here three days ago. We docked in San Diego at 10:00 AM, and by 11:30 I had checked in here at Camp Elliot (11 miles out of town), and was trying to get you on the telephone.

After several hours with no success I called home and found out from Mother that you had gone to Dallas on a shopping expedition. I shall try again on the telephone this afternoon.

Day before yesterday I took a long hike in the park, went through the zoo, and looked at the birds. The California coast here is so much like that around San Francisco that I thought of little else than our walks together there.

Darling, it will be only a few days now, but the waiting is still no easier. The closer it gets the more eager I get.

Now I shall go over to the public telephone and start calling you again.

I love you!

Bach

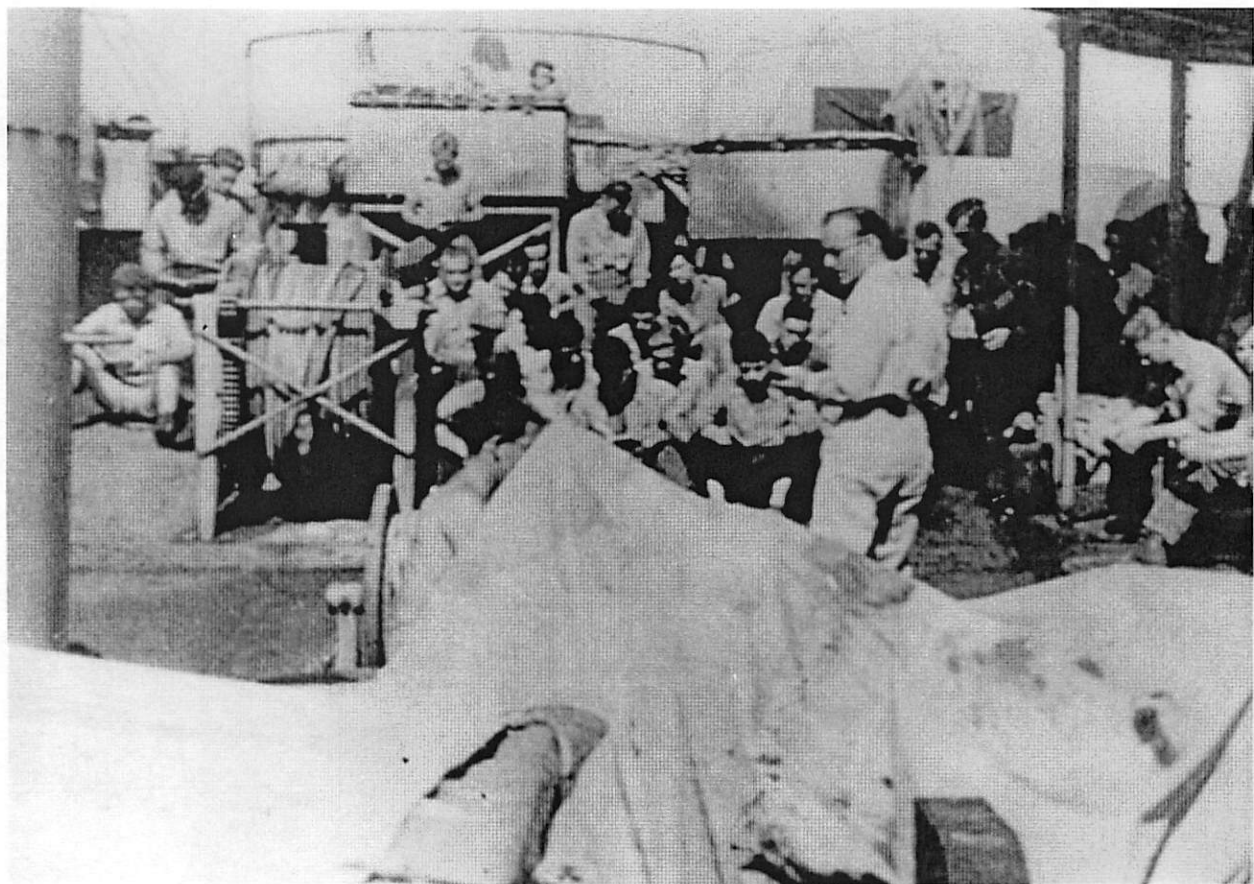




You wanted some pleasant people in my  
 narrative? Well, the gentlemen under the arrow,  
 who also appears in the picture of myself  
 sent you some months ago, was my  
 executive officer, Lt. Kenneth Wills, USNR.  
 He is a high-school football coach in  
 civilian life, an honorable, intelligent,  
 clean living gentleman, a fine officer, and  
 one of those rare creatures, a faithful  
 husband. He commanded LST 240 very  
 successfully after I left. He is incidentally  
 one of the best advertisements the state  
 of Iowa has.



LST 240 at sea with deck load. Note  
DE escorting off starboard bow. This  
picture was taken between Majuro and  
Kwajalein in the Marshalls, April 24.



I think I sent you one of these  
prints, but if I did not, this is  
a picture of an Army chaplain  
holding divine services one lazy  
Sunday morning, <sup>still</sup> when very  
little in the world was bothering  
us. It was between invasions, and  
this was just a "shuttle run".



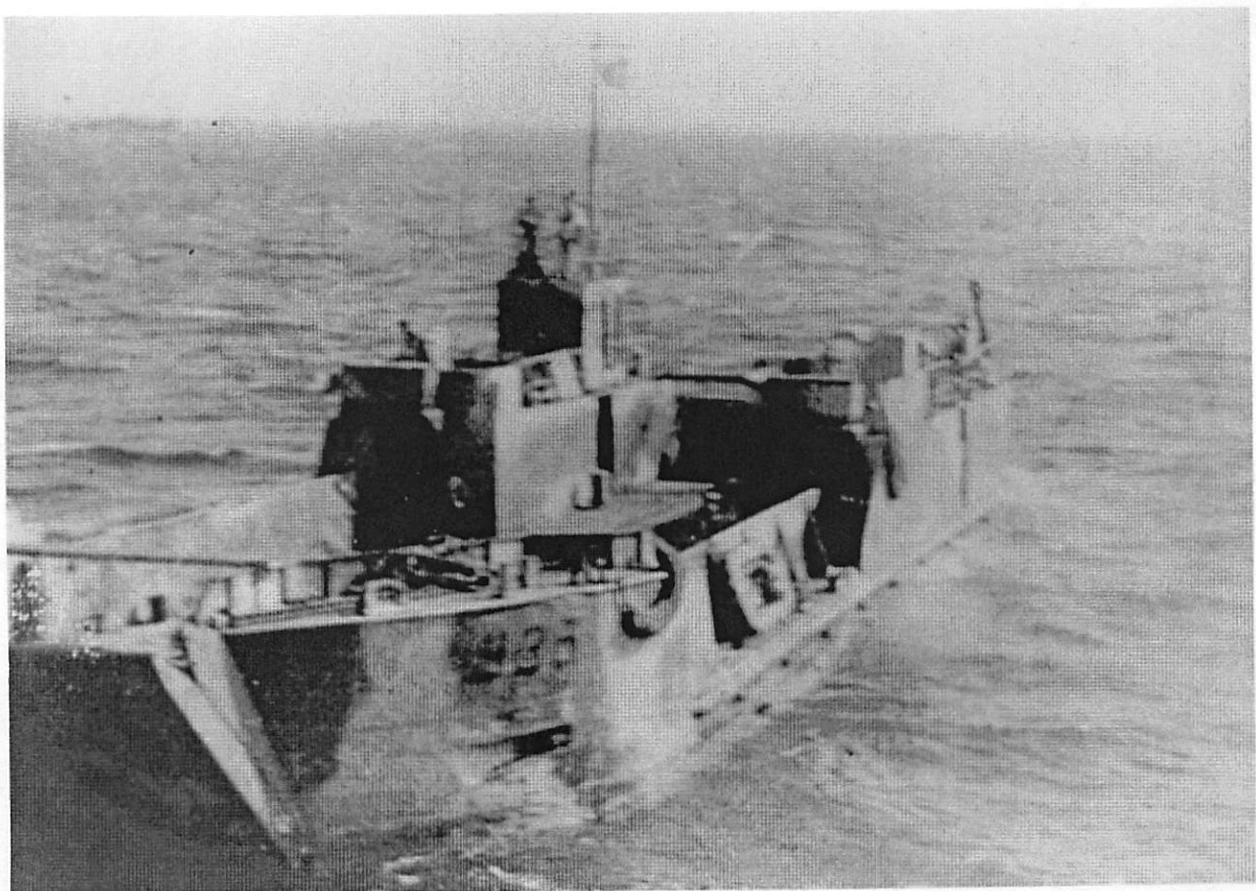
Scene aboard LST 240 on a shuttle  
run in the Marshall Islands, spring '44.  
We were carrying some HAF personnel  
from Tarawa to Kwajalein after the  
Marshall's campaign.

PERSON PHOTO  
JAN 16 1945  
NAVY PHOTO





In this picture my ship is lying on a coral reef at Kwajalein, and the LCT in the picture is trying to pull me off. I finally got off in 1 hr. & 15 mins., assisted by a rising tide, and by shifting water ballast. It was <sup>a</sup>very uncomfortable affair altogether, but although I admitted bad judgment in getting aground, the big-shots generously refused this explanation and excused me entirely.



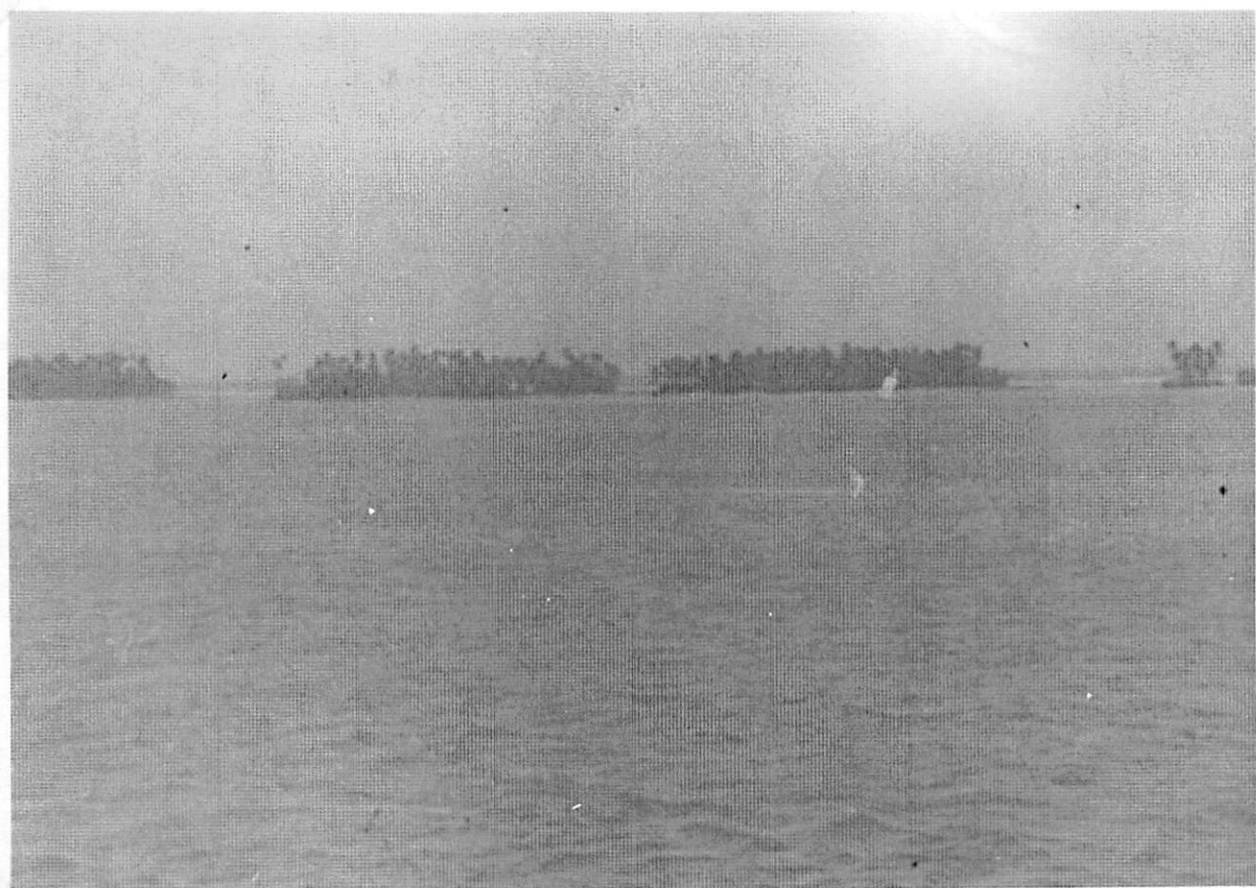
The LCT here is coming by  
to take a hauler from LST 240  
to assist me off a coral head  
at Kwajalein, April '44.



THE ARMY LINES UP FOR  
CHOW - ON LST 240

APRIL 1944

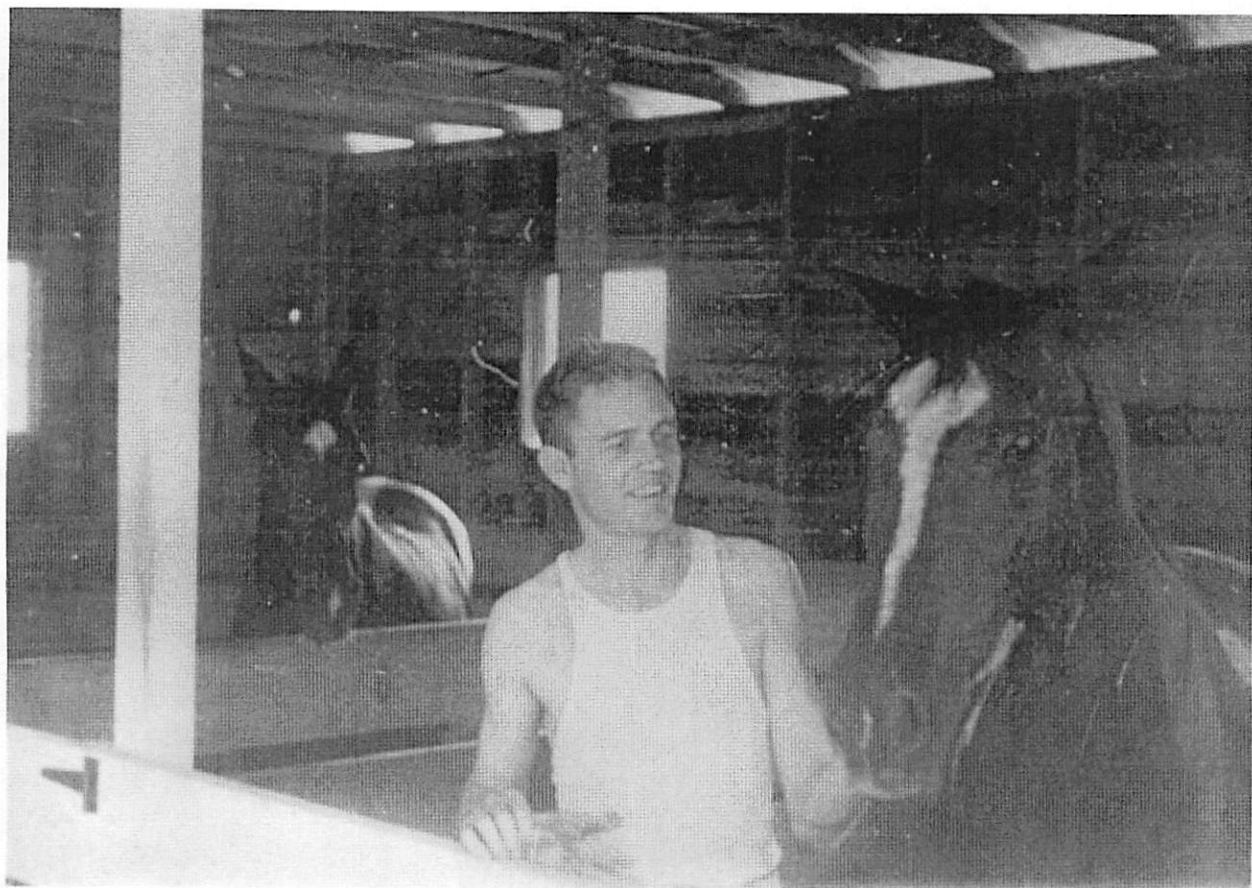
The shrouded objects are 20mm AA guns.



A small look in at Majuro

APRIL 1944





Buddy & I after a stiff workout.  
I have removed shirt & have  
been manicuring stable.  
Buddy