

8 Sept. 1945.

Okinawa.

My dearest Katherine:

Things are still moving so fast I can hardly get my breath.. these are great days here on Okinawa. Yesterday morning I watched the Jap generals from Amami O Shima, (the next large island north) surrender to Stillwell at a beautiful ceremony in front of Stillwells headquarters at Tenth Army. As the Japs marched out in their ill fitting uniforms the military band played, "The Old Grey Mare"... which was done at the request of Vinegar Joe, and referred, we understand, to the Emporer's white horse. The surrender was made to Stillwell with a staff sargeant interpreter standing at his side.

Now that censorship is off I can tell you a good bit.. on the way back from the ceremony I was crossing Kadena Field when a P-47 fighter (one of hundreds of planes that had flown in huge echelons over the ceremony) conked out and came down just a few yards to my left. I had with me a new gal from Manila who is a photographer, and we rushed over in time to take pictures of the funeral pyre... I have seen many planes crash here, but its hell to watch when you know its all over and the death of the young pilot seems so useless. Late last night a truck hit two lads walking in almost the same spot.. I saw them being loaded into ambulances.. so it goes.

Fine letter this week from Laurie York Erskine, who is still in Honolulu, and he said, in part,

"First off I shall probably have to drop all altruistic interests and get busy rustling up some money to take care of debts and family. Second, if I can get on my feet soon enough, I shall analyze the situation at Solebury School, and if I find it what I want it to be.. that is, if I find it has not bogged down into just another prep school, while I've been away... I may be able to raise enough funds for me to get in there and keep it alive in the sense that any school should be alive. In that case there will be no reason for Henry to bewail. But in case the school has gone to grass, and I have to bend every effort pot boiling for the slicks we can do no more than mourn the hope as another casualty of war. As a matter of fact, from this distance, I am not sure that the whole boarding school idea is not a casualty of war. It remains to be seen."

So... it looks like Henry might go to Solebury school yet. Laurie also mentions his years long correspondence with Doctor

Stocking on the essential nature of man... Sox says it is bad, and Laurie says it is good, and there they are.

For the past few days we have been busy with the released prisoners from Japan. Most of them are American flyers...but there are many Dutch nationals, Italians from the south Atlantic wars, Norwegians, Australian nurses... and all night last night the Britishers poured through.. we handled over 1,500 men in a few hours. Men from Baataa, Corregidor, Wake Island: the latter 44 months in prison. Their reports of neglect and inhuman treatment at the hands of the Japs were uniformly horrible. I talked to one B-29 pilot from Chicago who was kept in solitary 66 days, taken out of his black pit only for questioning and beating.. and he saw other members of his crew beaten to death before his eyes. I encountered, last night, a Dutch gentlemen who had taught English in a commercial school in Surabaio, Java.. he has been four years in the Japanese lead mines, and his lungs are gone. He was talking about his wife and four children.. he knew not where they may be now.

We have women.. Dutch nationals, and children. One boy, 15 years old, was put in the women's compound, but he feels that he should be in with the "men" and I think he is right. The little girls, younger than Ann.. are lovely.. though terribly thin and weak. One of them said, "My daddy taught me to catch snakes, with a forked stick, we roasted them and ate them... like corn on the cob." The Dutch people love chocolates but some of the sailors threw it up as fast as they could eat.. unaccustomed to rich food.

We are now expecting 30,000 released prisoners here.. and how in hell will we handle all of them.. I don't know. We are now doing business in astronomical quantities.. this morning we bought 50,000 chocolate bars from the Navy... we are using coca cola and fruit juice in thousand case lots.

Censorship is off. As you know I came out here attached to "Headquarters, 10th Army." I was pretty well fed up with the situation on Oahu, and volunteered to go with a combat task operation. It was in Januaary of this year, at a BOQ at Schofield Barracks, Oahu, that I learned we were going to the Nansei Shoto. I had never heard of the place, and had been reading up on the Bonin Islands (Iwo Jima) as I thought we would attack there next. When I looked at the map.. it seemed incredible that we were to drive a wedge into the heart of

Japan, close to land based planes on Kuyushu, China, and Formosa. I was, frankly speaking, scared stiff.

An army headquarters is a great, sprawling affair, which carries representatives of all the services, intelligence, supply, quartermaster, etc. We, as Red Cross, were one section of the command, which numbered about 2,000 officers and men. It was a "tactical" command.. charged with the responsibility of the fighting units here. We left Honolulu on St. Patricks day and were from March 17 to April 9 en route, with stops at Eniwetok, and Ulithi, where I saw Charlie Plumb, came ashore the night of April 10 in the mouth of the Ishagawa River which is almost in the center of the island. Everything north of the river was under Marine Command.. South of the river, Army.

This was a combined operation in the strict sense. On our ship and attached to our headquarters were officers from the Army, Navy, and Marines.. everything worked as one unit. Right in the middle of the battle I found Bill Bennett, and his pals, working in the radar room of the command ship in our harbor, keeping track of the Jap planes in the air. When we came ashore the divisions had wheeled and started south, but we were still within easy range of Jap artillery. And let me tell you something right now: bombs, and strafing, and small arms fire, are nothing.. absolutely nothing, compared with being under big guns. The big guns keep throwing them in.. the shells burst and everything is gone, men, trucks, buildings, everything. Several times they had us "zeroed in" and would "walk" the shells across the area, closer and closer.. there is just no place to go... a fox hole is blown to hell in a second, and if you are in a cave the mouth gets sealed shut with a mountain of dirt.

Despite the things that were said by David Lawrence and other arm chair generals in the States, this campaign was carried out with great brilliance. When he talks about making an "end run" at the bottom of the island, he has never seen the sheer cliffs that rise 300 to 700 feet straight up from the sea, and furthermore the men were not here to make that end run, had it been feasible. The 27th Division was battered, and had to be taken out of the lines, and the Marines put in.. just yesterday I talked to an officer of one regiment of the 77th.. the only living officer.. who said his unit had 150% replacements. In other words: all his men and half of the replacements were killed, and he was the only staff officer left. A regiment is roughly 3,000 men.

For the first three weeks we lived in a tent behind the Red Cross canteen on the beach, but spent most of our nights in a hole built against the inside of the sea wall. In May the mud was horrible.. we had 17 inches of rain in 20 days, and the whole island turned to a quagmire.. The roads were impassable. The campaign suffered, as did the men.

Many things have happened that I want to forget as soon as possible. One of my friends was captured, riding in his jeep, and horribly tortured by the Japs. We found his body, mutilated. Many others, were, of course, killed. Eugene Smith of Life magazine was shot in the face, only a few days after he had miraculously escaped death by shooting a Jap in the stomach.

One night a Jap soldier got in our CP... The boys fired, and he fell, then got up and kept coming, they fired again, he fell and got up again.. finally he did not get up. In the morning we went out to look him over.. what a mess.

Getting organized to handle these prisoners from Tokio has been a gigantic job. Twice in the past ten days I have worked 26 hours at a stretch.. but it does not pay, you just must stop and rest sometime. Several of our men are about out on their feet at this point. One of our boys developed dengue, and refused to go to bed .. he was evacuated yesterday with bronchial tubes and one lung collapsed.. one side of his face blue black, a horrible looking sight. The night of the "wild celebration" on Okinawa one of my GIs in the office got a bullet in his shoulder and it is lodged between his lungs and ribs, where they cannot operate. He has been evacuated.

We have, however, lost more men from psychoses¹ than anything else. They go completely haywire, talk endlessly (hysteria) or become depressed and will not talk at all. Many Red Cross men were poorly selected and should never have been sent into combat.

But this campaign has not been all hell on wheels, by any means. I have learned much, and further think what I have learned will be valuable. We are still blessed with cool

¹ That is now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD - previously known as Shell-Shock.

nights, although the days are stinking hot, and I shall be glad to see snow again.

I have requested transfer to Washington for reassignment Oct 15 via air. If I get out, by ship, by Nov. 15, I will be very lucky. There are nearly a hundred Red Cross people backed up in Manila, waiting to get home, so I am not going to try from there. Dombrowsky made a brief trip to Manila on business, and reports it is pretty well blown to pieces, also terribly crowded.. no place to lie down, let alone sleep, and prices very high.

Must go out and dig up some more of this triplicate paper.. as we are running out. All my love to you all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harry". The signature is written in dark ink and is somewhat stylized. Below the main signature, there is a smaller, less legible mark that could be a second signature or a stamp.