

My darling Mama:

Your boy John sits in the officers mess of a vessel which is sailing under the stars of the South seas. I have just eaten a meal to be dreamed of: asparagus, Swiss steak, carrots, spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, excellent coffee and dessert to digest my meal I stood by the rail on our upper deck and looked out to sea. The water is a graying black except for the white caps which we have seen all day. Clouds sit on the horizon, and occasionally a small island passes us by.

Lou and I are alone in the officers mess; he is looking over some maps before writing. The room is immaculately clean and richly furnished; black out screens are covering the rooms' two port holes; a sign on a door to my left reads: "Emergency Crash Panel – Kick Out"; a radio blares out some American propaganda program to the Philippines which is boring.

Outside within and around the foremost hatch sprawl the dusky warriors who flaunt the banner of the 642nd. Some have their cots down in the hatch, which, they say, last night was pleasantly cool, others are sleeping on trucks which are lashed to the decks; some sleep on coils of rope, and a few sleep atop the Hatch covering.

Somewhere in this scrambled mass is the heroine "Pin Up". I imagine that she is lying down, prostrate with frayed nerves & in the throes of utter exhaustion. For the past number of hours have been chimeric ones for her. Just before leaving the company area, she was entrusted to the care of one of the privates whom she has an especial fondness for because he feeds her; already nervous from the hustle and bustle of breaking bivouac, she became frantic when the private tied a rope to her collar. Just before the trucks arrived to take us to the docks, she broke away and ran under the supply room floor. No amount of coaxing could get her out, and the floor was too low to crawl under & besides we couldn't see her. In desperation we tore up the supply room floor and finally squeezed her out through a small hole. A very cowed little dog we experienced no difficulty in getting her aboard, and I think she is calming down now. There is another dog on board and they have been playing. Pin Up is very dirty from lying on the deck.

Now the monkey presents a different story. I saw him awhile ago sitting on a truck during a fire drill & looking as calm as Lang Silver. You should have seen him, however, as his owner carried him aboard, he was sitting on his shoulders with his nose nestled up against his owner's neck. He flattened himself so low that he looked like a small fur, and glanced neither to the right nor the left.

The pig, for whom we had prepared a little crate, is not with us. We gave him to a colored Red Cross worker (woman) who preached to the men & who took a liking to him.

There has been much consternation concerning the Army officers meals aboard; the ships captain referred to feed all of them, so we have been rotating the meals between the ships mess & the company mess on deck. So far we each (with a few exceptions) have had one meal a day in the ships mess. I was the only one of the four of us to eat tonight so I got the steward & cabin boy to give me some sandwiches of cold cuts & mayonnaise for the others. Last night Lou & Prentice & I were playing cards in the Officer's mess after the others had left. We stole a bounteous meal of cold cuts & ate it ravenously with one eye on the door.

It was terrifically hot when we landed and the men nearly all gone out as they walked up the gang plank carrying their pack, duffle bag, and cots. They got hotter down in the hatch and three or four of them nearly passed out with heat exhaustion. They all became extremely excited when one or the other becomes ill and they all start feeling sorry themselves and fancy all sorts of things; there was no place for them to go to the [illegible] where they first got on board, so a number of [them] had to go back to the pier for that; there was no water & despite the fact that they had filled their canteens only a short time before, they became frantic because there was no water. Several became sea sick and wanted to go on sick call, but now like Pin Up they are all composed and happy.

I have been reading Botany Bay most of the day; it is intensely interesting for the first two thirds of the book but folds up suddenly completely towards the close. England, about the time of the founding of the convict colony in Botany Bay, was about as low in the ways of humanity as a nation could become. I miss Australia & would like to go back there.

Ed should have seen our vehicles being swung aboard; all brand new with our new emblem on them; fully loaded with camping equipment & their beds covered with new tarps. Looked pretty impressive.

I am not dating this letter for security reasons although I am not sure that is necessary. Remember my mentioned for you not to worry because there will be no need for it. I adore you, you sweetest of persons.

Your ever loving son,

John Harrod