

NAME: Harley

RANK: Sergeant

ORGANIZATION: 20th Air Force

OVERSEAS WARTIME SERVICE: Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations

- The following excerpts are directly from two original wartime period letters written by Harley. These are two of many letters from Harley in the site curator's possession and more will be transcribed in the future.
- The following excerpts are presented under fair use provisions for educational purposes.
- No controversial material has been omitted from the following excerpts aside from an edited racial slur for the protection of younger readers. No grammatical or spelling errors have been corrected.

Harley writes a friend in the United States:

“Sunday afternoon
August 5, 1945
Iwo Jima

How are you and everyone...Just dandy I'm sure. Me? I'm ho – kay too. Your most welcome letter arrived a while back when we were still at Tinian. Gee, it's been almost three weeks or more, hasn't it? We've been here two weeks. Time certainly flies...

...For the first week we were here, we had a tent with a floor in it, excellent chow, (the best I ever had in the Army), and good showers. Then we moved to our present area – there is no floor here, the chow is none too good, in fact sometimes pretty foul, and about half the time or more it's salt – water showers. Ever try one? You get wet and that's about all.

To date I have eleven missions. Only twenty – four more to go. We got in the 10th & 11th last Thursday and Friday xxx respectively. Thursday we circled the coast (Jay-pan) for three hours. Seems funny to just cruise around there as if you owned the place; and think about those little y _ _ _ _ w - - - 's waging war on you. The towns and roads, etc. look just like any country tho. – Naturally...

...After supper

A while ago I rode out to a ship in the harbor on a 'duck.' Quite a gadget that duck. Would be a handy thing to have for fishing trips.

Started to go up on Suribachi this afternoon but didn't have time before supper. (Had some steak that was tender as leather.)

Well it's time for the show now so I'll close. Write again soon.

Always,
Harley”

Harley writes the same friend again in the United States:

“Sept. 3, 1945
Monday morning
Iwo Jima

Your letter of the 12th arrived about a week ago and I certainly was happy to receive it. It had been a long time since I'd heard from you. Guess you've been pretty busy tho.

But me – we flew our fifteenth mission the 13th I think, and since then have done absolutely nothing. We did go up to Tokyo, tho, last Thursday. (30th) This is all we have done since the wonderful news of Peace.

I hope you had a nice celebration for VJ – day. There was no boisterous celebration here but we are all nonetheless thankful for it. When the first news came out several were firing guns but this was soon stopped. I'm going to do my celebration when I get back...

...Right now that's the \$64. ~~dollar~~ question – when do I get back? When I left the States I only had 19 points; with a recount I've hoped to get 45 – maybe. Don't know exactly what we have coming. I'm hoping against hope that I at least get back soon tho. But naturally I can't expect to get out.

I'll bet your brother has enough points, doesn't he? Maybe he'll be there soon. Surely hope so...

...A couple of weeks ago my radar – observer, bombardier, tail – gunner, and I went out with our .45's. Probed around some caves and did a little target – practicing – in the water – Well an MP takes us in. It seems there's no firing at anything but the enemy.

Everything was OK for several days and I thought maybe they had forgotten the incident. But a couple of days ago I was called in again. The Major gave me the 104 AW – you know – company punishment. I got (or am getting) seven days extra duty. And you can imagine how hard I'm working.

The radar – observer had to see a colonel but the ole boy just dismissed him. (The tail –gunner & bombardier weren't even turned in. The bomb. had gone out of sight around the rocks and T. – G. covered his gun with his shirt – tail so the MP missed them.) Guess I'm just unlucky...

...Well, guess I've said enough for this time so I'll close. Write again soon as you can. I always am very happy to receive your letters.

Always,
Harley..."

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- Harley made it through the Second World War and passed away in his 80s.
 - **For visual context, this link connects to an original wartime period film in the public domain that covers the above time period and Harley's organization (viewer discretion advised):**
<https://archive.org/details/TheLastBomb1945>

- **For additional detail, this link connects to the Wikipedia article that covers the kinds of air raids on Japan which Harley participated in (reader discretion advised):**
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_raids_on_Japan