

*Hand written to Mom,  
Typed by Helen*

Somewhere in Phillipines

Tuesday, November 14, 1944.

Dear Mother and Gang,

Alas! a very good time has come for me to write you a nice long letter. It has been so long since you've received one from me you have forgotten what my handwriting looks like.

I imagine you've been wondering just what we are doing here and how we are progressing. You can pick up any newspaper and read about it, but I'll give you my version of this "horrible, horrible war". If I miss parts or facts which seem to be explainable by numbers, it will be due to censorship. Several times I'll have to refer to this division so I'll call it "X" Division. You know the number, but just for safety's sake.

On the morning of "A" day, we awakened, those of us who could sleep, and went to breakfast, although it was still dark; 5:00 A.M. I wasn't very hungry, but not knowing when the next meal would be, I ate a fairly good meal. After breakfast, we went below and unconsciously began looking over our equipment. I checked my rifle, I don't know how many times. It was now about 6:30, and "H" hour was in  $3 \frac{1}{2}$  hrs. We returned to the deck, and saw the shore in the distance; and to seaward, nothing but ships, ships and more ships, I was so scared and nervous, I didn't know if I was coming or going. Before I knew it, we were told to report to landing station. This was it! X Division was to take the brunt of it and our combat team was the spearhead. Climbing down the sides of the transport I was trying to keep calm, but it was impossible! We were to land about the third wave. In my opinion, it's too damn soon for an artilleryman! I was on the same assault boat as our Bn. Comdr. We circled around well off shore and then, it was 30 sec., -20 sec., 10 sec., "H" hour, and we were on our way! Our warships were pounding the shore, and once in a while, a Jap shell would land in the water, doing nothing more than scaring the personnel. About when we were 25 or 30 yards offshore, a Jap machine gun opened up on us, and we all hit the bottom, but fast! I had been baptized by fire, and been fired upon by the enemy; this wasn't the last, though.

The ramp went down and we plunged into the water, wading as fast as we can for shore and cover. I spied a coconut log lying on the ground and made for it. I hit the ground and laid flat behind the log, and a second later, --splat-- into the log went Jap round #2. I froze, and realized SOMEONE was guiding me. The front lines were about 50 yards inshore and bullets were a-humming everywhere.

After 10 minutes or so, I moved up the beach to join my buddy and arriving there, by means of crawling or running low, I flattened out and started digging. About 18 inches



separated our faces and through this, landing in the sand between us, came Jap round #3! When I heard that "zing", home seemed so far away, and I wanted to be there, but bad!

This ended my nervousness and when I got hold of myself everything went on as planned. We moved, dug in, moved and dug in again. Late in the afternoon, it started to rain, and we started putting up our defense and turning in for the night--in a foxhole. That was the first of 20 nights before we got a few days rest.

So much has been told of "Life in a Foxhole", you know all about it, and I won't bore you.

That night, the Japs counter-attacked the infantry, and when we got the range with our guns, we laid quite a good number out, and made them take-off. Now it was our turn to dish it out, and by the way the infantry swears by us, I guess we added a little gravy to the meal of hot steel.

I knew we were a good shooting outfit, and after seeing what results we got, I'm convinced we're better than good.

After 4 days on the beach, we started moving up; and that night we moved into a town to go into position. This night was to be a "dilly". At dusk, a few Jap planes came over and the "ack-ack" opened up.

You've never seen fireworks to equal this fire. The sky was covered with bright red tracers and clouds of small black puffs from explosive shells. The Nips got a hot reception and didn't stay long. They could be seen "high-tailing" it for safety at full throttle. Those little buggies can sure travel!

After the excitement was over, we bedded down for another night, not realizing what was to happen. When you read that "our position was attacked, but the enemy was repulsed", this is what happened that night.

About 11 o'clock, everything was quiet and peaceful, except for intermittent gunfire. All of a sudden, the town broke out into a yelling, screaming mad-house. Machine guns, rifles, ack-ack guns opened up. The Japs were attacking, yelling "Banzai-Banzai". They were inside the town and raising hell. One of their objectives was to blow up a bridge. One lad, manning an ack-ack turret, composed of 4 synchronized .50 cal. machine guns, sprayed the bridge, back and forth, and did he pile the Nips up--a Nip sneaked in and got him.

This commotion lasted a short time; no one went out to survey the damage, for any moving object will draw fire.



The next morning I had to pass through town on my way atop a hill, and everything was there to be seen.

On one corner they had stacked a pile of Jap bodies, and that pile was growing fast. One side street, through which we had to pass, was still littered with bodies. It was certainly a bloody battle, with Tojo's boys on the receiving end.

When we got to the bridge, we saw the results of that lad's handiwork. There were the Japs, lined up side by side, dead as doornails, and shot to bits. When a .50 cal. hits a man in the face, there's not much left. It was a horrible mess, and they didn't accomplish a thing.

I witnessed another nice sight that day from atop that hill. We had been up there about 20 minutes when a flight of Jap bombers, about 10, came over. They were flying in close formation, unopposed, when high above, several specks of silver, U.S. Navy fighter planes, appeared. Then started the "field day". The Navy went into attack formation and started to dive, the second plane covering the first, the third the second, etc. The first dived and missed, the second plane followed and you could hear the guns roar. A flash and Jap plane #1 was downed, then #2, 3, 4; I personally saw 8, and I'm told that "ack-ack" got the other two. Ah! 'twas a beautiful sight to behold. We didn't lose a plane.

That day was uneventful, until night. Day time is okay. You can see something, but night-----.

I had my foxhole about 30 yards inside the perimeter, directly behind a machine gun. Due to the previous night's affair, added precautions were taken. Trip flares (these explode upon contact, and illuminate the area) were strund out, and listening posts established. Everyone was on the alert, lest we have a repetition.

I had been in my hole about an hour, when one flare went off, then another; the machine guns opened up, and poured bullets all over the area, although we couldn't see a thing to shoot at. All I could think about was the happenings of the previous night. When morning came, our score was 1 caribou (water buffalo) dead. No Japs had been near us at all. The caribou had set the flares off. This will help give you an idea of the tension that exists.

The next days were uneventful. We moved up, fired, stayed a day or so, and moved again. As we travelled, we passed scores of dead Japs all along the roads, Testimony of the power



that we have against them. The initial force we fought was the infamous "Death March" men of Baatan. They had their turn; now they're doing their own march.

One day I acted as guard for the Bn. C. on a trip to the front lines. The Japs were holding up our advance, and some good artillery was needed, and the Colonel went up to see the "lay of the land". Acting as one of two guards, I witnessed an actual planning of an attack. The general and all the infantry commanders were there and me. It was a nice experience for me; listening to the pro's and con's of a particular way to attack.

A division barrage was to be set down, covering an area of about 300 by 400 yards. It was to start rolling when the infantry pulled back to safety. About 10 or 15 minutes, the doughboys came back and took positions about 40 yards behind us. I didn't like that! I want the infantry in front of me. Things were hot for a few minutes, with the Japs advancing into the trap, then everything was ready and came the artillery report "on the way". We hit the ground and the whistling shells, screamed overhead. A normal battalion barrage can really raise hell; and a division barrage--I leave it up to you. If a mosquito was alive when we got through, he was very, very lucky. We made a name for ourselves that'll take a lot to beat.

This morning a Jap plane came over our camp, flying about 300 feet and hell bent for election. Those big, red circles didn't look any too good.

This brings us up to the present time. I could write a thousand pages, but who wants to read that much.

Next time I write, I'll tell you about the towns and people. I'm sending back Helen's tags, and thanks.

Keep your fingers crossed, and keep praying.

All my love,

(s) Jack.