

Letter from Dad to his father in Cadillac, Michigan

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Okinawa

Dear Folks:

This is a stinking hot Okinawan afternoon, and with the huge pile of work undone in my department, I don't like to take even an hour off, but do want to let you know I received father's fine letter of July 22nd. Our volume of radio business has almost doubled, and the operation is also complicated by the arrival of many new ARC men with various air units. We not only have to get the wires typed, and processed through our index records, but must make arrangements to change our messenger run service almost daily to accommodate these units. Also the number of ships coming and going from several harbors here complicates matters no end. Lots of times by the time we locate the ship it is gone from these waters "destination unknown". It's a tough, complex business. My soldiers, now seven of them, do a fairly good job for soldiers, but they are not skilled clerical personnel, and make many errors, all of which are reflected in the overall success of the operation. Sometimes I get pretty discouraged, but the show must go on.

Glad to know my family "look fine" as you say. Have not heard from Katherine in some time, but expect she is busy getting in a brief vacation, and that I will hear in due time. Am glad Jo has a comfortable home with the Van Vrankens in Grand Rapids. I remember him, believe it or not, as a very charming man who ran a drug store. The reports from William sound grand.. and I have already indicated to you that I hope he stays where he is for his overseas trick. Also hope that you and mother can arrange to drive to Grand Rapids now and then as I know you enjoy it.

Speaking of Grand Rapids, I received a letter yesterday, posted May 3rd from Aunt Leah Hilton. She sounds very forlorn and lonesome; evidently Hazel sent her one of my letters, and her husband observes "he writes just like Ernie Pyle." Have not seen or heard from Leah since Grandma Williams died, and I

attended the funeral in Grand Rapids. Her husband, "Ken" is a plumber and had no use for me because I was once closely associated with the Crane Company. Like many plumbers he hates "the jobbers" and all they stand for. Believe they are very well fixed financially, and have an attractive home and fine cottage, but Leah says "I sure miss my dear old Dad.. I'm the only one left (of the family) in Grand Rapids."

Glad to have the reports on the Powers boys.. also Willard Hawley. If the daughter is anything like her mother she must be very attractive indeed. I remember her as a little girl with a broad nose and freckles, but am sure she does not look like that now.

About two weeks ago they gave me an assistant.. ARC man named Brown, who turned out as perfectly and utterly worthless and I have given my recommendation that he be sent home. He formerly worked for the Pullman Co. in New York, where he was evidently a little dictator in his department. He tried out a few of his tricks on my soldiers, and they all came to me saying they wanted release from duty, and then when he tried similar tactics on me I sharply re-assigned him to command, and recommended that he be given psychiatric examination which he is to have this PM. We sure have our troubles with "unstable" personnel... many men go completely to pieces in a setting of this kind where things, both business and personal, seldom go smoothly. I have high hopes of getting one of our new men, named (of all things) Zook, who owns three weekly newspapers in Nebraska and New Mexico. He is a self made little guy, and highly competent. He is now with a navy station where he has all of the comforts afforded anyone here, like a steel bed with steel springs, mattress, fresh food, and even 12 bottles of beer a week. He is enough interested in ARC to give that up and come to work in my office, and I would sure like to have him. So the men who are his immediate superiors are mumbling around about "getting a replacement" before I can have him. So it goes.

Am still able to retain contact with the war correspondents, many of whom I like very much. George Lacks from "Life" is now here and also a screwy guy from United Press who writes a lot of fiction while he is reporting. We have had several good ARC stories break lately; one we discovered an Okinawan girl and two small brothers.. all born in Honolulu and are American citizens and we're trying to get them evacuated. There is a directive on the Philippines about such cases, but

none here, and right now the colonels are trying to decide if the directive can be used in this area etc. In the meantime, we are trying to dig up a dress or two that fits and some underwear ... we may be able to get some of the ARC gals to part with the latter, but it is hard to find, as there is no source of re-supply here for any female personnel. We hope to get her out, with her brothers within the next week or 10 days.

Doing anything in the Army is still a great and wonderful thing to me. Yesterday I started out in the morning to get a re-supply of teletype paper, on which this is written, comes with self-carbon paper in the rolls, and thus saves time in typing thousands of radigrams. Sounds simple. First I went to the "Colonel". He scowled, asked me several questions, and finally signed my requisition. Just as I went out he said "better see my supply officer".. So I went to the Major.. he asked more questions, scowled, and signed his initials. Then I found that the signal supply dumps had been moved way down the island. After an hour's ride I went into a tent to see the "First Sergeant". Here I waited in line for perhaps an hour. Finally he looked over my requisition and said, "That's no good, the Colonel had no right to sign that". I pointed to the Major's initials and he said, "I don't know that guy... he's not our supply officer.. you gotta see Major so and so." After some 30 minutes of argument he let the requisition pass, and after going to four more tents to have the papers "checked" by various soldiers, I went out to the supply area. Here the GI said, "Hell, I'm from the 96th (division).. (meaning he was a combat soldier) I don't know where that damn paper is." I said OK bud.. let's have a look around, and we finally found it. I loaded two cases in my jeep and started home.. had been from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. getting two boxes of paper. On the way back I stopped at one of the Field Hospitals for supper, and was it good.. baked ham, and even ice water. Also white cotton tablecloth. With all the nurses at the tables I hardly knew how to act, so kept quiet and enjoyed my food.

The other night I noticed an article in a recent issue of "Time"... Navy V-mail edition (photostats) that the military command situation on Okinawa was a bit confused. It's against regulations to let you know much about that goes on... but between MacArthur, Nimitz, Vinegar Joe Stillwell, Doolittle, and a few others that have a finger in this pie the generals and colonels here have their hands full trying to figure out what is

what. I'll be able to tell you some tall stories about the results when I get home.

When I get this communications center operating properly, if ever, I may take over the operation of "rest areas" on these islands.. particularly the places where fighter pilots and bomber crews go to get their breath after months of strenuous duty. This will involve the operation of clubs (small hotels) commissaries.. and all the rest. Will be a tremendous job, and if I want to take it on will mean another promotion before long. One set-up for example.. will be on a small nearby island, and will be operated by about 10 ARC men and perhaps 40 girls. Red Cross is becoming big business in these parts. Our lord and master, Gibson, is still away, but expected back momentarily. His staff are pretty well disgusted that he found reasons for spending over 2 months back in Honolulu during the most difficult part of this operation.

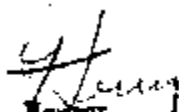
Night before last the Japs gave us a little going over that was far from pleasant. When morning finally came I was very thankful to be alive and that no one in our area was hurt. The sparks do fly, now and then. I expect their current efforts are an attempt at retaliation for what is happening to Jap cities.. it makes me shudder to even think of it as much as I hate the Japs. They should be able to see, by now, that the final result is inevitable, but their overlords can't let go, even though they know it is too late, and the people are too well disciplined to revolt, no matter what happens.

Josephine sent me a very fine package. It contained, of all things, some fish line and spinners. When I get a chance I plan to catch a few tropical fish and see what they look like. Then will try and find a native who knows which ones can be eaten. The water is so warm, however, that I doubt if they would be, as Henry Kaye often remarks, "very tasty".

Was surprised to receive word from Blackie in Dayton that Paul B. Zimmerman has resigned from Airtemp. This means that the "junior executives" like Andy Ward, and other young men that have worked long and hard, are in a tough spot. Don't know what will come of it, but Paul is going with T.K. Quinn, who has been with WPB through the war, and is a very capable man. The organization is Monitor Equipment Co. of New York City, but I do not know what they manufacture.

Hope this finds you both well.. I have an article out this month in Sales Management Magazine, but they spelled my name "S. H. Knowlton".. and in big type too. Of all the lousy breaks. Have another article for them almost completed, but what with the work of the day and hot weather, it's slow going.

Much love to all,


Henry.