

The Philippines
22 January Monday

Dear Claire:

We have been working all day and up to 11 or 12 at nite lately, and I have little time to write. But I shall write this letter in detail, little by little if necessary until it is complete. Because, you see, I have seen Bill and talked with him, and I know what it will mean to you and the folks to hear at first hand all about our meeting.

In this letter I shall not mention either the name or number of Bill's ship, because I intend to describe certain details which would violate security if coupled with identification. On Saturday afternoon, I received a phone call from Fleet Operations, relaying a message which read, in part: "Am anchored at Berth number _____. Come if you can. Signed Willie."

I immediately obtained permission to leave, got in a jeep and drove up to Fleet Headquarters. I was able to locate on a harbor chart, the exact location of the berth, but was unable to get any transportation out to the ship. So I had to return to camp and try to make other arrangements. We have a transportation section of our headquarters and the officers in it maintain a close liason with the Navy because of the necessity of arranging shipping for our troops and supplies. They were making a trip out into the harbor the next morning. I went along, deposited the officers at the Flagship, and went to look for Bill's ship. We arrived at the designated berth to find it empty. The ship had slipped her anchor sometime during the night and was nowhere to be found. We cruised around for hours in our General's picket boat, but could not find a ship of the M class. At noon yesterday, we returned to Headquarters and I immediately started to bother Navy Operations. They could tell me nothing of the location; but I finally prevailed upon the signal officer to interrupt priority messages to try and raise the ship by voice signal, but she didn't respond. You can well imagine what a disheartening experience it was, knowing Bill was whereabouts and not being able to find him. In the afternoon, I went out again on the picket boat, without much hope. This time I had a pair of field glasses. After about an hour of cruising up the coast, I picked up the silhouette of a ship of the proper class, lying about two miles off to star-board. We went up to her and discovered that she was a sister ship. Fortunately, I had the numbers listed. We hailed the bridge and were given the approximate location of the M, which was anchored about 10 miles northeast. By this time it was growing quite late and I was already overdue at the Flagship, to pick up our officer. However, we set a course and after quite a long time, I sighted two ships of the proper class, lashed side to side.

As I approached, I was able to make out on the bow the numbers I had been looking all over the Pacific Ocean for. Imagine what a thrill it was! We came alongside and I hailed the Officer of the Deck and requested permission to come aboard. When he learned that I had a brother aboard, he was most cordial, and called Bill over the announcer system: "Seaman first class Allen, report to the quarterdeck immediately." We chatted while waiting for Bill and suddenly I looked up and there he stood!

We stood and looked at each other for a moment. I had the most curious sense of unreality. To see that boy, aboard a wicked little war ship, anchored in one of the hottest spots in the world, the straits between two famous islands. We shook hands and sort of embraced each other and then I stood off to get a good look at him. Claire, he looks grand! He is the same Willie; if anything he looks younger than he did. He was stripped to the waist and was wearing blue dungaree pants and sneakers. Around his neck he wore a shell necklace. He is bronzed by the sun, well filled out and as healthy looking as a young panther. His hair has been bleached almost platinum by the sun. In his tanned face, his eyes are the most extraordinary blue. He has the same funny little turned-down smile and his characteristic laugh, the same pleasant, concise manner of speaking. We stood there on the quarterdeck talking. I, of course, was acutely conscious