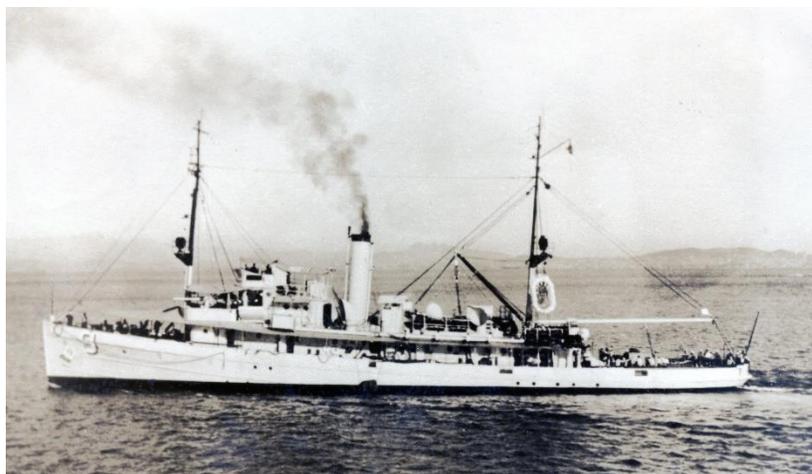


## Chapter Thirty-Two

### Tsingtao: September-October, 1939

A typhoon passed through Tsingtao on August 30-31. Herb devotes much of his next letter to anecdotes about the storm, and the damage to the U.S.S. Pigeon. It is Thursday evening when he writes.

*When Wednesday morning arrived, the harbor was still rough, and getting rougher all the time. We got typhoon reports throughout the day and the wind and waves increased in volume and velocity hourly. There were a lot of ships in the harbor; all within reach of here rushed in from the open sea. A lot of merchant men anchored in the stream; several Japanese men of war; and our six subs and the Pigeon anchored separately at the far side of the harbor. (August 31)*



**The U.S.S. Pigeon**

*The wind was really howling when we turned in last night. The full force of the typhoon was expected to strike during the night. I got up several times last night and it sure was storming out. Once, rain came flying through the office even though the windows were closed. It was driven by a 60 mile an hour gale that drove it through the cracks around the windows just as if there weren't any windows there.*

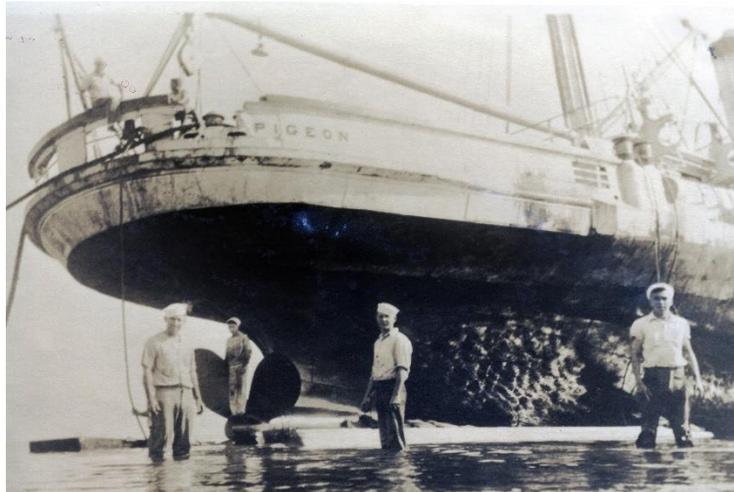
*We had about 90 fathom of anchor chain out but around 3 A.M. this morning we dragged about 1200 yards and had to get under way to return to our original berth. And then we got word that the Pigeon across the bay had dragged anchor, got her prop fouled up and was drifting towards the beach.*

*Upon awakening this morning, we found it still rough and stormy, raining hard, and visibility was limited to a few yards. ... Around ten o'clock it cleared up a little and we could see the pigeon across the bay, stranded, with quite a list on her.*

*Once visual communication was established with the Pigeon, they said that they would like to have most of the crew taken off; that below main decks was all flooded and that they were running low on chow. There are several large holes in her bottom. And her radio and engines are "out." (August 31)*

On Friday Herb writes how they rescued the men from the Pigeon.

*Well, this morning found things calmed down quite a bit. And we got underway and proceeded across the bay near the spot where the Pigeon is on the rocks. Then we anchored and boats were sent over to her. When the first boat returned with about 30 men from the Pigeon what a haggard and work looking bunch of fellows were in it. Attired in everything under the sun. Blues, whites, dress jumpers, sweatshirts, rain clothes, baseball uniforms, anything that they had been able to put on that was dry and warm. And what stories they had to tell. They all admitted that they had been "plenty" scared. With gaping holes in her bottom, they didn't know but she would roll over and sink last night. ... They were ready for a swim to the beach at any time with their money and other small valuables pinned to them. (September 1)*



**The Pigeon on the Rocks**

Herb explains the significance of the Pigeon to his squadron.

*Until all we want from her is removed, an armed watch will be stationed on the Pigeon at all times. The Pigeon is a big loss as it was a most valuable vessel to the Asiatic Fleet. The only salvage vessel out here; and almost necessary whenever submarines operate. She has a large steel compression chamber which can be used for training or rescuing divers. Also, she had the facilities to use the diving bell; she could conduct extensive diving operations. So, her loss will be keenly felt. (September 1)*

Then Herb writes what he has heard about the war in Europe.

*I suppose that you probably have just been listening to the same radio reports that I have. We've been getting Frisco on short wave since 7 P.M. and the news is coming hot and heavy. ... German planes have bombed Polish cities. (September 1)*

Sunday morning, he continues writing about the war.

*We are about twenty-four hours behind the news here right now. France and England will declare war on Germany if Hitler does not withdraw his troops from Poland. ... How inconceivable that there must be war when so many millions of people hate it. ... But under the leadership of a frenzied man they rush gladly into it. What will be left out of this war? I think that if Italy stays out of it, France and England can beat Germany. But if Italy goes in with Hitler, will they rely on us to "save the world for democracy again?" (September 3)*

On Monday Herb begins a new letter, and continues writing about the war.

*According to a dispatch that came in early this morning France and England declared war on Germany.*

*I wonder what all you people are thinking back there now? It will take a lot before the United States will become involved in it, don't you think so? Regardless of what happens the Asiatic Fleet will participate in it very little; for which you are no doubt thankful. But I'd almost be liking to help stop Hitler. And so would the rest of us.*

*So, some more history is being recorded in red in the story of civilization. Strange, but the way our history books seemed to read concerning the world war, when we were in school; didn't it seem to you that there could never possibly be another such war? And still; it is here! And regardless of who wins it, there will have been hundreds of thousands of people killed; many innocent civilians; cities destroyed; civilization practically uprooted in the countries engaged in it. Gosh, isn't mankind foolish! (September 4)*

Herb writes that he finally got liberty, and he went ashore yesterday afternoon. He writes about what he saw.

*Whew, what a wreck Strand Beach is, the beach where we had so much fun all summer long. Why the bath houses, concession stands and other places are just a bunch of splinters piled on top of one another and in corners. The sand on the beach is now coarse, all the smooth sand having been blown or washed away. I know that they won't have time to fix the beach up any more this summer.*

*In places the road and seawalls along the beach have also been destroyed or washed away. It is supposed to have been the worst typhoon in the history of Tsingtao. (September 4)*

Later in the week, Thursday afternoon, Herb continues his letter, waxing romantic about his experience ashore.

*Yesterday I went ashore. ... I was rather glad that I could spend the evening by myself. You see, sweetheart, Sept 6 comes but once a year, and it's a very sacred date to me. I had a few drinks and listened to the dance music at the club a while; and then took a walk along the seashore and sat down on a rock, where I wanted to be alone with you; at least my memories of you darling and all that transpired two years ago last night.*

*The waves washing in not far below where I was seemed to be bringing messages of reassurance from you. They also told what my heart was saying, "I love you," "I love you;" you'd be surprised Mary Lou, how distinctly they said that as they came swirling in to dash against the rocks. I could realize that I still loved you the same as I did that night long ago, only more so. And I could almost see you beside me, the same as you were then, loving me as much as ever; and saying "Goodness, how could this happen to us."*

*Darling, if I live to be a hundred years old, I don't think that I could ever forget my memories of that night; nor could I ever stop loving you as much as I did that night. You must know that Louise; you do know it, don't you?*

*(September 7)*

Herb turns his attention to the first of the two letters he just received from Louise. He writes "I'm sorry about your hand" (*September 7*), then he proceeds to admonish her for not giving her hand a rest.

He writes more about world events.

*What did you think about that German sub sinking that big liner? What do they expect to gain by doing things like that? ... Here in Tsingtao, the many Germans have large swastikas flying from their homes and stores; and no doubt they are all for the cause. I should boycott the place where I usually eat, but gosh; the chow is too good to do that.*

*The other night over the radio we heard a broadcast from Treasure Island that was pretty interesting. It was a re-broadcast of Roosevelt's speech; the one he made right after they started fighting in Europe. It sounded good, hearing his voice again. (September 7)*

On Saturday Herb begins another letter. He is staying on board this weekend, for a change.

*The beach isn't any good for swimming any more now; not near as good as it used to be; besides, it has gotten decidedly cooler here in the last few days.*

*As for the other things around town, I'm tired of them; the cabarets, club, other places. I might go ashore here a few more times to get a few odds and ends but that's about all. I have to pick up a couple of small suitcases I have ordered too. (September 9)*

Next he begins answering Louise's second letter. "I know how busy you were in the middle of Convention time so you don't need to explain the short letter. I'm glad everything was going so well with the meals and everything" (September 9).

Louise asked if he still loved her. He replies to this most affirmatively, then compares their relationship to "average" couples who are separated for some period of time, and who cheat on each other. He writes "I've really had little trouble in staying true to you darling in that sense. I feel that that sort of contact with other women would taint me for you and not make me worthy of you" (September 9).

Sunday afternoon he continues his letter.

*You know I'm worried about your hand darling. If you had to take an injection to fix up your blood so that that infection would heal up it means that you let it go too long without fixing it up, or else you knocked it around when you should have been careful. (September 10)*

It is the end of a busy week for Herb, and he writes to Louise about what he did.

*Everyone in the department and particularly the fellows in the office here are overjoyed about one thing. Our old supply officer leaves in a few days; the weasel! And in his place now we have a stout, red-mustached Lieutenant, who is a swell, jovial sort of person. Everyone likes him!*

*Monday I went ashore with Mike and we went cabareting in the evening. (Did I say I had quit?) And then yesterday "Fuzz" a new fellow in the office here, and me; we went ashore at one o'clock and saw the fleet championship ball game between the Augusta and Desron. And we yelled ourselves hoarse cheering the Desron fellows to victory.*

*Then in the evening we went cabareting. It burns me up to see people dance fast when I can't, so after a few drinks I picked out a girl who was a jitterbug if I ever saw one; and I threw all self-consciousness to the wind. ... I just can't seem to hop fast enough.*

*It's about time we were getting some mail; haven't had any in quite some time now. I want to hear that you made out fine during Convention; and that you haven't any more troubles or ailments.*

*Wonder how long the war will last. It has already resulted in some changes in our Navy. To begin with, it will be increased; and they are not letting men retire into the Naval Reserve; instead they are calling the Reserves back. (September 15)*

Herb begins another letter on Monday evening. He writes about his conversation with Red and his wife.

*I went ashore yesterday for a little while. Took a bicycle ride around for an hour and dropped in to visit Red and his wife and we chatted for a couple of hours.*

*They were trying to talk me into putting in for shore duty in Bremerton, Washington; because that is where they are from and they were telling me what a swell place it is for*

*a Navy couple. It would be a good idea honey, unless you'd rather have me put in for San Diego or San Pedro so that we could be closer to Halcyon.*

*Red and his wife were telling me how much they enjoyed it when Red had shore duty in Bremerton. And she is going to give me the address of a lady who rents apartments quite reasonably around there. But I am undecided about it; and you must help me to decide. (September 18)*

He continues his letter Wednesday afternoon, commenting on the war in Europe.

*Poland has just about been crushed, and Russia moving her army into Poland yesterday played a large part in it. Now France and England are puzzled; they don't know where Russia stands at all.*

*They cannot afford to let Germany get away with this and go on and be a mighty nation. So they will have to fight on; and now that Germany can shift troops from Poland to the western front, it seems as though it must be another long, bitter war. France and England waited too long before deciding to stop Germany. And England lost a large warship already; the 22,000-ton air craft carrier, Courageous. Germany's U-boats have sure sunk a lot of merchantmen too, so far. (September 20)*

Herb's work routine is changing; he is eager to tell Louise about it.

*In about ten days I'll be able to finally get out of the office. It's a good place to work in now with our new Pay Clerk and Supply Officer who are swell fellows but I'm rather tired of the office routine and it will be an agreeable change to get back down in the storeroom again. They usually relieve people in the office when they have only a few months to do in order that a new man can be thoroughly broken in before the old one leaves. So since I'm a short-timer I'm getting relieved.*

*Boy it sure feels good to be a short-timer, Louise and to be looking forward to the next transport. ... I'm quite confident that the Henderson will make her scheduled trip and that I'll be on it when she pulls into San Francisco next February. (September 20)*

The next day Herb receives two letters from Louise so he begins writing a new letter to her. Her first letter (dated August 15) was the one that was dictated to a friend, Olive. He writes "I'm awfully sorry that your hand bothered you that much then. Gee I hope it got well quickly and that you are fine" (September 21).

The next evening Herb continues writing.

*A few more cases of cholera have resulted in another part of Tsingtao being restricted to Navy personnel here. And that happens to be where all the cabarets are; "Lower Russia" they call it. So no more dancing down there for the boys. (September 22)*

Herb now faces a dilemma with regard to the ship schedules and pending exams.

*I hear we may go straight to Manila from here instead of touching Shanghai for a week. And if we don't stop at Shanghai it means that I'll have to get first contact on the Henderson so that I can get back to Shanghai and get the things I want. And if I get first*

*contact, I won't be able to take the exam for second class around the first of January. So, I am temporarily in a quandary my love.*

*They are going to hold exams again next month since everything was so balled up last quarter. And this time I'll be able to go up for second class. Of course there is no hope of my making it; why there are three third class on here now who are senior to me on account of time in rate and service; but it's just the idea of at least getting the experience of going up that I'm glad about.*

*And if I did go up in January, I'd probably stand a fair chance of making it. So; what to do darling? I think that could I make second, it would mean the most to us. But then; I can always go up for second; but I can't always get to Shanghai?? Oh well; I'll see! (September 22)*

Next Herb responds to Louise's second letter, postmarked August 22.

*Gee that was too bad about Georgie! And I know you miss him a lot, you liked him so much. But once an animal like that gets sick it usually is a very difficult task to bring them around all right. (September 22)*

The next day herb received another letter from Louise. He got a letter from Maisie as well, and he writes to Louise how much Maisie liked her when she and Bob visited her in June. Maisie thought Louise was swell, and would like to see her more often. Maisie thought that Bob was very nice, too. (September 24)

Sunday evening Herb continues his long letter, answering hers.

*Oh yes, there's no denying I had quite a lot of fun at times at those cabarets this summer. What's fun is when a whole gang you know is in the same place at once and you start feeling good.*

*Gosh honey; how can we make a honeymoon on a hundred dollars or less? Is it possible? But then, it must be if you say so. ... No, in no case should we wait very long to get married after I get back there.*

*I see you have the Henderson schedule, when she gets to Norfolk, etc. Do you know for sure when she leaves Frisco for here darling? You see we haven't received any official itinerary of hers yet. But we have an idea when she'll get here and back there. You can't imagine how it feels to know you are getting "the next transport!"*

*In a few months I'll probably send you a suitcase full of my junk so that I won't have so much to travel with. I'll have to send stuff that I don't think they'll charge duty on. Like any books I have, and bundles of your letters; but you must not read the letters until after we're married. ... You'd be surprised how many of them there are! (September 24)*

He reads a passage in Louise's letter that reminds him of a time a few months ago when he was feeling bitter about being in the Navy.

*Now, I don't feel quite like that naturally and I might even prefer to stay in the Navy if I can make second class before my time is up; and if everything works out right for us.*

*That Supply Officer was mainly responsible for my feeling the way I did then; and now that he's gone my outlook on the Navy has changed a lot. (September 24)*

He responds to Louise about Bernard.

*I'm glad Bernard has been nice to you lately, and I hope he continues to be so. I'd like to stay on good terms with him also. ... After all, it was through him that I met you. I'll always be thankful to him for that, at the least! (September 24)*

In her letter, Louise posed a hypothetical situation. She wanted to know if he could still be understanding, even if she had sex with someone. Herb responds thoughtfully.

*Isn't our understanding reciprocal; it has been to date anyhow. So if you should, as you say, ever lose your head and go all the way with someone, why shouldn't I still be understanding; since the same thing could easily happen to me and then I'd want to be understood.*

*In fact, there have been times out here when I wasn't careful and I let myself come closer to that than I should have. ... Though I've been feeling good at times I've never been so [much] that I ever lost sight of the fact that I wanted to stay physically true to you also. And I'm thankful for that, because it is easily possible that I could have done otherwise. ... And I'm rather old fashioned about things like that.*

*As for my abstinence since I've met you and been out here, it may seem to be an accomplishment of sorts; but there is something that detracts from it a little bit; that makes it not seem to be quite what it is, or quite so manly for that matter; and I'll probably tell you about that sometime. (September 24)*

Herb begins a new letter Thursday evening.

*Well honey, today I became a working man again, and I'm tickled over the change! Yep, now I'm back down in the storeroom; no more eye strain, chits, ledgers, and what have you. When four o'clock comes I'm through for the day and don't have to worry about any unfinished paperwork. ... Now I can "take in the slack" as they say in the Navy, until the ole' Henderson comes charging out! Darling, I'm so happy these days - I just radiate happiness. And I hope that you are happy too Louise. Happy, and sitting on top of the world!*

*The Japanese medical authorities are having a heck of a time trying to stamp out a cholera epidemic over here. There have been 80 cases of it this month, with about 60 deaths. Half of the town is restricted and a curfew for the Chinese has been set. ... We don't have to worry about it on account of all the shots we were given a few months ago. (September 28)*

Two days later Herb starts another letter. He has good news to report.

*This morning they held exams and I actually got to take the exam for second class this time. ... I guess I passed it alright because it was simple.*

*It sure would be swell if I could make second class before I catch the Henderson! ... It would mean that much more security for us; a \$13.20 raise per month; that's what I'll*

*get when I ever do make second. ... I'll know November 16 – but to get back to earth ... there is only the slightest chance of my making it.*

*I had your picture with me in at the exam table; the small picture that I took along with me when I took the exam for third class. ... Funny how much I love this little picture of you taken in May '38. More than any others I think. (September 30)*

## **October, 1939**

Sunday afternoon finds Herb writing a short note. He is excited to share with Louise some good news about his exam.

*I found out what a really swell fellow our new Pay Clerk is. He sent down from his room for me to come up and see him. When I got there, he called me inside and asked if I couldn't do a little better on some of the questions on my examination. You see, he was correcting our papers. And I had missed enough questions so that my mark would have been pretty low even though I wouldn't have failed. After some of the stupid mistakes I made, I don't deserve to make second class; not from the way that exam paper looked with those little X's scattered around. But now I should have a fair passing mark, thanks to a man who works for the men under him. ... Of course, all that was strictly unofficial; and he told me before I left that it was just "between he and I." (October 1)*

Herb's next opportunity to write again is Thursday evening. During the week he went shopping in town, and he tells Louise what he bought.

*I ordered two suits, both made of English wool, one dark brown and the other medium gray. And with the gray one I ordered some extra material so that you can get a suit made out of it to match mine. ... The whole outfits including two pair of trousers with the gray suit and the extra material only costs \$350 local currency. And since the exchange rate is only about 11 for one now, that makes it about \$32 (U.S.). But where in the states could you get a tailor-made outfit like that for that much money? (October 5)*

On Saturday Herb learns about Louise's inability to write letters for a while.

*I received a letter from Bernard explaining why there were no letters from you. Oh honey, I'm so sorry your hands bothered you that much. And I pray to God that you get rid of that infection soon. (October 7)*

Then he tells Louise about his shopping trip in town on Wednesday.

*I went down to "Henry The Tailor." I had to try on my suits there and I also ordered a half dozen shirts and a topcoat. So I'm just about all set now. Then I went out shopping and got some cork pictures, which are quite novel, to give to some of the folks there. And a small lacquer cigarette case and tray for us, also a set of pyramiding lacquer boxes for you; they rest inside each other. I don't know what you can use them for but they are pretty nice.*

*In the last store I hit I think I got something you'll like sweetheart. It's a six piece dresser set, tortoise shell, with golden dragons embossed on the pieces. ... After that, I went back*

*to the suitcase store where I had third and last suitcase made and I dumped all the packages into it and headed back for the ship. (October 7)*

Sunday evening Herb finishes this letter.

*Another weekend just about over with, spent playing Mah Jong mostly. Its one way to make time go by quickly. I'm happy all the time now hon since I've been working in the storeroom. When I knock off, I'm finished and I can do whatever I want. (October 8)*

Tuesday evening Herb begins another letter. He is feeling good about the Navy again, and he explains why.

*They have been putting out so many rates since the war started and they took so many more men in the Navy. ... Yes, they just opened rates wide open it seems like and I hope to be one of the lucky ones to get in on the ground floor. It will be such a swell break for us sweets, if I make it. It wouldn't be so much of a struggle then. ... Now the Navy looks swell to me; but I'm quite ashamed of some of the letters I wrote to you about a month ago weeping and wailing about the tough breaks I was getting.*

*The other day I got a copy of the "local paper" with my latest story in it about our China cruise this spring. I let some of the fellows read it and now I have a new nick-name, "Scoop."*

*I keep worrying and hoping that your hands didn't bother you too much longer that time when Bernard wrote for you. ... I know how much it hurt you not to be able to write when you wanted to; but naturally it wasn't your fault and you couldn't do anything about it. (October 10)*

Thursday evening Herb continues with news about the Pigeon, and his last visit into town.

*With the aid of a commercial tug, they towed the Pigeon off the rocks yesterday evening and now they can put her in drydock and patch her up. She was on the rocks almost a month and a half and it sure took a lot of work before she was finally floated.*

*I also went ashore yesterday and made my final liberty in Tsingtao. I had to pick up all my clothes after I tried them on. Gosh but civilian clothes seem funny after not wearing them for so long. They fit well alright but I can't be sure about the styles, as to whether they will seem all right in the states or not.*

*When I got back to the ship I went down here in the storeroom, where I keep my suitcases (all three of them) and I tried on a complete outfit of civilian clothes. Tie, shoes, shirt and all. Sure felt good! And I told the fellows "I'll be thinking about you guys when I stroll down Market Street in these duds." Yep, I sure will be one happy person when I have all this stuff I've collected, back in the states, safe and sound. Now I'm just about all set for the states only I'd like to hit Shanghai again so that I could get some perfume and material for you sweetheart.*

*(October 12)*

Sunday evening Herb begins his last letter from Tsingtao. He writes about ship schedules and mail service.

*Gee Mary Lou, it will be so soon now I can almost feel myself getting more excited about it every day. The time will be upon us before we know it. Do you realize that you'll only be able to write to me for about a month longer after you get this? Because once I leave the Canopus, any letters that you'd write after that wouldn't catch up with me until long after I'd be back there with you.*

*If the Henderson arrives out here on schedule and I make first contact I'll be leaving the Canopus during Christmas week. Which means that I'd be at that time receiving letters you wrote around the end of November.*

*Of course, an exact schedule of the Henderson will come out later and I also will have to find out for sure whether I make first or second contact. It hinges on whether I'll be lucky and make second class next month or not. If I get rated, I'd like first contact; if not, I'd like second contact. (October 15)*

He reflects upon the passing of time, and writes about how he perceives it.

*You can coast now you know, what with just a "couple" of months to go. Why, remember when we had a couple of "years" to do? But I think the time has passed very quickly. This year has on account of our cruise and stay in Tsingtao.*

*It seems strange to think that we have been away from Manila since last April. It seems like it has only been a couple of weeks. Now that we are used to the cool weather up here, I'll bet that the heat will really "get" us when we arrive down there on the twenty-third. (October 15)*

Herb's next letter is written Wednesday afternoon, while they are at sea.

*This is an unusual time for me to be writing but due to the "temporary inactivity" in the storeroom there is little else to do. ... I thought I might as well write a letter since it's quiet here except for some sheet metal and pipes banging back and forth due to the rolling of the ship. It hasn't exactly been rough since we've been underway since noon yesterday, but we have been running through big ground swells which has made the ship roll quite a bit. And since some of the fellows have not got their sea legs yet that helps account for the inactivity down here.*

*The hills of Tsingtao receded into the distance, leaving behind a pretty good port with some pretty good memories of a happy summer spent there. (October 18)*

Next Sunday morning Herb continues; he tells Louise about the rough sea and huge waves.

*The last two or three days have been very monotonous and dreary. We have been running through huge swells and waves that have slowed us down and delayed us and we also went a ways off of our course to avoid a typhoon. ... The ship just rocks crazily back and forth all day long. I never saw such large waves before. They grow to about fifty feet in height or over.*

*You'd be surprised how fascinating waves can be darling. Yesterday I spent a couple of hours, just watching waves; until finally one "got" me. You can see them rolling along, building up height and volume until they fall beneath their own weight in a churning white cascade. Or they will approach the ship at their height and topple within a few feet of you.*

*I was watching a lot of them as they roll up, and you have to look up at them from where you stand until they finally break. Depending on how the ship happens to be; in a trough or on the top of a wave governs its effect on the ship, whether it makes the ship lunge, pitch, toss or roll.*

*I was watching one big wave approach the ship and it started to break high above my head close to the rail I was leaning on, and then it suddenly moved in over the rail just about drenching a bunch of other fellows, and I got a little of it myself. That's what happens when you're too curious.*

*(October 22)*

He closes his letter on a hopeful note.

*I'll finish this letter tonight and then I can start another after we arrive in Manila. We should have a lot of mail waiting for us too. Gee honey but I'm anxious to hear from you again and know that you are well again. (October 22)*