

World War II and the Pacific Theater: General Island Life

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Military Collection Teacher's Packet
(Daniel D. Price WWII Films)

Overview of WWII Pacific Island Life

In the summer of 1943, North Carolina native, Daniel Dortch Price of Mount Olive, N.C., arrived on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, where he would serve as a Sergeant in the 38th Air Materials Squadron of the U.S. Army Air Force for about a year. Price's role at this point in World War II was to operate the aircraft supply hut on the Lunga Beach Fighter Strip on the northwest side of Guadalcanal, following the end of the Battle of Guadalcanal earlier that year. When he was not working to fulfill supply and parts orders for the Air Force, Price and his friends found other ways to fill their limited non-working hours. It was during his time on Guadalcanal that Price and his comrade, Bill Carroll, shot two films depicting camp life in the Pacific Theater. Both films are rare, unedited, non-official government views of the average experiences of North Carolinians and other American service individuals on the Pacific islands.¹

Life for North Carolina military individuals serving in the Pacific Theater during World War II varied depending on their assignment location and time of service. Many experienced the hardships and horrors of combat; while others who arrived after the battles had been fought, found island life to be uneventful and monotonous. This packet contains excerpts of letters, diary entries, photographs, and films, showing the experiences of several North Carolinians on different Pacific islands, all encountering similar yet slightly different challenges on the islands.

Island life was far from fun, especially for those who had never left farms or cities in North Carolina. Daniel Price recounts in an interview that arriving in New Caledonia and Guadalcanal had been the first time he had ever been on an island in his life.² It was not easy for the first Americans who came upon islands filled with Japanese military forces, that had embedded themselves in the various islands awaiting the arrival of Allied forces. The Japanese were prepared to give their lives for their emperor, and for their families' honor. It was a world that many Westerners were unprepared for, and had never encountered before the war.

In the first year and a half of America's involvement in fighting in the Pacific Theater against the Japanese—from the early spring of 1942 to the late summer of 1943—most American military personnel experienced the heavy toil of island and jungle warfare. There was no time to swim on the beaches or sightsee in mountains using an Army jeep, since hidden Japanese forces were still ambushing Allied troops as they pushed further into the islands after the major portions of battles had ceased.

By the time men such as Daniel Price had arrived in the Pacific, island life constituted setting up supply bases, airplane landing strips and fields, military camps, and entertainment for the men stationed there. All of this was part of the United States "island hopping strategy." This strategy targeted key islands and atolls to capture and

¹ Both Price WWII films are available for viewing on the State Archives of North Carolina's Youtube page. The black-and-white film, shot in the summer of 1943, is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ5c81Nbv18&feature=youtu.be>. The color film, shot in the fall of 1943, is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmGpGiCbpsI&feature=youtu.be>.

² See Daniel D. Price Interview, MilColl OH 1055, North Carolina Veterans Oral History Collection, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, accessible through the Internet Archive here: <https://archive.org/details/MilCollOH1055Price>

equip them with airstrips, in order to bring B-29 bombers within range of the enemy's homeland; while hopping over strongly defended islands, cutting off supply lanes, and leaving the Japanese forces there to wither.³ American island living could be perilous, too, as enemy ships could destroy supply ships heading to a given island, leaving the men on the island to fend for themselves until they could be resupplied. The Japanese had left booby traps, such as grenades with trip wires, hidden all around Pacific islands where Allied forces were landed—particularly in the interior of the islands. Also, staving off boredom would prove crucial to keeping up the morale of the men and women on the islands, who would in some cases spend four to five years away from their homes and loved ones.

Not every Pacific island experience was the same for a serviceman or servicewoman, but all islands shared common experiences. What follows are examples of different daily aspects of Pacific island life in WWII, as told or seen by North Carolinians through original letters, photographs, daily diary entries, or through interviews.

General Island Living

Captain John F. Mallard of Jones County, N.C, was a U.S. Marine who fought in the Guadalcanal and Marshall Islands' campaigns in 1942. In a letter home to his wife on May 24, 1942, Mallard presents a general description of his new home on an unidentified Pacific island, shortly after his arrival there:

“Well, We've just finished moving again, and are just about settled down in what will probably be our permanent home for some time to come. We again are living in a native house which is quite the other extreme from a house. The floor is dirt with a few stones thrown upon it There are no sides, no privacy, no conveniences [misspelling]. The roof is thatched of palm tree leaves but is quite water proof. The men are living in tents and they had to go right into the thickest jungle to clear a place to them.”

“There are plenty of flies and mosquitoes, especially flies, but life here isn't as bad as that. Give me the good ole' U.S.A. to any other place in the world though. This is supposed to be an island paradise, but any place in the U.S. would suit me better than a king's throne here.”

“. . . Well to-day is Sunday and I spent it swimming and paddling around. Lt. Smith and I bought an outrigger canoe from one of the chiefs [misspelling] in the village and we have quite a time scooting around with it. There are a lot of big fish around and we intend to try our luck the first chance we have. There's a great reef about three miles away from shore around the island so we have almost a natural lake in which we can swim and fish.”

“Believe it or not we still keep in touch with the U.S. by radio. I just finished stringing an aerial [antenna] between two coconut trees and we can pull in stations from the States with the greatest of ease. Boy, that makes home life 100% better just to hear some good old swing [music]. The things like that you miss the most are these that you take for granted when you're living in a land of luxury. Right now the radio is blaring away with some of the latest tunes” (see Item 1, pages 1-5).

Herman Harding Bolton of High Point and Burlington, N.C, served during WWII in the Pacific Theater with the 421st Bomb Squadron, 504th Bomb Group, U.S. Army Air Forces. Providing a quick synopsis of his new environment after just arriving in the Marianas Islands, Bolton writes to a friend on January 16, 1945, the following about the islands:

³ “Island Hopping: Footholds Across the Pacific,” National WWII Museum website, viewed on July 17, 2017, at <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/exhibits/road-tokyo/island-hopping>.

“In contrast to yours, my environment at the present is much different. We landed here, an island of the Marianas Group, on the 24th of December [1944] after a long trip crossing the Pacific. . . . We came by way of the Hawaiian Islands. Now that I have seen Pearl Harbor, I wish I had volunteered and had gone over there when I considered it as a civilian. The islands are beautiful and the harbor is ap[p]alling. . . .”

“When we first landed conditions were bad and living rough. On Christmas Day I set up my pup tent, took a bath from a helmet full of water, and ate ‘C’ rations from tin cans. These conditions are things of the past because we have most of our equipment set up now. At the present, I live in a six man tent, sleep upon a cot, eat in a mess hall and take a bath from a shower. The greatest inconvenience which still persist[s] is the air raids. The raids are of the nature of which I cannot comment except to say that the AA guns (anti-aircraft artillery) threw up fire which reminds me of the county fair fireworks but on a larger scale. It is very beautiful from the standpoint of appearance.”

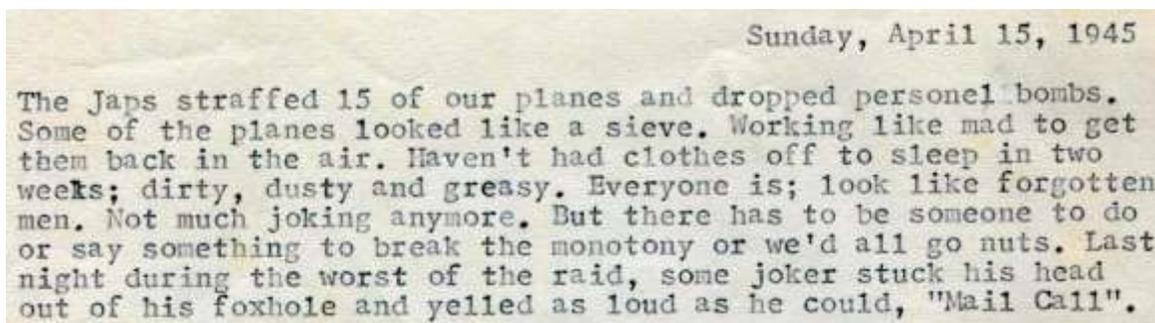
“This particular island has been a beautiful place. It still appeared so to me after the boat trip but in the truer sense war has mar[r]ed its beauty enormously. The weather is warm and working without a shirt is putting a tan on me. The people here consist of Japanese and natives of the Polynesian race” (see Item 2, pages 1-3).

Living with Air Raids

While many military personnel expressed some discomfort regarding mosquitoes, food rations, or bad weather, during WWII in the Pacific, those not in front-line combat fared better in comparison to those men who fought in the fierce battles of the Pacific. Air raids became a 24-hour fact of life, where air warning sirens went off when suspected or observed Japanese aircraft were approaching a given Allied island camp. Japanese planes bombed Allied locations, airfields, ships, aircraft, and strafed beaches and military tents. An American soldier could work for 18 hours, then not be able to get any sleep due to regular air raid warnings. The air raids got on American service personnel’s nerves, causing them to be jumpy and feel a constant sense of worry or fear.

Staff Sergeant Wallace M. Littlejohn of the town of Spindale in Rutherford County, N.C., was a U.S. Marine Corps aviation mechanic. He served in the Pacific Theater during the Battle of Okinawa in the spring of 1945. Entries from his war diary during this time detail the misery of his Marine service at Okinawa.

For example, an entry from April 15, 1945, about a Japanese attack with little warning reads about the Japanese raids on his location around Okinawa (see Item 3):



Sunday, April 15, 1945

The Japs strafed 15 of our planes and dropped personnel bombs. Some of the planes looked like a sieve. Working like mad to get them back in the air. Haven't had clothes off to sleep in two weeks; dirty, dusty and greasy. Everyone is; look like forgotten men. Not much joking anymore. But there has to be someone to do or say something to break the monotony or we'd all go nuts. Last night during the worst of the raid, some joker stuck his head out of his foxhole and yelled as loud as he could, "Mail Call".

Another diary entry from Littlejohn dated May 15, 1945, reads (see Item 4):

Tuesday, May 15, 1945

No raids last night; slept good. Drizzling rain all morning, worked awhile anyway. Good chow today at noon; white beans, hamburger, jam, peaches, green beans and hot coffee. Had pancakes this a.m.. Saw large convoy coming into harbor, made us happy. No news of world today as yet. Received 3 letters from wife last night. Worked 'til dark again tonight. Having movie tonight (16mm) at messhall, Olsen and Johnson in "Crazy House". Not going, don't have time. Got to wash, write wife and get some sleep. Continual rumbling of bombs and shells from Naha, terrific battle. This life of hard work, long hours, no rest, no recreation and continuous air-raids is beginning to tell, working on nerves. Not as steady as I once was. Jump at any sudden noise; not afraid, just involuntary action. God be with us.

Learning to be Resourceful

In the challenging conditions faced by American service individuals on the Pacific islands, basic necessities such as a place to sleep or the ability to shower became coveted possessions for the soldiers, sailors, marines, and flyers. The lack of available natural resources on the islands—which had suffered the scourge of combat and clearance by the Japanese military—meant that American military personnel had to come up with new and inventive ways to obtain items of a daily necessity, or to adapt their military supplies to suit their personal needs.

In a diary entry from April 16, 1945, Wallace M. Littlejohn describes the creative way in which they constructed a shower on the island:

“Took nice shower this p.m. We have a barrel full of water on a platform and the water runs out into a bucket with holes punched in the bottom and it makes a spray just like a regular shower. I put on clean clothes, feel lots better” (see Item 3).



Photograph of a makeshift island shower system, using empty aviation gasoline barrels to hold clean water for showers by American personnel with the 5th Bomb Group, U.S. Army Air Force (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).

Servicemen were not only coming up with imaginative ways to feel more at home, but also creative ways to entertain themselves in their downtime. A battle surgeon with the 307th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army, John B. Graham of Goldsboro, N.C., writes in a letter to his wife from the Marianas Islands on April 8, 1945, about ways to make boats for leisure:

“Many of the mechanically minded men have fashioned boats out of airplane belly tanks and even wood and sail within the lagoon. One even made a boat out [of] a belly tank with a propeller. He has a bicycle chain and sprocket hooked to the propeller and drives himself around” (see Item 5).

Entertainment

Entertainment became an essential part of daily living on the Pacific islands for U.S. military members. Whether it was playing card games, gambling, reading magazines sent from home, dancing, listening to the radio, or playing sports, entertainment dominated the periods of downtime for service individuals. The men also found other forms of entertainment on the islands, including games of baseball and volleyball. Baseball became an international game as American servicemen played the game at military camps all over the world, teaching islanders and Allied servicemen the rules of the game. Many North Carolinian amateur and professional baseball players would join military camp teams, sometimes traveling to play teams from other U.S. military branches in regional locations.



Three photographs of a U.S. Army Air Forces baseball game on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Pictured below are a group of U.S. Army members sitting on benches along the base path of the homemade baseball field. Photograph taken or collected by Ferd L. Davis of Zebulon, N.C., who served as a Captain in the 5th Bomb Group, U.S. Army Air Force (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).





Above, a photograph of U.S. military personnel playing volleyball in camp at Samar Island in the Philippines during World War II. Below, a photograph of U.S. military personnel playing basketball on a makeshift dirt basketball court with a cobbled-together basketball hoop (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).



American military members also often watched live plays put on by fellow service individuals on makeshift camp stages, or watched movies projected at night from handmade wooden benches on the sand. Hollywood

films and U.S. news reels were often played, though many of the films were not the most recent films and many soldiers and sailors had already seen the movies.



U.S. military camp play, put on by male and female members of the military on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).

Films would not always be watched without interruption, as John B. Graham recounts in a letter dated June 11, 1945 to his sweetheart about watching a film while at Okinawa:

“I stopped here [believed to mean Okinawa] a couple of hours ago to see a movie. There was the world premiere of “Gov’t Girl” [starring] Olivia de Havilland (circa 1942). I believe I was the only one present who hadn’t seen it. There is a battery of heavy artillery just beyond and behind the screen. They let go a salvo about every 5 minutes. The noise drowns out the sound and the yellow flash blinds you momentarily. The mosquitos were pretty bad. Isn’t it amazing what we will go thru to see a sorry movie?” (see Item 6, page 2).



Two scenes of U.S. military dances with male and female U.S. Army Air Forces personnel on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).



Setting Up a Military Camp

Most of the men and women of the U.S. military in the Pacific slept in tents or screen-enclosed wood framed barracks. Most military camps had a mess hall, where the men and women would gather for meals or the occasional celebration. Some camps even had a military bar or a chapel. Camps were mostly located along the beaches, because some entrenched Japanese forces remained on the interior of the islands, or many bobby traps

were yet to be cleared further inland. On the islands, the servicemen and servicewomen often built all the structures from scratch, using empty shipping crates in many cases for timber.

Some of the men took great pride in their work and saw an opportunity to make camp feel more like home, as Captain Raymond L. Mulkey of Dunn, N.C. wrote to his fiancée on November 4, 1943, while serving in the U.S. Army's Coast Artillery Corps in the Pacific Theater:

“Tomorrow morning I am beginning my new mess hall [and] hope to get enough lumber to do a good job for the old one made from logs [and] poles has just about seen its last days [and] my concrete floor that I poured last week is a humdinger—Level and so pretty and white—when I get done with it the boys are going to feel like they were back in Garrison” (see Item 7).



View of a row of U.S. Army Air Force tents in a camp on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).



View of another row of U.S. Army Air Force tents in a camp on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).



View of a U.S. military Catholic chapel service on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Notice the open-sided chapel walls, with makeshift ceiling lighting (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).



View of U.S. Army Air Forces members baking pies in a military camp kitchen on Morotai Island in Indonesia during World War II (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).

Homesickness



View of men lined up to receive mail at the U.S. Post Exchange for the 5th Bomb Group, U.S. Army Air Force, on an unidentified island in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Service individuals eagerly awaited the arrival of mail from home—whether from significant others or family members—to cheer them up, or get their minds off the war. Daily mail checks became a regular way of life for the military members, and would be a constant note in letters back home. Photograph taken or collected by Ferd L. Davis of Zebulon, N.C., who served as a Captain in the 5th Bomb Group, U.S. Army Air Force (from Ferd L. Davis Collection, Military Collection, State Archives).

One experience that all U.S. servicemen and servicewomen had in common was homesickness. Wishing for mom's cooking, hoping to go back to college, wanting to kiss and hold a girlfriend or boyfriend, or visiting with friends—all were things hoped for by those facing the utter horrors or challenges of warfare.

In a letter written to his wife on June 19, 1942, Marine captain John F. Mallard expresses the importance of receiving letters from loved ones when overseas:

“Might as well have my say right at the beginning and get things off my chest. Sweetheart, here I am writing you twice a week at least and sometimes much more often, but so far I've only received three letters from you. Now darling, some of the others receive three or four letters every mail when I don't get anything.”

“Honey, I know you love me as much as anyone can love another and you know your love is returned, but it would make me much happier to hear from you more. Don't get the idea that I'm fussing honey, far from it, -cause I'll never fuss with you; but letters do mean more than anything else to us down here in this blankety-blank place” (see Item 8).

What island life in the Pacific Theater taught many American military service personnel—including North Carolinians—is that there is no place like home.

Appendix: Scans of Original Records Used in Packet

Item 1: Letter from John F. Mallard to his wife, dated May 24, 1942 (from John F. Mallard Papers, Miscellaneous Military Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina)

May 24, 1942

My Dearest One,

Well we're just finished moving again, and are just about settled down in what will probably be our permanent home for some time to come. We again are living in a ~~zib~~ native house which is quite the other extreme from a house. The floor is dirt with a few stones thrown upon it, there are no sides, no privacy, no conveniences. The roof is thatched of palm tree leaves but is quite waterproof. The men are living in tents and they had to go right into the thickest jungle to clear a place to put them. There are plenty of flies and mosquitoes, especially flies, but

Page 1 of May 24, 1942, Letter

life here isn't so bad at that.
Give me the good ol' U.S.A.
to any other place in the world
though. This is supposed to be
an island paradise, but any
place in the U.S. would suit
me better than a huiqi
throw here.

Honey can you stand another
shock? I know it was quite
a surprise to you when I
made let it; but hold on
dear cause I've just been
promoted again, this time to
Captain. Here after you can
just call me Captain McAllard
please. How does it sound honey?
Captain + Mrs. J.F. McAllard. I must
admit that it sounds very, very
strange when someone calls
me captain now. Oh well

we can use the money during
when this thing is over, so
be sure and salt some away.
Want me to give you a total of
what I'm making?

12,400	- base pay
960	- quarters
222	- subsistence
240	- 10% award
<u>\$ 3,822</u>	- Total

Think we can live for a while on
that darning? Money means nothing
down here so I'm letting all you
arent getting side on the books
until it really means something.

Well to-day is Sunday and
I spent it swimming and
paddling around. St. Smith and
I bought an outrigger canoe
from one of the chiefs in the
village and we have quite
a time rooting around with it.
There are a lot of big fish

~~and~~ around and we intend to
try our luck the first chance
we have. There's a great ^{port} about
three miles away from shore
around the island so we have
almost a natural lake in which
we can swim and fish.

Say honey, how are you
making out on your three
gallons of gas? It will help
save your tires anyway honey
and we'll be able to ride when
the great battle is over.

Believe it or not we still
keep in touch with the U.S.
by radio. I just finished stringing
an aerial between two coconut trees
and we can pull in stations
from the States with the greatest

of ease. Boy, that makes home
life 100% better just to hear some
good old swing. The things like
that you miss the most are
those that you take for granted
when you're living in a land
of luxury. Right now the radio
is blaring away with some
of the latest tunes. Darling if I
could only see you just now and
then life would be somewhat
bearable, but an indefinite time
without you dearest one is going
to be very hard to endure. You're
the shining light of my life and
although I will endure any trials, I
can't help but get the blues
occasionally because it would be
so wonderful just to be with

you; to touch your beautiful hair;
and to just kiss you honey would
be divine. That's what I'm thinking
I know darling but I love you
so very much. You're still a
bride honey; the most wonderful
in the world; and there'll never
be a sweeter one.

Did you have a big birthday
cake with all the candles and
trimmings? may you have many
more of them dearest, but not
without me to help you celebrate.
The rest will all be happier if
I can make them so, 'cause I'm
nursing a hope that we'll all
be back by the time you have
occasion to celebrate another one.

Goodnight my sweet,

Capt. Frank

Item 2: Letter from Herman H. Bolton to a friend, dated January 16, 1945
(from Herman H. Bolton Papers, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina)

Someewhere in Marianas Is.
Jan 16, 1945

Dear Friend,

Perhaps you already know that I have left the states. If you do not this letter should assure you.

Although mail from the states usually travels slowly, yours did record time and reached me ten days after it was mailed. I am happy to hear that you are doing so well in business and that you have your home started already.

In contrast to yours, my environment at the present is much different. We landed here, an island of the Marianas Group, on the 24th of December after a long trip crossing the Pacific. While there were many unsanitary and uncomfortable conditions aboard, there were many experiences I shall never forget. I became sea sick the third day out but after I recovered I enjoyed the trip and the experience in an odd sort of way.

We came by the way of the Hawaiian Islands. Now that I have seen Pearl Harbor, I wish I had volunteered and had gone over there when I consider

ed^x as a civilian. The islands are beautiful and the harbor is appalling.

During the voyage there was very little work so time dragged itself slowly by. To dispense with it, I read an enormous number of books, played many games including cards, checkers, chess and others I don't recall and shot the hull with the boys. I celebrated both Thanksgiving and Christmas during the trip. There were turkey dinners for both occasions. The Christmas dinner was served on the 23rd because we were scheduled to land on the 24th and 25th.

When we first landed conditions were bad and living rough. On Christmas Day I set up my pup tent, took a bath from a helmet full of water, and ate "C" rations from tin cans. These conditions are things of the past because we have most of our equipment set up now. At the present, I live in a six man tent, sleep upon a cot, eat in a mess hall and take a bath from a shower. The greatest inconvenience which still persists is the air raids. The raids are of the ^{mature}

of which I cannot comment except to say that the AA guns threw up fire which reminds me of the county fair fireworks but on a larger scale. It is very beautiful from the standpoint of appearance.

This particular^{is} has been a beautiful place and it still appeared so to me after the boat trip but in the truer sense war has marred its beauty enormously. The weather is warm and working without a shirt is putting a tan on me. The people here consist of Japanese and natives of the Polynesian race.

Incoming mail as a general rule is not censored. It is subject to censorship, however, if the situation deems it necessary. There has not been any censored for me so far.

Give my regards to your wife and family.

As ever,
JH Bolton

Item 3: Wallace M. Littlejohn diary entries, April 15-17, 1945
(from Wallace M. Littlejohn Papers, WWII 60, Folder 2, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of
North Carolina)

Sunday, April 15, 1945

The Japs strafed 15 of our planes and dropped personnel bombs. Some of the planes looked like a sieve. Working like mad to get them back in the air. Haven't had clothes off to sleep in two weeks; dirty, dusty and greasy. Everyone is; look like forgotten men. Not much joking anymore. But there has to be someone to do or say something to break the monotony or we'd all go nuts. Last night during the worst of the raid, some joker stuck his head out of his foxhole and yelled as loud as he could, "Mail Call".

Monday, April 16, 1945

Very quiet and peaceful today, so far. It's 8:15 p.m. now. Had a condition red about 7 o'clock but no Jap planes came over. Our night fighters are circling field. They're finally getting into operation. Radar guns didn't work so hot last night. They practiced today and now they're really hitting the target. Our sqd. alone shot down four Jap planes today. Heard Pacific Fleet pulled out, leaving us holding bag. Army being pushed back by Japs. They're not far from Kadina Field, 1½ miles from here. The Marines at Kadina are bringing their planes over here to our field (Yontan). Things too hot at Kadina. Marines advancing slowly in south around Naha. Japs between Marines and Army. The Marine 6th division just north of here. Expect to have that area secured in a couple of days. Then they go south to help Army. We heard McArthur said he didn't need Marines to help. He just ought to be here to see. We have quite a few of our planes back in commission. Hooserek (Jersey) keeps saying he wished 1000 planes would come over just to see them get shot down. He runs fastest when siren goes off. Coerman came late today and took all of Leavengood's gear; 782 equipt. and seabag. He left rifle and gas mask. He says they're taking Leavengood to hospital ship. We still think he has cat-fever; wonder if we'll ever find out. Good boy, hate to see him go, although he'll probably go to states. Received three letters from wife, including wrist watch pins. Took three months and 17,000 miles of travel but they're worth it. I'm making a crystal for my watch. Ernie Pyle on this island. Would like to meet him. Have flashlight now but writing this by candle. Have to arise in the morning at 3 o'clock to start ships (planes) on starboard watch. Jenks and Leamer on guard now. Think I get it tomorrow. Took nice shower this p.m. We have a barrel full of water on a platform and the water runs out into a bucket with holes punched in bottom and it makes a spray just like a regular shower. I put on clean clothes, feel lots better. No shave as yet. Awfully tires, hitting sack, thinking of wife and home.

Tuesday, April 17, 1945

Started planes at 3 o'clock this a.m.---air-raid, have to stop now. Dust was thick we couldn't see nor breathe. As usual we worked hard all day. Shooting still going on in hills south of here. I washed a little tonight but still letting beard grow. Wrote letter to wife and Charlie Reynolds (my boss back in states). Received a box of fudge from Mom. Sure was good. It lasted about 30 seconds, everybody dived into it at once.

(continued)

*Item 4: Wallace M. Littlejohn diary entries, May 15-17, 1945
(from Wallace M. Littlejohn Papers, WWII 60, Folder 2, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of
North Carolina)*

Tuesday, May 15, 1945

No raids last night; slept good. Drizzling rain all morning, worked awhile anyway. Good chow today at noon; white beans, hamburger, jam, peaches, green beans and hot coffee. Had pancakes this a.m.. Saw large convoy coming into harbor, made us happy. No news of world today as yet. Received 3 letters from wife last night. Worked 'til dark again tonight. Having movie tonight (16mm) at messhall, Olsen and Johnson in "Crazy House". Not going, don't have time. Got to wash, write wife and get some sleep. Continual rumbling of bombs and shells from Naha, terrific battle. This life of hard work, long hours, no rest, no recreation and continuous air-raids is beginning to tell, working on nerves. Not as steady as I once was. Jump at any sudden noise; not afraid, just involuntary action. God be with us.

Wednesday, May 16, 1945

Siren went off last night at 3:15. Just did make it to foxhole. Bombers at high altitude directly over field. Search lights on them but anti-aircraft couldn't reach that high. What a shame. One bomber maneuvered at outer edge of harbor, keeping anti-aircraft concentrated on him while other bombers came from east end of field. Lots of bombs dropped all over field, ack-ack filling air. Looked out of foxhole; bomber directly above. Glad he didn't drop bomb. They would have never found any of us. Beautiful day, sun very bright. Two more men added to my crew temporarily, PFC Dunne and Corp. Sterniman from mag. 22 at Iwo Shima. Today at noon forty P47s were escorted in by three B29s. I'm boiling some clothes today. I have a beautiful wife. Worked 'til dark as usual. Finally got cherry picker (small tractor with cleats and derrick lift) to lift a wing on a plane. Started letter to wife at 8:15 and was interrupted by air-raids three times before I could finish. Leavengood came back today from Guam on a tanker. He was really glad to be back and we were sure glad to have him too.

Thursday, May 17, 1945

Jap bomber kept us awake most of the night; finally left foxhole at 1:15, up at 6:15. Pancakes for chow. This may sound like a lie but it's true; we had icecream for noon chow and it was delicious. Think I'll eat a tub full when I get home. Boy! how I'd like a chocolate sundie. More P47s came in today. Have begun to tell wife the facts about this life instead of sunny side. I'M never sad, never blue, not complaining. All credit goes to God, just lonesome for wife. Worked 'til 8:30 tonight but we had an alert at 8:00. Worked right on. Washed in helmet in dark. We all sat on top of foxhole waiting for ack-ack to start and when it did we all jump in foxhole. Alert over in 1½ hours, lights came on. Had stationary in lap, getting ready to write wife when all of a sudden the siren went off; back to foxhole. 90 mm bursting right over our heads. Concussion makes skin burn. Dozed a few minutes in foxhole. Not writing wife, can't, impossible. Had nice chat with Homer Donaldson, wise old man. I like him.

Item 5: Letter from John B. Graham to his wife, dated April 8, 1945
(from Box 1, Folder 9, John B. Graham Papers, WWII 36, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of
North Carolina)

Marianas Is
8 April 1945

my darling,
Today I received a letter from you mailed on 21 March. It had come thru Hawaii, I hope soon to start getting letters direct from you. As I wrote you on/about 25 March from here, something should come thru soon. I haven't heard from John Barrett yet. If he is anywhere in the vicinity when his boat puts into port + can get a few days leave, I hope that he can come and visit me. He can't be too far away. I should hear from him soon. You haven't mentioned anything about the watch I asked you to see about. Is there any news about it? Where is Ches. now? Is he still at Camp Peary?

Yesterday (Sat.) we took the ~~day~~ afternoon off and bummed down to the beach. They have a fine beach here that puts Waikiki to shame. However, it is still water, about like the sound at Morehead. The water

John

Page 1 of April 8, 1945, Letter

is very clear and clean (looking). Many people have swimming goggles consisting of a circular piece of glass about 6 inches in diameter mounted in a rubber face-piece which is fitted to the front of the face. With this it is possible to examine shells, fish etc in the water. It is quite a nice way to spend your time. The reason that the surf is absent is that there is a reef about 1/2 mile from shore which breaks the surf and forms a natural anchorage. Many of the mechanically-minded men have fashioned boats out of airplane belly tanks and even wood + sail within the lagoon. One man has a boat made out of a belly tank with a propellor. He has a bicycle chain + sprocket hooked to the propellor and drives himself around. The beach is clean and of the finest sand imaginable. It was a Japanese Riviera apparently, at least by legend.

Today we returned back to the beach and I got a real sunburn. We like this beach ~~too~~ especially because the navy has a hospital right on the water's edge. The officers have been kind enough

to let us use their shower to change and bathe in. They have a club next door with Coca-Cola, I hear. I have been wanting to get into close quarters with several bottles of same unsuccessfully for some time. Cokes are rationed with us, 6 a month. At the Navy Club beer + cokes + mixed drinks are unrationed. The ^{main} Navy club is said to be very nice, roof garden etc. Naturally the Army nurses have seen quite a lot of it. (There being no Navy nurses on the island). It is frequented, I hear, by Tyrone Power and other notables.

I went to church twice today, honey. Aren't you proud of me? I haven't been to prayer meeting yet but am going to do so next week, if they have it. Have you been going to prayer meeting lately, honey? TSK, TSK! You really are neglecting your church work! I am very proud of the chaplain, here. He is an extremely nice fellow. One of the things he has done recently is to pick up our mail at the depot for us, thus saving several days on the delivery. This has

been going on for sometime &
our knowledge. He is one of the few
people who can get transportation
at any time, here. Being unassigned,
I haven't the brass to even ask for
it. Bunting has answered my purpose
so far. Overseas they subtract a
certain amount of money from your
pay for food whether you eat it or
not. And it is easy to drop in on
the nearest mess at mealtime whether it
is your own or not.

Your description of Pat was quite
clear and about as I had expected from
mother's account. I feel so sorry for her.

I love you so much honey. I'd
give anything to be with you. Barring
complications, I shall not until
the war is over. Rotation is something
which they have in Europe. There are so
many people over here for 3+ years
that ~~rotation~~ regardless of any rotation
plan I won't make home for the
duration + possibly 6 months. You
and my son will flourish + thrive
I know and will be all the more
precious to me, if that is possible, when
homecoming is a reality. I love you
with all my heart.

Give my love to everybody.

Your adoring husband,
John

Item 6: Letter from John B. Graham to his wife, dated June 11, 1945
(from Box 1, Folder 11, John B. Graham Papers, WWII 36, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of
North Carolina)

Okinawa Shima
11 June 1945

Dearest darling,

I have received 3 letters from you since last writing, 2 yesterday, 1 today. They were dated May 14, 15 + 28. As I recall, the last one I received on Saipan was dated 8 May. Hence, there should be at least 15 letters kicking around the island for me. The one I received today was addressed to the 174th Regt. Com. Hence I should begin getting the later letters before the earlier ones. The earlier ones apparently have gone to the division where the "rear echelon commandos" are too busy to get them out.

The other day I went down ~~with~~ with the adjutant of the Com. to trade some Jap souvenirs for liquor if possible. We talked with one of the toughest, most cold-blooded traders whom I have ever seen. As he puts it, he is in the "souvenir business". He is a Seabee who has access to the Navy + Merchant ships in the harbor. He trades a few souvenirs for goods then trades the liquor to these alcohol-starved G.I.s. for about 4 times what he paid in souvenirs. He keeps pyramiding his profits in this way taking cash when possible + sending money home all the time. He was very

Page 1 of June 11, 1945, Letter

frank with us, admitting that he wasn't really trading for souvenirs but trying to steal them! He has been doing this for three years. His profits must rival those of the cigarette thieves in France or the nurse on Saipan who made \$30,000 in prostitution. It seems that in this part of the world the racketeers work as hard as they do at home.

We are still resting. We moved from the rest camp to a new area in a somewhat better location. Things are still very slow. I have sick call each morning which lasts about 15 minutes and ask them for the day. After sick call I went down and had a nice 2 hour visit with Bob Brickhouse. He told me that he has never seen his son, now 15 months old. He left the States the week after the baby was born in St. Louis. He didn't know that Barnett was a member of the race and was quite interested in the news of everybody. He had left New York a year before we did and wanted to know about everybody. As it has been a year since I left I didn't have too much to tell him. He has just been transferred from an Infantry Bn. to the Engineer Bn which is a much better job.

He doesn't go too far forward and has a much more permanent location. The engineer headquarters doesn't move much and has plenty of transportation i. e. doesn't have to ^{carry} carry his medical supplies like we do. He also sleeps in tents instead of foxholes. However, he deserves this break. He went thru Guam, Leyte + most of the Olinawa campaign with the infantry.

I stopped ↑ here a couple of hours ago to see a movie. There was the world premiere of "Gov't Girl" c Olivia de Havilland (circa 1942). I believe that I was the only one present who hadn't seen it. There is a battery of heavy artillery just beyond + behind the screen. They let go a salvo about every 5 minutes. The noise drowns out the sound + the yellow flash blinds you momentarily. ~~But~~ The mosquitoes were pretty bad. Isn't it amazing what we will go thru to see a sorry movie? The campaign seems to be going well at present. We are expecting it to be over soon and to go into a

training period. I hope that we can soon get some real rations.

We have managed to get a gas mantle lantern which belongs unofficially to the C.O. of the company. This makes letter-writing at night possible, paving air raids. We have a psychopath, an old regular Army bad boy in the 1st Bn, a Pfc. He has about 25 years in service, 20 of them bad time. He has the most brass of any man I have ever seen and is the official procurer of gear and unofficial items for the outfit. He is a real character having been busted a hundred times for general psychopathy. He is sitting next to me at the moment passing around a canteen of his "raisin jack" made from raisins, water + yeast. It is quite tasty, like hard cider + a kick like a mule. He has a heart big as an elephant + like most psychopaths is quite intelligent. He was very nice to me when we were in combat, even giving me his own blankets (I didn't know it at the time). As I carry a quart of medicinal whiskey he claims that that is all he wants but he really just likes to help.

(over)

... on test ...
I love you more & more & don't
try doing money, and I think about
you all the time. The three
pictures of Barnett which I received
("the Smiths") are precious & I love
them.
I don't know where you are
as I have missed the letter telling
where you are going but I expect
that you are in England.
I love you with all my
heart and pray that God will take
care of you & Barnett for me.
I am your devoted husband,
L. J. ...

Page 5 of June 11, 1945, Letter

Item 7: Letter from Raymond L. Mulkey to his fiancée, dated November 4, 1943
(from Raymond L. Mulkey Papers, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina)

Thursday Oct
9:00 P.M.
Nov. 4, 1943

My Darling:
Little late in getting started tonight, but
still I have to hurry. Since supper to-
night, have been helping Capt. Gilbert
make him a wardrobe comparable to
mine + and, tomorrow afternoon I am
going to help him then build him
a desk. The one I have just completed
for my B.C. is a good looking one +
tomorrow morning I am beginning
my new mess hall + I hope to get
sufficient lumber to do a good job for
the old one made from logs + poles
had just about seen its last days + my
concrete floor that I poured last
week is a hum dinger - level + so
pretty and white. Now I get done with
it, the boys are going to feel like
they were back in Garrison +
out two letters from my baby today

Page 1 of November 4, 1943, Letter

And right now I am gone into them and
see if there is any thing that needs special
attention. - I liked of one thing and I
shall begin with it. - The trip to Kent
I wrote you a week or so ago about the
proposed trip telling you that the only
part I was afraid of was that during
that time of the year and soldiers gone,
you might get hurt + as for the money,
I'll gladly give you the hundred bucks,
for I'm sure by your promise to be careful +
I will send it the first time I get
a chance to go to the Post Office + Per-
haps tomorrow + I don't think you will
be able to see much with a hundred
dollars in New York yet with the few
days you have it might do + anyway
you know where there is New York
to get it - So the hundred dollars you get
will be your mas from your darling +
Sharply I will be going on the last
three months of a year since we parted
in Jacksonville March 25th + never you
mind that at the end of the first
year or the third year I'll be the

Every day I am away from you, I am more
convinced that I love you more + lets not
think of either of us thinking some one else.
That is the farthest away from my mind
and anything I can think of + just you +
yourself + you will want to be with me +
will you when I return + live that then,
I will show be happy + may I have a kiss
a good big one in answer to this one +
and that I can taste + please +

Just I forgot it, will you promise that
not one drop of anything intoxicating will
you drink on your trip - and who is Lib?
you mentioned she + her date getting tight +
that I do not like +

Am glad that finally Charles went you
and hope by this time he has had an
opportunity to come up to see you - Oh
what a gentleman he is and how after
but months we still miss him -
What four pictures did Charlie send you?
I don't know of any new took while he
was here - What about sending them to
me since you are going to send any more.
Thanks for this address - glad he is a cop,
and do hope that keeps up something before the
war is over + the desert it - God bless you
Truly, Edward

This Rainy Day
June 19, 1942

my Darling,

right as well have my say right at the beginning and get things off my chest. Sureheart here I am writing you twice a week at least and sometimes much more often, but so far I've only received three ^{letters} from you. Now darling some of the others receive three or four letters every mail when I don't get anything. Honey, I know you love me as much as anyone can love another and you know your love is returned, but it would make me much happier to hear from you more. Don't get the idea that I'm guessing honey, you know it, cause I'll never guess with you; but letters do mean more than anything else to us down here in this blankety-blank place. Then I'm not in as bad a predicament as Captain Swift of our outfit who was married a week before we left and has yet to hear from his wife. He's nearly

heart. broken. Honey don't take this the wrong way
'cause I don't want it to seem as if I
didn't appreciate, what you're doing and the
letters I get from you; 'cause you know you
mean more to me than anything in the
whole world. That's just the reason I'm
longing for more news from you though.

Oh well, dearest, that was an awful
way to start a letter so please forgive me.
Would you be interested in knowing what
I think? Well I think about you continually
and that you are the most wonderful one
in this whole universe, and I just couldn't
do without you darling. This ocean is too
wide for me to whisper ~~so~~ sweet
things in your ear, but darling some
day we'll sail back across that ocean and
then my time will come. When we do
set up house - keeping we'll be the
happiest couple alive; we can't help grow
being, because we love each other so
much. There's a new song I heard
the other night which I want to
dedicate to you; "Consider your self kissed."
Think it will be right up on top of
the hit parade before long, too, 'cause
it fits so many of us.

With all this rain coming down, I
can't very well ever say anything about
the weather. This place must have one of
the heaviest rainfalls in the world 'cause
it's been raining continually now for almost
a week. Everybody and everything is soaking
wet and I'll probably be all muddy and
mucky when we return. Here it is ten
o'clock in the morning and raining so
hard that I'm afraid to stick my head
out for fear of drowning. You'll probably
spend your days rubbing my squeaking
joints from the rheumatism we'll all
have by the time we leave here. Practically
all my clothes are wet now and the
rain doesn't let up long enough for anything
to dry.

Sent some of my boys up on the
mountain to lay telephone wire about two
days ago and when we went up after
them they were all swimming around in
their birthday suits having quite a time.
Everything they had was wet. Just got to
show you how modest some of these
we are.

Don't guess you know much about
it, but the new pay bill for armed forces
has been signed which means an increase

of two dollars a month for us decent.
My quarters allowance goes up now
eighty dollars a month to ninety. If I was
only back in the states what a wonderful
apartment we could have for just us two.
I seem to distinctly remember hearing you say
you thought it would be wonderful for
us to live together. It would be even better
that. Darling as far as I'm concerned; it
would simply be heaven and some day we'll
have just that. You continue to get things
for us for some day we're going to send
them, just you wait and see. Next time
you write, let me know how much silver
we have on hand now and maybe we
might be able to arrange to increase it some.
So long darling and all my love.

Sincerely,
Freddy

P.S. Don't mention where we are to anyone
or say anything about it in your
letters darling 'cause it's still a
secret darling. We have a new
address for our outfit.

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