

Dear Katherine:

Well here we are, on the way to hit the Japs. This is the first I have written while we are underway although we have been going for a week now. However there really hasn't been anything of real interest to write. I am not dating this as it is against regulations to keep a diary or to write in diary form. So, although I will add to the letter from time to time I won't write it as a day to day chronicle, but merely as a continuous story. Naturally I won't mail it until a considerable time after the operation is over and most of the stuff has been announced to the public. We are on our way to invade the enemy in one of his biggest strongholds. In fact this will actually be one of the most important and biggest operations in the Pacific war to date. Naturally we are all proud to be able to play such a major part in it. The particular Island our outfit is going to hit is the biggest and strongest of the group so we expect plenty of trouble. Makin and Tarawa were set ups compared to what we are going into, inasmuch as there will be enemy air bases all around us. Of course they will attempt to knock these out before we get there, but it is highly doubtful if they can completely knock out all of them. The last week has been one of very little activity. We just roll along day after day at our seeming snails pace with nothing to see but blue water and sunny skies. The weather really has been fine. Clear and sunny every day and not much sea, just a long swell that makes us roll gently from side to side, but not enough to bother with, although some of the soldiers get sea sick the first few days. Time means very little out here on the ocean. I seldom know what day of the week it is. A thousand miles gets to mean little to you in such an illimitable expanse of water. In fact, from where we were this morning one could travel a thousand miles in any direction and not see land. We play poker must every night in the wardroom as there is no other pastime except reading. Usually, in the afternoon around three thirty I go out on deck in my shorts and pitch the medicine ball around with some of the other officers to get a little exercise. Don't infer from this however that we have lots of leisure time. We haven't. Ships work keeps us fairly busy most of the time. Our particular group of ships is considerably larger this time than last and is better escorted. This morning before dawn one of the destroyers picked up two subs on the surface about ten miles away. They submerged before the DD could get near and we don't think our group was spotted, however one never knows. Subs will not be as much of a bother though as planes. I think we have enough escorts to take care of the subs if there are only one or two. Tomorrow we enter the area of enemy air search, that is, the area which the enemy probably patrols with his planes, and every day thereafter the likelihood of being picked up by them becomes stronger. We will probably make up a pool on when the first real General Quarters will be sounded. Took the crew up on the forecandle this morning and gave them the dope on the coming operation also a little pep talk. Think they are all raring to go. So are we, for that matter. Wonder if the Jap knows we are on the way yet. Probably not. He'll pick us up soon though. Well it won't make much difference as he has probably been expecting us anyhow. What did we give Janet for her birthday. Today is her birthday I believe. Give her my greetings, although she'll get them a month or two too late. Incidentally, I guess we will be out here on this thing for at least a month and perhaps two. Its a sort of progressive affair and will take a good bit of time to finish everything up. When its all over I think we stand a good chance of getting sent back to the States this time. Hope so. This ought to be one good show. There are several photographers aboard and I have a couple of cameras myself so I hope to

get some interesting pictures. Well, that's all to date. Will write more when more develops, which shouldn't be long now. Tomorrow is possibly a little early but expect hot doings sure by day after tomorrow. Maybe we'll get a couple of more flags to paint on the bridge. -----

Four days have passed since I last wrote and nothing has happened yet. It seems amazing that we have not had any contact with the Jap as we are now right in the midst of numerous islands he holds, in fact we are just about surrounded by Jap bases. Of course our planes and warships are pounding them continuously but I didn't think they could neutralize them so completely. Tomorrow is D-day. If we are going to get anything at all we'll get it this evening. Things are entirely too quiet and peaceful. Its hard to believe that we are steaming along completely surrounded by Jap bases, the nearest not more than 70 miles away. There is a tremendous armada of ships of all descriptions divided into various task forces which are now closing in on the objective from all directions. Tomorrow morning will be the big day. Things will really start popping then. The weather has continued to be as nearly perfect as we could wish it. Hope it keeps up for the next two or three days at least. We'll need good weather for the small boats to land on the beach. These islands are all fringed by a coral reef and a heavy surf could cause lots of trouble. The Japs know we are coming by now because some of their planes spotted other groups of ships that are in the vicinity the day before yesterday. There has been no report of any attacks on our ships by their planes however. Seems like they would have tried to do something. I guess maybe most of their planes have been knocked out and they may be saving what are left for the day of the big attack. As far as we are concerned, this has been like a pleasure cruise up to now. On the last operation, we were attacked twice two days before D-day and shot down the bomber on the day before. Well, no doubt tomorrow will tell a different story. In two or three days, I'll have plenty to write about, so until then - au revoir. -----

It is now the afternoon of D-day. The bombardment has been going on since dawn. There has been no sign of enemy planes yet, nor is it likely there will be any as our air cover is strong enough to maintain complete control of the air. There are far more than 1000 fighters to protect us. I can't tell you exactly how many there really are and the above figure is very low compared to the actual. It has been a picnic for us so far as we have nothing to do today at all and will not take part until tomorrow. The lessons learned at Tarawa were applied here and instead of risking many men by a direct assault on the biggest base, they took adjacent lightly defended islands this morning and set up artillery units on them to shell the big island until its defenses are reduced. The ships will also bombard it of course and have been doing so all day. We hope to have it ready for invasion tomorrow morning which is when we will play our part. There is no danger involved for us however, only for the troops that have to go ashore. Of course it may take longer than one day to soften it up. We get the reports over the radio from the planes that are spotting for the big ships. It is very interesting to listen to them. Some typical reports are: "Right on the button, you've flushed the enemy out of that position and they are now running up the beach" and "That last salvo landed right in the blockhouse door but I think you'll have to get it in the middle to do any good". You see its sort of a play by play description

for us. There is another force of ships that is hitting the northern section of the atoll in the same manner as we are hitting the southern but we don't know yet how they are doing. There is a big airbase up that way. After all the beautiful weather we have been having today of all days has to be rainy and dull. For that reason we can't see much of what is happening from where we are except when there is a brief clearing in the weather. Tomorrow however we will be much closer in and will get a good view of the whole show. Hope the sun is out so I can get some good pictures. I

Plenty to tell this time. It is now 2 days after D-day and one day after troops landed on the main objective. Yesterday morning before dawn we steamed out of the lagoon to rendezvous in our area from which we were to take part in the operation. As we approached the island the battleships opened their bombardment. There would be a big orange flash that momentarily lighted up the entire sky, then from the point from which the flash came four, sometimes six, gleaming sparks raced with incredible speed towards the islands in a graceful curving arc. Each spark represented a 14 inch shell. As they neared the end of the trajectory they seemed to slow up and float down onto the island, making brilliant flashes of light as they exploded. Five or six seconds later the sound of the explosions would reach us. As it became lighter all types of ships closed in and kept up a continuous fire. The fire was concentrated on the section of the beach on which the troops were to land. Then the artillery on the adjacent islands captured the day before opened and laid down a barrage. At the same time planes continually dive bombed the beach and big bombers dropped heavy bombs. The noise was terrific. When the troops did get to the beach not a shot was fired on them. What a difference from Tarawa. Men who have been in to the beach say that for five hundred yards back from the water's edge the earth is completely plowed up to a depth of 15 ft. Whatever was in that stretch was simply buried. The Japs had a concrete wall along the beach here about five ft. thick but there is not even a trace of it. Of course all that didn't get the Japs out of the rest of the island. They merely retired back from the beach but it gave us a beach head. From then on it was merely a matter of blasting them out. This particular island was much more heavily fortified than Tarawa. Since the landings the troops have been advancing slowly, rooting them out of pillboxes and blockhouses. The artillery and ships have kept up a continuous shelling as the troops advanced. Night time is the most spectacular as you can see oil and ammunition dumps explode, sending huge spouts of flame as much as 1000 ft. into the air. Last night we were ordered to unload stuff that the troops needed during the night very near to the beach. On one of the other islands near by that we have not yet landed on a five inch battery had been intermittently firing. A destroyer turned his searchlight on us and the enemy battery, seeing us standing out like a sore thumb, took a couple of shots at us. About three shells hit the water near us and we could hear one whistle past overhead. Luckily he didn't hit us. It wasn't much fun especially as we are carrying hot cargo (munitions and fuel). It looks like it will be a couple of days yet before they finish off this particular island, which is the toughest in the atoll. Then there are some others that have to be taken in the same atoll but which won't be as tough. I don't believe we have had many casualties and I know the Jap casualties have been heavy. In fact it is unbelievable that anyone could still be alive after the pounding the island has received steadily for the past 72 hours. But there's plenty of them still in there. There was supposed to have been about 5000 of them although that figure is probably low. Very few will be taken prisoner if any.

There has not been a Jap plane in the vicinity for the entire operation to date. Reason - every plane in the island group was shot down or damaged on the ground prior to the invasion and we now hold such air superiority that it is impossible for the Japs to get any planes in. Most of this stuff has now been released to the public via press dispatches as we get them over the radio every night. I don't know how the northern group has made out but from the last reports everything was going according to plan. The beach where the troops landed is really something to see. I don't want to miss getting a picture of it. This time I got lots of good pictures of everything as I had a good camera and plenty of film. There is also a special photographer from Cincpac aboard who has taken a lot of pictures. More in the next day or two. -----

Here it is the next day or two. The battle for the main island in this section is still going on but the Japs are now pushed into a corner and it shouldn't be long before they are wiped out. They fight right on to the end though, no matter how hopeless the situation is. They figure if they can kill two or three of our troops before they kickoff they have saved their face, or some such rot as that. All night long star shells have been bursting over the battlefield. They shed an eerie light over the scene. Several of our small ships boats have been in to that section of the beach that we have well in hand with supplies. Mr. Gurley, who went in on one of the trips says that the troops ashore dread the night, as the Japs hide in their holes and underground chambers all day, or lie among the dead, and as soon as it gets dark they sneak in through the lines in the hope of getting a few of our men before they are seen. Its a ticklish business as it is difficult to tell friend from foe in the darkness. Yesterday morning troops landed on another island next to the main one. This one was the second best defended in the group here. We took part in that also. This morning troops will land on three more islands farther up the chain. Shortly after the landing we moved in to only a little less than a mile from the beach, so that we had a ringside seat for the whole battle. The island is very narrow and about a mile and a half long so that with the glasses we could watch our tanks and infantry as it advanced along its length. The tanks were out in front and would crawl along slowly. Every now and then a puff of smoke would land near one as a Jap threw a hand grenade. They would all stop and open up on the Jap position until it was cleaned out or if it was too tough, the artillery from the other island would work on it or maybe a destroyer would steam right up to the beach and pound it. Then the tanks would move on. One tank was way out in front of all the others, too far out front. About ten Japs ran out of a blockhouse and surrounded it, throwing hand grenades at it. The tank would have been done for except that another tank a good way behind could see what was going on through a break in the trees and wiped out the Japs with light machine gun fire. Through the glasses we can see the infantry picking their way along behind the tanks. The boys step warily and rather gingerly as they advance, believe me. At the first sound of rifle fire they all dash for cover and then proceed to locate the point where it came from. When they do they sneak up on it from all sides and toss in grenades. They are about two thirds of the way up the island now and should finish up by tonight. All of the really tough islands have now been taken. There are a good many more that we haven't landed on yet but they are lightly defended and unimportant and can be taken at leisure with a small force. I think we will have everything cleaned up here in another week at the most. I guess we will probably be around longer than that though. How long it is hard to guess. There are other

atolls in the group that they may take over before we go back, in which case we might well be around here over a month. None of us are anxious to stay any longer than necessary as it is certain we'll get some air raids eventually. Its a little early yet to expect them but in another week the Japs will probably start sending planes over every now and then on nuisance raids. Walter is writing Rosemary a book like this also. We may wait till we get back to the base to mail it, as you will probably get it just as fast anyhow, seeing how long it took you to get the one I mailed at Tarawa. Some mail went in today but I was too late to get a letter in. However, I am sure we will have some kind of mail service in the next few days so I will dash off a short note letting you know all is OK.

Went out this morning with another task force to capture three more islands. These last three were not nearly so heavily defended as the ones preceding and were cleaned up in one day. We now hold practically the entire southern tip of the atoll and most of the northern tip, including all the strong points. Other islands can be taken whenever we get around to it as they have only small garrison forces on them. This evening some of our casualties were brought aboard for preliminary treatment while awaiting transfer to a hospital ship. We have a doctor aboard. One soldier had a bullet hole in his chest just above the heart. It was a perfectly round hole about the size of a dime. The slug was still inside. They gave him plasma and dressed the wound with sulfanilimide. The Doc says he'll probably recover. He didn't seem particularly bothered about it. Two others had shrapnel wounds in their legs and arms which weren't serious. Another guy had been hit by a bullet in the wrist. The bullet had struck his rifle and glanced off into his arm. He said the force of it spun him around and knocked him down. Says you don't feel any pain, just a heavy blow and numbness, and its hard to tell where you're hit until you look around for the blood. Interesting. A boat came alongside later in the night and took them off. ----

Another day - two more islands taken. Up to now we've taken part in the seizure of every island in the southern section. I think we're about through now as far as that part of the job goes, but have no idea ~~as~~ what we'll do next. We should go alongside some transport today and get water, as we are running low. Some of the ships have Jap prisoners aboard. Would like to get one that could speak English as I imagine it would be interesting to talk to him. I understand that on ~~the~~ the main island that we hit the second day the Japs put all the native children up to fifteen years of age in a big shell hole and machine gunned them. They also herded the adult natives onto the beach and shot them because they wouldn't fight for them. This was told us by one of the wounded we had aboard. There were a good many natives on several of the non-fortified islands however who were unharmed. I believe they got two or three Jap women on the big island. The Army unit aboard is sending some mail in today so I will write you a short note. Hope you get it in a reasonable length of time. Heard someone say today that there is a bill in Congress for \$100 per month extra for members of the amphibious force, as extra hazardous duty pay, same as they now give paratroopers, and submariners. I'll believe it when I see it, like all rumors. Sounds like a lot of baloney to me as there is nothing in this type of duty warranting extra compensation any more than any other type of duty afloat. I won't refuse it if its true, however. Looks like the end of the page coming up so I'll close for the time being.-----