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My precious Katherine:

This morning on the way to breakfast I wondered why all the boys were at Mass... thought it might be some special religious day, and then suddenly realized that it was Sunday.. our work routine never stops, and one day is much like the next. Also our food is no different from other days.

Yesterday I took the day off and went out, with Julian Garrett and his camera, to see the sights. We drove down to Naha. I had expected to find the city ruined, but was not prepared for what I saw. It is desolate.. it is just gone. The only building we could recognize was a bank .. the curved facade of what must have been a theater, and some of the university buildings. But the "downtown" is gone.. we found the bus station by the pile of bus bodies and wheels.. the rail station by the little engine and cars almost covered with rubble.. but not a square inch of glass, or wood, or anything left.. it is literally pulverized. Already the bull dozers are at work, cleaning it up. We went on down to Shuri, which was even more disappointing.. it is level. Found the headquarters of the Japanese Red Cross and unearthed documents which are being translated. Found some medals for 1946.. imagine. On the hill back of Shuri is a Christian Church, standing bleak and white on the hill.. the cross intact. Before it are the stark remains of big trees, their denuded broken branches stretching to the sky. In the ravine below was the skull of a Jap, one leg with pantleg and shoe, and a twisted spine... quoth the raven.. nevermore. It was the most desolate scene I have ever encountered.

As I have explained, the central part of the island, where we came ashore, was almost untouched by battle. I wondered at the time why the island looked so clean and beautiful.. it was because of the rapid retreat. But yesterday I saw it all.. the wrecked vehicles, burned tanks, Jap one-man tanks, burned planes, and everywhere the sweet sickish smell.. we went several miles beyond Shuri, until we got into territory where pot shots from the brush are common.. so turned around and came back. Had lunch with a CB outfit that follows the Marines.. meat patties

with gravy, sweet potatoes, and delicious vegetable soup. The CBs are swell.

Later in the day we went to a native village, where they are living much as they did before we came, although now badly crowded. The area was full of kids.. hundreds and hundreds of them.. all ages and sizes. Many orphans of course. The women go out to work in the fields by day, and the men go on "work details" but you should see them lean on the shovel. Apparently the women did all the real work and the men saved their energy for more important things, like breeding young uns. It was a field day for photographs, and hope I can get some of the prints for you. There was a 12 year old Okinawan girl running a barber shop under a tree.. she cut hair for the old gaffers, and shaved them expertly. Her hands were tattooed, showing marriage.. the marks looked like horrible burns. Many of the little kids had sore eyes. Others looked bright and clean.

At length the "mayor" (each village has a head man) invited us to call. One of the native "policemen" escorted us to the mayor's courtyard, where the scene was almost beyond description. The court was small, faced on three sides by the open rooms of the house.. there are no walls on the inside.. facing the court. Each room contained three to 10 old people, sitting on the floor drinking tea. In the court itself contained a stable at one side with two sad looking, but very friendly horses (I thought of Barbie), two pigs.. in concrete wallows.. filthy dirty.. ducks, chickens, goats, and Okinawans.. old young big little. And right in the center of the whole works was, of all things, a copper sake still with the clear liquid running out of it. The mayor fed mash into the top.. the mash made of sugar cane and rice. He offered us steaming hot sake in little dishes used for the purpose.. it was strong as dynamite and all the natives laughed when I rubbed my stomach.. stronger than any brandy or 100 proof whiskey. As the fumes of the hot sake came up over my face I started to smell something even worse. Looking down I saw I was standing on a flat board, at the edge of the pigstye. The board had a small hole in it.. and investigating found that it was the neighborhood latrine.. very full indeed. The odor was overpowering, along with all the other smells. Don't know if I will ever want to taste sake again. At length we left. Julian crawled up on the tile roof of a house and shot the scene, or part of it, and hope we get a good picture.

Then we wandered around the village, watched the women washing clothes, drying tea leaves in bowls over little fires.. sorting rice, soy beans and grain, and preparing meals. They all eat with chopsticks. The language is Jap for the young uns who learned it in school, and the older people speak only Okinawan, which even the Japs do not understand. The MG boys are learning to speak both Okinawan and Japanese much faster than the people are learning English. The kids say, "cigarette.. cigarette.. or to-ba-ko or hello.. one said very plainly "Chesterfield".. no one asked for Camels. Some of them say, in greeting, "Tojo eat s--t" which they have been taught by the GIs and Marines.. more yankee humor coming out. When you laugh they laugh loudly and think its all a fine joke. Kids are kids, everywhere.. but some of the little orphan girls.. the look in their eyes gives you the creeps.

We watched the women coming in from the fields, carrying enormous loads of stuff on their heads. They wear dirty kimonos and make little effort to keep themselves covered. Some of the younger women are beautifully built.. even though they are short, they have straight strong legs from carrying heavy burdens on their heads from childhood. We found one girl carrying.. slung at eigher end of a pole, in nets that resembled cargo nets.. at one end a fat pig, and at the other end a little dried up old woman, presumably her grandmother.. my god.. what a sight. The men carry nothing.. in fact they do not go into the fields to work.

Finally we left the confusion and the smells and returned to camp. Did I wash good before going to supper! Just makes you crawl to think about them.. when I got back had to type the out wires for the day.. four sheets.. took me until 11 P. M. Tonight I started early, writing Bob and Marguerite, but we had an alert and had to keep the lights out all evening. So now it is nearly midnight and I had planned on spending the evening with you.

Now that the worst is over things will move rapidly here. The construction is unbelievable.. we have a PX open.. can buy pretzels, but no clothing yet. We are going to have a cigarette shortage, we believe, judging from recent demand on ARC. At the moment all our cigarettes are going to the hospitals only.. none to troops.

For a few days we had a taste of fresh food, but are back on rations..I did get one orange, and did that taste good. We also had stewed chicken once.

Yesterday, as a great favor, a guy gave me a fresh egg. I hardboiled it, and ate it on the way to Naha.. tasted swell, even without salt. The greatest treat we have had was some canned beer we got off a ship.

Harry Gibson, director, is in Oahu, trying to get a few thing straightened out. Joe Graham, his chief hatchet man is going home.. so are head and asst. head of supply department... and so are a dozen others.. some new arrivals. Why they came I can't imagine. The air is so charged around hdq. that I am thankful to be in the comparative peace and quiet of communications office. Someday I will explain how this whole thing works, but it's against security to give you my present location, or connection with military command. Am on DS.. so get mail at hdq. where I want to stay attached for good reasons, even though I do not live there. We have more wires than we can handle every day, and I have a new GI who is desperately slow... and we only have three typewriters, and he keeps one tied up.

Must get to bed darling.. how I miss you these soft moonlight nights.. We call them bomber's moons, and they are.. although the alerts are getting less frequent, and few are getting through, but when they do.... the sparks fly. We don't even have a shelter in our new area.. but we have a damn fine culvert out in front if things get really hot.

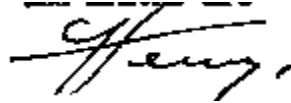
Have written Verne Miller.. will he be surprised to learn I am here.. a lot of boys have come from his area, but he has not arrived yet, and may not at all. Also wrote Oliver Melchoir, whom I have not seen since 1920 in Philadelphia.. he is Navy Lieut.

Hope you are getting all my letters.. am waiting with both ears back for those pictures.. it seems like I have wanted them for many months...will write Ann shortly.. have a lot of wonderful ideas to continue the Poi dog story.. adventures with a goat.. a hermit crab, who carries his own house with him and is very playful, and of course, the Loo Choo children...You would be surprised how many dogs reached here from Hawaii.. real poi dogs, with the troops. We have big new canteen at the air terminal.. opened Friday with Marine band and all the

trimmings.. how do you like our new "boss" out here.. think that is wonderful.. the greatest field soldier of them all....will write Ann shortly, also Henry.

Good night my lover.. keep your chin up.. the days and weeks, and months are slipping by.. as the Spanish say 'go with God' -- I love you....

Henry

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Henry", written below a horizontal line.