

Chapter Twelve

Philippine Islands: June, 1938

Zamboanga, Philippine Islands

At the end of the southern cruise the USS Canopus spent a day at Zamboanga, a small port across the Moro Gulf from Polluc Harbor, Philippine Islands, where they would stay a few weeks before returning to Manila. Herb writes briefly about Zamboanga.

Its tall coconut trees and palm trees are one of its features. The natives are very friendly and hundreds of them came out to where we were anchored, in their little boats. The men, women and children would all dive after the coins that we would throw them. They are just like fish in the water and nary a coin eluded them. The women brought large pans out in their boats and would scrub all your clothes for a peso. You had to lower to them a bucket of fresh water and a piece of soap, and then they'd really go to town. However, I don't like the way they bang on the clothes with a club. They brought out bananas, pineapple, mangoes and papayas which they'd sell to us at reasonable prices. They hated to see us leave for we brought them a business boom while we were there, I guess. (June 5)

Polloc Harbor, Philippine Islands

The USS Canopus arrived at Polluc Harbor¹ on June 3, and the next day Herb writes about getting mail. "This morning we anchored here and met the Black Hawk which brought loads of mail for us down from Manila. Gee, honeybunch no less than six letters from you!" Louise's letters were dated April 14, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28. Herb then proceeded to read and then answer all six of her letters. "I like to be able to write and answer your questions because it's almost as if I were talking to you" (June 4)

His first responses included reminiscing about their time together back in Halcyon, and some of the things they did. He writes:

I felt myself going along a sort of swift tide darling and knew I was rapidly falling madly in love with you, but then, I couldn't for the life of me see how there could be a sensible ending to our affair, or friendship. You bet I like to remember all those things and I love to have you write about them sweetheart. (June 4)

¹ Polluc Harbor is located on the southernmost island of the Philippine Islands. It opens up to the Celebes Sea.

The next day Herb continues reading and responding to Louise's letters.

Well, it looks as though in time I'll get to see Yoshiko and Gabriel. I'll have to look them up should they live in Manila after they get out here. It will be nice to be able to see friends of yours darling. Do you suppose it would be all right for me to visit them? We are really strangers, and you would have to tell them a little about me. (June 5)

Herb wrote nearly a full page about the hardships that Navy wives have to put up with. Then he explains why he tells her these things:

If you feel that some of these things are more than you would want to put up with, it would be your just right and privilege to influence me against staying in the Navy. However, as I told you before, we will be forced to try at least a year of married Navy life and from that we can always make our decisions. (June 5)

He responds to the matter of boundaries in relationships with others.

No, I don't think you had better practice up on kissing or get in training for kissing. I'm not getting any practice so I don't see why you should! Anyhow even if we are out of practice, I think it will all come back to us, don't you! In fact, I know it will! (June 5)

Herb writes about what it might be like when he returns to California.

I like to think about how and where we will meet when I get back. I'll just throw my arms around you and say "Oh, Louise" and kiss you and kiss you. Then I'd get liberty as soon as we tied up, and we'd go someplace where we could be alone and talk and kiss and tell each other how much we loved each other. (June 5)

In one paragraph he tries to answer her question about his swearing.

Do I ever swear much? Mmm, I'm afraid like all sailors I do. And also use a lot of obscene language. There is no reason for it, I should control my vocabulary but I usually don't especially when I'm angry. I hope I never get mad at someone when you are around darling. Because if I ever lost my head and started swearing at them, boy would you be shocked.

However, I'm gradually remedying that condition and in two years' time I think I'll have completely gotten out of that habit. And if any other man ever swears in front of you, he is either going to apologize or one of us will end up with a black eye. Whatever you do, don't get alarmed at a fight, it's nothing much. Please don't scream ever at anything. I don't like to hear a woman scream. (June 5)

The "spanking" issue comes up again, and Herb responds to something Louise wrote.

Ahem, does my eyes betray me? No. What do I see here but a "Herbie dear." Mmm. That means I'm trying to control my rage. Oh, so it's only a slip, eh? Well, I guess I'll just have to slip and spank my little doll some time in the future when I have her in a helpless position. ... But I might spank you sometime just on general principles, just so you will know I can do it. (June 5)

While still in Polluc Harbor Herb continues replying to Louise's letters from April. "I like when you start off by saying you have nothing to write about and then you proceed to reel off a half dozen pages without any strain at all. You're a sweetheart if there ever was one!"

He continues "There are a lot of sweet questions of yours in your lovely little note of April 22 that call for answering right away," and he writes:

I've also been reading a very interesting book called "The Power to Love" by Edwin Hirsch who is a doctor with several degrees and supposedly an expert on sexology. His book is so revealing it almost makes me wonder about it but I am sure he would not write a book like that for any other reason than helping people. I got a lot out of it because it told about some things of which I had no knowledge. It gave all the details to show how the sex act should be properly performed, and all the intricacies surrounding it. And because marital happiness depends on the knowledge, that is why I am glad that I chanced upon the book which belongs to a Pharmacist mate. I hope that some day we both can read a book like that together. (June 7)

Herb brings up the topic of Louise getting a ring set.

I'm glad that you think the idea of the ring and you getting it is okay and in a couple of months now I'll send you the money for it. Meanwhile maybe you could look around and see if you could locate one that you will like. Remember darling, you are going to be wearing it for a long time and that is why I'd like you to pay at least \$75 for it. In my estimation that really isn't enough to pay for a real good ring set. (June 7)

Recently Herb was in an argument with his coworkers about married life. Herb writes:

The other night we argued and talked almost until midnight. I was arguing with two fellows, both of whom have had unsuccessful ventures in matrimony. They tried as they might to discourage me and my zealous ideas. ... Also they said never to trust a woman, that they wouldn't under any circumstances.

Well, I just laughed at them. They hit upon the first rudiment of a happy married life and failed to notice its importance. I really bawled them out and told them that as long as they felt that way about trusting women to be sure not to get married. ... Because unless a man and woman implicitly trust each other to the fullest extent, there is no use in their trying to love together. Well in my estimation I won the argument. (June 7)

Herb wrote again about his projected savings for the start of their married life, and how that was the sum total of what they will have for their needs – including their honeymoon. "Say what you will \$500 isn't going to go very far at all and we will want to be sure that we make the most of it. We will want to have part of it left for a reserve for our venture in home-life, after we return from our honeymoon." (June 7)

A couple of days later, Herb was still answering some of Louise's letters from April. He remarks about the pictures he received which were taken at Easter time. "I love the way your hair is in those pictures that you had taken in your green dress. Your hair is sort of straight in front and wavy where you have it tucked in back of your ears" (June 9).

Louise had asked him for his viewpoints about the Temple, at Halcyon. He writes:

I appreciate the Temple because it embodies, in fact it is built on Theosophy, and Theosophy is something that I am very much interested in. Just from delving into it slightly, I have been able to create a philosophy of life for myself which satisfies me a lot more than did the religion in which I was brought up. Bernard has told me a great deal about the Temple in the few talks we have had together in recent years and I have grown to like it and what it stands for, more and more.

When the course of our lives permits Louise, after we are married; I'd favor our actively participating in Temple activities. Indirectly the Temple in a way is responsible for bringing us together and that is another reason why I'll always appreciate it. (June 9)

On Saturday, Herb received two more letters from Louise, and he writes: "I'm so happy after getting your letters, I have to start answering them now." He wants to clarify an earlier comment about Louise's former boyfriend. "Well naturally I'd never biff Milton or anyone else unless they were actually bothering you darling. I'm not that antagonistic. I'm not like that." (June 9)

Then in the next paragraph Herb again refers to spanking her, because of a nickname she used once. "You had better not call me --- that --- when you do get me back there or else, I reiterate, I might spank you" (June 9).

In his next letter Herb writes "I want to get this letter off as soon as possible because I know that you are probably anxiously awaiting an answer to a very important question which you asked me in this letter."

Yes, I have a hundred dollars, just; and that's why I told you to look around for a ring set because I was all set to send you the money any month now. So, this payday I'll draw the money and send it to you hon.

I'm glad that you really found a ring that you like a lot. It will be nice for you to be able to have the ring for Convention time and that's why I'll send you the money right away. (June 11).

Herb writes to Louise about the situation in China.

It sure is awful the way those Japs continue to bomb civilians in those overpopulated cities like Canton. I sure hope that I do get up to China again some time though. It would be a heck of a note to do two and a half years out here without seeing any more of China than I have seen so far. Even if we had to go into a dangerous area, I wish we would go up to China this year or next year. It looks as if that war will probably drag on and on for the rest of the time that I am out here. (June 11)

Louise had written about the money she receives from Pearl each week now. Herb responds:

It's nice of Pearl to give you a few dollars a week. Naturally you more than earn it but considering how everything is, finances have to be greatly curtailed. I guess that you are about to Pearl what Bernard was to Doctor, aren't you?

When one is interested in a great movement like that too, I guess its comforting to know that you are helping out a lot. I'm really proud that my sweetheart has such a responsible position and such a trusted one. Why I'll bet that some of the people even envy you, don't they because you are so close to the leader of the Temple? (June 11)

He closes this letter with "I'll be glad when I get an answer to the first letter that I typed to you to see how you take to this typing idea of mine. It enables me to write much more quickly, legibly and it helps me out by giving me so much practice" (June 11).

On Sunday Herb began a very long letter which would stretch out over several days, responding to Louise's most recent letter, which he describes as "no less than eleven pages of the most delightful literature that I'd ever want to read" (June 12).

One of the subjects Louise wrote about was their last night together. Herb responds.

I'll never forget our theme song either. Did I tell you that Frances Farmer sang it in "The Toast of New York." But it will never sound as beautiful as when you sing it to me again sweetheart. (June 12)

Manila, Philippine Islands

The USS Canopus is back in Manila. It is Monday evening and Herb is excited because he got "three great big letters" from Louise. He decides to dedicate some time to answering Louise's letters, instead of going up on deck to watch the movie.

Those are three wonderful letters Louise and I think that it will probably take me three or four nights to answer them. Your letters were postmarked May 16, 20, 24. Of course they were written on nearly every day from May 7 to May 23. I love those kinds of letters. It's just as if I were watching you live and as if I were with you. (June 20)

Louise had asked him to go visit Yoshiko and Gabriel, and he replies:

Why sure I'll be glad to see Yoshiko and Gabriel some time darling, since you want me to especially. You don't think I'd hold it against Yoshiko because she is a Japanese girl, do you? I'll particularly enjoy seeing her because she had seen you so recently, and it will be swell to see someone who has known you as well as she has, and who is a good friend of yours. I'll first have to find out where in Manila that address is. (June 20)

Louise wrote that she wished that Herb would get to come home early, in 1939. He answers:

Darling, you just keep right on wishing that we'll get home ahead of time. I also wish that. And you never can tell; maybe our wish will be granted. But don't put too much faith in what I'm going to tell you.

It is only scuttlebutt (gossip, unfounded rumors), that Submarine Squadron Five will be relieved in 1939 and that the Canopus will be in the Philadelphia Navy Yard by September 1939. Aw, but that would be too good to be true. They have been hearing that for the last five years now; that the Canopus was going back next year!

This fact stands though. The Canopus and her six subs are definitely over age and obsolete. They are in failing condition and are bound to be relieved in a few years from now at the most.

So, I say sweet; let's continue to wish hard, eh? Even though we couldn't get married right away; it would still be wonderful, wouldn't it? Me too, I mean I love you so much; I wish that I could be near you sooner than my tour of duty will allow. (June 20)

Over the next two evenings Herb writes two letters, in total 12 typewritten pages. He answers several of her questions about movies and actors, then tells her what it is like in the storeroom when he writes.

You know why I like to write around this time of day? It's because no one else is around. I eat supper and then come down here in the storeroom where I'm by myself and I can write to my hearts content. The other fellows hang around up on topside until movies; and they don't come down and interrupt me until 10 o'clock. So because its rather warm down here, I take off most of my clothes; train both of these fans on me and then I'm comfortable and all set to spend the evening with you dear. (June 21)

He writes very apologetically about something he wrote in a previous letter, concerning what he wanted them to do when they will finally meet up on his arrival in San Francisco.

Louise darling; I really did an injustice by asking you the question that I did. Your answer was a soft rebuke to me for the simple reason that I really feel the same way as you do about something like that. ... Of course, it would only naturally bother you if we acted as man and wife before we were actually married. Especially since we will only have but a few days to wait for the performance of the ceremony which will bring us such great happiness. ... Marriage is very sacred to you; and it also is to me. ... It will always be comforting to us to know that our whole love affair was ever as honorable and perfect as it possibly could be. Darling I'm sorry for asking you a question like that, that sort of put you on the spot. (June 21)

The next night, at his usual time, Herb writes a letter to Louise again. He writes about his work and his errant boss.

The usual fellow at the usual time. The nights really seem to roll around quickly, don't they. Perhaps I might be able to finish answering your last three letters tonight. Then if I do; tomorrow night I'll have some more to answer, I'm quite sure.

I sure did quite a lot of work down here today. There are four of us down here, and this morning two of the fellows, one of them the boss came back from liberty quite, shall I say, ossified. So they weren't much help to us.

What a boss I have. He is a swell fellow and all that but he sure gets himself into a lot of trouble. He has 12 years in the Navy and is a first-class storekeeper. He likes to drink a lot and has always been in a jam. The other day he found out the result of his last court-martial which he got for attempting to sock a shore patrol while he was on liberty. Since his wife died a few years back he hasn't given a hang about anything. (June 22)

Four days later Herb begins another letter.

This is another very dreary Sunday. We wait all week long for Sunday, a day of rest for us, to roll around; then when it does get here it is usually always an extremely dull and gloomy day. However, no day need be gloomy for me dear as long as I have you to write to.

Whew, we took on quite a few tons of stores Friday, for our storerooms and as a result all of us storekeepers had to work pretty hard. And now I see that my forearms are stiff and I can't type very smoothly at all. (June 26)

In one of the passages Herb complains about his ship again, and writes that he is hoping the ship will get recalled to the States early.

You must think that it is strange that I usually have so little to write about the Canopus and its activities but you have no idea what a really dead ship this is as Navy ships go. However, I guess that most tenders are the same. Our principal mission is to tend those dratted submarines morning, noon and night. Whether it's the supply dept. or the deck force; the subs are always causing somebody a lot of work and bother. And the darn things aren't any good to begin with.

That is why we are hoping that maybe, Sub Squadron Five will be recalled to the States next year. As far as our military life is concerned it doesn't amount to much. It's the boys on the subs who fire the guns and torpedoes and go through maneuvers, with the old Canopus trailing behind like a nursemaid. (June 26)

He writes about their plans to be up in Shanghai, China in a few more months.

Right now the current scuttlebutt is that we might take a run up to Shanghai in August. I hope so because I really would be interested in seeing a little more of China than I have thus far; considering that that is why I came out to this hell hole to begin with. The beauty of the Orient; foey sez I. Give me dear old California and my darling sun kissed sweetheart; that's all I'll ever want. (June 26)

In the same letter Herb comments briefly on what's happening throughout the world.

These days it takes just one look at newspaper headlines to convince a person what a screwy era of civilization we're living in. thousands of unprotected women and children being bombed to death in Spanish cities, British ships being sunk, Jews being hounded like animals in Austria and Germany, and the Japs also bombing and killing thousands of Chinese civilians. Where is it all heading to? Something terrible, I guess. Anyhow I don't think it will involve our country; not as long as our leaders have sense enough (with the support of everyone) to keep our army and navy growing so that they will be strong enough to awe any would be invader. Huh, what a golden era of civilization.

(June 28)

Herb includes a poem "The Exile" a rather bitter piece about being a sailor in the Asiatic Fleet. Herb did not write it, but adds a comment in his letter "It just about sums up the average fellow's opinion of the Orient" (June 26).

The boss just showed me a poem; I didn't write this one; and it really is the truth. I might as well write it down for you now.

THE EXILE

I'm sick of the Mongol and Tartar,
I'm sick of the Jap and Malay,
And far away spots on the chart are
No place for yours truly to stay.
I've had enough undersized chicken
And milk that comes out of a can;
The East is no region to stick in
For this one particular man.

I'm weary of rice and fish-heads,
All co-mingled with highly spiced dope;
I'm weary of bathing in Lysol
And washing with Carbollic soap.
I'm tired of itch, skin diseases,
Mosquitos and vermin and flies;
I'm fed up on tropical breezes
And sunshine that dazzles my eyes.

Oh, Lord, for a wind with a tingle,
An atmosphere zestful and keen;
Oh, Lord, once again just to mingle
With the crowds that are white folks and clean. (Over)

To live without fear of infection,
To sleep without using a net,
And throw away all my collection
Of Iodine, Quinine, et cet.
To know all the noise and the clamor,
The hurry and fret of the west;
I'll trade all the Orient glamor
That damned lying poets suggest.
They sing of the East as enthralling,
(and that's why I started to roam),
But I hear the Occident calling;
Oh, Lord; I want to go home!