

Oahu, Hawaii

Jan 9, 1945

Dear James & Mary.

Here I'm back from a wonderful vacation over on the island of Hawaii. I hope that you and Mom don't get together to compare letters as they are just about alike.

It's the most exciting thing that has happened to me since I passed through Evansville last April. I wanted to call you all but I couldn't make any calls. Just imagine being that close to home and not being able to see you.

I was sorry to hear that you fell fell down and I hope you didn't hurt yourself. Mary you will have to keep a closer watch on her till after I become an Uncle. The ice and snow you spoke of sure sounds good although I saw a little snow myself, over on Hawaii.

Well to get on with my trip, I left Honolulu on a C-47 and flew to Hilo, Hawaii, about 190 miles from Honolulu. If you look at the map you will see that I just about flew over all the island so you can

see that I really had a good aerial view of the islands. The plane flew at about 6,000 feet, just high enough to see quite a bit of the ocean at one time. I was surprised to see how close the islands look together from that altitude and a couple there you could see the whole island at one time.

As I approached Hawaii I saw Mauna Loa, that is the largest mountain over here, and the top was covered with snow. So you can see that we even have snow here in the tropics although you could never believe it in downtown Honolulu.

Well the plane landed arounded Hilo, that is the 2nd largest town in the island about the size of Princeton, Indiana, and took a bus into town. I couldn't help thinking how wonderful it is to be able to fly down on a plane you have never seen before as you get somewhat of an idea as to what the place is like.

I spent the first day and night in Hilo, doing nothing but eating, sleeping and taking in a show. The food was great and you could really get good steaks. The favorite

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dish over here is the banana split and I have really eaten my share of them.

The next day I started on a 2½ day tour of the island that the special service goes to soldiers and that was really the best part of the trip as I got to see all the ~~islands~~ island hitting all the points of interest. There were 9 of us in a station wagon, just like you would do in civilian life. The driver was a native and would stop anywhere you wanted to take pictures.

We stopped first at the Rainbow Falls, (I am sending Mrs pictures of the trip and you can put them in the scrap book), and then went to the Akaka Falls. The latter is 420 feet and really is beautiful. It is back in the mountains and as I left I saw it from the plane.

After that I passed the Onomea Arch, that is a natural arch in the rock. Next I went through the cattle ranch, that sounds funny over here doesn't it, and it is the second largest in the world, believe it or not. It

reminded me a lot of the land I saw back in Texas and how I would like to be back around there. That took up most of the first day, although at the end we passed through some of the coffee fields.

That is what is so outstanding about these islands, - you can see anything you want outside of home. That is the first coffee plants I have seen and I was rather surprised as to the way it grows. It grows on a bush and the coffee beans are on the inside of a red berry that looks somewhat like a cherry.

That evening I stayed at a mountain hotel in Kona, that is on the other side of the island from Hilo, and that certainly was a beautiful spot. My room overlooked the Pacific, about a 1,000 feet down. That evening I went over to a little M.D.O. they have there and it is so seldom they see any soldiers that they really treat you nice. That finished the first day of the trip and I topped it off with a big T bone steak, for 75¢.

The next morning I started out bright and early to see that side of the island. The first stop was at one of the oldest churches on the island and there was a Shrine to the Virgin Mary, made completely of coral. I have a picture of it which you will see later. Then I went to the Palace built for the first king, Kamehameha, and saw all the pictures of the early kings, etc. It seems that the early race of Hawaiians were giants and some of the women weighted as much as 250 lbs. That would have been no place for me. Next I saw the coffee mills and the process coffee goes through before it get to you all. It reminded me a lot of the pictures I had seen of South America, the way they spread it out to dry.

I then stopped at Capt. Cooks Monument, he is the English man who discovered the island, and where his monument stands is the only piece of land owned by the British on American soil. Next was the small fishing village and the city of refuge. That is the place criminals would come to do time for

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the crimes they committed. The morning was
ended by seeing the Little Grass Shack
at Kealahou. Remember the ~~song~~^{song}, "I
want to go back to my Little Grass Shack
in Kealahou, Hawaii, it was written
after that shack or vice versa.

After dinner most of the afternoon was
spent riding through the lava fields and
it looked like the most barren spot in the
world. Nothing for miles but just the
waste land that the lava had flown
over not a thing growing on it. That
evening I arrived at the Kilauea Military
Camp up in the mountains and stayed
there my last two nights. It will be hard
for you all to believe, but it was so cold
there I slept with five blankets on top of
me. The next morning I finished off the
tour by seeing the steam cracks and
Kilauea Crater. The steam cracks are
nothing more than just steam coming
out of a hole in the ground but the
crater was really something to see.
The whole thing was about a mile in

diameter and the side about 200 feet tall.

Well I went back to the camp and I think I would be content to spend the rest of my days in the army there. It is a rest camp for soldiers and the army has done everything possible to make it different from a regular army camp. They even have a different color spread on every bed and pictures on the walls. Funny what a little paint and color can do for a place. There was every kind of sport you would want and more food than you could eat. The first night they had a Hula Floor Show with the chinas, imagine that at an army camp. The beauty of it was that it only costed a dollar a day.

I could go for a day, on just the camp, but as I told Mom, you all will have either gotten tired and stopped reading this long letter or will have fallen over in a dead faint getting me from me this long. Its the first really interesting thing I have done that I am able to

write about.

Well the last day I went back to the airport and took a plane back to Oahu and that was it. I came all the way from the rest camp out to where I am on this island and it only costed me 10¢. In fact the whole trip only costed \$35 and would have cost a tourist several hundred in peace times and I saw every thing they would see. When you get something like this you can really see what a wonderful job the Army is doing to please the soldiers and the plane ~~to~~ trip along would have costed quite a bit but we get it for free.

To top all this off I had to come back to camp and go out on a field problem over night. It was sure great just to live like a human again though.

You will have to frame this letter as I will never be able to write one this long again and if the Japs knock the plane down that carries this letter, they are going to have me, personally,

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to deal with.

I hope you both had a nice New Years and lets hope we can spend the next one together.

Write when you have a chance and give me the news on the home front. As far as me I am fighting one hell of a war here in the Hawaiian islands and I am going to receive the Oak leaf cluster or my Good Conduct ribbon for my flight to Hawaii.

Your brother

Owen.

P.S. Maybe even the Distinguished Flying Cross - Who knows?