

I found the EASTLAND to be a darn nice ship! Quarters are comfortable; the food excellent. With a well-provisioned canteen, a library and record collection of both popular and classical stuff, you can see that it isn't bad duty. We also have our own movies aboard, shown in the messhall when the ship is blacked out and underway. When in port, the Chaplain shows the flicks out on deck, where a screen has been rigged up on No. 2 hatch. To date, I've seen a number of good Hollywood releases, including "Wilson," "Going My Way," and other feature productions.

I'm getting a wee bit ahead of myself, so perhaps I should say that I was named Personnel Officer when I reported aboard. This collateral duty also included work as the Ship's Secretary and also the editor of the ship's news paper....and just recently, the Captain appointed me as the Public Relations Officer for the ship. So, you see, a guy is kept rather busy in the Navy.

Well, we spent two months in the "states," engaging in advance amphibious operations, a "shake-down" cruise, designed to determine if the ship was seaworthy, and an availability period, during which minor repairs and alterations were made to prepare us for our initial trip across. On the 23rd of December we received orders to sail. Boy, was morale low because all believed we would be spending Christmas at sea. Instead of heading due West, we hugged the coast and returned to our "shake-down" port.

I spent Christmas with an editor-friend of mine, who works on the Los Angeles Times. Christmas, however, just wasn't the same again this season. The spirit just wasn't in me. All in all, however, I think I had as merry a Christmas as anyone could possibly anticipate under such conditions. So, I guess I shouldn't bitch! But that's every man's privilege in the Navy and don't think they don't take advantage of it.

We left the states on the 26th. With anchors aweigh and setting a course for the blue Pacific, we were off. The trip was a pleasant one and uneventful, though reports that Jap subs were operating off the West coast, kept us all on edge. We made the voyage without mishap, I'm happy to say, however. Upon arriving at the islands, after celebrating New Year's Eve both soberly and quietly at sea, the captain granted liberty. I was among the first to go ashore.

Since this was my first trip to the Pacific, I must confess that I was quite thrilled. I made a tour of one of the islands near which we were anchored. Felt just like a tourist as I absorbed the natural beauty of the scenic spots that I visited. Unfortunately, I left my camera aboard, so I didn't take any pictures. Without them to offer in evidence, you'll just have to take my word that this isle is truly a tropical paradise. If there was some way in which to earn an income, I do believe I'd seriously consider returning here to live. That's how much I'm sold on this place.

Out here, summer is perpetual. The days are bright and sunny...the water cool, clean and inviting. The inhabitants are healthfully lazy. The effect is the same on all visitors. After a few days in this climate, it's no wonder that you begin to think that the life of a beachcomber would be just perfect.

I don't know how long we'll be anchored in this lagoon. In due time, I guess, we'll join a task force, participate in an amphibious operation with the aim of knocking the hell out of those damn Japs and returning home to stay when the job is done. Well, Doc, I believe I've just about exhausted all the available news and information that I can get past the censor. So I'll close for now. Thanks again for that issue of the "Rebounds." Will be looking forward to your next. Extend my best wishes to Mrs. Allen for me...the same to the rest of the family. So, until next time, I'll remain,

Sincerely — Michael Cuban

AIR MAIL