

**ROLAND CHAMPAGNE**

**MY COMBAT YEARS**

**PART 2**

**JOURNEY TO THE PHILIPPINES**



Dear Roland,

I thoroughly enjoyed our time together at San Diego last year (2013). My deep best to you and wish you could be with us but even so your son represents you well in your absence.

In camaraderie,

Bob Siefert  
& Company, 381<sup>st</sup> Inf

on behalf of A  
S



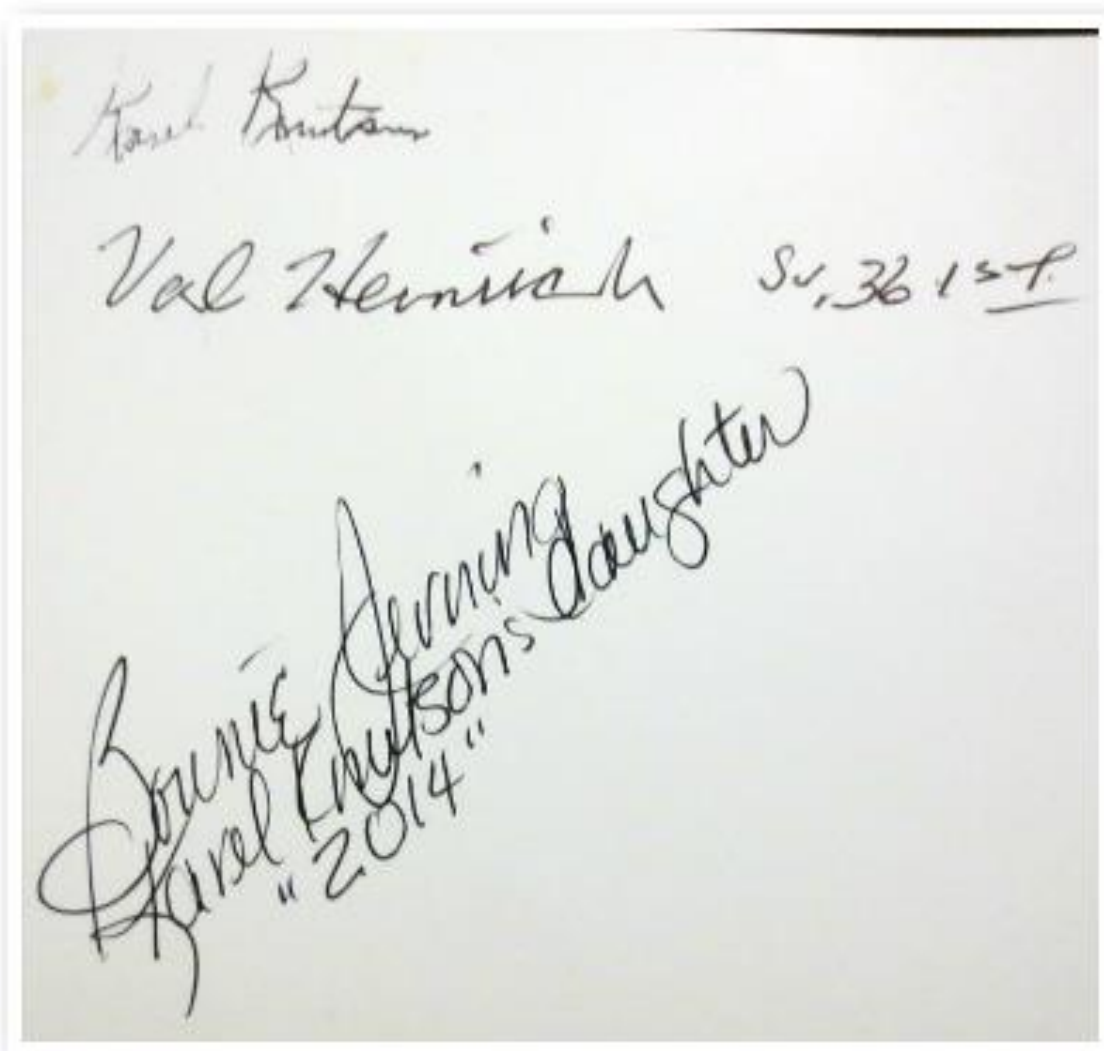
Bob Siefert

96th

381st Infantry

E Company

Chicago Reunion July 2014



**Karel Knutson**

**Val Heinrich  
Has attended 56  
of 57 reunions!**

**Chicago Reunion  
July 2014**





Yosemite Falls, Yosemite National Park, California  
Reached via Union Pacific Railroad

I sent these postcards to my family during my trip back to California from my furlough.

I enjoyed my furlough very much and did not mind the long train rides at all.





RED CROSS CANTEEN-CHEYENNE, WYO.

Buffalo once swarmed over the plains from the mountains to the Mississippi congregated in herds of untold numbers that extended for miles. They furnished hides and meat to the Indians and in later years many of the noted scouts gained much of their reputations from their exploits in buffalo killing. These animals once so numerous are now reduced to a few scattered herds.

*Post Roland Champagne*  
 3862422 Cts 502  
 Camp San Luis Obispo Cal

WEST VIRGINIA  
 AM  
 1944

PERCE  
 ONE CENT  
 CANCEL  
 HERE

POST CARD

Hi - still broke  
 and going West  
 No address as yet so  
 don't write! OK  
 Cheyenne is really cold.  
 We're on time. What a  
 surprise. I have a whole  
 day to spend in Sacramento.  
 J. Roland

Mr. Mrs. Hideon Champagne  
 6 Butler St.  
 Lawrence Mass.

AMERICAN SOURCE CO., DENVER, COLO.

"I's the last day of my furlough. I've seen a little of Sacramento and that enough. We arrived on time. Its always the case when you return."

"I received the \$15.- thanks a lot. I was broke when I left Chicago. I didn't spend a cent during the trip. I had all the milk and sandwiches I could eat."

"My clothes were dirty when I got off the train."

"Now I'm wearing my OD's."

"It was a little cold this morning so I didn't mind."

"The camp is 52 miles from Sacramento. I don't know if I'll get any weekends off. I'll close now as the janitor is cleaning up."

Roland  
July 11, 1944

July 11, 1944 to July 16, 1944



Camp Beale was a staging area for overseas departures. We stopped here to make sure all our equipment was working properly and we had everything we needed for our voyage and beach landings.

All the equipment was packed up and crated to be shipped to our destinations and staging areas as well.

NOTE my address!



July 12, 1944

Dear Mom,

Excuse the pencil.  
I have no ink as yet.

The boys certainly are busy  
around here. I turned in  
my blouse, one pair O.D.  
pants and shirts, pair  
woolen gloves and cap.  
They had taken my over-  
coat. We're getting a  
lot of new clothes!

This camp is really hot.  
It's 14 miles to town and  
65 miles to Sacramento.

I'm glad I received the \$15.  
We may not get paid till  
August so I may write home  
for more.

It's a good thing I didn't go to  
Chicago for Friday night.  
I only spent \$11 on Saturday.  
Right now I only have \$12.50.  
It costs \$1.04 to get to camp.



I only had .77¢. Always send  
the money right away when I  
ask for it.

I'm stuck again... I don't  
know what to write anymore.

I guess I won't write as  
much as I use to.

I just wrote this letter to let  
you know my new address.  
I didn't receive my furlough  
mail as yet.

That furlough sure fixed me up.  
I'm glad I went home because now  
I'm more relaxed and eager to  
go across. It's inevitable.

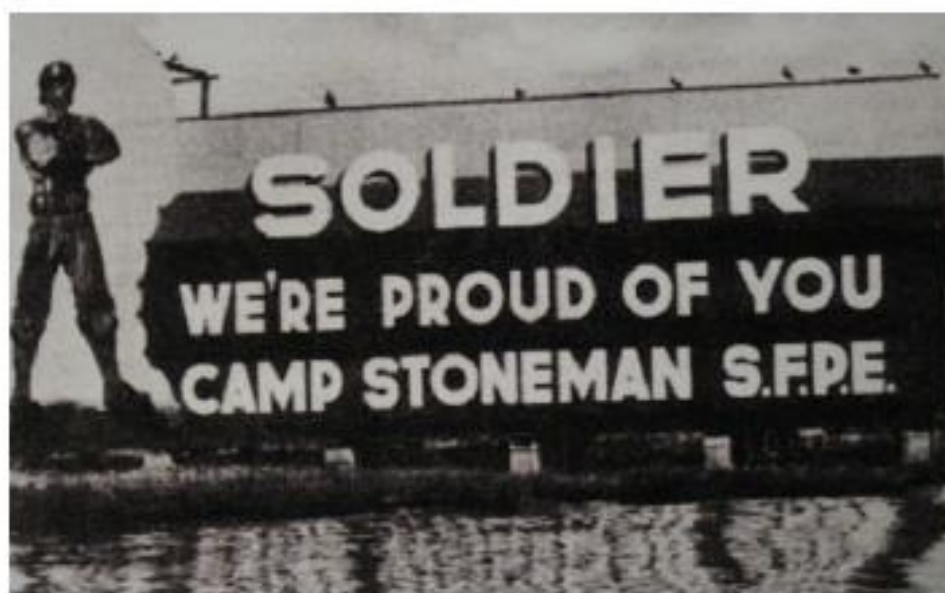
"Personnel" passed out some  
V-mail stationery!!!

Just to show you I found  
some ink!

your loving son,

Roland

On July 16 we left by train for Camp Stoneman and arrived on the 17th.



That night we heard huge explosions.

---

On July 17, the Port Chicago explosion of two munitions ships happened six miles away. It was the largest wartime accident in US history with 322 sailors killed.

The munitions ships and docks were completely demolished and the town, which was one and a half miles away, suffered heavy damage. The explosion was visible from thirty-five miles away in San Francisco.

We were all called up for guard duty but it turned out we were not required after all.



**The pier was entirely wiped out. There was even wide spread damage to the town which was several miles away.**



**The Port of Chicago was operating 24 hours a day seven days a week.**

**Over 5,000 tons of dynamite exploded in this terrible disaster.**

OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH  
NOT TO BE RELEASED  
FOR PUBLICATION  
NAVY YARD NAPE ISLAND CALIF

DECLASSIFIED IAW DOD MEMO OF 3 MAY 1972, SUBJ: DECLASSIFICATION OF NW II RECORDS



**Though the deep water harbor and piers were totally destroyed both of them were up and running one month later.**

**This harbor was too important to the war effort in the Pacific campaigns.**



July 17, 1944 letter to Mom

"Well today completes my 13th month in the Army of the United States."

"Now I'm somewhere on the West Coast."

"You can start using V-mail. Air Mail will only cost six cents. I can receive up to five (5) lbs. of anything if I ask you to send it to me. You can send me things up to 8 ounces and by first class mail (without my permission)."

July 17, 1944

Dear Mom, Well today completes  
my 13<sup>th</sup> month in the  
Army of the United  
States.

Now, I'm somewhere  
on the West Coast.

You can start using  
V-mail. Air Mail  
will only cost six cents.  
I can receive <sup>up to</sup> five (5) lbs.  
of anything if I ask  
you to send it to me.

You can send me things  
up to 8 ounces and by  
first class mail. (without my permission)

The Sunday paper you've  
been sending me will be  
appreciated very much if  
you keep on sending it!

I may send home some  
junk I still have.

Louis could use my shoes.



I might send home the camera and the films.

The lieutenant said I may not be able to write to Junty in French.

I'm glad of that. I won't feel guilty now when I don't write to her in French.

I may not write for a week just because I don't know what to say anymore.

That furlough sure fixed me up. In this mood I don't care to write to anybody, even Lucille. That's all for now.

your loving son,

Roland

P.S. Don't forget the A.P.O. number in my <sup>new</sup> address.

"The Sunday paper you've been sending me will be appreciated very much if you keep sending it." "I may send home some junk I still have. Louis could use my shoes. I might send home the camera and the films.

The lieutenant said I may not be able to write to Aunty in French. I'm glad of that. I won't feel guilty now when I don't write to her in French."

"I may not write for a week just because I don't know what to say anymore. That furlough sure fixed me up. In this mood I don't care to write to anybody, even Lucille. That's all for now."

"Your loving son, Roland"

PS "Don't forget the A.P.O. number in my new address."

P5  
I couldn't find my pen!



UNITED STATES ARMY

Dear Wanda, and all July 25, 1944

I hope you're not worried about me not writing to you.

When you have those pictures developed send me two sets of enlarged ones. My friend wants a set.

Send me the bill so I'll know how much to charge.

Send me all the pictures so I can see them, then I'll send you some.  
You can hold the negatives.

July 25, 1944 letter to Mom and All

"I hope you're not worried about me not writing to you."

"When you have those pictures developed send me two sets of enlarged ones. My friend wants a set."

"I hope you'll like my haircut. I'll be getting more if you think I lok good with one. That's the first one I ever had."

"I haven't received my mail as yet and I'm not kicking. I don't even go to mail call anymore."

Don't worry about me. I'm having a good time.

And don't worry if I don't write as often as I use to. I can't be writing all the time.

Your loving son, Roland

PS I may keep my shoes and watch.

July 27, 1944

We left on the old steamer Delta Queen for San Francisco harbor. It was a two hour voyage with people lining the shore to wave goodbye to us.

**CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMPANY**



*Through the Heart  
of California*

**COMFORT and LUXURY  
AFLOAT**



**SAN FRANCISCO  
SACRAMENTO  
STOCKTON**

**THE DELTA ROUTE**

**CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMPANY**

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**TIME TABLE**

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**SAN FRANCISCO — SACRAMENTO**  
Fare \$1.80 — Round Trip \$3.00

*Steamers De Luxe*  
“Delta King” “Delta Queen”

DAILY

Leave	(Except Sunday)	Arrive
San Francisco . . .	6:30 P.M.	Sacramento . . . 5:30 A.M.
Sacramento . . .	6:30 P.M.	San Francisco . . . 5:30 A.M.

No Stops En Route

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**DINING ROOM SERVICE**  
*Table d'Hote and A'La Carte*

Dinner 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. — Breakfast 6:00 to 9:00 A.M.  
Staterooms are air cooled in summer  
and warmed in winter.  
Have Hot and Cold Running Water  
Suites of Two and Three Rooms with Bath or Shower  
Attractive for Automobile Parties

---

These steamers Connect at Sacramento with  
**SACRAMENTO-NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
FOR  
MARYSVILLE, YUBA CITY, OROVILLE, CHICO,  
COLUSA, WOODLAND AND WAY STATIONS  
*Also Connect With*  
AUTO STAGE LINES FOR GRASS VALLEY,  
NEVADA CITY, LAKE TAHOE RESORTS

---

*Passenger Steamers*  
“Pride of the River”  
“Isleton”

SAN FRANCISCO — SACRAMENTO  
AND  
RIO VISTA, ISLETON, RYDE, WALNUT GROVE,  
COURTLAND AND WAY LANDINGS

Leave	Arrive	
San Francisco . . .	6:00 P.M.	Sacramento . . . 7:00 A.M.
Sacramento . . .	7:00 P.M.	San Francisco . . . 6:00 A.M.



We carried our bags on our shoulders and walked up the gangplank.

Of course we would do this many times from now on. In the past we traveled by train from camp to camp. Now we were traveling by ship to each destination.

The ship we took is still around today. Can you believe it? The DELTA QUEEN was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1989.

Today this same ship is a boutique hotel in Chattanooga, TN.





At the dock  
the Red Cross  
met us with  
donuts and  
coffee.





We went up the gang plank at Pier 28 with all our gear and bag slung from our shoulders and boarded the USS Sea Sturgeon.

This is the ship that took us to Hawaii, our final stop and training point before sailing off to combat.

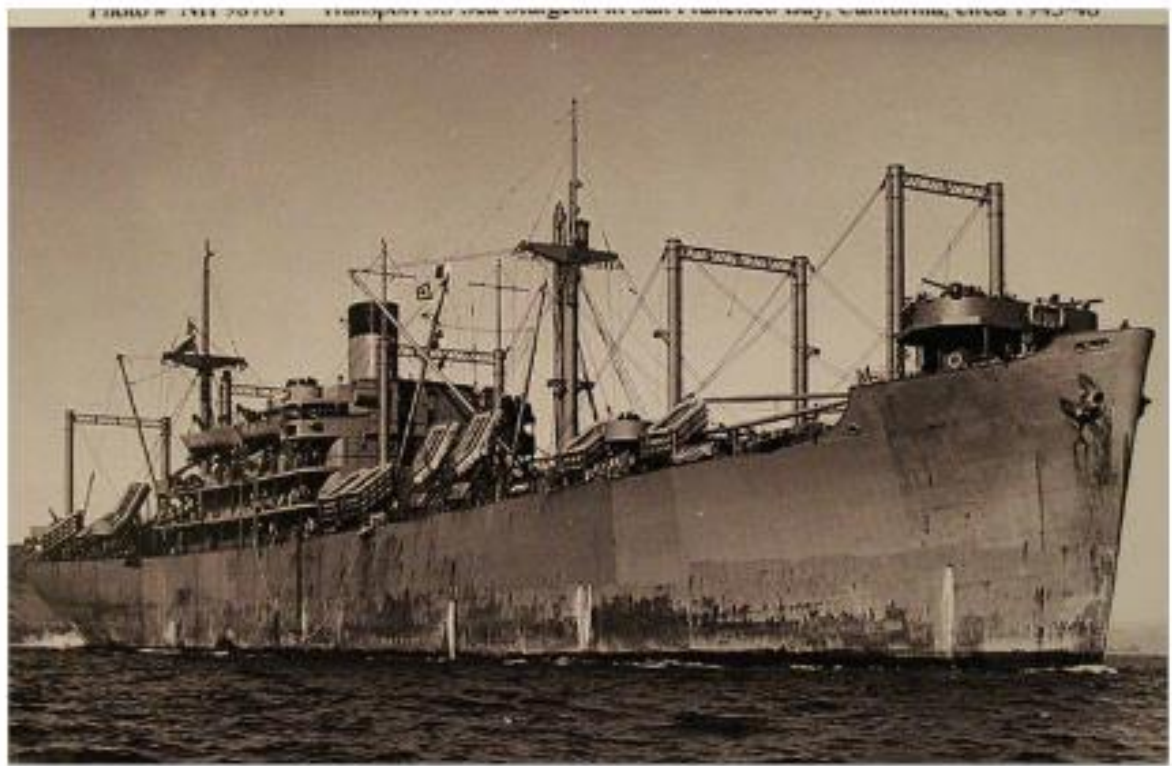


**July 28, 1944**

**We were packed in like sardines. The ship was run by civilians and the food was terrible. We were glad the voyage was only to Hawaii. Our ship was aided by tugboats as we pushed off and sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge.**

**Here is a B-17 flying over the bridge and our ship the USS Sea Sturgeon sailing for Hawaii.**





August 2, 1944

We arrived in Pearl Harbor in the morning and boarded a narrow gage railroad named the 'Pineapple Express' to the Schofield barracks. We climbed onto flatcars and rode through fields of sugar cane and pineapple fields.

Of course it looks different for tourists today but the tracks are the same.



We stayed in wooden huts on the edge of a large pineapple field. They had tar paper roofs to keep the rain out, and two windows and a door all covered with screens. Each hut was on stilts about eighteen inches from the ground.

The surrounding earth was clay, and during the frequent rains it stuck to your boots like cement. This alone was a deterrent to going over to the pineapple field for a snack.



At the firing range we again practiced the rifle and carbine but this time at distances shorter than before. The ranges were fifty yards for standing and one hundred and two hundred yards from the prone position.



In December 1942, the Army opened the Ranger and Combat Training School at Schofield Barracks. Using the jungle-like terrain of central Oahu and simulated Japanese defenses,

we learned hand to hand combat, stream crossing techniques, demolitions, and the use of special tactics and weapons, flame throwers, mortars and small arms.





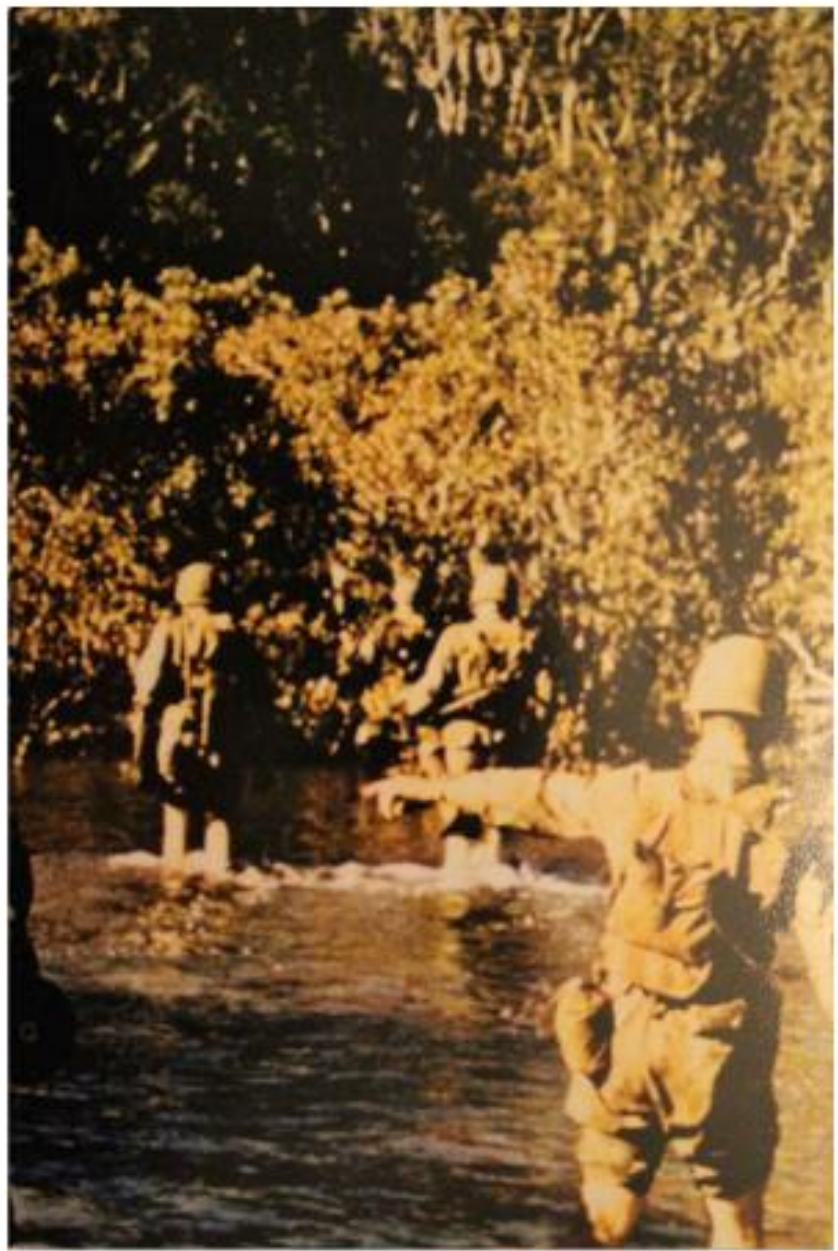
The Pacific Jungle Combat Training Center (CTC) was comprised of several parcels of land totaling approximately 2,545 acres in the adjacent valleys of Punaluu and Kahana, located in the Koolauloa District on the northeast coast of the island of Oahu, Hawaii.



Our group trained with 75mm armor piercing rounds, 105 and 81 mm high explosive rounds, practice mortar rounds, and small arms.

More training areas were opened in 1943 to teach survival skills and familiarize the troops with conditions on their Pacific Island objectives.

Oahu had over 50 sizable Army Training Centers before the war ended.



We did much of our training at the Green Valley Jungle Training Course located in a forest reserve on the northern end of Oahu Island. We were instructed in Japanese camouflage, jungle survival including how to catch and eat lizards, snakes and frogs.

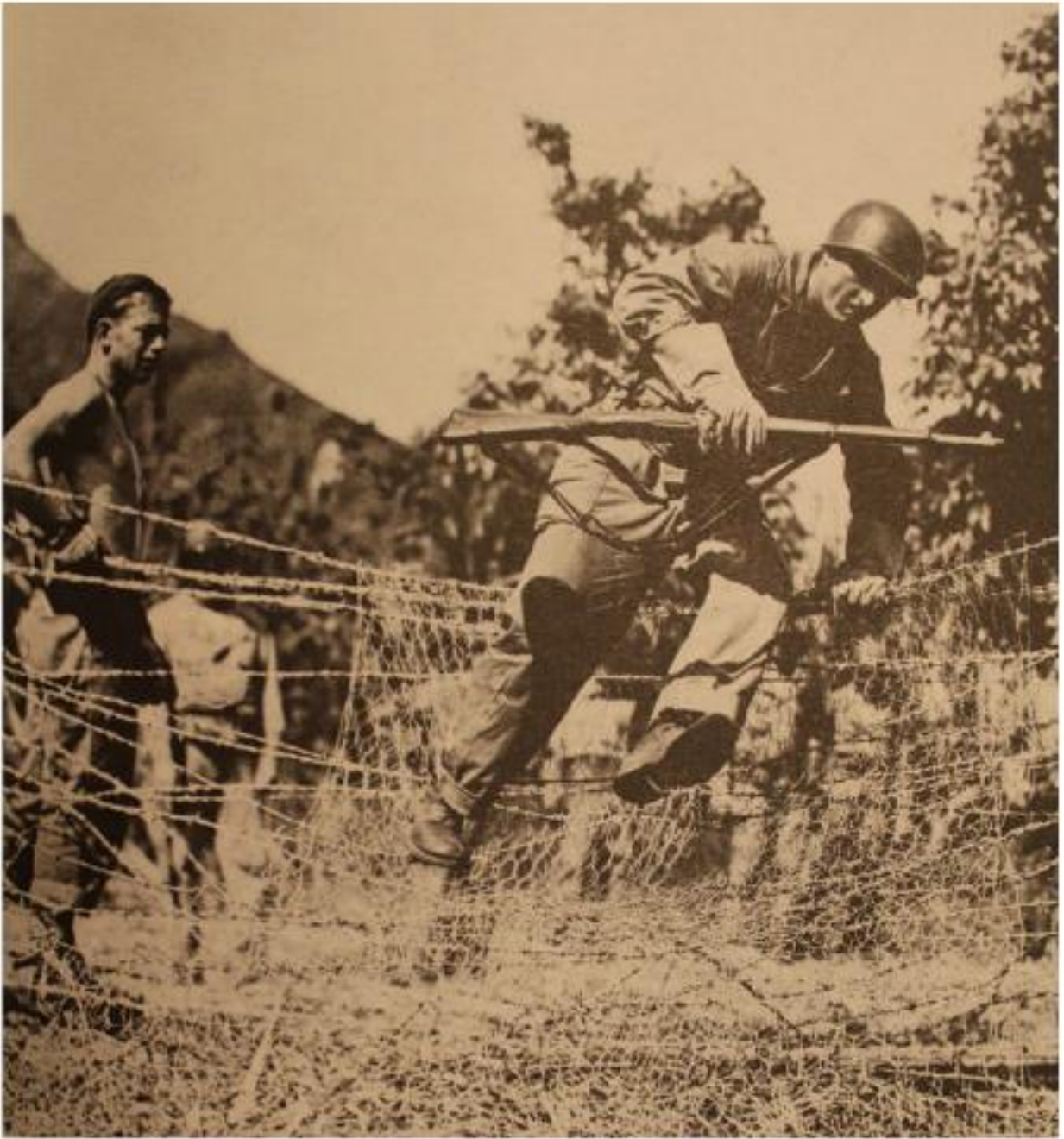


The obstacle course included swinging from vines, crossing creeks on rope bridges, hurdling large barricades, avoiding camouflage pits,

shooting at cardboard images of enemy springing out from behind trees, out of trenches, and throwing hand grenades into log bunkers.



Time was spent camping out in the jungle, other nights at the huts that were Schofield Barracks. At this time censorship of outgoing mail began. Return address was simply Army post office (APO) 96, CO postmaster, San Francisco.



The training got tougher by the day, but we all knew that this would be nothing compared to combat. The days of combat were fast approaching.



At one point we were all sent to help fight a forest fire in the reserve, hard work which did nothing to help us prepare for combat. This was on our minds each and every day. One day we were told to bring our steel helmets to the supply hut. There they had paint in different shades from tan to yellow to brown to green. We all painted our helmets how we wanted them.

Here is a VMail letter I wrote to my Mom on August 25, 1944. I was writing letters much less frequently than I had in the past year.

My experiences at this point were just so new and foreign that it was hard to communicate what was going on, plus we always had to worry about what the censors would cut out.

Of course I never stopped thinking of home.

FROM: *Mr. Champagne*  
*412 3220 AFPO*  
*747 7-1420*



# V MAIL

TO:

*Mrs. Eva Champagne*  
*14th St*  
*Lawrence, Mass.*



*OK*

FOLD

HERE

FOLD

HERE

V-Mail service provides a most rapid means of communication. If addressed to a place where photographing service is not available the original letter will be dispatched by the next expedition means.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) Write the entire message plainly on the other side within marginal lines.
- (2) PRINT the name and address in the two spaces provided. Addresses of members of the Armed Forces should show full name, complete Military or Naval address, including grade or rank, serial number, and to which assigned or attached and army post office in case of the appropriate postmaster or appropriate fleet post office.
- (3) Fold, seal, and deposit in any post office letter drop or street letter box.
- (4) Enclosures must not be placed in this envelope.
- (5) V-Mail letters may be sent free of postage by members of the Armed Forces. When sent by others postage must be prepaid at domestic rates (3c ordinary rate, 5c if domestic air mail service is desired when mailed in the U. S.).

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



TO: Mrs EVA CHAMPAGNE  
6 BUTLER ST.  
LAWRENCE, MASS.  
U. S. A.

FROM:

Post. Rj Champagne 31362422  
Hq Co 3 Bn 382 Inf APO 96  
% postmaster San Francisco

(Sender's complete address above)

SEE INSTRUCTION No. 2

Aug. 25, 1944

Dear Mom,

I received your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> with my pictures in it. The pictures didn't turn out as I expected. My friend is a K mail clerk. His name is Filiberto Large. His mother is French. Starting with this letter I will write to you on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of each month. That way I'll be sure to write once in a while. Okay. There's not much I can say but I'll still find something to write about.

You can be sure I won't miss writing to you on those dates. As for all the others, well, I don't know what to say.  
your loving son, Roland

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY  
V... - MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT NO. 147



Dear Mom,

I received your letter of the 17th, with my pictures in it. The pictures didn't turn out as I expected. My friend is Co. K mail clerk. His name is Filiberto Large. His mother is French.

Starting with this letter I will write to you on the 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th and 30th of each month. That way I'll be sure to write once in a while. Okay.

There's not much I can say but I'll still find something to write about.

You can be sure I wont miss writing to you on those dates. As for all the others well, I don't know what to say.

Your loving son,  
Roland

On August 31st we were told that the next day we would sail from Pearl Harbor to engage in a full scale rehearsal landing wearing full gear.

The next morning right after breakfast we were trucked to the docks and boarded the USS Frederick Funston. We numbered 1,200 men of the 3rd Battalion 382nd Infantry Regiment.





Our bunks were more comfortable with only three high on each side and not five like this ship.

The did have the same construction with stretched canvas over pipes.

The lighting and ventilation were both good so we were adequately comfortable.

We left Pearl Harbor for a rendezvous point near Maui with a waiting LST flotilla. The next morning we awoke to find our ship in the middle of it.

The LSTs moved in tactical formation toward Maalaea Bay, which is formed by the east and west parts of Maui, Kahoolawe, and Lanai Islands. When we reached the bay off of the Wailea/Makena shore the bow doors opened up and the ramps went down.

This practice was for the amphibious tanks and LVTs so we stayed on board and watched them debark, form into waves, go to the line of departure, and start towards the beach and then turn around.



By now it was mid-afternoon and the seas had become much rougher. It was apparent that the amphibious vehicles would have trouble re-boarding the LSTs.

The time needed stretched to the point that several ran out of fuel. When this happened their bilge pumps stopped and they sank. Boats from the waiting LSTs had to rescue the crews.

All of these drills were really exhausting for us. The excitement mixed with fear of being out in the water, the pre-dawn breakfasts, and the knowledge that we were getting closer and closer to combat all took their toll.

I was not writing home as much. I really did not know what to say.



Troops rode LST's from Manus Island to Leyte

Still more rehearsals took place on September 3rd with the rehearsal on the 4th including our combat gear and weapons. While our LVTs were departing for the beach naval gun support pounded the northwest coast of Kahoolawe Island. The sound of the bombardment was deafening. When we were about three hundred yards from shore we turned around and returned to our LST.

On September 5th our rehearsal landing was scheduled for 8:30 AM. We boarded the LVTs at 7:00 AM and by 7:15 AM we had left the LST.

It was an amazing sight and a hint of what was to come to see thirty amphibious tanks and ninety amphibious tractors that were carrying the Division's four assault battalions form up into waves and head towards the line of departure. We passed the line around 8:00 AM with the Navy support bombardment crashing onto the beach ahead of us. At approximately 8:30 AM, right on schedule our LVT hit the beach and went inland two hundred yards before opening up the ramp and letting us out. We ran out and thus Maui Blue Beach 1 was taken. That area of our landing is today very expensive real estate with expensive resorts and golf courses. What a difference seventy years makes!





As with all the landings we had to climb down the dreaded cargo nets into the waiting landing craft. That was the part I hated the most.





Here is a good view of the landing crafts on the beaches with us men running out of them.

There was always lots of commotion with people running as fast as they can while carrying all of their gear. You had to be extra careful of your rifle so as not to get it wet. That would be more difficult for us shorter guys than the six footers.



We moved farther inland across rocky terrain that was covered in cactus. We spent the night under the stars. The next morning we had K-rations for breakfast and then returned to the beach. Our LVTs were there waiting and soon we were back on our LST.

We remained anchored offshore until dark and then made an overnight sail back to Pearl Harbor docking on September 7th. We returned to our barracks on the now familiar Pineapple Express.

September 12, 1944 letter to Lucille

"Well this makes two in a row. I haven't written to Aunt Anna as yet. I don't know what to say to her. I've been trying to write to Uncle in South Lawrence and I still don't know what to say. These relatives are driving me nuts. I still don't know what to do with my watch. It runs once in a while though. I may try to send it home someday."

"I hope your choice of Christmas presents will benefit me greatly. I have no idea what to ask for so you send me what you think is right. Oh yeah I just thought of a small fruitcake in a tin box. I think that would be good!!!"

"Your loving brother, Roland"

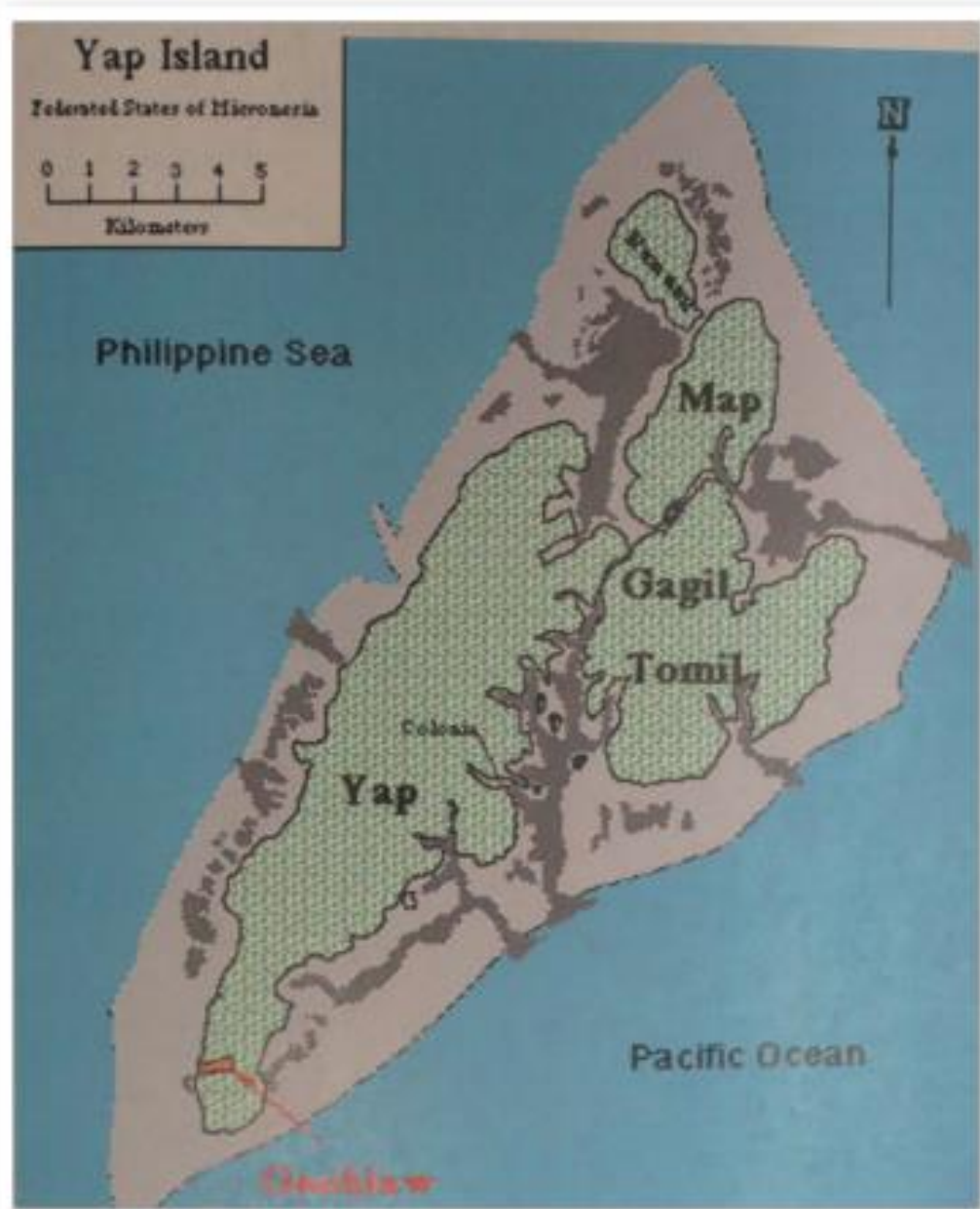
On September 11th the 96th Infantry Division convoy of 23 LSTs left Pearl Harbor. The faster transport ships left on 15 September, one of which was the USS Frederick Funston. Roland Champagne was on this one.

The Funston was 492 feet long with a displacement of 8,100 tons. Quarters were cramped but efficient. The troop compartments had hundreds of sleeping spaces with narrow aisles, with sleeping spaces stacked three high. Each bed was stretched canvas over a steel pipe framework. Twelve hundred troops were aboard for the voyage

Censorship was becoming more strict as we were leaving the US territory of Hawaii. I told my sister Lucille in a September 15 letter that I could not write anymore "dates or headings so don't ask me to put them in".

A total of 45 ships carried the 96th and its attached units. At the same time the 7th Infantry Division was in convoy headed west. The 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions comprised the Army XXIV Corps, which was part of the US Army, Pacific Ocean Areas.

Once we were well away from Hawaii we were told of our mission. It was the seizure of the Yap Island Atoll, known as Operation Stalemate II. The landing was scheduled for October 5th and codenamed William Day. The 96th was to seize Gagil-Tomil Island and the 7th to seize Yap Island itself.



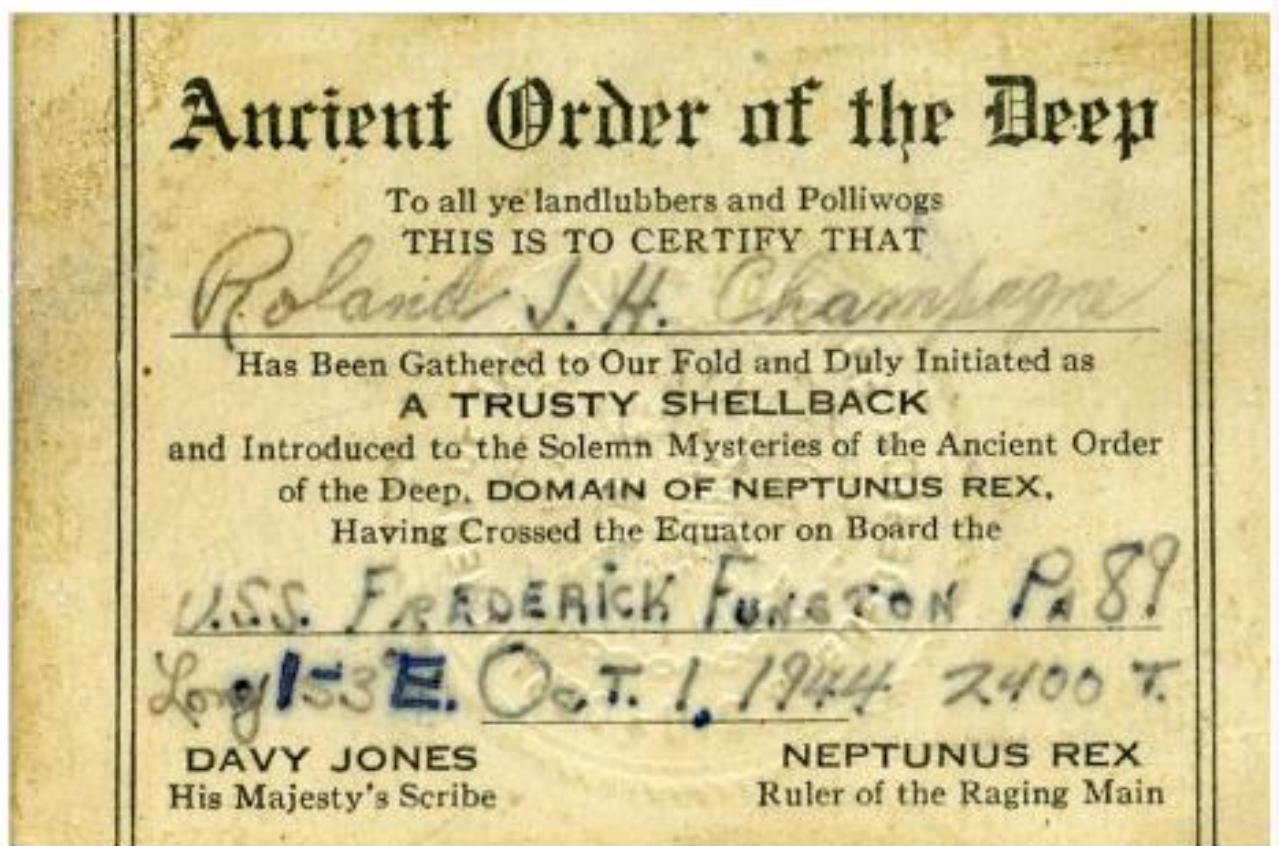
We were in the middle of the ocean for days. The weather was sunny and calm. All we could see was water, and our companion LSTs and several destroyers that were escorting us. On the morning of September 19th all of us in the Army and those in the Navy who had never crossed the International Dateline were summoned to report to “King Neptune” for initiation into his domain. We were smeared with grease and then doused with seawater from a fire hose. This spared us from being “thrown into the sea as food for the creatures of the deep”. We were now “Golden Dragons”. Getting all that grease off later was quite a challenge with only cold showers to help.



Days passed sailing at eight knots in clear skies and a slight breeze making us very comfortable on deck. Finally on September 25th we arrived at Eniwetok. There we were told that the Yap islands were no longer to be our target. We were now part of the Southwest Pacific Command under Douglas MacArthur. Our staging area had changed to Seeadler Harbor, Manus in the Admiralty Islands. October 20th was now code named A-day, when we were to land on Blue Beach 1 on Leyte.



With this change in plans we left the next day for the Admiralty Islands. We were headed farther south and the days were getting warmer. On October 1st we crossed the equator which was met with still another initiation for us first timers. This time we were “slimy polliwogs” and made to run through a gauntlet of broomsticks held by “old salts”, smeared again with grease, and made to drink a vile tasting concoction of I don't even want to know what. After this initiation we were worthy “Shellbacks”, members of the Ancient Order of the Deep.





## Manus, Admiralty Islands

October 3, 1944 to October 14, 1944

We arrived in Seeadler Harbor, Manus in the Admiralty Islands on 3 October where it was swelteringly hot. Since the Yap landing had been scheduled for 15 days earlier, our southern landing force for Leyte had to wait for the northern landing force to assemble. We joined the X Corps, making up with us the 6th Army. Our main opposition would be the hardened veterans of the Japanese 16th Infantry Division who had fought in China and at Bataan. Their strength in Leyte was estimated to be 20,000 troops.

Life on the troop ships was very uncomfortable due to the heat. Unfortunately though others were allowed onshore we were not. Days passed until all assault troops were transferred on board the LSTs on October 10th. Joining our 330 Army infantrymen were medics, combat engineers, amphibious tankers and LVT crews. It was hot and crowded on our LST.

All we could do was wait for our orders.



AMERICAN RED CROSS

Hello Lucille,

Well, its another letter with this heading. Incidentally its the last piece of paper I found with it. I put the word free because I haven't got my air mail stamps with me. Enough of that. Well what goes on in the social world back home. I haven't had time, because I was a little lay, to write to anybody! So... sing out. You know; last night I dreamt I just got home on furlough and Larry popped in. He was just like Ray Roy.



Hello Lucille,

Well its another letter with this heading. Incidentally its the last piece of paper I found with it.

I put the word free because I haven't got my air mail stamps with me. Enough of that.

Well what goes on in the social world back home. I haven't had time, because I wa a little lazy to write to anybody! So sing out!

You know; last night I dreamt I just got home on furlough and Larry popped in. He was just like Ray Roy.

Its funny but it seemed lo-  
gical that Larry took off  
and went to the West coast.  
I must be nuts to say that! hey!  
Dick wrote me and said Phil  
was still at his old tricks.  
That kid will land in  
reform school yet. Its too  
bad he turned out that  
way. I hope Louis doesn't  
get too chummy with him.  
I hope you don't repeat  
what you write in your  
letters. It really fascinates  
me, the way things are  
thought up. Please don't ask  
me to talk about such things.  
Well, thats all for now

your brother

Poland

Its funny but it seemed logical that Larry took off and went to the West coast. I must be nuts to say that! Hey!

Dick wrote me and said Phil was still at this old tricks. That kid will land in reform school yet. Its too bad he turned out that way.

I hope Louis doesn't get too chummy with him.

I hope you don't repeat what you write in your letters. It really fascinates me, the way things are thought up.

Please don't ask me to talk about such things.

Well thats all for now  
your brother

Roland



AMERICAN RED CROSS

Hello Gene,

Well how are things going at school? Tell me all about it - where you eat lunch, how the "caf" has been changed and so on.

You can find plenty to write about without restrictions.

It'll improve your English and also help you to know how to write letters correctly.

Tell Louis to write me about his school and also his "running around."

I hope you made "first string" on the varsity. Send me the clippings of



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Tell Louis to write me about his school and also his "running around".

I hope you made "first string" on the varsity. Send me the clippings of the games ..

the games and also other  
"notes" you find on the sports  
page. I hope you'll like  
that French as much as I did.  
I thought it was my easiest  
subject in high school.

One thing I really liked was  
those dictations. Keep Louis  
"on the ball" and see that he  
improves in his school work.  
Take pride in your work and  
you'll really reap treasures.

Let me know if you are  
working after school.

Send me the football scores  
on the Sunday paper.

That's all for a spell,  
— so, so long —

Your brother,  
Roland



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AMERICAN RED CROSS

Dear Mom,

Well here I am writing again with nothing to say.

Its funny how a fellow can write something, when he wants to, and when he knows too well that he can't say a thing!

I don't know what to say after writing Gene a letter.

You can't say much when you don't receive mail regularly. No complaints!

I hope you sent the mirror and a few useful things I could use. You could put a pencil or some other



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I hope you sent the mirror and a few useful things I could use. You could put a pencil or some other useful thing ..

useful thing like a bar  
of soap or a can of candy  
or peanuts. I'll be asking  
for something I didn't get in  
those "supposedly coming" Christmas  
presents. I forgot to tell  
Gene ... Tell me what  
you did on Labor Day,  
Thanksgiving and Christmas.  
There's plenty to write about  
when you're in civilian life.  
Well seeing that that's  
all I can say I'll  
just close with all  
my love,

Your son,

Roland

You could put a pencil or some other useful thing like a bar of soap or a can of candy or peanuts.

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We sailed on October 14 for Leyte. On the way we received some indoctrination about Leyte and its people. Tagalog and English were the two languages spoken. The cities or barrios as they were called were controlled by the Japanese but guerrilla groups were active on the island harassing the Japanese troops.

We were given and instructed to take one Atabrine tablet daily to protect against malaria. We were also given small vials of Halazone tablets for water purification, warned about schistosomiasis, the small parasite that gets under your skin and multiplies.

Because of these dangers we were told to avoid streams and rice paddies. Of course that was impossible advice to follow. Did those clowns know where we were going?



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During the voyage we turned in our US Hawaiian currency for Philippine Invasion money, a prewar-style Philippine currency imprinted with “Victory”. It was denominated in pesos with the value of one peso set at 50 US cents.

We also received our final assault briefings. Companies K and L would assault Blue Beach.

We were to land north of the Calbasag river, which would be on our left flank. The highest elevation overlooking Blue Beach 1 was 750 to 800 yards inland named Hill 120. The main north-south road, Highway 1 was located on the ocean side of Hill 120 and had an important bridge over the river. A smaller second bridge was located on a very narrow road about 150 yards from the shoreline. Adjacent to the north side of the river near the small bridge was a small rise named Hill 90. The objective of companies K and L was the seizure of Hill 120 and the capture of the two bridges along the Calbasag river.

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My last night on the LST was filled with personal reflection. I had seen and learned so many things since graduating from Central Catholic High School more than a year ago.

I wondered if I would remember all I had learned while being shot at and was nervous just thinking about it. There was nothing more to be done to prepare me.

All I could do was say my prayers, close my eyes and try my best to get some sleep.



**96th Infantry Division and the Battle of Leyte**



**October 20, 1944 to January 23, 1945**

