

***“Our job is to keep the planes flying and if necessary, defend the airfield.”***

**Lester E. Folkenson, Jr.**

**War Letters, June 1943 to February 1946**

**Aircraft Mechanic, M.A.G. (Marine Air Group) 31**

Transcribed by John U. Rees

Boot Camp, Parris Island, S.C., June 1943

Kinston, N.C.

Memphis, Tn.

Cherry Point, N.C.

Newport, Ak.

San Diego, Ca.

Roi-Namur Island

Roi Airfield (Dyers Airfield)

Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands

Okinawa, Yontan Airfield

Occupation of Japan, Yokosuka Naval Base

Sgt. Lester E. Folkenson, Jr., HQ Squadron, Marine Air Group 31

(born August 1924, 20 years old in August 1944)

177 letters, 2 postcards

123 letters, 5 postcards

114 letters

**Total:**

**414 letters and 7 postcards from 3 June 1943 to 7 February 1946 (Thursday)**

**(4 June 1943 was his first day at Parris Island.)**

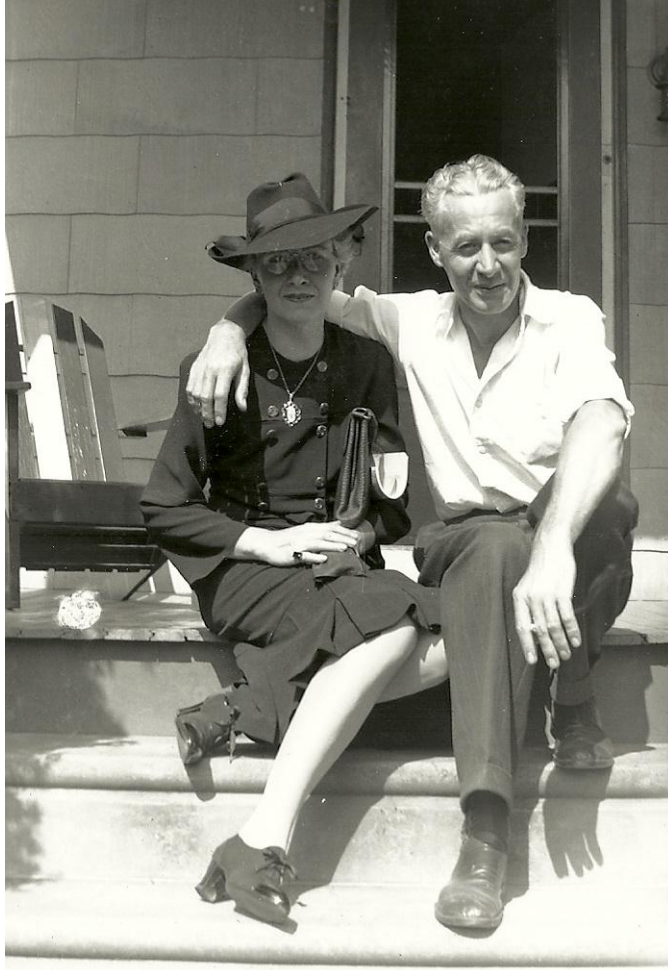
**See also Scrapbook of newspaper clippings about Okinawa, collected by Les's mother, Thelma Townsend Folkenson. His father Lester, Sr., worked for the Railway Mail Service on a train that ran between New York and Pittsburgh.**

**For context (and two good reads) see,**

**Eugene B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York and Oxford, 1981) (Marine infantryman on Okinawa; Les enjoyed reading this for it's view of the front line soldier's experience on Okinawa, the fellows who were flown out on the transports he kept running.)**

**Samuel Hynes, *Flights of Passage: Reflections of a World War II Aviator* (Frederic C. Beil, N.Y., and Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Md.: 1988) (Memoir of a Marine Corps pilot.)**

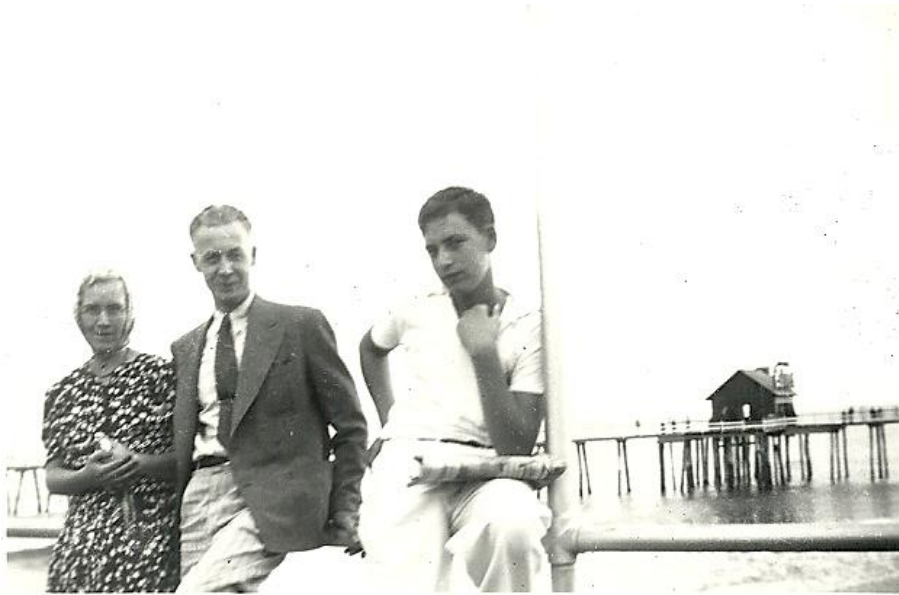
**George Feifer, *Tennozan: The Battle for Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1992)**



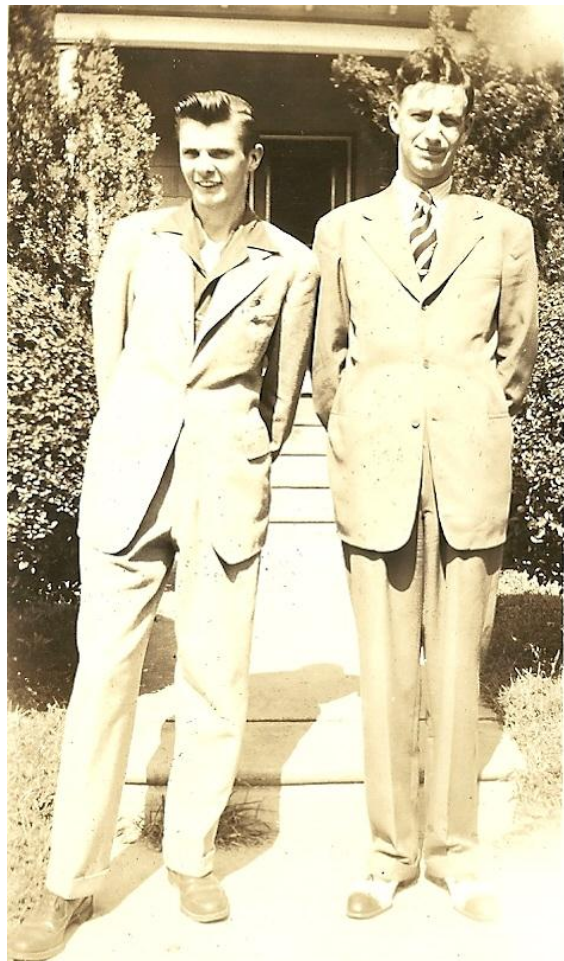
**Thelma Folkenson and Lester E. Folkenson, Sr.**



**Nana Townsend**



**Lester Folkenson, Jr. with his parents.**



**Lester Folkenson, Jr. (right), circa 1942-43.**

**(Note: See end of this collection for photos of Lester at younger ages, as well as pictures from occupied Japan.)**

(First correspondence)

Postcard: LEF to mother, postmarked Richmond, Va., 3 June 1943

To:

“Mrs. L.E. Folkenson  
7322 Claridge St.  
Phila. Penna.”

“Pvt. Lester E. Folkenson P.I. USMC

Dear Mom, I am writing on the train from Washington, its more like a cattle car. The coal dust comes in the window & the seats are like boards & they say sleep. Son”

Postcard: LEF to mother, postmarked Parris Island, S.C., 4 June 1943, 4:30 PM

“Dear Mom send mail to

Pvt. Lester E. Folkenson Jr

Platoon 416

6th Recruit Bn.

Parris Island, S.C.

Arrived here at 4 o'clock

Son”

LEF to mother, 4 June 1943

“Dear Mom Right now I am finishing washing & hanging up my wash. It sure is hot down here just about 100 or higher. We have two corpals as instructors and are they tough. Today we got finished collecting all our cloths and our rifle. Drilling in the hot sun today six of our sixty-four men passed out from the heat & went to the hospital. I thought I was going to faint but we stopped drilling in time. It is about eight now and this is my first chance to write to anyone. Right now I wish I was home laying around doing nothing. Our shower and toilet are about two blocks from our barrack. The beds are soft and I can fit in the bed [he was 6 foot 4 inches tall]. We have to take a shower every night and shave every morning. I am sorry I did not join the army and have it easy instead of like [hataii?]. We have to clean our barrack every morning and we get up a[t] 4.30 then we eat breakfast at 5.45. The eats are fair and not exeptional good. The train we came down on were more like cattle cars. Well I'll have to close because I have to take a shower and write a few cards. Son”

LEF to mother, 5 June 1943, 7:05 PM

“Dear Mom Well this is our fourth day and we got finished at 4.30 today. During the course of training you march about an average of 30 miles each day. Sunday we are going to take our I.Q. tests which last all day. Monday we are going to start drilling with our rifles. Today we received two shots, one in each arm, and a complete physical. We also went to the dentist and I had to have three teeth filled. If this training doesn't make you its almost sure to kill you. The fellows who passed out yesterday returned today and nobody passed out today. Well today I like the Marines and the two corporals are becoming more human. We had a good breakfast and a good supper but diner wasn't so

good. Down here the water and all liquids have plenty of salt in them, this is to replace salt lost from sweating. Next week we will be allowed to go to the P.X. and then I can get some envelop, because this is the last one. We were marching today with our cartiledg belt one, which has a first aid kit and canteen attached to it. When they cut your hair they only leave about six inches down the middle, a ¼ inch high. My feet are just beginning to hurt, even tho my work shoes are comfortable. They are having boxing matches tonight but we aren't going. The Marines issue everything you need including four packs of cigarettes, and three boxes of matches. The food has too much salt in it. Well I have to say goodbye because I have to take a shower, write some cards, & fix my barracks box.

Your Marine; Son."

LEF to mother, 10 June 1943

"Dear Mom; Well this morning we got up at 4.30, washed and shaved, then we had to mop and sweep our barracks. At 5.45 we went to breakfast, and after breakfast we had a rest of about a half-hour. After drilling for a while we left our area about eight o'clock and took our blankets and sea bags to be stenciled. Our exercises and boxing instructions were after we returned from the blankets. After our exercise we had our morning outdoor class about making a camp, military courtesy, and our general Orders. This ended at ten o'clock.

At 10.15 we went to lecture about why we are in the service and our allies. After this we returned and went to chow (diner) where we had roast beef, beets, potatoes, pickles, and a peach cake. I have to drink a little coffee because the water is always highly salted and we have very little milk. But at dinner we had orange-ad with very little salt in it. After chow we have mail call and then we are off till 12.30.

In the afternoon I drilled with a rifle and our cartlidge belt. On the cartlidge belt there is a bayonet, canteen, and first aid kit. We drill with a U.S. 30 cal. Rifle which weighs about nine pounds. ... About three thirty we had our afternoon school in which we learned to field strip a rifle. We have to take it apart and clean the sand and oill out of it and then we have to rebuild the rifle. In the rifle there are 73 different parts and we have to know them all.

At four we have to line up and go to supper. Usually we don't even have time to wash. The eats aren't good but you almost have to eat them, because you can't get any eats any place except at the P.X. & we can't go there.

After supper we rested till five and then we learned to port arms, left shoulder arms, & right shoulder arms with our rifle. At six we were dismissed to wash our clothes, clean our rifles, and take a shower. At ten the lights go out and you are supposed to go to bed. Last night a fellow in our platoon dropped his rifle and has to sleep with it.

June 11, 12.30 PM.

Well here is another day's training half gone and it has appeared to be a weeks. This morning after breakfast we had exercises for about an hour and then we had to run a little. After that we had boxing lesson and boxing exercises.

At eight o'clock we put on our cartledge belt & rain coats, and marched with our rifles. When we reached a drill field we practised till 10.30 steady drilling, port arms, left shoulder, & right shoulder arms. We have to slap to rifle and is my hand raw and red from hitting it.

For dinner we had potatoes, lima beans, fish, tomato soup, bread, butter, sugar, & salted ice tea. We have plenty of food but the ice tea tasted exactly like soapy water.

For breakfast we had ham & egg omelet, cereal (rice krispies) peaches, a little milk, and coffee.

At present we are in our bathing suits waiting to fall out to wash our clothes. At present it is 12.30 and we fall out at one.

Just received daddy's letter and am glad to hear that Oxford is winning [playing baseball in the Connie Mack League], but tell everybody to put this number after my name 855414 this is very important. Today I hate the Marines and our corporals but tomorrow I'll probably like them. The drilling is hard on the legs & feet, and the slapping of the rifle is hard on the hands, but I think I like it.

I don't need anything but you could send some candy & cookies that you get a lot of, When you send a box don't make it too big. I could use a piece of steel wool & a small can of metal cleaner.

Well I have to say goodbye now as the corporals might show up any minute. Heard from Wilma, Devlin, and Joan. Can't get any cards to write now. Tell nana we swam the length of the pool only 40 yds. That's all the swimming, & no baseball yet.

Well I must say goodbye now.

The Marine,  
Son."

#### **LEF to mother, 12 June 1943**

**"Dear Mom;**

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Training Day – June 12, 1943.**

**This morning we slept till five and worked like the devil to get our work done by 5.45. After breakfast we went to our exercises and boxing lessons. While waiting for the instructor we were asked our general orders, and some of the fellows didn't know them, so we have to write all twelve fifty times.**

**Then we went to school till ten o'clock and learned about battle formations, hasty & deliberate fortifications, fox holes, and trenches. ...**

**We ate at 11 ... [after a full afternoon they drilled] till four. Then we went to mess and had ice coffee, sandwiches meat, spinach, donuts, and peanut butter. I was glad to get some peanut butter so I ate plenty."**

#### **LEF to mother, 15 June 1943**

**After describing his activities he noted "on Sunday we really got one hole brick of ice cream." Then went on,**

#### **"7th training day – June 15, 1943**

**Well this morning we got a little extra sleep, we got up at 5.00. For breakfast we had toast with a meat sauce [creamed chipped beef?], oatmeal, cornbread, and an apple. We have one quart of milk for four fellows so you have to drink coffee." After morning activities they went to noon "chow and had liver & gravy, string beans, apple salad, bread pudding, and soapy ice tea.**

**After mess we had mail call and then has a rest till twelve.thirty. From rest we went drilling and drilled till three without a rest. Men were dropping out of ranks right and left, but they were put back and forced to continue. After a while they**

**collapsed and were unable to continue but they are all-right now. The whole platoon is tired but everybody is well and I still haven't passed out from exercise or the heat.**

Sunday night and Monday afternoons meals weren't fit to feed to the pigs. Today a 2nd Lt in the mess hall asked a fellow if he liked the food, so he said that he like[d] it. Personally the food is rotten.

Well I am beginning to like the Marines even after all the drilling. ...

Now I have to say goodbye because I have to clean my rifle and write some other letters. Don't forget to send something to eat next week?"

**LEF to mother, 16 June 1943**

**"8th Training day:**

**Today we arose at the usually time washed, shaved, & cleaned the barracks before breakfast. For breakfast we had oatmeal, wheaties, bacon, fruit and a little bit of milk and some coffee. This morning we had an orange so I saved it till this evening for the time when I get hungry. ...**

**For lunch we had roast beef, white potatoes, lima beans, and white cake with icing on it. To drink we had salty water and coffee. ...**

**For supper we had meat & potatoes mixed, beets, raisins & carrots mixed, cold coc[o]a, and a piece of white cake.**

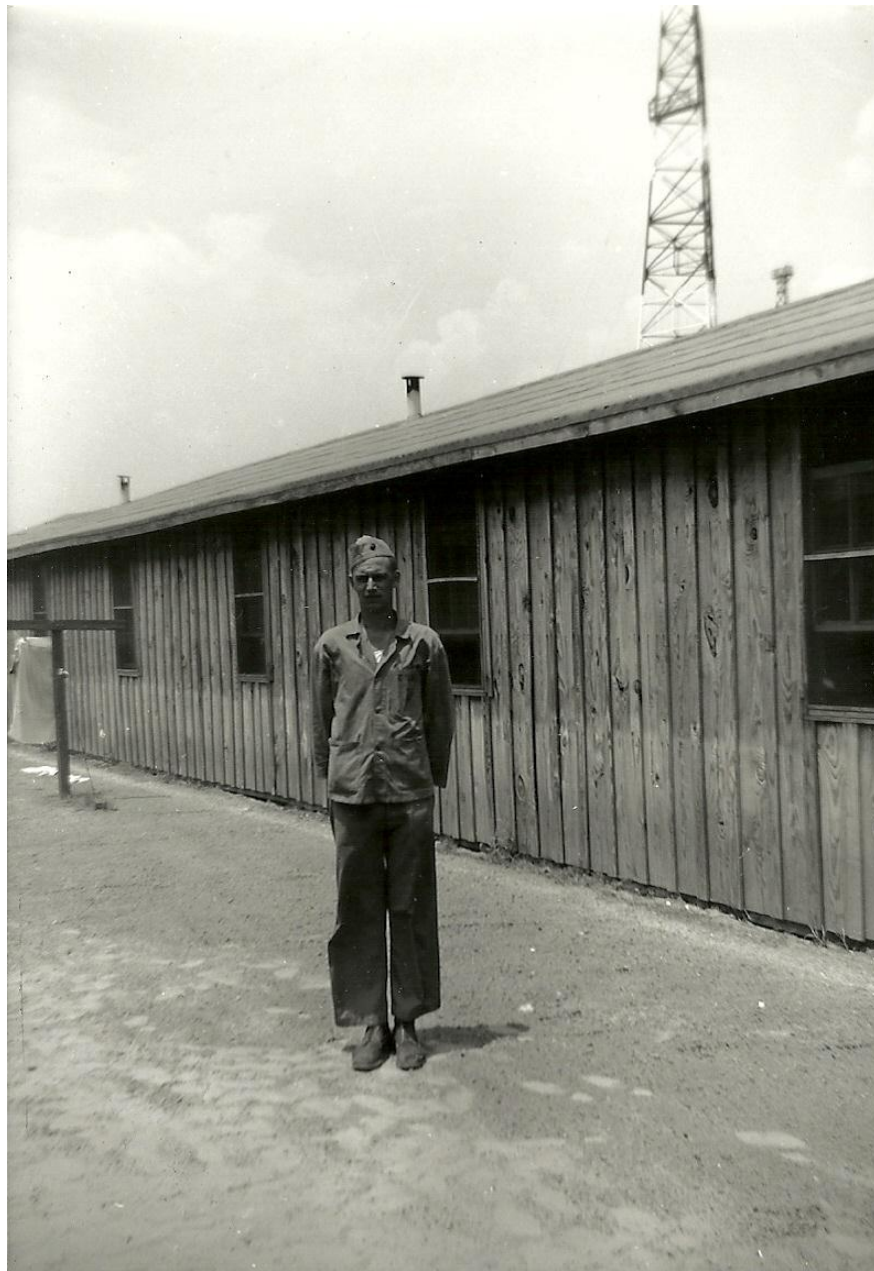
**Tonight we are permitted to go to the Post Exchange, so while I was there I had a coca-cola, pint of ice cream, and brought back a box of butter thins for later."**

LEF to mother, 18 June 1943

**"10th Training Day.**

Today was our tenth training day and was an inspection day. The platoon is usually awful but today they were pretty good and I think we passed the inspection. He inspected our mess gear, rifles, canteen and canteen cup, cartledge belt and our drilling. ...

At 10.45 AM we lined up and marched to the drill field and had our inspection. It took two hours and the fellow to my left keeled over on his face and was out. After inspection we went to mess and had hamburger, potatoes, egg plant, letuce, and ice cream. For breakfast we had oatmeal, wheaties, French toast, toast, coffee, and bacon. ... [in the afternoon the platoon went through an obstacle course] This was the end of the course but not the end for us as we had to run about a mile and the we were finished for the day. Chow was at 4.30 and we had fried potatoes, huvard [Harvard] beets, lettuce salad, fish, bread, donuts, and iced coffee. I ate everything but the fish and was I hungry after the exercise."



**At Parris Island**

**LEF to mother, 20 June 1943**

**"11th Training Day.**

**... In the evening we put on khaki and expected to go to the boxing bout, but instead we got guard duty. I was on from 10.00 PM to midnight and then 10.00 to noon. My post was large but only had two barracks on it. Behind the barracks are woods where stray dogs stay and when they howl it gives you the creeps. From 10.00 PM to midnight it is very quiet and lonely and it gives you time to think of home, and makes you homesick. ...**

**For dinner today we had, salty ham, mashed potatoes, cabagge, asparagas, bread, salty water, and cookies for desert. Doesn't the [sic] sound good? I don't like it."**



**LEF to mother, 21 June 1943**

**“12th training day:**

**Today was a very easy day. We arose at 5.00 and went to mess at 5.30 and what a breakfast cereal, apple sauce, toast, bread, coffee, and condensed milk for cereal and coffee. ... Now we eat [final] chow at 4.30 and had beef stew, lettuce, creamed cabbage, bread, and some more coffee. For desert we got two cookies. After chow another fellow and I went to the Post Office to get our packages. I managed to get some cookies and saved the other stuff. Next week send some fruit because then we will be at the range.”**

LEF to mother, 22 June 1943

**“13th Training Day.**

Well today we got up at 4.30 and had all the sweeping, swabing, and dusting done by 5.30 when we went to chow. For breakfast we had French toast, bacon, oatmeal, real milk, and coffee. After breakfast we had our exercises and some fellow fooled around so we ran about two miles as punishment. We had no boxing. ... [After drill and inspection during which] We stood there from 9.45 to 12.00 o'clock ... we returned and went to chow. For dinner we had baked beans, potatoes, tomatoes, pineapple, and lemon-ade; I went back for seconds. ... [the afternoon was spent at the obstacle course, running, and more drill] At 4.30 we went to chow and had pork, mashed potatoes, gravey, corn, cold coffee, and for desert had three cookies again.”

**LEF to mother, 24 June 1943**

**“14th training day:**

**Well today we got up at 4.15 and had all our work done by 5.30. After chow we had our exercises and our boxing lessons. The[n] we drilled for a while and also had a lecture on ‘Scouting and Patrolling.’ Then the 2nd Lt. got a hold of us and drilled us and ran us at double time till chow at 11.30. At 1.00 we marched to the barber shop and got a haircut for a quarter. All they did was cut around my head. While we were there we were permitted to go to the P.X. where I had a pint of ice cream, and a bottle of orange soda. It tasted good after salt water every meal. ...**

**15th training day:**

**This morning we slept till 4.45 and went to chow ... For breakfast we had french toast, coffee, wheaties, bacon, and bread. ... For dinner we had meat, vegatbles, and gravey mixed, then boiled potatoes, corn, salad, grape juice to drink, and cookies again for desert. ... For supper we had lunch meat, lima beans, salad, bread, hot coffee, and iced cake for desert.”**

LEF to mother, 25 June 1943

**“16th training day:**

... For breakfast we had pancakes and syrup, toast, bread, grapefruit, corn flakes, and coffee. ... For dinner I had fried potatoes, cabbage & pineapple combined into a salad, stewed tomatoes, bread, and two apricots as desert. ... [at] 4.30 ... we fell out for chow. For chow we had steak, fresh peas, mashed potatoes, gravey, pickle relish, bread, hot

coffee, and a rasin bun for desert. ... When you send a package don't send candy but send cookies and a few pieces of some fruit."

**LEF to mother, 27 June 1943**

**"17th Training Day:**

**This is the day we were waiting [for], because after evening chow we are going to the rifle range. ... After [noon] chow we had mail call, then we tore down our sacks (bedding) and packed our sea bags with all our belongings. We didn't have to mop & scrub the barracks until the drill instructor caught a fellow laying on a empty bunk. The we had to move all the bunks outside and mop down the floor. The rest of the afternoon we did nothing but at 4.30 we went to chow and had steak, mashed potatoes, lima beans, salad, orange ade, and marble cake for desert.**

**At five we fell out with rifles, cartridge belts, and rain coats to start for the range. The instructor picked some fellow[s] to stay and load the truck with our sea bags & the instructors locker boxes. He choose a fellow behind me, so I laughed at the fellow because he had to stay and load the truck, so the instructor also picked me to stay and load.**

**The truck didn't arrive till 8.00 while the platoon left at 5.30. It is about three miles from Parris Island to the rifle range by truck. It maybe shorter when walking.**

**We have the same type barracks but not as nice as the old barracks. ... The barracks is full of roaches and the place look[s] crummie. All week it has been raining on and off each day. ... Today is Sunday ... For breakfast I had two hard billed eggs, 1 piece of toast, ¼ of a cantolope, 1 box of rice krispies, and a cup of coffee. Up here you can get all the milk you want and more of everything, but you have to eat it all. You are forbidden to eat candy, because it hinders your sight, so don't send candy when you send a package. ...**

**We are on the rifle range for three weeks ..."**

**LEF to mother, 28 June 1943**

**"1st day at range:**

**Today is our first official training day on the range so we celebrated and got up at 4.30. ... For breakfast we had fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, cereal, milk and coffee, and some warm toast for once. ... For dinner we had beef stew, mashed potatoes, sour-kraut, lemon & raisan pudding, bread, and water to drink. ... At four o'clock we had exercises and from there we went to chow. For evening chow we had pickles, potatoes salad, cheese, bolonna, bread, a rasin bar for desert, and hot coffee to drink. ...**

**When you send a package don't send any candy, just send some fruit, cookies, and nuts of any kind."**

**LEF to mother, 29 June 1943**

**"2nd day on the rifle range; ... At six o'clock we fell out and proceeded to the movie house to see a picture on sighting and aiming the rifle. We had to got there with cartlidge belts, rain coat, and rifle. After the movie we had a late breakfast, at 8.00, and for breakfast I had, scrambled eggs, bacon, 2 pieces of toast, cereal, a cup of coffee, a cup of milk, and orange preserve to spread on our toast and bread, I also had a fresh orange. ... At 10.00 we had a rest period and then continued [class**

**work] until eleven when we quit and went to chow. For dinner we had pork chops, hot beets, creamed potatoes, pickles, lemon ade, and pumpkin pie for desert. ... Four thirty came and we marched for chow. For supper we had pork & beans, spinach, sliced tomatoes, hot coca, bread, and cake with icing & peaches on top for desert. Now I am convinced the food is better on the range than at Parris Island's main station."**

LEF to mother, 30 June 1943

"3rd day at rifle range:

It seemed this morning that 4.30 AM came even before I got to sleep. Lat night I was so tired that I didn't awake all night. For breakfast we had cereal, toast, egg, oranges, coffee, and bread. ... For dinner we had steak, potatoes, corn, salad, bread pudding for desert, and water to drink. ... In the afternoon we had position of the rifles and had our exercises at four. For supper we had beef stew, pickle relish, string beans, bred pudding and cake for desert and hot coffee and water to drink. Toady it was about 100° at supper time, so the coffee made me sweat more. After supper I bought a quart of milk and drank all of it, but got a little sick."

LEF to mother, 1 July 1943

"4th day on range:

This morning we got a cheerful surprise by getting up at 4.15. We made our sacks as usually and mopped, and then every layed on the floor and went to sleep. At 6.00 we fell out with our usual equipment, and went to our usual morning movie on 'Rapid Fire with the M1 Rifle.' Our platoon ate breakfast at 7.00 and for breakfast, had 2 soft boiled eggs, grapefruit, bacon, 1 piece of toast, a cup of coffee, and a bowl of cereal. Some breakfast?

At 8.00 we started rapid fire from the three positions kneeling, sitting, and prone. ... Ten to 10.15 is our well deserved and much welcomed rest period. We went to dinner at 12.00 and had, steak, peas, potatoes, gravey, and jello. I had plenty of jello as our platoon was at last chow so we cleaned them out.

In the afternoon we did the same as in the morning and now my whole body is bruised and aches. Four o'clock came around and we had our exercises which made me feel worse. We had supper at 5.00 and had kidney beans, meat loaf, creamed potatoes, coffee & water to drink, and donuts for desert. ...

The Marine

Son

P.S. Is Nana going to stay at the farm [in Western Pa., near Pittsburgh] all summer?"

**Lester's mother, Thelma Townsend Folkenson, occasionally sent small questionnaires for him to answer. In the 24 June 1943 letter he sent back one with his answers:**

**"Do you like being a Marine.**

***At times yeas and at times no.***

**Have you gained or lost weight**

***I don't know because I haven't been weight."***

LEF to mother, 2 July 1943

“5th day on range:

Today we arose a little late at 4.45 and for once didn't go to the movies in the morning. For breakfast I had oatmeal, scrambled eggs, 2 pieces of toast, stewed apricots, and a cup of coffee. ... For dinner I had corn on cob, boiled rice, peas, raisn pie for desert, and lemon ade to drink. ... [after an afternoon at the rifle range and a movie on throwing hand grenades] returned to the barracks to take our exercises which made my muscles ache more and more. Now every step I take is agony but I can't give up now as I am almost half way thru. For supper we had hot dogs, rice, sourkraut, stewed cherries, a sweet bun & bread, a cup of cold coca, and a cup of water. ...

Last night when I lefted [left off] writing the letter we had to fall out, as were were, with rifles & cartlidge belts. Some fellows were without shoes, some with just underwear, some with pants, and some with nothing on. I had my dungrees and helmet on. Then a fellow from the platoon drilled us. He has a voice like the drill instructor and some one told the D.I. so after mail call 5.30 PM the D.I. made the fellow talk like him. We all thought the fellow was funny but the D.I. didn't so we drilled from 9.00 to 10.00 at night. The D.I. thought it was funny when we drilled but when we marched into and knock[ed] down 12 ash cans it wasn't funny to him.

...

6th day on range:

After I closed last night we had to take our bed clothes and mattress and tear the bunks apart & throw everything on the floor. Then we had to make our bunk in two minutes. The first time we failed, but the second time we were successful and then we were given 1½ minutes to get undressed and get in bed. If there was a sound made after the lights went out we would have stayed outside all night.

But to talk about better things today was a nice warm day, about 100°, with a wind blowing. For breakfast we had corn flakes, scrambled eggs, cantolope, coffee, and bread. After breakfast we went to the butts [targets at the rifle range], at 7.30, and worked there till 10.00. At ten we practised our positions and then at 11.00 we were free till chow. For dinner I had 1 small pork-chop, potatoes, salad, asparagus, bread, and marble cake.

After dinner we learned how to throw a hand grenade, but use only dummie grenades which weigh 20 ounces. ... [late in the afternoon] a platoon sergeant gave us some exercises. Boy they were some exercises that made every bone in the body ache. Then we went to supper and had cold cuts, salad, potatoes, and jello. They had ice tea and I had plenty but they wouldn't give me more jello or cold cuts. ... I received the package from 'Horn and Hardarts,' boy the cup cakes are gone already. The buns and cake is saved for tomorrow as it is Sunday. ...

What is Nana going to do; stay at the farm or is she coming back?"

**LEF to mother, 5 July 1943**

**“7th day on range: [4<sup>th</sup> of July]**

**Yesterday day was Sunday and nothing happen[ed] exciting except at night we had ice cream and crackers to celebrate a fellows birthday. I didn't write any letters yesterday but I caught up on my sewing, washing, and cleaning my mess gear and canteen cup. The rifle had quit[e] some rust on the metal so it took and hour to clean and oil it good. ...**

Today was Monday but we still got up at four. At my next post I hope we get up later. The breakfast is always the best and most plentiful meal of the day. For example this morning I had two boxes of cereal, stewed prunes, scramble eggs again, hot golden brown toast for once, and a cup of coffee. When we were finished, the rifle instructor had a pleasant morning for us, working in the butts. You work from 7.30 to 11.00 and my ears are stilling ringing from the bullets winging overhead. I was lucky today to get a high numbered targets as less men fire on these targets. It was fairly cool working in the butts and that was one thing for us.

After working in the butts we returned to our barracks and went to chow at 11.30. For chow we had rice again, string beans, jello, water again to drink, I had a piece of ham as big as a half dollar. There is a sign that reads 'Take all you want to eat,' but to get it you have to be a magician. This was about enough food to keep a bird alive.

Then at 12.30 we left for the 22 range and arrived there at one. This is a good two mile march in the cool sun with the temperature about 105°. We fired about fifty bullets and were soaking wet with sweat. Then we thru granades for a half hour to make sure our dungress were dirty and full of sand. I did good is [sic] firing the rifle. I had sand up my arms, on my hands, and on my face. It stuck like glue and then it was three so we marched to the school range. While marching to the school range I began to get dizzy and sick in the stomach. I managed to last all afternoon but I think I was sick from not enough food. The temperature then was about 120° and we had a sweat shirt on, a dungaree blouse, plus poncho, gun belt, and rifle. Instead of going back to the barracks we had to snap in for an half hour till four. Our rifle sergeant left and now we have a platoon sergeant as instructor. At 4.00 we took our daily exercises and all this time we were covered with sweaty clothes and gummy with sand. Right after the exercises we went to chow and nobody felt like eating as they were sweaty, dirty, and tired. It was a good meal and I managed to eat some. We had stewing beef, string beans, rice, coffee, water, rice pudding, bread, plenty of butter and sugar. I bet I drank a gallon of liquid at supper and also had a quart of milk outside from a truck that comes around.

Now I just finished washing and soon I am going to take a shower. Everbody is on edge and if they are accidently bumped or pushed are ready for a fight. I guess this is from having a 'field day' everyday last week and drilling till ten after finished the 'field day.' This platoon is coming through boot-camp the hardway getting all kinds of punishment. Each fellow has a cold from sweating after our night drilling when we are only half clothed. Tonight we haven't drawn any punishment as yet, but maybe I better cross my fingers.”

LEF to mother, 6 July 1943

"9th day on range: ...

This morning I had a big breakfast 2 hard boiled eggs, bacon, ¼ of a cantolope, 2 boxes on corn flakes, toast, and a cup of coffee. We ate at 5.30 as we were going to the movies at 6.30 AM. Didn't even get time to shave. The picture were 'Storage and Handling Small Arms,' and 'The Loading of Small Arms.' ...

We had to eat chow early as there was another picture to be seen at 12.30. At 11.30 we had chow and had spare ribs, salad, potatoes, tomatoes, bread, and lemon ade to drink. ... Three-thirty we were all finished and I was thirsty so I drank a quart of milk before supper. There was no exercise today.

For chow we had meat stew, fried potatoes, salad, creamed peas, bread, peach pie, and ice tea.

Tonight we ate the cake and it tasted good."

LEF to mother, 8 July 1943

"12th day on range,

July 9th, 1943

... For breakfast I had scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, apple, 3 boxes of cereal, and a cup of coffee plus more milk. The first time I been filled for a long time. ... [after a morning spent on the rifle range] had a lecture till 11.00 when we got cleaned up for chow.

Had a large piece of ginger bread for dinner but don't recall any other foods.

Saw another movie at 12.30 to 1.30 on windage and elevation. Then snapped in till 4.00 when we usually quit but today we started to fire our M1 rifle at 4.00. I fired 9 shots and got 29 out of a possible 45. Not so good but not the worst. ...

Done at the early hour of 5.30 and still had to eat chow. For chow we had sweet pickles, lima beans, creamed potatoes, corn, celery, rice pudding, and two cup of iced coffee. I got plenty as most of the mess men were from Phila. I got second on rice pudding and I filled again today."

Another questionnaire from Lester's mother and his response, 8 July 1943 letter:  
"Did you get the big box with peanut butter – home made cookies –peanut Krunch:  
*Yes.*

**Why did you want metal cleaner.**

*To clean my mess equipment.*

**Why did you want the steel wool.**

*To clean canteen & cup.*

**Did you get a box from Horn & Hardart.**

*Yes in good condition."*

LEF to mother, 10 July 1943

"Hello Mom; During the night it was pouring rain, so when we got up at 4.30 we expected to see it raining. It wasn't and it was a clear starry sky. When I get up at 4.30 it is still dark. For morning chow I had plenty of bacon, 2 boxes of bran, oatmeal, 2 pieces of toast, 1 apple, and a cup of coffee. Even with all of this I was still hungry. ...

Had chow at 11.30 and had hot dogs, sour kraut, mashed potatoes, pickles, and rice pudding for desert. We had lemon ade to drink for a change. At the main station we got a variety of drinks, but here at the range we have gotten water almost every meal. ... [Back on the range] Our orders called for 3 shots sitting, 3 shots kneeling, and 3 shots standing from the two hundred yard line and 3 shots prone from the five hundred yard line. All slow fire. Instead they changed all order at the last minute and we had nine shots sitting, and nine shots kneeling from the two hundred yard line at rapid fire. With ... rapid fire you have one minute to get off sixteen shots. I did fair and finally got my first bulls eye. Now I know there are three ways of doing things; the right way, the Army way, and the Marine way. The Marine way, they try to do it the hardest way. ...

For chow we had cold cuts, tomatoes, potatoes salad, pickles, and pudding for desert. I had seconds which consisted of hot dogs, potatoes, rice pudding and to drink we all had iced coffee. Every meal today was good and I got filled. On seconds when I got the rice pudding my eyes were bigger then my stomach, although I ate a plate full of rice pudding I had to throw some away. ... Last night I opened your package with the three oranges and boxes of cookies in it. Two of the oranges kept fair but the third was rotten so I thru it away.”

LEF to mother, 12 July 1943

“Last night was the worst night I have spent in the Marine Corps. Lights went out at 9.30 and I walked around camp until 1.00 due to a sore finger. Tuesday we worked in the butts and while carrying a wooden frame I ran a splinter in my finger. I took it out and thought I had all the splinter out. On Friday my finger began to get full of puss and on Sunday the whole finger was num. Sunday evening I went to the dispensary and here the[y] lanced it a[nd] soaked it in hot water. Then they put some drawing saval [salve] on it and bandaged it. It throbbed only when I layed down and tried to sleep so I got up and dressed and walked till one. Then I slept till 4.30 and was tired all day. The finger is sore but getting better.

For morning chow we had stewed pears, oatmeal, toast, bacon, scrambled eggs, milk, and coffee. ...

Had [noon] chow earlier today but didn't have time to read Wilma's letter. We had pork & beans, pickles, jello, corn bread, and grape soda to drink. ... For supper we had pork chops, breaded tomatoes, mashed potatoes, greavy, and sponge cake for desert. Twice today we had something more to drink than water. For supper weak ice tea.

After supper we went to the steam rack [to clean rifles] and then washed some clothes. Had a community sing a few barracks down with a real cowboy from our platoon play the guitar and singing. ... P.S. Don't worry about the finger, it is all-right.”

LEF to mother, 13 July 1943

“12th day on range.

Last night I had more sleep and felt better today. My sore is feeling good so tonight I am going to remove the bandage and have a look at it. Fingers and hands are getting banged up & cut everyday.

This morning we got up at the usual time but it seemed we had more time after chow. I had time to clean and grease my rifle. For chow I had two boxes of cereal, bacon,

grapefruit, toast, scrambled eggs, and coffee. We always have plenty of butter, sugar, and bread. ...

We had a nice rest between 11.00 to 12.00. During this time we had to do only a few minor things. Such as eat chow, clean the rifle, fill our canteens, and rule off our score books. ... For dinner we had cold cuts, potatoe salad, beets, jello, sponge cake, and lemon ade to drink. Also had one large biscuit. ... [after an afternoon spent on the range and in the butts] went to chow and had a good feed. I had two pork-chop, apple sauce, spinach, potatoes, and sponge cake for desert. Had ice tea to drink. ...

Wednesday is pre-pilimary, Thursday is pilimary, and Friday is record day with our M1 rifle.

**If you send any more packages you now can put some candy in them. On the range the candy is supposed to affect your vision so Friday we are finished shooting. The Marines call candy 'pogy bait.'"**

---

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=pogey+bait>

### 1. pogey bait

buy pogey bait mugs, tshirts and magnets

The Marines in China before WW II were issued candy (Baby Ruths, Tootsie Rolls, etc.) as part of their their ration supplements. At the time, sugar and other assorted sweets were rare commodities in China and much in demand by the Chinese, so the troops found the candy useful for barter in town.

The Chinese word for prostitute, roughly translated, is "pogey". Thus, Marines being Marines, candy became "Pogey Bait".

Platoon leaders should control the use of pogey-bait and non-issue food.

### 3. Pogey Bait

buy pogey bait mugs, tshirts and magnets

The term comes from the word Poge which is used by military personnel to describe someone who is not infantry such as administration, clerical or supply. In the Marine Corps it is used to describe anyone not having an MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) of 03\*\*. Example: 0311 is basic infantry. Pogey Bait is anything that does not fall under the typical field rations and used to describe something store bought. The term is used to suggest that store bought food might be used to lure Poges (admin or clerical personnel) away from their desk jobs and out into the field.

I'm heading to the PX to pick up some pogey bait for the field exercise this week.

See also, Henry Berry, *Semper Fi, Mac: Living Memories of the U.S. Marines in World War II* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 36.

---



LEF to mother, 15 July 1943

"15th day on range; ...

Chow time was the usual time and I had two pieces of toast, sau[s]age, coffee, french fried potatoes, two boxes of cereal, and a large cup of milk. You better stock up with food as I have been building a large appetite.

At seven o'clock we were on the firing [range] ready to fire for preliminary day. ...

Eleven came and we were finished firing so we went to chow and had pork chops, potatoes, creamed peas, piece of cake, and ice tea to drink. For seconds I had spaghetti and sau[s]ages left from breakfast. ...

Three came and we marched to the movie house and saw a colored picture called "The Marines on Parade." ...

Four o'clock the movies were over and then we went to chow. It was an awful meal. All I ate was some potatoes, one hamburger, bread pudding with raisins, and coca cola. I filled up on bread, butter, and cold coca."

LEF to mother, 16 July 1943

"16th day on range.

This morning when I got up I felt very good after a long night's sleep. The D.I. made us go to bed last night at 8.30 so we would be rested for record day today. We also got up at five this morning a little later than usual. Had chow about the same time but were told not to eat too much. I had 2 quarters of cantaloupe, some oatmeal, one piece of toast, and a cup of coffee. The milk we got for our cereal and coffee was sour, but we used it anyway.

It was clear, bright, and not windy and was an excellent day for shooting record. I was a little nervous but got over it after while. My score was only 271 out of a possible 340 and wasn't so good ... but I got marksman. ...

We were all finished shooting at 10.30 so we went back to the barracks and did some work, then got ready for chow. Dinner was a poor meal so I had only rice, string beans, pie, and some lemonade. Again I filled up on bread, butter, and liquids.

After chow we had mail call and then the D.I. read off a list of men who were to report at the movie house at 1.40. I was one. There were about fifteen and we believe they were the ones with the highest I.Q. We were interviewed by a Lt. and all he ask[ed] was our rifle score, name, and age. I don't know what it was for. ...

Following [evening] chow we took our shooting pads off [f] the dungrees, washed plenty of clothes, scrubbed our cartridge belt, cleaned mess gear, and canteen cup. Sometime tomorrow we go to the main station and back to civilization for good.

When my leave comes I don't know but don't send any packages after the 28 of this month. Feel [feel] fine and I believe I gained about ten pounds and lost ten off the hips and bottom. This is about all for today as it has been hard and nerve racking."

LEF to mother, 18 July 1943

“Well Saturday afternoon I found out officially what I made on record day. I shot 272 and received a marksman medal which is all-right, but not too good.

Saturday we were to go on mess duty at the main station but instead got mess duty on the range. We moved from our old barracks and now are in two story barracks. These are all plaster board walls and ceilings and have plenty of good lights. It also has a toilet, sinks, shower, and a water cooler for each platoon. There are bad features. It is full of roaches and the mattress are full of bed bugs.

**On mess duty we get up at 4.00 and have to be at the mess hall by 5.00. We leave the mess at 9.30 & return at 10.00. Then we leave at 1.30 and return at 2.45, and are usually done for the day at 7.00. My job is to wait on the commissioned officers only. The mess hall is only for officers and non commissioned officers stationed on the range. I get plenty to eat and plenty to drink and the food is really good. ... On duty we weare white pants and a white undershirt.”**

LEF to mother, 19 July 1943

“Today was our first really hard day on Mess. It was Monday and everyday this week will be like it. On Saturday night and Sunday it is easy as most of the officers & non-commissioned officers leave camp and go home near by.

This morning we got up late, 4.30, and had twenty minutes to get washed and shaved. We didn't have time to [make] our bunks. All of the platton isn't on mess, some are on police duty and some are barracks orderly.

I left the barracks at 4.50 this morning and didn't return till 7.15 at night. We worked in the mess hall all day and didn't get a rest.

I have plenty too eat but not much time to eat it in.”

LEF to mother, 20 July 1943

“Hello Mom.

It is now 9.30 AM and I have been working since five without sitting down. We are now at the barracks and are resting till ten, when we return to the mess hall. My legs are almost num from the hips down. My job is waiting on tables and we are on our feet all day.

For breakfast this morning I had bacon, biscuits, coffee, cereal, and had some milk. Last night we had rasin pie and I had about ten pieces and didn't get sick. ... 8.50 PM.: ... Went to the P.X. tonight for a minute and weighted myself. The scale said 184 so I gained about 12 pounds. This week I ought to gain plenty as I am meating all the time.”

LEF to mother, 21 July 1943

“Tonight our day was done at 7.30 and I was plenty glad for that. We now only have three days left of mess ... as we don't get Saturday's night supper.

I managed to get to the P.X. tonight and got some ice cream after trying for over a week.”

**LEF to mother, 22 July 1943**

**“Today is completed and now we have five more meals to get. The hardest part of the day is getting up and getting breakfast started. When we start serving breakfast you lose track of time and when you think about it is after evening chow. The cooks are a fine bunch of fellows and it is easy and pleasant to work with them. Also, the mess hall is half tiled and half painted walls, while the floor is made from a rubberize material.”**

**LEF to mother, 25 July 1943**

**“Well today is Sunday and we left the range on Saturday and now are at the Main Station. ... The food at the range was good compared to the food here.”**

**LEF to mother, 26 July 1943**

**“[After platoon inspection] Came back to barracks and immediately fell out for chow. For chow we had pork chops, creamed potatoes, beets, squash, and prune pie. This is the first good meal we have had since we left the rifle range. The water at the main station isn't salty any more but you are to take [take] salt tablet[s] to replace the salty water. These tablet are on the table and I take about six each day, two after each meal. ...**

**Four o'clock: ...**

**The mess halls we generally eat in are empty today as our hole battalion and mess men went on a picnic. Something new in the Marines and do the old time Marines hate this idea. Our platoon didn't go but we aren't working hard. ...**

**Five o'clock:**

**Well chow is over and had a fair meal, spegetti, cake, lettuce, and water. Just found out we have guard duty tonight so I had better close now.”**

**LEF to mother, 28 July 1943**

**“Got up a little earlier this morning but I was still tired from guard duty last night. I had guard duty last night from 2.AM to 4.AM. ...**

**Breakfast was fairly good this morning. I had toast, oatmeal, corn flakes, orange, and a cup of coffee. ...**

**Returning from the parade we went to the barracks to get washed and changed, to wash our clothes, and then went to chow. For dinner I had shredded carrots, creamed potatoes, onions, and some delicious ham. The meal was so good I went back for seconds and probabally could have eaten third's. ... [later] I layed down and rested for my guard duty 2-to 4.00. While I was on duty the rest of the platoon had bayonet practise and later went for haircuts. I was relived at 3.30 and I had to go and get a haircut. While there we went in the P.X. and I took this time to get a pint of ice cream and a few cookies.**

**Came back and went directly to chow but didn't eat much. A fellow found a dead coack-roach in his jello and that turned my apetite.”**



**At Parris Island**

LEF to mother, 29 July 1943

“It was ten when we finished [cleaning up the barracks area], so I washed a set of dungrees and tried to get some of the rust out of my canteen cup. At one time I had a clean one but someone stoled it and left me this rusty one. Here, if you want to keep anything you have to watch it or keep your eyes on it at all times. ...

This is all for tonight as I am going to have my evening snack and got to bed. The snack consists of two pieces of bread I swiped from the mess hall, peanut butter, and jelly you sent.”

LEF to mother, 3 August 1943

“Well today is the day that our platoon leaves Parris Island for their homes. Myself and another fellow have to remain here as casuals for an indefinite length of time. The reason for that is I don’t have a green overcoat or green blouse, because mine are specials and are not in yet. This is one time I am sorry I am big [6 feet 4 inches] and I feel sort of sick

not leaving with my buddies. ... As I write and look around at the empty bunks my eyes begin to water and I feel sort of sick, so I'll continue later. ... [He was put in charge of a detail digging a emplacement after the noon meal.] From 3.30 till 4.15 we just sat around in the police shed and did nothing. Now at chow I don't have to wait in line but just sit down at a table and start to eat. After I was finished the day of August the second I was no longer a boot but a Marine.

Now I can go any place on Parris Island without having to ask somebodys permission to do so. It['s] a nice feeling to be free but it would be better if I was on the train heading home on furlough. ... The Marine. Son

P.S. With nothing much to do I am a little homesick and feel a little sore from digging. I wouldn't be in any other service but the Marines. Hope to see you soon."

LEF to mother, 4 August 1943

"This morning I started working on police duty and had to boss the cleaning of the toilet. The casual's just watch while the boots do all the work. After that we did nothing except oil a few rifles, and that took about ten minutes. Most of the morning I sat in the sun and took a sun bath.

At eleven thirty we went to chow and had steak, fresh peas, salad, bread-pudding, and grape juice to drink. Also had bread with plenty of butter. ... At 4.15 we were finished for the day and went to chow. For chow I had spaghetti, apple salad, donuts, and hot coffee. Today it was very hot and close, and they give us hot coffee to drink. ...

Don't try to write to me as I might leave any minute of any day.

Tonight we are going to the show to pass the time away as it gets lonesome without the rest of the fellow[s]. If I am here Sunday I think I will go swimming all day to make the time go fast. ... Goodby for the present but hope to see you in the near future. ... P.S. A.T. on envelope means awaiting transfer."

LEF to mother, 5 August 1943

"We had chow about 11.30 and I had a fair meal with plenty of water-melon for desert. ... No word about a leave, so the future begins to look blacker and blacker on me getting home."

Lester left for home about August 6<sup>th</sup> if the postcard he wrote home on 2 August was correct.



**Lester E. Folkenson, Jr.**



**Home on leave.**



**With Nana**



**With his father and mother.**

**Cherry Point, N.C.**

LEF to mother, 23 August 1943 (Cherry Point, N.C.)

“Well I arrived at Cherry point at 1.15 this afternoon and was told I wasn’t expected until 8.00 AM tuesday morning. When I heard this my heart sank low and I am now feeling even lower.

Last night I got in Wilson at 2.30 in the morning and spent the night sleeping on a swing on a hotel porch. It got very cool early in the morning so I moved to the bus station. We got the bus at 8.23 AM and were very susprised that it was a stream-liner and even got a seat alway to Cherry Point.

Cherry Point is a very large base and isn’t completed yet. Everywhere you look they are puting up building or hangers, and making roads. When you walk around the base it looks like a college campus except it needs more grass and trees. ... This is just a classification center and I expect to be gone in a couple of weeks. Tomorrow we are going to be interviewed and maybe reclassified. ... There are a few fellows from my old



platoon here but Adams was shipped to Memphis, Tenn. last week. Here he takes up ordnance and then if he is good enough airal gunnery. ... Well I'll try to write more tomorrow when I hope to feel better. The homesick Marine."

**LEF to mother, 24 August 1943 (Cherry Point, N.C.)**

**"Today has been moving very fast and I haven't had much time to think about home, which is a good thing.**

**Here we get up at 6.15 and have exercises at 6.30. After about ten minutes we march over to breakfast, and have a breakfast fit for a general. At times there is so many varities of food that you can't get all of it on trays. Also we can have seconds of everything but drinks. On tables there is always jelly, peanut butter, mustard, ketchup, and pickle relish. ... In the afternoon at 12.30 they have roll call and then each goes to his own working detail. But I went to the classification center this afternoon ... I think I am getting A.M.M which means Avaition Machinist Mate: This takes twenty-two weeks and then I can apply for a pilot. In the Marines before you can apply for a pilot you have to serve six months ...**

**Chow was very good tonight. Here is a list of what we had, with probably a few things escaping my memory;**

**Lettuce, bread, butter, plums, cake, soup, crackers, potatoes, ham, hamburgers, apples, and ice tea. On the table were apple butter, peanut butter, and pickle relish and a few other things. How would you like a meal with as much varaiety as this has and second on any of this you want. ... The Much Better Marine."**

LEF to mother, 25 August 1943 (Cherry Point, N.C.)

"We had this job [recycling tin cans] from 9 to 11 and then had chow which was one of those ten course dinners. They had so many thing[s] to eat that I can't remember what I had."

LEF to mother, 26 August 1943 (from Cherry Point, N.C.)

"Hello Mom; Now I finally found my calling in the Marine Corps; a janitor. This morning we swept, dusted, and cleaned generally a building. There were about three large rooms plus a gym that had to be cleaned. About fifteen men were assigned to this job and we were finished at ten. When I say finished I don't mean they let us quit, on the contrary, we had to pick up papers and butts till eleven.

Chow was next on the list and then came a rest till twelve-thirty. For desert we had apple pie with ice cream on top of it and cake beside. How is that for a desert?

In the afternoon after roll call a group of fellow names were called and they fell out of ranks. I was one of them. The information they gave us was that we we[re] going to Memphis, Tenn. on August 31 for Avaition Machinist Mate."

LEF to mother, 27 August 1943 (Cherry Point, N.C.)

"Tonight at six I went to the hospital with my buddy to visit his friend. He is an Italian and has his back injured from a airplane crash. A plane crashes a day here and usually one man gets killed each day. Don't worry I am in no danger spot.

Leaving the hospital we went to the P.X. and pushed and shoved to get some ice cream."

LEF to mother, 30 August 1943 (Cherry Point, N.C.)

“Hello Mom, Well today is the day before we leave for Tenn. and I am glad we are leaving. ...

At this base there is about twenty thousand swab-jockies (sailors) and about twelve hundred Marines. There is also some Waacs, Waves, Spars, and of course some lady Marines.

This morning we had nothing to do so I went to the airfield with Bill, a fellow who is going to Memphis and also a member of the platoon at Parris Island. We looked the planes over and went in some of them. They are so big and heavy that it's a wonder they fly. Took a look in the hanger where they were repairing some and to my surprize there were women Marines repairing and painting the planes. Some were working in bare feet and all had slacks and a jacket on.”

(In the envelope with the 30 August 1943 letter is one from Thelma (Honey) Townsend Folkenson to Lester Folkenson, Sr.:

“Dear Les

Thursday

This letter from son came this morning. I suppose he didn't have a whole lot of time to write and that's why we hadn't any mail for a couple of days.

Marguerite sent me a card today – they won't leave Atlantic City until tomorrow, for which I was thankful. I had the house to clean & then supper for them and the weather is terrible – terrible hot. It was just as hot at 2 a.m. as it was all day. Walt came to visit last night & left about twenty minutes to two. He's a lulu. Son sent him a card last week.

Am going to rest on the floor for awhile & then get going again. So far today I washed woodwork in kitchen dining room & little bathroom. Mom made over some curtains for the kitchen so I had to washed [sic] & stretched them. Emptied the wash water & raked half the yard. I'd like to go get all the cleaning done today & just clean the porch & bake tomorrow.

Bring some candy if you have time to get it.

Lots of Love,  
Honey xxx”)

**Memphis, Tn.**

LEF to mother, 3 September 1943 (from Memphis, Tn.)

“Hello Mom; Today is my first full day here and I am beginning to like it better. We have to be in bed at 9.30 and get up at five thirty. The chow is fair but does not come near the Cherry Point food.”

LEF to mother, 20 September 1943 (from Memphis, Tn.)

“8.00 PM: ...

Tonight I received your package ... I ate some of the candy, put some in a jar And the rest of it is being eaten by the fellows. ...

Tell Billy Kemner to write me when he gets in boot camp. Also tell him to do his best in the I.Q. tests, as if he wants avation it is usually juged on his I.Q. marks. Remind him ‘to keep his eyes & ears opened & his mouth shut’ plus ‘don’t ever volunteer for anything.’”

LEF to mother, 21 September 1943 (from Memphis, Tn.)

“Our daily routine usually consists of all morning is shop (8.00 to 11.45) and then we have chow (11.45-12.45), after that we go to class (1.00-3.00), then our swimming (3.00-4.00), and finally this class[where he was writing the letter] (4.00-5.05).”

**LEF to mother, 26 September 1943 (Sunday, from Memphis, Tn.)**

**“Enclosed is a menu that we were given on the first anniversary of the base. We had all the food on the menu but it is a rare occasion when we get a meal like that.”**

**Title page, “1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Sept. 23 MENU Naval Air Technical Training Center Memphis, Tennessee”: Inside,**

***Menu***

**Cream of Tomato Soup**

**Crackers**

**Sweet Pickles Celery Stuffed Olives**

**Southern Fried Chicken**

**Baked Spiced Ham Candied Sweet Potatoes**

**Buttered Asparagus**

**Spiced Peaches**

**Apple Pie Vanilla Ice Cream**

**Fruit Punch**

LEF to mother, 27 September 1943 (Monday, from Memphis, Tn.)

“Well today is the start of my fourth week of school. The time seems to pass very fast but I would much rather be stationed nearer home. ...

At swimming this afternoon we had to swim the width of the pool 15 times. To make it worse we had dungre pants on and a khaki shirt. The pool is twenty yards wide which makes a total of 300 hundred yards I swam today. After that we had to tread-water for

two minutes with these clothes on. When we are finished swimming lessons I ought to swim pretty good.

In school today we learned how to field strip the thirty caliber aircraft machine gun. It is fairly easy but has plenty of parts to learn.

**Just received the package from Horn and Hardart's and it was all in tack. I have started to eat the cup cakes."**

LEF to mother, 3 October 1943 (Sunday, from Memphis, Tn.)

**"I received your box from H&H. [Horn and Hardarts] and also a box of salt water taffy. They didn't last long as the fellow[s] were quite hungry when they arrived."**

LEF to mother, 4 October 1943 (Monday, from Memphis, Tn.)

**"P.S. Thank Mrs. Jensen & bible class for the cookies as I can't find time to write."**

LEF to mother, 10 October 1943 (Sunday, from Memphis, Tn.)

"... went to the so called 'food.' We had chicken for dinner but all I had was bone and an empty stomach. Missed breakfast as I over slept, so you can imagine how hungry I was."

LEF to mother, 11 October 1943 (Monday, from Memphis, Tn.)

"Received your package this afternoon but didn't open it until after evening chow. By now there isn't much left."

LEF to mother, 14 October 1943 (Thursday, from Memphis, Tn.)

**"The food has improved slightly but their bake good[s] are something to talk about. I'm not kidding it is really good. We have cake or pie at least once a day and always have plenty of butter. Does that make your mouth water?"**

**When you send crackers in a package make sure they are butter-thins or something similar. Don't send any peanut butter or things like that."**

LEF to mother, 16 October 1943 (Saturday, from Memphis, Tn.)

**"Today we had to work outside on ships for our shop and it was really cold. Last night I nearly froze with two blankets on, so tonight if I get cold I am taking a blanket and sleep in the toilet near the radiator. Most of the windows won't close and some of them haven't any glass in ... By the way don't ever say the sunny south. Right now I believe it is colder than in Phila. ... One good thing the chow halls are warm and serve a hot drink each meal. ...**

**You wonder where all my time goes well here is a regular day.**

**6.00 get up, make bunk and wash**

**6.20 have roll call & march to chow & eat.**

**7.15 have morning exercises.**

**7.50 finished exercises & march to school.**

**8.00 to 9.55 shop period**

**9.55 to 10.10 our smoking period or in my place I write a few lines provide[d] I am caught up on my shop work.**

**10.10 to 11.45 finish up shop**

**11.45 to 1.00 eat chow, get mail, & be back at school by one.**

**1.00 to 3.00 therapy class on our shop subject.**  
**3.00 to 4.00 our sport period, returning to barracks and getting a shower.**  
**4.00 to 5.05 our special subject for the week.**  
**5.00 to 5.50 get shaved, dressed and assemble for chow, also get mail  
& another shower.**  
**6.15 to 9.30 is usually our own time to wash clothes, write study and any  
other things. ...**

The cold southern Marine”

LEF to mother, 19 October 1943 (Tuesday, from Memphis, Tn.)

“The weather was like spring and last night it was very comfortable sleeping. It seems to be getting warmer and warmer each day, so maybe after while there will be another summer. ...

The food lately has been very good, so I guess the marines have started to cook. One good thing, nearly every meal we have cakes or pie.”

**LEF to mother, 21 October 1943 (Thursday, from Memphis, Tn.)**

**“Yesterday morning one of the fellows was very drunk from liberty and refused to get up for fire drill and for school. Here is all they have on him[:] an hour late in returning to the base, failing to get up for a fire drill, not going to school, not reporting for muster in the morning, and not making his sack. Today he received his punishment. Five days in the brig on bread and water. Boy I sure am glad I never started drinking.”**

**LEF to mother, 24 October 1943 (Sunday, from Memphis, Tn.)**

**“Last Thursday night I had my liberty, so I went to town. Another fellow and I went to the ‘Fair Grounds,’ a park like willow Grove, only to find out that it was negro night there. We left there and went to a roller skating rink, which I enjoyed very much.”**

LEF to mother, 2 November 1943 (Tuesday, from Memphis, Tn.)

“We opened your package last night and boy did the fellows make a dent in it. Almost all of the cookies are gone now and just a few nuts left.”

LEF to mother, 7 November 1943 (Sunday, from Memphis, Tn.)

“This morning we were allowed to sleep until you were slept out. Some of the fellows are still sleeping and it is nearly noon. It was so nice and warm in bed this morning I didn’t even get up to eat breakfast. I guess I didn’t miss much as the food lately has been just plain rotten. A few days last week we had horse meat and another day I believe it was goat meat. The horse meat was all fat and muscle and made me sick even to look at it ... The last four [weeks of schooling] ... will be working on actual type ships the[y] use in the combat area. Such as;

F4F-Wildcat – navy fighter, at present being used on carriers.

F4U-Corsair – navy fighter, probably the fastest and one of the best fighters in the world.

TBF-Avenger – a torpedo bomber, it is being used in the battle area now. ...

The fellows really made short work on Grandma [Himburt's?] cookies. Last night my bunk-mate received a package from home, so we had a little meal of our own. We had a bag of grapes and some kind of polish cake, which was real good. ...  
P.S. Just came from dinner and we had chicken, mashed potatoes, tomatoes, olives, apple sauce, and apple pie for desert. I swiped a piece of chicken for my bunkmate."



**“Son [Les] – Irv Ibach,” Memphis, Tennessee**

LEF to mother, 12 November 1943 (Friday)

“Enclosed is a menu of the meal we had on our [the Marine Corps] birthday. It sounds good but the meal wasn't so good. The food is really bad, when I don't feel like eating.”

Title page, “168<sup>th</sup> Birthday Nov. 10, 1943 U.S. Marine Corps Naval Air Technical Training Center Memphis, Tennessee”: Inside,

***Menu***

Cream of Potato Soup  
Crackers

Southern Fried Chicken  
Giblet Gravy

Mashed Potatoes Brussell Sprouts  
Sliced Tomatoes  
Mayonnaise

Bread Butter

Chocolate Ice Cream  
Cocoanut Layer Cake

Coffee

LEF to mother, 4 December 1943 (Saturday)

“9.00 A.M. Sunday Dec. 5, 1943

Today nobody came around throwing us out of the sack, so I slept till about 8.30. Then got up washed and shaved and here I am writing to you. Didn't go to breakfast, but a fellow brought back an orange for me. Just the Sunday I don't go to breakfast, they have a good meal. ...

3.00 PM ... From church we went to chow, and it was a good chow for a change. We had baked potatoes, salad, bread[ed] veal, cranberries, ice cream, coffee, and bread with real butter. Do you have any trouble getting butter?”

LEF to mother, 13 December 1943 (Monday)

“Walt can be very glad his sgt. Only pinched his [ear]. One day when I was in boot camp our D.I. [drill instructor] caught a fellow chewing gum in ranks. Instead of pinching his ears the D.I. made him rub the gum well into his hair. That evening he had almost [all] of his hair cut off again trying to get that gum out. ...

One of the fellows in our section got a Christmas package tonight with goodies in it. Well it didn't take long for twenty-six hungry marines to eat it.”

LEF to mother, 13 December 1943 (Monday)

LEF to mother, 14 December 1943 (Tuesday)

“Received your package this afternoon and now it is practically gone. The fruit cake was really good and the fellows also enjoyed it.”

LEF to mother, 22 December 1943 (Wednesday)

“P.S. Just had about a quarter of a fruit cake.”

LEF to mother, 25 December 1943 (Saturday, 3:00 P.M.)

“Here I am at the base sitting in my sack and swearing at the navy, south, and weather. Friday morning it starting [sic] raining and hasn't stopped. It isn't just a light rain, but it's a down-pour.

Last night I attempted to leave the base, but return[ed] as soon as I got near the main gate. There was a double line five blocks long waiting for transportation into Memphis. The rain was turning to ice on the roads, so that made the buses run all the slower. If it clears up I am going in tonight.

The Christmas dinner was delicious and I guess even better than what you had at home. Enclosed is a menu [missing from envelope] and boy did I eat plenty. Beside that each service man received a small package. In the package was soap, tooth paste, razor blades, candy, sewing kit, was cloth, and a package of cigarettes....

Visitors were allowed on the base today and were permitted to eat christmas dinner in the mess halls.”

LEF to mother, 30 December 1943 (Thursday)

“Finally received your package this afternoon. The crumb cake wasn't broken up, but the crust was very stale. Everything has been eaten up by now. It doesn't take long for twenty hungry marines to eat a box from home.”

LEF to mother, 2 January 1944 (Tuesday)

“Chow wasn’t so good at dinner time, so I’m pretty hungry.”

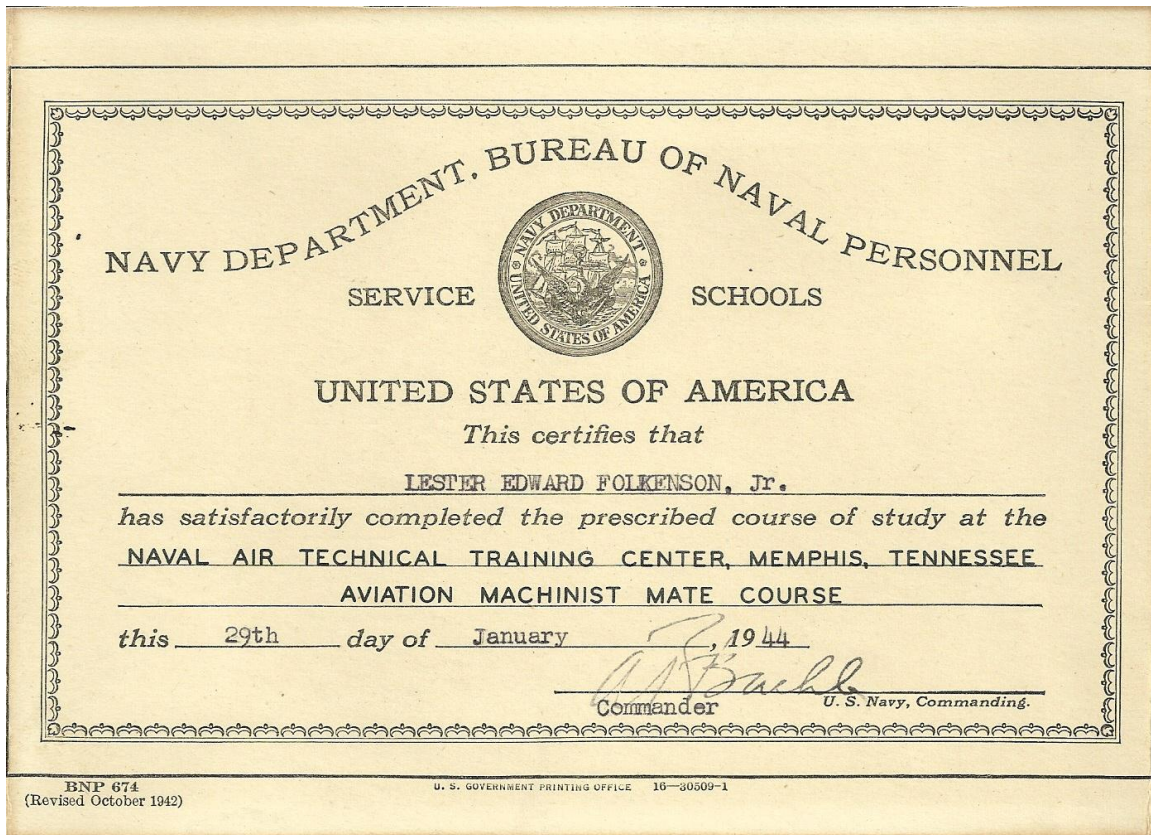
LEF to mother, 6 January 1944 (Thursday)

“Tell pop I received Aunt Annie’s package and have already written a thank you letter. The cookies were very good, but it didn’t take twenty six marine’s long to finish up the box.”



**Les Folkenson, Rear row, center.  
Johnny Leone (front row, first on left)**





### Cherry Point Marine Air Station, N.C.

LEF to mother, 9 February 1944 (Wednesday, from Cherry Point, N.C.)

“One good thing about here, is the food is much better and we can have all we want. Today we had steak, potatoes, tomatoes, green beans, peaches, and plenty of butter. Some meal.”

LEF to mother, 21 February 1944 (Monday, from Cherry Point, N.C.)

“This morning I started my first airplane, since leaving Memphis. It was an SBD [Dauntless], a navy scout bomber & dive bomber, which is gradually becoming obsolete. I also had to check and see that all the controls functioned properly while the plane is running. Sitting in the cockpit makes you feel like a king. ...

Don't worry about me getting plenty to eat. I believe I have gained about five pound since landing here. Today we had ham, and was it good. I had about three plates full plus plenty of butter. That should make your mouth water. ...

Tonight we had to work late because some visiting planes were leaving here tonight. It was after six when we got back to the barrack. We managed to get sixteen planes started and off the apron in fifteen minutes. I never saw a group of marines move so fast.”

LEF to mother, 27 February 1944 (Sunday, from Cherry Point, N.C.)

“Yesterday our crew worked from 8.00 AM to 9.00 P.M. with only an hour & a half out for chow. Worked to give an F4U a good check, because today it was going on an experimental flight. They have been having trouble with this type planes tail control, so this flight is to see if it can be remedied. Instrument[s] have been installed, which took six

month to build and are very sensitive plus being specially built. As you can see this flight was important, but it rained this morning so it was called [off]. There were two guards guarding this plane twenty four hours a day. ...

Right now I have two buckets full of dirty clothes soaking, so you can see what I'm going to do today. Being a Meck is O'K. but the clothes get dirty too easy. ...

All the planes is [sic] our squadron are flown by marine pilots, but these pilots were trained by the navy. When we received new planes, what I mean is not new from the factory but from some other field or maybe from the factory, they are occasionally flown by army or navy pilots. I can see why the marine pilots are the best in the world. They give a damn for any thing or person. The officers and pilot are really swell fellows. Most are very young Between 20 & 28. ...

The eats here are fit for a king and the meat is very good. We have to get up at six, eat breakfast, and then muster outside the barracks for roll-call."

LEF to mother, 7 March 1944 (Tuesday, from Cherry Point, N.C.)

"Foods is very delicious here, but they won't give us very much. If we want any more we start all over again with a clean tray."

LEF to mother, 11 March 1944 (Sunday, from Cherry Point, N.C.)

"A second mess hall opened today, so that cuts down the confusion in the old mess hall. Tonight when we went to chow they weren't going to let us in because we didn't have a chow tag. Finally we got chow after a good argument. Pretty soon were going to need a pass to go to the toilet."

LEF to mother, 12 March 1944 (Sunday, from Cherry Point, N.C.)

"This morning our sgt. Got us our chow tags, so now we don't have to fight for our meals. Afternoon chow was pretty good. We had, butter, bread, mashed potatoes, creamed chicken, peas, salad, coffee, crackers, jelly, & apple butter. Some collection but I still didn't get enough to eat.

Last week one of our fighter squadrons moved in. They have F4U (corsairs) and must have about twenty-two planes. Here is what our group consists of.

Hdq. Sqd.

Service Sqd.

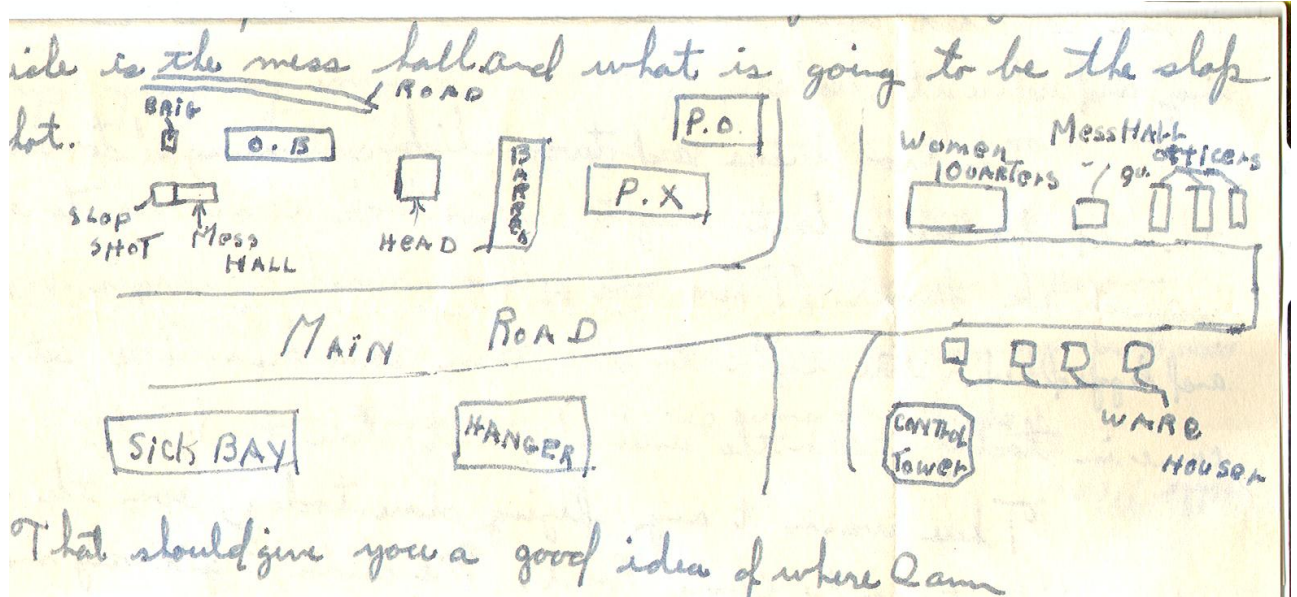
2 Dive bomber Sqd.

2 Fighter sqds.

A few more of our squadrons should move here, before the month is finished.

Our barracks is really seated in a good position. At one end of the barracks is the brig building at another side is the mess hall and what is going to be the slop slot."

**[See diagram below.]**



### Kinston, N.C.

LEF to mother, 16 March 1944 (Thursday)

"Yesterday we had to go to one of our outl[y]ing fields to pick up a crashed plane. The right landing gear broke when the plane land[ed], but there wasn't much damage to the plane.

The field lies about four miles from New Bern N.C. and New Bern is fourty miles from Kinston. We had the plane loaded on a flat trailer truck with just the wings taken off. If other trucks or cars came towards us they had to get off the road.

All that 45 miles I rode on the right fender of the truck, so I could wave the on-coming machines over. Some didn't move and the[y] just about missed the tail of the plane.

We didn't expect to stay at the field, but the job took longer so we stayed there all night. All we had was the clothes we were wearing. The six of us rounded up some sheet[s] and an empty hut to sleep in. The hut had a stove, so we managed to keep warm. I slept on a sheet & a mattress, then I had a sheet & mattress over me.

One god thing about our trip was they had a party at chow time. For supper we had potatoes, peas, and steaks. The steaks were about an inch thick and ten inches in diameter. Butter, all you want. They also had beef, a hundred cases for two hundred men. I tried some but one swallow was enough. Guess I'm no rummy."

LEF to mother, 23 March 1944 (Thursday)

"When we go after these planes, we usually have a sgt. in charge, but no officers. That time we had the steak was at one of our out-lying fields. Having a party and steaks like that happens only once in a life time in the Marine Corps."

LEF to mother, 3 May 1944 (Wednesday)

“The barracks is about as dead as anything tonight. The ‘slop shoot’ opened tonight, so all the fellows are there drinking beer. They have been waiting for this occasion, since we reached Kinston.”

**Slop chute/shute:**

**“A bar for lower enlisted grades having few amenities and serving only low content beer-no hard liquor.”** <http://www.answers.com/topic/slop-chute>

**Slop chute:** “Any place that serves alcohol, especially beer. Usually Post Exchange (PX) but could veen be ‘21’ Club in New York City.” Henry Berry, *Semper Fi, Mac: Living Memories of the U.S. Marines in World War II* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 36.

LEF to mother, 10 May 1944 (Wednesday)

**After an Easter furlough spent at home.**

“Last night I spent the whole evening catching up on some of my sleep. We just made the train at Washington. As we pulled in at Washington we had to run to catch the 6.40. All of us were lucky to get a seat clean to Wilson. There were a group of ‘boots’ going to ‘boot camp,’ so we all got a seat in that car.

The car in front of ours was the dining car, so we ate supper about 8.30. I had fried chicken and it was real good and plenty to eat. That meal just hit the spot.”

LEF to mother, 9 July 1944 (Sunday)

“8.30 P.M. Sunday

Had to stop writing so I could get some chow. For chow we had cold cuts, bake beans, tomatoes, pickles, fruit cocktail, and fresh milk. Of course they refused us seconds on milk. I’m beginning to think food is rationed here.

After chow four of us went to the ‘slop shoot,’ to drink beer, but I only had cokes. In a short time the entire line was down there and having a high old time.”

LEF to mother, 18 July 1944 (Wednesday)

**Following another visit home.**

“The train ride down was much cleaner and better then usual. I had a seat all the way to Washington, but stood from Washington to Petersburg, Va, after that I had a seat to Wilson [N.C.]. ... We had supper on the train around Frederickburg Va. and for a change it was good. I had chicken, mashed potatoes, lima beans, tomatoe juice, ice tea, and ice cream. My clothes stayed fairly clean, because I rode in air-conditioned coaches.

I would have written a letter last night, but I had to attend a beer party. The party was given by our pilots and just for us mechs in Hdq. and no more. There was plenty of beer, coke, water melon, and hot dogs. About forty fellows and officers were there and they made short work of fourteen cases of beer. The party lasted form 5.30 P.M to 11.00 P.M. and by the time it was over most of the men felt very good. I must have eaten a water melon, a dozen hot dogs, and about twelve bottles of coke, so you can see I didn’t starve. It was held off the base in some farmer land who had a fire place, and a creek near-by. Some of the fellow went swimming (in birthday suits), but didn’t stay in too long, because the current was too swift.

We are going to move almost any day, because everything we have is packed. The new base is about five miles from Newport Arkansas, which somebody said is 60 miles from Memphis. All our present planes remain here and we get new planes at Newport.”

LEF to mother, 21 July 1944 (Friday)

“This afternoon everything was quite still until a little after three and then things started popping. First of all five visiting SBD-6’s came in and right after them came twenty F4U, and then an R4D [made by Douglas, also known as a C-47] came in. After all that ended some plane had to be refueled and some were getting ready to take-off. For awhile we were really moving fast.

Last night our new planes came in (SBD-6 ‘Dauntless Dive Bombers’), and most of us are disappointed with them. At the present time we have SBD-5, but these are staying here. These SBD-6’s are the same as the SBD-5, except for a few minor changes, such as a more powerful engine. The new planes came from Norfolk Va. and when they landed here they were covered with oil and mud. ...

At eight this morning eight R4D (transports) landed here to take some men to Arkansas, to get some men to the new base. There were about 150 men that left for Arkansas. All they will do is some kind of work details at the new base, and I hope they get all the work done before we get there. ...

Today was fish day, so chow wasn’t anything to brag about. For dinner we had fish and for supper we had cold cuts, so I didn’t gain any work on that chow. ...

P.S. We are supposed to move around August second.”

LEF to mother, 27 July 1944 (Thursday)

“The heat today was terrific and at the present time it isn’t much cooler. Sweat is rolling off me, so I guess I’ll have to take another shower. The mornings start off cool and it ends up as hot as the devil.

Today we just loaded two trucks and that’s all I did today. The whole line section just layed around the hanger sleeping and reading. That’s the life nothing to do and all day to due it in. Yesterday our tool-box was stolened and the colonel is raising the devil about it. It is believed that one of those new squardons has taken it and if it don’t soon turn up they will be restricted. The tools were really valuable. ... After loading the trucks we had to go off the base to unload the trucks into box cars. Where the box cars were there were some water melons, so a few Marines in Kinston had water melon today.”

### **Newport, Arkansas**

LEF to mother, 9 August 1944 (Wednesday)

“Well, here I am again, but this time more settled. The base officially belongs to the marines, so now our colonel has the say over the base. This afternoon eight of us helped unload the last box car full of our equipment. As soon as all the box cars were unloaded, the railroad took them away, because they needed those cars. The eight of us had duty tonight, but beings we unload[ed] box cars, we were finished work at five. Now the duty section stay at the hanger until dark, and then two men from the duty section stand-by all night. These two stand-by’s are to take care of visiting airplanes during the night. There usually isn’t any visiting airplanes at night, but its OK, because the two men get the next day off. ...

The chow situation around here is certainly messed up. There is only one chow house opened and that is serving over three thousand men. They can’t cook enough food to serve all those men, so it takes about two hours to eat chow. We now have two (SBD) dive bomber squardons, three (PBJ or B-25 Mitchell) bombing squardons, one service

squadron, and us Headquarters squadron. To say the base is getting full is putting it mild....

Last night almost all the flight section went to the eight o'clock show. We saw 'Bathing Beauty' and I thought it was a very good picture. Speaking of pictures while we were at Memphis Pop [Lester, Sr.], Taylor, and I went to the show and saw 'Going My Way' with Bing Crosby. Our theatre on the base at one time had fixed leather seat[s], but the army took the seats with them. The navy refused to pay for the seats, so now we just sit on hard benches, plus paying a dime for admission. The marines certainly get robbed by the navy. ...

Oh, yes, these new bunks are certainly swell, I actually fit in the bunk. Now I can stretch out without having my feet come out the bottom."

LEF to mother, 29 August 1944 (Tuesday)

"Today a squadron of SB2C (helldiver), dive bombers, arrived on the base. The plane[s], pilots, and aerial gunner[s] flew in today, and the ground crew will arrive on the train some day this week. This squadron was stationed at Greenville, N.C. in an outlying field of Cherry Point, while we were at Kinston. They are just about ready to go overseas.

With the new squadron moving in we must share the hanger, our rooms in the hanger, and space on the apron. This isn't so good because each squadron will swipe the others tools and that causes trouble.

Tonight it was rather cool, but three of us decided to go swimming. Well we walked over to the swimming pool, which is about a ½ mile walk, only to find the pool closed and being drained. Instead of wasting our efforts we stopped at the slop-shoot and had some cokes and potatoe chips. No beer on the base, so we couldn't have any beer, not that I wanted any."

LEF to mother, 1 September 1944 (Friday, 7:00 PM)

"Two more squadron moved in this week and again the mess halls are overcrowded. It takes a good hour to eat and get out of the mess hall. This darn base sure is messed up.

The cake arrived in good condition and the bottle of cherries didn't break. Now does that answer your question and relive you of one more worry."

LEF to mother, 5 September 1944 (Tuesday, 7:00 PM)

"Last night a rain and wind storm came up, so I was an unfortunate victim. The planes had to be double tied, so the 'O.D.' [officer of the day] came thru the barracks and got us up. I pretended I was asleep, but he was mean and made me get up. That hurt waking a sleeping beauty. Well the marine corps didn't pull anything over on us, because we went and ate midnight chow.

This afternoon we enter a group called 'Service Command.' We are getting all new officers, more men, and no one know[s] anything about this outfit. The outfit is being formed on this base. One good thing about today, we got paid and I drew thirty bucks. One of my roommate[s] returned from the P.X. with cokes and potatoe chips, so I'm having a snack while writing."

LEF to Nana (his grandmother, Mary Hanley Townsend), 8 September 1944 (Friday, 7:30 PM), addressed to "Mrs. W.S. Townsend c/o Homer Clawson Hillview Farm Salina Penna."

"Dear Nana ... Twenty mechanics from Hdq. Sqd. are leaving tomorrow afternoon for the West Coast. Well I happen to be one of them and I have plenty of packing to do. We received the notice yesterday that we were being transferred, so for two days we sure have been busy.

This afternoon we got new clothes for our old worn out clothes. I managed to get five new pair of stockings, one shirt, three hats, two work pants, one work coat, and a new pair of shoes. ... With these new clothes I should be well dressed for a few more months.

The barracks looks as if a cyclone hit a paper factory. Paper, old letters, and coke bottles all over the floor. The boys across the aisle are having a little whiskey, while shooting dice. Others have gone to the movies, some are writing, others packing, this sure is a very active barracks. Usually the fellows are sleeping or just laying around, so it is quiet, but not tonight. This moving isn't too good of [an] idea, but it may be for the best. ... My address will change, so don't write until I send a card from my new base, with the new address. I'm going to call home and see if I can find mom and pop at home for a change.

Boy it sure has gotten cold these past two nights. Last night I used two blankets and could have used more. Tonight my one blanket is at the bottom of my sea-bag, so I'll probably freeze with one blanket on. The sea-bag has to be packed just so, as I have plenty of things to go into it.

Well I guess this is about all I can write for tonight, so I'll write again, when I get settled at the new base. Hope you are well and everything is just fine at the farm.

Love, Son"

LEF to mother, 9 September 1944 (Saturday, 2:00 PM)

"Dear Mom Well today is the day. At four o'clock this afternoon we leave for Miramar, Cal., a marine base outside of San Diego. From Miramar they send the men overseas, but we don't know whether we will go over.

Our sea bags were collected early this morning, so we are just about ready to leave. ...

After I finished the telephone call last night I went to the mess hall and got a midnight snack. Sandwiches, cake, and hot coffee. It sure hit the spot because last night was cold. ... P.S. We are going by train."

### **Miramar, San Diego, Ca.**

LEF to mother, 19 September 1944 (Tuesday)

"I wasn't in that 'Service Command,' so I can't tell you what it was like. That 'Service Command' Group didn't go into effect until around Sept. 15, and at that time I was safely settled here. ...

Chow at this base certainly is swell compared to the last few bases we were stationed. Here they give us ice cream about every day, so that just hits the spot. The only bad thing is we have to stand in line too long. There isn't any silverware or cups here, so we have to use our own silverware and use our canteen cups as cups."

LEF to mother, 25 September 1944 (Monday, 7:20 PM)

“After they finished signing the pay-roll they nailed us for another work detail. This detail was to take up boardwalks in ‘tent city’ and take some tents down. A large group of men left today, so there is room in the barracks for us. That means most or the biggest part of ‘tent city’ will be gone. Tomorrow morning our section is supposed to move into the barracks. ...

This evening after chow six of us went to the ‘slop shoot’ for some beer. I took a sip of beer and that was too little, so I stuck to cokes and ice cream. The chow at this base is swell and we get plenty of ice cream for desert. You can go back for 2nd, 3rd, and on up for everything, including desert. Yes sir, we sure are eating plenty and getting fatter.”

LEF to mother, 26 September 1944 (Tuesday, 7:10 PM)

“In the afternoon we had a small work detail at the ‘transit officers quarters.’ Four of us had to sweep and swab a few rooms and a long hall, after that we were finished for the day. All our work was done at two, so the four of us went to the P.X. and had a milk shake. ... This new barracks is closer to the mess hall and the main part of the base. With it being closer to the mess hall that means a few more minutes sleep in the morning.”

LEF to mother, 28 September 1944 (Thursday, 6:15 PM)

“The chow is swell here and we have ice cream almost once every day. There isn’t much of a chow line as many men are leaving this MWSS-2 [Marine Wing Service Squadron], but only a few are coming in as we did.”

LEF to mother, 2 October 1944 (Monday, 7:05 PM)

“Sunday four of us went [on] liberty about nine A.M. and didn’t return until Monday morning. As soon as we reached town we had chow and then went and got some clothes cut-down and our greens pressed. I had my khaki shirt, tie, and greens pressed, plus having a stripe sewed on my shirt. This tailoring and pressing took about two hour[s], because we had to wait in line and then had to wait for each other.

After all this tailoring it was getting hot so the four of us decided to check our green blouse at the U.S.O. It doesn’t cost anything and the U.S.O. is in the center of town. By this time it was close to 11.30, so we ate dinner and walked around town for awhile. For dinner we had a swell steak and French fried potatoes.

While walking around town we saw a poster saying football game that Sunday, so to the football we moved. The [game] was between the Hollywood ‘Wolves,’ and the San Diego ‘Bombers.’ The game was[n’t] too good as it was a one sided affair with the ‘bombers’ winning 20-6. The ‘Wolves’ players were big and heavy, but the ‘bombers’ sre stopped the big brutes. It was a swell statium, but for seat they had cement rows, and that sure make[s] one spot on a person plenty sore. Weather was like baseball weather than cool football weather. Everybody comes to the games in shirt sleeves and that sure looks funny.

There were two pretty well drunken marines and those two were a show in them selves. They had something to drink before the game and during the game they nursed a quart of Whiskey. Both were rooting for the opposite team and boy you should have heard that.



The game drew quite a crowd, so the trolley cars were too crow[d]ed to ride back to town. It didn't take very long to walk back to town, but it sure made us hungry. So four hungry marine[s] headed for the nearest chow house. All four of us had breaded veal cutlets and they were plenty tasty. The café was fairly high classed and quiet, but it wasn't quiet while we were there. Things just happened and that started is on a fit of laughing and I thought we would be thrown out at any minute.

It was six o'clock when we finished chow and that was too early to go any place special, so we took in a show. The show was over at eight and it was getting cooler, that was a sign to check out our green blouses from the U.S.O.

Harry James was at 'Pacific Square' in San Diego. This place was so crow[d]ed that you couldn't get inside and we sure did[n't] want to stay outside. One of the fellows got the idea we should ride the ferry, so to the ferry we walked, a good mile. The ferry go[es] to 'Coronado' and that is a residential section with a swell hotel along the beach. There wasn't anything doing in Coronado and it was then close to mid-night, so we decided to return to the base.

At the bus station there was a line a block long waiting for the bus and we didn't stay in that line. Instead, the four of us too a taxi cab out to the base, which costs one dollar each. The base is twenty mile[s] from town, so the taxi was well worth the price.

That just about covers our day Sunday, except that we decided to go to the dance at Coronado this Tuesday. ...

I had a new set of dog tags made, so enclosed is one of my old dog tags, you can out in that scrap book. There are two of them, but I'll sent one in the next letter."

**Answered in this letter:**

**M.A.A.C.: Marine Corps Air depot**

LEF to Nana, 2 October 1944 (Monday, 9:30 PM)

Dear Nana Just received your letter this afternoon and I'm trying to answer it this evening before lights go out. Light[s] go out at ten so you can see I'll have to write and think plenty fast. I haven't written any letters over the week-end, so a few letters have piled up on me. Instead of writing on Sunday four of us went to San Diego on liberty.

We left in the morning and didn't arrive back until sometime Monday morning. I'm having a little trouble staying awake and boy did I hate to get up at six this morning. Reville sounds at six, so if I want chow I have to get up then. Going with[out] chow all day isn't too hot and chow usually is good, so I get up. ...

It is quite cool in the evenings and the barracks are cool, so I [am] sitting in my sack writing this letter. I've been using one blanket, but last night I nearly froze, so tonight I'm using a poncho over the one blanket. My second blanket is at the bottom of the sea-bag and digging that out would be a major operation. Living out of a sea-bag isn't too hot, because it must be packed just so, and the thing[s] we need placed near the top. We now live in barracks.

The base is being drained of men and no new ones to replace the old ones, so they are tearing down the tents and the bunks in the tents. That is our work details and I sure hate that. The other day we took the tents off the wooden frame, rolled the tents, bagged the tents, and loaded them on a truck. This afternoon we go[t] a easy job of loading and unloading bunks at a warehouse, where the bunks are being stored.

At the present time we aren't in any outfit, just a replacement squadron and we aren't doing any mechanic work. All of us are still classified mechanic, so when we get a new squadron we will do mech work again. So far we haven't been assigned any overseas detail, so I'm sure of being here at least another week. Getting another stripe is out for a long while, because rates aren't given out very freely overseas.

I wish mom and pop would have come to Newport with Wilma, but I guess pop couldn't go then. They will never come out here so it will be a long time till I get home again. The marines are lucky if they spend fifteen months overseas, usually they spend two years over there."

LEF to mother, 4 October 1944 (Wednesday, 6:00 PM)

"Last night three of us went to that dance on 'Coronado Island' at the Coronado Hotel. In the days before the war the hotel was a swanky place, but it has come down a little. The dance wasn't held in the main ballroom but in a place that reminds me of a night club. Tables surrounding the dance floor. There was beer and coke sold at the dance.

On our way to the dance hall we passed the main dining room of the hotel. Boy what a place. Ceiling was as high as a gym ceiling and there were old chandlers hanging half way from the ceiling to the floor, then on a small balcony was an orchestra playing dinner music. It must have cost a small fortune to live in that hotel at one time. The dance was OK and for a change there were enough girls to go around."

LEF to mother, 5 October 1944 (Friday, 3:00 PM)

"Yesterday afternoon we had swimming again and this time we really got a work out. Across the pool, 25 yards, underwater, stay afloat for 15 minutes, twice across the pool any style, up the cargo net, jump off that 20 ft platform, and then climb down the cargo net. ... This time on that jump I must have hit the water wrong, because I hurt my back. It hurts when I reach up and hurts when I lift or carry anything. While standing on the parade at attention the darn thing really hurt. I think I'll go to the sick-bay tomorrow. ...

Today they were looking for volunteers to donate some blood. Well most of the fellow[s] volunteered, so I joined them. When they are going to take the blood I can't say, but it will be soon. We still haven't been assigned to any out-going detail.

The other day two oil stove[s] were installed in each barracks ... These nights are plenty cool and most everyone has a head-cold. This weather is even worse than Phila. weather. Here we have four seasons in each day.

No mail from you yesterday or so far today. It's time for evening chow and evening mail call, so I'll finish this later this evening.

Just returned from chow and it was pretty good. This noon we had fish so I didn't eat very much, no fish. Tonight we had mashed potatoes, hamburgers, green beans, carrots, ice cream, milk, butter and bread. As you can see from that type chow I will be gaining pounds. ...

No mail from anyone today ...

After chow we went to the P.X. and had some more ice cream."

LEF to mother, 7 October 1944 (Saturday, 6:10 PM)

“There wasn’t any work detail this afternoon, so we went over to the large parade field and played touch football. ... All together there were twelve of us and this evening there are twelve well bruised marines. It was a lot of fun and almost every one is limping tonight. My back is healing OK, so I don’t have to go to sick bay. It may have been a cold in my back. ...

This evening chow wasn’t just up to par. We had spare ribs, potatoes, gravy, diced beets, corn, milk, salad, butter, bread, and pears. From chow we went to the P.X. for some ice cream and some sandwiches, we will eat the sandwiches later tonight.”

LEF to mother, 13 October 1944 (Friday, 6:45 PM)

“After the morning muster [at 8:00 AM] a group of us started to play touch football. I lasted till ten and then I retired as I was tired out. From the football game we walked over to the P.X. and had a pint of milk and a sandwich. That is all I did this morning. ... After the Lt’s little talk [at 1:00 PM] we again walked to the P.X. and got some ice cream and the headed for the afternoon show. We saw ‘Till We Meet Again,’ and I thought it was very good. ... Following [4:00 PM] muster we went to chow and had mashed potatoes, stewing beef, beets, carrots, gravey, cookies, butter, bread, and milk. All in all the chow is really swell.”

LEF to mother, 15 October 1944 (Sunday, 2:45 PM)

“So far today has been quite busy. Three of us, Ulrich, Roger, and me, went to 7.30 A.M. church and took communion. This service was especially for the men on the out-going detail, and church was fairly crowded. It was just a brief service. Enclosed is a program we were given and I also got a New Testament. Didn’t get any breakfast.

At 9.30 we had a muster and marched to the quartermaster to draw two tubes of ointment, mosquito net for our helmet, and our gas mask. ... After that we were free to do what we had to do, which was work on our packs and sea-bags.

At 1.30 P.M. we had another muster and this time we brought our sea-bag along. The sea-bags packed with the things we were taking overseas ... On the parade ground we layed the contents of our sea-bags on our blankets and then the contents were inspected by a Lt. No flammable, mashable, or breakable things were allowed in the sea-bag. After the Lt. past our thing[s] we packed the sea-bag, right on the parade field, and piled them up. Then a truck picked the sea-bags up and they are headed somewhere. So far we don’t know when we are leaving.

That brings you up to the present time. Some of the boys are sweeping the barracks out, which is a good idea. The barracks looks like a paper mill. You know how the living room looks when Pop finishes reading the Sunday paper. Paper scattered all over the place. ...

:Last night I had intended to write three letters, but I only got a letter written to the little squirt. The rest of the fellows from our old squardon went to the ‘slop-shoot’ and got feeling very very good. Their packs had to be adjusted and packed by today. So myself and Reeves were the only sober one[s], so we had to help each of the fellow[s]. That lasted until lights went out.

Here are the fellow[s] from the old squardon going overseas with me; Taylor, from Upper Darby, Reeves, Rogers, Ulrich, Leone, Me, Miscouski, Estrovity, Hess, Gatto, Jackson. I think that[‘s] all, of course ‘Pop’ Sipes is coming along.

It’s nearly time to leave for chow. We have to go to chow a half hour early, so we get near the front of the line. The line is really big and we want to go to the 5.00 P.M. show after chow. Chow starts at 4.00 PM. ...

Well it[‘s] time for me to leave for chow, so I’ll be closing for the day. Hope your cold is better and pop’s leg has healed.”

### **Roi-Namur Island**

**(Worked on Roi Naimur as an aircraft mechanic on F4U Corsairs, and the occasional Douglas SBD Dauntless; on Okinawa he serviced fighter aircraft from the fleet and the transports used to evacuate wounded, in addition to the Corsair he was responsible for.)**

LEF to mother, 31 October 1944 (Tuesday, 5:45 PM).

“The food aboard ship wasn’t too good, but we managed to eat it, as the salt air made us hungry. For almost every meal we had oranges, so I feel almost like an orange, I believe they had an orange grove in the bottom of the ship.”

LEF to mother, 7 November 1944 (Monday, 9:30 PM).

“Last night at exactly 5.30 the engineering chief were looking for some men to help him to pull a 60 hr. check on one of the F4U’s. I was in my tent, so I was one of the fellows chosen. That was good, because we learned something about the Corsair. I never worked on the Corsair back in the states.”

LEF to mother, 8 December 1944 (Friday, 8:45 PM).

“One of the fellows have crackers and another has some cheese so we shall have a nine o’clock snack. If you ever send me anything no ‘SPAM,’ because we get plenty of that out here. The food is pretty good and at the rate I’m eating I’ll be gaining some weight.”

LEF to mother, 26 December 1944 (Tuesday).

“We eat at a table in the mess hall off trays, but we have to have our mess cup and our own silverware. ... Most of the food is dehydrated, but occasionally we get some fresh chow.”



**Photos probably taken on Roi-Naimur Island**



LEF to mother, 28 December 1944 (Thursday).

“Didn’t get much sleep last night, but I managed to catch up this morning. I would have slept right thru noon chow, but one of the fellows in the tent awoke me. It was a good thing he did, because it was a good chow; roast beef, corn, potatoes, jello, bread, & butter. I believe that was the first jello I’ve had since reaching here. Speaking of roast beef, we had a roast beef sandwich last night, hot.”

LEF to mother, 7 January 1945 (Sunday).

“This afternoon was exceptional good chow, which was swiss steak, mashed potatoes, peas, and gravy. It isn’t very often we get steak, so I had my fill while it was there. There isn’t any ice cream on this island, but on Christmas day they gave us a large cup of ice cream plus plenty of chow.”

LEF to mother, 24 January 1945 (Wednesday).

“There was no beer tonight, so everybody in service squadron had to drink coke and they didn’t like that. They have to get the beer from the navy and for some reason the navy has closed the warehouse for a few [hours?]. There us no place to get beer on the island, except the beer you are rationed.”

LEF to mother, 27 January 1945 (Saturday).

“Pop wanted to know where we get our fresh water. The island must have a couple of water purification plant[s] [that] makes salt water into fresh water. There isn’t enough rain to supply a sufficient amount of fresh water. This fresh water is for drinking and cooking only.”

LEF to mother, 9 February 1945 (Friday).

“I don’t believe we get any fresh milk and there is never any milk to drink. Most of the time it is cold water and you would be surprised how that hit’s the spot. There is milk for cer[e]al and there is milk for coffee, all canned or powdered milk.”

LEF to mother, 17 February 1945 (Saturday, noon).

“Mrs. Gettel sent a box with a fruit cake inside and I guess you know that didn’t last long. Mrs. Hind sent a box with candy and a few other things. ... Spent yesterday trying to get my mess gear cleaned up, so its fit to eat out of. I used some metal polish and it cleaned the mess gear pretty good.”

LEF to mother, 19 February 1945 (Monday).

“Tonight we had oranges for chow and they are the first oranges I have had since we left the ship.”

LEF to mother, 23 February 1945 (Friday, 8:00 PM)

“Well tonight there is the usual discussion going on, but this time it is more interesting. About chow and boy am I hungry. Looks like I’ll have to go to eleven o’clock chow and that [is] a few hours away. Lately I just can’t seem to get enough to eat. Speaking of chow I just received your package yesterday post marked Oct 13, 1944 ... addressed to Miramar [California]. To say it was beat up is putting it mild. There happened to be a can

of fudge in that package, if you still remember back that far. Well one of the fellow[s] was hungry, so he decided to taste the fudge. He tasted it and he must have turned three colors and head[ed] for the door. You might say the fudge was spoiled.”

LEF to mother, 28 February 1945 Wednesday).

“One of the fellows in our tent came in last night plastered to the gills. It seems as tho he went visiting and where he went they had two cases of beer. So four of them had a party and boy it must have been some party. He still looks pale around the gills, I’m just wondering whether pop was that bad on New Years Eve.”

LEF to mother, 14 March 1945 (Wednesday).

“These past few days we have been eating food and not just plain chow. We are now eating in the navy mess hall as ours is closed for awhile. I can see where the army and navy gets all the good food and the marines get what’s left over.”

LEF to mother, 17 March 1945 (Saturday).

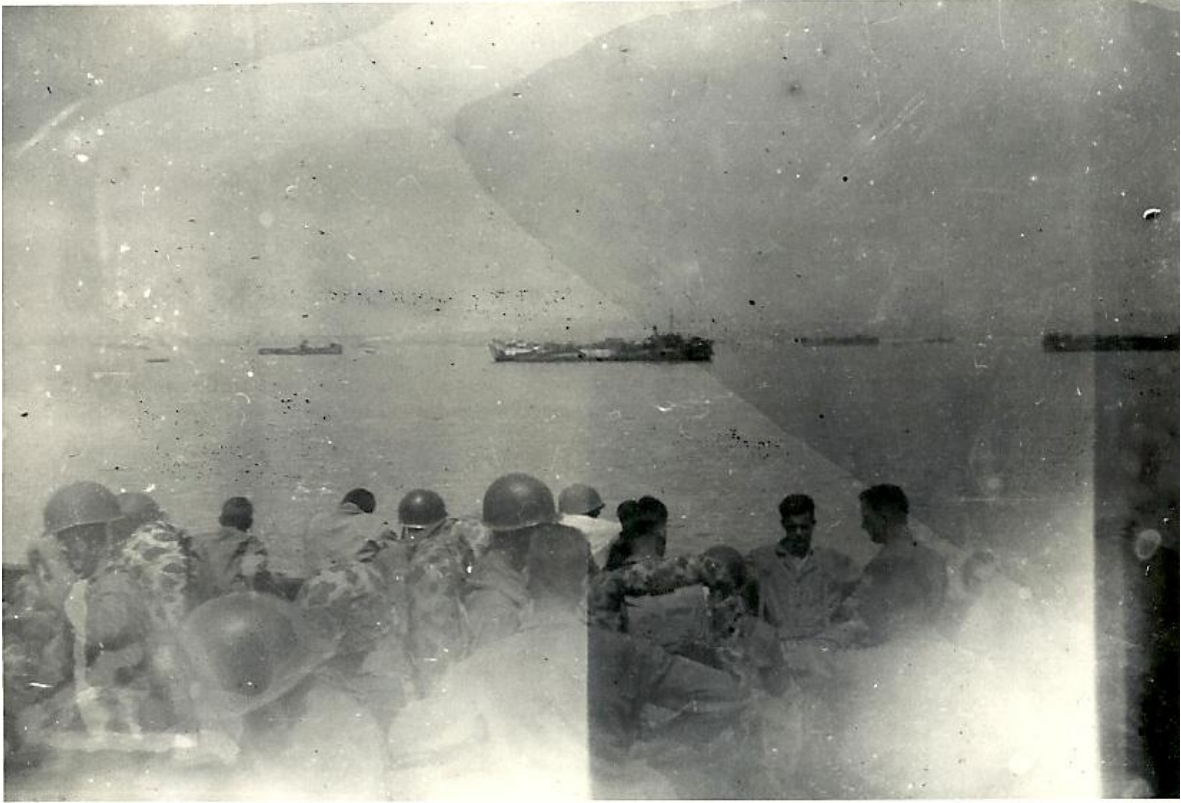
“The ‘marines’ have a shortage of coke and beer on the island so now we are allow[ed] one coke or one beer. Of course the swabbies have plenty. They sell cokes at the navy P.X. from 6.30 to eight, so I guess I’ll get a couple tonight. Today the P.X. had some candy for a change, but only three per man, so we went thru the line a few times.”

### **Okinawa, Yontan Airfield**

LEF to mother, 15 April 1945 (Monday).

“Dear Mom Well we finally reached our new home and it really feels good to put your feet on dry land. We left Roi-Namur around the end of March and we have been aboard ship ever since. The ship we came on was a little better than the one we had coming from the states, but not that much better. The ship this time had a wonderful ‘turkish bath’ aboard. It was called the mess hall. If you didn’t eat fast you would almost drown in your own sweat. Then to make it nice [they] had really good food, but it was too darn hot to eat much. All in all I[’m] happy to be on land.

When we reached Okinawa it was about four in the afternoon, so the first thing we did was dig a foxhole and fast. We came ashore about ten days after D day [the initial landings actually occurred on 1 April], so you can see we didn’t do any fighting. Our job is to keep the planes flying and if necessary, we have to defend the airfield. The ‘line company’ does all the fighting and the air corps gets bombed. A bombing or straffing isn’t bad, because you are in a good fox hole and the air defenses are good. It’s safer here than at home. Almost”



**Pictures likely taken from shipboard, on the way to Okinawa.**







**Picture likely taken from shipboard on the way to Okinawa.**



**Lester Folkenson, Okinawa, 1945**

LEF to mother, 27 April 1945 (Friday).

“There has been a small mess hall set up, so now we don’t have to do our own cooking. Each squadron has their own mess hall, but we eat with Hdq. instead of service. The flight section is nearer Hdq. area, so we use their mess hall, the rest of service sqd. uses service sqd. Mess hall. The chow is good and cooked better than at Roi, because they cook for about 200 men. Of course we still have a lot of rations left around, so we have our midnight snack.”

LEF to mother, 2 May 1945 (Wednesday).

“Dear Mom Well it’s just about three-thirty P.M. but we can’t do any wash as it is pouring rain. At the present time I’m sitting in our tent writing this and have a field jacket on. It gets darn cold when it rains, and the rain keeps the Nips away at night. For three straight days we didn’t get much sleep and the last two days we got a good night’s sleep. If this rain keeps up it means another night’s sleep. Boy I was never so glad to see rain as I am here.

Last night one of the fellows swiped some smoked Herring from one of the carrier planes that land here. That stuff certainly smells up the tent and it’s too darn cold to have the tent flaps opened, so I just sit here and smell Herring. How people can eat such stuff?

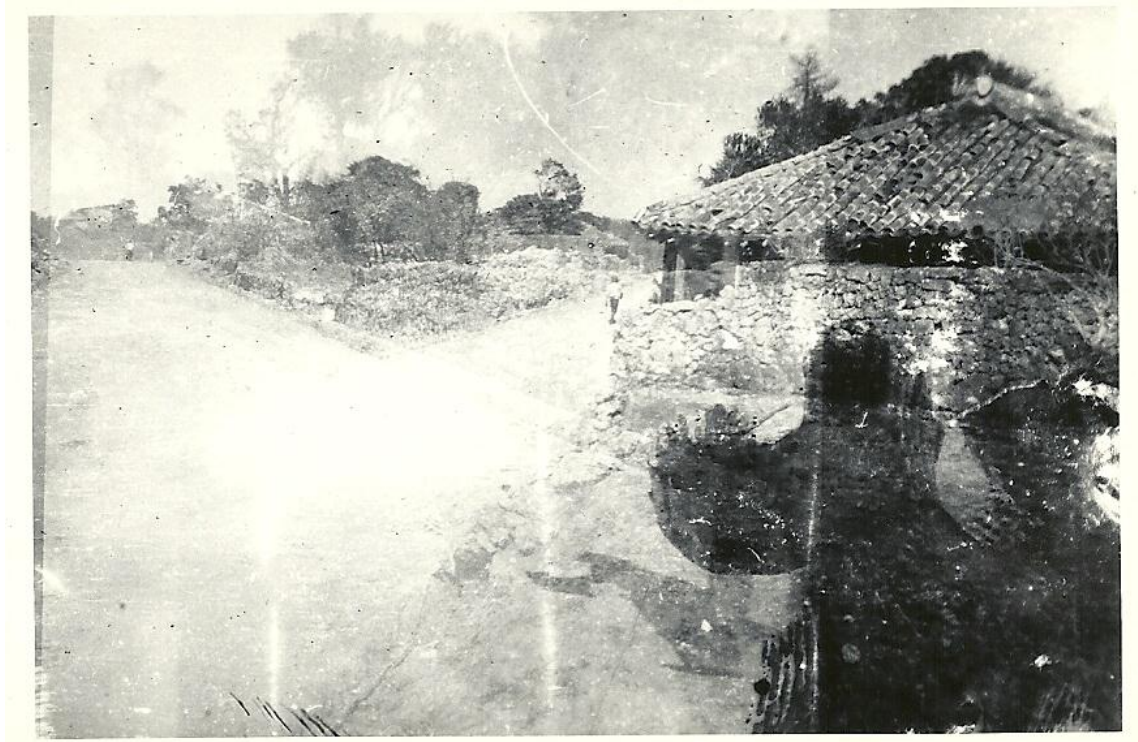
Enclosed is some invasion money we were given in exchange for our American money. This was exchanged aboard ship. The money is invasion money and not Japanese money printed in Okinawa. The yen = one dollar, five yen = half a dollar. If I get some more I’ll send it home. There aren’t many souvenirs left around as the line company marines got all the good stuff and further more we are way behind the lines. Our navy guns have started to pound those little yellow rats. ...

This afternoon we really had a good chow, bread veal cutlets, mashed potatoes, string beans, gravy, pears, butter and coffee to drink. That is about the second time we’ve had fresh meat since hitting this rock. ... Its time for chow, so I guess I had better stop until after chow. Well chow is over and it was fairly good, just passable.”

LEF to mother, 8 May 1945 (Tuesday).

“Just came back from chow and since it is pouring rain there isn’t any work for awhile. For breakfast we had pan-cakes, sausage, oatmeal, milk (not fresh), butter and coffee. The pan-cakes were really good as they only cook a few [at a] time, not like yours all sticky. Don’t believe me, well pop always said your pan-cakes were like glue. ...

A plane just came in so I had to run out and spot it, but that’s all we do on a day like today. Most of these planes that come in are off carriers and have been hit while bombing the front lines and can’t make it back to the carrier. Our job is to repair them, so they can get back to their carrier. A lot of the carrier pilots come here so they can go souvenir hunting or swap whiskey for souvenirs. With whiskey you could get almost anything.”



**Okinawa landscape**

LEF to mother, 11 May 1945 (Friday).

“Today was a heck of a day. There for a while we had a shortage of gas, but now there aren’t enough trucks to haul a sufficient supply of gas. We call up for a gas truck and if you are lucky the gas truck may come in about two hours. Fighter planes have top priority, then evacuation planes, and then comes carrier planes. The fighter planes have been plenty busy today. So far I haven’t started smoking, but when those air raid’s sound I certainly hit that can of hard candy.” We have a gallon can of hard candy sitting on the table and another is waiting to be opened.”

LEF to mother, 16 May 1945 (Wednesday).

“This afternoon I met a fellow who I went thru boot-camp with. He is in one of the line companies around here and is a baker, so maybe I can get some chow. This fellow has been overseas nineteen months ...”

LEF to mother, 20 May 1945 (Sunday).

“When you send packages, send some chow, because we can always eat at nights. We don’t need crackers as there are plenty of hard-tack around and some of it is pretty good. Today chow was just plain rotten and that’s the only way to describe [it]. It’s a good thing there was jelly and bread, as that is what I ate all day. This stuff about us getting good chow and fresh meat is a lot of bunk, about the only ones that gets are the officers. After being here awhile you get to hate the officers, they get all the good stuff and we get whats left. Its just like the beer and whiskey at Roi (Airfield, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands]. The officers could get all they wanted of both and all the enlisted man could get was two cans a night.

... We get plenty of butter, but it is this ration type butter, which is better than the real stuff. This ration butter has a little cheese taste to it and with jelly it is really good. All they ever have to drink is water and varnish remover, and on these cold days that varnish remover tastes pretty good, A good cup of tea or cocoa would just about hit the spot.”



**“Leone swiped a couple of bottles of this sick bay brandy ...”  
Les’s friend Johnny Leone (on right), hailed from 146 Rochester Ave.  
Brooklyn, N.Y.**

LEF to mother, 26 May 1945 (Saturday).

“Leone swiped a couple bottles of this sick bay brandy, which is a 100 proof stuff, 1/8 of a pint in each bottle. It gets cold and damp when we hit that foxhole [used during air raids] at three in the morning, so we each take a swallow. It doesn’t taste too good, but it does warm you up, that plus the long underwear keeps me ‘snug as a bug in a rug.’ ... When you send another package, enclose plenty of peanuts and put them in an air tight can, so they don’t get stale. ... There is a Red Cross tent about fifty yards from our working area, so about twice each day we hit that tent for a cup of coffee.

We hit the Okinawa beach 15 days after the line company marines established the beach[h]ead, so you can see the front line were miles away. Yes we came ashore in those landing boats, but there is no coral reefs w[h]ere we hit shore, so the boat went clean to shore. The closest we have been to a Jap is when the MP’s bring prisoners back.”



**“Les Folkenson and Bill Kemner Awase – Okinawa – 1945”**

LEF to mother, 30 May 1945 (Wednesday).

“Remember back home when we used to complain about the food and you would say ‘some day you’ll wish you had that.’ That day has been here for the past month. Boy if you save tin, so they can make cans to put this ration stuff in, don’t talk to me. To be a cook out here, all you need is a can opener and you’re an A-1 cook. Fresh meat is something those poor civilians are ‘forced’ to put up with. The other day the mess hall had date pudding and fig pudding, in cans, sitting on the floor, well now there are a few missing and the stuff was pretty good.”

LEF to mother, 1 June 1945 (Friday).

“This morning I was elected a volunteer to go on a special work detail ... all we did was play nursemaid to a bunch of canned food. All we could swipe was two pounds of sugar.”

...

Just finished a can of date pudding and that stuff is really good. We swiped date pudding and some crackers from the mess hall yesterday, so we shouldn’t starve at nights.”

LEF to mother, 3 June 1945 (Sunday, 8:45 PM).

“All day today and this evening four of us have been playing nursemaid to twenty carrier airplanes. They are operating from here for a time, so it is our job to gas and oil them and keep them in shape. We have a eight hundred gallon gas truck and one plane usually takes about 150, so not many planes get gassed on one load of fuel. Eight planes usually return at once and then they go up again in a ½ hour and then they beat their chops because the planes are[n’t] gassed. No gas truck & they expect us to build one. This is run by the navy, so that explains why it is fouled up. ... I’m still in one piece of those Japs landing on our airfield and no one in flight section even got scratched. All we did

was loose a good nights sleep and a few extra pounds. Can't afford to lose many pounds with this chow they are dishing out. The chow is improving slightly, ever so slightly."

LEF to mother, 6 June 1945 (Wednesday).

"At evening chow we swiped a box of K ration crackers, so we are now eating crackers and plum jam. Where there's chow there is always a way to swipe it."

LEF to mother, 9 June 1945 (Saturday).

"Right now Leone is heating some water and we are going to make some cocoa. I wish some of the those packages you sent would get here, so we could have something different to eat in the evening. In the past three days the fellows have been able to acquire about two quarts of whiskey, but the stuff didn't lay around and get old. Where they got it is our secret. Out here you just have to swipe what you need ..."

LEF to mother, 13 June 1945 (Wednesday).

"Tonight something unusual happened I had steak for supper. Remember me telling you about that cook I met who I went thru boot camp with. Well he was up around the airfield this afternoon and said they were having steak for supper, so I went down to his mess hall and ate. Besides that they had cherry pie and the chow was darn good. Have to visit more often.

LEF to mother, 15 June 1945 (Friday).

"Leone is fooling around making a pot of cocoa. We swiped a large can from the mess hall, cocoa, sugar, and milk from the mess hall, plus some crackers. We do supply something, the blow torch to heat the water with. Of course the fuel in the blow torch was swiped. Yesterday we were all out of 80 Octane gas, so out we went and swiped three barrels of the stuff. We use the gas for our generator, washing machine, transportation, and the blow torch. Just call us slippery hands."

LEF to mother, 18 June 1945 (Monday).

"Just had a fifteen minute air raid alert, but no Jap planes came over this time. Guess they are waiting till the moon comes up higher tonight. Last night a Jap plane came over and actually dropped a few bombs. None were even close to the airfield. For a long while we have laying in our sacks during alerts and running for our foxhole when the ack-ack starts. We did the same last night, but no ack-ack sounded, we were lucky to hear the plane diving so in one second the tent was empty, who said I can't move fast?"

Today should be a national holiday all over Yontan airfield. This morning we had our first fried eggs since we left our nice peaceful home at Roi-Namur. The [sic] tonight we had steak, which is the third time we had fresh meat since reaching this rock. Maybe the chow is going to get better. Even with the 'ration' stuff I sure as heck didn't loose any weight. Time out while I get some cocoa and crackers, plus some jelly. ...

If Francis Markam was flown out of Okinawa, then you can be sure he left from Yontan. There for awhile Leone and I were working around the transports, but now Leone is doing it himself. I imagine Leone saw him if he was loaded on a plane, because we used to help them put the stretchers on the planes. Those transports certainly are doing a wonderful job at evacuating the wounded, so fast now they have to wait for wounded."

LEF to mother, 20 June 1945 (Wednesday).

“Something else drastic has happened, the chow is getting better. The old mess sgt. got into trouble so they bounced him right out of the group. This new guy seems OK and the chow, since he has taken over is much better. Tonight we had fresh pork for chow and for a change there was plenty of meat. Somewhere Leone acquired a can of cooked OX tongue, so right now he is heating the stuff with the blow torch, wonder what it will taste like?”

LEF to mother, 22 June 1945 (Friday).

“Remember the packages I told you I received, well yesterday morning I went over to the post office & picked them up ... Your packages were post marked Feb. eighth and Feb. 26th. All the crackers were stale and couldn't be eaten ...

Our chief cook, Leone, has started to make the cocoa for the evening. Tonight our menu is cocoa, crackers, [illegible word] and peanut[s], and anything else we can find to eat. Chow at the mess hall is darn good since we got this new mess sgt. And we actually got fresh meat.”

LEF to mother, 21 July 1945 (Saturday).

“No guard duty tonight, but its still plenty late. They had an extra special good chow tonight, so I went thru the chow line twice. We had reall fresh meat, what kind I would[n't] know but it tasted good. The food may be coming overseas, but it sure as heck isn't coming here. Of course those fakes we have as cooks have plenty to do with it. All they can do is weild a can opener.

We are still doing guard duty, every third night, and those posts are still just as dark. Last night I had the post around the mess hall and by some unknown factor a one gallon can of fruit cocktail seemed to stick to my hand. The stickiness went away when I got to the tent, so we ate the stuff. ...

They have a captured Jap plane and we are taking care of it, so that means more guard duty, besides the regular stuff. Those Jap planes are really cheaply constructed, but everything on the plane is simple. Nothing complicated about anything. This plane is a 'Tony' and boy they are really small compared to our 'Corsair.'”

LEF to mother, 23 July 1945 (Monday).

“No more group guard, but they have a special little guard for the flight section. We have to stand guard duty on a captured Jap plane. Service Sqd. fixed it all up and the big wheels fly it, so we have to watch their play toy.

It was captured at Yontan during the early stages of this campaign. This Jap pilot landed, thinking Yontan was still Jap held, but to his great surprise it wasn't. He hopped out of the plane, and one more rat was eliminated. The plane was in good condition and all intact, but service sqd. checked it over. It's a 'Tony,' so maybe you saw a picture of one. ...

I see the people in Europe are beating their chops, because the Americans aren't supporting them. That's T.S. All the fresh meat must be going to Europe, because it sure as heck isn't coming here. Of course we get plenty of lamb, its OK, if you can find any meat. Carrots are another thing. Still in all I'm not losing any weight. ...

Chow wasn't too good tonight, so we opened a gallon can of fruit cocktail. That's a can of stuff I managed to acquire when I was on guard duty. No, I didn't steal it, just borrowed it. Out here you never steal anything, just borrow it."

LEF to mother, 20 August 1945 (Monday).

"I had yesterday off ... Sam was supposed to come up here in the morning, but didn't get here till the afternoon. We had finished noon chow when Sam arrived, so I went to chow again. The chow was good steak and onions. I thought we had bad chow, but the outfit Sam's in has worst chow. ...

Ah I smell coffee, so I guess the coffee is brewing and that's a signal I should close. It['s] pretty cool these past few evenings, so a hot cup of coffee really hits the spot."

LEF to mother, 22 August 1945 (Wednesday).

"The chow these past two evenings hasn't been too good, so we are doing our own cooking. Somewhere along the line we acquired a few seven pound cans of bacon and it's pretty good. Besides that we have coffee, crackers, and some provoloni (Italian cheese). What's the matter can't you speak English? Leone got it from home and boy that stuff really smells.

Some of the guys are at the movie and the rest are playing pinochle ... I played a game before evening chow, but didn't do too good. You know the guys think I'm a chow hound, just because I eat a lot. For noon chow I only had some hot dogs, two serving of sweet potatoes, two serving of apple sauce, two of rice pudding, three hot roll, and a piece of cake, plus water to drink. Now do you think I'm a chow hound? And your wondering whether I'm gaining weight?"





**On Okinawa.**

LEF to mother, 29 August 1945 (Wednesday).

“Ah, I see we will be having some chow in a very few minutes. One fellow brought over a can of bacon, another got out his electric stove and we have six boxes of crackers sitting on the table. Got the crackers at the sea-bees P.X. There is no more coffee until we acquire another can, so I guess we better acquire on pretty soon. The chow at the chow hall hasn’t been too bad. A miracle has happened, they finally got the ice machine working and we are getting ice water. Well they weren’t rushed, as it only took five months to get it fixed up. Something like pop’s was of doing something.”

LEF to mother, 3 September 1945 (Monday).

“Tuesday 4, 1945

Well the fellows made a pot of coffee and everyone decided to drink the coffee in our tent, so that is why I didn't finish this last night. After the argument started there wasn't any sense in even trying to write. ...

Today I had off, but we aren't supposed to leave our own area ... This morning I left to see Bill Kenner [in another M.A.G.] and I managed to get there and back without being caught. It took about an hour to reach their strip ... Bill had to work, so we stood there and talked while he was frying lamb chops. For evening chow I had some good lamb chops, mashed potatoes, butter, and peas. The butter was special as Bill swiped it from the ice box. Earlier in the day I had some ice cream and apple pie. I see where I'll have to go visiting more often. ...

Well now I see the coffee pot is heading this way, so I'd better close before the fireworks start.”



**Ground crew with Corsair fighter. Les Folkenson, rear row, far right.**

LEF to mother, 6 September 1945 (Thursday).

“In the near future we are moving to Japan, so now you can see which way we are heading. Where we are going is supposed to have barracks and the airfield is already built. No more mud, thank goodness.

This morning we were supposed to have a rifle inspection, but the weather treated us right. It started to rain at eight, so the big wheels called off the inspection. Of course we had to go to work, our work was to rest in the shade till noon chow. Oh, yes, this is getting easy. Just had to leave and visit another tent, where I got a cup of pineapple, its pretty good. [And] it[‘s] something that our cook didn’t ruin, trying to cook it. These cooks we have can cook about as good as pop, they can’t.

The chow has improved slightly, but there is still a scarcity of fresh meat in service Squadron’s mess hall. Of course we get plenty of ‘Pacific steak,’ spam to you, and that’s a kind of meat I don’t want to eat in civilian life. The ice machine is still working, so we manage to get a cold drink for dinner and supper. Pretty soon the chow will be getting like stateside.”



**Turtleback tomb on Okinawa**

LEF to mother, 11 September 1945 (Tuesday).

“That picture of George Sivel’s grave was taken by Leone ... Little John happened to have one of his buddies in the sixth division and he was killed around Sugar Loaf Hill That’s where a lot of the fellows from the 4th marines, sixth division got killed. I believe George was in that same outfit.

Just came from noon chow and as usual they had some kind of canned meat. What it was I wouldn’t know and I’m very sure the dogs at home wouldn’t even eat it. Because we are moving there won’t be any fresh meat until we are safely settled in Japan.”

LEF to mother, 18 September 1945 (Tuesday). Typhoon.

“Dear Mom Well I finally got a few minutes to write a little and this has been a very eventful week-end. Since Saturday evening all we have been doing is making sure our tents stayed up. Saturday evening a Typhoon hit here and lasted till Monday evening. After it was finished the airfield look[ed] like a junk yard instead of an airstrip. Such a time it was and I believe it was even worse than a bombing.

Saturday evening the three of us hit our sacks in our oversize tent, not know[ing] that a Typhoon was headed this way. About midnight we woke up and closed the tent flap as the wind was getting strong. In the sack about an hour when it sounded like a 20 gun salute, my locker fell down, all my clean clothes were dirty everything was all over the tent, so we started cleaning it up. We got it all cleaned up stood the locker up and climbed back to bed, when my side of the tent came loose and bang down went the locker and my sack. By this time we weren't so happy, so I said 'nuts' and went to another tent with a blanket. That left two fellows left in the tent and pretty soon they left, the tent caved in. It was four A.M. then, so we pulled the tent over our gear so it would[n't] get wet and slept in another tent. Of course all evening it was pouring rain, so we were soaked.

Sunday morning came, we went to chow and since it looked pretty clear we mustered and found out there was no work. Back to the living area we headed and started moving our equipment into a tent that was still standing. We got that finished and everyone figured the Typhoon was over, so we layd down to sleep. Well it wasn't over and Monday [Saturday?] night was just a drop in the bucket compared to what Sunday night was. It rained and was windy all Sunday, but no terrific winds. They had all the airplanes tied to gas truck[s], bull-dozers, scrapers, or what ever heavy thing they could get. It rained hard all day but we still went to chow, what there was of it, mostly hot coffee.

Then came the evening and the hectic night. Everyone went to bed at five as there were no light[s], [the] generator got wet and we couldn't get it started. With all the tent flaps closed it was warm, but I managed to sleep till seven at seven I heard somebody yell 'timber' and got up and looked out. Another tent bit the dust. There they were in the pouring rain moving all their equipment to another tent. Two down, three now to go. So far our tent was holding up good as we doubled tie the sides where the wind was hitting. We managed to last till midnight and then things happened. The wind changed direction and now the tent flap was beating against my sack and I couldn't leave as the sack was holding the tent up. So I just layed there and pretty soon there was a crash down went mine and another fellows locker box, we got out of our sack[s] to see what happened and bang our sack[s] were all over the place and the tent was shaking like jello. The three of us took one look at the messy place, grab[bed] a blanket and sat up all night. We sat down and everytime the wind blew we expected the center pole to collapse. By this time the four flaps were wide open and the wind was sailing thru, so we weighted down everything we owned. Oh, and during the night another tent hit the deck and that leaves only two standing.

About six A.M. it let up, so out we got and started to straighten out the tent and drive more stakes. We got it fixed, but the wind still howled, and the tent held up for us. In all of service sqd. [squadron] fifty tents blew down and there is five men to a tent, so you can see [there] is a lot of wet guys and gear.

What made me mad was Saturday morning I washed all my dirty cloths and by noon everything I owned was clean. Monday I took inventory and found only three pieces of clothing clean and the rest were full of mud. All day today I have been drying cloths and bedding and I got most of it dry, except for the stuff in the sea-bag and I'll get that tomorrow.

Tonight I start work at midnight and finish at eight tomorrow morning. The docks close to us are ruined, so all our gear has to be hauled by truck to Buckner bay and loaded on ship from there. All we do is load trucks here and the sea-bees unload them at the Bay and load ship. We are now working day and night, so maybe we will finally get out of here.

All these airplane transports have something wrong with them. The wind raised heck with there control surfaces and some of the surfaces were ripped off. They have seaplanes in the bay and they surely must have been beaten pretty bad.

Leone has been moved to Service Sqd. Main area as the tents he was in blew down and they can't get any more tents to replace the old ones. It sure is quiet around here as everyone has gone to the show, all five of them. At one time there sued to be twenty-five of us living here, but now the numbers down to six. This must be a bad luck spot.

No mail for the last four or five day[s]. Just heard that a transport with some mail for here crashed and burned at Guam. Well if that's so, it doesn't look like there will be any mail for awhile. ... Love, Son"



**Living quarters at Yontan (LEF, center above)**



### Japan

LEF to mother, 12 October 1945 (Friday).

“Well here we are in Japan, well at least we are tied up to a pier in Yokohama, waiting for some trucks to take us to the base. ... This evening Tuesday we will be on this scow exactly two weeks just to make a two day trip.

Right now we are tied up to a pier, but tomorrow we will move out to sea, as we can't get off. No trucks ... From the rumors we are going to be on this ship for another week. Ah yes they can stick this marine corps -----

Next we come to the chow subject and that just as bad. The chow itself isn't bad, but they sure have put us on a diet. A dieting person would even starve on this tub. Besides that we (meaning the enlisted scum) haven't had any bread for the past week.

It sure makes you feel good to walk past the merchant marine mess hall and see them eating bread, steak, and plenty to eat. ...

A few days before we left Okinawa, I received two of your packages I believe they were post marked June 3, but right now I can't remember exactly what was in the package.”

[Note: in the same envelope were two receipts for insured packages mailed from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 5 June 1945. An accompanying list gives the contents:]  
(190732) sent June 5

- 1 pkg. chiclets
- 5 bags tea-balls
- 1 jar inst. Cocoa
- 1 “ apple sauce
- 1 can sausage
- 1 pkg. potato sticks
- 1 can sardines
- 1 “ potted meat

- 1 chess game
- 3 books
- 4 towels

---

(190733) sent June 5

1 pkg. Butter thins

1 can peanuts

1 pkg. chiclets

1 can potted meat

5 bags tea balls

1 jar pickles

1 “ apple sauce

2 towels



**Photo likely taken en route to Japan**

LEF to mother, 19 October 1945 (Friday).

“Dear Mom: Well this is our third day on dry land and it sure feels good to walk on something that doesn’t move around. Last Wednesday morning at 9:30 AM we depart[ed] from the U.S.S. scow and came ashore at Yokosuka [Japan] and this time it was only a ten minute ride from ship to shore. When we left Okinawa we had to ride in a LCT [landing craft tank] for about an hour before we reached the ship. The sea was rough and the LCT really moved around, so plenty of the fellows got seasick going from shore to ship. I got pale and felt sick, but managed to keep my food down. Then we had to climb up cargo nets and that’s a job. Here at Yokosuka we left the ship by climbing down the cargo nets, but that didn’t matter, as everyone was thankful to leave that ship.

The new base isn't too bad and it isn't like stateside bases. We are living in some sort of a building and that's one good thing. This base was at one time a training base and had schools that trained Jap sailors. Our barracks was at one time a Jap school, because the blackboards are still up in some of the rooms. A lot of the windows were broke out, but now they have Jap workers putting in new windows. Every window on this base had stripes of tape across them to prevent them from breaking from the bombings. All over this place the Japs had built foxholes and deep caves, carved out of solid rock. ... [Writing of some photographs he had taken on Okinawa] In that picture I sent Wilma I was wearing a Japanese kimana and had a silk Jap flag. None of that happened to be mine. They belonged to one of the fellows that was in the tent. We got those by swapping liquor to the line company marines, while we were at Yontan. ...

So far we haven't been doing our work as the ships with our equipment haven't unloaded. Someone must be unloading them, but so far I haven't been nailed for that little Job. All we have been doing for the past three days is sleeping and exploring the new base. It sure is a big place ... Maybe they think that the Jap airforce is wiped out, but right now there must be a hundred Jap combat planes sitting on this base capable of flying. The base doesn't even look like it's been bombed. ... The mess hall takes up one whole hanger, that because the 4<sup>th</sup> marines, M.A.G. 31, & 602 sea bees all eat in the same chow hall. Every sqd. Has their own hanger and there are still plenty of hangers left over. Boy this really must have been a big naval base for the Japs. ... Tonight I should sleep pretty good as we actually did some work this afternoon. Four of us were elected for a detail which turned out pretty good. We took a trailer truck and a crane and head[ed] for the Jap planes. The aircraft carrier Lexington is sitting out in the harbor and they wanted two suicide planes and a Jap dive bomber to take back to the states. We got the two suicide planes and someone else brought the dive bomber down to the docks. We loaded the two suicide planes aboard an LCT [landing craft, tank] and the dive bomber was to come aboard also. They had to make a sling to pick up the dive bomber, so while they were making the sling Leone and I talked with the swabbies aboard the LCT. It was chow time so we were invited for chow and we had meat balls and sp--- (can't spell it). For after supper drink Leone had some home made raisin jack. I tested it and my hair is still standing up."





**“In that picture I sent Wilma I was wearing a Japanese kimono and had a silk Jap flag. ... They belonged to one of the fellows that was in the tent. We got those by swapping liquor to the line company marines, while we were at Yontan. ...”**

LEF to mother, 22 October 1945 (Monday).

“The chow up here has been good and you get all you want.”

LEF to mother, 27 October 1945 (Saturday).

“They are still issuing that Jap beer, but that stuff is too strong for me to even taste. I believe it is over 10% alcohol, so you can see that stuff is really powerful. About four bottles really set the fellows off and they are a good size bottle, close to a quart.”

LEF to mother, 29 October 1945 (Monday).

“Yesterday afternoon I went on liberty with Little John and a few other fellows. We stopped at the tavern and had a few beers and then we walked thru town to see if there was anything worth buying, there wasn’t. Then we came back to the tavern and the other fellows went in to have a few more beers.”

LEF to mother, 31 October 1945 (Wednesday).

“The chow on this new base has been pretty good and there is always plenty. Tonight we had lamb and it was pretty good, but don’t get the idea ever to have lamb when I get home. Too bad pop isn’t in this outfit. He would learn to eat anything and if you find a roach in your bread you consider yourself lucky, extra meat.”



**Base at Yokosuka, Japan**

LEF to mother, 2 November 1945 (Friday).

“Today was my day off and of course I went into Yokosuka this afternoon. The town wasn’t very crowded and there were very few marines from M.A.G. 31 in town. The rest of the Mag. Gets liberty Wednesday or Sunday, but we have to be different. Of course there is plenty of swabbies in town. First of all we stopped at the beer hall and the line was too long, so we went to the movies ... After the movies we drifted down town and stopped at this house where this fellow knew the people. Went inside and talked and even had a cup of tea. It was really a cup of tea, not the hot dishwasher stuff. ...

Got a pack of cigarettes and a bar of chocolate from the Red Cross this morning. Cigarettes are something you can trade to the gooks and they pay about 20 yen for a pack of cigarettes. ...

Chow wasn't bad tonight but it wasn't the best in the world. Lamb stew (pretty good), rice, peaches (our one and only desert since we arrived at Yokosuka), bread, and coffee. I was hungry and even went back for second on the lamb stew and rice."

LEF to mother, 5 November 1945 (Monday).

"Remember I told you I met a family in town, I should say Little John met them and I went with him to see them. Well Little John had a girl there, and I mean had. Some way or another she took a shine to me, so Little John is beating his chops. This girl happens to be eighteen and very slant eyed, but not bad looking. She even invited me to spend Christmas there, they happen to be Christians, so they say. Her father must be educated, he spent 20 years in Java as an importer of clothing. He can only speak Dutch, Japanese, Indoineasians and a little bit of English. There must be six kids in the family and all of them can speak a little English. There isn't anything to do in town, so I usually go there and shoot the breeze til its time to return to the base. I'm picking up a little Japanese, but a darn little. Would you object if I brought my girlfriend home?

The last two days the chow line has really been long. It looks as tho we are feeding all the marines in Japan and some swabbies. It takes you easily two hours to just eat chow. The chow is pretty good and we get all you can eat. Last night we had fried chicken and it was really goo. This time I got a leg, but usually I get the part that went over the fence last."

LEF to mother, 8 November 1945 (Thursday).

"Packages have been coming in, but as usual I didn't receive any. Little John got a package with some Italian food and we really ate that stuff."

LEF to mother, 11 November 1945 (Sunday).

"Well yesterday noon chow was really something and we will pay for it in the months to come. For chow we had turkey, stuffing, celery, cabbage, pie, ice cream and bread. The cooks really had to work for a change instead of spending all the time in the sack. They even have Japs working in the mess hall and that means less work for the cooks. With all the turkey they had, some of the guys got spam. Then for evening chow they had the nerve to serve turkey after some of the guys got spam instead of turkey at noon chow. If we had an officer with any guts that wouldn't happen, but we don't have that kind of officer. ...

Last night they gave us three cans of beer, so some of the fellows were really plastered. I gave my three beers to little John and that just helped him along. After nine beers we lost count, but he must have had plenty as he went to bed at seven."

LEF to mother, 18 November 1945 (Sunday).

"The time is now twelve noon. I went to early chow and came back so the rest of the fellows can eat chow. ... Chow wasn't too good, they had cheese, some kind of lunch meat, poor potatoe salad, navy beans, mixed fruits, bread, and coffee. The big meal will

come tonight. One day this week we had ham at noon and pork chops in the evening, so you see chow isn't too bad. Lot better than it was on Okinawa. ...

Tonight we had a good chow and all you could eat. We had chicken, stuffing, potatoes, gravy, pie, orange, bread and coffee. With all that everyone got plenty and I got my share. The Lt. in charge of the flight line got all of us an early chow pass, so we managed to keep away from the long lines. Those early chow passes come in handy on liberty days, when you are in a hurry.

The enlisted men's club in Yokosuka have free beer today and most of the M.A.G. had liberty, so most of the fellows are pretty well loaded. All the beer is stateside beer, so there is no chance of poisoning from that. This club is a nice place and there is plenty of room. Some days they have an orchestra from these navy ships in the bay."



**Enlisted Men's Club, Yokosuka, Japan**



**Interior of Enlisted Men's Club**

LEF to mother, 20 November 1945 (Tuesday).

“Again I’m starting this letter sitting in the flight section’s office waiting for the rest of the fellows to come back from chow. They were late serving early chow today so it is now noon. Usually early chow starts at eleven and regular chow starts at eleven thirty. For chow we had, fair stew, fried potatoes, peas, jelly, coffee, bread, and a great surprise, a piece of cake. That’s the first piece of cake we’ve had since we left Okinawa. A new Lt. Colonel joined the outfit and he has been hot on those cooks heels to get better chow and get a better system at feeding the men and washing the trays. Since he has arrived chow has been good and they are working out a better system. ...

No mail this afternoon, but there may be some tonight. Im now back at the barracks after a pretty good [meal]. My chow pass is only for me, but Little John and I both managed to get in on the pass. Anything to pull something over on the marine corps. For chow they had roast beef (all you want), fresh boiled potatoes, corn, peaches, bread, and our usual stand-by, coffee.”

LEF to mother, 25 November 1945 (Sunday).

“Out of about twelve planes we have three planes that are flyable. They expect us to keep TBMs [Grumman Avenger torpedo planes] in commission when we can’t get any parts for them. The M.A.G. is all F4U’s [Vought Corsair fighters] and they don’t have any TBM parts. Its not my worry and I don’t care if they never get any parts. Yesterday we put the new flap on my F4U and today we took it out of the hangar to see if it was OK. Everything was OK, but I still kept it grounded so I would get a chance to clean it and grease the landing gear. That’s what I did all afternoon, played nursemaid.”

LEF to mother, 27 November 1945 (Tuesday).

“Had all day yesterday off, so in the afternoon I got an early start on liberty. We were going to a town [possibly Oppama, according to his 1 January 1946 letter] about fifteen miles from here, and to get there we had to take a train. Enlisted men aren’t supposed to ride in trains, but we boarded the train at a stop where there were no M.P.s. It was an electric train, exactly like the Frankfort elevated. Took it only fifteen minutes to get where we were going.

You stepped off the train and it looked as tho you were in a different country. This place was clean, had trees and the house[s] were well kept and had lawns. Just the opposite from Yokosuka. There were hardly any service men around and there were plenty of nice shops. The main reason we went there was because this fellow had a date for two o’clock with some Jap girl. We got there at 12.30, so we walked around and looked the town over. There is a shrine there so we looked at that and tried to take a few pictures, but as luck would have it the darn camera wouldn’t work. ... Well we met his girlfriend at two o’clock, so I decided to look around by myself. I walked around for awhile, looking at different thing[s] and then decided to take the train to Yokosuka. I was standing on the platform waiting for the train when this fellow I left came running up and told me to wait. Here his girlfriend decided she wanted [to] go to Yokosuka and keep me company (This girl is friends with the family we know, so that’s where we end[ed] up.) All the cars were crowded except this one and it must have been reserved for servicemen, in the [car] we went.

The three of us got almost to where the ‘family’ lives and this girl decided we should go in the front way and she would go in the back way. This way they would[n’t] know that we went to meet her at that town. (Boy these women are slick). So in we went and pretended to be surprised to meet her (Saito – Say-toe) is her name. To talk to these women all you do is act simple and you really get to know them good. I’m even picking up a few Jap words. And that just about completes my day on liberty except that we got a ride in a jeep back to the base. ...

They opened up a mess hall for S/sgt’s and above, so that’s where I eat now. You sit down and eat off real plates and use reall silverware for a change. They have Japs waiting on the tables and you should see those guys hurry. Makes me tired to watch them. This way I get all I want to eat and I sure can eat plenty. Maybe I’ll be able to gain a few pounds before I go home. Getting practice on how to eat the civilian way. ... During noon chow I went over and picked up that package and it was from you, dated July 2, 1945. Everything came OK and the figs didn’t spoil like they did in another package.”



**Les Folkenson, standing on right (with Kaiko?).**

LEF to mother, 29 November 1945 (Thursday).

“Dear Mom Another wonderful day for flying and we did do flying. In the morning three TBM towed target for the navy ships and in the afternoon it was the same. When they took off from here it was pouring rain and when they got out to sea the sun was

shining and it was a nice warm day. It was a miserable day around here and it was cold to make matters worse. ... This afternoon the colonel came out and was beating his chops, because the tow target hops didn't go up on time. These darn TBM.s are just about ready for survey, so after every hop their is a million oil leaks to fix. Don't have any gasket to use, so some of the oil leaks just have to remain until the QM gets us some parts. And to think I have to put flight time in, on one of these tubs. ...

It's lots of fun to walk along and stop to talk to a perfectly strange girl. I know a few words in Japanese and your sign language really gets good out here. Usually I can make my self understood and I can usually understand them."



**Les wearing long underwear top; he said it was so cold in Japan sleeping nights with no heat, he always wore his long underwear to bed.**

LEF to mother, 3 December 1945 (Monday).

"Tonight we had package call ... Did you send us a box of candy from Gimbel Brothers around Oct. 11? It was a good box and now there is exactly nothing left of the candy. ...

The new Lt. Colonel we have has been flying my F4U and he can really handle it. Seeing that those second Lt's wised up and are now starting to fly it. They have been flying it quite a lot and the engine leaks oil like an oil well. Oil all over the plane, so I think there might be a slight oil leak. Think so?"



LEF to mother, 6 December 1945 (Thursday).

“Dear Mom Went to the early movie, but after the main picture I left. It was one of those cowboy pictures and it was awful, plus the movie being cold. That darn movie house is about the coldest place, with the exception of the mess hall. Boy that mess hall is really cold. The coffee freezes before you get it back to the table and the chow is always cold. Just a few months ago we were wishing for some cold weather, and now we want warm weather. ... For some reason packages have been arriving at the rate of twice a week, so maybe I'll get all those back packages. Now that the food is good and there is plenty, all these packages arrive, such a system.

Down at the flight line we have set up a little snack bar. Somewhere along the [?] our Lt. managed to acquire a small hot plate, so we eat. Coffee or cocoa at any time plus crackers, jelly and of course spam. That hot stuff tastes might good after working outdoors, for a few hours. It['s] not cold, but its damp and that wind really bit[e]s into your hide. ...

Had liberty yesterday afternoon and of course I went to see my girlfriend. She was all dress[ed] up in a typical Japanese costume ... Her name is Kaiko {Kay-co), now does that satisfy you.”

LEF to mother, 8 December 1945 (Saturday).

“This morning we mustered at our usual six A.M and got up at 5.30 AM. Its hard enough getting up at 5.30, but it was harder yet with no lights [the Japanese-built barracks building was having electrical problems], its a wonder everybody got dressed. Then to make everything wonderful we had a colonel's inspection this morning and cleaning up in the dark was just wonderful. I hope the colonel broke his neck when he came to inspect the barracks.

The sea-bees have just caused plenty of us a few more gray hairs. They are blowing up some Jap engines and Jap planes, but the[y] wouldn't tell anyone. Just kept it to them selves, so when the blast went off I nearly jumped out of my skin. There was plenty of stuff to blow up, so all day there has been blasts going off. Just like a night at Yontan [airfield, on Okinawa]. ...

Boy that plane of mine is really giving me plenty of trouble. Oil leaks all over the place and now the brakes are going bad. I have just about everything fixed, except the brakes, and we need new parts to repair them. The longer it stays in the hanger means the les work I have to do, so it can stay there for ever. It seem[s] as tho we get one thing fixed and bang, something else goes wrong. ...

Tonight they broke down and gave us some beer, so I guess there will be a few guys plastered tonight.”

LEF to mother, 10 December 1945 (Monday).

“Went to see my girlfriend this afternoon and as usual she was home All dressed up today with skirt and high heels and didn't look bad. They made some kind of a cake that contained sweet potatoes and it was good. Of course they eat the stuff before I eat any of it. Every time we visit their the mother makes us tea and today was no exception. Went into their room today, so I had to take my shoes off. It was pretty cold but pretty soon they filled an earthenware pot with hot coals and that kept our feet warm. When I come home don't be surprised when I take my shoes off.”

LEF to mother, 12 December 1945 (Wednesday).

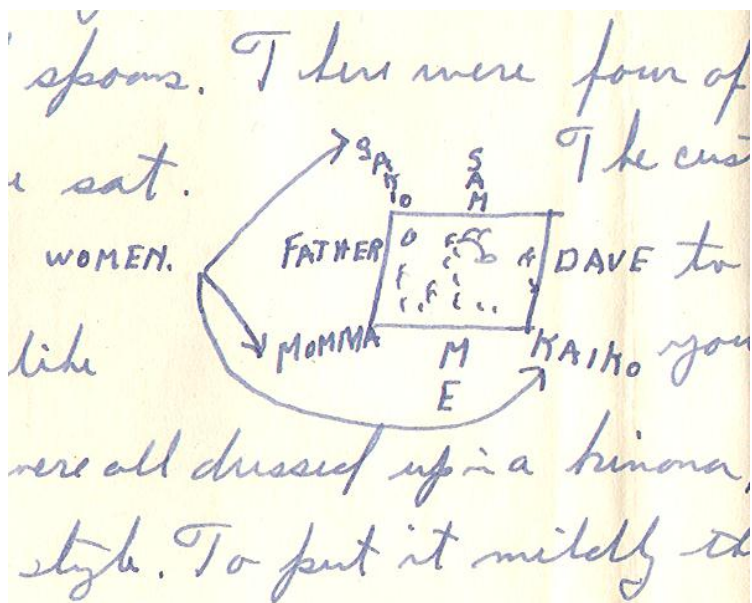
“Boy over half of service squadron is sick in the stomach from some kind of bad food. I believe it was either the pork or ham we had last night. I went to chow late and they ran out of both so that is why I’m not feeding the fish. ... I’ll bet this new Lt. Colonel of our[s] will climb up and down the cooks backs about this.”

LEF to mother, 18 December 1945 (Tuesday).

“Monday afternoon I had liberty, and so we went to see that Jap family we know. There are four of us that go their all the time, but Little John was sick Monday and besides it was raining. The three of us went and now and I[‘m] glad I went, they had a party. First of all we took our shoes off and went into the one and only room. In the center of the room was a pile of quilts and in the center of those quilts was a table like affair. Of course you sit on a cushion, but the cushion is on the floor. You’d be surprised, its plenty warm.

Well we sat their for awhile talking when pretty soon they set a round table on top of this cage like affair. Pretty soon chow started to arrive and then the saki. We had saki and everytime you took a sip one of the women would fill the glass again. (I didn’t get plastered). To eat we had some delicious soup, dried fish as thing [thin] as paper, sweet potatoes covered with sugar, crab meat, fish, and some kind of rabbit food. All in all it was darn good. To start out with we were using chop sticks, but we weren’t doing very good, so we used the fork and spoons. There were four of us eating and three onlookers. Here’s how we sat. **[see hand drawn diagram below]** The custom is for the men to eat and the women are there to serve you. You can give them something to eat, just like you were feeding a dog at home. Sakio and Kaika were all dressed up in a kimona, with make up and their hair fixed American style. To put it mildly they looked darn nice.

We were all finished our meal and sitting around talking, momma was holding the baby and the father was singing. All of a sudden I heard this noise like somebody smacking their lips, so I looked around. There was the mother nursing the baby (Guess baby had to have his saki). These women just don’t seem to have any modesty or they just don’t give a darn.”



**Sketch from 18 December 1945 letter**

LEF to mother, 20 December 1945 (Thursday).

“Tonight we really had a good chow; mashed potatoes, peas, gravy, ham, raisins, and ice cream. It was really good and all you wanted, except ice cream.

Must be a good picture on at the show tonight as no one is in the barracks and there isn't even a poker game going on. They opened a beer hall on the base, so I guess there is a lot of guys over there. Its about time they opened one as they have enough beer on this base to float a battleship. Good thing that Little John has a bad stomach or someone would be carrying him back tonight.”

LEF to mother, 22 December 1945 (Saturday).

“I'm thinking about bringing home one of these young pretty Jap girls, so she can act as a servant. After seeing how the women hop when the men say so, I think I ought to bring one of those back. In this one house that I visit all the time the mother really rates and she is the brains of the family. That's probably because they lived in Java for twenty years.

They open a beer hall on the base a few days ago, so that's one reason why the room is so empty, It seems different to be able to hear the radio without straining an ear drum. I guess if I go to bed early I'll be rudely awakened when the guys get back from the beer hall.”

LEF to mother, 26 December 1945 (Wednesday).

“Christmas Eve I went to 10:30 PM church and the chapel was really crowded. Took communion for the first time in a long while. Some Lt., a few [?], and two Jap boys decorated the chapel and it looked swell. There was about the only place anyone felt the Christmas spirit and where a lot of guys felt homesick. Before church the barracks was empty so I layed down and caught up on some sleep. Most of the fellows were at the beer

hall, but I just wasn't in the mood to go there. Not many of the fellows were drunk and that was surprising. ...

The barracks is empty tonight, so I guess the fellows are at the beer hall or chow. Almost forgot to tell you, we now have a red cross lounge. Its about thirty yards long and about twenty yards wide with a fire place in the middle of one wall and a coffee bar at the far end of the room. All over the lounge is leather-upolstered furniture and along the walls are these flouresent lights that give off a blue light, so we call it the blue room. The fire place is a swell place to sit as its warm and there are reall log[s] burning. All in all it's a nice place and it's a wonder we rate such a place. They have nip fellows dishing out coffee and cookies, no red cross girls. ...

Enclosed is a christmas menu and for a change we got everything that was listed. After that meal I was really filled and I've had that filled feeling ever sent [since]. I had a sample of everything on the menu, so you could say I really ate plenty."

LEF to mother, 1 January 1946 (Tuesday).

"Last night the barrraks was sorta empty as most of the fellows spent their New Years Eve at the beer hall. Of course their was a few fellows that were drinking whiskey in the barracks, but not very many. For a change I was awake this New Years and saw the new year arrive, from the sack. There were a few [wonder?] minds that fired their rifles and when that went off I layed back down. Wasn't taking any chances of stopping a bullet. ...

Yesterday was Japanese Christmas or New Years, I don't know which one. All the people were dressed up, the women in kimonas and the little girls sure looked cute in their outfits. The clothes were all different colors and it looked nice to see the kids clean for a change. The nips were getting all liquored up from 'saki,' so we were expecting trouble, but no trouble."

LEF to mother, 6 January 1946 (Sunday).

"For chow tonight we had mashed potatoes, corn, fried chicken, ice cream, cake, bread, butter, and coffee. It was darn goo chow, but I wish that mess hall would warm up. The mess hall in an old hanger, so it has a cement deck and that is really cold in this cold weather. It wouldn't be do bad if the wind would stop, but that darn wind keeps coming in off the bay [Tokyo Bay]. Working out on that flight line is really cold as the flight line is just a few hundred feet from the bay. ...

Saki, that we had, tasted a little like rubbing alcohol and was clear like water. I[t] doesn't have a bitter taste and is kinda smooth going down. The guards at the gate search you, so their isn't a chance to take any food to the Jap family. It's a court martial offense if caught taking food out of the gate, so you see I don't want to try that. Don't get the idea I like fish, I just eat it at that house, because the[y] feel insulted if you refuse anything to eat."

LEF to mother, 11 January 1946 (Friday).

"Wednesday evening all us in flight section chipped in and threw a beer party. I guess you know most of the fellows were plastered, plus a couple of Lt. we know real good. There was very little work done Thursday morning and not many guys moved fast. ...

The barracks is empty, except for a few fellows sleeping and they are quiet. The beer hall opened tonight after being closed, so they could install steam heat. Guess the fellows

are really opening the place up. Just drifted over to the mess-hall and got a canteen cup of ice cream, and it really tasted good.

Another fellow and I went on liberty this afternoon and we drifted into see Kaiko. She said she was going to take us some where yesterday, but we did[n't] have enough time. Boy this liberty set up is just wonderful, don't have anytime to do a darn thing. The father was[n't] home but mama was there, so they were more talkative. With the father home they don't talk very much. The old man's boss. Look, don't get the wild idea, I like fish, because I don't and don't try to feed me fish. At the Jap house I only ate a little bite of fish to be polite, at home I don't have to be that polite."

LEF to mother, 14 January 1946 (Monday).

"A couple of the fellows have just returned from the beer hall and they are really plastered. I'm sure glad I'm not in the sack trying to get some sleep, because with these fellows not even the dead could rest. Just as long as they don't make noise after lights go out nobody can make any complaints. If the Officer of the Day catches them raising heck, it will be the brig. I hear rumors that the brig is plenty cold. Cold in Jap is (SA MU i) (Sa-moo-e) ...

There is a bunch of big wheels on the base, some congressmen I believe are in the group, but none of us have seen them. Guess the C.O. of the M.A.G. are showing them the good parts of the base and keeping them away from the enlisted men. All they need to do is walk in the mess hall and see how dirty it is and the kind of chow we get, then maybe something would be done. ...

What the father in that Jap family does for a living I wouldn't know, as I never ask him. They don't have any sons over fourteen and I hardly believe he was in the army. The entire christmas meal is something rare including snow white potatoes. We usually get those dehydrated potatoes."

LEF to mother, 19 January 1946 (Saturday).

"Tonight we are having a beer party down at the flight line, so I won't be able to write any letter tonight. Everybody tossed in twenty yen and that was enough to buy twenty cases of beer and twelve cans of peanuts. Besides that the Lt. Managed to acquire a few gallon cans of cheese, a case of crackers, and some kind of lunch meat. What I don't drink in beer I'll make up in eating."

LEF to mother, 2 February 1946 (Saturday).

"Dear Mom: The Time is now three in the afternoon and we are waiting for two of our planes to return so we can go back to the barracks. The rest of the planes are in the hanger, as there is supposed to be high winds tonight. One plane that is flying is one of those TBM's and it happens to be on an areology hop, the other plane that is flying is a Piper Cub and thats just play[ing] around. If those two planes come back on time we should be finished work by four o'clock and that [is] something unusual. ...

Boy last night it was so cold in the messhall that I couldn't stay and eat chow, and that's unusual. Instead I went over to the 'Blue Room' and had coffee and doughnuts for my evening chow. Pretty soon the 'Blue Room' will be the messhall, if this cold weather keeps up. That's about the warmest place on the base. The barracks was plenty cold and

of course the heat was off. Ah yes this is a wonderful place not to be, and that stupid Kopec is thinking about signing for another two years. He's nuts. ...

Well mom I hear those planes circling the field, so I guess I'd better close and get those planes gassed and oiled. Then we have to pull the planes in the hanger for the evenings as high winds are expected. ... With love, Son"

### Lester E. Folkenson, Jr. Growing Up





**LEF, Jr., April 1927**



**LEF, Jr. circa 1929**



**LEF, Jr., circa 1929**



**LEF, circa 1930**





**LEF, circa 1930**



**LEF, Jr. with Nana, probably at the Gas Station she and William owned near Saltsburg, Pa.**



**Lester E. Folkenson, Jr.**  
**Photographs from Occupied Japan**





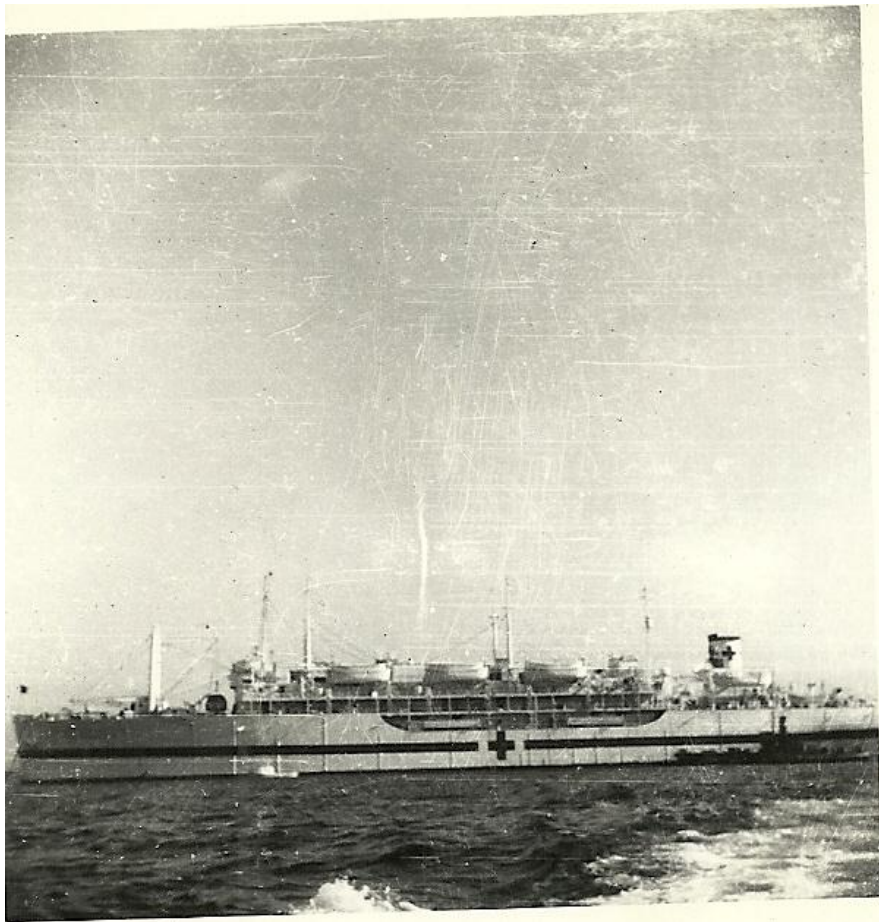
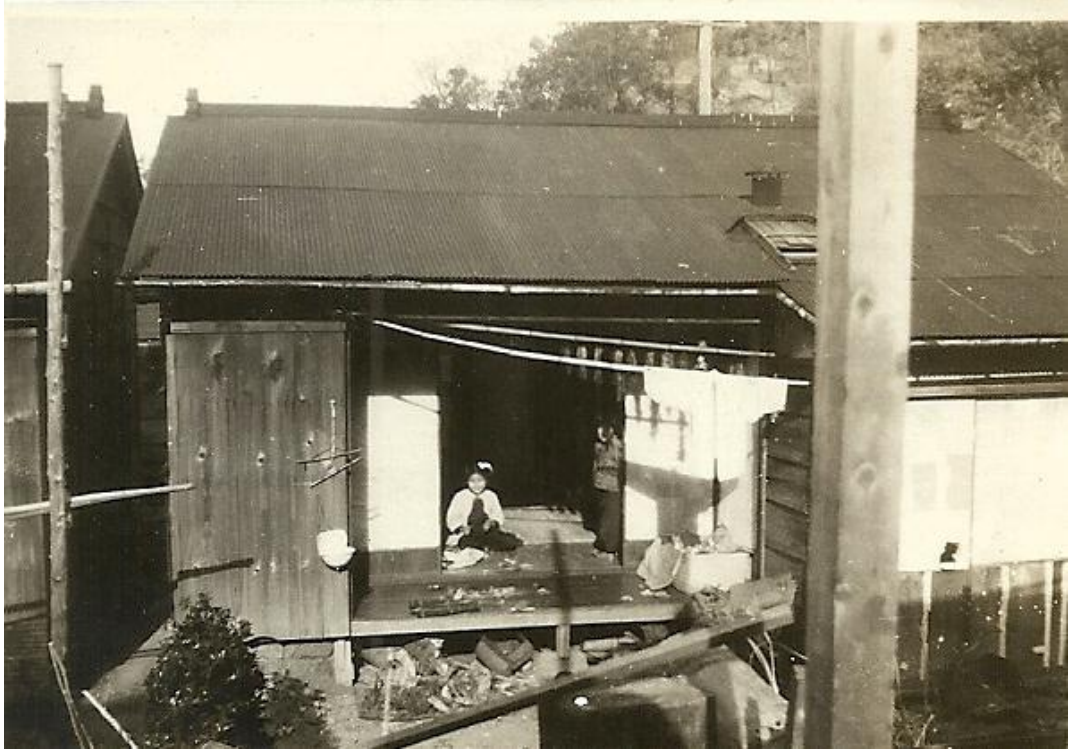
**LEF on right.**











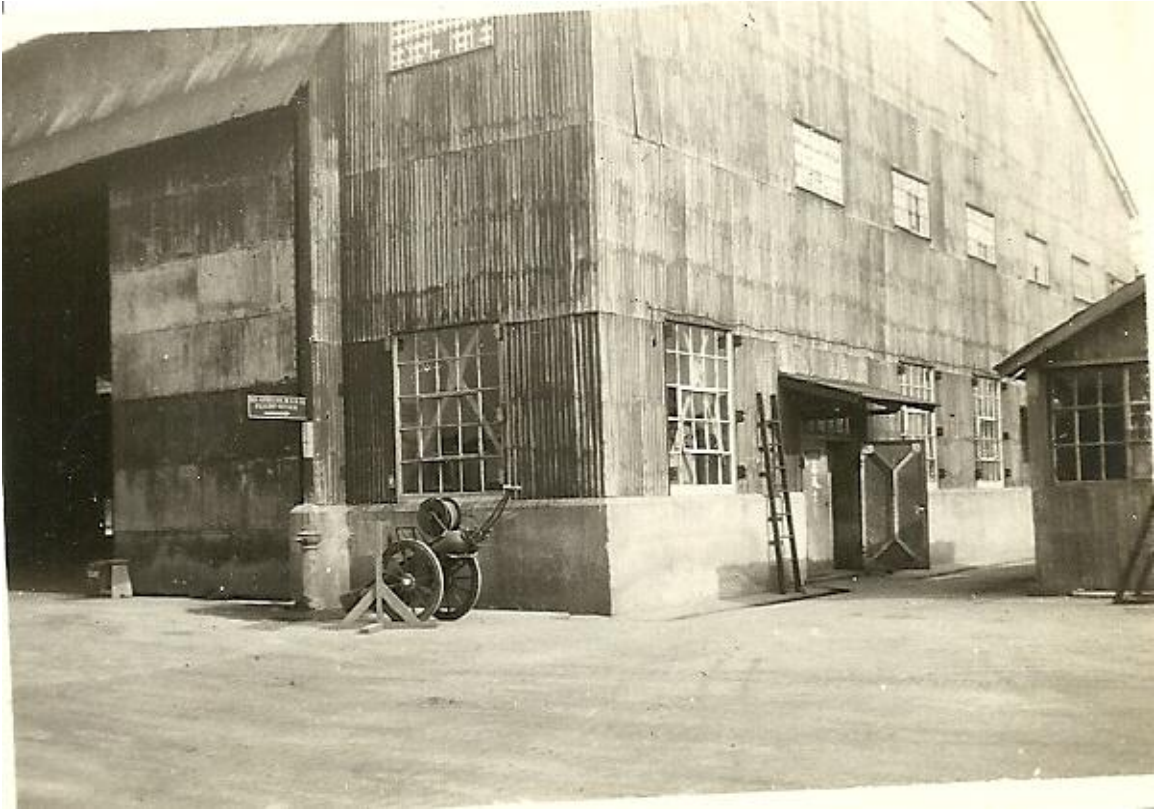




**Corsair taking off or landing.**



**Guard post. Sign says "Marine Corps Air Base M.A.G. 31"**



**Guard post. "Marine Corps Air Base M.A.G. 31"**



**Air base (above), Japanese planes on left. Below, Corsair in flight.**





**Corsair landing.**

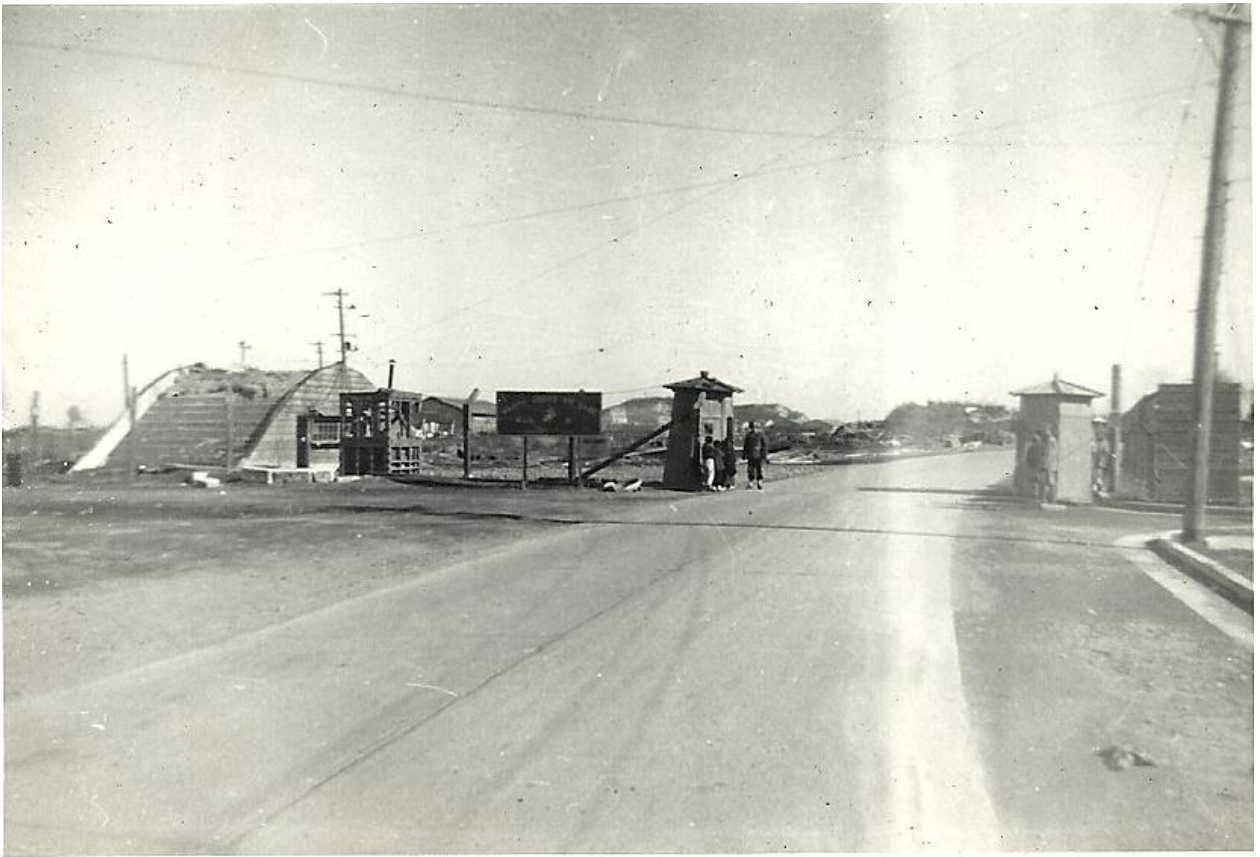


**Grumman "Avenger" torpedo planes.**



**C-47 transports on right.**







**Aircraft hangers.**



**F6F "Hellcat" fighter**

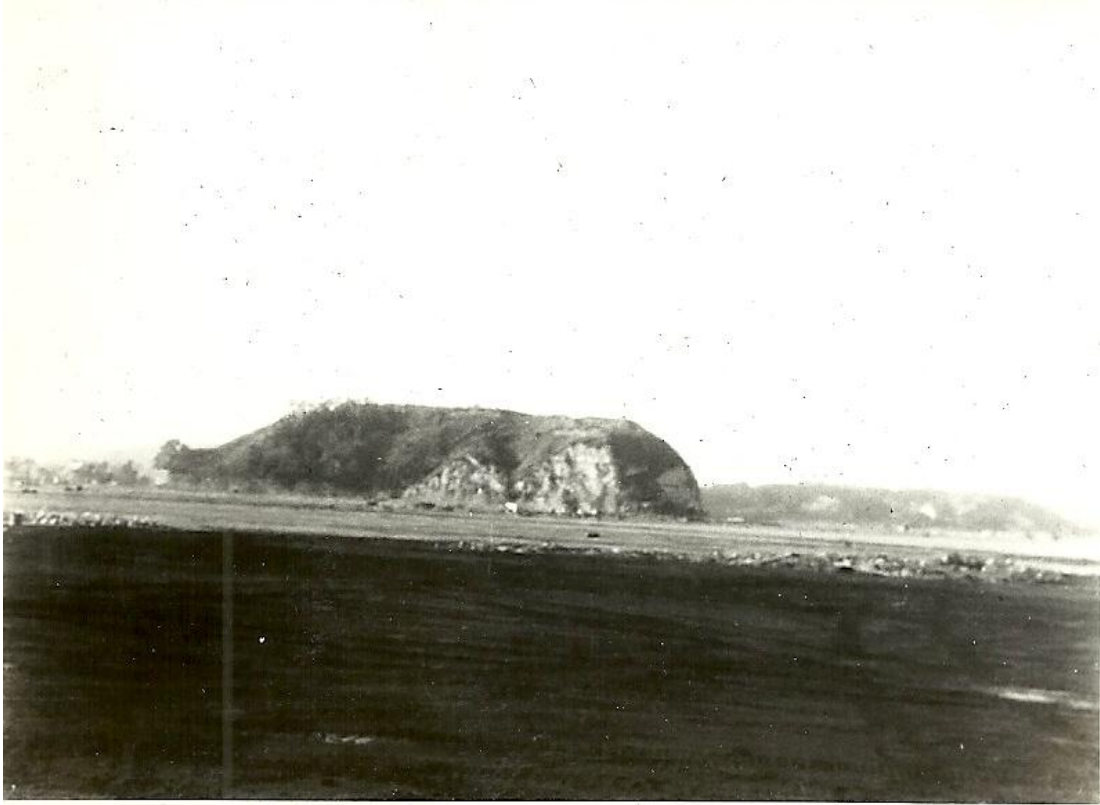




**Corsair fighter**



**Wreckage on airfield (before)**



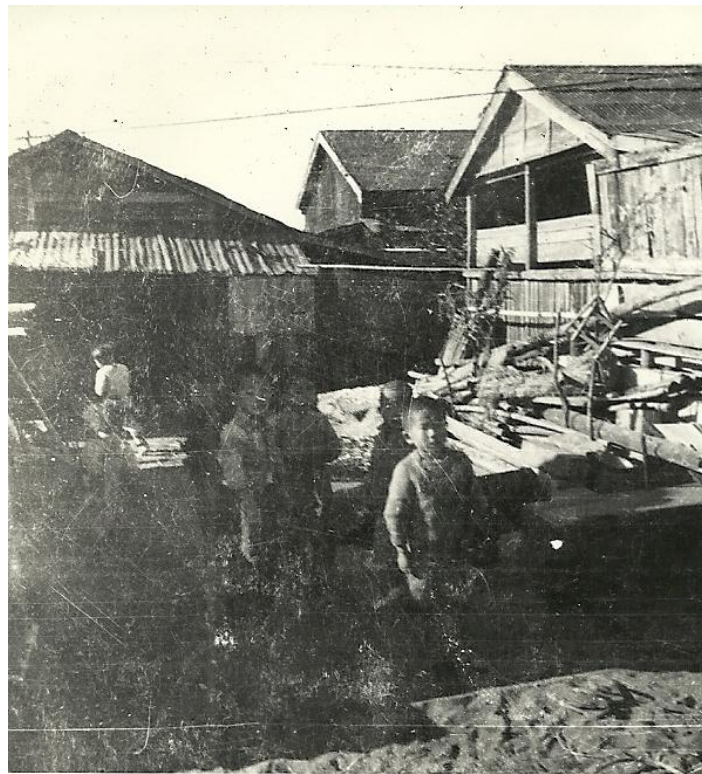
**And after.**



**“Hellcat”**

**Miscellaneous Photos of Civilian Areas**











**Finis**

