

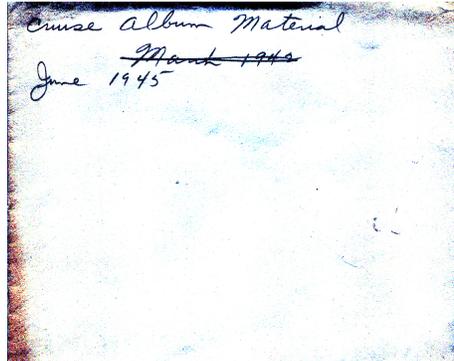
Introduction

The first wartime letter Robert (Bob) Sylvester Brown wrote his wife, Alice Dunn Brown, began with a clear directive--“When writing, address mail as stated above.” The letter ended with a heartfelt request--“Please write, just as soon as you can, and as often as you can.” This piece of correspondence was dated February 10, 1942. Bob had just arrived at the United States Naval Training Station in San Diego, California. Boot camp awaited him. He had left Alice three days earlier in Denver, Colorado, their home together since they had married fourteen months before his enlistment. Bob sent the envelope airmail, paying double the standard postage. Alice received it two days later. As Bob had hoped, his wife promptly picked up her pen to write him. In one passage, Alice’s tone was both plaintive and resigned. “I think I’ve shed enough tears since you left to float one of your navy vessels. I wish I could be as brave as you are about it all, but I am trying & I think it will get easier as time goes by. As you say, the job has to be done & we must have faith.”¹

World War II separated millions of married couples, some for short periods of time and others for much longer. Bob and Alice Brown fall into the second category. He joined the United States Navy Reserve early in 1942, just two months after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor brought the country into the war. As a sailor, Bob served on only one ship, the *USS Louisville*, until his discharge late in 1945. Its big guns supported several Pacific island campaigns. Bob thus saw combat, including kamikaze attacks on the *Louisville* by enemy planes. Like probably all married couples where a spouse wore the uniform, Bob and Alice wrote each other letters. Undoubtedly, Bob spoke for both of them when he stressed to his wife, “You don’t know how much your letters mean to me.” Eighty-eight of their letters form the basis of this story.²

The Brown Correspondence cited in the following pages consists of these wartime letters. They are part of the Brown Collection of memorabilia this author purchased online in the spring of 2018. It includes family letters, photographs, uniform patches, and various documents such as liberty passes. Yet in all likelihood, Bob saved many more items. Just a few months after he boarded his ship, Bob directed Alice to buy “three scrapbooks or picture albums in which to put all the pictures, menus, cards...I am collecting....” Bob knew Alice was saving similar items, such as programs from plays she attended and photographs taken with friends. Bob urged Alice to put these in an album, too, “according to date of occurrence.” Once reunited after the war, he envisioned them sharing the details of each other’s lives by going through the scrapbooks together. “It will be great fun,” Bob predicted, “looking through them in years to come.” Did the Browns ever make those albums? From an envelope Bob kept, an envelope that is now part of the Brown Collection, it appears Bob did so. Some World War II sailors kept scrapbooks known as “cruise albums,” with that first word part of the Navy lexicon for a voyage a ship made. Bob wrote a reference to a “Cruise Album” on an envelope he kept with a “June 1945”

date on it. Liberty passes were inside of the envelope when this author acquired the collection. If Alice, too, made a scrapbook, do her and Bob's scrapbooks still exist? Does the memorabilia that is part of the Brown Collection owned by this author come from Bob's wartime albums, or are they additional pieces of memorabilia that he never put into the albums?³



Like the memorabilia within the Collection, the Brown Correspondence is by no means complete. Any set of documents offers the best insight into an era if the letters, diaries, and other written records are kept together. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. We know the Brown Collection is incomplete. Online bidders aside from this author ended up with a few of the couple's letters. Additionally, Bob and Alice's descendants might be in possession of some correspondence they did not want to part with. In 1945 Bob, for example, wrote Alice two letters on August 14th and 15th in which he discussed news of Japan's surrender. Those are not part of the Brown Correspondence; perhaps the couple's family has them. Some letters are undoubtedly missing, too, because they have been lost or destroyed over the decades. We know that Bob, ever so reluctantly, threw away some of Alice's missives. Just seven months into his Navy service, Bob ran out of storage room for them. After rereading many of Alice's letters, he ruefully reported to her that he had "gotten to the point where I am going to have to destroy some of them because they are taking up too much room in my locker. I know we were going [to] keep all of our letters, but since there is so little room, I'll have to dispose of some of them, which I hate like everything to do, but I think you'll understand, Dearest."⁴

By their very absence, such missing letters affect the story that follows. In one to Alice written soon after he boarded the *Louisville*, Bob piques the researcher's interest with what was probably just an aside for Alice. But to the historian today, it is a tantalizing hint at a document that might be lost to history--"I'm keeping up the diary as near as possible so that after this war is over, I'll have a record of where we have been, but until then most all such information is secret." The Navy forbade the keeping of diaries while at sea in case such pages ever fell into the hands of the enemy. Still, some sailors ignored that regulation. While the Brown Collection does not include Bob's diary, it does contain some of his letters. He often wrote in spurts, beginning a letter before he reported for a duty shift, picking up the pen after the

shift, and finishing it at night, before lights out. Alice similarly began and ended some letters as daytime responsibilities interrupted her.⁵

The Brown Correspondence consists of one hundred and six letters. Bob and Alice wrote eighty-eight of them (83% of the letters). A preponderance of the correspondence dates from Bob's first year of military service. Sixty-seven of the eighty-eight letters are from 1942, only one is from 1943, four are from 1944, and sixteen are from 1945. Few of the letters were only one page in length. Most ran four pages. Bob sent Alice one, though, whose ten-page length surprised him--"Gee this is getting to be almost a book," Bob concluded as he was writing it. For the Brown Correspondence, Bob wrote sixty-one of the letters and Alice twenty-seven (or put another way, 70% are from Bob and 30% from Alice). Thus, the letters tell us more about Bob than Alice.⁶

Undoubtedly, though, he spoke for both of them in one of his first letters after the *Louisville* left the West Coast for a major campaign. The date was June 9, 1942. The United States had been in the war for six months. Although no one knew it at the time, more than three years would pass before the enemy surrendered in August 1945. Bob thought of the immediate past and future as he wrote that June, "When leaving for the Naval Training Station in February, little did I actually realize how dreadfully much I was going to miss you. I knew we were going to miss each other an awfully lot, but now as the days grow into weeks and weeks grow into months without seeing you, [it] make[s] it seem almost unbelievable what so many men, including myself, are having to go through as a result of war. I miss you more than words can ever express Dearest, and am hoping and praying that we, the U.S. and Allies, can make fast work of crushing the forces responsible for so much sorrow and loneliness."

Who They Were

Bob and Alice Brown's life together began and ended in Colorado. They met at the Denver Choral Society, which reflected the love of music they shared. Bob proposed to Alice at the city's Elitch Gardens, known for its flowers and outdoor theater. They married in Denver on December 28, 1940. As a young couple, Bob and Alice lived in the city. She bade him farewell at Denver's Union Station when he left for the war. Today, the Browns remain in Colorado, lying side-by-side at the Crown Hill Cemetery in Wheat Ridge, just west of Denver. Bob lived until 1975, observing his sixty-second birthday four months before his death. Alice remained a widow until her death, at age seventy-seven, in 1988.⁷



Robert Sylvester Brown was born in South Haven, Michigan on May 4, 1913. The generations in his family that immediately preceded him spent their lives in Nova Scotia, Maine, and Massachusetts. There, Bob's grandfathers and a great-grandfather earned their livelihood in occupations common to 19th century communities. Bob's ancestors worked as a carpenter, a bricklayer, and a farmer. But by the late 1800s, the economy was changing to one that was more business-oriented. One can see that in the occupation of Bob's father, Elmer Sylvester Brown. He worked for at least two companies. Bob's parents, Elmer and Bessie Sneaden Brown, began their lives in Massachusetts. They married there in 1905. Five years later, in the 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Elmer worked as a "frame maker" in a Hyde Park, Massachusetts hat company. He and Bessie rented a home in the town for their young family. Yet by the time Bob was born three years after the census, they had moved to South Haven, Michigan. We do not know why they chose to raise their brood of eight children there (four boys and four girls; Bob was sixth in respect to birth order). South Haven is a port city on Lake Michigan, so perhaps an employment opportunity explains the family's move. By 1917 when he registered for the World War I draft, Elmer worked for a company that made pianos. He remained in that industry until his death in 1942. Whatever brought the elder Browns to South Haven, it seems fitting that a World War II sailor would begin his life on the water's edge.⁸

Bob eventually left his hometown, though. In June 1937, he lived in Detroit, Michigan where he earned a living as an insurance salesman. That month, at age twenty-three, Bob married one Lillian Skrobicki, age nineteen, who worked as a doctor's assistant. The marriage did not last long. Exactly twelve months later, Lillian filed for divorce. The court granted the final divorce decree two months later.⁹

Two years after that, in the fall of 1940, Denver, Colorado was Bob's home. He registered for the federal draft there in October. World War II had begun in Europe a year earlier, in September 1939. Knowing that the global conflict could pull in the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law a Selective Training and Service Act in September 1940. It would be the first of four such draft laws. This initial one required all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-six to register for the draft on October 16, 1940. Bob did so, and his draft registration card gives us a physical description that aligns with the few wartime photographs that are part of the Brown Collection. In fall 1940, Bob stood 5 feet, 8 inches. He weighed one hundred and thirty pounds. A dark complexion complemented his gray eyes and brown hair. He listed a sister as his "next of kin," probably because he had not yet married Alice.¹⁰

Like Bob, Alice did not spend her early years in Colorado. Kansas was her home state. Two years older than Bob, Alice entered the world on August 3, 1911. Her grandparents and great-grandparents were part of the 19th century westward movement. Alice's maternal and paternal lines are rooted in New York and Virginia respectively, the two most prominent states in the Early Republic. But the following

generations in Alice's family moved westward as Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Wisconsin became their homes. Her parents, Charles and Maude Alice Denison Dunn, were born in the Midwest. Bob's parents, remember, ended up there when they left Massachusetts for Michigan. In comparing Bob and Alice's family background, however, one difference is apparent that would have greatly affected family lifestyles. Male wage earners in Alice's family worked in higher-paying occupations than did those in Bob's family. Recall that Bob's male predecessors earned their living as a carpenter, a bricklayer, and as a farmer. In contrast, Silas Dunn, Alice's paternal grandfather, worked as a sewing machine agent, a foreman at a flax mill, and a merchant. Alice's maternal grandfather, Charles E. Denison, was, in the words of a federal census entry, a "printer & publisher." One could argue that Bob "married up" when he wed Alice.¹¹

Alice was the third of five children born to Charles and Maude Dunn. (Like her husband Bob, Alice was given the middle name of one of her parents.) When they married in 1904, Charles and Maude lived in the small Kansas town of St. Francis where Alice would be born seven years later. Her parents spent their lives in the area. Charles worked for the United States government as a rural mail carrier. But neither Charles nor Maude began their life in Kansas. Iowa and Nebraska were their birth states respectively. We do not know when and why they moved to Kansas, but they probably met in St. Francis. Charles' job as a postman insured a reliable income for the family, although early in 1930, Maude worked in a bookstore. Her employment outside the home, unusual for a married woman with three teenage daughters, may have related to the beginning of the Great Depression. The comfortable life Alice's father gave his family with his job as a United States government employee contrasted with the piano factory job Bob's father held for so many years. (In 1939, Charles Dunn earned three times the annual salary of Elmer Brown.) Alice's parents are buried in the St. Francis Cemetery, affirming their long ties to the town.¹²

Chapter 1

February 1942 – May 1942, From Boot Camp to Shipping Out

Bob's departure for boot camp on February 7, 1942 triggered more than three and a half years of letter writing between the couple. The two had never corresponded before. In her first letter to Bob, Alice recognized this would be a new form of communication between them. "I do believe," she observed, "that this is the first letter that I have ever written to you because we have never been separated, either before or after our marriage." Alice saw the ensuing correspondence as the opportunity for both of them to write what she called "love letters." And they were that. Declarations of their deep feelings for each other began and ended each letter.

Between those lines, the couple shared many things, most notably how much they missed each other and their dreams for the future.¹³

Within days after Bob's enlistment, he left for boot camp. The United States had entered World War II just two months earlier. The push was on, therefore, to increase the size of the armed forces for the war that lay ahead. Bob, who had dutifully registered for the draft, knew Uncle Sam could summon him. Being drafted at that time meant Army service. Once in a combat theater, soldiers spent nights in foxholes and ate food out of tin containers called K-rations. Even though many soldiers served in support capacities, there also existed the distinct possibility of face-to-face combat. From one of his letters, it appears Bob chose the Navy to avoid Army service. (Most assuredly, other young men did the same.) In a letter to Alice months later, Bob acknowledged, "I know now that I did not beat the draft by very much." On February 2, 1942, Bob was sworn in at the New Customs House in Denver. He quickly received orders to report on Saturday the 7th for the trip to San Diego's Naval Training Station. Alice saw some irony in Bob's February 7th departure date. Bob's brother Harry was getting married that day. As she later wrote Bob, "Strange how the same day can bring happiness to one brother with a new wife and bring sadness to another by separation from his wife." Bob's orders made it impossible for him to attend the family event. The Navy booked Bob and other recruits on one of the Union-Pacific's Challenger passenger trains that regularly left Denver's Union Station for Los Angeles. Alice and some others accompanied him to the station. "Mutt," a friend of Bob's, had enlisted in the Navy, too; he had the same departure orders as did Bob. Alice and her group waited until the two recruits went through the gate and walked down to the platform to board the train. They waved, but Alice saw that Bob did not see them. Still, she waited before she left, going only when she presumed Bob was on the train. It pulled out around 7:30 p.m. Five days, Alice later bemoaned, was all the time they had from enlistment to departure.¹⁴

The letters between them began the very next day, Sunday the 8th. Alice woke up alone in their home at 414 E. 5th Avenue. She found, in her words, "the ground blanketed in snow again," and the snow did not abate. Alice saw a metaphor in that. "So, you see darling, you not only brought stormy weather to my heart, but stormy weather outside as well." She confessed that she was having a hard time accepting the fact that he had left. "Seems almost impossible that you are gone and that the train is carrying you so far away from me. And it seems strange to try to say or write on paper what I want so much to say to you in person." But for most of their years apart, it would be such letters, not face-to-face meetings, which kept them in contact. In her closing, she tried to end on a positive note-- "...I'm going to keep my chin off my chest and think of the 'Have gots, instead of the 'Have nots.'" (Alice held onto the letter until she had further direction on how to address it; each day after the 8th, she added dated postscripts until she received word from Bob on his new address.) In spite of what Alice described as "heavy snow," she drove to church, specifically to Detroit's First Plymouth Church. She and Bob had been married there.¹⁵

On the very night of his departure, Saturday, February 7th, Bob sent Alice his first communication. It took the form of a telegram he wired her from Caliente, Nevada where the Union-Pacific Railroad had a station. One can imagine Bob rushing into the Western Union office to get his message sent before the train pulled out. His words were few in number, as is the nature of telegrams. "Arrived Caliente Nevada 715 PM Okay Don't Get Too Lonesome. Love=Bob." Alice received the telegram around 10:15 p.m. Sunday night. In a postscript to the letter she had written earlier in the day, Alice promised she would "try not to get too lonesome. Must go to work now." She later added, "...one year of close companionship does things to one." The day after he left Denver, Bob wrote her a letter, too. He did so while he sat on the train heading west. It was Bob's first letter to her. (Unfortunately, it is not part of the Brown Collection.) However, Bob lost it on the train, although Alice miraculously received the letter five days later. She reasoned that the porter must have found the envelope and mailed it. On Wednesday, February 10th, Alice received two more communications from Bob, a postcard and a letter Bob mailed from Las Vegas. Obviously, looking at the number of communications between them in just a few days, the Browns were anxious to stay in contact.¹⁶

Bob's train arrived in Los Angeles' Union Station on the morning of the 9th. In L.A., the Navy recruits boarded another train that carried them south to San Diego. Around 1:30 p.m., the enlistees detrained. As Bob later wrote Alice, the men were then "marched to buses and brought right to our base," the Naval Training Station (NTS). The recruits took their oath and received an up-to-date copy of a Navy publication that dated back to 1902, the *Blue Jacket Manual*. (It was a detailed, written account of the training enlistees received in boot camp as well as information they needed once they arrived at their first duty station. Bob called it simply "the blue manual.") Physicals and then dinner followed. Afterwards, Bob and the other recruits learned of their housing and unit assignments. Bob's was Billet No. 55, Co. 42-72. By then, it was around 10:00 p.m. The day ended with Bob having had no time to write Alice. He did so, though, the next morning, February 10th. Bob sent the four pages airmail; the envelope shows a 3:30 p.m., San Diego postmark. Alice received it in Denver on the 12th. The two, three-cent stamps Bob spent on postage were well worth it since the letter gave Alice his company designation. That was necessary for the delivery of any mail to a recruit. With Alice now knowing Bob's address, she could begin mailing what she called her "love letters." At the very end of this first letter to Alice from boot camp, Bob made an earnest request of his wife--"Please write, just as soon as you can, and as often as you can."¹⁷

The Navy understood, too, the importance of letters from home for its recruits. San Diego's NTS also wrote to Alice the day Bob arrived at the base. This communication took the form of a postcard stamped "9 FEB 1942." After recruits arrived, NTS directed each man to address a postcard to his family to tell them he had arrived at his training station. (Enlistees addressed the card, a fact we know because Alice recognized Bob's handwriting on the front of the card.) The postcard explained what the next weeks would bring to the recruit. First, the apprentice

seaman would undergo “preliminary training.” After that, each enlistee would either be assigned “to a sea-going vessel” or he would be assigned to “a course in a Service School.” If the latter, a “sea assignment” would follow the Service School training. But the postcard’s last paragraph contained the information, really, that every recruit’s family waited for. “Frequent and cheerful letters from home are of great benefit to the recruit and they are the best means of encouraging him to write home frequently.” NTS promised “prompt delivery of mail for each recruit” if family members addressed their correspondence in the following way--the enlistee’s name, followed by the company to which he had been assigned (a numerical designation), and, below his name and company, the phrase, “U.S. Training Station, San Diego, California.”¹⁸

For Apprentice Seaman Brown, the next weeks spent at boot camp meant, in Bob’s words, “drilling and marching continuously and having lectures.” At night, Bob wrote Alice. On Valentine’s Day, they each mailed the other a letter. Bob’s was an especially emotional one in which he admitted he felt “lonesome and homesick.” Perhaps a cold he had come down with a few days before made him feel more depressed. He told Alice the cold had “been getting worse.” Recall Alice had written him earlier about the “tears” she shed because she missed him so. In his Valentine’s Day letter, Bob shared with her more than one moment when he had trouble controlling his emotions--on his first Saturday night in boot camp, “...it was all I could do to hold the tears back, [then] a couple of times while on the train coming [out here] and [once] again last evening when I hadn’t heard from you and [lastly] thinking about Valentine day today.” A few days later, Bob filled out the paperwork for a \$10,000 life insurance policy. He named, of course, Alice as his beneficiary. The policy was not a lump-sum payment if he died. Rather, Alice would receive a lifetime monthly payment of approximately fifty dollars. As Bob explained to his wife, “...you are going to need it if I shouldn’t come back and I want you well secured.” Alice understood the insurance was “a good idea,” but she emphatically added, “Let’s not even think about your not coming back—you must & will come back to me, I know you will!”¹⁹

The letters helped to bridge their separation, but what they both really wanted was to see each other again. In a February 23rd letter, Alice wrote of her “deep yearning and longing for you.” A visit the day before with friends made her perhaps overly sensitive to Bob’s absence. “I felt badly when Marianne kissed Charles and caressed him just before I left—however, I didn’t lose control of myself and I’m sure Marianne wouldn’t have done it in front of me had she thought about it.” In that same letter, Alice mused about a trip to San Diego. She shared with Bob a judgment a friend had made--“Clyde says that he wouldn’t want his wife to come to San Diego to see him cause it is a wild town full of tough women...” Regardless of what their friend thought, Alice was determined to make the trip.²⁰

Five days after writing this letter, Alice drove to Denver’s Union Station. She had not been there since Bob’s departure exactly three weeks earlier. Alice checked on the train schedule and fare for a trip to San Diego. She wrote Bob that same day

to share her findings. Alice could leave Denver, she explained to her husband, on a Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. The train arrived in San Diego on Friday at 11:45 a.m., so it took two nights or one-and-a-half days. Alice did not want to miss too many days of work, so she was not sure how long she could stay. "Even if we only had 3 or 4 hrs. together, it would be worth it!" The round-trip fare cost \$50.24. Alice also checked into a flight from Denver to Los Angeles on Continental Air Lines. If she flew, she would leave Denver at 8:45 in the morning and the plane would land at 4:10 p.m., although she would still need to get from L.A. to San Diego. Yet reading between the lines in her letter, Alice saw a clear benefit in flying. "I could leave here in the morning and be there with you that night." The main deterrent, however, was the expense. The air trip cost \$100 round-trip. Alice thought of a third alternative. She could take the train one way and fly the other way; that would cost \$84. "I suppose I could borrow the money." Alice reminded her husband that they had fifty dollars set aside for an emergency. "I want you so badly though," she confessed, "that it seems like an emergency to me." What was crucial, she stressed in the letter, was that Bob had time off when she visited San Diego.²¹

What the Browns hoped for happened a week later. Bob heard his first leave would be the weekend of March 7th. Instead of writing Alice, he sent her a telegram on Tuesday, March 3rd. (This guaranteed she would receive news of his leave in time to make the weekend trip.) "Get Leave Saturday and Sunday PM Come If You Can Love Bob." Alice left Denver, by train, on Wednesday the 4th. She arrived in San Diego in the afternoon on Friday the 6th. Alice probably headed straight to the Hotel Southern, in the heart of the downtown area, where she planned to stay. She saw Bob that evening in the NTS Library. Their visit lasted, however, as Bob put it, just for "a few minutes." This was because his liberty took place only on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. On Saturday the 7th, Bob went to the Hotel Southern. In some notations he made for the time spent with Alice, Bob wrote, "had dinner, visited all through San Diego. Took pictures." The next day, when Bob's liberty hours began, Alice was waiting for him at the NTS gate. They visited the city's Balboa Park, a 1,400-acre piece of land, with its zoo and museums. Alice left for home the next day, but not by train. She flew out of San Diego's Lindberg Field on a United Air Lines flight to Union Air Terminal in Burbank, a city outside of Los Angeles. There she transferred to a Trans World Airlines flight to Denver. Alice did not know it at the time, but in less than a month, she would be back in San Diego. That visit would not be a pleasant one.²²

In the weeks immediately following Alice's trip, Bob looked past boot camp's graduation. In a letter to his wife, he shared his hopes as to the Navy assignment he would receive. A few days after Alice arrived home, Bob took a typing test for the storekeeper's rating. (Storekeepers oversee the ordering and storage of supplies; the Navy designates the jobs and levels of responsibility of its sailors with the word "rate," unlike the Army that uses the word "rank" for its soldiers.) In a letter to Alice, Bob was adamant that he had passed the typing exam, "but they said I didn't...They wouldn't even give me my rate and it looks like the examiners have orders not to accept any new storekeepers unless they are exceptional as the...field is so filled up

that they don't want any more." In a letter to his father, Bob appears to have mentioned that he would be happy with an assignment as a radioman or as a machinist. Alice clearly wanted him to have a stateside assignment so he would not have to go to sea--"Bob, isn't there some way you can stay on land duty or patrol?"²³

Up to this point in the Brown Correspondence, their writings reflect some common themes one would expect in letters between World War II couples--their love for each other, how much they missed each other, and how they understood that "the job" of winning the war had to be finished before they could resume their life together. But a four-page letter from Alice to Bob dated March 18, 1942 differed in tone and content. It did not reflect the self-sacrificing spirit Alice had written about earlier. It could be that Alice's visit with Bob, less than two weeks before, made her miss him even more. For whatever reason, when she sat down on the 18th to write him, she pleaded with her husband to come home on a special leave. Alice's request was unrealistic and self-centered.

Bob had graduated boot camp and was awaiting word as to his station (i.e., his assignment). Alice wanted Bob to request a leave. She felt he qualified for special consideration for more than one reason. Alice argued that the Navy had treated Bob unfairly. Recall that only five days elapsed between his enlistment and the day he boarded the train for boot camp. "Darling, you had to leave on such short notice and you could tell the authorities that...you need to come home as they did not allow you time before you left." Another justification for a leave, Alice argued, followed from the one rooted in his too quick departure. "Tell them that you have business matters—papers to get in shape, which would be the truth..." Alice reminded Bob that some enlistees had a month between enlistment and departure; their friend Clyde was one such recruit.²⁴

Additionally, Alice told Bob to point out to his superiors that he was a married man. "If you can only persuade them that you need leave to see your wife. After all, it should make a difference with married men, and if you are willing to sacrifice everything, even life itself, surely they should consider you enough to let you come home before you sail." In her plea, she urged him to approach his superiors with this piece of correspondence from her in his hand. "Show them this letter, Bob." When he did so, she continued, "Tell them your wife needs to see you before you go." Alice urged him not to give up. "Try as hard as you can, darling, and keep trying and I'll keep hoping with every ounce of faith I have." She implored Bob to add a very personal plea to his leave request. "You could even tell them we want a baby before you are sent to sea, which is true darling. I do want one, ever so badly—tell them anything." In this letter, Alice thus pressured Bob to approach his superiors and ask for a special leave to return home.²⁵

We do not know how Bob dealt with her plea. It is unlikely he did as she asked. Even though he had been in the Navy for only about six weeks, Bob would have known that sailors just graduated from boot camp did not make such requests. A sailor could ask for an emergency leave because of, for example, a death in the

family. But that was not what Alice was asking for. Bob had left NTS by the time he received this letter from Alice. Beginning on March 20th, Bob was billeted at San Diego's Destroyer Base "to await further transfer," as he explained the move. On that same day, NTS mailed out another postcard to Alice. She must have frowned upon reading it. The card informed her that Bob had been transferred (it did not specify to where). She would be notified "of his new address upon arrival at new station. Please discontinue addressing his mail" to NTS. The last sentence must have hit her hard since it meant a break in her ability to communicate with her husband. She painfully felt the distance between them days later when Bob became seriously ill.²⁶

On Saturday, March 21st, one day after Bob arrived at the Destroyer Base, he did not feel well. He reported to sickbay. Bob registered a temperature of 101 degrees, and his sinuses were bleeding. Wednesday morning his temperature went up to 103 degrees. The next day, Thursday the 26th, the medical staff transferred Bob to the Naval Hospital in San Diego. Doctors diagnosed acute pneumonia, confirmed with chest x-rays. By late afternoon, his temperature was 104 degrees. Some hours later, Bob managed to write a two-page letter to Alice informing her of his hospitalization. "I just ached all over," Bob explained to his wife, "and my legs and head felt like they were going to tear loose until in the evening..." In the week he had been ill, friends transferred with him to the Destroyer Base had shipped out. Bob must have felt alone in more than one way. On the 29th of March, doctors used an oxygen tent to facilitate his breathing.²⁷

Over the next days, telegrams went back and forth between San Diego and Denver. On March 30th, the Naval Hospital notified Alice as to Bob's condition. The message was brief and pointed--"Your husband is seriously ill in this hospital with pneumonia acute will keep you advised of any change in his condition." (The envelope for Bob's March 26th letter was not postmarked until the 29th, and it did not go airmail. Alice, therefore, had not yet received it when the Navy's telegram arrived. In all probability, the telegram was the first news she had of Bob's illness.) Alice appears to have jotted down some handwritten phrases on the back of the telegram, the core of a reply she must have sent to the Naval Hospital--"Advise condition of Robert S. Brown-can take plane Advise if I should fly." This must have been what prompted a second telegram from the Naval Hospital to Alice on the morning of March 31st. In it, the Navy informed Alice that her husband's condition remained the same; it promised to let her know "of any change."²⁸

Alice now drew upon two organizations she and her family belonged to in order to obtain more information on Robert. The first one was the Freemasons, a fraternal group. The Brown Collection contains a handwritten copy of a telegram from one B.T. Boyce who lived in Denver to the "Master of [the] Masonic Lodge" in San Diego. Boyce was undoubtedly a Mason. Alice's family must have had ties to the Freemasons; perhaps her father was a member. In any event, she or someone in her family contacted Boyce. Boyce in turn, sent a telegram to San Diego's Masonic Lodge to get information on Bob. It did so. In an April 1, 1942 telegram to Boyce, the San

Diego Lodge reported that Bob's condition was "greatly improved." Obviously, a Mason had visited or telephoned the Naval Hospital.²⁹

In addition to using the Freemasons, Alice enlisted her "sisters" in the Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO) to get updates on Bob's status. Alice was an active member of the Denver chapter. Either from information in a national membership directory or from her local PEO friends, Alice sent a telegram to Alice Warner, a PEO member who lived in San Diego. She asked her to visit Bob. "Appreciate wiring me P.E.O. sister, collect advising his exact condition." The telegram was read at the April 1st meeting of San Diego's PEO chapter. One of the women present, Katherine Beagle, called the Naval Hospital and was able to speak directly with Bob. Katherine wrote Alice a letter that very day to share what she had learned. Bob and his doctor did not think it was necessary for Alice to come to San Diego since Bob had "improved slightly." Katherine followed this, however, by admitting Bob was "still very ill." The doctor, though, "feels there is no immediate danger." On the day of her visit, Bob had been removed from the oxygen tent and his temperature was "not so high." Katherine, who lived just ten miles east of San Diego, made a promise to Alice. "I shall do the very best I can to keep you posted." Katherine planned to visit Bob "at intervals" and also phone him regularly. "I shall," she wrote, "as a P.E.O. sister feel it my duty to call [the] Dr. each day for a report on his condition." If it worsened, Katherine promised to wire her. Acting upon the information Katherine had learned, P.E.O. sister Alice Warner sent a telegram to Alice in Denver--"Your husband [sic] condition slightly improved will notify you if change for worse." Katherine signed the letter "Yours in P.E.O.," followed by her signature.³⁰

On April 1st, Alice sent a telegram directly to Bob. She told him she had received his letter, undoubtedly the one mailed on the 29th. Alice confessed she was "anxious regarding your condition." She admitted she wanted to be with him "if you need me." Alice must have been relieved when a telegram arrived signed by Bob--"Immediate danger passed." The very next day, April 2nd, Bob wrote a short, one-page letter to his wife--"Must make this brief as I am awfully weak." He had received some special delivery letters from her as well as a telegram (the one she sent on the 1st). Katherine Beagle had come by with flowers. As to his condition, Bob wrote, "Had two chills Sunday and was under oxygen tent from Sunday night until Tuesday morning. Have had to be fed through arteries because I can't keep anything in my stomach." Bob sent the letter airmail, but Alice had already left Denver by the time it arrived at their home. Mindful of the expense of another trip to San Diego, Alice traveled by bus from Denver. She arrived in San Diego on April 4th. That very same day, the Naval Hospital sent her a telegram--"Condition your husband improved No longer considered serious." Alice could not see Bob until Sunday, the 5th, which happened to be Easter Sunday. The two spent the afternoon together. Alice left for Denver the very next day, again by bus. Bob remained in the hospital for several more days. He returned to the Destroyer Base on April 18th to await assignment.³¹

Bob stayed at the Destroyer Base for almost six weeks. He continued his letter writing to Alice, of course, and described how he wrote them in sections. There were “so many interruptions, routines, etc. I have started letters in the mornings some days, and have written little by little all day until finally after supper [I] finish it.” But even then, blackouts occurred every night at the base. They made it hard for Bob to write in the evenings. The windows “are all blackened,” he explained to his wife, and “there are only two soft blue lights in the whole room which are on all night.” During his weeks at the base, Bob’s superiors assigned him to general work details. In his spare time, he took some Navy classes. Bob still hoped to be assigned to what he called “land duty.” If he was, Alice could move to wherever the Navy sent Bob. They no longer would be separated. But in the end, Bob received a sea-going assignment. That was not before another hospitalization, however, and an unfounded charge by Alice that briefly cast a shadow over their relationship.³²

Bob’s mailing address at the Destroyer Base included the phrase “c/o General Detail,” a reference no doubt to the tasks he would be given as he awaited assignment. Bob explained some of them in letters to his wife. He told her, for example, his job one night was “to pick up paper and littering in the theater with five other fellows after the show tonight.” Another cleanup detail Bob drew centered on the area around the “trash burning dump.” On a different day, the Command assigned Bob two duties, the first at the base’s service station where he pumped gas. That same evening, Bob pulled all-night watch duty. Another “General Detail” led to an accident that put Bob in the hospital again.³³

In the third week of April, Bob was working at the docks. A fire began on a barge in the bay. Bob described the scene in a letter to Alice. “A short or something had set fire to the oil in these big transformers which made a pretty hot and big fire.” After the flames were extinguished, someone directed Bob to take a box of equipment out to the barge. He caught a ride on a speedboat. Once he delivered the box, Bob prepared to leave the barge, with others, on a boat. Bob proceeded to untie the rope that secured the boat to the barge. He explained to Alice what happened next. “By the time I had the rope loose, the boat had moved out a little so I made a jump for the aft platform.” But Bob’s shoes were wet and slippery. “As soon as I hit [the platform],” Bob wrote Alice, “my feet slipped and I went down across the side [of the boat].” A Navy captain riding in the speedboat grabbed one of Bob’s hands while an enlisted man grabbed the other. A third sailor helped pull Bob back in. His injuries were apparent. Bob had a gash in his chin from where he had hit the deck. Additionally, having landed on his left side, his ribs pushed against one of his lungs, the one weakened by his recent bout with pneumonia. After the fall, Bob had trouble breathing. In pain, he was taken to the nearby Navy hospital once the boat docked. X-rays showed no broken bones. A doctor stitched up Bob’s chin. He stayed in the hospital overnight for observation. Upon discharge the next afternoon, Bob reported to Alice that he felt “stiff and sore.” His ribs were taped. And Bob added, he had “a patch on my chin and a bound wrist.” Five days later, a doctor removed the stitches on his chin. Since his ribs still hurt, though, the doctor would not release him from

what Bob called “hospital attention” until he was completely well. That meant a further delay in shipping out.³⁴

While Bob waited for those orders, he took some navigation classes in the evenings. He described the content as “dealing with routing and charting ships on their routes and locations.” Bob was not sure how well he would do since he had never taken geometry, trigonometry, or astronomy. The Navy offered no credit for the classes. They were “merely for our benefit,” Bob explained to Alice. With so many shipping out, and sailors arriving at the Destroyer Base after their boot camp graduation, new students kept showing up in the classrooms. Bob complained to Alice about the lack of progress. Instructors “are always reviewing what we learned the first couple of nights to help the new students.” Bob decided he wanted to be assigned to radio. Yet he admitted in a letter to his wife “because I have had no training or experience, it is pretty hard to get into radio.” Nevertheless, Bob kept up his hopes for a radio position.³⁵

What Bob really wanted, however, was shore duty, or what Bob called “land duty.” At least, that is what he told Alice. In mid-May, he responded to a letter from Alice where she must have confessed to Bob, again, how lonely she felt. “Dearest One,” Bob wrote, “I am awfully sorry that this war has brought such utter loneliness to you, and I am hoping we can be together before long. I am trying and shall keep on trying to get a station on land so that you can come out here to live.” If the Navy assigned Bob to shore duty, he told Alice, “We can be together most every night and weekends.” Their mutual wish for shore duty was the theme of this letter.³⁶

“I love you so much Honey and there must be some way we can find to get back together,” Bob continued. “Right now is the time we need each other the most and I know if we do our part, God will help us through these rough spots and give us some happiness in spite of all the grimness of war.” Bob wanted his wife to know he had been trying to get a shore assignment. He told Alice he had spoken with “a transfer clerk” about the possibility he could be assigned to carpentry work in a “company crew here at the base.” The clerk, however, explained to Bob that such a request could not be made at that time since he was already awaiting a transfer.³⁷

The Browns’ separation contributed to tensions in their marriage that, in turn, led to arguments. One letter, written while he was at the Destroyer Base, hinted at a recent disagreement. Bob had just received mail from Alice in which she, again, vowed her eternal love for him after what appears to have been a spat. In his reply, Bob told his wife that her words “relieved the strain somewhat, yet for some reason there still is a little hurt in my heart. I’m afraid I’ve utterly failed in making you really happy, and hope it is still not too late to try and smooth out some of our differences and really make another effort.” We do not know what those differences were. But they appear to have led to an argument. Bob assumed responsibility for the problem they were having. “I may have started something which may have hurt you. I am sorry if I did, but I was quite out of sorts.”³⁸

Less than a month later, another one of Bob's letters to Alice showed that he feared his wife still harbored some resentment. (Over what, we do not know.) It was Monday, May 11th. Bob had not received a letter from Alice for three days, a fact that speaks to the frequency of their written communications. Bob brought this up at the very beginning of a four-page letter to her. "You must have been awfully busy Thursday and Friday not to have been able to write unless your letters did not get here." The absence of mail from Alice did not make sense to Bob since, in her last missive, Alice promised a long letter would follow. "I was looking forward to getting that letter, and perhaps a little disappointed in not getting it." Two pages later, Bob confessed that he feared Alice had not written because she was upset at him. "Somehow I feel there's something wrong. You have a right to be angry at me over last Monday night. I'm plenty disgusted myself, but is there something else troubling or worrying you, Sweetheart? I may or may not be able to get an answer to my wondering, though I hope there is nothing seriously wrong."³⁹

A letter Bob wrote five days later, on May 16th, clearly spelled out a belief Alice held that would have been damning if true. Alice thought Bob had been unfaithful. "Please believe me Dearest, there were not and never have been any girls or women that I have been with except yourself since I came out here." (The emphasis is Bob's on those key words.) Alice's charge seems to have originated in a party Bob attended given by a female relative of another sailor. When Bob wrote Alice about the gathering, for some reason she came to believe that several women were in attendance. Bob was puzzled at the conclusion she had drawn. "I don't quite understand what you mean by a party with girls and drinks, or a party with wild women. Certainly I did not say anything about women or girls at the party." Bob insisted the only female was his friend's cousin. "It really hurts me," Bob admitted, "to feel that you distrust me or my word." He also admitted that he was "angry" at her accusation.⁴⁰

As Alice read this letter at home in Denver, the next lines must have unnerved her. Bob might have sighed as he observed, "It seems that writing letters, and telling you the truth about everything I do is getting me in the doghouse more than anything else. It is hard to make oneself really clear in a hurried letter, on the other hand, one has a tendency to read between the lines and take for granted or imagine a lot of things that are not actually stated. If this is the case with you, perhaps I had better stop writing about things." For more than one reason, Alice needed Bob's letters. They affirmed his love for her, and any wife wants to hear that again and again. Additionally, their correspondence acted as a bridge to connect them when Bob's military service separated the couple. Bob's reference to the possibility that the letters might stop or decrease in content would have upset Alice. By the end of his letter, Bob admitted to Alice that he could not "stay angry with you...Forgive me Dearest if I have said things to hurt you." Note that as Bob brought his letter to a close, he continued to assume responsibility for the tension between them. He felt the need, one last time, to declare his faithfulness. "Please be assured that I never will be stepping out on you." Bob believed Alice's charge of unfaithfulness emanated from, as he wrote her, "the lonely mood you were in at the time."⁴¹

Bob anxiously awaited a reply to this letter. After twelve days, none had arrived. On May 28th, Bob decided to telephone Alice. But in case he could not reach her, Bob wrote her as he waited to place the call at the Navy YMCA. The 28th was a special day for them. They had married on December 28, 1940. In letters, Bob referred to the 28th as their anniversary, regardless of the month. On this May 28th, Bob's letter betrayed a special urgency. "Sweetheart, I have not heard from you since you received that nasty letter...(i.e., his letter of the 16th)." Bob had been thinking of something he had written in it, perhaps regretting the statement. In this letter dated on the 28th, Bob repeated what he wrote twelve days earlier--"If I have given you reason to distrust me, I am awfully sorry." But that was not the line he now regretted. It was what followed it. Bob had written, "I know we could never be happy living together again" if she did not trust him. Bob followed this recollection of what he had written her with a question. "Darling, is that the reason I have not heard from you?" Bob reiterated what he had concluded in his May 16th letter--"I doubt if we could be happy together if you distrusted me. I could not be happy with anyone I distrusted in word or action. Darling, we can be happy because I love you so much, but we must trust each other, I'm afraid you don't trust me very much. Please, Please, darling, for God's sake, let me out of the suspense of wondering."⁴²

As Bob prepared to end his letter, he added one last declarative promise. "Dearest, I swear before God that I have done nothing that would make you ashamed of me or distrust me." At 10:00 p.m. (11:00 p.m. in Denver), Bob gave up hope in placing a call. He knew he was just days from shipping out. Bob alerted Alice to the fact that this letter "is the last letter you will receive for a few weeks." In the final lines, Bob reaffirmed his feelings for his wife and his hope for their future. "I love you Dearest, and I shall always love you no matter what happens. I shall always pray for the day when we can be together again." Below his signature, Bob added a postscript. After trying for four hours to place a call to Alice, Bob finally met with success. We do not know the particulars of their conversation, but we do know from his two-sentence postscript that all was well between them after they spoke to each other. Bob still sent her the six-page letter, written while trying to place the call. He affixed an airmail stamp to the envelope. He obviously wanted Alice to read his thoughts as soon as possible.⁴³

During his weeks at the Destroyer Base, Bob kept hoping Alice could make one last trip to see him before he shipped out. Such a visit would have been her third since he arrived in San Diego in February. Her first was the two-day one early in March; the second visit was another two-day trip early in April when Bob was hospitalized with pneumonia. Bob wanted her to make a third trip on the third weekend in May. He had liberty from Saturday night on May 16th until Monday morning on the 18th. But for reasons we do not know, Alice was unable to leave Denver. As it turned out, Bob spent his liberty with some sailor friends. They took a bus to an amusement park at San Diego's Mission Beach. Bob had his picture taken there for ten cents and mailed it to Alice. He knew they had missed their

opportunity for a final reunion before he shipped out. Bob guessed that would happen before the month ended, and he was correct.⁴⁴

Early in May, Bob observed to Alice “most of my acquaintances and friends are gone and new ones coming in all the time.” Bob should have shipped out weeks earlier, but his two hospitalizations delayed his duty assignment. According to Bob, medical records from both had to become part of his personnel file before the file could be seen as complete. Once it was so designated, the Navy would assign him to a duty station. That finally happened. Bob hurriedly wrote Alice a one-page letter on May 20th to alert her to his departure for San Francisco. Bob and other sailors boarded a train in San Diego. They arrived in San Francisco around 11:30 a.m. on the 21st. The men rode a bus to Treasure Island, a naval receiving station (a site from which navy personnel departed for Pacific service or arrived back from the same).⁴⁵

Bob did not stay long at Treasure Island. The day after he arrived, the Navy assigned him and other sailors to the heavy cruiser *USS Louisville*. It was undergoing an overhaul at a naval installation in the Bay area. For security purposes, he explained in a letter to Alice that he could not tell her which ship he had been assigned to or what his duty station was on it. A few days after he officially became part of the crew, he wrote Alice again to update her. “I haven’t worked so hard in all my life as we have worked these past couple of days, but it is doing me lots of good physically. I feel fine and am eating like a horse even though I am stiff and ready to roll into my bunk as soon as we get through the night.”⁴⁶

It appears from one of Alice’s letters that she wanted to come to San Francisco. (The letter itself is not part of the Brown Correspondence, but Bob’s reply is.) Her plan called for more than just one last visit before he shipped out. Alice wanted to move to the city and get a job there. That way, whenever Bob’s ship came into port, she would be able to see him. In a letter to his wife, Bob explained why he did not think this was a good idea. First, in respect to a trip now, he did not know how much longer his ship would be in port. Second, it may not be back on the West Coast for four to six months. He promised to send her a telegram as soon as his ship returned to “some U.S. port and have you fly out.” In a different letter written four days later, Bob offered hope of another possibility that could unite them--he would ask to attend a Navy school. Once his ship returned to the United States, he wrote Alice, “Perhaps I will have made a school by then and will be left here. That would be the answer to my prayers if you could be where I am.” Ironically, Bob received orders to report to a Navy school, but that did not happen until the spring of 1945, and the school was not in the States.⁴⁷

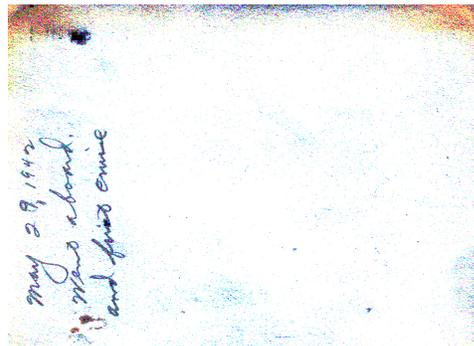
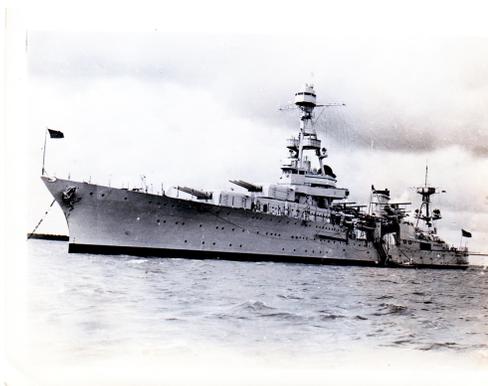
Like most sailors, Bob fulfilled his military service with sea duty. That meant many months would pass before his ship returned to the West Coast. As he stressed in a letter right before the *Louisville* departed, “I’m afraid it will be a long time before I will be back to these United States.” Reunions with Alice would be few in number. And when they did occur, they would be short ones. Correspondence between the Browns would have to suffice. But the letters would not be received

with the regularity experienced in Bob's first months in the Navy. Mail would be intermittent. "When and if I go to sea," he wrote Alice, "I likely will have to go for months at a time without hearing from you." And Bob's letters to Alice would likewise be sporadic. As he warned her, "Dearest, please do not be alarmed if you do not hear from me for three or four weeks at a time. We will be allowed to write letters from aboard ship, but they cannot get mail ashore very often, however, I will try and have a letter for you in every mail that leaves the ship."⁴⁸

Just weeks before Bob left the States, Alice had sent him a small gift, a St. Christopher's Medal. It depicts the saint carrying the Christ-child across a river. Such a medal has long been seen as protecting travelers. Bob saw it as "a good luck piece" and wore it daily. Since his military service would take him across waters, it was a most appropriate gift. One imagines Bob wearing it throughout his wartime service, with almost all of it spent on the *USS Louisville*. In a few of its Pacific campaigns, some of the ship's crew died as a result of enemy action. The *Lou's* deadliest day was January 6, 1945 when over one hundred and twenty-five crewmen received burns in a kamikaze attack, forty-five were wounded, and thirty-two were killed. Bob was on board, but he did not become a casualty. On another fatal day for the *Louisville*, June 5, 1945, kamikazes struck again. But Bob was not on board. He was in Hawaii, attending a Navy technical school. We have no way of knowing if either of the Browns attributed his "luck" to his St. Christopher's Medal.⁴⁹

Chapter 2 June 1942 – November 1942, "Somewhere At Sea"

Bob to Alice, June 3, 1942



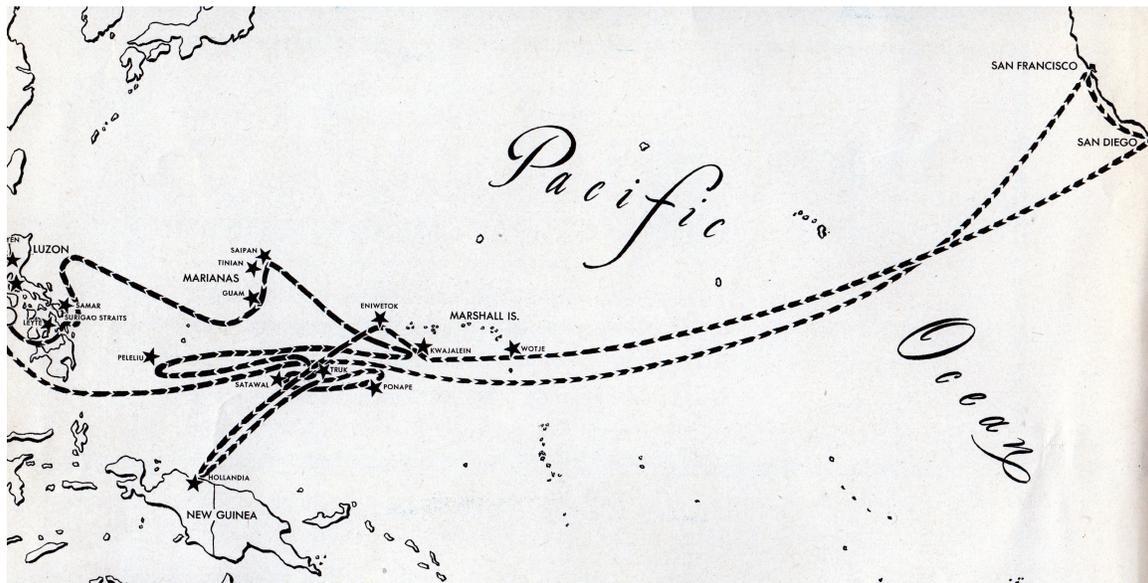
The above photograph of the heavy cruiser *USS Louisville* is part of the Brown Collection. That is Bob's handwriting on the back, recording a date whose significance he did not want to forget--May 29, 1942. Bob had first been "received on board" the *Louisville* on May 22nd, the day after he arrived at Treasure Island. We

know from a letter Bob wrote Alice that he and other sailors reported for duty on the ship that day. But they did not spend the night there. Bob told Alice the men had slept elsewhere, probably in the barracks on Treasure Island--“We have not moved aboard as yet as the ship is undergoing repairs but it won’t be long before we will be permanently stowed away.” It appears he was not “permanently stowed away” until the 29th. That would explain why, in his writing on the back of the photograph, he linked the 29th to the phrase “Went aboard.” The date is telling since the ship left San Francisco Bay on the 31st. It could be, with departure looming, officers brought the new crewmen on board with their gear on the 29th. At that time, the *Louisville* was close to leaving on what Bob identified as his “first cruise.” Merely by using this last word, Bob identified himself as a sailor. Today, we associate the word “cruise” with a relaxing vacation civilians take on board a passenger liner. Yet early 20th century sailors used the word to denote a Navy ship’s voyage. For the *Louisville*, the noun “cruise” also related to the type of ship the vessel was.⁵⁰

The *USS Louisville* was a heavy cruiser, distinguished from a light cruiser by its bigger guns. Congress authorized its construction, along with other Navy vessels, in December 1924. At that point in time, the ship did not have a proper name. Throughout its years of construction, it was simply known as “Cruiser No. 28.” It was not until March 1929 that the Navy announced Cruiser No. 28 would be called the *USS Louisville*, CA-28. (The “C” stands for “cruiser” and the “A” for “armored.”) The ship was christened on September 1, 1929. Officials wove into the ceremony’s pageantry references to the city of Louisville and the state of Kentucky. A shoe from Man o’ War, one of the most famous horses in racing history, hung from a ship’s bulkhead. Although the horse had never raced in Louisville’s Kentucky Derby, Man o’ War had lived most of his life in Kentucky. The *USS Louisville* displayed the horseshoe as a “talisman,” an object thought to bring good luck. In time, that reflected the nickname crewmen came to call the cruiser--“the Lucky Lou.” Other sailors shortened the ship’s name, fondly, to “the Lady Lou,” “the Lady,” or just “Lou.”⁵¹

The *Louisville*’s World War II service was one its crew could be proud of. Wartime Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal observed of the *Lou*, “Her guns were a potent factor in every engagement” from the first raids against Japanese-held islands in January 1942 to the last major battle at Okinawa in June 1945. The *Louisville*’s list of campaigns is an extensive one, identified with islands the Japanese had taken over or islands they threatened--the Marshall and Gilbert Islands, the Aleutians, the Solomons, the Western Carolines, New Guinea, the Marianas, the Philippines, and, finally, Okinawa. It is a given that most sailors love their ship. The *Louisville*’s crew was no different. To preserve the history they had lived through on the *Lady Lou*, twenty-one of her officers and three of her enlisted men wrote a history of the ship immediately after the war ended. They chose *Man of War* as the book’s title. It was privately printed in 1946. The authors inserted within the narrative an extensive collection of Navy and crew photographs. Did Bob have the book? He should have since it was written and published for the crew. Copies in existence today are rare. This author owns one that belonged to crewmember

Quartermaster 3/c (3rd class) Sverre Scheldrup. Among sailors, the volume was known as “the cruise book.” *Man of War* will be cited in this story to give a historical context to Bob’s military service and to his letters, using either the title itself or the phrase “cruise book.” Because of wartime censorship, Bob could not share with Alice where he was when he wrote a letter. He also could not tell her in his letters what campaigns the *Louisville* was involved in before, during, or after he wrote her. The cruise book and other historical sources, however, allow us to place each letter in a historical context. The calendar date Bob unfailingly wrote at the top of each first page acts as a reference point. Not everyone who writes a letter dates it. Luckily for us, Bob and Alice did.⁵²



Map from the *Lady Lou* 1944 cruise book that shows her campaigns, with the exception of the Aleutians, through 1944.

When Bob became a member of the *Lady Lou*'s crew at the end of May 1942, the ship had already participated in two Pacific campaigns. In January, just a month after the Japanese raid at Pearl Harbor, the *Lou* joined a task force that attacked enemy forces in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. In February, the Command attached the *Lady Lou* to another task force that headed out from Oahu to the southwest Pacific. It guarded shipping lanes to Australia. After the task force completed the assignment, the *Lou* returned to Pearl Harbor. From there, it headed to the Mare Island Navy Yard in the San Francisco Bay area. The *Louisville* was scheduled for an overhaul; more armaments were also added. Bob joined the crew at that time.⁵³

While in boot camp, Bob held the Navy rate of all enlistees--apprentice seaman. After graduation, he moved up one rate to seaman 3/c (3rd class). When Bob was still at the Destroyer Base in San Diego, assigned to General Detail, he anticipated a

promotion. (A raise in salary accompanied advancements.) He twice informed Alice he would be a seaman 2/c early in June. He progressed to that rate on June 2nd, just a few days after boarding the *Louisville*. As the next few years demonstrated, once the Navy promoted Bob to a higher rate, he began studying for the next rating exam so he could advance again. On August 28, 1942, Bob informed Alice, "I took the Seaman First examination [the] day before yesterday, and while it seemed fairly easy, I know I missed several questions and will not know whether or not I passed until the first of next month." Bob did well on the test. He became a seaman 1c effective September 1, 1942. Bob announced to his wife that he would "start studying for the next rate."⁵⁴



A rating badge from the Brown Collection. The one stripe designates Bob as seaman 3c. The lightning bolts indicate radio.

Bob had his eye on a specialty area for his Navy service--radio. Recall that he had been interested in it when he was at the Destroyer Base in San Diego. While at Treasure Island, Bob wrote Alice and gave her his new mailing address. After his name, she was to write "U.S.S. Louisville, N.C. Division, c/o Fleet Postoffice, San Francisco, Calif." A living World War II Navy veteran who also served on the *USS Louisville* explained to this author that "N.C." stood for "Navigation Communication." A United States Navy ship divided its crew among six major organizational units called "departments"--gunnery, navigation, engineer, construction and repair, supply, and medical. Each department, in turn, was divided into "divisions." The letters "N.C." in Bob's return address identified him as part of the Navigation Department and, within that, he served in the communications division.⁵⁵

Early in his time on board the *Louisville*, Bob was assigned to radio duty as a radio striker (i.e., an apprentice radioman). As a striker, Bob performed basic duties. He delivered messages as well as coffee until his superiors decided he was knowledgeable enough to take the exam for the beginning radio rating. Bob wrote Alice about his radio position just days after arriving at Treasure Island, "So far I don't know much about it, but I'm sure going to try to make good, and perhaps get into school later to learn more about it. I cannot tell you what my duties are connected with this job nor anything about the equipment aboard ship, but I can say right now it's going to take a powerful lot of studying." And study he did. Three months after he announced to Alice that his radio position would take "a powerful lot of studying," he reinforced that conclusion in an August 1942 letter to her--"Most of my spare time recently has been put to studying." In September, five days after he

officially became a seaman 1c, he shared with Alice his next goal--“to apply to learning Radio.” Bob’s duties as a striker appear to have ended on January 1, 1943, four months after he had attained the rate of seaman 1c. On New Year’s Day, 1943, Bob advanced to radio technician 3c (3rd class). He held that rate until June 1944 when the ship’s June 30th muster roll listed Bob as “RT2c” (radio technician 2nd class). He remained at that rate until his discharge at the end of the war. “RT2” appears on his grave marker at the cemetery where he is buried.⁵⁶



Sailors on the *Louisville* take rating exams.

His radio work as a striker gave Bob extended blocks of free time. He described to Alice what a typical work schedule was for him three months after he boarded the *Lou*. “In the line of work in which I am, one day [I’ll] work all day and part of the night at whatever needs attention, then we may not have much to do for the next day or two outside of routine work, so reading, studying, or games such as pinochle or checkers fill up the spare time.” One should add two other personal activities to this enumeration of how Bob used his “spare time”--rereading Alice’s letters and writing ones to her. In his correspondence, Bob often reminisced about past events and imagined future ones. Sometimes books prompted him to do that, too.⁵⁷

The ship’s library furnished Bob with ample reading material. At one point in the summer of 1942, the library added fifty-seven volumes to its holdings. The *Louisville*’s shipboard newspaper, the *Morning Press News*, printed their titles and authors on the front page. Bob sent Alice the two pages that listed all of the new books. He thought she “might be interested to note the increase in our library.” Apparently, husband and wife were both readers. Alice recommended he read the book *Timberline*. Bob found it in the ship’s library. One book we know of prompted Bob to think of both the past and the future. He identified with it so much that he urged Alice to get a copy from the Detroit Public Library. Bob told his wife the author was “Curwood,” and the book was *Green Forest*. It was written in a genre that usually did not interest Bob. He admitted this to Alice. “As a rule, I do not care for sordid gangster or detective stories, but this book really brought back a lot of

memories of my boyhood days back in Michigan.” As a young man, Bob had lived in Detroit, specifically in “some of the sections of that city mentioned” in Curwood’s book. Putting descriptions of Detroit aside, Bob also thought “a wonderful picture is depicted of northern Michigan, part of which I have heard so much about and have often wanted to see.” Looking to the future, Bob offered a thought--perhaps after the war they could go there.⁵⁸

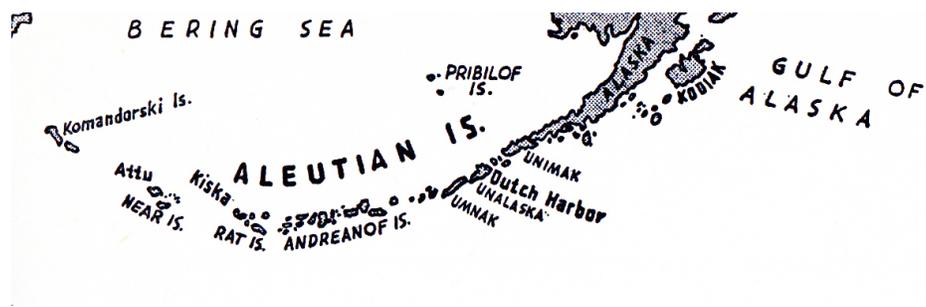
Another letter to Alice referred in detail to shipboard contests in which Bob participated. These were ones in addition to the basic card and board games he had already told her about. Bob described some competitions that sounded most unusual--“getting drinks out of a pie plate filled with flowers, using only the mouth” and “two men eating a string, in the center of which was tied a dollar bill.” The sailor who reached the dollar bill first got to keep it. Bob identified other games--quiz programs, spelling bees, and musical contests. He entered at least one singing match where he performed *Shortnin Bread*. Although he did not win first place, Bob and another crewmember received, as he told Alice, “a dollar for our efforts.” In describing this particular competition in his letter to Alice, Bob referred to the “much singing and play work” he had done in Michigan. Buoyed by his experience on the *Lou*, Bob asked Alice to mail him some of his sheet music. He asked her “to pick out several pieces of my music that you think would be appropriate for a group of men.” Clearly, Bob thought he might form a singing group on the ship. He even gave his wife specific packaging instructions to ensure the pages were not damaged in the mail. In another letter, he asked Alice to type or handwrite the words to a few songs. As he explained, “I seem to have forgotten some of the words to some of the songs I used to sing.” Specifically, he asked for the lyrics to *Because, Then You’ll Remember Me, I Love you Truly*, and *Giannina Mia*.⁵⁹



This is a photo from the Brown Collection. Bob wrote the names of the sailors on the back, and he indicated which one he was. Bob is in the first row, second from the left.

One would not guess from the levity in Bob's summer and fall letters that the *USS Louisville* was in the frigid, blustery waters of the North Pacific. As part of the U.S. Navy's Task Force 8, the cruiser and her men were engaged in another campaign. This one occurred in the waters surrounding the Aleutians. It came out of the United States' effort to take back from the Japanese two islands in the Aleutians chain, Attu and Kiska, that the enemy had recently seized. Until this campaign, the *Louisville* herself had not been charged with firing her guns at the enemy. Instead, the cruiser had been part of two task forces that had provided support to aircraft carriers; planes from the carriers mounted raids against enemy installations. In the Aleutians, the ship took on a more offensive role than in her two previous campaigns. Working in radio as he did, Bob would have had knowledge of the messages that went back and forth between the task force's command and the *Lady Lou*.

Alaska had been a United States territory since 1867 when the administration of President Andrew Johnson purchased it from Russia. Its Aleutian Islands stretched westward from the southern tip of Alaska. In the summer before the attack at Pearl Harbor, the Army and Navy established bases at Dutch Harbor on the island of Unalaska (located on the extreme eastern end of the Aleutians). In early 1942, the Army built an airfield on the island of Umnak and one at Cold Bay on the Alaskan Peninsula. The primary bases, though, were on the island of Kodiak on the extreme eastern end of the Aleutians. In June 1942, Japan fought American forces in the North Pacific. At that same time, to draw parts of the United States Fleet northward, Japan invaded the Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska. (The former is located at the extreme western end of the Aleutians chain, and the latter just east of Attu.) Some eighteen hundred Japanese soldiers landed on Attu and Kiska, unopposed since no American bases existed on those two islands. (About one thousand miles lay between Attu and Dutch Harbor.) For the next twelve months, the Japanese dug in as the Americans worked to harass them and insure that no further Japanese forces could be landed. Americans did not attempt to regain possession of Attu and Kiska until the summer of 1943. The *Louisville* played a role in both the 1942 harassment of the occupying enemy forces and in the 1943 successful reclaiming of the two islands.⁶⁰



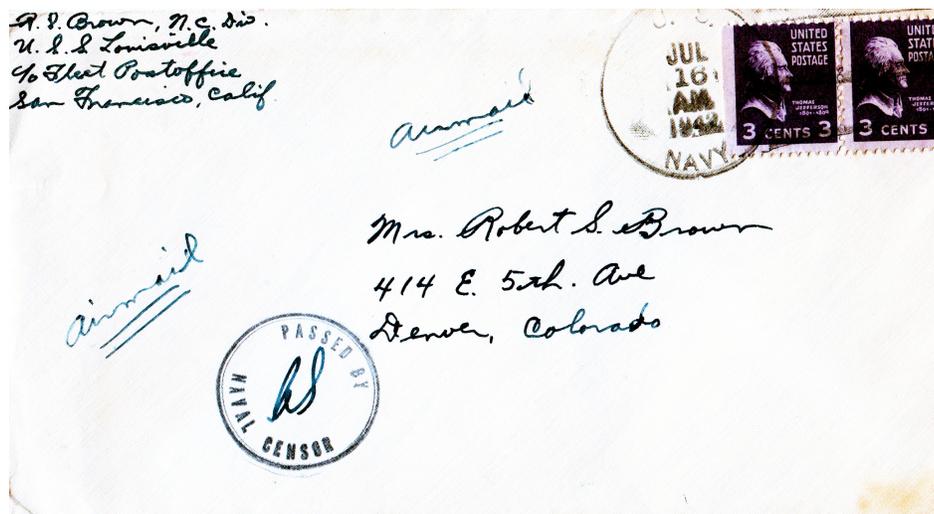
In June when the cruiser arrived in Aleutian waters, Bob waited anxiously for letters from Alice. When he was stationed stateside in San Diego and momentarily on Treasure Island, he experienced no serious problems receiving mail. Doing so in the waters of the North Atlantic was a totally different situation. At the end of July, two months after the *Louisville* left San Francisco Bay, Bob still was not in receipt of any correspondence from his wife. As he complained to Alice, "It has been such a long time since I have received any of your letters..." Just a few days after he penned that, mail sacks were brought on board the ship. But as Bob lamented in another missive to Alice, "there were no letters for me." He knew that would not always be the case. Bob explained to Alice the route her letters took to reach him-- "...all mail is held at San Francisco until it can be brought to us either at sea or [it] goes to a port we are about to enter and is held [for us] there." He knew that "one of these days I ought to get quite a stack of mail." Until that happened, Bob reread old letters from Alice-- "In the absence of more recent letters from you, Dear, I have been rereading former letters and find a lot of comfort and satisfaction in same..." Finally, after two months at sea, on August 1st Bob wrote his wife that her letters had arrived. "They all came at once, and [there] may still be more that I have not received as yet because the sacks of mail come aboard ship in such quantities that it may not all be sorted yet." All totaled, Bob received twenty-three letters early in August. Fourteen of them were from Alice. Bob also opened two envelopes from his father, written before he died suddenly of "heart disease" on July 6th. Some of the other letters Bob received were apparently from family members writing to him about that loss.⁶¹

Bob, of course, wrote letters to Alice as he waited for correspondence from her. And he made it clear that she was his priority. "When I do write, I always write to you," he explained, "and then if there's any time left, [I] write someone else, generally...my brothers and sisters." Twenty-five of Bob's letters to Alice are in the Brown Correspondence for the months the *Lou* was part of Task Force 8. He might have written more. Or knowing the irregularity of getting mail in and out of the Aleutian waters, Bob's letter writing may have tapered off during the campaign. In two of his letters, he shared how he sometimes wrote her with music playing in the background. On June 3rd, Bob explained to Alice, "One of the fellows in our section has a radio phonograph and quite a number of records, which makes the whole atmosphere a little more cheerful and homelike." Two weeks later, he reiterated this point. As he wrote Alice, "Records were being played below deck in our compartment, the music of which, through the ventilating system, could be heard very plainly above deck."⁶²

It appears that Bob's first letter to Alice after the *Lou* left San Francisco Bay was dated June 3, 1942, just a few days following the cruiser's departure. The opening line was a simple one-- "Somewhere at sea and not much to write about except that I am OK and feeling fine." These last six words allayed a concern Alice may have had about her husband's adjustment to life on board a ship. Bob had never been out on the ocean. He wanted Alice to know he had not experienced seasickness, which would have been embarrassing and debilitating. "The first day at sea made

me just a bit dizzy, but since that first day they'll have to hit some rougher going than we have had before it will make me sea sick.”⁶³

The words “somewhere at sea” at the beginning of this letter reflected the fact that Bob could not give the ship’s location. The *Louisville’s* officers enforced wartime censorship regulations. In another letter two weeks later, Bob reiterated the restrictions under which he now wrote, unlike the prior four months when he was still stateside. “There are so many things I would like to tell you about, the way we live aboard ship and what we do, but since this is war, please bear with just a few lines, Dearest.” Bob had written Alice right before the *Lou* steamed out, alerting her to the fact that his letters would change in tone and substance once he was at sea-- “Aboard ship we are not even allowed to seal our envelopes until they have been censored, so I can’t seem to put any feeling in those letters, knowing that someone else besides my loved one will be reading them.” While in San Diego, he wrote openly about how he physically missed Alice. In one letter, for example, he admitted to “missing very much your loving arms, your sweet lips and your body close to mine.” Such physical references do not appear often in any of the Brown Correspondence once he shipped out. On board the *Louisville*, Bob knew that others read his letters.⁶⁴

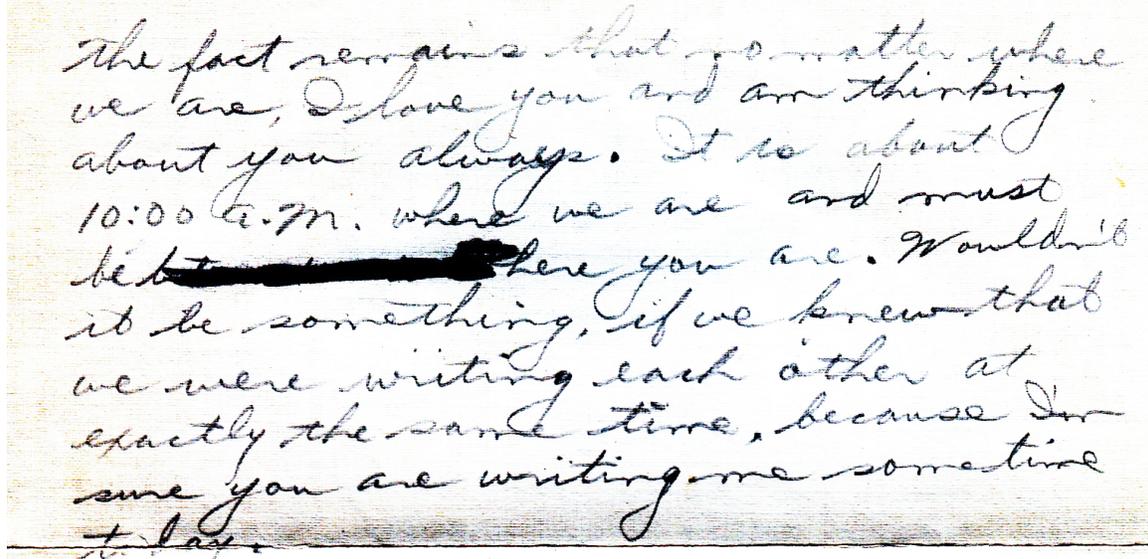


It was not until August 7, 1942 that the cruiser participated in Task Force 8’s bombardment of Japanese batteries and installations on Kiska. Four United States naval cruisers (one of which was the *Louisville*), five destroyers, and four destroyer-minesweepers mounted the attack. They had all left, surrounded by fog, from Kodiak. Upon reading the account of this bombardment in the *Louisville’s* cruise book, one can detect the pride the crew felt about the role their ship played. The narrative also captures the emotion many if not most crewmen experienced. “Soon our turn came. We swung into position and at long last our guns spoke, spoke with all our pent-up emotions. Every shot fired served to cleanse us of the bitterness and savagery that had been bottled up for so long.” In the words of *Man of War*, the *Louisville* “steamed back and forth, wrecking harbor shipping and facilities, shore

installations and gun emplacements.” This was Bob’s first combat experience, and he certainly had a story to share with Alice about the events of August 7th. Yet, of course, he could not do so because of censorship regulations. Of the letters in the Brown Correspondence for early August, there is a gap between Bob’s August 2nd letter to Alice and the next one on August 16th. It could be that Bob wrote letters in those fourteen days that are not part of this author’s collection. Or perhaps Bob was too occupied with his duties in those critical two weeks.⁶⁵

The August 7th bombardment had been attempted in July, but fog near Kiska led to collisions between four of Task Force 8’s destroyers. The task force thus returned to Kodiak to await better weather conditions. One historian of the Aleutians argued, “The hazards of surface and air navigation are greater there than in any other part of the world.” He described the weather system in dramatic terms--“A giant low pressure system hovers over the Aleutian Chain in the North Pacific like a permanent hurricane,” the system “often blanketing the entire region with rain and fog or winds of up to 100 miles an hour or even greater.” The *Louisville’s* cruise book noted that sometimes the fog was so thick that the crew could not see “the bow of the ship from the bridge.” The weather also made it impossible to guarantee tactical air support when United States forces sought to regain control of Attu and Kiska. The American military thus heavily relied on naval bombardment of the entrenched Japanese forces.⁶⁶

In at least two of Bob’s letters he inadvertently shared information on the *Lou’s* location. One did not slipped by the censor and one did. The first was an innocent observation that he did not realize could give away the *Lou’s* general location. In an August 1942 letter to his wife, Bob referred to the time difference between where he

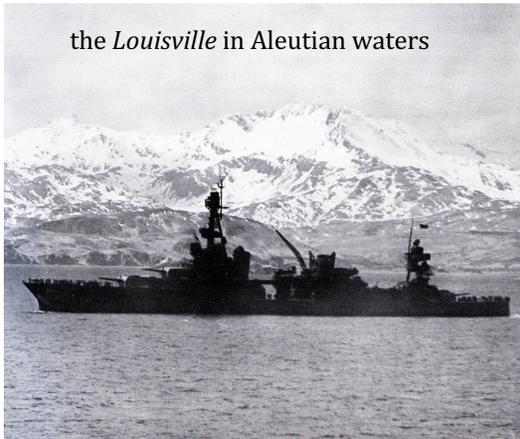
A photograph of a handwritten letter snippet on aged, yellowed paper. The handwriting is in cursive and somewhat faded. The text reads: "The fact remains that no matter where we are, I love you and am thinking about you always. It is about 10:00 a.m. where we are and must be ~~about~~ where you are. Wouldn't it be something, if we knew that we were writing each other at exactly the same time, because I'm sure you are writing me sometime today." The text is underlined at the bottom.

The fact remains that no matter where we are, I love you and am thinking about you always. It is about 10:00 a.m. where we are and must be ~~about~~ where you are. Wouldn't it be something, if we knew that we were writing each other at exactly the same time, because I'm sure you are writing me sometime today.

was (off the Aleutians) and where Alice was (in Denver). The ship’s officer who acted as the censor for this letter caught the implication of sharing a time zone with the letter’s recipient. “It is about 10:00 a.m. where we are,” Bob observed to Alice, “and must be [words blackened] where you are.” The first word appears to be

“between.” Bob’s writing after that is not legible because of the censor’s markings; they are probably numbers that refer to the hours it would be in Colorado if it were 10:00 a.m. in the North Pacific. In another letter to Alice, Bob consciously tried to be careful to safeguard information on the *Lou’s* location. He announced that he had a gift for her. However, he “could not send it to you through the mail without revealing where we have been, so [I] will have to keep it until I can give it to you personally.”⁶⁷

Surprisingly, the officer who read a September 22, 1942 letter allowed a much more specific reference to the *Louisville’s* location to stay in the letter. When Bob wrote it, the crew could finally see land. As Bob shared with Alice, the ship had been at sea. Sailors had “not seen land for nearly a month now.” But mountains, he told his wife, loomed before them that day. Mountains stand on islands throughout the Pacific, but snow does not sit atop most of those unless the mountains are in the North Pacific. The passage in Bob’s letter that a censor appears to have looked at too quickly read, “As I walked out on deck, as usual I glanced around at the horizon, but



the *Louisville* in Aleutian waters

the first thing I saw was a towering mountain peak, seemingly rising out of the water...the snow capped peak towered on up to reach other clouds.” Later in the letter, Bob wondered if he had divulged too much. In another passage, he shared with Alice the fact that it was a cloudy day. Bob wrote that just like clouds in the sky were “shielding all views, which is what I am afraid will happen to a few paragraphs of this letter if I tell any more or have told too much already...” One could argue that the officer who read Bob’s pages should have blackened out the words

“snow capped” since they clearly hinted at the *Louisville’s* participation in the Aleutians Campaign.⁶⁸

In September, the Navy released to the American news media selected details of the bombardment of Kiska. The *Louisville* docked, probably in Kodiak, soon after Bob wrote his September 22nd letter. Once on shore, Bob must have heard that the Navy had released some information on the fighting in the Aleutians. The day after the *Lou* came into port, Bob wrote to Alice. He wanted to assure her he was all right. “I don’t know what you have been hearing over the radio about this ship and I can imagine your reaction if you have heard any of the news we heard had been broadcast. This I will neither confirm or deny but I do want to reassure you that I am all right. Please don’t let any unconfirmed news, either press or radio, upset or worry you.”⁶⁹

Looking at the totality of Bob’s letters to Alice for the months of the Aleutians Campaign, topics he wrote about ranged from the mundane to the sentimental. For the everyday subjects, Bob asked, for example, if she still drove their car, “and what

about the tire and gas situation?" Recall, too, the passages in his letters where he discussed how he spent his free time (studying, readings, etc.). Additionally, Bob made several references to their finances. It is not clear, based upon the Brown Collection, what type of job either of the Browns had before Bob enlisted. Their correspondence contains no information on Bob's employment. From references in some letters, we know that Alice worked both before and after Bob left to fulfill his military service. It is not clear exactly what type of job she had. The letters refer to a "plant" and work shifts (some of which were at night), so the position may have been one in a war-related factory. Bob was almost thirty years old when he enlisted, and Alice was a year older. Both had time, therefore, to establish themselves in the workforce. That probably explains one pronouncement by Bob in a letter to Alice--"I think we would have been pretty well fixed financially by now, and could have been enjoying life if this war hadn't torn us apart." From their letters, we know the Browns had a house in Denver they rented out. That brought them what Bob judged to be "a small income." Alice's salary from her job added to that.⁷⁰

Then there was Bob's income as a member of the U.S. Navy. At the 1942 seaman's rate, Bob probably received a monthly salary of ninety-six dollars. He designated twenty-two dollars of that, however, to a monthly allotment for Alice. Bob explained the allotment in more than one of his letters. The allotment, as Bob defined it, was for Alice's "dependency as a wife." Twenty-two dollars would be deducted from his monthly salary. The federal government added twenty-eight dollars, giving Alice a monthly allotment of fifty dollars. Additionally, the government deducted a monthly premium from his pay for a ten thousand dollar life insurance policy. Even with these deductions, Bob could save a significant amount if the *Louisville* was at sea. Towards the end of the Aleutians Campaign, he detailed to Alice how little he spent in six weeks on board the cruiser. On August 5th, a payday, he drew just twenty-five dollars, allowing the rest to stay on the books. Six weeks later, he told Alice, he still had twenty-two dollars. The three dollars went "for candy, ice cream and toilet articles."⁷¹

But everyday concerns did not dominate Bob's letters to Alice. Sentimental thoughts did. The Fourth of July triggered some philosophical observations on the war and some memories of the previous 4th of July. On board the *Louisville*, the crew did not enjoy any time off from their regular duties. In a letter to Alice written on the 5th, Bob shared the fact that "our work continued as usual throughout the ship. The men did feast on a turkey dinner with apple pie topped with ice cream, a treat in itself. Two other occurrences made this July 4th different from most other days on the *Lou*. It was payday, which, as Bob noted, "is quite uplifting, socially, mentally and financially." Also, the mail was delivered. Bob received an airmail letter from one of his sisters, but nothing from Alice. Her letters, he wrote, "must be held up somewhere."⁷²

In this same letter, Bob reminisced about the last Fourth of July, and he imagined the next one. He also linked the couple's future happiness to the eventual resolution of the war. Bob reminded Alice how they had spent the previous Fourth

of July--a picnic in a park with just the two of them followed by fireworks when it got dark. On board the *Lou*, Bob's thoughts turned to the next July 4th, too. "I am hoping we can celebrate the Fourth together next year and that this whole damnable war will be at an end before that time." (Three more July Fourths would pass, however, before he and Alice could once again share the holiday.) Bob continued his thoughts, ruminating on how a loss by the Allies would most certainly impact their lives. "Our forefathers fought for the freedom and happiness you and I have shared during the past three decades. We likely will never again find the happiness and life to which we are accustomed unless we win this war, and the quickest way possible will not be too soon for me, so here's hoping."⁷³

What is most touching about Bob's letters is the degree to which he reminisced about his life with Alice. Bob wrote in one letter, "Nearly every night, unless I am awfully tired, I lay awake thinking over the past two years or more since first we met at [the] Dover Choral Society. I remember so clearly the night you first kissed me, and the beautiful night at Elitch's Gardens when I first asked you to marry me." From this letter, we know Bob and Alice met in 1940. The war had broken out in Europe in September 1939. By the summer of 1940, Germany controlled the continent, having forced France to surrender in June. At that point, England basically stood alone in Europe against Hitler's forces. Germany continued its attacks upon American and British supply ships in the North Atlantic. This economic fact and impassioned pleas from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to President Roosevelt increased the possibility that America would join the Allies. As the movement to war accelerated among some United States policymakers, Congress instituted a draft in September 1940. Three months later, Bob and Alice married. Their courtship took place, therefore, amidst the probability that the United States would join the Allies. That is why Bob wrote in this same letter, "I guess I must have been mad to have asked you to tie yourself down to me, knowing I would have to spend a year in the army sooner or later anyway and [then there were] the threats of war, yet if I had to do it over again, I know I wouldn't have done [it] differently because you are all I have to look back upon and for which to look forward, Dearest."⁷⁴

For five months, Bob served on a heavy cruiser in the waters off of Alaska, following a daily routine that probably had few deviations. Still, he did not lose track of dates that held meaning for him. Recall Bob had left home for his military service earlier in the year, on February 7th. On September 6, 1942, he pointed out in a letter to his wife, "Eight months tomorrow night since I left you at the station at Denver, and about six months since we have seen each other..." The sadness of those two goodbyes was not something Bob forgot. He was a sentimentalist. Another example of this can be seen in letters he wrote monthly, recall, on a certain date. Bob seems to have paused regularly on the 28th, remembering his and Alice's wedding day. On his first full month on board the *Louisville*, Bob wrote Alice a letter on their special day--"It was eighteen months ago this afternoon we were married." Bob wrote a longer passage recalling their wedding in an August 28th letter. That date, Bob wrote Alice, "is one of those special days on which it doesn't seem right that we cannot be

together. Twenty months ago today marked the end of the trail down quite a lonesome road, and the beginning of a new, richer and happier life, traveling down a new and more beautiful highway of life with you. Today we are on separate roads, but we still have each other and our hearts and thoughts are in like channels looking forward to a new intersection where we can again unite and find a richer and more beautiful life than before." Unknown to Bob, Alice was writing him a letter on that same day, August 28th. She wrote from Denver's Union Station where Bob had left for boot camp. The two letters, one written on a warship in the North Atlantic and the other one written in Colorado, show that even though they were separated by thousands of miles, they thought of each other on a day special to them. No one was with Bob to remind him of that date every month. Yet it is clear no one needed to be. He remembered on his own because of the feelings he held for his wife.⁷⁵

Bob affirmed his love for Alice in every letter. Some of his declarations were especially touching. "I love you more than words can express," Bob concluded in one letter early during the Aleutians Campaign. But he nevertheless continued to try to put into writing his feelings for Alice. Thoughts about his wife occupied him every day. "...[I] am sending all my love, for I shall never stop thinking about you and loving you My Precious Darling." In another letter, he reiterated again how Alice occupied his thoughts--"I really don't know what I'd do if I didn't have you to think and dream about..." Many if not most husbands would end a letter to their wife with the simple word "love" above their signature. Bob invariably wrote more, however, than that standard declaration. "God Bless you, my Darling wife, and keep you" appears at the end of one letter.⁷⁶

Bob's dream of coming home to Alice also occupied his thoughts. He trusted she would be there. "Nights when I think about you and at times while working or talking with the fellows, I think of so many things I would like to tell you but never can seem to put those thoughts on paper." Bob continued, "In the end," though, "all I really know is that I love you so very much that nothing matters anymore...just as long as I have your love and you waiting for me just as soon as I can get home." (Bob underlined the word "you" twice.) Even though Bob knew an officer would read his letters, he referred to his physical longing for Alice in at least one letter during their first, long separation. "I love you so much that I'd give anything to come home...to talk to you and hold you in my arms, caressing, comforting you, and keeping you warm." One month before the *Louisville* left Alaskan waters for the States, Bob alerted Alice to what he expected from her once they reunited. "I sure will be ready for heaps and gobs of lovin when I get back to you..."⁷⁷

In one of his first letters from the waters around the Aleutian Islands, Bob was already thinking of a reunion with Alice. The *Lou* had left San Francisco Bay just ten days into what would be a five-month campaign when Bob wrote Alice, "[I] hope we can see each other the first time we hit port." If Bob could not get leave to go home to Denver, perhaps Alice could travel to the West Coast, although Bob was not sure where the *Lou* would dock. At one point he asked her to look into the cost of a round trip ticket, "both by train and plane," from Seattle and San Francisco to Denver. He

was not sure if he would have enough leave time to make the trip or if Alice would travel west to see him. When Bob sent her this query, he stressed he still did not know when he would be back in the States. By late September, however, Bob thought he had a return date. It is doubtful that the Command announced it, but one probably appeared in the rumors that circulated throughout the ship. In a September 22nd letter to Alice, Bob wrote, "There is a chance that we might be in the states before November." He was correct.⁷⁸

On their first Alaskan cruise, Bob and the *Louisville* remained in the Aleutians throughout the summer and into the fall of 1942. On the very day--August 7th--that Task Force 8 fired its guns at Kiska, Marines landed on the South Pacific island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons. Their fight there against the Japanese lasted for six months. United States naval support was critical in the Solomon Islands' battle. The Command ordered the *Louisville*, along with other cruisers in the Aleutians, to head to the South Pacific. Even without that imperative, however, the increasingly harsh weather conditions spelled the end of the task force's offensive actions in the Aleutians. As the *Louisville's* officers concluded in the cruise book, "The nights grew longer and the days shorter, the seas more ferocious; and the fog remained our curse, enveloping the wind-swept, snow-driven island chain, enforcing peace even against man's wishes. No longer able to wage effective war, the *Lou* was directed south. We were glad to say good-bye to the ice and snow and the 'williwaws' of the Aleutians." By the end of October 1942, the *Louisville* had left Alaskan waters. She was on the West Coast early in November 1942. The cruiser moored at the Navy's base on Mare Island not far from San Francisco. But she did not stay long, so no reunion occurred between the Browns. The *Lou* took on more fuel as well as more supplies before she set out across the Pacific Theater. She arrived at Pearl Harbor on November 17th.⁷⁹

By the time 1942 came to a close, the Browns had seen each other only twice after Bob's February departure for boot camp--on Bob's weekend liberty in March 1942 and then a month later in April when he was ill with pneumonia. As it turned out, Bob and Alice were not reunited again until December 1943 when the *Louisville* returned to San Francisco after several more Pacific campaigns. Twenty months had passed since the Browns had last been together. During that time, letters served as their only form of communication. Thoughts of time spent together before the war, and their plans for the postwar period, were topics they returned to again and again in their letters. Simply put, they reminisced and dreamed.

Chapter 3
December 1942 – October 1945,
"Hay-Good Lookin,
What's Cookin' out there in the blue-blue Pacific?"
Alice to Bob, July 11, 1943

Bob and Alice's sixty-seven letters from 1942 gave us insights into the story of Bob's enlistment, his time in boot camp, and Bob's first months on board the *Louisville*. The pages even offered the reader details on their courtship. In addition to the 1942 correspondence, we have some of their letters from 1943, 1944, and 1945. They total, however, only twenty-three letters, about one-third of the number we have from the Browns in 1942. For 1943, the Brown Correspondence holds just one letter of note. It is from Alice to Bob. There is a telling document, however, in the Brown Collection for December 1943 that represents a life-altering week for the couple. It is a hotel receipt. At that time, the *Louisville* was moored near San Francisco. Bob had leave, and Alice traveled to the city to be with him. She rented a room at the Hotel Clark. Their daughter Nancy was born in August 1944. Obviously, that receipt held a special significance for Alice. In 1944, Alice would have written Bob letters on her pregnancy, the events that surrounded Nancy's birth, and their daughter's first months. But the Brown Correspondence holds only four of their 1944 letters. (Alice wrote three of them.) For 1945, Alice wrote fifteen of the sixteen letters in the Brown Correspondence. Recall that in the first year of the war, 1942, Bob wrote most of the letters we have. And for the last year of the war, 1945, we have a preponderance of letters from Alice.

Destination ;	Import :
Going to ; -	at sea patrolling (Blind)
Leaving -	Nothing Special.
Africa -	Honey Bumpy
Alaska -	Hello Darling
Aleutians -	Honey Heart
Atlantic Ocean -	Hello Beautiful
Australia -	My Dear
British Isles -	Hello Dearest
China -	Darlin
Coming Home -	Precious
Damaged -	Hi Toot
Expecting to come Home -	My Precious Darling
France -	Dear Honey Bumpy
Germany -	Honey Dear
Hilberts -	my Dearest
India -	My Dearest Darling

Aside from the Brown Correspondence, the Brown Collection contains memorabilia that relate to Bob and Alice's story. Among other things, Bob kept liberty passes, sketches, and a salutation code. This last item, in Bob's handwriting, was a code he made to circumvent one aspect of the censorship regulations. Those, recall, prohibited military personnel outside of the United States from telling correspondents their specific location. By creating a two-page code, Bob nevertheless shared that information with Alice in the opening words of each letter he wrote her. The greetings referred to specific areas of the world. If Bob wrote, for example, "Hello, Dearest," the *Louisville* was in the British Isles. New Zealand was simply "Dear Alice."

In two other documents from the Brown Collection, Bob recorded concise details about the campaigns in which his ship participated. Together, the documents are a handwritten chronology for 1944-1945, although an abbreviated one. Bob entered one chronology, for January-April 1944, on a blank V-Mail sheet. He wrote more on that year, and on 1945, using an unusual piece of paper--a large, brown envelope from Denver's "Department of Revenue." It was meant to hold a 1945 Colorado license plate. When flattened out, the inside of the envelope offered a large blank space upon which one could write. Bob filled up the twelve by thirteen inches with his handwritten chronology for some remaining months in 1944 and for January-February 1945. It is not clear if Bob transferred his chronology of the *Lou's* campaigns to the V-Mail and the brown envelope from some other sheets of paper or if these two documents contain his original writings.

Bob wrote seventy-three notations on the V-Mail and on the inside of the license plate envelope. Some read matter-of-factly and others dramatically. Both documents adhered only somewhat to capitalization and punctuation rules. Early in

February 1944, Bob jotted down on the blank V-Mail page, "2-7 Arrived Majuro atoll took on fuel and ammunition." Eleven months later, the *Louisville* was in the Philippines as part of a task force retaking the American territory from the Japanese. In an entry on the inside of the license plate envelope, dated January 6, 1945, Bob wrote, "Air attacks heavy Started bombarding Luzon arrived Balanga In Eve plane dove into bridge killed admiral and about 40 others." He jotted down more lines on the comings and goings of the *Louisville* at the top of a few letters he received from Alice.

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. Point or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

TO: _____ FROM: _____

(CENSOR'S STAMP) SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2 (Sender's complete address above)

1945
12-26 Left S.S.

2-28 Five support bombarding from inside of lagoon

1944
1-13 Left Long Beach Calif.
1-22 Left Lahaina Roads, Maui Is. 2:00 PM
1-30 Started bombarding Wotje Is.
1-31 Started bombarding Namur and Rai Detonks. Landing troops and Marines.
2-1 While bombarding got hit with 8" shell on fantail. Repaired at sea.
2-2 Went into lagoon, fires still burning all around.
2-6 Left Rai and Namur atoll
2-7 Arrived Majuro atoll took on fuel and ammunition
2-8 Left Majuro
2-9 Arrived Kwajalein atoll, sea plane back to base from Japan
2-15 Left Kwajalein atoll at noon
2-17 Started bombarding Eniwetok Is.
2-18 Went inside lagoon

3-5 Left Eniwetok
3-7 Arrived Majuro
3-22 Left Majuro at noon all shells ducks got together
3-23 Crossed international date line at night, swapped Friday etc 24th.
3-25 Crossed equator, had initiation
3-27 Alanca bombed Pelieu had air attack at night.
4-13 Left Majuro at noon
4-22 Alanca bombed Hollandia New Guinea.
4-23 Close to land, shot of mts. in view
4-25 Left Hollandia
4-29 Crossed international date line had 2 Saturdays
4-29 Alanca bombed Truk got 84 Alanca today

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP? **REPLY BY V...-MAIL** HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1943 16-4642-4

All of the Brown material should be read and analyzed against the backdrop of the *Louisville's* own history since Bob served on the cruiser. The *Lou* participated in several Pacific campaigns. In these battles, the ship was part of a task force. Usually, the *Louisville* assumed a fire support role, i.e., she fired her guns to “soften” enemy defenses before assault landings by United States Marines or soldiers. The *Lou* also bombarded Japanese installations during and after the landings. Assigned to radio, Bob would have played a role, albeit a minor one, in communications between the *Lou* and other task force ships before, during, and after the battles took place.

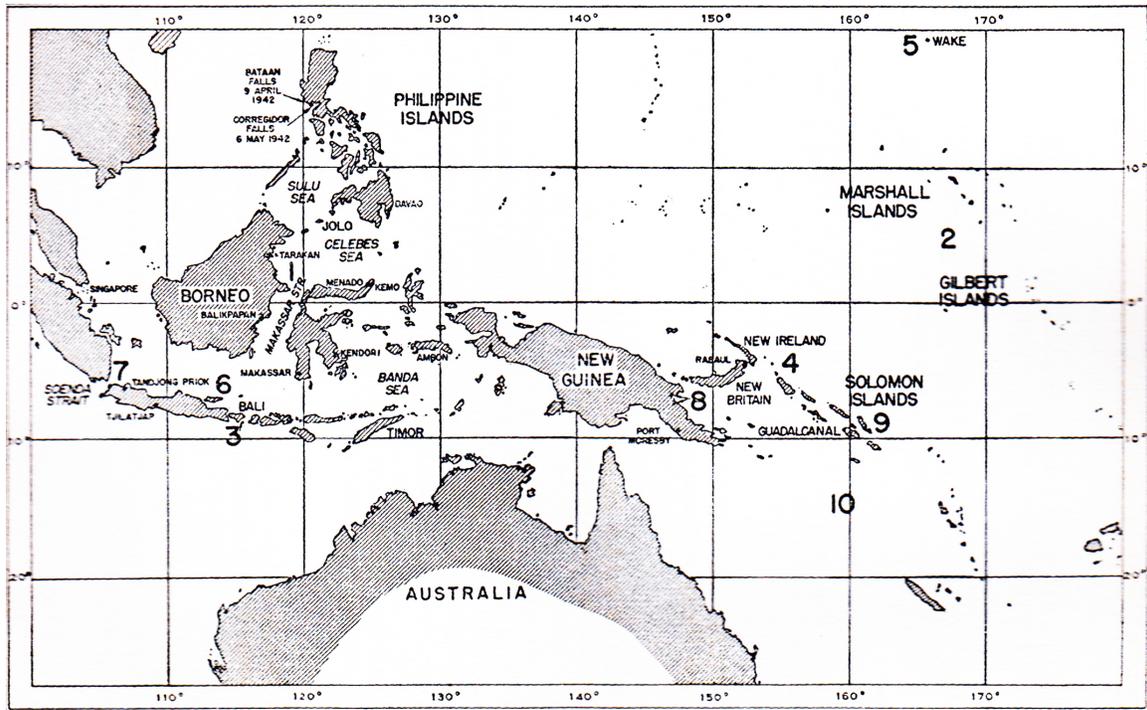
As soon as Bob boarded the cruiser at the end of May 1942, the ship headed for the Aleutians. That was his first campaign. After the Aleutians, the *Lou* participated in more campaigns throughout the Pacific--the Solomon Islands, a second assignment to the Aleutians, the Marshall Islands, the Western Carolines, New Guinea, the Mariana Islands, and the Philippines. Several men on the *Lou* became casualties in the Philippines as the result of kamikaze attacks. One major campaign followed it--Okinawa. There, the *Lou* again sustained serious damage and loss of life, once more from kamikaze strikes. Luckily for Bob, though, he was not on board at the time. As noted earlier, he was at a radio school in Hawaii.

From the campaigns he did participate in, Bob had some dramatic stories to share with Alice, but censorship, of course, forbade him doing that in the letters he mailed home. Once Bob returned to the States, we do not know what details he shared with his wife. If Bob was like other veterans, he told stories, with smiles and laughter, of the good times. Did Bob recount for Alice details of the deadly and historic Philippines Campaign? There, the *Louisville* fought in the biggest naval battle in history. At the same time, the cruiser fired her guns in the last battle line ever fought between opposing navies. Alice playfully asked Bob in one of her letters, “What’s Cookin’ out there in the blue-blue Pacific?” Bob’s answer could have been, “Quite a bit.” Alice had no idea how much history her husband was a part of as a crewmember on the *USS Louisville*. Assigned to communications, Bob had personal knowledge of the messages that went back and forth between the ship and the Navy Command. During the various campaigns, Bob witnessed major moments in World War II history. If only we had written accounts from Bob that expanded, in narrative form, on the chronology he jotted down on the V-Mail and brown envelope. Did he ever write a memoir for his family? Did Bob keep up the diary he mentioned in one of his early letters? These are just two questions for which we have no answers. Posing them, however, reminds us how important such records are if written by someone who was there. Historians call such documents “primary sources.” The Brown Correspondence is one example of a primary source. Bob’s memoir (if he wrote one) and the diary we know he kept early in the war are two other examples.

*The Solomons, “the first real trouble”
(December 1942 – March 1943)*

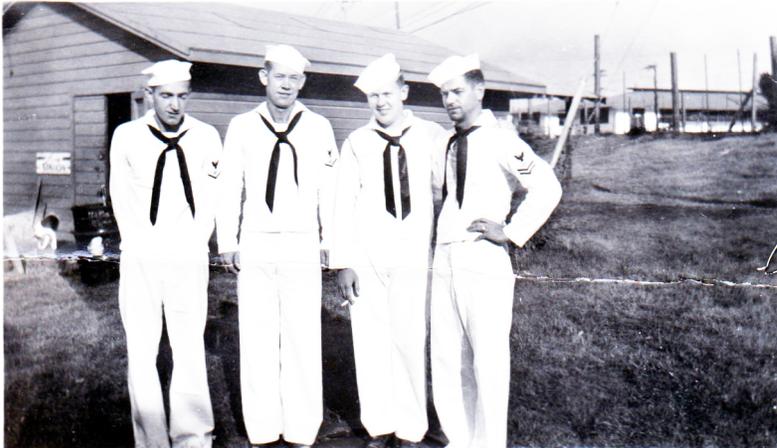
When the *Louisville* left Pearl Harbor at the end of 1942, its original destination was Australia where her crew was to enjoy a much-deserved R & R (rest and

relaxation) after months in the Aleutians. But new orders arrived when the cruiser was at sea. Recall that since August 1942, Marines had been fighting on the Solomon island of Guadalcanal, or as the United States forces came to call it, "The Canal." Americans were trying to wrench control of the island from the Japanese who had landed there in July. If Japan retained possession of Guadalcanal, it could strike at two Allies, Australia and New Zealand. At a minimum, Japan could disrupt Allied communications with Australia. Navy Command directed the *Lou* to join Task Force 67 charged with blocking enemy reinforcements of Guadalcanal and interfering with the enemy supply line for Japanese troops already on the island.⁸⁰



The *Louisville* remained in the Solomon Islands from January until March 1943. The Brown Correspondence contains no letters from these months. Still, Bob must have written Alice. If not for wartime censorship, Bob's letters about this campaign would have been filled with the drama he experienced as a member of the *Lou's* crew. The men saw more combat in the Solomons than they had in earlier campaigns. The action began soon after the *Lou* joined the task force. *Man of War* identified the early morning of January 5, 1943 as the "first real trouble" the *Louisville* encountered. As the task force moved in the waters around the Solomons, enemy aircraft approached the ships. The *Lou's* cruise book described what happened next--"Then, suddenly, the aircraft shrieked down out of the sun in a dive bombing attack." The *Lou* joined other ships in the task force and fired anti-aircraft guns; the Command later credited her with downing one of the Japanese aircraft. Bombs hit two of the United States ships, killing nine men. The *Lou* was not one of those ships.⁸¹

On January 29th, the *Louisville* participated in the last significant naval contest in the fight for The Canal--The Battle of Rennell Island, south of Guadalcanal. Two Japanese aerial attacks, separated by less than an hour, took place against the task force on the 29th. In the first attack, two enemy planes dive-bombed United States ships. The *Lou* had to execute a hard left turn to avoid one of the bombs dropped. Many more Japanese planes took part in the second attack. At one point, all of the enemy planes targeted a column of cruisers that the *Lou* was in. A torpedo hit the *Louisville*, but it did not explode. One of the ship's nicknames, the *Lucky Lou*, seemed well deserved at that moment. But the danger was still there for the cruiser. *Man of War* explained what happened next. "The planes maneuvered around the task force. Then with a shriek of racing motors, they plunged down among us. The volume of anti-aircraft fire scattering in all directions to meet the attack was unsurpassed in the *Louisville's* history up to that time." Two torpedoes hit a cruiser close to the *Lou*, causing severe damage. The *Lucky Lou* and her crew remained in the waters near Guadalcanal through February and into March. One night early in February, Japanese troops evacuated the island, leaving American forces in uncontested control of it. Upon leaving the Solomon Islands in March, the *Lou* headed for dry dock in Wellington, New Zealand. Finally, the crew received two weeks of R & R.⁸²



From the Brown Collection. The sailor on the right might be Bob.

Utilizing the salutation code he had created, Bob's letters from New Zealand would have begun with the greeting, "Dear Alice" to alert her on his location. Early in April, the *Louisville* pulled out of Wellington. After a stop at Pearl Harbor, she headed north, far north, to familiar waters.⁸³

*The Louisville Returns to the Aleutians
(April 1943 - October 1943)*

The 1942 Aleutians Campaign that the *Louisville* participated in had bombarded Japanese installations on Kiska. A year later, United States naval ships again arrived off of the Alaskan coast. Together, they constituted Task Force 16. The *Louisville* was part of the returning armada. The task force was there to support the

landings of American forces on Attu and Kiska. For Attu, the *Louisville* patrolled north of the island to protect the landing forces. For Kiska, she fired her big guns at enemy, onshore targets. As her officers explained in the cruise book, with the Kiska campaign, "A new era had opened in the *Louisville's* life. We had become the power behind the blow which was to put troops ashore in most of the remaining great invasions of the Pacific war."⁸⁴

Before Kiska, though, was Attu. The *Louisville* arrived back in the Aleutians on April 25, 1943. She patrolled the waters around Attu. Even though it was officially spring, it still felt like winter. The *Louisville's* cruise book referred to the weather as a time when the ship, on patrol, was "feeling our way through the fog and cold of the northern sea." The landing on Attu had been scheduled for May 8th, but as one historian noted, "weather so foul and sea so high" forced a postponement. Three days later, the dense fog benefitted the Americans. Japanese planes and submarines simply could not see the invading forces. On the 11th, United States troops landed on Attu to take back the small island from the entrenched Japanese. It took close to three weeks to do so. In the end, the *Louisville* played only a peripheral role in the Battle for Attu. She patrolled west of Attu and, in the words of *Man of War*, the cruiser "protected the inner transports from attack by enemy ships." Two months passed before the Kiska landings allowed the *Louisville* to play an aggressive role in the campaign.⁸⁵

Japanese soldiers on Kiska had built an extensive underground city. The United States military scheduled the American landing for the second week in August 1943. Immediate preparations for it began in July when the Command ordered ships to the waters around Kiska. Battleships, cruisers, and destroyers were to fire upon Kiska to weaken whatever defenses the Japanese had built there. When the *Louisville* arrived off of the island early in July, she initially convoyed troops and supply ships for the upcoming landing. Once again, the cruiser had to contend with extreme weather. "We were caught in one of the worst storms of the Lady's long career," the cruise book recounted. "Winds of gale proportions piled up mountainous seas, until the capital ships of the convoy were rolling and bobbing like corks. For two days our ship fought the lashing sea, rolling and tossing to the beat of its mighty waves." As the cruise book noted, on July 5th the *Louisville's* guns offered "fire support and shore bombardment." It was a significant moment in the ship's history since it was one of the first times she directed her guns against the enemy. Bob and the rest of the men on board knew that, and as such, their pride in being part of her crew must have been even more apparent.⁸⁶

After the early July bombardment of Kiska, ships in the task force returned to Kodiak, only to leave again for Kiska on July 19th. Three days later, having arrived in the waters off of the island, American sailors found clear skies, the first such temperate day in two months. Again, the *Louisville* fired her guns at Kiska. The August 15th landing would not mirror the one on Attu in May since the Americans encountered no enemy troops on Kiska. Cloaked in the bad weather that was

endemic to the Aleutians, Japanese surface ships had snuck into Kiska and successfully evacuated all of their troops.⁸⁷

By the time American forces took back Attu and Kiska, Bob should have mailed Alice several letters. He had, after all, been in the Aleutians for over two months. Unfortunately, the Brown Correspondence contains no letters from Bob written in 1943. It does, however, hold one from Alice. She wrote it on July 11th, at which time the *Louisville* was in the waters off of Kiska. Alice herself was not in Denver then. She was enjoying the tenth day of a vacation in her hometown of St. Francis, Kansas, where her parents still lived. Alice enclosed two letters in the envelope, explaining to Bob “sometimes I have to write a couple in one day to take care of the overflow. My heart is just bursting with love for you dearest—and today it is simply bubbling over, and to take care of the bubbles, you are getting this extra [letter].” Alice enclosed a copy of a poem, two lines of which read, “Where there is God, There is no need.” She disagreed. As Alice wrote Bob, “I used to believe that when I was with you, darling, but now I rebel because even if God is with me, I still need you and want you dearest, always! I’m so terribly in love with you darling—keep praying that we can be together very soon.”

A December 1943 Reunion

Five months later, Alice’s prayer was answered. After Kiska, the *Louisville* drew convoy duty in the North Pacific. In October, the cruiser reported to the Navy’s shipyard on Mare Island for a major overhaul. Alice left Denver for a long-awaited reunion with Bob. In San Francisco, she stayed at the Hotel Clark where she rented Room 402 from December 6–13, 1943. Including a thirty cents charge for long distance telephone calls, the hotel bill totaled \$17.80. In their letters to each other, Bob and Alice often referred to themselves as “Pappy” and “Mommy.” They became that in August 1944 with the birth of their daughter Nancy, conceived in all likelihood at the Hotel Clark.⁸⁸

One Sunday morning after Bob left her, Alice walked up Nob Hill to Grace Cathedral. The imposing church had what Alice described to Bob as “a little chapel with a war shrine.” She wrote his name in a book “for the absent,” especially for servicemen. Alice then lit “a prayer candle” and said a prayer. Every Thursday, as Alice told Bob, the war chapel held a service for those in uniform. At that time, she informed her husband, “The names, written in the book, are read—so yours was one of the names read and especially remembered in the prayers on Thursday, Dec. 30th.” Alice boarded a bus the next day, on December 31st, for the trip back to Denver. She arrived home early on the morning of January 3, 1944.⁸⁹

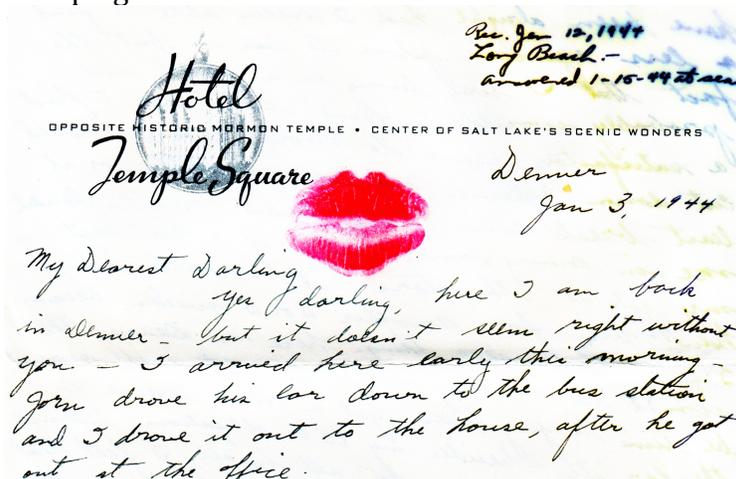
Bob must have given Alice the salutation codes when they saw each other in San Francisco. Because of censorship regulations, he would not have been able to enclose the two pages in one of his earlier letters to her. As the *Louisville* steamed from one Pacific island to another, Alice must have appreciated the myriad of coded salutations Bob created to let her know exactly where he was.

1944 – The Browns Welcome a Daughter
Amidst a Year of More Pacific Campaigns

When the Browns parted in San Francisco, however, Bob did not immediately leave for the Pacific Theater. The New Year began with the *Louisville's* assignment to Task Force 53. It supported the invasion of the Marshall Islands in the Central Pacific. To prepare for that role, from January 2-3, 1944, the *Lou* participated in maneuvers near San Clemente Island, one of the Channel Islands off the coast of Southern California.⁹⁰

Home again in Detroit, Alice wrote Bob on the 3rd. She confessed her reluctance to leave San Francisco. “Even tho the town was lonely without you, it seemed like I was nearer to you as long as I stayed there.” By the time Bob received this letter on January 12th, the *Louisville* was in Long Beach. We know both of these facts because Bob made notations at the top of Alice’s January 3rd letter. The chronology Bob wrote on the blank V-Mail sheet states that the *Lou* “Left Long Beach Calif.” on January 13th, the day after Bob received Alice’s January 3rd letter. On that piece of correspondence from his wife, Bob also duly noted that he answered Alice’s letter “at sea” on the 15th. Task Force 53 stopped for just one day in Hawaii to pick up more supplies. Bob’s handwritten chronology recorded the fact that on the 22nd, the task force “Left Lahina [sic] Roads, Maoi [sic] Is. 2:00 PM.” (Lahaina is a deep-water channel on Maui; naval vessels often anchored there instead of Pearl Harbor.)⁹¹

Alice wrote Bob one other letter in January that is part of the Brown Correspondence. At the very end of it, she implored him to “keep faith with God.” One could argue that he needed to do that more in 1944 than in any other year of his military service. That year, Bob experienced his heaviest days in combat. Until the fall of 1944, none of the *Louisville's* officers or enlisted men had been killed by enemy fire. That changed in the Philippines. The crew learned there that kamikaze attacks upon the *Lou* and casualties among the crew were likely to occur more and more in future campaigns.⁹²



The Marshall Islands
(January - March 1944)

In January 1944, Task Force 53 headed straight from Hawaii to the Marshall Islands, some 2,600 miles to the west. The Marshalls is a coral atoll made up of over thirty islands. Japan had seized the atoll during the previous world war, so it thus had two decades to build military installations there. The *Louisville* arrived off of the Marshalls on January 30th. That evening, the *Lou's* task group joined hundreds of ships to prepare for the assault. Close to one hundred islands and islets stand within the atoll. At the northern end of the atoll's lagoon are two islets, Roi and Namur. The former had an air base and the later a garrison. At the southern end is Kwajalein Island. Japan built a supply depot there. Because of their military installations, the Roi-Namur islets and Kwajalein Island were the main targets for the Marshall Islands Campaign. The battles for these enemy-controlled areas lasted until March 7th.⁹³

D-day for Roi-Namur was January 31st. Fire support units began bombardment before dawn. Later, the *Louisville's* cruise book recorded that the cruiser "opened the intensive pre-invasion bombardment of Namur...The heavy fire schedule was maintained throughout the day with good effect." Bob recorded this information, too, for January 31st in his handwritten chronology--"Started bombarding Namur and Roi Islands. Landing troops and Marines." In the afternoon of D-day, as the *Louisville* waited for orders on additional targets, the ship sustained her first battle damage. It resulted from "friendly," not enemy, fire. The cruise book recounted the incident. "An 8-inch shell from another cruiser ricocheted off the island to explode alongside our starboard quarter. Heavy pieces of shrapnel riddled the chief's quarters, but the crew of the battle dressing station within miraculously escaped injury." Bob's notation for the date February 1st was more concise--"While bombarding, got hit with 8" shell on fantail. Repaired at sea." The next morning, the bombardment increased. Once Marines secured Kwajalein Island on February 3rd, the *Louisville* dropped anchor in its lagoon. Bob wrote in his chronology for February 2nd--"Went into lagoon, fires still burning all around." According to Bob's February 6th entry, the *Louisville* departed Kwajalein some days later--"Left Roi and Namur atoll."⁹⁴

The *Louisville*, however, was not done with its role in the Marshalls Campaign. Bob's chronology documented the cruiser's appearance on February 7th at another island in the Marshalls--"Arrived Majuro atoll took on fuel and ammunition." According to Bob's entries, the *Lou* left Majuro the next day. Bob's chronology gives a stay on the "Kwajalein atoll" from February 9th-15th. February 17th found the cruiser's fire support unit bombarding Eniwetok, another atoll over three hundred miles west northwest of Roi-Namur. Bob wrote more than one entry for Eniwetok in his chronology--for the 17th, "Started bombarding Eniwetok Is." The next day, Bob noted that the *Lou* "Went inside lagoon" and three days later, on the 20th, "Fire support bombarding from inside of lagoon." Once the cruiser steamed into Eniwetok's lagoon, the *Lou* proceeded to mount a heavy bombardment of the atoll's

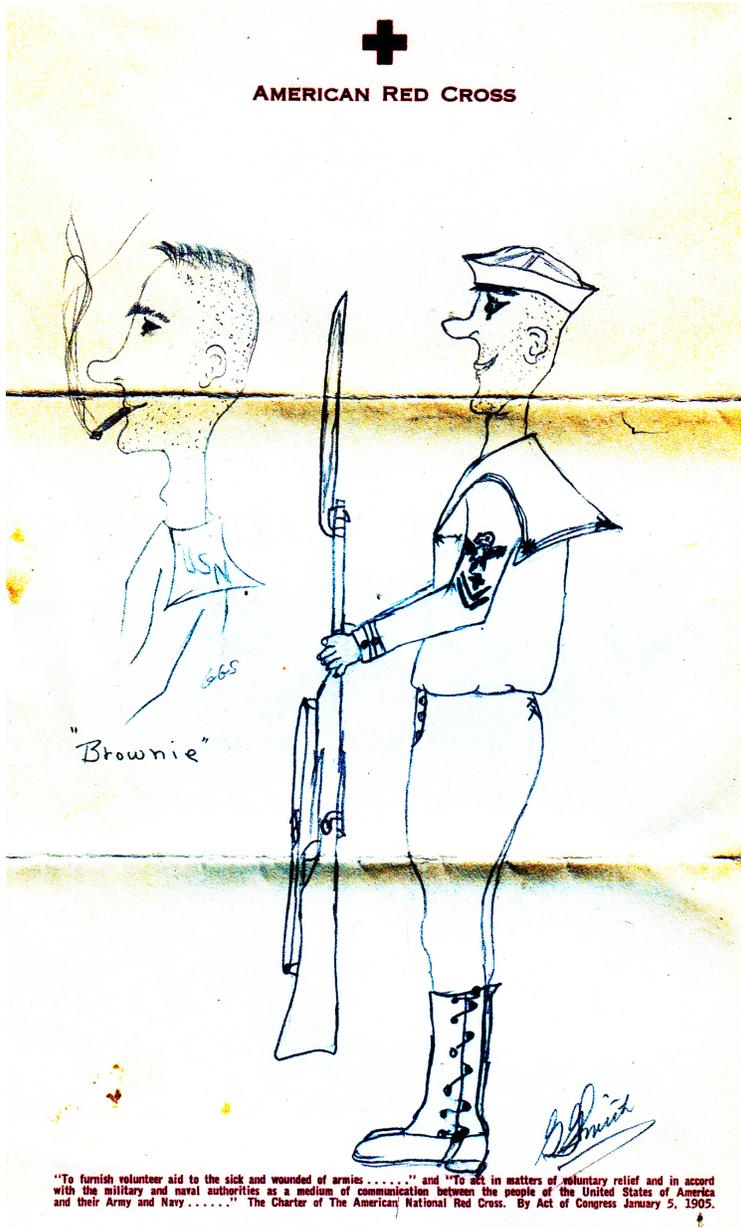
northern island, Engebi which was probably the bombardment Bob referred to that took place inside Eniwetok's lagoon. After the Marines seized Engebi, the *Louisville* remained in Eniwetok's lagoon. The cruiser bombarded one final island in the Marshalls--Parry, northeast of Eniwetok. It was the last island Japan held in the Marshalls. From February 19th-23rd, American naval, air, and surface units fired upon Parry. The goal was to eliminate as much Japanese resistance as possible before Marines landed on the 22nd. The action at Parry, in essence, ended the Marshalls Campaign. The Command and later history judged it a success. The close naval gunfire support, in which the *Louisville* played a role, proved to be a major factor.⁹⁵

The Navy had particularly wanted Eniwetok because it lies furthest west in the Marshall Islands chain. Given its location, the Command determined that the atoll could be used as a temporary naval and air base until more permanent ones could be seized in the Carolines and Marianas, two more island chains west of the Marshalls. As it turned out, those island groups occupied the *Lou's* task force from March through August of 1944. Bob was in the Marianas when his daughter was born.⁹⁶

Bob's handwritten chronology documented the next campaigns in which the *Louisville* participated. As Bob wrote, on March 5, 1944 his ship "Left Eniwetok." The cruiser, he next noted, "Arrived Majuro" (in the Marshalls, recall) on the 7th. The *Lou* stayed in its lagoon for two weeks. Bob might have written Alice some letters during that time. Given his salutation code, they would have begun with the greeting "Darling," the code word for the Marshall Islands. Bob's next entry in his chronology was for the *Lou's* departure from those islands. On March 22nd, he wrote, "Left Majuro at noon all shellbacks got together." This line hinted at the planning of a centuries-old ceremony for sailors who were making their first crossing of the equator. Bob's next two entries referred even more to the ceremony. For March 23rd, he wrote, "Crossed international date line at night, skipped Friday the 24th." Bob recorded the day of his ceremony with an entry for the 25th--"Crossed equator, had initiation."

The ceremony inducted sailors into what the *Louisville's* cruise book identified as the "Royal Order of the Deep." Before a sailor crossed the equator, he was known as a "pollywog," or a "wog." (A pollywog is an early stage in the life of an amphibian, especially a frog.) As the amphibian pollywog matures, it physically changes. In the Crossing the Line ceremony, pollywog sailors underwent a change, too, which was the point of the ceremony. Since "shellbacks" are defined as veteran sailors, after sailors crossed the equator they became "shellbacks." The roots of the ceremony go back to bygone eras when wooden ships sailed the seas with their sails unfurled, the wind as their power source. Seafaring in those days was a more dangerous venture than in modern times. As such, successfully crossing the equator represented a true accomplishment. On the day of the ceremony, a Jolly Roger flag flew above the *Louisville's* deck. According to the cruise book, this signified "Neptunus Rex had come aboard to see that all wayward Pollywogs are properly initiated into the Royal

Order of the Deep." King Neptune and his "Royal Party," the cruise book continued, conducted the initiation "with traditional mock pomp and boisterous ceremony." Newly initiated shellbacks received an elaborate certificate certifying they had gone through the initiation. Perhaps Bob put his in the album he kept on his wartime experiences.⁹⁷



A drawing of Bob, "Brownie," in the Brown Collection. The artist was probably another sailor on the *Louisville*.

The Western Carolines and New Guinea
(March – June 1944)



Still part of Task Force 58, the *Louisville* and the other ships now steamed into the Western Carolines, one more stepping stone in the movement to Japan. They are located north of the large island of New Guinea (which itself is north of Australia). United States Army General Douglas MacArthur planned an invasion of New Guinea. This necessitated Allied control of the Western Carolines that is made up of many small islands. In April and May 1944, the *Louisville* participated in bombardments of Japanese-held islands in the area. The ship's cruise book entitled the chapter on this period "Keep Them Safe." It was a reference to the Navy's goal to make the beaches

and inland areas as secure as possible for the landing troops going on shore against the entrenched Japanese. The *Louisville* helped to do this in more than one way. Initially, the cruiser participated in pre-invasion bombardments. Then as the landings took place, the *Lou's* guns shelled enemy positions. Once American soldiers and Marines got on shore, the ship offered continued gun support to the troops. In less than two weeks beginning late in April 1944, Bob participated in actions at Hollandia (on the coast of New Guinea) and at three islands in the Carolines (Truk, Satawan, and Ponape).⁹⁸

The Brown Correspondence contains only one letter from these months. It is from Alice to Bob, dated April 9, 1944, Easter Sunday. She reminisced on the prior two Easter Sundays, ones they had observed together. The first one occurred in 1941, just four months after their December 1940 wedding. In her letter to Bob, Alice reminded him of that first Easter they shared together as a married couple. "It was dark and raining hard outside and you didn't want to get up-but with a little gentle coaxing on my part, you did get out of bed and we dressed and picked up Irene & Stan." The foursome attended a sunrise service. A breakfast out followed. When they left the restaurant, the sun shined brightly and "the rain clouds had all vanished." Alice and Bob stopped at the church where they had been married. Most assuredly, Bob needed no reminder as to how they observed the next Easter in April 1942. He was in San Diego's Naval Hospital, and Alice had come out from Denver for a short visit. Bob was in the Pacific for Easter 1943 and again, now, in 1944. But Alice adopted a positive attitude. She looked ahead to Easter 1945. Alice referred to "a tiny baby" she would have with her next Easter. "Surely next year peace will have been achieved and we can be together, darling, once again." As it turned out, they would not share another Easter until 1946.

In April 1944, the *Louisville* and the rest of Task Force 58 supported the Allied landings in New Guinea, specifically the operation off Hollandia on April 21st. (Hollandia was a small settlement in Humboldt Bay on the coast of northern New Guinea. Americans, however, identified the entire area around the settlement as "Hollandia.") After the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, Japan invaded parts of northern New Guinea. The enemy's control of areas on the island endangered not only Australian lines of communication but also MacArthur's plans to liberate the Philippines. Bob's handwritten chronology for April 22, 1944 read, "Planes bombed Hollandia New Guinea." He recorded another entry for the next day, one that showed the proximity of the *Lou* to the island--"Close to land, lots of Mts. in view." On April 25th, Bob wrote simply, "Left Hollandia." Next, the *Lou* assisted in the American landings on Truk, an island in the Carolines with important Japanese air bases. On April 30th, to "neutralize enemy positions in the Western Carolines," the *Louisville* and other ships bombarded Satawan Island where the Japanese had an airstrip. Bob's cruiser "led the way" in the bombardment. The *Lou's* cruise book characterized the ship's intense shelling by concluding, "We gave Satawan a through going over." On May 1st, fire support ships bombarded Ponape, another island in the Western Carolines. After Task Force 58's roles in the Hollandia and Western Carolines campaigns, the Command gave the crews a well-deserved rest. Ships,

including the *Louisville*, stopped briefly at Eniwetok before returning for a month to the Majuro lagoon in the Marshalls. For sure, Bob would have written several letters to Alice in those weeks. They all would have begun with the salutation “Darling,” his coded greeting for the Marshalls. Bob’s chronology for June 9, 1944 recorded the *Lou’s* departure with a simple entry, “Left Majuro in a.m.”⁹⁹

The Marianas
(June – August 1944)

The *Louisville’s* next campaign was the Marianas in the Central Pacific. This chain of islands extends some 1,300 miles southward from Tokyo, putting it within Japan’s inner defense perimeter. Fifteen of the Marianas appear on a map as an arc that measures about 425 miles. At the southernmost end of the arc lie the four biggest islands--Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam. Aside from Guam that had been an American possession since 1898, Japan occupied the other main islands in the Marianas during World War I. The Japanese invaded Guam two days after they attacked Pearl Harbor, giving them complete control of the Marianas. The United States Command envisioned advanced American naval bases in the Marianas from which Japanese ships could be attacked. Additionally, the Marianas offered airstrips from which American planes could bomb the main island of Japan. Unlike other Pacific campaigns, the Marianas was not an Allied operation. It was one completely controlled and prosecuted by the United States. The Americans targeted Saipan, Tinian, and Guam as the islands they would go after. The *Louisville* spent two months in the waters off of these three islands.¹⁰⁰

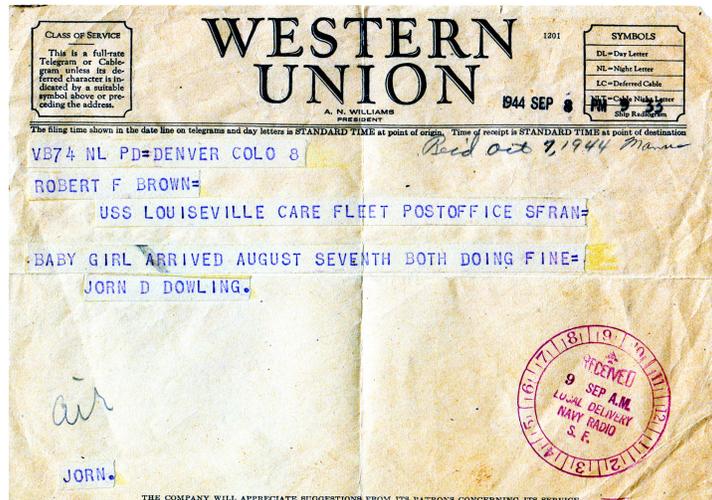
Just as she had been in earlier campaigns, in the Marianas the *Louisville* was part of Task Force 58’s fire support group. Rear Admiral Oldendorf, who commanded the fire support vessels, used the *Lou* as his flagship. Bob and the rest of the crew must have felt pride in the prominent role their cruiser now played in the campaign. Altogether, there were approximately six hundred ships in the task force, ranging from battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, high-speed transports, and tankers. In addition to such vessels, over two thousand aircraft and more than three hundred thousand Navy, Marine, and Army personnel participated in the Marianas Campaign. On June 10th, in the words of the *Louisville’s* officers, “the entire force got underway for the first phase of the greatest amphibious effort yet made against the Jap [sic]. The *Louisville* was guide ship, and the first stop was Saipan.”¹⁰¹

The bombardment of Saipan continued for eleven days and nights. American planes began bombing Saipan on June 13th. Battleships, cruisers, and destroyers followed suit the next day. The *Louisville* led the shore bombardment. Bob recorded this in his chronology for June 14th--“We bombarded Saipan.” The only “time out,” according to the *Louisville’s* cruise book, was “for fueling and taking on ammunition.” At one point, as explained in *Man of War*, the *Louisville* “moved in for close range firing. It was a dangerous mission,” the officers wrote. “An enemy battery could spell doom at any moment.” The Command declared victory at Saipan on July 9th, after which the *Louisville* and others in the task group moved on to the

next island campaign in the Marianas, Tinian. Tinian’s runways and proximity to Saipan (just one mile away) made it the second island in the Marianas that the Command was determined to seize from the Japanese. As with Saipan, at the beginning of the Tinian operation the *Louisville* acted as “the leading unit of the shore bombardment.”¹⁰²

Bob recorded in his chronology the *Louisville’s* first day of action at Tinian. For July 19th he noted, “Started bombing Tinian.” Referring to the upcoming landing of American troops, the *Louisville’s* officers later wrote in the cruise book, “Every gun that could bear from ships and nearby Saipan was speaking--‘keep them safe.’” Like Saipan, Tinian proved to be “a long, hard and grueling fight.” Bombardments continued daily. The *Louisville’s* cruise book credited the Tinian phase of the Marianas Campaign with giving the cruiser her nickname. “The *Lucky Lou* can attribute that name to her action at Tinian. For two days she lay off the southwestern sector of the island, pounding known strong points without receiving return fire. On the third day, a battleship and destroyer, while lying in the same waters, received extensive damage from an unspotted active enemy gun.” For July 26th, Bob’s chronology recounted when the Marines set foot on the island--“Landed troops on Tinian.” His next entry, on August 1st, declared the end of the battle for the island--“Secured Tinian Island.” The *Louisville* and other task force fire support ships moved south for the attack upon Guam.¹⁰³

Ships from the main task force had moved against Guam a few weeks earlier, so by the time the *Louisville* joined the attack on August 2nd, it was almost over. On the 10th, organized Japanese resistance basically ended. The Marianas Campaign had lasted from mid-June until mid-August 1944. The *Louisville* was assigned to it for fifty-nine days. In that time, the cruiser fired 24,948 rounds of ammunition. A prominent historian concluded for the Tinian and Guam phases of the Marianas Campaign, “Never before had the Navy done so much to help a ground operation, or stayed with it for so long.” After the war, Bob could be proud of his wartime service. The *Louisville* and its crew played an important role securing Pacific islands in the Allied movement toward Japan.¹⁰⁴



Bob became a father while he was carrying out his radio duties off the coast of Guam. Daughter Nancy was born on August 7, 1944. A man who was probably a family friend sent Bob a telegram on September 8th announcing the birth.

After leaving Guam, the *Louisville* reported to Eniwetok where the crew drew liberty, loaded supplies, and received mail. The cruiser was not alone since most of the Pacific Fleet anchored at Eniwetok. A week later, on August 19th, the *Lou* set out for Espiritu Santo, one of the islands in the New Hebrides. As Bob wrote in his chronology, on the 24th the *Louisville* "arrived Esperito [sic] Santo." It remained there, according to the chronology, for three days before departing for Guadalcanal. Once at The Canal, the *Lou* and other task force ships prepared for the next campaign. Bob might have written Alice letters at that time, each bearing the greeting, "My Darling," his code for the Solomon Islands. Bob's chronology recorded, for September 6, 1944, a two-word entry--"Left Guadalcanal." His next entry was for yet another Pacific island chain.¹⁰⁵

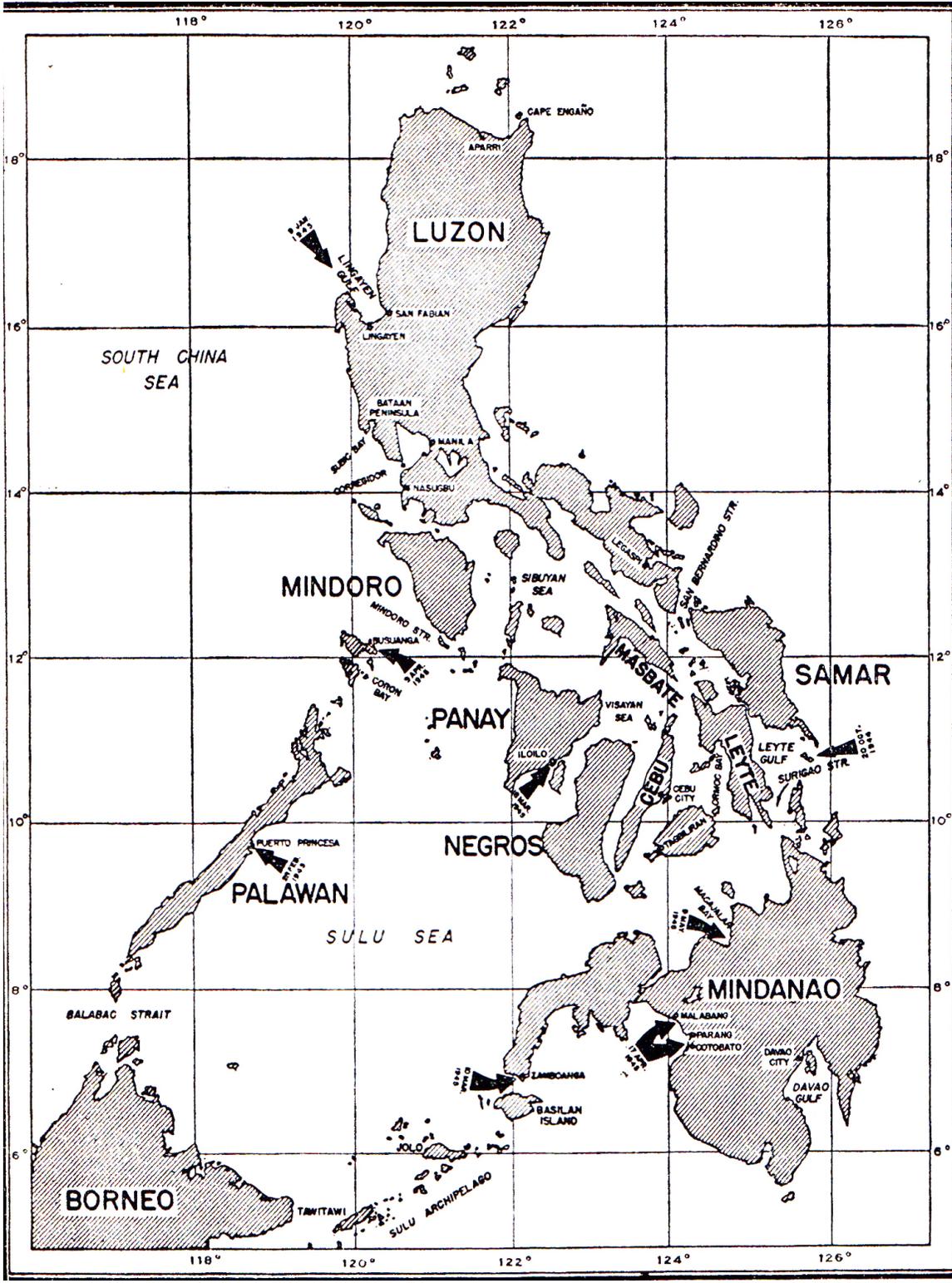
Peleliu
(September 12 - 24, 1944)

Peleliu is an island in the Palau chain, located in the most western part of the Carolines. Japan had built runways on the island and used Peleliu as its primary air base in the Western Carolines. The American military planned to utilize the airstrips to mount strikes against the Philippines. The bombing of Peleliu, by the *Louisville* and other fire support ships, preceded the landings by Marines. Bob recorded this bombardment in his chronology when he wrote, for September 12th, "Started bombing Palau Is." Two hours later, planes from the aircraft carriers dropped their bombs. This preliminary sea and air attack continued for three days before the initial landings, which Bob's chronology identified as happening on September 15th--"Landed troops."¹⁰⁶

Fierce fighting continued on the island for two months. The role of the *Louisville* and other ships in her task group, however, ended long before the Marines took Peleliu. On September 25th, the fire support ships received orders to report to Hollandia. Bob's entry for that day in his chronology read simply, "Left Peleliu Is." As Bob further wrote, on September 27th, the *Lou* "Arrived Hollandia N.G. [New Guinea]." The cruiser stayed there for two days before, as Bob documented for the 29th, the *Louisville* "Left Hollandia." From there, the *Lou* steamed to Manus, an island in the Admiralty chain north of New Guinea where the crew relaxed with some much-needed R & R. Less than three weeks later, however, the *Louisville* pulled up anchor. Bob noted the departure on October 2nd in his chronology--"Left Manus." The cruiser joined a task force that played a role in the liberation of the Philippines. One wonders which Pacific campaign Bob was the most proud of participating in as a crewmember of the *Louisville*. The Philippines would have been a good choice for more than one reason.¹⁰⁷

The Reoccupation of the Philippines
(October 1944)

Of all the island campaigns Americans fought in as they moved closer and closer to the Japanese mainland, the Philippines held particular meaning for them. Some seven thousand islands makeup what had been a United States territory since 1898. The main island of Luzon was the site of a five-month-long battle that began in December 1941 and continued into April 1942. During those months, American and Filipino forces held off a much larger Japanese force on the Bataan Peninsula. In April, however, they were forced to surrender as food and military supplies ran perilously low. The Japanese marched approximately seventy thousand Americans and Filipinos sixty miles to a POW camp. About ten thousand of them died on the journey, many murdered by enemy soldiers, on what became known as the Bataan Death March. With the May surrender of American forces on Corregidor (a small island off of Bataan), Japanese control of Luzon was complete. Island resistance, led by Filipino guerrillas and escaped Allied forces, continued over the next years. In that same period, POWs languished, beaten and starved, in various camps throughout the Philippines. By the fall of 1944, Americans knew about the Bataan Death March. They also had heard, from a handful of escaped POWs, of the brutal treatment surviving American prisoners had been receiving for three years. The *Louisville's* cruise book acknowledged that the Philippines Campaign would be different than earlier ones. As the *Lou* approached the Philippines, the mood of many on board darkened. "It was becoming a personal war," officers wrote in their cruise book. "We were going to avenge the deaths of those who had fought and died on Corregidor and Bataan. This was our land and the Jap could not stop us."¹⁰⁸



The Philippines also held great strategic importance. Once the Americans controlled it again, they would sever critical communication and shipping lines between Japan's home islands and its "Outer Empire" to the south. Additionally, the Philippines, only thirteen hundred miles from Japan's home islands, could become another staging point for the invasion of Japan itself. In preparation for the Philippines Campaign, Allied ships from various ports in New Guinea and the Admiralty Islands moved toward the islands. Bob's chronology recorded that on October 18, 1944, the *Louisville* "arrived and started work on Leyte Isl, Philippines," located southwest of Luzon. The armada included the American Navy's Third and Seventh Fleets. For this campaign, the *Louisville* was one of seven hundred and thirty-eight vessels in the Seventh Fleet. Its commanding admiral divided the fleet into three task forces. The *Louisville* was in the Covering and Support Force. Six battleships, five heavy cruisers (the *Lou* being one of them), six light cruisers, eighteen escort carriers, eighty-six destroyers, twenty-five destroyer escorts, and eleven frigates made up this task force.¹⁰⁹

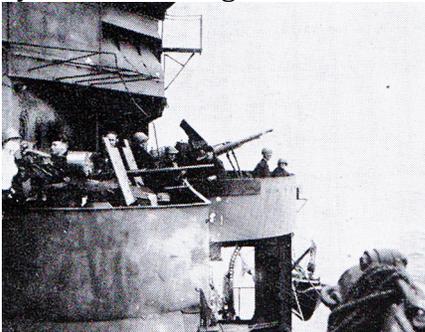
The fire support formations were divided into three units. Admiral Oldendorf commanded the one to which the *Louisville* was assigned. After the *Lou* steamed into Leyte Gulf, pre-bombardment of Leyte Island followed. The beginning of the Philippines' liberation started on October 20, 1944, as Bob recorded in his chronology for that date--"Landed troops on Leyte." In the hours before that happened, ships such as the *Lou* fired their guns and planes mounted air strikes. Thousands of United States Navy landing craft headed for the beaches. The first ones reached the shores at four points on the island, all along the western side of Leyte Gulf. Japanese planes took off from nearby air bases, targeting the invading Allied ships.¹¹⁰

Twice on the landing day, the *Louisville* lived up to her nickname, the *Lucky Lou*. The ship's cruise book described one of those lucky moments in riveting detail. (General MacArthur believed the public now associated the phrase "D-day" with the Normandy landings in France four months earlier. He thus ordered the Leyte landings to be called "A-day.") "It was on 'A' Day morning, as we were resuming our systematic destruction of shore installations, that a dive bomber slipped in over the formation. *Louisville* lookouts were the first to spot him, and our guns were the first to take him under fire. Then, as if in vengeance, the Jap pilot swerved from his course, diving for a low sweep over the ship." The *Louisville* fired her five-inch guns at the plane but failed to hit it. The 40-mms and the 20-mms opened fire as well, but the enemy plane kept coming toward the ship. Before heading to a Japanese airfield on Leyte, the pilot dropped "two wing bombs" above the *Lou*. As ship officers later wrote in the cruise book, "All hands topside stared hypnotized as the bombs arched gracefully away from the speeding plane. Their flight seemed endless." But luck was with the *Louisville*. "The bombs whistled over the ship to explode harmlessly in the sea, not 300 yards away."¹¹¹

A second lucky moment for the *Louisville* occurred around 4:00 p.m. on A-day. The *USS Honolulu*, a light cruiser, had finished her assigned bombardment and was

sitting in the waters of Leyte Gulf about five miles off shore. A Japanese plane dived down out of the sky and dropped a torpedo, clearly aiming for the cruiser. Approximately three minutes later, the torpedo hit the *Honolulu* on her port side. Sixty members of her crew died. The *Honolulu*, as the *Louisville's* officers observed in their cruise book, was "lying not far from our ship."¹¹²

A few days later, on October 22nd, the *Louisville* had a third close call. This time the enemy did not drop a bomb from a plane. Rather, the plane itself became the explosive projectile. The *Lou* was being refueled that afternoon in Leyte Gulf. Crewmembers spotted eight Japanese planes over nearby Samar Island. The *Louisville's* cruise book dramatically documented what happened next. "Two planes broke from the group to start an unhurried circling of the ship...The Jap pilots were waiting for the zero minute—that time of the evening when darkness filters into the eyes of nervous gunners." When one of the enemy pilots thought the light favored



him, he "rolled his plane over on the wing tip and pushed his throttle against the stops. Our gunners sent up a challenge of steel to meet his steep angle dive, but nothing seemed to divert his aim. He drove through the mists of darkness like a projectile. Every man felt the plane was directed at him as he froze in position, waiting for the crash. Then suddenly it was over. The Jap had missed the ship by inches. As he plunged into the water on the starboard side of the boat deck, shrapnel flew back aboard ship, killing one of our men. That was our first kamikaze. It had caused our first action death aboard the *Louisville*."¹¹³

Luckily, the second kamikaze aircraft that targeted the *Lou* on October 22nd was also not successful. Again, the cruise book explained what happened in the words of officers who were there. This second plane "made his do-and-die plunge before we had fully recovered from the first. However, he had waited an instant too long to start his run and narrowly missed the bridge. He crashed into the water a few feet beyond us, in a funeral pyre of smoke and spray."¹¹⁴

The Battle of Leyte Gulf
(October 23 - 26, 1944)

Once American landing forces secured a foothold on Leyte, the Navy focused on protecting the beachheads from enemy sea and air attacks. Unable to prevent the landings, the Japanese became determined to weaken the Americans' hold on the beaches. To execute this plan, one historian described how the Japanese "committed to action virtually every operational fighting ship on the lists of the Imperial Navy," a navy that was still "a formidable surface force." Three Japanese fleets, the scholar continued, "were hurled at our newly established beachhead in the Philippines from three directions." Between October 23rd and 26th, elements in the Third and Seventh Fleets fought Japanese naval forces. Collectively, four of these engagements became

known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf. RT2c Bob Brown and the *Louisville* fought in the one that occurred at Surigao Strait.¹¹⁵

Historians use superlatives to describe the Battle of Leyte Gulf's significance. One scholar, for example, classified it as "the biggest and most multifaceted naval battle in all of history." Another concluded, "The Battle for Leyte Gulf was the greatest naval battle of the Second World War and the largest engagement ever fought on the high seas." One last example of the battle's historic importance relates to what was called "the battle line." That was how opposing navies, dating back to the 17th century, had positioned themselves to fight each other. Ships lined up, end to end, across from each other on the open seas. They then proceeded to fire their broadside guns at each other. As it turned out, four hundred years of naval history came to a close in one episode during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. It happened at Surigao Strait. The *Louisville* and her crew played a role in that last battle line engagement in naval history.¹¹⁶

The four separate actions that make up the Battle of Leyte Gulf occurred, in the words of one historian, "in three different bodies of water separated by as much as 500 miles. Yet all four were fought between dawn of one day and dusk of the next, and all were waged in the repulse of a single, huge Japanese operation." Collectively, the four engagements included the typical carrier-based air strikes that had characterized the Pacific war. The Battle of Leyte Gulf also saw surface ships and subsurface vessels engage each other, from ones as small as patrol (PT) boats to the large battleships. Enemy forces fired at each other from point-blank range to fifteen miles, using weapons as small as machine guns and others as large as the battleships' big guns. The four engagements that together are called the Battle of Leyte Gulf are the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea, the Battle of Surigao Strait, the Battle off Cape Engano, and the Battle off Samar. Altogether, almost two hundred thousand men fought in the Battle of Leyte Gulf; they served on two hundred and eighty-two American, Australian, and Japanese ships. Robert Brown was one of those men and the *USS Louisville* was one of those ships.¹¹⁷

The Battle of Surigao Strait
(October 24 - 25, 1944)

"Big Naval battle in Leyte Bay and Surigao Strait. We sank 1 [Japanese] destroyer, 1 battleship, 1 cruiser, left another battleship burning. Total for night, 9 ships."

Bob's October 25, 1944 entry in his chronology of the *Louisville's* campaigns

The southern waters of Leyte Gulf flow into a body of water called Surigao Strait. Some thirty miles long, the strait runs north and south. It connects the Mindanao Sea in the south with Leyte Gulf in the north. The admiral in charge of the United States' Seventh Fleet believed the Japanese would use Surigao Strait to enter Leyte Gulf. If they did so, the Japanese ships would come into the strait through its twelve-mile-wide southern entrance. The admiral thus ordered Oldendorf's Bombardment and Fire Support Group to guard the twenty-five-mile-wide northern

entrance to the strait. Ships under Oldendorf's command became Task Force 77.2. The armada consisted of six battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and twenty-four destroyers. Additionally, thirty-nine PT boats were already guarding the southern entrance of Surigao Strait. They, too, would now fall under Oldendorf's command. In the words of one historian, the predictability of Japan's movement and the topography of the strait "allowed Oldendorf to lay a trap."¹¹⁸

Oldendorf once more chose the *Louisville* as his flagship. In the estimation of its officers, the ship "had reached the pinnacle of her career." The *Lou's* cruise book, with clear pride, concluded, "She was the flagship that spear-headed the greatest surface engagement of this war." Task Force 77.2 weighed anchor on the night of October 24th. The crew of the *Louisville* knew what awaited them. The day before, according to the cruise book, "scuttlebutt raced like wildfire through the ship of the approach of large enemy naval forces." The next day, once the task force was on its way, Oldendorf addressed the men through the loudspeakers. He verified what they already knew--a battle was imminent. Officers from the *Louisville* later observed, "On our success hinged the fate of thousands of men ashore and in troop transports in the Gulf....Silently, grimly, we steamed in column down the Gulf with the *Lou* in the van."¹¹⁹

Oldendorf strategically placed his ships in key positions from the northern end of Surigao Strait to the waters outside of its southern end. The admiral ordered the "main battle line" (composed of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers) to the extreme northern end of the strait. Six battleships formed the center of the main battle line. Five had been at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941--the *Pennsylvania*, the *Tennessee*, the *Maryland*, the *West Virginia*, and the *California*. The Japanese attack that morning heavily damaged the first three, and Japanese planes sank the last two. (Salvage work eventually made the *West Virginia* and the *California* fit again for duty.) These five battleships, along with the *Mississippi*, now awaited their opportunity for revenge against the Japanese fleet.¹²⁰

Three or four thousand yards directly south of the battleships, cruisers and destroyers formed a left and right flank for the center of the battle line position. The heavy cruisers (the *Louisville*, the *Portland*, and the *Minneapolis*) assumed their positions on the left flank. Two light cruisers and nine destroyers completed the left flank. The remaining heavy and light cruisers, along with some destroyers, made up the right flank. Five to six miles south of the battle line, Oldendorf positioned three destroyer squadrons. Below them, at the extreme end of Surigao Strait and into Mindanao Sea, thirty-nine PT boats stood watch. These small crafts were "the eyes of the fleet."¹²¹

For hours, the *Louisville's* officers later recalled, "Alert and apprehensive, we steamed back and forth across Surigao Strait, waiting our prey." The left flank cruisers, which included the *Lucky Lou*, repeated that movement again and again some two-and-a-half miles south of the battle line. The cruisers moved ten miles east and then ten miles west at a speed of five knots. On the night of the 24th, a

quarter-moon disappeared in the sky just minutes after midnight. The strait was now completely dark, with visibility in the water under three miles. It was a windless night and the sea was calm. A five-knot-wind and lightening appeared now and then. One can imagine the tension Bob and other crewmen felt on board the *Lou*. With his position in radio, Bob must have known more than most of the other enlisted men as to what was transpiring as Oldendorf dictated communications between his flagship and other vessels under his command.¹²²

PT boats patrolled about one hundred miles south of the main battle line. Right before midnight on October 24th, some of them sighted Japanese ships entering Surigao Strait. They moved up the narrow entrance to the strait in a column, surrounded by darkness. The Japanese fired upon the PT boats, hitting some of them. The enemy ships did not sustain any damage from the PT boats. By the time this phase of the Battle of Surigao Strait ended, six crewmen on the PT boats were dead. On board the *Louisville*, Oldendorf first received word of the engagements at 12:26 a.m. In the words of the *Lou's* cruise book, "Tension electrified the air." Before the Japanese could come within range of the battle line's big guns, the enemy first had to confront United States destroyers. Those engagements began shortly before 3:00 a.m., about three hours since the PT boats had first encountered the Japanese fleet. For over an hour, the American destroyers fired at the enemy as the battleships and cruisers waited their turn.¹²³

Finally, about ten minutes before 4:00 a.m., the foremost Japanese ships were 15,600 yards (almost nine miles) from the *Louisville*. The *Lou*, recall, was positioned in the left flank, below the battle line. The battle line itself was about 21,000 yards from the enemy ships. Moments later, at 3:51 a.m., Oldendorf ordered all ships to "open fire." The five left flank cruisers immediately began firing their 8-inch and 6-inch guns. It is not surprising that the *Louisville*, serving as the flagship, was the first cruiser to do so. About a minute later, cruisers on the right flank followed suit. The battleships of the main battle line fired next, aiming their projectiles over the cruisers.¹²⁴

The *Louisville's* cruise book dramatically described what happened in the following minutes. "A blinding spurt of fire billowed into massive, rolling flames, filled with acrid, orange smoke. The *Lady* lifted a few feet, recoiled to port and shook as her nine-gun salvo hurled over a ton of steel and explosives at the approaching column of ships...Other ships opened up at our signal. Night was day as their guns belched flame and fire. Our attention was riveted on the first group of shells as they descended toward the target. A hit!" Men on the *Louisville* cheered. The Japanese ship at the head of the column "was a mass of flames shooting hundreds of feet into the sky...The enemy never quite knew what happened as salvo after salvo tore into him, ripping ships apart like matchboxes, setting off magazines that scattered the remnants of battered hulls into oblivion. Time and again, the *Lou's* guns roared. Shaking and shuddering from stem to stern with each blast of the turrets, we continued our devastating fire."¹²⁵

By 6:00 that morning, ships under Oldendorf's command saw the damage they had done to the Japanese fleet by looking at the surrounding waters. Debris from enemy vessels, some of it on fire, littered the strait. Oil slicks were visible on the water's surface. In the Battle of Surigao Strait, the United States task force possessed, in the words of one naval historian, "overwhelming strength." The number of ships lost and the casualty counts testified to the American advantages. Oldendorf's task force lost no ship in the Battle of Surigao Strait that morning, although enemy gunfire damaged six PT boats. In respect to major vessels, only one destroyer, the *Grant*, was severely hit. (British and American shells damaged the *Grant*.) In comparison, the American task force sank five of the seven Japanese ships--both battleships and three of the four destroyers. The remaining two Japanese ships were badly damaged. With so many enemy ships sunk, scholars estimate the number of Japanese who died in the Battle of Surigao Strait totaled in the thousands, with one concluding it might have been over five thousand. American deaths numbered thirty-nine (thirty-four of them died on board the *Grant*); another one hundred and fourteen were wounded (ninety-four of those were on the *Grant*).¹²⁶

In the decades after the Battle of Surigao Strait, probably few if any of the men on board the American ships understood the history they had just brought to a close. Since the 17th century, naval ships had fired upon each other in a battle line formation. The last time it was employed was four hundred years later in the Battle of Surigao Strait. The era of the battleship ended with World War II. It did not take long in that global conflict for the aircraft carrier to overshadow the battlegroup. With the end of the battleship's tactical importance came the end of the battle line. In the conclusion of one historian who spoke for others, Surigao Strait "was the last engagement of a battle line." Bob Brown was a part of that history even though he may not have realized it.¹²⁷

What happened in Surigao Strait in the early morning hours of October 25, 1944 was but one part of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. As noted earlier, that battle goes down in history as the largest naval engagement between the Allies and enemy forces in World War II as well as the largest naval engagement in all of history. It was unquestionably an Allied victory. After the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the United States held the naval advantage in the Pacific Theater. The Japanese navy suffered such a defeat that it would never again pose a real danger to the Allies. Henceforth, Japan relied on its land forces and air power in its unsuccessful attempts to check the Allied advance toward the homeland. One part of the air power was the use of kamikaze missions. Bob and the *Louisville* had already been introduced to that new method of Japanese warfare in the Philippines. In his chronology entry for October 27, 1944, Bob wrote, "2 planes suicide dive on ship, missed but shrapnel flew all over, 1 man killed, 5 wounded Planes blew up." For the next day, the 28th, Bob jotted down on his chronology just three words, "More air attacks." Bob and the whole crew must have felt relieved when the *Louisville*, as Bob wrote for October 30th, "Left Philippines."¹²⁸

Bob's next entries should be read as documenting how much further away the *Louisville* traveled from the dangers the crew had lived through in the Philippines. For October 31st, Bob wrote, "Passed Palau." His entry for November 1st read, "arrived Ulithi Is. Rec'd mesg [message] that Japs were raising hell with operations at Leyte. Under 24 Hr. Notice." As a member of radio, Bob would have known the information in this communication before the vast majority of the crew did. The atoll of Ulithi is part of the Carolines. The *Lou* re-provisioned there. It was clear from the November 1st entry that the cruiser would be returning to the battle. In the words of the ship's cruise book, for two days the crew "had been sweating when line after line of men rushed to load stores and ammunition from the supply ships." On November 2nd, Bob's chronology entry noted that the *Lou* "Pulled out at noon 25 Knots with Part of 3rd fleet." The next day, the *Louisville* joined Task Group 38.3. It headed back to the Philippines to support future landings on Luzon. (The Command had not yet set a date for those landings.) The task group participated in strikes against the city of Manila and other locations on Luzon. As Bob recorded in his chronology, on November 6th, the *Louisville* "started back for Ulithi." There, the ship underwent repairs. As soon as those were completed, the cruiser took Oldendorf to Hollandia for a meeting with MacArthur and the Navy commander of the Seventh Fleet. They needed to finalize plans for the invasion of Luzon. Bob and his fellow crewmen got a brief respite from the war while they waited to pick up Oldendorf. The *Louisville* crewmen spent their week of wait-time on the island of Manus, north of New Guinea.¹²⁹

It was probably while the *Louisville* was in Manus that Bob wrote Alice a letter dated December 4th. (It is the only 1944 letter from Bob in the Brown Correspondence.) The salutation partially conformed to their secret code, the one Bob had detailed in two handwritten pages. In the December 4, 1944 letter, Bob used the greeting "Hello Precious." The code for the Philippines was "Hi Precious." Did Bob absentmindedly alter the first word, or did he purposely change it to signal to Alice that they were still involved with the Philippines, but the ship was not at that moment in the waters near those islands? American newspapers carried the story of the Battle at Leyte Gulf, although devoid of details such as the names of United States Navy ships involved in the battle. In any event, Bob's December 4th letter began on a joyful note--last night, he received four letters from her. One ran sixteen-pages. (This letter from Alice is not in the Brown Correspondence.) As Bob explained it, the sheets gave him "all of the details from start to finish regarding the birth of our first child." In the letter, Alice also shared some problems she suffered during her pregnancy. Her condition had been so serious that Alice told Bob they might not be able to have another child. Bob admitted to his wife that such news "is somewhat of a shock." But, he added, "it is much better that we can face it squarely." Bob believed "Everything will turn out for the best whether we can or can't have another to grow up with Nancy." Bob, added, too, that they would be careful when they reunited. "We will take all precautions the next time we are together and until we are back together for good."

While anchored at Manus, the task force's fire and support unit received a new commander, Rear Admiral Thomas Chandler. (Oldendorf had been promoted from rear admiral to vice admiral.) Soon after Bob wrote Alice on December 4th, Chandler and the *Louisville* returned to Leyte Gulf, the staging area for the Luzon invasion. Bob's handwritten chronology gives December 8th as the departure date for when his crew "Left Manus" and December 12th as the date when the *Louisville* "Arrived Leyte." There, the *Lou* watched for Japanese air attacks, now knowing all too well that an enemy plane could be a kamikaze strike. "We were continuously alerted," the cruise book explained, "to keep Jap planes out of our stack." Nevertheless, enemy attacks occurred. On the evening of December 20th, for example, the *Louisville* shot down a Japanese plane off the starboard quarter. On Christmas Day, Bob recorded in his chronology that the *Lou* "Left Leyte after Jap task force." He further recorded the fact that on the 26th, the cruiser "Arrived Mendon." The island's name is not clear; Bob may have meant "Mindoro" where American forces had landed in mid-December. In any event, what appears to be "Mendon" in Bob's handwriting was unquestionably an island in the Philippines that Americans controlled. On December 27th, Bob's chronology documented that the *Lou* "left Mendon" and on the 28th it "Arrived Leyte."¹³⁰

Back in the States, Alice sat down on January 1st to write Bob. She omitted the tradition greeting, "Happy New Year." As Alice concluded, "I know that it can't really be a happy year until we are reunited and the three of us can live happily together." Her next sentences did not look forward, however. Rather, they turned back to thoughts about the holiday season that had just ended. "This Christmas has been a strange paradox, as has every Christmas since the war started—we are supposed to be celebrating the birthday of the Prince of Peace and here our loved ones are fighting and killing in order to bring about peace." With the phrase "our loved ones," Alice appears to be referring to Bob and other family members or friends in uniform. If she had received letters from Bob with the salutation "Hi Precious," she knew he was in the Philippines. Denver's newspapers reported on, to use Alice's words, the "fighting and killing" that was taking place there. Her next thoughts emphasized hope, however, in spite of the deaths. "Perhaps next Christmas we will have peace on earth—good will toward men—and oh my darling, I pray and hope that you will be with us long before Christmas 1945."

The day after Alice wrote this letter, the *Louisville* left the waters around Leyte, bound for Luzon. It was near midnight on January 2, 1945. In his chronology, Bob wrote "Left Leyte" under the date January 3, 1945. The new month proved to be a deadly one for the *Lucky Lou*.

Lingayen Gulf
(January 5 - 6, 1945)

Out of the thousands of islands in the Philippines, Luzon was the key one for the United States military. Symbolically, it was the island that held emotional meaning because of Bataan and Corregidor. Strategically, it was the largest of the

Philippine Islands and the location where the United States military had built its installations in the prewar years. The Japanese took over those bases early in 1942. Now, three years later, the American military was determined to take back Luzon more than any other island in the Philippines. The Navy committed over eight hundred and fifty ships to the Luzon operation. Vice Admiral Oldendorf commanded the fire support group that consisted of six battleships, nine cruisers, and thirty destroyers. It was charged with bombarding the beaches in the days before the invasion. The Command scheduled the landings, initially on the southern and southeastern coasts, for January 9th. Fire and support ships were to begin pre-bombardment on the 6th.¹³¹

The job before the *Louisville* and other ships in her task group was similar to what the crews had been doing for more than a year. In the words of the *Lou's* cruise book, fire and support ships used their guns "to neutralize and destroy enemy shore installations such as pillboxes, stores, coast artillery, and personnel concentrations." It was by no means a task devoid of danger. The cruise book pointed out that "air coverage" for the fire and support group "was seldom possible." During the Philippines Campaign, the danger of Japanese air attacks on United States naval vessels included not only traditional aerial bombing of the ships, but also the possibility that an enemy plane could be a kamikaze.¹³²

In the late afternoon of January 4th, the fire and support group headed north to Luzon. Rear Admiral Chandler was on board his flagship, the *Louisville*. In the Sulu Sea area, located in the southwestern part of the Philippines, the task group made its way past islands still held by the Japanese. Crewmembers heard the call to General Quarters when enemy planes were sighted overhead. A kamikaze targeted the *USS Ommaney Bay*, a carrier escort. In his handwritten chronology, Bob recorded what happened next in his entry for January 4th--"suicide plane sank one carrier." His words failed to capture the tragedy of the enemy's action. The ship and ninety-three members of her crew were lost. After the enemy attack ended, the Japanese planes remained in the area. As *Louisville's* officers wrote in the cruise book, "Like the tiger stalking her prey, they were always with us." Twenty-four hours later, kamikazes went after the *Louisville*.¹³³

When that happened on January 5th, the fire and support group was less than one hundred and fifty miles off of Luzon. Japanese planes from an airbase on the island took off to attack the American ships. The alarm was sounded on board the vessels--"Bogies—low—closing fast." Two kamikazes dived toward the *Louisville*. Her cruise book's firsthand account recorded the tense-filled minutes that followed. "The first plane rushed into an angular dive at the ship." The *Lou's* guns fired at the enemy plane. Still, as the cruise book explained, "On and on it came through the great barrage of steel. It seemed nothing could stop it from crashing into us. Then suddenly it made a last-minute swerve from the *Louisville* to plow into a nearby destroyer." Once again, the *Lucky Lou* confirmed the validity of her nickname. However, her luck did not hold.¹³⁴

A second kamikaze attacked the *Louisville* moments later. In the cruise book, officers recounted what happened next. "As the second plane plunged at us, all port guns were immediately on it. Tense figures throughout the ship drew a sigh of relief as they saw projectiles drive into the rapidly descending plane, setting it ablaze. However, their relief was soon spent. The plane merely wavered and then plunged on towards the ship. The crescendo of its motor became a roar, reaching its zenith with a terrific explosion as she crashed into turret two, ripping the gun compartment open and sending a wall of fire up through the superstructure to the main battery director at the foretop." Just for a short period, "The engines backed down at the Captain's order" (i.e., the engines reversed the rotation of the propellers so the ship pulled backward instead of forward). The cruise book's account followed with even more details. "With control established in Batt. Two, we proceeded at full speed ahead to regain our position. Quickly, reinforcements were rushed to re-man the AA batteries affected and they were reorganized to continue the fight." Numerically, casualties were light. Although many men were burned, only one crewmember was dead. Bob's chronology described the losses this way in his January 5th entry--"Suicide dive bomber hit #2 turret, 1 killed, 15 injured."¹³⁵



A kamikaze (circled in the air above the ship's bow) approaches the *Louisville*. This photo is in *Man of War*, the *Lou's* cruise book.

The *Louisville* was not so lucky when the second kamikaze hit occurred on January 6th. The enemy strike against the fire support group involved an estimated one hundred Japanese planes. The day had begun with an early morning bombardment of Japanese beach installations by the *Louisville* and other ships. The first part of Bob's January 6th entry in his chronology acknowledged that in spite of kamikaze assaults, the *Lou* continued her job--"Air attacks heavy. Started bombarding Luzon." Enemy air attacks on the fire and support vessels occurred throughout the morning and into the early afternoon. The ships' guns, however, fought them off. Around 3:30 p.m., the fire and support group entered Lingayen Gulf on the northwestern side of Luzon, looking for more Japanese defenses to fire upon. After bombarding Lingayen beaches, the task group headed for the open sea. But soon after that change in course, Japanese planes mounted a powerful attack. It was about 5:30 p.m. when enemy aircraft dived toward the *Louisville*. Those who were there described what happened next in the pages of the *Lou's* cruise book. "All ships opened fire simultaneously as the planes came in. The sky, in a matter of seconds, became a billowing cloud of smoke, flying steel, and flaming planes." Japanese suicide planes again streaked down toward the *Louisville*. "Three kamikazes closed in on our starboard bow in an attempt to break through our fire." Guns from the *Lou* and another cruiser shot down two of the planes. But, as the cruise book recounted, "the third, flying low over the water, continued to drive upon us...Gun crews shrieked curses as the plane came onward through their steady rain of bullets. A 20-mm. machine gun got him fifty yards from the ship."¹³⁶

Crewmembers, however, focusing as they were on this plane, did not see another kamikaze "coming in at an intense speed off the starboard quarter." The cruise book continued, "Guns swung to fire on him, but to no avail...One of its bombs exploded above an ill-fated 40-mm. *Louisville* gun, killing the gun crew which had fired on the plane; the other bomb exploded at the height of the open bridge just outside the Captain's sea cabin, hurling death-dealing shrapnel throughout the area." Admiral Chandler was "critically burned" along with other crewmen. The cruise book described the horror that ensued. "The entire forecastle was engulfed in flames. The starboard side became the funeral pyre of many of those men who were stationed in the area of the hit. Men horribly burned stumbled to assist firefighters. Persistently, relentlessly, damage control parties fought to save the ship, to beat back the inferno. In the after half of the ship, men, choking and gasping for air as the thick smoke, stinking of burned flesh and paint, enveloped them, stood their ground feeding the anti-aircraft guns. They blazed away at two other suiciders closing in on us, making a total of six fired upon in a few minutes."¹³⁷

The *Louisville's* cruise book attempted to convey the anguish that confronted crewmembers. "Lingayen Gulf became a holocaust. The forward portion of the ship was a tragedy of twisted plates, twisted bodies, and twisted minds. High in the superstructure in the main battery fire control station, men wondered if they were trapped. On bended knees, one of them prayed." Below, on the decks, "out of the flames, broken, burned bodies pulled themselves over blackened fire hose, through stinging salt water, along the blackened decks to the arms of those who mercifully

injected morphine, applied rudimentary first aid, lifted them into the wire-meshed battle stretchers and lowered them to safer areas." Over one hundred and twenty-five crewmen had been burned. Damaged as she was, the Command ordered the cruiser to safer waters. Casualties on board the *Louisville* were high. Thirty-two members of the crew had been killed and fifty-six wounded. (Admiral Chandler died of his burns the day following the attack.) Bob summarized all of this in his chronology with the sentence, "In Eve plane dove into bridge, killed admiral and about 40 others."¹³⁸

Even after the damage inflicted on the *Louisville* in the kamikaze attacks, the cruiser again bombarded the beaches on Luzon in preparation for the January 9th landings. The *Lou* was forced to withdraw from action once the extent of the injuries she sustained became clear. The *Louisville* left the waters off of Luzon after the landings took place. She joined other ships in need of major repairs. Bob recorded this decision in his chronology for January 7th--"Moved out with carrier force." The vessels first stopped at Leyte Gulf where the wounded were transferred to hospital ships. According to Bob's chronology, on the 8th the *Lou* arrived at Luzon. His entry for January 10th read, "Left Luzon with crippled ships and transports." From the Philippines, the *Louisville* proceeded on to Manus.¹³⁹

Bob wrote Alice on January 14th, apparently while the *Lou* steamed toward Manus. He had just received her December 13th letter. Bob could not, of course, share anything about the Philippines campaign with her in his letter--not the historic encounter with the Japanese fleet in Surigao Strait, not the kamikaze attacks, and not the resulting casualties on board the *Louisville*. If he wanted to tell her about any of that, it would have to wait until they saw each other in person. Instead, when Bob wrote her on January 14th, he reminisced and shared a dream for the future. Bob referenced a trip they had made to the Grand Canyon. He wanted to drive back there, "and perhaps see it from both sides besides taking that pony trip down in the canyon. It is a fascinating hole..." Bob's letter also spoke to how much he missed Alice's physical presence. It appears that in her December 13th letter, she had written Bob about her longing for him. He replied in the same spirit. "Let me assure you Dear, you are not alone in hunger for love [sic], for I also have been waiting over twelve long months for a little more of your lovin. So look out mamma cause one of these days yo [sic] pappy may get to come home. Well, enough said about it for the present, more when I see you."

Before too long, Bob was able to do just that. Given the damage the *Louisville* sustained because of the kamikaze attacks, Bob probably knew that the ship would have to return to the West Coast for repairs. As such, his phrase in the letter "more when I see you" might indicate he knew it would not be long until Alice made a fourth trip from Colorado to California. What Bob had no way of knowing was that the worst of the war was behind him.

A Reunion and a Transfer

According to Bob's chronology, the *Louisville* "Arrived Manus" on January 18, 1945. Two days later, he wrote "Left Manus." The *Lou* did so as part of a convoy bound for Pearl Harbor. Bob recorded that his ship arrived at Pearl on the 29th. The cruiser, however, did not stay long in Hawaii. Bob's January 31st entry in his chronology read "Left Pearl." His next entry was for February 6th--"arrived SF." The *Louisville* underwent repairs at the Mare Island Navy Yard. Fourteen months had passed since the ship had been home. The *Louisville* spent February, March, and part of April on the West Coast. Her crew was thus in the States when President Roosevelt died suddenly on April 14th. Together, Bob and Alice "heard the news standing on the quarter deck of the *Louisville*," as she later wrote.¹⁴⁰

We do not know exactly when Alice arrived in San Francisco for her fourth reunion with Bob. A keepsake from the *Louisville* in the Brown Collection hints at a stay that lasted for weeks, not days. It is a program from a "Ship's Company Dance"



held in San Francisco's Palace Hotel on the evening of March 26, 1945. The Browns must have attended the dance, the most likely explanation of why they kept the program. A letter Alice wrote Bob on the night of April 16, 1945 tells us when she left the city by train for home. "Once again, we have bid one another goodbye—you have sailed out under the Golden Gate into the broad expanse of the vast Pacific, and I am headed East on the Exposition Flier, back to Denver and Nancy!" (Bob made a notation on this letter that he had left San Francisco two days earlier, on the 14th.) Alice wrote her husband on the 16th while in her assigned railroad car berth. She worried that Bob may not be able to read every one of her words because of the rough train ride. During the daytime hours, Alice sat in a seat, as she described it to

Bob, "surrounded by Navy men—a draft of 10 or 11 men who were on their way to Glenwood Springs to the Naval Hospital." According to Alice, age-wise the sailors fell into one of two extremes--"Most of them were real old or very young." Alice spoke with just a few of the men, she assured her husband, "then only because they approached me first, and when they saw that I was blue—tired and about to cry—they seemed to understand my terrible heartache."¹⁴¹

In mid-April, the *Lou* was again ready for duty. She steamed down the coast to San Diego for what the cruise book described as some "refresher training" and an "intensive shakedown." By the end of April, the *Louisville's* time in San Diego came to an end. She set out for Pearl Harbor, arriving there on May 5th. In Hawaii, the ship refueled. The *Lou* also brought on board, in the words of her officers, "ton after ton of supplies...tucking enough TNT inside our tight steel skin to blow us over the moon." Clearly, the *Louisville* was again heading into action. The ship left for Guam on May 10th. From there, it departed for the *Lou's* last World War II campaign, which was also the last major battle of the war.¹⁴²

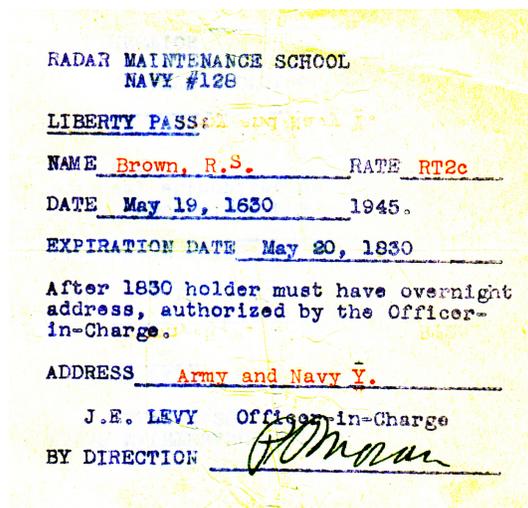
Alice understandably felt low after being once again separated from Bob. In a postscript to an April 27, 1945 letter to him, Alice put what she called her “terrible heartache” in context. She added a postscript dated April 28th. Every month recall, that day held special meaning for the Browns. In this postscript from April 28th, Alice observed, “Good morning, my sweet, and a happy anniversary to you—4 years and 4 months—and we are still doing alright. Yes, we have our ups & downs—but mostly it is up.”

A few weeks later, in another letter, Alice confessed she still “sometimes” felt “down.” In a way, Alice wrote for all World War II couples when she referred to how she felt torn. Alice understood, with the United States fighting a war, this was not a time when she should be self-centered. Yet she still mourned the years together they had lost because of the war. “I sometimes feel that my love for you has been selfish—and I don’t want it that way, ever, darling—I love you so very deeply, dearest, and I am miserable when we cannot be together. The short time we had in S.F. only served to make me miss you more desperately than ever, and also made me realize how much we have missed these last three years.”¹⁴³

When Alice wrote that letter, Americans had just received the news that Germany had surrendered. It happened on May 8th, a date that became known as V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day). Alice described some Home Front responses in one of her letters to Bob. “We did not do any celebrating—business houses closed and there were church services of prayer and thanksgiving—Pres. Truman spoke—Churchill and King George, and other prominent people, but everyone stressed the fact that we are only half thru and we still have a big job to do. Last Sunday, which was Mother’s Day, was set aside by the President for a day of special prayer for people of this nation to attend church and thank God that half of the war is over.”¹⁴⁴

News of V-E Day brought a large measure of relief to all Americans even though they understood, as Alice put it, that only “half of the war is over.” For Alice herself,

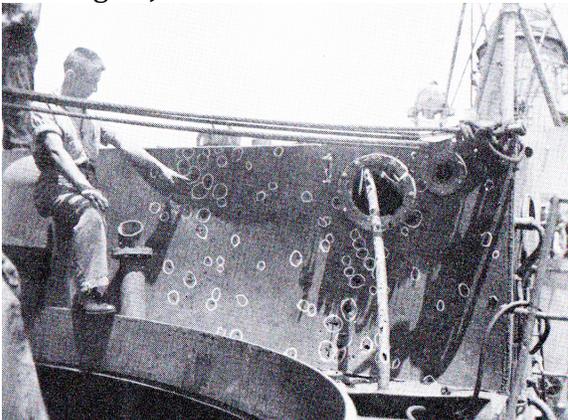
news she received in mid-May resulted in another reason for relief. She learned Bob had a new station, one that was not in a combat zone. In May, the Navy sent him to a Radar Maintenance School in Hawaii. Thus when the *Louisville* departed Pearl Harbor for Guam on May 10th, Bob was not on board with the rest of the crew. Alice knew he had been interested in attending a Navy school. On May 14th, she received a letter from Bob telling her that he had gotten such a transfer.



Alice penned a reply to Bob's letter that same day. The fact that the school was not stateside did not upset Alice even though, she reminded her husband, "That is what we have both wanted." She saw Bob as out of harm's way now, so, she concluded, "We'll just be happy the way it is." Alice continued. "I am overjoyed about your going to school in Hawaii—at least you'll be safe for 3 or 4 months—and after that well, maybe you can get leave to come home or ask for another transfer or something." With these last words, Alice's reference to "another transfer or something" probably represented her hope to keep Bob out of combat zones. In their last reunion, Bob may have shared with his wife the details of the kamikaze strikes the *Louisville* had suffered in the Philippines Campaign. In this same May 14th letter, Alice told Bob she knew someone in Detroit who had a friend who had also attended "Radar School in Hawaii." He was "now an instructor in San Diego." Alice urged Bob to "try very hard, apply yourself, give it the best you have—you may come out [an] instructor yourself & get to come back to the U.S.—I know you can..." Alice made this plea understanding what still confronted Allied forces. "I know the war in the Pacific will take time and will be tough—but oh I hope & pray that you will be home to spend Christmas with us. Is that too much to hope for, darling?"¹⁴⁵

How "tough" the Pacific war would be was seen in the last major campaign of World War II--the Battle for Okinawa. It took place on an island in the Ryukyu chain just nine hundred miles north of the Philippines and three hundred and fifty miles south of Kyushu, the most southern of the main Japanese home islands. The island is no atoll. It is large, some twenty-seven miles wide and sixty-five miles long. The harbors offered a superior naval base for the Allies. And if needed, the island's size meant several airfields could be built there. The Allied fight to take Okinawa began on April 1, 1945 when over twelve hundred ships landed some 170,000 Marines and soldiers on the western side of the island. When the *Louisville* arrived at Okinawa on May 23rd, the battle for the island had been going on for about seven weeks. Navy Command attached the *Lou* to a fire support group as Marines moved inland.¹⁴⁶

During the three-month-long Okinawan campaign, the Japanese again ordered kamikaze attacks against United States ships. One crashed into the *Lou* on the evening of June 5th. *Louisville's* casualties numbered eight dead and forty-five



injured. Two radiomen and a radio technician were among those killed, their bodies hit by shrapnel. If Bob had been on duty that evening, we do not know how close he would have been to the stations where those three sailors died. But Bob was not on the *Louisville*. He was in Hawaii at the Radar Maintenance School.¹⁴⁷

The riddled bulkhead of Radio III within which all of the crew died.

Anticipation

From there, Bob wrote Alice about the event Americans had been anticipating ever since the United States entered World War II in December 1941--the surrender of Japan. Bob had enlisted, recall, in February 1942. It was now the summer of 1945. Germany had capitulated, but Allied military leaders expected a long, drawn-out end to the war in the Pacific since they presumed Japan would surrender only after an Allied invasion of its homeland. The kamikaze attacks hinted at the type of resistance the troops would face. But the United States dropped a new type of weapon, an atomic bomb, on two Japanese cities early in August. The bombs proved much more destructive than conventional ones. On August 14, 1945, the Emperor of Japan publicly announced his nation's surrender to the Allies.

Bob immediately wrote Alice two letters, one on the 14th and another on the 15th. In them, he described the local festivities that accompanied news of the surrender. Unfortunately, the two letters are not part of the Brown Correspondence, but Alice's reply to them is. She shared with her husband what those days had been like stateside. "I listened to the descriptions of the celebrations in various cities, over the radio, [I] did not go downtown as it was just a wild crowd. Eldon had his shirt almost torn off him." Immediately after these observations, Alice's tone became reflective, speaking, in a way, for all Americans. "I am deeply grateful that it is over and we all have a tremendous debt to the boys who gave their lives." Then Alice added some thoughts that families of returning servicemen who had not been seriously injured would have echoed. "I am very thankful that you are coming home to us, and that you have your arms, legs, sight and hearing." Alice followed these lines with a promise to Bob and to herself. "I'll try not to be too impatient about your coming home, as I know it will take a few months."¹⁴⁸

But years of separation understandably made Alice anxious for her husband's return. If he was back in Denver soon, she proposed a short trip for them "up in the mountains before cold weather." A certain park closed in October, though, so the trip might not be possible if Bob did not show up soon. Still, Alice recognized that such an excursion was not that important. "Even if we did not do a thing—just sitting, talking, reading—just being together is the main thing. I love you so desperately dearest, and am hoping and praying that by the Grace of God you will get home to me soon—very very soon!" One month after Alice wrote this letter, her husband was in the process of being discharged from the Navy. Like so many of her letters, this last one testified to Alice's love for Bob and to her belief in a personal God. What the letter really emphasized, though, is her desire to be reunited with her husband now that the war was over.¹⁴⁹

Bob and Alice Brown, like millions of other couples, had anticipated the end of World War II because with it, they could be together again. Yet in a larger sense, Germany and Japan's surrenders meant that the democratic values of the West had triumphed over the authoritarianism of the Axis Powers. The Browns knew that two very different value systems were at stake in the global conflict. As Bob once wrote

Alice, "Our forefathers fought for the freedom and happiness you and I have shared during the past three decades. We likely will never again find the happiness and life to which we are accustomed unless we win this war..." But in all probability, the triumph of democracy over authoritarianism was not the first thought of husbands and wives when they heard news of Japan's surrender. With one in uniform and the other on the Home Front, couples probably thought that soon their life together could pick up where it had left off because of America's mobilization. Certainly, the Browns' letters in August 1945 give evidence of that.¹⁵⁰

Bob's departure for the Navy just two months after the attack at Pearl Harbor made their separation of forty-four months longer than that of most couples. Only seven months into it, Bob acknowledged how he and his wife were representative of their generation. "I think we are all praying for tomorrow when we can be back home with our loved ones." In her very first wartime letter to Bob, one can imagine Alice with her head held high as she sat down to write her absent husband. Instead of complaining about their separation, she accepted their new reality, "As you say, the job has to be done & we must have faith." Yet over the course of the next three years, at times Alice found it difficult to always remain resolute. In the summer of 1945, though, Bob's "job" was now "done." After his discharge, Bob, Alice, and Nancy could move forward, building a future together.¹⁵¹

Epilogue

The Browns represent just one couple out of millions separated by the demands of war. After enlisting in the United States Navy in February 1942, Bob soon left to fulfill his military service. He sent Alice a telegram just hours after boarding a train in Denver, Colorado for boot camp in San Diego, California. The last words were a cautionary note that he probably did not believe when he wrote it-- "...Don't Get Too Lonesome." She did, of course. Bob and Alice's correspondence continued until the war ended three and a half years later. In their letters, we read about the Browns' thoughts and feelings during their years apart. As Alice observed in her first letter to Bob, written the morning after he left, "Seems almost impossible that you are gone and that the train is carrying you so far away from me. And it seems strange to try to say or write on paper what I want so much to say to you in person." Alice may have felt it "strange" to put her thoughts into writing because she had never had to do that before with Bob. They had never been separated since they met and married, all of which took place in 1940. The very first letter Alice ever wrote her husband was the one she penned the morning after Bob left for boot camp.¹⁵²

The couple kept in contact by writing to each other. All totaled, the letters had to have numbered in the hundreds if this author's collection holds eighty-eight of them. From those alone, we know several things about Bob and Alice. Declarations

of how much they loved and missed each other dominate the content of their letters. The Browns' correspondence also gives us insights into some shared character traits. Both were romantics, enjoyed traveling, read books, and shared a faith in God. Those aspects of their personalities probably explain, in part, why they became a couple. Imagine what we could learn about them if we had all of their letters. The Brown Collection offers us several lessons in historiography, too. What the couple saved shows us the value of dated letters, the importance of holding onto "pieces of history," and the need to keep related memorabilia together in one collection. Because Bob and Alice Brown did all of this, younger generations can learn about World War II through this story of one sailor and his wife.

The Brown story, however, is not one that focuses solely on the war. Above all else, it is a personal tale of a couple, married only for fourteen months before a war separated them for close to four years. Through the memorabilia Bob and Alice saved, the reader shares some high and low points in their relationship. The Browns basked in memories of their time together before Bob enlisted. Their letters to each other contain passages on their courtship, wedding, and months as a married couple. Throughout the correspondence, Bob and Alice reminisced about their shared past and dreamed of their future together. Still, at moments the physical distance between them strained their marriage. Misunderstandings ensued. More than once, Alice hurled accusations at Bob in letters that hurt him. Bob insisted he was innocent. He thought the charges emanated from her loneliness. In the end, the love the Browns had for each other got them through the years when the war forced them to be apart. At its core, the preceding pages are an account of a married couple separated by war. Such a story is as much a part of World War II history as is any military campaign.

¹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, February 10, 1942. Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 11, 1942 postscript in her February 8, 1942 letter to Bob. All letters cited, as well as other Brown documents, are the personal property of the author. The collection was purchased in separate lots on Ebay in March-April 2018.

² Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 28, 1942.

³ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, August 28, 1942.

⁴ Alice mentions the two August 1945 letters in one of her letters to Bob, dated August 20, 1945. Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 21, 1942.

⁵ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 22, 1942 and May 6, 1942.

⁶ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 4, 1942.

⁷ In his July 23, 1942 letter to Alice, Bob referred to where they met and where he proposed. Elitch Gardens is described in *The WPA Guide to 1930s Colorado* by the Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration (1941; 1987 edition). The Browns' wedding announcement is one of the documents in the Brown Collection owned by this author. Bob and Alice's death dates are taken from their grave markers that are on findagrave.com (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁸ The 1920 and 1930 Federal Censuses as well as in Bob's WW II Draft Card cited directly below name Michigan as his birthplace. Bob's birth date is found on his grave marker at the Crown Hill Cemetery In Wheat Ridge, on his WW II Draft Card, and on the Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, all of which are on ancestry.com (accessed March 1, 2018; March 18, 2018; and March 18, 2018 respectively). Bob's maternal grandfather was Edmund Sneaden who the 1880 United States Federal Census lists as a carpenter; Bob's paternal grandfather was Mavrell Brown identified as a brick mason in the 1900 United States Federal Census; Bob's paternal great-grandfather was Solomon Brown who is identified as a farmer in the 1860 United States Federal Census ancestry.com; all accessed April 21, 2019). The 1920 and 1930 United States Federal Censuses place Robert and his family in South Haven, Michigan ("Robert Brown" in those censuses on ancestry.com, accessed April 21, 2019). The number of children in the family is also taken from those two censuses. His father's middle name, birthplace, marriage date and place of marriage are taken from Elmer Brown's marriage record on ancestry.com (accessed April 21, 2019). For information on Elmer's employment, see the World War I Draft Registration card for "Elmer Sylvester Brown," the 1920 and 1930 Federal Censuses, and the death certificate for "Elmer Brown" in the Michigan, Death records on ancestry.com (accessed April 21, 2019). Bessie Brown died in 1939 (Find A Grave on ancestry.com; accessed March 18, 2018).

⁹ A search on ancestry.com yielded the marriage and divorce records for "Robert S. Brown" (accessed March 18, 2018). The marriage certificate lists his parents by name, Elmer and Bessie Sneeden Brown (the 1870 Federal Census for Bessie's father "Edmund Sneaden" spells the last name as "Sneaden" as does the Find A Grave record for Bessie). While "Brown" is a common surname, the correct name of Bob's parents, including his mother's maiden name of "Sneeden," identifies the Robert S. Brown who married Lillian Skrobicki as the same Robert S. Brown who married Alice Dunn in December 1940. Additionally, in 1937 Bob would have been twenty-four, the age entered on the 1937 marriage record. Lillian cited "extreme cruelty" and "desertion" in the petition for a divorce. These may, however, be standard phrases used in divorce petitions, to justify the dissolution of a marriage. They may not indicate character flaws in Bob. According to the divorce record, a minor child was involved.

¹⁰ "Robert Sylvester Brown," WW II Draft Cards (ancestry.com, accessed March 1, 2018).

¹¹ For Alice's maternal line, see "Charles E. Denison" in the 1900 United States Federal Census and Find A Grave for "Charles Edwin Denison." For Alice's paternal line, see "Silas S. Dunn" in the 1870, 1880, and 1910 United States Federal Censuses. For Charles E. Denison as a "printer & publisher," see the 1900 United States Federal Census. (All documents cited are on ancestry.com, accessed April 28, 2019.)

¹² Alice's birth date is on her grave marker at the Crown Hill Cemetery In Wheat Ridge, Colorado (findagrave.com; accessed March 1, 2018) and on the Social Security Death Index under "Alice M. Brown" (ancestry.com, accessed on March 18, 2018). Maude Dunn's complete name is found on her 1904 marriage certificate (ancestry.com, accessed March 18, 2018). Kansas is identified as Alice's birth state

in the 1915 Kansas State Census (ancestry.com; accessed April 28, 2019) that also places the family in St. Francis. The 1925 Kansas State Census lists five children in the Dunn household (ancestry.com; accessed April 28, 2019). Birthplace entries for Charles and Maude on their 1904 marriage license give Iowa as the birth state for both of them (ancestry.com, accessed March 18, 2018), although the 1900 and 1930 Federal Censuses for Maude gives Nebraska as her birthplace while the 1940 one gives Kansas. The 1940 United States Federal Census has \$2,600 as Charles' 1939 income; that equates to some \$45,000 today, and for a small Kansas town, that would have been and would be today a comfortable income (the census is found on ancestry.com, accessed March 18, 2018). In contrast, Bob's father Elmer Brown had a 1939 income of \$870 (1940 United States Federal Census, accessed April 19, 2020). In the 1930 United States Federal Census, Maude is identified as a "proprietor" in a bookstore (ancestry.com; accessed March 18, 2018). Charles and Maude's burial site is found at findagrave.com for "Charles Judson Dunn" and "Maud Alice Dunn" (accessed April 28, 2019).

¹³ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942.

¹⁴ In the Brown Collection is a one-page, typed sheet with the heading, "Record of Bob's Letters while in the U.S. Navy." (Hereafter cited as "Record of Bob's Letters.") It begins with his February 2, 1942 swearing-in and ends with an April 18, 1942 entry. Details on Bob's departure are taken from this "Record of Bob's Letters" and from Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942. On Bob's reference to the draft, see his May 18, 1942 letter to Alice. On Harry Brown's wedding, see Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 13, 1942.

¹⁵ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942.

¹⁶ Bob's February 7, 1942 telegram to Alice; on Caliente as a company town, see Nevada Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Nevada* (Reno, 1991; first published in 1940 as *Nevada: A Guide to the Silver State*); Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942. For Alice's reference to Bob's February 8, 1942 letter (which would have been his first to her), see Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 13, 1942. Alice's letter to Bob dated February 10, 1942 refers to his card and letter written from Las Vegas. It is not clear from the Brown Collection exactly what type of job Alice had. The letters refer to a "plant" and work shifts (some of which were at night), so the job may have been one in a war-related factory (Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 27, 1942; Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942; February 10, 1942; and March 18, 1942).

¹⁷ "Record of Bob's Letters" for the date of his arrival in Los Angeles and San Diego as well as his housing and unit assignments, however, this typed sheet incorrectly puts his arrival on the 10th. For the true date of the 9th, see his letter to Alice dated February 10, 1942. The February 10th letter Bob wrote also ties his receipt of the Blue Jacket Manual to the moment he took his oath.

¹⁸ In Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 13, 194, Alice identifies Bob's handwriting on the card.

¹⁹ "Record of Bob's Letters," entry for February 16, 1942. Robert Brown to Alice Brown, February 14, 1942 and February 17, 1942. Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 23, 1942.

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- ²⁰ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 23, 1942.
- ²¹ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 28, 1942.
- ²² Robert Brown telegram to Alice Brown, March 3, 1942; "Record of Bob's Letters," entries for March 4th-9th. In "Record of Bob's Letters," he wrote that Alice left San Diego on a United Airlines flight for L.A. where she transferred to a TWA flight. The names of the airports are taken from The San Diego Federal Writers' Project, San Diego, *A California City* (San Diego, 1937), p. 1 and The Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of California, *The WPA Guide to San Diego* (New York, 1984; originally published in 1939 as *California: A Guide to the Golden State*, p. 206 where the Los Angeles-area cities and airports are listed by which airline used each airport. We know from the "Record of Bob's Letters" that Alice flew on United from San Diego to Los Angeles.)
- ²³ Robert to Alice Brown, March 11, 1942; "Dad" to Robert Brown, March 18, 1942; Alice Brown to Robert Brown, March 18, 1942.
- ²⁴ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, March 18, 1942.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ "Record of Bob's Letters," entry for March 20, 1942; the NTS postcard to Alice Brown is dated March 20, 1942 and postmarked at 5:30 p.m. that same day.
- ²⁷ "Record of Bob's Letters," entries for March 22 and March 26, 1942; Robert Brown to Alice Brown, March 26, 1942.
- ²⁸ Telegram March 30, 1942, Naval Hospital San Diego Calif. to Alice M. Brown with handwriting on the back; Telegram March 31, 1942, Naval Hospital San Diego Calif. to Alice M. Brown.
- ²⁹ A handwritten copy of B.T. Boyce's telegram to the Master of San Diego's Masonic Lodge is in the Brown Collection, as is the telegram that the San Diego Lodge sent to B.T. Boyce on April 1, 1942.
- ³⁰ Alice mentions her PEO meetings in a letter to Bob, February 8, 1942; Alice Brown's telegram to Mrs. Warner is not dated; however, its wording appears on the back of the Naval Hospital's March 31, 1942 telegram to Alice, so Alice probably sent the request to Mrs. Warner on the 31st or the next day. Also undated is Mrs. Warner's telegram to Alice Brown. Katherine Beagle to Alice Brown, April 1, 1942.
- ³¹ Telegram Alice Brown to Robert Brown, April 1, 1942; Telegram Bob Brown to Alice Brown, April 1, 1942; Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 2, 1942; Naval Hospital San Diego Calif. to Alice Brown, April 4, 1942; "Record of Bob's Letters," entry for April 4, 5, 6, and 18, 1942.
- ³² Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 6, 1942 and April 27, 1942.
- ³³ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 20, 1942; May 10, 1942; May 6, 1942; May 14, 1942.
- ³⁴ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 22, 1942; April 23, 1942; April 27, 1942; May 4, 1942.
- ³⁵ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 4, 1942; May 5, 1942; May 13, 1942; April 27, 1942.
- ³⁶ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 12, 1942.
- ³⁷ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 12, 1942.
- ³⁸ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 20, 1942.

³⁹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 11, 1942.

⁴⁰ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 16, 1942.

⁴¹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 16, 1942; Bob's May 18, 1942 letter refers to the one on the 16th as "the nasty letter."

⁴² Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 28, 1942.

⁴³ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 28, 1942 and May 29, 1942.

⁴⁴ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 12, 1942. Alice first arrived in San Diego on Friday, March 6th and she left on Sunday the 8th. (She traveled by train and plane.) Her second trip was by bus, from her Saturday arrival on April 4th to her Monday the 6th departure for Denver, again by bus. For letters from Bob to Alice where he urged her to visit in mid-May, see Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 14, 1942; May 16, 1942; May 19, 1942. Bob described how he spent what became his last liberty weekend in San Diego in a letter to Alice dated May 17, 1942.

⁴⁵ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 7, 1942; May 8, 1942; May 20, 1942; May 21, 1942.

⁴⁶ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 22, 1942; May 22, 1942 as the date Bob first board the ship also appears on the *Louisville's* December 31, 1942 muster roll (ancestry.com; accessed April 7, 2019). Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 24, 1942.

⁴⁷ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 24, 1942 and May 28, 1942.

⁴⁸ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 22, 1942; May 28, 1942.

⁴⁹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 14, 1942.

⁵⁰ The *USS Louisville's* muster roll for December 31, 1942 has a column entitled "Date first received on board." In the entry for Bob, the May 22, 1942 date is given, ancestry.com, U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls, 1938-1949, accessed April 7, 2019; Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 22, 1942.

⁵¹ For the history of the ship the *USS Louisville*, see a book written by some of its officers and privately printed for the crew, *Man of War, Log of the United States Heavy Cruiser Louisville* (Philadelphia, 1946), pp. 10, 13, 14. For examples of the *Louisville's* shortened, more familiar names, see pp. 21, 91, 102. There is a second cruise book put together by officers, entitled simply *Lady Lou*. The year "1944" appears on its front cover. In length and size, *Lady Lou* is a much smaller volume than *Man of War*. *Lady Lou* has little text; it is primarily photographs of the ship, her crew, and some of the campaigns. The last page records the *Lou's* February 1945 arrival in San Francisco.

⁵² The Forrestal quotation is from *Man of War*, p. 7. The names of the crewmembers who put *Man Of War* together can be found on p. 18.

⁵³ When the author purchased Quartermaster Scheldrup's copy of *Man of War*, an eight-page (legal-sized paper), mimeographed history of the ship entitled *History of the U.S.S. Louisville (CA-28)* accompanied the book. The eight pages cover the cruiser's history from its January 15, 1931 commissioning to its October 15, 1945 arrival in Jinsen, Korea. (*Man of War* begins its history of the *Lou* earlier and ends it later.) The eight page history is cited here as Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*. Ship's officers probably put the eight pages together.

⁵⁴ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 27, 1942 and May 13, 1942; the *Louisville's* June 30, 1942 muster roll has Bob at seaman 2c with the note that he "Advanced to

rating” on June 2, 1942, ancestry.com, U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls (accessed May 9, 2020); Robert Brown to Alice Brown, August 28, 1942; the ship’s muster roll dated September 30, 1942 lists Bob as a seaman 1c, effective September 1, 1942, ancestry.com, U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls (accessed May 9, 2020);⁵⁵ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 28, 1942; the living Navy veteran is George Coburn, Oceanside, CA (conversation with author March 12, 2018). For a listing of a ship’s divisions, see June 1944 Navy publication *Seamanship*, www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ref/Seamanship/index.html (accessed August 26, 2016)

⁵⁶ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, May 27, 1942; August 16, 1942; September 6, 1942. For radio strikers, see www.navy-radio.com/flory/id9.html (accessed April 14, 2019). The *Louisville’s* muster roll for January 16, 1943 shows his advancement from “S1c to RT3c” on January 1, 1943. The muster roll for June 30, 1944 identifies Bob as “RT2c,” and he remained at that rate for the rest of the war. Muster rolls are on ancestry.com, U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls (accessed May 9, 2020); see the photograph of his grave marker earlier in the story for his RT2c rate.

⁵⁷ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, August 28, 1942; see also Robert Brown to Alice Brown, June 17, 1942.

⁵⁸ In Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 10, 1942, Bob mentioned Alice’s recommendation for the *Timberline* book. Robert Brown to Alice Brown, August 20, 1942 (along with the August 20, 1942 front page of the *USS Louisville Morning Press News*) and June 9, 1942.

⁵⁹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 6, 1942 and July 7, 1942.

⁶⁰ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume VII, Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls, June 1942-April 1944* (Boston, 1951) pp. 4, 5. David Kennedy, *The Library of Congress World War II Companion* (New York, 2007), p. 518; *Man of War*, p. 88.

⁶¹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 23, 1942; July 28, 1942; August 20, 1942; June 27, 1942; August 1, 1942; August 2, 1942. For the cause (“Found dead. Organic heart disease.”) and date of Elmer Brown’s death (July 6, 1942), see his death certificate available on ancestry.com, Michigan, Death Records, 1867-1950 (accessed April 21, 2019).

⁶² Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 6, 1942; June 3, 1942; June 17, 1942.

⁶³ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, June 3, 1942.

⁶⁴ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, June 17, 1942; May 28, 1942; May 14, 1942.

⁶⁵ Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 9, 10, 11, 12. See also, for the August 7, 1942 bombardment, *Man Of War*, p. 91; Brian Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War, World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians* (1969; 1995 edition), pp. 151-152.

⁶⁶ Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War*, pp. xi, 5, 150; Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 3, 37; *Man Of War*, p. 89.

⁶⁷ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, August 28, 1942 and July 7, 1942.

⁶⁸ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 22, 1942.

⁶⁹ For news of the Aleutians Campaign in Stateside newspapers, see, for example, Minneapolis, Minnesota’s *Star Tribune*, September 17, 1942 (www.newspapers.com, accessed May 30, 2020). Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 23, 1942.

⁷⁰ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, June 27, 1942. On Alice's job, see Robert Brown to Alice Brown, April 27, 1942; Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942; February 10, 1942; and March 18, 1942.

⁷¹ For seaman's salaries, see two web sites--bluejacket.com/usn-ratings and navycs.com/charts/1942-military-pay-chart (both accessed May 31, 2020). For Bob's references to the allotment, see Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 28, 1942; August 16, 1942; July 23, 1942; June 27, 1942; September 21, 1942. Bob's copy of the life insurance policy is in the Brown Collection. For Bob's expenditures on the ship, see Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 21, 1942.

⁷² Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 5, 1942.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 23, 1942.

⁷⁵ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 18, 1942; June 27, 1942; August 28, 1942. Alice Brown to Robert Brown, August 28, 1942.

⁷⁶ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 7, 1942 and July 23, 1942.

⁷⁷ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 16, 1942; August 2, 1942; May 18, 1942; September 18, 1942.

⁷⁸ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, June 9, 1942; June 27, 1942; August 16, 1942; September 22, 1942.

⁷⁹ *Man of War*, p. 91; Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 14. *Man of War* (p. 91) notes that crewmen heard news of the Allied landings in North Africa while in the States. Those occurred on November 8 – 11, 1942, which places the *Louisville* on the West Coast early in November. *Man of War* gives November 7, 1942 as the date when the ship arrived at Pearl Harbor (p. 91).

⁸⁰ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume V, The Struggle for Guadalcanal, August 1942-February 1943* (Boston, 1949) p. 4; Kennedy, *The Library of Congress World War II Companion*, p. 522; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy, *U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945, Official Reports to the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington, D.C., 1946), pp. 49, 53; *Man of War*, p. 92.

⁸¹ *Man of War*, p. 92.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 94, 97; Morison, *Guadalcanal*, pp. 355-357, 371; King, *U.S. Navy at War*, p. 93.

⁸³ Sverre Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 5. An explanation is needed for this citation. The author owns Mr. Scheldrup's copy of *Man of War* as well as an eight-page (legal-sized paper), mimeographed history of the *Lou* entitled *History of the U.S.S. Louisville (CA-28)*. On the title page, Mr. Scheldrup wrote his name. The eight pages cover the cruiser's history from its January 15, 1931 commissioning to its October 15, 1945 arrival in Jinsen, Korea. It is cited here as Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*. Ship's officers probably put the eight pages together, and either they or other officers later drew upon the chronology for the cruise book *Man of War* that was printed in 1946.

⁸⁴ *Man of War*, p. 99.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 40; Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War*, pp. 271, 332; *Man of War*, p. 99.

⁸⁶ Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War*, pp. 358, 360, 361, 364, 379; *Man of War*, p. 102.

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- ⁸⁷ Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War*, pp. 359, 361, 364.
- ⁸⁸ *Man of War*, p. 102; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, pp. 5-6. For the Browns' use of "Pappy" and "Mommy," see, for example, Alice's February 14, 1942 letter to Bob and Bob's May 2, 1942 letter to Alice.
- ⁸⁹ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, January 3, 1944.
- ⁹⁰ Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 346; King, *U.S. Navy at War*, p. 103; *Man of War*, p. 107.
- ⁹¹ *Man of War*, p. 107.
- ⁹² Alice Brown to Robert Brown, January 5, 1944.
- ⁹³ Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 70, 74, 203, 206, 207, 230, 232, 234, 236-237 (for the number of vessels in the Marshall Islands Joint Expeditionary Task Force, Morison gives "297 sail of shipping, not counting the fast carrier task groups or the submarines," p. 207); Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 6.
- ⁹⁴ *Man of War*, p. 107; Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 242, 250.
- ⁹⁵ Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 282, 288, 300, 301, 331, 332; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 6; *Man of War*, p. 107;
www.pacificwrecks.com/provinces/marshall_parry (accessed April 7, 2018).
- ⁹⁶ Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 202.
- ⁹⁷ *Man of War*, pp. 64, 91-92. Several websites explain the history of the ceremony. See for examples www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=75241 and www.w2db.com/other.php?other_id=17 (accessed September 19, 2016).
- ⁹⁸ George Coburn was another sailor who served on the *Louisville* when Bob did. George Coburn's Continuous Service Certificate is the source of the April 21-May 2, 1944 dates and locations. (Copy in possession of author.)
- ⁹⁹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume VIII, New Guinea and the Marianas, March 1944-August 1944* (Boston, 1953), pp. 36, 38, 41, 59; *Man of War*, pp. 109, 110; King, *U.S. Navy*, pp. 105, 106; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 6; Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 316-317.
- ¹⁰⁰ The June 9, 1944 date for the *Louisville's* departure from Majuro is taken from Robert Brown's Chronology; the ship's two-month stay is taken from Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 6; King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 106; Morison, *New Guinea*, pp. 5-6, 149, 151, 157, 160, 341.
- ¹⁰¹ *Man of War*, p. 110; King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 108; Morison, *New Guinea*, p. 160; Morison identified the *Louisville* as part of Task Force 52 and Task Group 52.17 (*New Guinea*, pp. 170, 409 respectively).
- ¹⁰² *Man of War*, pp. 111, 116, 117; Morison, *New Guinea*, pp. 328, 351; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰³ *Man of War*, pp. 117, 118; King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 112.
- ¹⁰⁴ Morison, *New Guinea*, pp. 325, 326; King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 111; *Man of War*, pp. 120, 121, 123.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Man of War*, pp. 120, 121, 123.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Man of War*, pp. 123, 124; King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 115; Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume XII, Leyte, June 1944 - January 1945* (Boston, 1958), pp. 34, 39.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Man of War*, pp. 135, 137.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Man of War*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁹ *Man of War*, pp. 137, 147; King, *US Navy*, p. 175; C. Vann Woodward, *The Battle for Leyte Gulf* (New York, 1947), pp. 21, 25, 26, 27, 114n; Thomas J. Cutler, *The Battle of Leyte Gulf, 23-26 October 1944* (Annapolis, 1994; 2001 edition), p. 174. The admiral in command of the Seventh Fleet was Thomas C. Kinkaid.

¹¹⁰ King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 238; Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, p. 31; *Man of War*, p. 141.

¹¹¹ Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 27, 31; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 6; *Man of War*, pp. 138, 142.

¹¹² Morison, *Leyte*, p. 145; *Man of War*, p. 142.

¹¹³ *Man of War*, p. 144. The crewman killed was probably Seaman Second Class Louis Marvin Johnson. His name is entered in *Man of War's* list of crewmen KIA, and research on ancestry.com (specifically in the military's section on "casualties") gives October 27, 1944 as his date of death. Johnson may have been hit by shrapnel on October 22nd and later died of his injuries.

¹¹⁴ *Man of War*, p. 144.

¹¹⁵ Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 1, 90-91; King, *U.S. Navy*, p. 120; *Man of War*, pp. 141, 144, 147.

¹¹⁶ The two quotations on the historical importance of the Battle of Leyte Gulf are from Cutler, *Leyte* (p. xiii) and Vann Woodward, *Leyte* (p. 1) respectively; for a similar description, see Willmott, *Leyte*, p. 5. In his book, Vann Woodward details the tonnage of ships at Leyte versus that at Jutland, the World War I naval battle, pointing out that at Jutland, the tonnage was "considerably less" than the tonnage at Leyte. (p. 3); Cutler in his volume on Leyte (p. xiii) also compares it with the Battle of Jutland, pointing out that 250 British and German ships fought each other at Jutland while 282 American, Japanese, and Australian ships fought each other at Leyte.

¹¹⁷ Vann Woodward identifies the four engagements, *The Battle for Leyte Gulf*, pp. 1, 2; Cutler, *Leyte*, p. xiii on the number of men and ships.

¹¹⁸ Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 94, 95; Willmott, *Leyte*, p. 141; Morison, *Leyte*, p. 198; Cutler, *Leyte*, p. 175; *Man of War*, p. 147. The historian quoted is Craig L. Symonds, *World War II At Sea, A Global History* (New York, 2018), p. 575; Symonds cites thirty-nine as the number of PT boats (p. 576).

¹¹⁹ *Man of War*, pp. 147-148.

¹²⁰ Cutler, *Leyte*, pp. 174, 181, 182.

¹²¹ Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 97-98, 99; *Man of War*, p. 149; Cutler, *Leyte*, p. 175; Morison, *Leyte*, pp. 204, 206.

¹²² *Man of War*, p. 149; Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 97-98; Morison, *Leyte*, pp. 199, 206.

¹²³ Willmott, *Leyte*, p. 145; King, *U.S. Navy*, pp. 120-121; Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 99, 102, 108; *Man of War*, p. 149; Morison, *Leyte*, pp. 208, 223. Morison, *Leyte*, p. 217 gives 2:54 a.m.- 4:20 a.m. as the time when the destroyers on the left and right flanks attacked the Japanese ships. Symonds, *World War II At Sea*, p. 576.

¹²⁴ Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 108, 111, 113; Morison, *Leyte*, p. 224.

¹²⁵ *Man of War*, p. 154.

¹²⁶ The historian quoted is Morison, *Leyte*, p. 240. For ships and casualty losses, see Morison, *Leyte*, p. 240; Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, p. 127, and Cutler, *Leyte*, p. 205.

There is a difference in the number of Japanese ship losses between Cutler and Vann Woodward; Vann Woodward is the one used in the narrative.

¹²⁷ Morison, *Leyte*, p. 240 is the historian quoted; see also p. 226. Cutler, *Leyte*, p. 205 also refers to Surigao Strait as “the last of the great gun” battles.

¹²⁸ Cutler, *Leyte*, pp. 283, 285; Vann Woodward, *Leyte*, pp. 229, 230;

¹²⁹ Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, pp. 6-7; George Coburn’s Continuous Service Certificate (as well as *Man of War*, pp. 157-158) for the November 5-6, 1944 fire support the *Louisville* rendered on the air strikes.

¹³⁰ *Man of War*, pp. 157, 158; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 7.

¹³¹ King, *U.S. Navy*, pp. 125, 126; *Man of War*, p. 159.

¹³² *Man of War*, p. 159.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 164; on the *USS Ommaney Bay*, see

www.navsourc.org/archives/03/079.htm (accessed May 8, 2018).

¹³⁴ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume XIII, The Liberation of the Philippines, Luzon, Mindanao, the Visayas, 1944-1945* (Boston, 1959), p. 101; *Man of War*, p. 164.

¹³⁵ *Man of War*, pp. 164-166; Morison, *The Liberation of the Philippines*, p. 103.

¹³⁶ *Man of War*, p. 167; Morison, *The Liberation of the Philippines*, p. 109.

¹³⁷ *Man of War*, pp. 167, 169.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 171.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 7; Alice Brown to Robert Brown, May 14, 1945.

¹⁴¹ The Browns’ first reunion occurred in March 1942 when Bob had a weekend liberty while in San Diego’s boot camp. The second one took place in April 1942 when Alice visited him while he was in San Diego’s naval hospital with pneumonia. The third was in San Francisco in December 1943. Details on Alice trip home are taken from her April 16 and April 24, 1945 letters to Bob.

¹⁴² Scheldrup, *History of the U.S.S. Louisville*, p. 7; *Man of War*, p. 174.

¹⁴³ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, May 11, 1945.

¹⁴⁴ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, May 14, 1945.

¹⁴⁵ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, May 14, 1945 and May 23, 1945.

¹⁴⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume XIV, Victory in the Pacific, 1945* (Boston, 1960), pp. 79, 80; King, *U.S. Navy*, pp. 175, 176; *Man of War*, p. 175; Max Hastings, *Inferno, The World At War, 1939-1945* (New York, 2011), p. 618.

¹⁴⁷ *Man of War*, pp. 184-185. Those radiomen had been in Radio One (*Man of War*, p. 182) and Radio Three (p. 185). This author does not know which radio station Bob had been assigned to when he was on board the ship.

¹⁴⁸ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, August 20, 1945.

¹⁴⁹ Alice Brown to Robert Brown, August 31, 1945. In the Brown Correspondence is a September 26, 1945 letter from a Navy chaplain stationed at the separation center in Shoemaker, California. He wrote Alice to tell her that Bob was “in the process of being discharged from the Navy.” Bob probably went straight from Hawaii to the

West Coast for his discharge. He never returned to the *Louisville*. At that time, the ship remained in the Pacific on some occupational duties until December 1945.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, July 4, 1942.

¹⁵¹ Robert Brown to Alice Brown, September 10, 1942. Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 11, 1942 postscript in her February 8, 1942 letter to Bob.

¹⁵² Alice Brown to Robert Brown, February 8, 1942.

Illustrations

Photographs, documents, and maps used in this story are from the Brown Collection, the *USS Louisville's* two cruise books (*Man of War* and *Lady Lou 1944*), as well as various publications that contain Navy photographs and maps.