

Letter written before the outbreak of hostilities:

I am on all night duty as Field Officer of the day, which consists in keeping watch at the Harbor Defense Signal Station, ready to alert the troops in case of attack. It is potentially a very hot spot. Until someone with a lot more rank could get here I am commander of all the troops in the Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays. Until something unusual happens, however, there is nothing to do but stay awake. It takes me about 2 hrs. to write a reasonably decent account of the trip to date, so I have decided to strike off a few carbons. I hope you all won't mind too much. O.K.? Here goes.

We left Pier 45, Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, at noon, Aug. 28, [1941] on the the U.S.A.T. Pres. Pierce. It is a 550 foot passenger cargo-passenger steamer, built in 1922. It is capable of 18 K., which is the same as flying for an Army transport. It was formerly a round-the-world liner for Dollar Lines, President Lines, and was once owned by Pacific Mail. The Army took it over about July, and this was Trip #2 to P. I. It had just come from dry dock, and developed engine trouble before we cleared the G. G. Bridge, so we put about and anchored halfway between Alcatraz and Fisherman's Wharf. Repairs were completed by 8 P.M. and after a one hour test cruise about the Bay, we went out under the Bridge at 9 P.M. We had aboard about 200 officers, plus a battalion, 1000 men, of the 200th New Mexico National guard, an anti-aircraft outfit. Due [to] the delay, we had to slow down to avoid arriving in Honolulu at night, so it took us 5 days, instead of 4 1/2.

We were in Honolulu from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. I went ashore with a Lieutenant Stecker, son of a Regular officer, who has been out here before, and knows his way about. Went swimming at Waikiki Beach, and to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel for a couple drinks. Waikiki is O.K. but aside from the fact that the waves break about 1/2 mile out, it is no better than Calif. beaches. The bottom contains a lot of coral, which cuts hell out of your feet! We were back downtown by noon, so we hired a taxi and went for a tour of the island. Saw the "Upside down Waterfall" where the wind blows the water back up into the air and dissipates it, instead of allowing it to fall over the cliff. This is close to the Nuaana Pali, over which King Kamehameha drove his enemies, as told in the words of a popular song of some years back. The wind blows up the face of this cliff, which is the local suicide jump, with terrific force. The latest tale about it is that a native who jumped off in a suicide attempt recently was blown back to the starting point with only a broken wrist instead of a broken neck. Aside from the fact that everything is very green and beautiful, I saw nothing so terrific about the place. Honolulu is very little different from a town of its size in the States, except that there are more dark skinned people on the street. I am certainly glad that I got to see it at Uncle's expense. I would have felt very badly to have spent my own \$ on the trip. I'll admit that you can't see all of such a place in one day, but I saw enough of it to form

an opinion. So much for Honolulu. If you want a lot of sentimental gush about the place, read the Dole Pineapple ads, or some Honolulu Chamber of Commerce literature.

Between Honolulu and Manilla we had a heavy cruiser for an escort, and ran blacked-out at night. About a week out of Honolulu we were in a junior typhoon for about 36 hrs. The wind attained a measured speed of 75 m.p.h., and it rained so hard that sometimes we could barely see the cruiser, which was only about 200 yards away. The waves were high, the ship tossed and everything was lovely. Aside from that, we saw not a single ship (or a married one either), only one small island about 5 miles off, and the trip was quite dull.

Arrived at Manila at 3 P.M. Tues. Sept. 16, 12 days out of Honolulu and 17 days (running time) out of Frisco. We just missed the Corregidor boat so went to the Manila Hotel for the night, as there is only one boat per day out here. Got a very nice room for \$3.50. Stecker and I went down town and walked about a bit. He went to high school here for three years, so knows the town pretty well. The principal shopping street is called the Escolte. It is so narrow that two cars just have room to pass, and only about 3 blocks long, but has some good little shops and larger stores which would stack up favorably in the States. When you get one block off it you are among the natives. They are small, dirty, smelly, and a lot like the Mexicans and Indians of Southern Cal. About 8 we went to a very modern, air conditioned night club called the Jai Alai for dinner. The place takes its name from the game of jai alai (high a lie) which is a glorified hardball. After eating, we went to another part of the place to watch the play, which is very fast, and interesting to watch. They have a pari-mutual set-up and bet on each event, which takes 10 to 15 min. to play. They play from 7 to 11 P.M. After an hour or so of this we went up to their Sky Room (so called because you can't see out of it) and drank whiskey sours until closing time. Next day we walked and rode about until 3 P.M. when we boarded the boat for Corregidor. Worth mention, I think, is the taxi situation. Taxis outnumber private cars about 3 or 4 to 1. They are very cheap, so you can ride anywhere about town for 25 or 50 cents. To drive a taxi, you head it down the street, put a heavy foot on the gas, clamp one hand on the horn with a death-grip, and hope. The most important item is the horn button. They keep up such an incessant beeping that it almost drives me nuts, especially after the quiet of Corregidor.

Arrived Corregidor, which is an island in the mouth on Manila Bay about 30 mi. from Manila, about 5:30 P.M. Were taken to the Corregidor Officers Club for dinner, and then shown to our quarters. All wives were sent home several months ago, so we live in groups of three in quarters intended for family use. The houses are quite large with high ceilings, wide porches, and most of their wall space devoted to sliding "windows." These windows are composed of three inch squares of translucent shell.

The high wind and heavy gunfire will not permit the use of glass here on "the rock." The houses are of two stories, surrounded by tropical trees and bushes and are quite adequate; the plumbing is quite old, as some of the houses were built in 1915. I live downstairs with a captain from St. Louis. My room is about 20 by 20 with private bath. I keep 2 150 watt bulbs burning in my clothes closet at all times to prevent mildew. If you do not do this, mildew [that] is an inch thick will form overnight. We have a cook and 2 house boys, who keep the house clean and do the laundry, of which there is plenty. The cook gets \$15 and the house boys \$10 per month, plus board. This is quite cheap, but they don't overwork. About the only clothes I wear which I brought with me are sox and underwear. All my uniforms I have had made since I came here. Also a white uniform, a tux (black trousers and white coat) and a mess jacket, either of which must be worn after retreat. Am having a white sharkskin suit made to wear to town. Golf, tennis, softball, pool, badminton, softball [sic], swimming and bowling are available. I am too lazy, however, and usually go to the show, which we call the cine. There are 8 white nurses and over 300 officers on the Rock, so *that* is out. We get to Manila about once a month. I went in last week and for the first time to see what I could see. Went to the Cantalina, a taxi dance with mestiza hostesses. I've seen lots of Mexicans and some dark clouds I could do with, but nothing there I would be found dead with. They are all good dancers, so I danced a few but my heart was not in it. Saw a lot of fellows who came over on the Pierce, out looking, same as I. Had some drinks with them and went home. All in all, my trip to town did not add up to much.

I have a battery of 12" mortars in the 59th C.A. [Coast Artillery], which is a white regiment commanded by Col. Paul D. Bunker. He was executive for organized reserves at L.A. for several years, and I know him fairly well. The battery was organized on June 1 this year, but is in a good state of training. I am expecting to be assigned to a battery of three inch anti-aircraft guns, in which case I will go to one of the outpost forts, of which there are five. We go to work at 7:30 A.M. Dinner 11:30 to 1. Off at 3, unless there is a night drill or alert, in which case we may be out all nite. Off Wednesday and Saturday P.M. We had about 15 inches of rain the first 2 weeks I was here, but no rain for the last 2 weeks. The rainy season is over this month. On account of the elevation of the rock the weather is cooler than in Manila. I sleep under one blanket after midnight. The weather is O.K. The duty is O.K. The quarters are O.K. If they just hadn't chased all the women home everything would be O.K. As it is it could be a lot worse, so I might as well like. So much for the travelogue.

bye now