

NAME: James

RANK: Not Available

ORGANIZATION: 2nd Marine Division

OVERSEAS WARTIME SERVICE: Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations

- The following excerpts are directly from two original wartime letters written by James. These are the only letters from James in the site curator's possession.
- The following excerpts are presented under fair use provisions for educational purposes.
- No controversial material has been omitted from the following excerpts aside from edited racial slurs for the protection of younger readers. No grammatical or spelling errors have been corrected.

James writes a friend in the United States:

“Nov. 29, 1943

How do you like this J _ p dispatch paper? I have my command post set up in what was the J _ p headquarters on Betio Atoll, Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, and have a desk, paper, pen & ink, and even the garrison flag. We knew we would have a tough time here, but it was much worse than we expected. However we got in and we expect to stay...

As ever,

James”

James writes the same friend in the United States:

“Dec. 8, 1943

I came in to Tarawa with the Marines, so had a front seat for the show, which was very spectacular. I had bullets hit within three feet of me, and had a number of close escapes both on shore, and in the landing boat while coming in. Our ship was fired on by shore batteries, two shells going just over, and three others landing close. However I came through without a scratch, although several men were wounded within a few feet of me.

The first group of my men landed 2 ½ days after I did. In order to make camp for my men, we had to bury more than a hundred J _ ps. I had fixed up a foxhole, and just as I was getting ready to go to bed, I discovered a pair of J _ p feet sticking out of one end, so had to call the clean up squad to take him out and bury him. The next morning we found live J _ ps in a steel and concrete pillbox in our camp. It took us four hours to crack it open, then I went in and killed the one J _ p left alive of the seven original occupants.

The sights and smells were pretty bad here for a while, but things are getting cleaned up now. We expect to be here a while, then shall go out to reorganize before going in again...

...This would be a nice island in peace time, but is badly torn up now from the bombs and shells. However we are reasonably comfortable, and have a few conveniences. We are eating with another unit, and have garrison rations, which are an improvement over the emergency rations we had for a while. We also have water for shaving, and even for bathing and laundry, whereas for the first ten days, water was for drinking only.

We've had no mail for a long time, but I hope it comes soon, and that I'll have a letter from you. I love to hear from you, so don't forget me, and please write whenever you find time. Love and best wishes,

Yours as ever,

James''

- James made it through the Second World War and passed away in his 90s.
- **For visual context, this link connects to an original wartime newsreel in the public domain that covers Tarawa operations and James' organization (viewer discretion advised):**
<https://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.38987>
- **For additional detail, this link connects to the Wikipedia article that covers James' wartime organization, the 2nd Marine Division (reader discretion advised):**
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Marine_Division_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Marine_Division_(United_States))