

Chapter Sixteen

Manila: September-October, 1938

September, 1938

Herb had gotten the job that he had wanted so much: working in the Storekeeper Office in the Supply Division. He wrote to Louise about the many advantages of such a position, and that he was looking forward to earning a higher rating. Yet he expresses that he is feeling somewhat overwhelmed.

This is the first time I wrote since last Sunday. So many times I wanted to write and so many times; what a frustrated feeling. After looking at ledgers for eight hours a day I just couldn't read or write or do anything I wanted to.

In this letter Herb begins to chronicle in great detail the events that took place a year ago, that led up to his visit to Halcyon.

A year ago this afternoon, the Tennessee was out off the coast of California and I had my sea bag packed and ready to leave the ship as soon as it anchored. We were heading for San Pedro and were due in early in the evening; but we were delayed and did not anchor until around 9 p.m. All evening I anxiously paced back and forth the decks, waiting for the time when I could say goodbye to the Tennessee.

Well, around 9 p.m. in a crowd of liberty bound sailors I finally walked down the gangway with my seabag and hammock over my shoulder; and I said goodbye to the old Reel ship for a long time. I caught a San Pedro motor launch since I wanted to check my baggage at the Y. in San Pedro. That afternoon I had decided that since my leave had been cut down a few days because of the earlier scheduled arrival of the Henderson I would not have time enough to go up to Halcyon and see Bernard. So, I decided I'd hang around Long Beach and San Pedro and have a good time of it all.

Another China bound fellow and myself took our seabags up to the San Pedro Y. and checked them in. then we caught a train for Long Beach and went down on the Pike where we had a few beers and made the rounds of the cafes looking up shipmates to say goodbye to; over a glass of beer.

Around midnight, feeling pretty tired, we parted after arranging to meet on the following day; and I proceeded to the Long Beach Y. where I turned in for the night. Before I fell asleep, I thought of the farewell binge we were scheduled to hold on the following night. (September 3)

He follows this story by explaining that he will describe what happened each day, one year ago to the day¹.

Tomorrow I'll tell you about tomorrow a year ago. Stay with this letter and learn how a note changed a young man's destiny! How a wonderful romance blossomed out of a sudden change of mind.

Anyhow, tomorrow I'll be more inspired to recall everything more clearly. Those days are days that I'll never forget though. Darling, I adore you! You are the sweetest, dearest, being that ever a person could love! (September 3).

Herb writes more about his life in Manilla.

Thursday night we had a basketball game with some Philippine team and we beat them in a close game 26-24. Yours truly played part of it and was lucky enough to make a few points. Tonight we play another local team.

If it wasn't for the exercise I get out of playing basketball I don't know what I'd do for exercise with that job of mine.

That blankety blank job. It wouldn't be so bad if we didn't have a couple of dimwits for a supply officer and pay clerk. Boy they have the whole supply department on here just about bogged down. Not one fellow likes either of them.

But I've got too much time to do on this ship so I can't very well afford to let them know what I think of them. Besides I want to get rated this quarter if I can. Which reminds me; in about another month the exam will come off so I'll have to get hot and do some studying every day from now on. (September 3)

Herb knows that the next day the ship will receive more mail, and he expects another letter from Louise. He explains that he will write more when he has her letter, because "When I write to you when I'm not answering a letter of yours it seems more like a one-sided conversation. When I'm answering your letters it's as if we were talking together" (September 3).

Before closing this letter, Herb writes about trouble they were having with some of the locals. In some parts of Manila there had been thieves waylaying and robbing sailors. One sailor even was killed in Cavite. They apprehended the killers and the trial got a lot of publicity. The Lieutenant investigating the case had his life threatened as well. (September 3)

The next day is Sunday, and Herb has plenty of time to write to Louise. He acknowledges that she had been quite busy during the Temple Convention week in Halcyon. He writes reassuringly that he understands why she didn't have time to write to him much.

He also recently received a letter from Bernard, which included comments about Louise. Herb shares with Louise what Bernard had to say about her and the Convention week activities. "He said that they all liked your cooking; that it was excellent; and that you made an expert manager, too. So, sweetheart I'm so very, very proud of you" (September 4).

¹ Herb's detailed account of these events are recorded in Chapter 1.

The next day Herb went into Manila to visit Yoshiko and Gabriel. He took a long bus ride out to where they live, but found out that he just missed them. So, Herb decided to head into downtown Manila. He writes to Louise about how he spent his time in Manila.

By that time, I was pretty tired and dusty you can bet. So I wandered into an air conditioned theatre and saw "The Rage of Paris." ... It was a fair picture but I didn't enjoy it much I guess on account of the headache I've got this afternoon. Yea gads, I don't wonder Yoshiko longs for California with all this heat, and dust, and filth, and whatnot here. And so, I ended up here at the Y writing to you. (September 5)



Manila Skyline from Harbor, 1938



Manila Waterfront, 1938

When the next weekend rolled around, it was "raining cats and dogs." Herb decides that he should now try to stay on board a lot and "study as often as possible as the exams will probably be the first week in October" (September 10).

Then he writes about their basketball team and its schedule.

Well, we had four basketball games in the last two weeks and we won three of them. ... We are entered into a Service team league too, which starts its schedule this weekend. So we'll be playing soldiers and marines a lot then; besides our arch rivals, a snappy team from the S-36². (September 10)

Early Sunday morning Herb writes to Louise again. He writes about an old song that he likes.

If there is anything I like to hear, it is old popular songs. ... "Blue Skies" is my favorite. ... It says just how I feel to a T! ... The part that fits most is:

*Lookin' at the days hurrying by;
When you're in love, my how they fly.
Blue days, all of them gone;
Nothing but blue skies from now on.*

(September 11)

Herb complains about his immediate supervisors. He refers to his boss as a "fathead" and that it is the consensus of the entire Supply Department. "It's amazing how one man can be so inefficient; not to mention his non-efficient assistant, the Chief Pay Clerk" (September 11).

The next evening, just before the movies end, Herb writes about how playing basketball is beneficial for him in carrying out his work duties.

Just got back from a basketball game. We lost a tough one - 36 to 40 in an overtime period. Gosh, if only our team was managed properly it could be swell; but it isn't. I can't say much though because I'm not a very good player. I'm not being modest; I'm just not good as I never have properly learned the game.

What I'm interested in most is the exercise; especially because of this darned job of mine. It sure gets on my nerves at times. But I'll be darned if I'll let it worry me. Not even if these books won't balance at the end of this quarter; and that will be at the end of this month. I've already started running tapes on the books and they seem to be in fair shape; most of them. When they don't agree with the Chief's main ledger, I have to check mine page by page until I find the mistake. That's lots of fun! (September 12)

Herb shares his thoughts with Louise about the situations in Europe and in China.

Hitler sure has maneuvered himself into a position of historical importance, almost unparalleled in history. You must admit he is a showman. (But I wish someone would shoot him!) I think he did a lot for the German people but like capitalism, he has outlived his importance. Now he is in danger of putting Germany back where she was in 1918, and should that happen, they'd never be given a place in the sun again.

Oh yes, there is a war going on out here, isn't there. We almost forget about it at times. Then again; we can't, for were it not for this Oriental conflict we'd be enjoying the

² One of the submarines attached to their squadron.

summer in China waters. They (the Japs) aren't having a very easy time of capturing Hankow, it seems. (September 12)

Herb didn't get a chance to write again until the following Saturday. He explained that in between playing two basketball games and sunbathing, he just didn't have time to write. (September 17)

Then he writes about his tour of duty with the Navy.

Well darling today I have a year on the Asiatic Station. Only a year and a half to go now. In other words, it was a year ago today that Frisco slipped behind the eastern horizon as the Henderson chugged over the western horizon. (September 17)

He continues commenting on the situation in Europe.

What did you think of Chamberlain's visit to Hitler? That was a very generous gesture, I think; but that fanatic Hitler didn't leave much room for peaceful settlement of the Czech crisis. Naturally everyone deplores the idea of war and seem willing to sacrifice Czechoslovakia, but that's just putting off a showdown that seems inevitable. I don't think they should give Hitler an inch even if it means war. They (all the democracies) ought to crush Fascism once and for all. And that would mean an end of the Spanish civil war and the war in China. But if Hitler gets away with this, he'll only be back for more in a year or less; and all the while Germany will be building up insane strength. (September 17)

Sunday morning Herb writes about a typical Sunday on board, calling it "a useless day."

Since we sleep here in the office we can sleep up to breakfast, if we want to. And then go eat; and come back and sit around the office and read the Sunday paper, or talk; or listen to the radio. Until dinner, when we eat! Then the same thing over again until supper. Then movies; and we're all set to go to work Monday morning again.

But I usually try to get more out of a day than others because that makes it go faster. For instance, when I finish this, I'll study awhile until dinner. ... Then after dinner I'll take a sunbath for a couple of hours. Then I'll read a little or study some more before supper. And then the movies. (September 18)

Late Thursday afternoon Herb finally gets a chance to write to Louise again. "Aren't I awful darling! But I've been busy all the time lately it seems" (September 22). Then he writes about how he needs her letters to keep him going.

Gee I feel it honey when I don't hear from you for a couple of weeks. Much longer than that and I don't know what I'd do. Because I do love you so terribly much honeybunch, you know that. You're forever on my mind, day and night; and I could never forget how much I love you sweets! (September 22)

Herb explains for Louise the Navy's rating system for his position, and how the coming Storekeeper exam will play a major role in Herb's long-term plans.

There are eight third class storekeeper rates. That is for the entire Asiatic Fleet. All eligible men take the exams on their respective ships and their papers are sent into the Augusta where the highest eight will be rated. So you see its rather stiff competition.

On the basis of 100%, the highest anyone can get on the exam papers is 80%. That is a perfect paper. Then you get one point for each year in the Navy not to exceed ten; and 2 ½ points for each year in lower ratings, not to exceed ten.

With a perfect paper, the highest I can get is about 90%. In other words, an old timer can beat a new fellow out even if he gets less of a mark on his exam. However, if I can get something between 85% and 90%, I'll stand a chance of getting rated. So you'll be hoping and pulling for me, won't you sweetheart!

What I'll have to do is study like the dickens for the next couple of weeks and get as perfect an exam mark as possible. The exam won't be particularly hard but there are always a few tricky questions and it doesn't take many errors to bring your mark down a lot. We can use the extra dough, hon, so keep your fingers crossed.

If I could make it this quarter, then I could go up for second class a year from now, in other words before I come home. Boy if I could make that we'd be all set.

Then Herb again comments on the situation in Europe.

Boy I'm getting to despise England and France for leaving the Czechs in the lurch. Fools! They'll pay for this folly with interest someday. You'd think they might realize that. Somebody has to stop Hitler sometime. I'm hoping Russia will do something about it, but even that looks doubtful now. So, Hitler will triumph once again, and be hailed as a demi-god by the gullible Germans. But just so our dear old U.S. stays out of it; that's all that matters to us. (September 22)

Late the next evening, Herb writes another letter, and he muses over what he might do this coming weekend. He was invited to attend a party on Saturday.

Two ship's cooks who have an apartment (bamboo) over on the beach, are going to throw a roast pig party. There will also be drinks and "gals" probably, and I'd feel out of place I'm afraid. Temptation I do not fear for I could easily resist it; but I would not want to be a wet blanket. It will be lots of fun and a fairly clean party because they are pretty good kids. You see cooks and storekeepers are in the same Division so it will be more or less a Division party. I don't know? I'll sleep on it. (September 23)

When Saturday arrives, the first thing Herb does is to make another attempt to visit Yoshiko and Gabriel.

I caught the first boat ashore yesterday and set out for De Leon's. after the hour's jolting bus ride, I arrived there only to find that I had missed them again. I thought of dropping them a line last week but I really don't know their mailing address. Anyhow, I left a note there with my address and told them to send me theirs so that I can notify them the next time I'm coming out. I talked with his brother and sister a while, and then caught the next bus back to Manila. (September 25)

After arriving back in Manila, Herb decides to go to the party after all.

In the evening I proceeded to the scene of the party to which I'd been invited. It turned out to be more or less of a hectic flop. In the first place the drinking fellows could buy no drinks as all liquor stores were closed yesterday.

I got there around seven o'clock. There were just two fellows lounging around. Two more went out looking for drinks, and two others went over to a cabaret trying to pick up some girls. Well both research expeditions came back empty handed. ... So there we were about ten of us fellows. One fellow called up a friend of his and told her to come over. She did, and he told her to round up a bunch of her friends and bring them over. Another fellow went out to borrow a phonograph.

Around 8 o'clock they brought the pig in. A couple of the natives who want to stay on good terms with the cooks picked out one of their tender pigs and roasted it for us. Yep, a whole roasted pig about three feet long. They carried it in on a bamboo stick.

About a half hour later [one of the fellows] came back with a couple of quarts of rum. Well with a few drinks in most of the people present, they at least started having a social time. We had some cherry punch for chasers, so I got by with about a teaspoonful of rum in a glass of cherry punch. They danced a little and we sat around pleasantly talking and joking!

Well around 12 o'clock they [the girls] had to go so that made it a stag again. And no drinks or money in the crowd. Then some of the other fellows decided to go to the cabaret while two others went out to try for drinks again. As far as the latter; alas it was now Sunday! So no drinks, which rather disappointed the four [girls] that the fellows brought back from the cabaret.

Me, I was yawning and changing phonograph records; bored with the whole lashup. And evidently the music box made too much noise for some neighbor who called the shore patrol. But they only inquired at the door, satisfied that our party was respectable. But the girls got scared for they thought it was the cops.

Finally, around 3 a.m. they shoved off, with the remnants of the pig, and after a substantial pot of coffee we "turned in" all over the place. There wasn't "bed room" for us all. I had one though. One fellow slept on a couple of chairs, one on a bamboo mat, three of us in the beds; and the fellows who own the apartment had to go across the hall to an empty apartment and sleep in there. Around 4 a.m. we turned in but what a job to get asleep with dogs barking, babies crying, and roosters cackling their heads off. Around 7:30 we got up and after a pot of coffee three of us caught the 9 a.m. boat back to the ship. (September 25)

Continuing in the same letter, he writes "What a pleasant surprise awaited me on the ship! We got mail last night; there was no less than four letters from you" (September 25). He proceeds to answer them. Louise had humorously referred to what it would "cost" him to spank her, and he responds.

Well that's up to you; whether you want to anticipate a spanking or not my dear. But your terms sound good. I might bargain with you on those grounds. Only three kisses for each spanking you might deserve won't be enough. Five apiece is my ultimatum to you.

He congratulated Louise for doing so well preparing and serving meals for their Convention guests. He also comments on her new friend. "It's nice that you like Dorothy, and are becoming good friends. It's always nice to have another friend especially your own age" (September 26).

Herb then writes a very long paragraph attempting to help Louise feel better about waiting for him to return home. He tries to reassure her that time will go by more quickly now than it did during their first year apart.

Then he responds to Louise's concern about their finances after they are married; again, he tries to reassure her things will work out alright. "Oh, we won't worry too much about money, will we? Just as long as we get by" (September 26).

Then he writes about their relationship, comparing his life now to his life before they met.

Oh you couldn't have been as aimless as I was Louise. I just didn't know what to expect of the future. I just drifted. Until I met you! Now I've goals, ambitions, ideals, principles, and most of all you!" (September 26)

Later in the same letter, Herb responds to what Louise wrote about him spanking her.

Oh; so you are teasing me! Yeah, I'll bet you were scared about my threatening you ... You might have hit the truth too dear. I've heard that sometimes a good spanking does make the person love the one acting more. Hmm; I'll have to experiment, I guess. Or maybe I should drop the subject completely; it always seems to be coming up. (September 26)

Herb responds to her concern about his suggestion of a drastic means for him to return home sooner than expected. He writes "O.K. my love. I've long since forgotten about the idea of a bad conduct discharge. I'd sure be afraid to face you if I did get one. That would never do" (September 26).

October, 1938

On Saturday morning Herb begins writing a letter, and explains that he will not have much time this weekend for writing. "Tuesday are the exams and I have to bear down for them. Also, today starts a new quarter and all my books have to balance to the cent in the next couple of days; so that means some overtime work this weekend" (October 1).

He then writes about an injury he sustained during basketball practice.

At the close of a pretty tough scrimmage game, I twisted my ankle pretty badly. It didn't bother me much that night; but the next morning I could hardly walk. ... However, I

soaked it in hot water a couple of times and that helped a lot. Today it isn't bothering me at all. (October 1)

The following Wednesday afternoon Herb writes to Louise with the results of the exam.

I made out swell on my exam yesterday. Better than I expected too, because at the time some of the questions seemed puzzling to me. Out of a possible 91 I made a final mark of 90, more than I hoped for. And it should be more than sufficient to grab off one on those eight rates.

The papers go in to the flag ship Augusta now and the rates won't be back until Nov. 15. All the fellows are telling me I have it "in the bag." (October 5)

He writes an explanation for Louise not getting his letters for a long stretch. "That was because of the time we were out looking for the Clipper for ten days. For a period of almost two weeks no mail left the Canopus" (October 5).

Wednesday evening Herb continues writing the same letter, and he reveals some of the drama in the department where he works.

A couple of guys in this office are intensely disliked for their stool pigeon traits. I have a job keeping on the right side of them and still on good terms with the storeroom fellows. you see since the supply officer and pay clerk work in this office, some of the fellows spill things in their ears about the gang down below. Oh, it's a great lashup! (October 5)

Next Saturday morning Herb gives an update on the basketball season.

Last night we were unfortunately eliminated in the Service League playoff. A strong 31st infantry team came from behind in the last quarter to beat us 27-22. ... I wasn't much help to the team on account of my ankle, and even if I was o.k., I'm not a good enough player to play against a team like the 31st Infantry. (October 8)



That weekend Herb enjoyed a liberty, and this time he went ashore on his own. He went into town and watched kids playing baseball; he went to a show; then over to the Y to watch the final basketball game of this season – then back to the ship. On Sunday Herb got two letters from Louise, and that afternoon he began answering them, paragraph by paragraph.

At left, Manila YMCA, 1938

One of the things Herb touched upon was politics. He wrote a long paragraph on his views of communism, fascism, labor unions, and the future of democracy. He concludes with "I didn't mean to write a political speech honeybunch, I'm sorry. You see, I'm inclined to be interested in politics" (*October 9*).

It had been over a year that they had been writing letters to each other, and he writes "I have over a hundred letters from you. A package of them are in my seabag, a package in my locker, besides a box full, and some loose ones, always current ones, in my "stationery" (*October 9*).

On Wednesday evening Herb continued answering her latest letter, while the Canopus was at sea, scheduled to arrive in Hong Kong early Thursday morning. He had been looking forward to this trip, and he writes:

We anchor around 7 a.m. Then I shall finally be back in China, or rather the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. Still, it's China; and maybe I'll be able to go across the bay to Canton. Hong Kong is the best port in China though for buying anything on account of large markets; and it is also a duty-free port. (October 12)