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Dear Family and Friends:

This letter must be considered a joint enterprise, as I have neither the time nor the physical energy to write all of you.. nor the place to do it. Am sitting in the press tent tonight, one of the few places with electric lights.

The story begins on ship, when the night of April 10 it turned stormy and cold... at dawn on the eleventh we were in a pouring rain that felt like ice to our thinned blood; as the rain stopped we sailed up through a group of islands that had been secured. As the morning sun came out we could see the thatched huts along the beaches, and the tiny terraced farms up the mountainside. Through strong field glasses it looked like Shangri La. In the afternoon we approached the coast of Okinawa with our hearts in our mouths, but we soon saw planes, our planes, and all felt much better. Drifted along shore for several hours, behind the line of battle vessels of various types that were shelling the shore. Observation planes directing the fire circled above, and dive bombers were sailing in and out amid the flack and swooping down to strike their targets.

At 4 p.m. we had a general alarm and were confined to quarters. Sat and watched the navy corpsmen set up their emergency operating room with dispatch and speed, operating tables, sterilizer, lamp, and instruments. During the succeeding hours I learned the meaning of sweating it out.. not knowing what was happening. When the all clear sounded we learned that 12 of us, ARC men, were to go ashore at once, ahead of all others on our ship, because we were needed.

When we hit the beach we had no idea where we were, as the location was coded. A truck was to come for us but had not arrived. We were in a sort of cove or breakwater, where the engineers had run a road along the beach at the front. It soon got dark as pitch, and about the time I decided to investigate what was in my rations, signal flares went up. We ran for cover in the shelter of an embankment. This performance was repeated twice before our truck arrived. We could see planes streaking

across the sky but could not identify them. Then we started on what turned out to be a Cook's tour of Okinawa, as the driver got lost and we wandered all over hell. Several times we took cover in the ditch, once when an ammunition dump went up, and we could not tell whether it as ours or the enemy's.

At last we arrived at our bivouac area, where I found friend Jean Ludins running a canteen for an endless stream of GIs. It is located on a beach where the ducks and amphibious tractors, drive by end to end.. unloading ships. The negro drivers had a fire, and coffee cooking in big GI cans.. huge garbage cans to you.. and we stuck by the fire as it was bitter cold. We sleep with all clothes (when we sleep) including jungle sweater and waterproof parka.. wool socks and two blankets. When we finally started to crawl in bed the little yellow bastards came over and we dove into fox holes, where we spent the rest of the night.

Breakfast on K rations and off to press headquarters; met Moscow of the NY Times, John Lardner, Jim Lindsley of AP and several others.. Later Garrett and I tried to hitch hike out to the press ship, and wound up on a duck, stranded on a coral reef for several hours in the boiling sun. (Days are hot). We finally wound up on an ammunitions ship. I was scared stiff, crawling over tons of TNT. We finally got to shore.. to help the boys round up supplies from a nearby dump.. our stuff is scattered over miles of beaches, and we just have to scout for it.

Some of our supplies are scattered over.. have found soldiers wading knee deep in chocolate bars looking for chewing tobacco. Late that afternoon some corpsmen gave me some hot food which tasted good, even though slightly scorched.

The only way you can picture an operation of this kind is to imagine that hundreds of Ringling Brothers circuses landed here all at once, complete with tents, equipment, and gear, including road machinery and giant cranes. There are all types of amphibious vehicles, prime mover units, trucks, jeeps, and all types of self tracking vehicles. Miles of roads have been built in 10 days; bridges reconstructed... high hills cut down for roads, water purification plants set up; all this first in drenching, cold, pouring rain, and later in the worst dust I have ever encountered. Your face gets plastered, your eyes are protected by dust goggles, but your lips crack.

My first lesson in soldiering came from a GI named Slim. He showed me the best available fox hole, and how to lie flat when bombs drop, arms folded under to avoid concussion. He told me my helmet and gun were my best friends. The former is used to protect the head and face; for washing and taking a bath; and when stuck in a fox hole under fire for certain unmentionable but very necessary activities. It's a swell gadget. Artillery at the front sometimes roars all night; it shakes the ground and hurts your ears. We live in sand; in our food, our coffee and in our hair. Considering the fact that it has been fertilized with night soil (human excreta) for centuries, we will no doubt come down with everything. A tiny scratch infects and shoots pus in a few hours. All possessions are semi-public property.. have had three ponchos to date, two mess kits, three cups, and two trench knives. Put a flashlight in your helmet when you go to sleep and some one "borrows it" before you wake.

The next day, after a breakfast of potted meat and beans, hitch hiked a ride out in the harbor and got coffee, sugar, tinned milk and cigarettes from a ship. We use 200 lbs of coffee in one day in one canteen, and we are already running several. The army only has field rations ashore, so we draw extra stuff from the Navy.

Have been around a good bit of the island, and find it very interesting. It has a rugged terrain.. with rivers and deep valleys. There are many conifers, that look like Michigan. The natives lived in villages, in little houses made of bamboo, many with tiled roofs. The remains of the towns smell to high heaven. The natives that are not in compounds are friendly and cheerful.. the children grin and wave.... I gave a tiny little girl hard candy and she thanked me in Okinawan and bowed deeply.. her little head touching the dust. The women carry baskets on their heads with great loads of stuff.. the men wear hats that look like those worn by Japanese fisherman. Principle crops are barley, rice, cabbage and other vegetables. Many of the natives know nothing about the war. One woman threatened to tell the Emperor that Americans were not paying rent on her little place. Others have already learned to say "hello" and to wave instead of bowing. Sanitary facilities as we know them are unknown.. schools had small outhouses but the average native used the front porch, or yard. The young women are beautiful, now wearing Navy shirts and slacks, but the older

ones are ugly, and have terrible teeth. They all smell to high heaven.

Have often wondered what America will be like when our cemeteries are larger than our cities. Here, for centuries, the dead have been buried in huge vaults in the first of the hills.. they are everywhere. Poor men just dig a hole. The body is placed in an earthen vessel, feet drawn up, knees to chin, for a three year mourning period. At the end of this time - the bones are put in an urn and transferred to the tomb. Tiny ones of babies, larger urns for entire families. Their pottery is very elaborate and beautiful. Many of these tombs were shelled, as it was impossible to tell which ones were fortified. They are now being sealed, however, and troops are instructed not to desecrate them. They smell awful inside.

It is almost impossible to take pictures of the natives, as they have been taught since childhood that when a picture is taken the soul leaves the body. Even the tiny kids hide their faces and run at the sight of a camera. One native who spoke a little English said "Japs all gone.. they number up." How true. The island is alive with goats, and there are many chickens and ducks. Lots of horses which resemble Mongolian ponies.. very tame and gentle. The GIs are riding them all over with halters.

Last night was hell on earth. It began when we were inspecting a building which we are already converting to a canteen, at the edge of a native village that is mostly rubble: we were surprised by an air attack, and the guns let loose all over, the flack showering on the tile roof like rain. In the midst of the excitement, a mamma goat and her nanny climbed in on top of us, shaking and bleating. Hard to tell who was the most frightened.. us or the goats. We got back to our area on the beach at dark, and were immediately forced under ground. We watched enemy bombers come down in flames, but one laid an egg a few yards from us... the concussion was terrific... no sleep at all. In fact we have not averaged two hours a night so far. Tokyo Rose said today: the American will not sleep for 7 nights".. that's OK with me if we can get some sleep then.

Perhaps the Japs invented amphibious warfare, but I wish Henry Kaye could see what goes on here. The ducks and tractors are fascinating, and at high tide the landing ships back right up to the beach and open their huge ends on the shore so vehicles can run in and out.. endlessly. Tomorrow we move to

our command Post, and will at least be out of the dirt and confusion of the beaches. We will, however, have to construct new fox holes along side our tents.

Incidentally, only one of us has seen a snake, and that was a small one that is dead. The great dangers are malaria, dengue, and dysentery,-- the latter being extremely bad. We do our best to keep clean, but it's very hard. Our clothing is caked with dirt and our boots with mud. Can't tell you anything about the military activity at the front, but we all know we are going to win, in spite of the very tenacious and extremely clever Japs.. they pull some fast ones, believe me.

My job is to cover all ARC posts on the island once a week, and record what is happening.. also to write stories and articles.. some assignment. I'll be able to get around everywhere, from the front to the back areas. So far our men are doing a herculean job, under the most difficult conditions you can imagine. Our canteens run right around the clock, and we supply comfort articles to the evacuation and field hospitals. Also news sheets, and have already started movies in one or two units. The trouble is when we start to show them there is an alert.

We were shocked about Roosevelt... and there were as many opinions as people about his successor. We have received several false alarms on the European situation.

Our only relaxation is a beverage introduced to us by Slim, known as "GI" which is a mixture of medical alcohol and fruit juice. Hardly a concoction for social festivities, but in a fox hole about one fourth of a canteen aspirin, or anything that might let you fall asleep.

Must try and get some sleep before the three flares crack out again, and the siren rings; the shells sail over and the flack falls like rain. Our mathematical odds are excellent, but the sensation of being under fire is very real just the same.

Have received considerable mail here. Thanks a thousand times for all your letters... they mean more than anything here. Keep them coming while we count the days and weeks and months until we can be together again... It does not seem so far from home when mail comes to us in from 10 days to 2 weeks, so far.

ALOHA Henry.