

## **Preface**

**William Henry Knowlton, my Grandfather, was a correspondent for the Red Cross, in 1945, at the age of 39. My Mother was his daughter Barbara, aged 16 in 1945. My Grandmother, aged 35 in 1945, was his wife, Katherine. His other children were Ann, age 11 and Henry (Henry Kaye), 13 in 1945.**

**I know how this story ends. In some ways, it ends with me sitting like my grandfather did in 1944 and 1945, at a qwerty keyboard. His machine was in Okinawa. It could hardly be held up by a wooden desk. Desks were a scarce commodity, so maybe his was a wooden box of some kind. His Red Cross typewriter was situated, later on, in a canvas tent (when one was available) which he called his office. At times he had to move his office, tearing down and re-building large canvas tents, with only one quarter of the manpower usually used to do that job.**

**The Beast on my lap has a Screensaver (picture on its screen, mostly decoration), made from one of the pages of one of his letters. That Screensaver starts out with the words "under the Okinawan sky". He wrote many pages in his life, but during 1944 and 1945 he wrote letters, mostly to Katherine, (my grandma Knowlton), and sometimes also to his children: my mother, Barbara, my aunt, Ann, and my uncle Henry.**

**Grandma (Katherine or Kay) Knowlton was my favorite grandparent, because in my memory, she always smiled, and always was in a good mood. Both my mother, who was Katherine Knowlton's daughter Barbara, and my aunt Ann, have passed on. My uncle Henry is still with us. He gave me copies of these**

letters from my grandfather. I do not remember Grandpa Henry, because he died when I was three.

The letters were a recent discovery, when my Uncle Henry was going through his mother, Katherine's effects, in 2003, nearly sixty years after they were written. Uncle Henry wrote an introduction to these letters, which goes like this:

*My father “went to war” in 1944. At that time, he was 38 years old with a wife and three children. He decided to join the American Red Cross as a war correspondent rather than try to get a commission in the Army, as he was sure the army would put him behind a desk on some U.S. military base. Keep in mind that WWII was fought by young troops, and dad was definitely the “old man” in the group.*

*You may wonder what would have made him do this, and in reading his letters you will find the answer. While he was working in Dayton at Chrysler Airtemp, he had an affair with his secretary, Eloise, which, needless to say, caused a great deal of tension at home.*

*At the time, I was 12 years old and had no idea what was going on, but my older sister, Barbara, was aware of the situation, as was my mother. Though neither dad or mom ever stated his reason for joining the Red Cross, I have since come to believe he did so mainly to get out of a sticky situation at home and let things cool off while he decided what he wanted to do.*

*When he came home from Okinawa, he met mom in Chicago for the weekend (away from us kids). I never heard “Eloise” mentioned after his return, and he and mom seemed as affectionate as in their earlier days (they regularly “spooned” on the sofa in the evening). Dad also encouraged mom to write an advertising column in the local paper. The column was called “Petticoat Patter”. Mom would sell the advertising to the local merchants, and dad would usually edit (or write) the copy.*

*The letters ... are in chronological order. Parts of a few are missing, but most are complete. There is a group of letters dated from March 20, 1945 thru March 30, 1945, which were written at sea, and are undated. I made no attempt to guess the correct order of these letters. They were written while dad was at sea between Hawaii and Okinawa. Okinawa was invaded April 1, 1945, and dad went ashore on April 11, 1945.*

*Henry K. Knowlton  
November 21, 2013*

I have tried, minimally, to edit the letters, giving them a fairly close rendition, into a modern word-processed format. I have used OCR (Optical Character Recognition) so that I could avoid retyping all of them. Some were handwritten, and I *have* typed in those.

My wife and excellent proof-reader, editor, helper, and librarian, Suzanne, also did a lot of typing. There are handwritten annotations which he added to the letters. I have tried to be faithful to everything handwritten, mostly using the *Freestyle Script* font, except for a final entry which is as written. For the OCR'd parts I

have used the **Courier** font, which resembles what was used on most typewriters.

My cosmetic edits have been very minor, changing one to two space characters at the ends of sentences, plus some minor typo and spelling corrections. He used poetic license, using vernacular expressions, phonetic spelling, and mostly his personal style. That made frequent use of a two-period ellipsis, in place of commas and dashes, though he used all three. I think, like many of those enslaved to the keyboard, his aim was to get the points across as fast as possible. Try typing on an old manual typewriter, if you want to know why.

So what is left is a machine-readable version of his letters, with some OCR-based additions like the **Red Cross** letterhead. I have added some footnotes and other interjections. For example, when the censor had added nearly-transparent tape, but you can easily see through it.

He tried hard to get officially recognized as a correspondent, so he could sell some of his writing. That recognition came at the end of the year 2012, when a [document](#) on the RYUKYUS Campaign (Battle for Okinawa) was DECLASSIFIED by the U.S. Army. There had been no censorship since fall of 1945, so his writing after that was unrestricted, but his job with the Red Cross was over too. I have not spilled any beans, as we are now at peace with Japan.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Sullivan".

**Chris Sullivan**