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Bougainville, Solomon Islands, South Pacific

February 1, 1944

Dear Mother and Dash,

All is fine. We got some fresh butter and potatoes today, so life took on a rosy hue. The drainage system in my tent is to be improved on, but that is the only hardship and can be corrected with a bit of ingenuity.

I am going to tell you a true story, leaving the gruesome details out. I tell it to you because I have seen so many killed whose families will never know the circumstances, never know whether their son finished up in a manner to be proud of or not.

A man cannot be about to go to War or be in a war-zone behind the lines without wondering what he would do under fire or in a tight spot. I had to find out or I would never have been able to have lived with myself.

Well, you can hereby cease to worry. I have satisfied myself that I have as much guts as is necessary for self-respect. I will give you a brief sketch of what I voluntarily subjected myself to. I also promise you I will not go looking for trouble again. It didn't bother me. I can truthfully say I have ice-water in my veins in a tight spot, but if I kept it up it would only be a matter of time before I got mine. I prefer not to be a hero.

I wrote "Dash" (*nickname for Lt. Robert P. Chew's father*) of my experiences not long ago when I was with three infantry men that drew the first fire of the day in an attack. It missed me—just—and I stayed with those men all day—finally acting as stretcher bearer for a man to our rear who was hit. It was exciting and fascinating. After that first burst missed me, I received a thrill out of the shots zipping around the rest of the day.

Well, I figured the first time was interesting; let's see another. I went back again for what turned out a rugged day. To make a long story short, a sergeant and I crawled up past the front elements of the infantry to try to help three wounded men stuck out there. How they got there is beyond me.

A damn sniper had us under fire and was promiscuously throwing hand grenades, but I reached the wounded and a lone infantry man was guarding them. They were horribly wounded. I got one on my back and tried to pull myself to the rear, but it was impossible. He was too heavy and bled too badly—also, the sniper could get us both as we left the tree. I put him down and got some morphine into them, then stayed there trying to figure out some solution. As I was lying with them ducking the sniper's shots and grenades, a Jap started out of a hole ten yards to

my left rear. I had no gun—only that A&F field knife and the rifle of the only close infantry man jammed. I felt rather helpless and forlorn, but strangely unconcerned because it just wouldn't sink in that it might be "finis." Luck was in one hand, however, and the Lord on the other. As the Jap (*soldier*) reached for a grenade, (*an infantryman with*) a flame-thrower who had just come up caught him squarely. Four more came out and met the same end (burned alive).

I will not go into any more details. I got back after seeing others get it around me and sent back the necessary aid. If the infantry cannot get their own wounded, no volunteer can, and I have done my share. I don't intend to go back, as I promised you.

I tell you this story for it gives you an idea of the infantry's usual days' work—the real heroes of this or any war. They get the graves and the staff officers get the medals. Relatively few of them get their just recognition while some staff officer will stick his nose into the wind and get voted a medal—but that is natural.

Also, the Chews are as good as anyone else in this world. I had to find out how I would behave and feel satisfied now.

Am in good health and do not worry. I will take no more unnecessary risks.

Lots of love,

Bob

PS: For a relatively mild individual, my hate for the Jap is fanatical.

I see by a news cast that after two years the O.W. I. (Office of War Information<sup>1</sup>) informs you of mistreatment of prisoners by the Japs. That has been common knowledge out here from the beginning. That is why we NEVER TAKE PRISONERS unless a General demands one for information. They are killed in cold-blood, and I hope to see the extermination of their race. They are animals.

Received clippings—Thanks.

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<sup>1</sup> The United States Office of War Information (OWI) was a United States government agency created during World War II to consolidate existing government information services and deliver propaganda both at home and abroad. OWI operated from June 1942 until September 1945.